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INTRODUCTION

This 33rd UMass Amherst *Student Writing Anthology* maintains the primary goal of its predecessors: to celebrate student writing and give it an audience beyond the classroom. In past editions, we imagined our largest audience to be students enrolled in our First Year Writing Program courses (Englwrit 111, 112 and 112H). This year's book, however, is the beginning of our efforts to produce a far richer text that we hope will reach a far wider audience. Our first step toward achieving this goal is significantly expanding the book, and including a selection of texts from some of our Junior Year Writing Courses.

Since 1982, all undergraduate students at UMass Amherst have been required to take both a first-year course on general expository writing and a junior-year course on writing in their majors. The idea behind instituting this curriculum was to give our students practice in and guidance on writing throughout their college years. As a result, we now have more than 70 such junior-year courses administered by 50 different departments in every college and school on campus, serving 4,500 students each year. It is our intention to draw on the wealth of excellent writing being produced in these classes, enabling our readers to learn from both the content and genres that emerge from these diverse courses. Our ultimate goal is to make this book a campus-wide resource, used at every level, as an integral part of the University’s effort to both celebrate and improve student writing here.

In our efforts to reach this goal, we have made other revisions to this year’s edition of the *Anthology*. Discussions of critical issues, original thinking, and complex rhetorical choices emerge in our first-year students’ writing—from both our *Basic Writing* and *College Writing* courses. In past editions of the *Anthology*, essays from *Basic Writing* appeared along side those written in *College Writing*, without their own space and the distinction they...
Basic Writing is a complex course that fulfills a diversity requirement because of its emphasis on issues of U.S. linguistic diversity. Thus, Part One of our book begins with essays selected from each of the four units of Basic Writing. In this course, 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 lead 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 college students.

Our section devoted to College Writing has also been expanded; we have added examples of texts from our fourth unit, called the TBA unit because, building on goals and concepts covered in the first three units of the course, each of our teachers composes a unique project based on his or her personal strengths and interests. Many extraordinary projects emerge in Unit Four, and often include collaborative writing, experimental approaches to academic writing, and publishing texts for specific purposes and audiences. Often books are created for community outreach as well as college audiences. The following are some examples of TBA projects: composing letters about the greatest problems facing America and sending them to President Obama; creating books about the architecture found on the UMass Amherst campus; writing survival guides for incoming UMass freshmen and transfer students; researching how Massachusetts State Budget cuts will likely affect the various services offered to the poor within the state; composing and compiling reviews on such topics as recent films, the various dining commons on campus, and art showings within the local area. Clearly these TBA units are as diverse and intellectually stimulating as our teachers and students who create them—and again, their content and style reach across disciplines and class level.

We invite our readers to discover the many rhetorical choices available to us in academic writing and to learn from the wealth of ideas 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.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to so many people who made this book possible: the First Year Writing Program instructors who contributed texts to the Anthology (far too many 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 and lecturers who shared our vision for this book and worked so hard to make the Junior Year section a reality: Annalieise Bischoff, Genevieve Chandler, Laura Holland, and Holly Lawrence. The efforts of our Anthology Committee members were extraordinary. The committee spent over seven months reading, commenting on, and scoring almost 200 submissions—the largest number we have ever received. Making selections was very difficult; every text had something to recommend it, and often our choices were painfully made. Our discussions were thoughtful, spirited, and exciting. Our graduate student committee members, Deb Collins, Sarah Magin, and Samantha Nataro, worked over winter break reading and scoring ALL the texts that had been submitted from the fall 2008 semester—an extraordinary effort. Our fourth 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 chose all the essays from that course. Special thanks also to David Fleming, Director of the Writing Program, for his vision, his support of this project, and his finding the time in his unfathomably busy schedule to offer his sage advice whenever we needed it. Finally, I wish to thank Pearson Custom Publishing for agreeing to publish this book and bundle it with The Brief Penguin Handbook, a required text in all first-year courses; through this agreement, all our first-year students have access to this valuable learning resource. Everyone involved in this enterprise owes a debt of gratitude to Becky Blajda and her unwaivering support and enthusiasm for student writing.
Her assistance in the office, from the beginning to the end of this project, made this book possible. I also thank Pearson for sending us Wendy Nelson as our project director: her enthusiasm, her support, her professionalism has brought much joy to the project and lifted us when the weight of our tasks seemed overwhelming.

Patricia Zukowski
Chair, Anthology Committee

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Deborah Collins
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Prof. Genevieve Chandler
Laura Holland
Holly Lawrence
PART I

BASIC WRITING
This collection of essays represents some of the excellent writing done by students in the Basic Writing course (English Writing 111) during 2008. Basic Writing here at the University of Massachusetts is a prerequisite for College Writing for some students and also grants US 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 1, students explore the idea of multiple literacies and discourse communities, focusing their writing on a literacy with which they have experience. In Unit 2, they read texts which examine literacies from an academic perspective and then apply this lens to a home literacy. In Unit 3, the class examines literacies of power and how certain groups and institutions are supported and normalized by the language society forwards. In Unit 4, 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.
I choose myself as an example for the significance of language/literacy. I have experienced a lot of language barriers, and I am trying to overcome them. Language is significant to me because it is a tool to talk with people around the world. If no language existed, then people couldn’t communicate with one another and it might cause big problems. It would be impossible to live longer without a spoken or written language; we would be isolated and frustrated with others.

I was born in Taiwan and raised there until I was three, when we moved to the United States. My parents were unaware that I was deaf when I was an infant. When my parents discovered that I was deaf, they were worried about how they would be able to communicate with me. Language is an important tool for everyone in the world. Luckily, American Sign Language existed, so my parents learned to sign quickly with me as I grew up. American Sign Language is a sign language used in the United States and has no writing form like English. ASL is understandable to deaf people, and they need to convert it into English to write. Most deaf people have trouble writing English from ASL because ASL has a lot of missing words such as “the,” “is,” “am,” “to,” “-ing,” “-ed,” etc. For example, in English, one would say, “I am going to a store to buy food.” In ASL, we would say “I go store buy food.” Before learning American Sign Language, I would always point at something, gesture or yell for something in order to communicate with my parents without a problem. It was my own before learning ASL.

When I was young, I learned ASL so fast, much faster than my parents. A deaf person usually learns ASL faster than a hearing person. I can easily communicate with my family without using my own “language” of gestur-
ing or yelling anymore. It was quick and efficient because sometimes my parents couldn't understand me when I used my own language. So ASL was a new tool for me to use. I am really glad that I acquired a new language
to develop my language skills.

As a way to develop my ASL skill, I went to deaf school for almost six years, where the language barrier did not exist. I made a lot of deaf friends that I could sign with. I was satisfied with that. But after six years, I transferred to a hearing school in 5th grade to experience being the only deaf student in school for the first time. I used an interpreter in class to translate English into ASL as I do in my current writing class. I made a lot of hearing friends, however, there was a language barrier because I couldn't hear and talk that well and they didn't know ASL. So we overcame it by writing back and forth with patience. We can write everything on paper like the way people talk. I taught them the ASL alphabet and basic signs to make the conversations run smoothly. They loved learning signs and thought it was “cool” because they never had a deaf person around them before. But sometimes, I felt left out during some deep conversations. They couldn't explain everything that they talked about, so they signed some words or wrote a few words to sum it up in order to save time. That was one of things I disliked about the language. English and ASL are different. I have always struggled with English, since it is not my primary language and ASL is much easier for me.

I have been in mainstream classes with interpreters since 5th grade; I didn't attend any deaf school anymore. Even so, I have experienced the deaf and hearing worlds, which is a good thing for me to understand the difference. Deaf people use sign languages and hearing people talk with their voices. Now-a-days, I rarely talk in classes; I always use the sign language because it is my primary language, and I am proud of being a deaf person. However, I still use interpreters in class to understand what I have learned in class. I hate it when people think that deaf people are dumb because they can't hear or talk, but I can hear and talk a little. Deaf doesn't mean dumb at all.

When I am at home, I always speak English to my family with my voice, so it is very different than being at school with ASL. It is just my habit to communicate with my family with my voice because I feel more
comfortable being around them. My family understands me easier than random people because they have gotten used to my voice. However, sometimes I use ASL to back up my speech if my family misunderstands. Even though I am deaf, I feel more confident to talk with my family than with strangers. In the outside world, I have to try my best to speak up as much as possible because there is no deaf world. It is great that I know ASL and English, so I can communicate with deaf and hearing people.

I have learned a lot from language barriers and I have survived for a long time. I overcame the barriers. If I hadn’t solved these problems, then I would have been alone and frustrated for my whole life. I am satisfied with either language I use to communicate with different people. Of course, language is important to me, and I am grateful that I know both ASL and English.
According to the Buddhist perspective, humans cannot perceive their inherently enlightened nature due to delusions from *samsara* (the current world). Only when they reach enlightenment can they awaken to their original Buddha-nature. Likewise, I did not realize the meaning of being a Korean until I was challenged with different jargon and overcame hardships in America when playing football.

When I first arrived in the United States to study abroad, everything looked strange and new. Especially, when I saw the students playing football on the varsity pre-season, it looked interesting. “I! I! I!” they roared some strange language. The first impression of football was exciting, easy, and challenging. Since I have been a good runner and love to challenge new things and learn American culture, I signed up for the football team for my freshman sports.

I first started in junior varsity level. Playing football was not as easy and fun as it looked in the first place. The most difficult thing was understanding football slang; since I did not know the terminology, I was not able to play well. In football, it was really important to recognize and know the formations more than any other sport. To be more specific, because I did not understand the language for formations, I was being totally left out from the squad and caused a lot of trouble. For instance, I did not know what was going on when the coach yelled out “I-21, I-21! Sang! I! I! I! Stand behind the three back!” I-21 meant 2nd running back carrying the ball through the 1st hole in I-formation, where all the running backs lined up straight like the alphabet-I. I was the second running back, so the defenses only protected my way accordingly. But I did not realize I was the one getting the ball. Thus, a quarterback had been carrying the ball, search-
ing for me in the mad opponents without any defenses. Eventually, the quarterback was badly smashed because of me.

My trouble did not end here. When the quarterback called “I-28 toss,” I was supposed to get the ball and run to right edge of the field—I ran to the left, instead. The ball that the quarterback tossed missed me. It bounced on the ground and was lying on the field: I fumbled. This time the quarterback yelled, “28 toss is to the right! Stupid!” I did not even have time to feel ashamed at that moment as I had to pick the ball up to get our attack chance back. So I rushed and stretched my arms toward the ball on the ground; however, everyone was already piling up on the ball. They smashed and dove on my hand, which made my hand break. At last, the coach did not even let me play in games or even practice until I fully understood all the confusing terminology.

I was becoming smaller and smaller in this new sport and culture with my palm broken. My nostalgia for Korea hit me. I was starting to miss my country—the familiarity of my country—because I had become friendly with no one. I felt discomfort as well as detachment from the team. The fact that I was the only Asian on the football team made me feel even more aloof to the team. The disconnection I felt from the team passed on to strangeness toward American culture. And that was the end for my JV football career, with my hand broken.

The next year, I joined the Varsity Football team pre-season to learn and play more football. During preseason, I strived to understand the jargon through football playbooks and support from my team. I was, then, starting to catch up on the plays. I joined the varsity team and ran a game. The match against Berkshire Academy shifted my frustration to connection and enlightenment.

The quarterback shouted as a sign of getting prepared, “Blue nine-teen, blue nineteen, set...” I was extremely nervous because, this time, I knew exactly where and when I should get and run the ball. I was fully prepared. Conflicting feelings filled my heart. I could hear my heartbeat saying, “Run it! You want it!” Every heart beat was telling and showing me that I was alive. I felt the involvement—the connection and spirit of the team. This time, I would not hear “stupid” from anyone. I would not disgrace my
country as well as Asia. I rubbed my Korean flag sticker on my helmet and wished myself luck.

“Hike!” The quarterback tucked the ball in between my arms and stomach. I ran as hard as I could; I felt my blood pound into my head, bloodstreams that flowed inside my veins and pieces of my muscles that I was using. I felt alive but unexplainable through words. Opponents were dangling, hanging and popping on my body and legs. Even a huge lineman, looking at least 200 pounds heavy, was pushing me back. I was entering into my internal, spiritual threshold, whether I should give up my bodily exhausted work, and defeat my spiritual level, or elevate my spiritual level through giving up my pain. I could just kneel it, call it a set, and wait for another play. Meanwhile, I remembered not to disgrace Korea again. I was representing Korea in this foreign, American sport and I would not give up. Unlike the last time, I knew all the lingo and the fact that I was the only Korean, Asian, reinforced me to stay strong. I kept driving my legs and yelled to myself “keep going!”

“SMOOSH!” with that thick, low, and loud sound, I could clearly see clear liquid, probably my saliva or sweat from a strong tackle, scattered around in a one-hundred-and-eighty degree angle from my mouth to the air in slow motion, as if I was watching a first perspective movie in a limited vision from a helmet. “Touchdown” resonated through the speakers. “By Sang Woook Jo, number thirty-three, from South Korea.” I felt proud for the first time of being the only Asian in the varsity football team. I did well enough to represent my country. As I crossed the end zone, I crossed the threshold in my mind wherein I had transcended my fatigue and pain to finding my identity—I had achieved my personal best and elevated my mental stage.

I took off my helmet and pointed at the Korean flag on my helmet for the touchdown ceremony. My best American friend yelled out, “Ya’ve shown not all Asians are afraid of Americans!” I was proud; I showed everyone my Korean spirit. I proved that Koreans are strong. I realized how much I had been ignorant towards my origin, Korea, while the spirit had always belonged in my heart. My coach said, “Well done, Korea.”
Adopting the jargon allowed me to be part of the American football players. This contributed to my internal and external growth as I had been constantly reminded of my identity, Korean. I learned to represent my country among the American “insiders.” Of course, initially, jargon was a huge barrier or a sort of task to become one of the insiders. However, after understanding the technical terms, I was able to learn team spirit. This spirit further expanded and enabled me to evolve my mentality—from isolation to nostalgia to finding my roots.

Indeed, as I adopted a language, I was changed. I was able to discover and appreciate my origin and elevate my psychological state. As the teaching of Buddhism indicates, I had been blind to my identity as a Korean until I reached the moment of enlightenment by immersing myself in an unfamiliar, American, ‘team’ sports. Now I have realized and become enlightened to my Korean nature and how much my country means to me.
THE LITERARY CUSTOMS
OF MY FAMILY

Hemanth Kanakamedala
Unit 2: Bringing Literacies Home

“Literacy arouses hopes, not only in society as a whole but also in the individual who is striving for fulfillment, happiness and personal benefit by learning how to read and write. Literacy... means far more than learning how to read and write... The aim is to transmit... knowledge and promote social participation.”

-UNESCO Institute, Hamburg Germany.

This suggests/implies that literacy actually ‘arouses hope in a society’ and that literacy is more than just the ability to read and write, it is ‘knowledge.’

I recall those days when my grandpa used to recite the famous quote, “Knowledge is power.” My grandpa, who was not only a linguist but a philosopher and a writer, tried to pass on his legacy to me. He would always tell me not to limit my knowledge to that of the classroom but to constantly be in search of something more, something different from my everyday tasks of going to school and doing my math homework. He would continually remind me of the importance of acquiring knowledge and to never be satisfied. ‘You have to starve for knowledge Hemanth,’ he would say. His view, or rather my family’s view, about literacy is completely different from the universal perception of literacy. Literacy is not just the ability to read and write but something a lot more extensive.

Not only my grandpa, but my whole family holds this particular opinion about knowledge, or rather, literacy. This is revealed through the various activities that we carry out every day. For instance, my grandmother teaches Telugu (the native language of Andhra Pradesh) to foreign students,
and I used to attend these classes. I just loved the way she taught Telugu and conveyed its beauty to the students. Sometimes she even let me substitute for her whenever she wasn’t available. This was a valuable experience for me and gave me an opportunity to teach an international community and while doing so, to learn more about their culture and also to improve my reading and writing skills in Telugu.

My uncle, who is a professor of History and an economist, also played an important role in influencing my literacy. When I visited him in San Francisco during my summer vacation, he showed me a few essays written by his students. I particularly had a tough time with expressing my thoughts in English writing and I was fascinated by the way they felt free to use English as a tool to express their thoughts. That was when I realized the importance of writing in good English and that it was equally as important as studying the sciences. He used to assign readings of various articles to me and I had to write critiques on these articles. I wrote critiques on articles about Islam, Indian history and Politics. This task improved my writing and reading skills to a great extent. He taught me things that the Indian schools would never teach. Literacy according to an Indian school would be the ability to understand and comprehend the sciences while the ability to read and write is not considered to be as important.

Finally, my mother, who I feel is similar to the writer, Amy Tan’s mother, found it difficult to communicate in English. She is often misunderstood when she attempts to communicate with an American and ends up being unintentionally rude. For example she would say, ‘What are you talking? This is 45 bucks, no?’ She would actually mean, ‘Can you please repeat what you said? Does this cost 45 bucks?’ I often feel sad for the difficulty she has to go through to get her point across. Some people might be under the impression that she is illiterate. But considering the fact that she is a project manager for a medical company and completed an M.Phil. in Linguistics in India, she is definitely literate. She knows the functions of language, she can create software in seconds; aren’t these the qualities of a literate person? Amy Tan illustrates this point very well, “I wanted to capture what language ability tests can never reveal her intent, her passion, her imagery, the rhythms of her speech and the nature of her thoughts” (22). Through this sentence, Tan reveals that one’s literacy cannot be judged by
the way one speaks. Rather, she suggests that there can be hidden literary talents in every person just like her mother. Hence, I learned that one’s literacy cannot be judged by the way one speaks and that it can be hidden just like it is in my mother.

Let us recall the excerpt at the beginning of the essay, “Literacy arouses hopes, not only in society as a whole but also in the individual who is striving for fulfillment, happiness and personal benefit by learning how to read and write. Literacy... means far more than learning how to read and write...The aim is to transmit... knowledge and promote social participation.” It suggests/implies that literacy actually “arouses hope in a society” and that literacy is more than just the ability to read and write; it is “knowledge.” UNESCO urges the people to transmit literacy, i.e. knowledge. Unfortunately, many of us fail to recognize the true meaning of literacy. From the examples of my family, I feel that literacy in a broader context is of many forms, like the teaching of my grandmother, the knowledge of my grandfather, the all-round literary skills of my uncle and the hidden talents of my mother’s linguistic and managerial skills. In that regard, I consider myself lucky to be from a family/discourse community that values such ideology.

Works Cited
READ! READ! READ! Why do people read? People read for social-interaction, confirmation, instrumental reasons, and for news. There are people who read to accomplish practical goals. Some read to maintain social relationships, others read to learn about third parties, and the rest read to gain support for attitudes or beliefs. In Heath’s essay “Literate Traditions,” she mentions that “reading is a social activity” (103). It brings people together for socialization, to make them feel a part of an environment which creates a discourse community. “The experience of any one individual had to become common to the group, however, and that was done through the recounting of members’ experiences” (Heath 105). When readers come together to discuss what they’ve read, they come with a history behind it, an experience to share with others who are in that community, so that they can relate to one another. Discourse communities have their pros and cons; they can be very beneficial but at the same time they could have an affect on your personal life. What makes up a discourse community? A discourse community consists of people with specific characteristics who indulge in certain activities that have the same interests to create a social setting. There are characteristics that make up a discourse community such as common goals, communication, and feedback. Next there is a set language with exclusive terms and expressions, which is required of the group called lexis; it is the special language used within that community. Lastly, there must be a level of membership where the community can grow. At any rate, let’s take a look at some positive affects of a discourse community.

Being in a discourse community you become part of a family, especially for those who feel left out of society. One of the good things about being
in that environment is that you learn a new language. “This special language contributes to a sense of closeness and professional spirit among people who are under a great deal of stress” (Klass 8). Moreover, some people when they start to understand the terms and phrases they become comfortable not only with the language but with the people that they start to finish one another’s sentences. That technique would come with experience and a relationship. In addition to that, you make new friends; you meet new people that have the same interest as you. Also there is always something to talk about. Harry Potter readers can relate to one another because they understand each other. They have read all the books; they know every character, strength and flaws. They talk about the events that happened in the past, what’s happening in the present and what they think will happen in the next book. These books are their lives. This can be a problem at times.

Once you’re in, you’re in. You are adopted into a community. But one problem with readers and their discourse communities is that they lose that awareness of the difference between their world and the outside world. They forget about the language barrier; specific words and/or phrases that can’t be used all the time. In Klass’s piece “Learning the Language,” she speaks about her transition from a student to a doctor and how at first she was able to separate the doctor’s language/readings and that of her own, but later was completely immersed in the language of medicine. “Yet I am uncomfortably aware that I will never again notice the peculiarities and even the atrocities of medical language as keenly as I did” (10). Readers are so wrapped up in their communities that they tend to forget the other people around, who are not part of their community. Their mindset is focused so much on their book and environment they forget about that transition back to the real world. Readers try to picture their life as a book; while it may be true in a book, it is certainly not true in real life. The book is their escape from reality. In reality there aren’t any flying dragons or broom sticks or wizards. Just real people with real problems and real situations. There are so many people who are part of a discourse community; in like manner, I myself am part of one.

For some it may be reading, others it could be movies such as the ‘007’ series or even television shows but for me it’s basketball. I belong to a basketball team. My team and I are close; blood couldn’t make us any closer.
We laugh together, we fight together, we even cry together at times. We're always yelling at each other but in actuality we're playing with one another. For an example, every time I see Kim, my teammate, whether it's in practice or just walking around on campus I'll yell 'Kim you suck!' It's not that she literally sucks or stinks at basketball; it's just a phrase we use to play with each other. Honestly, I forgot how it all started. It's a phrase we use when we want to laugh or when we're having fun. Another example is about a couple weeks ago, we had a recruit on campus named Rachel. She was a dull girl who never ever went to a party before and was very cocky; basically the team didn't like her. A week later, Kim got sick and I said “you've been infected with the Rachel.” So, now it's a running joke on our team, any time when a person gets sick we call it “the Rachel.” On the flip side of that I sometimes forget that not everybody understands our lingo or is part of our discourse community. So I can't say the same thing to a friend on campus as I would my teammate. Certain things I do with my team I can't do with any one else.

At the end of the day, your discourse community defines who you are as a person and as an individual. It dictates who you are and how you relate to people around you whether it's outside your discourse community or inside. A discourse community has its advantages just as well as its disadvantages. It shapes your identity and labels you not as an outsider or an outcast but a member, a person who is a part of something, a family, a community. When you think about everyday life and the people in it, isn't it fair to say that everyone has a discourse community they belong to, whether they believe so or not? There are those who are part of the “teaching world” of discourses, and in addition to that, doctors, lawyers, even actors and actresses. These people have their own language and their own perception of the world, as seen thorough the lens of their discourse. Aren't they labeled and put into categories to the world just as the readers? What discourse community are you part of?
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Since I was younger I struggled with the idea of power. Was it easy to control, like a power button on a TV or was it much harder to stop like a train? As I grew up I learned power is much more than control; it is a force that pushes people to do things, good or bad. Power pushed Hitler to kill thousands of Jews and power gave Martin Luther King the strength to fight for humanity. When I was a child, my parents made sure my sisters and I understood that we were our own people and we made our own decisions. We were individuals that controlled what we did and we had the power to choose what we wanted to do. As a kid I didn’t comprehend what that meant and now as a college student I am just beginning to understand it. As a person you should have a right to do what you want and say what you want.

This ‘right’ is what Gloria Anzaldúa and Michael Callen struggled to obtain. Callen was considered an outsider in society because he had AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). He wasn’t able to live a normal life because he was told he was a ‘victim’. This ‘victim’ idea is what Callen struggled with; he believed he wasn’t a victim and that he shouldn’t be labeled as one. Callen was punished daily by the media and the public because of this disease. He asks towards the end of his article, “Is there anyone who can talk about AIDS and emerge from the battle unscathed? Probably not” (135). This is one example of how Callen was unable to have a right like everyone else. AIDS was like a brand, like a stamp of disgrace. He was unable to have rights as a citizen because he had AIDS.

Anzaldúa was shunned in school because she spoke a different language as a child. She didn’t have the right to speak Chicano Spanish. Anzaldúa was being restricted to speak only English, which she couldn’t. Her lack of
English defined her as less educated and stubborn. Anzaldúa goes into detail about how she was told her language was a failure, that English is the only language to know. “In childhood we are told our language is wrong. Repeated attacks on our native tongue diminish our sense of self” (Anzaldúa 122). Anzaldúa was raised to see English as the “oppressors language” and not her own. She lost the right to be an individual because she couldn’t speak the language she was raised to speak.

Anzaldúa and Callen both struggled to fit a mold that society created for them. They were incapable of having control and making their own decisions because people chose for them. Anzaldúa says, “Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself” (123). She is being forced into something she is not, quite similar to Callen. They both suffer from the silence that they are required to live in. They have no way to gain power because they are constantly being pushed around and told what to do or what to say. The loss of power has led them to use different techniques to create happiness and to live a normal life. Instead of being able to relax and love their lives they have to try harder and push themselves. Callen and Anzaldúa both use their ‘flaws’ to their advantages by questioning everyday norms. Callen used being exiled as a way to expose that he was different but that it was okay and acceptable. They are forced to adapt to what they have and accept this different lifestyle. In both cases this ‘acceptance’ brought up language as something Anzaldúa and Callen could relate to. In Anzaldúa’s article language is more prominent, but Callen also shows how he has created his own language from being cast out.

Callen states, “When I was diagnosed in 1982, I decided that I’d have to pay close attention to the language of AIDS” (129). This was a language that Callen could relate to, a language that he shared with other people. Similar to Anzaldúa, he could rely on other people to share the burden of his loss of power. When they lost power and control, Anzaldúa and Callen created something to be proud of. “When the other races have given up their tongue, we’ve kept ours” (Anzaldúa 127). Anzaldúa makes sure the reader is aware that she hasn’t forgotten where she came from and who she truly is as a person. Callen pushes the article by asking why AIDS patients are called victims. They have not lost; they are patients just beginning to fight.
Human nature truthfully shows when Anzaldúa and Callen prove they have found something to keep hope in. Human nature being that even when we (humans) hit rock bottom there is something within us that pushes us to fight, whether it’s keeping our native language no matter what people have to say or fighting being called a ‘victim’ because we are not someone who has lost a battle. It’s the will power to overcome something people may label as ‘impossible.’ It comes from deep within and gains strength as it emerges. It can make or break a person. It takes a person who has desires and hopes to create language into something stronger than just words.

Language and power together bring a storm of force. I have learned this over and over again after reading these articles. You never realize how much these things impact your life and how you live. Language and power can be reversed, to get power you can use a language or to get a language you can use power. I believe that depending on who you are either one can mean more than the other. To me I believe that power is stronger. After reading both Anzaldúa and Callen articles I actually saw how to gain power in situations that most people wouldn’t think you could. These articles changed my mind because I began to rethink how I use power and language everyday and don’t realize it. Everyone has fought for something, whether it’s to be recognized as ‘normal’ in a society full of close-minded people or to be proud of the language you were raised to speak. It doesn’t matter who you are or how bad you want something, power will always be controlling.

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RACISM AND LANGUAGE

Lorena Alves

Unit 3: Exploring the Power of Literacy and Literacies of Power

If the word nigger was referred to you, how would you react? Most people today find it offensive but there is part of the population that uses this word regularly. Throughout decades and generations the word ‘n-----’ has gained new attributes. According to April Schneider in “Reclaiming the Word Nigger,” “As language evolves over the course of history, the meanings of words fluctuate.” There is a difficulty of speaking and thinking about ‘the-N-word’ as a result of the double standard that the word holds. The roots and history of the word conveys detrimental events and connotations while its current usage disregards the past and creates a new meaning for the word. Through examples from history and the TV media, such as “Jackie Brown” and Nas one can see how delicate and controversial the word ‘n-----’ becomes in discussion.

During slavery, slaves were sold to Americans by Portuguese slave traders. The Americans bought ‘Ne-gros,’ which is the Spanish word for black that derives from the Latin adjective ‘niger.’ Slaves then used the word ‘Nigger’ in their attempt to say ‘Ne-gro’ or black. In the article, “Words You Can’t Reclaim,” Sanam Hakim says, “The term ‘nigger’ was used specifically by Southern whites towards slaves and is still today associated with images of death and hatred.” Slave owners referred to theft slaves as ‘n-----’, thus exercising their power. They dealt with slaves as if they were property and non-human. Then after the American Revolution, the word became a racial slur used as hatred for the black folks in the so called “White America” (Alatea). The word ‘n-----’ is accepted as being racist and dehumanizing towards slaves. History illustrates that ‘the N-word’ clearly degrades the image of African Americans through different systems and power usage. Due to its history, the word represents the continuous link of
a people afflicted with enslavement only because of their skin color. The word ‘n------’ refers to a slave and someone who is unequal. It degrades a black person’s image and infers inferiority. When weighed against other racial slurs such as kike, cracker, towel head, white trash, queer and many others, ‘n-----’ is frequently considered the most defamatory of them all because it is tied to our history. Perhaps this is because of the long history of the word that makes it so difficult to accept the new definition.

In contrast, the current usage of ‘the-N-word’ has changed and is put in a different context and isn’t always so negative. It is now commonly used by teenagers in hip-hop culture in TV media for ‘bonding.’ As Latea mentions, “African Americans have appropriated the slur, subverting it to a self-referential term that is often suggestive of familiarity, endearment or kinship.” Today’s younger generation believes it is permissible to say the word ‘nigga,’ the slang version of the word, among friends. With the rise in media popularity among teenagers, the term has become more widely used and accepted. In Quentin Tarantino’s “Jackie Brown,” Ordell, a Black character has Jackie Brown, who is a stewardess, smuggling money into the country. Jackie is busted by the cops and picked up by a bondsman, who falls in love with her. She then double crosses both sides. Samuel L. Jackson often uses the word to demonstrate familiarity. “Look, I hate to be the kinda nigga does a nigga a favor, then---bam---hits a nigga up for a favor in return,” Jackson tells another black character in the movie. “But I’m afraid I gotta be that kinda nigga” (Allen Taylor). In this example, Jackson is not using the word in a derogatory way; he uses it in kinship and not racism. He uses the word to demonstrate familiarity with a man of the same skin color.

The word ‘n-----’ is frequently seen in the rap and hip-hop music today. Nas, a very influential rapper according to MTV, was listed number five on MTV’s 10 Greatest Emcees of all time. In his song, ‘Be A Nigger Too’ the word is used as familiarity,

I’m a nigger, he’s a nigger, she’s a Nigger, we some niggers. Wouldn’t you like to be a nigger, too? To all my kike niggers, spic niggers, guinea niggers, chink niggers. That’s right, y’all my niggaz, too. I’m a nigger, he’s a nigger, she’s a nigger, we some niggers. Wouldn’t you like to be a
nigger, too? They like to strangle niggers, blamin niggers, shootin niggers, hangin niggers. Still you wanna be a nigger, too?

Nas is speaking about 'the-n-word' in terms of affection and friendship. When Nas raps, “y’all my niggaz, too” he is talking about diverse groups of people whom he relates to, though someone not part of the hip-hop culture would be horrified to hear these lyrics. They would accept the word as being racist and dehumanizing. However, ‘the-n-word’ in Nas lyrics is neutral, and does not imply inferiority and racism. These examples show how the word has mutated forms in its current usage. Both in the TV media and rap songs, black people use the word to bond. Today ‘the-n-word’ has a new definition and meaning.

But the history behind words tack on connotations to the word. As demonstrated, the ‘N-word’ carries along many negative connotations and images due to its history. On the other hand today, ‘the-N-word’ represents familiarity and kinship. It has gained new attributes and is used in different contexts. Part of the population today used the word for ‘bonding’ while the rest relates the word back to its roots and finds it offensive. Because of this double definition, discussing this word is very controversial. It is hard to talk about the word and claim who has the right to say it because different groups interact and hold different views about the word. Maybe this controversy is present because of the long history of the word, which creates an objection to its new definition.

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NOT OUR FAULT!

Shuyi Guo

Unit 4: Unschooling Literacy

Thousands of multilingual students are being educated every day in the US. Technically, the American society should have these students broadly participate in various kinds of school programs, and place their interests in different subjects in school. These multilingual students actually find many subjects interesting, but these subjects usually do not include English. I happen to be one of these students; I speak both Chinese and English. I am also an immigrant from China. For the first four years of my stay in the US, not only did I completely lose my interest in English, I also hated it. I hated learning English and anything that required me to interact with it. This might sound like it is my personal problem that has nothing to do with anyone or anything. But I argue that it is not the fault of us as multilingual students for finding English boring but the fault of the system of school literacy. The teaching of literacy in school has caused us to lose all interest in studying English. Specifically, the teaching of grammar and spreading of “folk theories” play a large role in turning off our desire to learn English and marginalizing us to be the subordinated group.

In an excerpt from the essay “Language and Literacy,” Eleanor Kutz points out that school literacy often degrades multilingual students. It leads the teachers and students to believe in folk theories. Folk theories are the “ideas that people in a particular cultural group share about how something in the world works” (Kutz 178). I find the “folk theory” behind school literacy saying that students who are able to speak and write Standard English are smart and respectful but students who are not able to are dumb, disrespectful. Clearly, those “able” to read and write students are the dominant group. By believing in this folk theory, the students and teachers who are in power carry out practice and real life behaviors. They “rationalize the
displacement of those who have been marginalized" (188). The teachers and students often feel comfortable categorizing students as talented or dull, or even sometimes as literate or illiterate. Most of the time, multilingual students are categorized as illiterate. As a result, most of the multilingual students feel excluded and eventually lose curiosity in English; in my case, I even hated English.

I believe it was in my senior year of high school, I found out the reason why writing in English was so painful for me. I remember I was writing my college essay. For the first time I was so happy and excited to write. I spent hours working on it. I felt I was writing it as if it was not one of my English assignments. I forgot all the strict rules; I didn't care about the introduction, the topic sentences, and the supporting details. I just told the story in my tone as if I was talking to my reader.

"I looked around, hoping to find a way to escape" was how I began my college essay. I was describing the most important event happened in my life. "I ensured [my mother's] position in my heart and somehow arrived in the United States, on May, 13th, 2002 at the age of 13," was the sentence I ended my first paragraph with. In the entire first paragraph, I did not insert a thesis statement. All I did was just describe the moment I had to leave my mother for the United States. In my entire essay, I told in a chronological order other crucial moments in my life after I arrived in the U.S. I delivered the message: how I behaved in each of these moments actually represented my growth. I was becoming more mature. In my college essay, I ditched the system of formal writing. None of any of my first sentences were topic sentences, but they were descriptions for moments like, “When I was little, I always noticed kids riding bikes and enjoying themselves”; “Within a year of my arrival to the United States, my father married another woman”; and “Not long after my father's marriage, a friend of mine brought me to a Chinese Christian church.” Obviously, the sentences following these first sentences were not supporting details, but continuations of depicting the moments.

In contrast to my college essay, the analytical paper that I did on page 9 of Tom Phillips's "A Humument" tortured my brain and bored my mind. I started the paper with the thesis statement “On page 9 of Tom Phillips' A Humument, Phillips suggests that people in society often live in
a way that they systematically follow the stages of life.” Later on, I created a topic sentence for each paragraph in order to back my thesis. My topic sentences included: “Marriage would be the first ‘surprise’ that the youngsters encounter; it is the first stage in their life”; “The second stage would be the time when people pursue their successes”; and “The third stage is the stage of weakening.” The structure of my paper was obvious. It is the formal thesis-to-evidence writing style. But the question is: why it is necessary to follow this structure? Is it because it can give the reader a quicker idea of what the argument is? So just to save the reader a couple minutes, is it all right to restrict the students from expressing their creativities? Even today, I am still not sure of the reason for formal writings. And really, who cares about page 9 of “A Humument”? Who wants to explicate a page in “A Humument” if it is not an assignment?

Thinking about the differences between my college essay and my analytical paper on page 9 of “A Humument”, I realize a few things that I value the most in writing. The first thing is the benefit that the writing is able to give me. As long as I am clear with the purpose of the assignment and agree that I will benefit, I don’t mind doing it. I am sure I will have greater motivation in doing it. The second thing is the relevance of the writing to me. If the assignment gives me a chance to write about myself and my ideas as a unique individual, I’d love to do it! This is why I was so happy to write my college essay. Last and the third thing is the creativity I am able to release from doing the assignment. I am more creative when I can free-write, meaning to write disregarding the grammatical rules. I will be able to follow my mind and explore with it. In this process of enjoyment, I am sure I will end up developing some original ideas. Overall, if a writing assignment has any one of the three elements I value, I will definitely say “bring it to me!”

As Kutz suggests, our school instruction in the structural terms and stylistic rules of English is so “painful and boring” (179). It also prevents us from knowing the real purpose of writing by “bypassing the opportunity to build on the implicit knowledge of language that [we] bring to the classroom and missing the chance to create a foundation for [our] later understanding of language-related social issues” (177). Having the same opinion as Kutz, I believe what we actually need in order to bring us to writing are
the “effective approaches to the study of language,” (177) meaning that we need free-writing and individualism. We have to disregard the rules, but let our writing follow where our mind travels to. This way, we can expand our imagination and finally claim original ideas or develop bigger thoughts based on the literacy we learn. After all, I say that most schools have problem in their ways of teaching English. As a multilingual student, I have no control over the system of school teaching. The only way I can respond to the boring teachings is to learn with a frustrated attitude. It is not my fault that going to English classes is just to fulfill the school requirements.

Having an accent when I spoke English was the reason why I hated speaking English. The “normal” spoken English is without an accent. In the essay “English-Only Triumphs, but The Costs are High”, Alejandro Portes points out that assimilating to the way Americans speak English is desirable in American society. My English with a Chinese accent is not accepted as the normal way of speaking. I feel excluded from the English speaking world; therefore I become silent especially in my English classes. As I was reading the Class Magazine, I found out that my classmate, Jingming, has experiences similar to mine. Jingming is silenced mainly because he cared too much about the idea of being “correct” and “incorrect”. He is “afraid to say the wrong words, or use incorrect grammar” (6) that even “a single incorrect word will make [him] sweat while speaking” (7). The view that “use of a standard form of English is a sign of literacy [of being correct]; non-standard forms are labeled illiterate [being incorrect]” (Kutz 179) displaces Jingming into a spot of silence in classrooms. Like me, Jingming claims to be “a stranger to the system of English pronunciation [because] there is too much irregularity in English” (7). Both of us find pronouncing the word wrong or speaking with our accent to be shameful. At the end, we would just rather be quiet and be “strangers” in English classes. I am not sure if Jingming has also lost his interest in English as I did, but one thing is for sure, we only talk more “outside of the classroom” (7). Outside of classroom, there is no pressure when we make mistakes, so we can freely converse with others. Overall, I argue that it is not the fault of Jingming and me that we become “strangers”. It is the idea of what is “correct” and “incorrect” in school literacy that marginalizes us. Our confidence to speak up is beaten down.
I hope my arguments in this paper will be taken into consideration. English learning is truly important to the lives of many multilingual students. We as multilingual students often lose interest in learning English because the teaching of it disappoints us, and we also feel being excluded in classrooms. I wish that at the same time we try our best to keep up with the study of English, the system of school would assist us by letting us express our creativity and individualism.

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THE NEW COLLISION
OF EAST AND WEST

Wuxi He

Unit 4: 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 strug-
gling 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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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 closer, personal audience (i.e., fellow class members) and introduced key elements of the rhetorical situation (contexts, purpose, audience). In this essay, students are the ultimate authorities on the contents 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.
I THINK I LOST MY KEY TO THE GATE OF HEAVEN

Jennifer Cullinane

There is a semi-attractive boy kneeling at the pew in front of me. His white collared shirt is crisp and clean, if only slightly wrinkled with the precise folds of newly purchased clothing. Like me, he could not bring himself to take an iron to a shirt he will wear only once. If I were to sniff the collar of my own shirt, I would realize my red turtleneck still stinks of Filene’s Basement. Never mind an iron; I couldn’t even bother to spritz my sweater with Febreeze. But, in the vein of the night’s Catholic spirit, I look nice enough, and that is all that matters. As I fall to my knees, feigning reverence to the Christmas Eve Mass, I study my unknowing object of interest. I close my eyes, but only slightly, only enough to give an impression of a faithful parishioner in prayer. A believer. Heads bowed, the parish chants in unison the holy prayers we are expected to know by heart. Through my downturned gaze, I continue to scrutinize the boy who sits in front of me. A coat of perspiration lines the nape behind his earlobe, tiny beads framing his unkempt hairline. I follow a line of sweat that creeps down his neck. Isn’t it the sinners who are supposed to roast in hell? Cramped in the pews, the meek and devout who have gathered here tonight seem destined to broil at the altar. Even in the muted light of the cathedral, a red tee shirt gleams through the pristine white of his button-down. I focus my persistent stare on the body in front of me, seeing past his white linen, centering upon that red tee shirt. Somehow he looks less clean now. Tainted.

I look down at my own chipped, black nail polish. Tainted. My Grandmother’s house had always been a place of congregation for my family. And, as a clan or Irish-Catholics, there certainly were a lot of family to congregate. On a typical day, the house would strain under the visits of
sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, nieces, nephews, distant cousins, and an ever-multiplying brood of grandchildren. Looking back on it, I don’t know who suffered more at the Church’s ban of birth-control: my grandmother or that poor house. My Grandfather and I had just returned from a walk to Castle Island on the morning my cousin announced her engagement. I remember because, upon the surprise of her declaration, I dropped the grilled cheese Pop had just bought me at Sullivan’s. I was severely disappointed. The grilled cheeses at Sullivan’s were my favorite. As I dusted off the crust of my sandwich (“Don’t worry, it’s still good,” Pop promised), I listened carelessly to the babbling of my cousin and my grandmother. Pop, with all the sentiment of grandfatherly wisdom, muttered “Good luck,” and then left to finish his pipe in the den. “And when’s the big day?” Nana asked mildly with her placid smile. It was a perfectly crafted expression of indifference, only a gossamer veil to mask her criticisms. I would grow fiercely familiar with that expression in the ensuing years. “Well, me and Jimmy were thinkin’ a spring wedding,” Becky chirped, brushing her acrylic finger-nails through her bleached blonde hair. “So, maybe April? Then, we figure the pictures will look really good if we take ‘em outsi—” “Hmm.” Nana sighed. Unreadable. “What?” Becky asked, smacking her gum against the inside of her lips. “The dress?” Nana finally prodded, turning back to her cleaning in the kitchen. “Oh my God, yeah! I have already been lookin’!” she squeaked, momentarily distracted as she adjusted the dangerously low-slung cut of her shirt. Becky was anything but discreet. “I found this wicked cute strapless gown at this boutique on Newbury Street. It’s super expensive, but I figure—” “And it’s ivory, of course,” Nana interrupted tersely, clanging a pan to the kitchen stove. I looked up from my sandwich as I sensed a shift in the room. Sinking into my chair at the kitchen table, I nibbled on my crusts and watched as Becky grew increasingly uncomfortable. She cleared her throat. “That’s not really the standard anymore, Nana,” she proceeded shakily, not entirely convinced at her stance. My grandmother circled away from Becky, turning her attention to the dishes soaking in the sink. She ran a sponge under the faucet and poured dish soap into a bin, the clanking dishes the sole penetration of the stony silence that had settled over the room. I was only seven. I couldn’t understand why Becky looked so uncomfortable. I
I couldn’t imagine why our grandmother had any say in the color of her wedding dress. And I definitely did not know the difference between “white” and “ivory.” But for this much I was sure: Becky would be wearing the latter.

I was twelve when I first discovered *Seventeen* magazine. In school, girls would gather in a circle and pour over the latest issues, most of which had been stolen off the bureaus of their older sisters. Compared to my subscription to *Highlights for Children*, *Seventeen* was simply scandalous. At twelve, any scope into the world of teenagers is exciting, as if you are uncovering still forbidden secrets. There were tips on boys, kissing, and even sex—subjects that, to a middle-schooler, are absolutely thrilling. Indecent, inappropriate, and maybe even sinful, *Seventeen* became my Bible. And when Mary-Kate Olsen was featured on the cover wearing a flannel scarf and black nail-polish, my life took a surprising turn. It was the middle of July, and I couldn’t quite convince my mother to buy me a flannel scarf (“Do you want to die of heat stroke?” she laughed at me), but I managed to persuade her on the black nail polish. The next day, my stubby fingernails were freshly coated with “Midnight in Moscow,” the darkest shade I could find at CVS. The following Sunday morning, my mother and I pulled in front of my grandmother’s house. “Oh,” she scolded. “You didn’t take off that nail polish!” I looked down at the chipping paint on my fingernails. I hadn’t given my nails a second thought since the night my mother helped me paint them. “I’ll keep my hands in my pockets,” I promised.

From my grandmother’s house, we walked to the Gate of Heaven Catholic Church, just a few blocks away. Tucked in her usual pew cornered near the altar, my grandmother sat solemn in prayer. Kneeling beside her, I made the conscious effort to tuck my fingernails into a fist. I sat through the entire service like I did every Sunday—bored and not really paying attention, waiting for my favorite part of Mass: the Eucharist. When the altar boys broke out the wine, it meant it was almost time to go home. Thank God! I bustled out of the pew and waited impatiently in line, prepared to receive the cardboard cracker Father Jack called “the gift.” After five minutes of waiting for the elderly people in front of me to shuffle back to their pews, it was finally my turn. I stood eagerly before Father Jack, trying to listen as he muttered something about the body and blood of Christ.
I nodded my head and said “Amen”—the go-to response at mass—and held out my hands for my cracker. “What’s this?” Father Jack asked, looking down at my fingernails. Immediately, Catholic guilt swept over me. “Oh, it’s just—” I stammered as he grasped my fingers between his cold, clammy hands. “Black?” He looked appalled. I suddenly felt the urge to schedule an appointment for confession. The chubby, rosy face I had grown used to after a lifetime of Sunday Masses suddenly looked upon me as a sinner. His frown, the disappointment behind his stare, induced a shame in me that was unfamiliar. Little did I know it was this very sentiment that lies at the core of any ample parish. “You should ask your mother to wash that dirt off you,” he pronounced solemnly. Part of me expected him to sentence me to an afternoon of “Hail Mary’s” in repentance. I ran back to our pew, my eyes glued to the ground and my cheeks burning red. That was the first time I felt uncomfortable in Church. That Sunday I ran away before I was able to receive the Eucharist.

On every other Sunday after that, I sat out willingly, choosing to exclude myself before I could ever again be turned away. My teenage years saw an increase in rebellion. In addition to the black nail polish, I added a heavy layer of black eyeliner to my costume for Sunday morning services. In the summer of 2004, I wore a “Kerry for President” tee shirt to mass, only buying the shirt a week after the Church announced Kerry’s excommunication. I stepped it up the next year, exchanging the Kerry tee for a Pro-Choice bracelet that demanded the Church “keep their rosaries off my ovaries” and piercing my cartilage with a chunky skull earring. I grew accustomed to the parishioners’ shocked stares, the priests’ awkward avoidance of eye contact, and my mother’s begging to “please just wear a sweater this Sunday.” What I never really did grow immune to was my grandmother’s stony silence. Every Sunday for four years I felt like Becky, squirming at the kitchen table. I was sixteen when I announced I was an atheist. And I expected fireworks. It was the ultimate disrespect, a total rejection of everything that had been forced on me since I was a child. Surely I’d get a few tears. But my renouncement didn’t exactly get the shocked response I’d hoped for. All regarded my proclamation with varying waves of relief. At the very least, my absence would free up space in the
too-cramped family pew. No one could deny me my place, but, again, I could exclude myself.

This Christmas marks my first time inside a Church since my not-so-dramatic departure two years ago. In my red turtleneck, I am neither shocking nor controversial. I fit in perfectly as one of them. I still can't pay attention to the service. Like a child, I am bored, unsatisfied, and eager to leave. Instead of actively participating in the routine of mass, I continue to stare at the boy in front of me, the boy who wears red under his costume for tonight’s service. It’s far more intriguing than waiting for the Eucharist. My mother, sitting beside me, sneaks peeks at me out of the corner of her eye, not quite trusting I won’t suddenly interrupt the homily and burst into protest against the Church’s ban on gay-marriage. She can trust me. I’d like to think I have grown up. I am no longer the self-centered, indignant, attention glutton of my teenage years. Tonight, I will continuously go through the motions, the rituals and the prayers coming more naturally than I had expected. It is like I never left. I haven’t missed those Sunday masses. Not in the slightest. But, still, I am compelled. There lies a comfort within Church, overheated as it is. Outside, there is nothing to look forward to. Every day we await a dark and dingy reality that promises nothing but the discontent of the present and the future disasters of tomorrow. There is no Heaven, no second-coming, no opportunity for a fresh start. There’s no hope.

And maybe that’s the way the world really is.

But isn’t it nice to pretend? Looking down at my fingernails, I pick at the remaining flecks of black polish. Maybe it wouldn’t be so bad to come back. Worse comes to worst, I can spend the service checking out Gate of Heaven’s stock of semi-attractive boys.
Chanel.
_Elizabeth Arden._
_Clinique._
_Christian Dior._

These are the names engraved upon all of the overpriced cosmetics compiled within my mother’s obnoxiously large makeup bag. The bitter aroma of the brewing coffee travels in the air, while the consistent hissing of the dripping liquid becomes the background filler. The daily preparation before leaving for work always starts this way. My mom is currently sitting comfortably on the cold, white tiles of the bathroom floor. Her frail and tanned hands hover beside her face — meticulously applying her mask. The fluorescent overhead light gleams across her thin brown hair. Overworked and exhausted, her sunken eyes exaggerate her high cheekbones and unhealthy complexion.

_Mayonnaise._
_Batteries._
_Rubber bands._
_Napkins from fast food restaurants._

My mother has a jarring obsession with hoarding any and every product. In her closet, there are cardboard boxes all piled on top of each other like brown, unsteady towers. These towers are as high as my chest, and within each cardboard box, closed with packing tape, are more boxes...with hundreds and hundreds of untouched pens. Her way of feeling secure and
in control is fed by the need for compensation, which has evolved into a bigger hunger and desire to accumulate objects.

My mother grew up in a family with five other kids, in Korea, and money wasn’t an overflowing resource. In Korea, you are either poor or wealthy, and she was poor. My mother walked everyday along the dirt path roads to school in her mundane uniform, carrying her sack of lunch consisting of rice and eggs. Apparently, some of her schoolmates brought pens their parents bought from America. These ordinary pens weren’t necessarily attractive, but merely a foreign object that represented class—an object which only a few could attain. This was my mom’s life story; she was an eternal prisoner of poverty with a consumer’s addiction to bulk packages. I guess when those girls brought in those pens, that significant event slammed a label across her forehead saying, “I am poor.” And her overflowing stash of pens and possession of bountiful knick-knacks was her retaliation to that status label by saying, “Fuck you poverty.”

_Paper Mate._

_Pentel._

_Bic._

_Pilot._

In dire need of a pen for classes, pure necessity has brought me here in front of the office supplies section of the convenience store. Colors. Grips. Fine point. Medium point. There are so many choices and so many pens: 10 minutes go by...15...20. I have a pack of generic ball point pens in my hand the entire time. Why am I frustrated? Because this pack holds ten pens in it, and I only need one or two. To me, the appreciation value of each pen drops if I have an abundance of them at once. The more I have of something, the more expendable I will think they are. And in the end, I will inevitably be here again, in this aisle...searching for some more pens. I give in and pay for the package of ten.

_Costumes._

_Candy._

_Flashlight._

_An orange pumpkin._
When I was a kid, I wore my sister’s hand-me-down clothes and ate peanut butter sandwiches for lunch — which I prepared every morning. I didn’t play on the club soccer team, I never went to school-run events, or experienced “Moms and Muffins Day,” where the moms and kids came in early to school and munched on muffins. My mother was never home because she was working two jobs. And for a long time I resented the fact that she wasn’t involved in the PTA or didn’t watch my performances in numerous plays and musicals. Late in the night, she’d come into my room and bring me some item of compensation. More and more she’d insist on buying every unnecessary object, burning away the money she had tenaciously earned — to keep me happy. One year I saw in a Halloween catalog, a plastic candy bucket in the shape of a pumpkin, with light bulbs for eyes. My mom went hunting to all the different stores until finally purchasing it from a “Zainy Brainy” outlet in the town next to ours. This pumpkin bucket wasn’t even remotely a logical contraption. It was heavy, awkward to carry, and the light bulbs barely lit the sidewalk in front of me. But I thought I was hot stuff. And this is what I appreciate looking back upon it now: How my mother had successfully created the illusion of wealth by buying me anything, even though we could not afford it.

Awareness.

Respect.

Eternal Debt.

Pens.

When I buy something, I want to be sure I’ll appreciate it. I guess when I purchased those pens at the store, I was internally repaying my mother for all the times she bought me something unnecessary — things I never thought twice about. I saw what the physical toll of years and years of work did to a woman. It made me realize how much sweat and lost sleep went into all those hundreds and hundreds of miscellaneous objects that my mother bought for me. Even more importantly, how much those damn pens meant to her. And how much those pens made her voice louder than the never ending echoes of poverty.
I do not know where my love for art came from. My parents, the two most wonderful and giving people you could ever meet, are also the two most uncreative and artistically challenged beings you will encounter. Growing up, my walls were tan, or, as I would like to call them, eggshell. My carpet was a grayish color, and my house was off white. My parents have two other offspring than me. Both are just like their parents: stick figure drawers. You could say that there was nothing in my childhood that could have invoked my artistic abilities: not the bland household I lived in nor the stick figure drawers that surrounded me. Art came as naturally to me as walking.

I always knew I loved art. I never woke up one day and decided that I loved art; there was no moment of realization. The love of art came to me without any baggage or doubt. It was that easy kind of love. Although sometimes we conflicted, as all great relationships do, we always managed to work things out. Sometimes the wrongs turned out to be right after all, resulting in something magnificent and making me come back for more.

Most of my pieces are black and white sketches of random objects in my surroundings that I found interesting. I found interest in the most insipid of objects. What makes a curtain interesting to me is not the patterns that may be on it, but the way in which the light hits every draping. People may look at their curtain and think the curtain looks the same every single day, but I find it to be different. Not just every single day, but every
second that passes by. The curtain looks different at five o'clock in the evening than it did at noon. Although I mainly sketch a lot of black and white drawings, I find most joy in painting. With painting, the smallest change in detail can make the biggest difference. I never go into a painting with a plan in mind. The outcome is never what I picture in my mind, but even better.

My most valuable piece is a painting I did of some still-life objects: a brown jar and leaves on a tan cloth. This particular painting took me over one year to finish. I could have probably finished it and had it looking decent within two days, but it would not have turned out the same. Like writing, a painting can have many different contexts, depending on what the artist is trying to achieve. The reason it took me so long to complete this piece was because I wanted it to look as realistic as possible. I wanted everyone who looked at the painting to think that it was a photograph, not a painting. After completing this project, I gave it to my mom for a Mothers Day present. She said it was the best gift she had ever gotten. This is one of the reasons why I love art so much. My family and friends enjoyed art's company as much as I did.

- III -

As I grew up, art and I were inseparable. I spent time with my love every chance I had. There was never a blank piece of white napkin at a restaurant or Styrofoam cup at a family gathering that art and I did not manage to take over. We left our mark everywhere that we went. Up until the 9th grade, there was not one art fair or local gallery show that art and I did not make an appearance. We've “hung” out with the greatest—Pablo (Picasso) and Vincent (Van Gogh), just to name a few.

I learned a lot from my love, art. Art encouraged me to make many mistakes. There was no mistake that could not be undone. Art loved my imperfections and allowed me to express them freely. When it felt as if my imperfections had shattered my world to pieces, art was always there for me. I would pick up a paintbrush and get lost in a world where we were the only beings that existed. Although art and I were imperfect, putting us together was a perfect match. I blindly fell in love with art, without any
realization. However, I have come to realize that somewhere along the way, art and I have broken up.

- IV -

As I pulled out my old paintings and sketches from underneath my dusty bed, in my room with my parent’s eggshell-colored walls, I realized that my once great love was lost. How did this happen? All my pieces were signed, “Bao Pham 2003,” or even earlier. How could it be that I have not drawn or painted anything in over four years? Should I be angry at my artistically challenged parents? Have their stick-figure-drawing genes finally kicked in? I knew that would only be a cop out for it was my own doing that caused art to leave me.

I should have not neglected art. Too many times I chose to “go out.” Underneath my bed, on top of a bland gray carpet was nowhere to leave my love. I was too caught up with more important things. School, family, friends, and my daily dramas cost me an important part of my life, something I can truly say that I loved, taking it away without my consent.

I decided to restore my old pieces and hung them up on my eggshell walls, framed and ready to be showcased. I hoped that maybe by hanging them up, almost like magic, I could find the ability to draw and paint again. As I attempted to blow off the dust, a sense of helplessness took over. The thought of art never taking me back frightened me. I used to be able to pick up a pencil and a piece of paper and automatically, virtually effortlessly, a beautiful image would appear on paper. But now, no matter how hard I tried, nothing would appear.

Unlike the fairy tales that I was familiar with as a child, my story does not end “happily ever after.” I do not know where this story will end, or if it has already ended. Maybe this is it, and art and I will never reunite again. I spend my busy life now, longing and waiting for art to come back into my life. Still, to this very day, I can honestly tell you that I have no clue if art will ever forgive me. If you ever have the opportunity to meet my love, Art, please hold onto it, and do not make the same mistake as I did in letting it go. I have faith that somehow, in this crazy and demanding society, art and I will find each other again.
I've been here forever. Thank God this ER surgeon, Dr. Waltzman, is intrigued by me. He even took my blood himself, foregoing the protective gloves (doctors usually feel above boring tasks like that), or else I'd probably still be in the same damn room, waiting for the head/president/God of vascular surgery to come see me. This high and mighty surgeon takes one look at the port wine stain that spreads from my hand all the way up my arm and onto my chest and thinks I have phlebitis, which is cool because it's a cool word. It's also the first diagnosis I've heard. Up until now, I've been getting shrugs and sent someplace higher. But now I'm in the Mecca of Medicine, Children's Hospital Boston. So far, the dialogue has gone like this: Maybe she has a blood clot. But why would a seventeen year old girl have a blood clot? Maybe it's an allergy. It would have to be something she's around all the time—like the air. Maybe the straps on her shirt are cutting off circulation, causing the disgusting swelling to balloon her arm and shoulder to three times the normal size. That's when I started fuming, “I am not that slutty, sir.” It turns out, all three brilliant ideas were refuted by ultrasounds and rolled eyes. And so I was sent back to the waiting room to pace the floor while they came up with something else to test for.

So all that blood Dr. Waltzman spilled when he stuck me and drained a pint made the room a biohazard, and masked nurses were flurrying around cleaning it, which was entertaining. It also turns out that the blood that actually made it to testing indicates I could still have a blood clot, even though nothing came up on the ultrasound. But first they have to see which kind of tissue in my still expanding arm is swollen. Fantastic, my first MRI. Two hours and several jackhammers-rocking-my-ears later, I ran
downstairs and asked if I could possibly have something to eat or drink, seeing as how they wouldn't let me ingest anything for the past eleven hours in case I needed emergency surgery. Denied, again. So this Waltzman guy comes in, visibly frazzled, and wraps my arm saying, “Ace bandage might help the swelling go down.” Then came the always comforting, “I just talked to the chief of vascular abnormalities, and he asked me, ‘What the hell are you doing giving me a case like this at eleven thirty at night?’ so we're going to get you a room.” Thanks.

Since I made it up to my room without dropping dead, they finally decided it was okay to give me some food, so I attacked the kitchen and found chocolate pudding and graham crackers. I was lying in my surprisingly comfy hospital bed, thinking sleep might happen after all, when all of a sudden the fire alarm went off. Oh wait no, that’s me. My heart rate is naturally slow, and I guess the machine doesn't like anything below 55 bpm. So they came in, making bets that I must be a marathon runner. I tell them I’m wicked lazy and never run, but they shush me and lower the setting. My heart keeps getting slower, so they come running back twice more, eventually lowering it to some “freakishly low number,” as they called it. Sweet dreams.

I wake up to find two nurses and a team of six doctors hovering over me. The clock is lying—they wouldn’t wake up a patient at five thirty in the morning. Each of them took a turn asking me the same questions and lifting, poking, and twisting my arm, with me still half asleep but conscious enough to be embarrassed by my morning breath. After the interrogation, they told me I was being moved to a single room. Now that I didn't mind; it felt like I was moving up in the world. It wasn't until I got settled in my new place, right next to the nurse’s station, that I saw the sign on the door: “BIO HAZARD: Please wear mask and gloves when entering.” They closed the door and told me they would be back with breakfast. Little did I know that would be the last time I would be allowed to leave the room for the next five days.

Every day was the same. They brought me my chocolate frappe and pancakes for breakfast. I sat around, answered the questions of nurses, med students, doctors, chiefs of staff. They thought it was necrotizing fasciitis, a flesh eating bacteria that would have been a terminal diagnosis, consider-
ing how much of my arm was swollen. They started me on hardcore antibiotics, just in case it was some other type of infection. The IV tube kept me strapped to the bed; I had to get help just to walk the four steps to the bathroom. This didn't go over too well since I am both a spastic and spontaneous person. Even the steady stream of calls and text messages from my loving friends and relatives pissed me off; they were nagging reminders that “No, Aunt Carole, still no news.” I was horrified that I didn’t appreciate the concerned calls—it was not me anymore.

One night however, my friends, thank God, visited me. I was overwhelmed with excitement and listened with wonder as they told me about the past couple days at school, stories that would have been boring under different circumstances. During the visit, I attributed the intense heat I felt under my skin to the pure excitement of contact with the outside world. However, when I noticed the sideways glances my friends were stealing at each other, I knew something was weird. All of a sudden the base of my scalp was on fire; I was so bright red, my birthmark hardly stood out against my skin anymore. It killed me to see the fear in everyone’s eyes as they got off my bed and moved away from me. I scratched my head until it bled, and learned I am allergic to Vancomycin, one of the powerful antibiotics they unnecessarily bestowed upon me. After that episode, they had to change my IV injection site. Since I was not allowed to move, my already low blood pressure was even lower, causing my veins to elude even the best intravenous nurses on the floor. Watching them stick a needle in my wrist and slide it around under my skin, mining for blood, was the most morbidly fascinating thing ever. That ordeal sped things up a bit; that day, my blood was sent to be screened for lupus, Lyme disease, cellulitis, kidney disorders, Cancer. I got to leave my room for once, wearing a mask of course, in order to have my heart tested for defects. My MRI results showed significant swelling in my arm and chest (really?!) and a “spot” on my heart, which apparently didn’t concern anyone but me. So a couple gallons of blood later, there I am again, back in my lonely room, getting the news that everything came back normal, and they are sending my case to other Boston hospitals and specialists in the area. Great! Thanks!

A couple more days passed, and I was contemplating ripping my IV out myself and making a run for it. I realized my situation was very similar to
that awful torture technique, where the victim is stuck in a room and barraged by lots of people until they have no idea how long they’ve been there or what their name is. However, that was the very day that one med student came to visit me and take pictures and notes, hoping to be published in a textbook. I wished him luck, and he laughed, saying I was the one who needed the luck. As if on cue, my primary doctor (I call her that because I had a team of thirty doctors in a conference room on another floor working on my case), came in and said she had news. “You are, without a doubt the healthiest patient I have ever cared for: you have a low heart rate, low blood pressure, a high pain threshold, a large and perfectly healthy heart, amazingly efficient kidneys, and no infections whatsoever.” Apparently, just because it couldn’t hurt, they had tested me for the flu. “But even though you have no other flu symptoms, you have the flu, which in rare cases causes myositis, which usually occurs in the calves but can sometimes happen in the upper limbs, so we think you can go home tomorrow.” Such confidence.

The swelling, which during my hospital stay had crept uncomfortably into my neck, giving me the constant feeling of a turtleneck—and I hate turtlenecks—and into my stomach, making the left side of my stomach appear about five months pregnant, had not relinquished its grip on me yet. However, this started to go back down to semi normal by the next afternoon, and I was discharged—though still in a mask, which only increased my confidence in their diagnosis. Personally, I think they just wanted to get rid of me. It was disheartening to see that these doctors did not have the same drive I expected them to. I would think that to grind your way through years of medical school and residency, you would have to be a very determined person, and feel some desire to satiate your curiosity—I thought that motivation was why you persevered and became a doctor—to figure out the human body and its quirks. But, whatever, in two weeks I looked like me again, and I was fine to leave it at that.

Two months later, during the first week of softball tryouts, my other arm swelled up and extending it felt like I was ripping every fiber underneath my skin. I got an emergency appointment with the same rheumatologist who had treated me before, and she had no answers. I was sent to Tufts Medical Center instead. I had to explain my story from the begin-
ning, to three different nurses, because the first two couldn’t handle it, to my new doctor and two of his med students, and eventually to the top upper extremity surgeon in the city, who would later perform a biopsy on this swollen thing that used to be my arm. And now, three and a half months after that surgery, I still have no answer. It was obviously not the flu. Those long days in the hospital gave me time to think about my life—really think about it. I had a hard time accepting the terrifying idea that lurked in the back of my mind: if my life ended here and now, I would be very unsatisfied with all I have experienced and accomplished. I freaked out about it for a little bit, but that was obviously doing nothing for me. So I channeled my fear into thriving off of the adrenaline that came with my heightened sense of mortality. My interesting experience in the world of medicine motivated me to look into it as a possible career, and I may have found my calling in physical therapy. I now actually know what doctors are talking about when they rattle off blood pressure statistics like “one-oh-two over sixty-five,” or talk in hushed voices in the elevator about elevated creatinine kinase levels. Over the course of my medical saga, I met loads of interesting people, especially where I least expected it. I had conversations about religion, politics, and art with the technicians who ran my ultrasounds and drew my blood. One phlebotomist told me that in her culture, having a birthmark meant you were very special in your past life, and someone gave it to you so that in your next life, people would recognize that. So it wasn’t all bad. I discussed the excitement of college; one of the med students studying me had graduated from Amherst College. That conversation, among other things, made me glad I chose UMASS; he told me I’d have a great time, despite the nagging heart attack pains that, according to my “diagnosis,” were supposed to go away months ago. And another great thing about coming to UMASS came up in my last appointment when my doctor said:

“So, it looks like we have no answer, but it’s not cancer. We will see you at Thanksgiving but, just out of curiosity...where are you going to college?”

“UMASS Amherst; I leave the twenty-eighth.”

“Oh good, that’s close enough to air lift you.”

He wasn’t joking. I laughed, because what else are you supposed to say to that?
CAENOGENESIS

Michael Wong

“Never forget that only dead fish swim with the stream”
(Malcolm Muggeridge).

Commencement

I never truly believed in going with the flow; instead I fight the current and create a unique style that differs from the social norm. I strongly believe life is what we make of it; we can change and choose the paths we take every day, good or bad. Choosing the path is hard; hence the analogy of “fighting the stream,” but this fight is what makes life interesting and fruitful. The only way to get noticed in anything in life is to bring something to the table nobody else has done or experienced. This provides a change in direction from the traditional flow of the traditional template of life. Humans are naturally curious; we all desire to try new things and to gain knowledge of information not well-known by others. Doing this allows us to display our uniqueness when the time is right. Nobody questions the status quo, only an attempt to alter it. But as we know, life changes, the world changes, and the status quo is altered at a continuous pace; uniqueness is not only required for growth but also to continuously fight and challenge social norms. Hence the reason the dead fish swim with the stream: they are unable to fight their way against these social norms. Caenogenesis.
Clothing

Clothing makes a first impression on people. I am what society would call a prep or preppy: I like polo shirts, sweaters, nice belts, and, of course, the boat shoes. Although there is already a classification for my choice of clothing, I am no normal prep in any shape or form; I do have all items from the list above, but I tend to stray away from the “normal colors” and go for the brightest colors I can find. When I look at my closet, two things come to mind: rainbow and summer. My polos combine to create a shirt form of the color spectrum. My pants are not just khaki; they are an array of blues and some funky greens, yellows, and reds. My belts are not just boring leather; instead they host designs filled with bright colors and summer-like themes: dolphins on pink backgrounds; palm trees on bright green; fish on bright yellow. Dressed to impress, dressed to make an impact. This style of clothing can be uncomfortable for some people. I wear a lot of colors most guys would not dare to try out: pinks, limes, purples, Nantucket red or bright blue shoes that are as bright as the summer sky. The color is definitely an eye catcher, and it instantly identifies that I am a unique person: I like to stand out. At the same time my wardrobe is not just a set of the wildest colors I could find rolled into one. It was a careful selection of a combination of colors and patterns to create outfits that give a clean, but unique look. As previously said, we make our own decisions: to go with the flow and just wear a T-shirt and jeans, or to go outside the box and get a little fun. Caenogenesis.

Computer Science

Speaking of funky, my choice of major is an interesting tale. First a little background: my full intention is to become an orthodontist, perhaps even a pediatric orthodontist. The number one major for an undergraduate going into medical or dental school is Biology. The social norm dictates that if you want to go to either medical or dental school, you need to love, adore, obsess about biology and all other science classes associated with the medical field. As previously stated, my objective is to stand out. Instead of having plain Biology as my major, something a little funkier seemed more appealing, a little different. Computer Science was not just some random choice; similar to the clothes, it has its purpose to display uniqueness and
take an alternate route that actually is a better path towards the same goal. Technology is such a crucial part of the medical field; it has enhanced our sciences, more specifically our medical fields, dramatically enabling a way to perform tasks at a degree of precision and difficulty unimaginable in previous years. Our methods of curing diseases and correcting teeth through digital imaging and advanced X-rays have vastly improved. The ability to pin-point the problem using robotics can ensure there will be no human error with perfect calculations and precise measurements. So although the fundamental foundation of dentistry is biology, there are several other factors that are equally important but commonly overlooked. My choice is unique; my interest is different. But this is how new products and ideas are introduced into the mainstream environment. The status quo changes because perspective alters, and new minds emerge as they break away from social norms. Caenogenesis.

The sport I did in high school was rowing, and I was the coxswain (pronounced cox-in). Crew is one of the least popular sports in the world, yet it brings some of the most dedicated and unique athletes ever. A common misconception is that the coxswain’s job is simply to say “row, row.” This stereotype is a result of ignorance of a sport that requires attributes found in large successful corporations: unity, teamwork, dedication, and efficiency. The coxswain’s actual job is quite complex; there are many characteristics I must embody to make my team successful. Since the coxswain is the only individual facing the forward direction, he or she is not only responsible for steering the boat along the shortest critical path, but also for helping the team visualize the competitive landscape. After several seasons of practice, the ability to verbally describe a landscape has become an expertise. The coxswain must also motivate the team to push themselves to utter exhaustion in order to win races. This is definitely the most difficult responsibility; however, it is the main component of coxing. Rowing is a mutual relationship between the coxswain and the rowers, and although coxswains do not share their sheer physical pain, I personally have experienced the same level of intensity and competitive thrill. As a coxswain, my job is unique from any other position in any other sport in the world. My
decisions must also be unique to strategically and psychologically eliminate all opponents. Rowing is all about rhythm, and races are all about speeding or slowing this rhythm while maintaining physical composition and maximum efficiency. I control the rhythm in my boat, and it is my job to increase the rhythm of the boat at the least expected moment to surprise the opponent and thus take control of the race. Social norms dictate to take rhythm shifts or “moves” at specific points in the race; my race plan has always been cultured by a desire to steer away from a social norm and use surprise and psychological humiliation to win races. There is absolutely nothing worse than seeing a boat move on you after you have made a move of your own: this is the most embarrassing situation in rowing. To take control of a race means to row your own unique race, with slight regard to the competition, but mainly a self awareness to push yourself as an individual, as a team, as a boat. Uniqueness is a virtue in this sport, but to have a unique race plan and talented athletes typically means you will take home the gold. Caenogenesis.

Conclusion

Dead fish swim with the stream, but live fish fight the stream, creating their own paths and styles. My style might be strange to some, my major choice might confuse others, and my race plans might sound completely amateur, but uniqueness is not meant to be understood. Instead, uniqueness is in direct opposition to social norms, but even uniqueness can get old. A race plan can be copied; a clothing style can become popular. This is the reason the people who are fighting the stream are always above the social norm: I have moved on to a new race plan, created a new sense of style, and renewed my uniqueness. Uniqueness is created by humans because standing out and making a difference promotes change and voices opinion. The human race naturally identifies differences before the similarities. We all have different unique abilities, styles, whether they are internal or external. These differences define us as people, as a race, and as a planet. “Don't think you're on the right road just because it's a well-beaten path” (Unknown). Make your own path and let the world follow you. Caenogenesis.

Caenogenesis: process of growth in individual not common in its species.
The first thing I remember ever hearing was my sweet mother saying, “Daniel. We will call this good looking one Daniel Wu.” I peeked out of the cave and into the grand world for the first time, and I saw my father, looking ghostly pale, standing beside my mom. “He will change the world one day and bring prominence to the family name,” he then said right before he passed out. And prominence came.

That visual scene might not have happened, but at least that’s the way I always pictured it.

My last name is significant. Hidden beneath the short sound that follows the common name, Daniel, is a meaning that represents who I am. To the typical person, there is nothing electrifying about my full name, Daniel Wu. The simple “Daniel” is a run-of-the-mill kind of name. It lacks the natural feel like “Running Wind,” and it misses the sexy, seductive touch like “Fabio.” After all, many uncreative American parents name their sons Daniel. “Wu,” on the other hand, sparks a little animation to the overused name. This is the main reason why it is so meaningful to me. It’s what makes me stand out in the crowd. And if I was stuck in a crowd, and you wanted to get my attention, screaming “Woo!” would be a lot easier than yelling out “Daniel!”

The name “Wu” is a gateway word to the various nicknames I’ve received throughout the years. Although the majority of my friends call me Wu, in fact, an exceptional number of people call me by other interesting names. “Wu-Tang” is a popular one I get a lot. It is based on a famous hip-hop group of rappers that were “ain’t nothing to [mess] with.” It seems as if wherever I go, someone calls me Wu-Tang and thinks that’s being origi-
nal. In addition to Wu-Tang, I’m also known as “Wu-Man” and “Wu-Wu” to name a few. My favorite one, “Kanga-Wu,” is the cleverest one to this date. It’s a play on the word, kangaroo. The reason why I am called Kanga-Wu is because down in New Jersey, I am known for my stunning jumping ability, just as kangaroos are known for theirs. Sports and athletics have always played a huge part in my life and have shaped me into the nicely built man I am today.

The popularity of my last name and the beginning of my athletic career began in 8th grade. Back in middle school, I used to be the stellar playmaker on the football team. Every time I would get the ball, my adoring fans, which consisted of my teammates and their parents, would scream “WU...!” The sound of the crowd in unison was unbelievable, and I can still hear its mellifluous ring in my ears. The cheering of Wu continues on to this day on the track field. As well as living the athletic dream, I also strived to succeed in other delightful things, like singing.

Back in middle school, we had an annual talent show that I was proudly part of for two years. One of my favorite moments was when I sang “All or Nothing” by the pop band, O-Town. This was one of those goose-bumps-hair-raising moments. While singing my heart out in front of hundreds of spectators, the audience was cheering “Wu” so loud that I couldn't even hear myself. The overwhelming sight of a packed auditorium with students waving their multi-colored cell phone screens in the air and the screaming of my name was utterly breathtaking. The moment was magical. The feelings I felt were simply unforgettable. It may sound as if my last name is linked with only amazing memories and fun...but that is absolutely not true.

The problem with having Wu as your last name is that it begins with the letter W. Having your last name start with a letter just before X, Y, and Z is not that enjoyable. The downside of this is that we get everything last. We always end up with the leftovers of whatever we’re getting. Whether it’s taking attendance or giving out delicious homemade cookies, we are always stuck in the worst situation. It’s horrible when the teacher won’t let you leave just because she hasn’t checked off your name yet on the attendance list. You are then stuck in the awful situation of waiting along with the other unfortunate W, X, Y, and Z’s while the lucky A, B, and C’s leave early.
A major downside to having a simple and short last name like Wu is that it rhymes too easily. This can, at times, be clever and entertaining, but it often ends up overdone and obnoxiously annoying. Anything that ends with the sound “oo” is open ammunition that can be used to make fun of me. All this poetic misery can be traced back to the elementary past and carries on to this day. The most common rhyme I get, which is not very amusing, is “Dan Wu, smells like poo (as in poop)!” I can see why it’s funny the first few times, but after the hundredth time or so, it begins to lose its pizzazz. Although it is blatantly immature, I still get people reciting this line to me once in a full moon. Even though it can be irritating, I should appreciate the art and the display of creativity by poets inspired by my last name. In fact, despite the numerous jokes I receive for having the last name Wu, I have also come up with a few rhymes to counteract them. For example, “Dan Wu is too cool for you.” Like they say, “If you can’t beat them, join them.” I love my last name even if it rhymes too easily and gives me a hard time because in the end, it defines who I am.

Wu may be just another Chinese last name to many, but to me it is so much more than that. Because it is Chinese, it is especially precious to me. Because I grew up in America, I struggle to maintain the Chinese in me. There are many times I become so absorbed with the American lifestyle that I fail to remember that deep down, beneath the western influence, I am Chinese. I forget the many Chinese traditions that my family cherishes. For example, I’ve forgotten to light the incense everyday to respect the elders passed away, or many times, I’ve failed the tedious obligation of pouring tea for everyone’s cup that’s even slightly not full. And for my “lack of responsibility and maturity,” as they say, “my people” verbally abuse me.

A big thing that makes me an American and not so much Chinese may be offensive to some Americans. My parents and relatives often criticize my tendencies to talk back. They call me “Ahn Gang,” which is the Chinese equivalent for “hard ass.” Their belief is that the elders are right even when they are wrong, and I should obey that. I believe that B.S. is nonsense. My American education was generally based upon the fundamentals of standing up for what I believe in. This essential concept is proven in the various history lessons I’ve been taught that emphasize the need to be steadfast and
constantly challenging authority. They call it being American with a negative connotation, but I call it freedom of speech and belief with pride.

My family may scathe me for my loud mouth and lack of initiative to light incense and pour tea, but I believe I carry on more culture than they think I do. The Chinese in me is not exceedingly obvious, but it is there. At the core of my “hard ass” American appeal that I give off, I hold a strong bond with my Chinese background. I often participate in Chinese ceremonies, and I celebrate all the major holidays. I may not be the most polished Chinese man, but it’s not like I don’t want to be. Regardless of my inability to set a good example, I hope that I can continue to pass on the family name, as well as some of the major Chinese traditions, to the future generations. But there’s one thing I know for sure, and that is that no matter how far I may stray from my culture and surround myself with American customs, I am still Chinese inside; it shows in my Chinese American name: Daniel Wu.

As I grow older and change by the second, I know I can look back at the good and bad times, the unforgettable experiences, and have it all come alive with my last name sparking the recollection. I once read a very good analogy about change. It said that as the years go by, they add on to you like onion peels on an onion. Rather than losing what happened in the past, the experiences are just hidden beneath another layer or year. I believe that this is true, and my family name, Wu, is at the core of the onion. It holds everything together.
Part II

Unit II

In the first unit, 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 in the form of 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.
“Aim steady and don’t panic. You’ll be fine,” Uncle Charlie said to me as we began our journey into the dimly-lit forest in the early hours of the morning. “Don’t let them know you’re scared. They sense that kind of stuff. Chances are they’re probably more scared than you.”

I remember thinking there was no way the animals could possibly be as scared as I was. I glanced down at the rifle clutched in my hands, and then up at the forest. More than anything, I wanted to turn around and go home right then and there. But I couldn’t. I had promised Uncle Charlie I would spend a day hunting with him. What a mistake that was.

I come from the city, a place where hunting deer is an extremely rare occasion. My Uncle Charlie, on the other hand, was born and raised in Presque Isle, Maine, a town where they see more deer than automobiles. So for him, this was just another day at the office. I, however, was a mere trainee, standing there with a rifle, legs shaking, scared out of my mind.

“Come on, keep up. You gotta stay with me,” Uncle Charlie yelled from ten or so yards away. Suddenly, Misty, the bloodhound, began to go crazy. She jumped up and down, spinning around, barking as loud as she could. Uncle Charlie got her to quiet down and then took his position. He looked at me and whispered, “Get down, we’ve got something.”

I followed his finger with my eyes to a clearing up ahead. I saw it very clearly. It was a deer! And another one! The two deer were drinking from a small creek. The larger deer then began to lick the smaller one’s fur. I realized at this moment that it was a mother and her small fawn. She was bathing the fawn in this small creek. The thought of killing a family sent shivers down my spine. I looked over at my uncle, and he was already aim-
ing at the deer, with the most determined look on his face. I whispered to him, “Uncle, we can’t do this. She has a baby to take care of!”

“Oh, nonsense. This is how the food chain works,” he barked. I rested the barrel of the rifle gently on the boulder in front of me, taking aim. I was sweating profusely at this point, and I could feel that lump in my throat. I glanced over at Uncle Charlie, and he was doing the same thing, except for one major detail. There was something different about him. He had this fire in his eyes, an uncontrollable hatred for this innocent deer who posed no sort of threat. Yet, he looked upon this animal with such loathing, as if it were the devil in disguise.

“Fire on my count. Ready...aim...,” Uncle Charlie ordered. Every second felt like an eternity, and every breath felt as if it were my last. “Fire...”

Both rifles shot simultaneously, and the mother deer dropped to the ground instantly. The fawn scampered off into the darkness, the plush world teeming with wildlife. Misty and my uncle ran after the injured deer almost immediately. I sat there, frozen, rifle in hand, not blinking, not speaking, and not even breathing. I had been aiming at the mother, but there was no way to tell whether or not I had actually fired the fatal shot. Still, I couldn’t help but view myself as disgusting, a cold-hearted killer.

My thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the cheer of my uncle. “We got him kid! Nice shooting,” he said. He then proceeded to tell me how I had officially entered manhood. I remember thinking that he couldn’t be more wrong. I had never felt like less of a man in my entire life. It puzzled me. In fact, it angered me. How can one be proud of this evil deed? We had just taken a life and watched a baby run off alone into the wilderness. I felt like this fawn: alone and scared.

In his short narrative, “The Clamor of Justification,” Barry Lopez raises several points and questions that remind me of this life-changing experience. Until reading this piece, I had not analyzed my uncle’s ways thoroughly. Lopez writes, “They killed wolves habitually, with a trace of vengeance, with as little regret as a boy shooting rats at a dump” (267). Uncle Charlie falls directly into this categorization. His eyes showed a deep hatred for these animals. At first I did not think much about this. I just assumed it was the way he was raised. And, to a certain extent, this was the cause. However, this hatred can be analyzed further, and Lopez does a great
job with his analysis. Perhaps it can be explained simply by Lopez's theory of theriophobia. Theriophobia is fear of the beast. Hunters may fear the wolf for its capabilities, its ability to be violent and harm other beings (Lopez 269). However, I believe Uncle Charlie's hatred is much more profound. I hypothesize that hunting animals gives my uncle a sense of power. For a moment, he gets to play God. He chooses the animal's fate: whether it should live or die. I think this is simply irresistible to him.

After reading this essay, I thought about several other things. Lopez offers a great comparison between hunters and those who oppose the killing of animals. I can relate myself to this category. Prior to this experience, I had never actually seen an animal being killed. After the hunting experience, however, I had witnessed a murder first-hand. Previously, I would have been the indifferent individual simply because killing animals did not apply to my life. Now, on the contrary, I've had an experience where this applied to me so, I can form an opinion. I can agree with Lopez when he states that, "My only discomfort came when I talked with men who saw nothing wrong with killing wolves" (Lopez 267). I don't stand outside of meat markets and protest the killing of animals, but I can now relate to Lopez for I share a similar discomfort around these particular individuals.

Lopez also writes about biblical accounts. He states that, "In the Bible, wilderness is defined as the place without God—a sere and barren desert" (270). Before reading this essay, I had never viewed it in the same light. When I read this quote, it brought me directly back to that day. I saw the helpless calf run off into the wilderness. He felt alone and scared, with no one to help him, including God. Then I visualize myself and how close to that deer I felt in that particular moment. I felt as if the same scared thoughts were running through our minds simultaneously. Just like the deer, I was alone; I was alone with no guidance, no one to relate to, in a scary, unfamiliar environment. Some may say that this is when God comes into play. He takes charge here and will lead you through the darkness. But here, in that harsh, intimidating environment, even God seemed absent.

Work Cited
I've always wanted to be a rock star. In my mind, I see myself onstage in front of an audience of diehard fans. I'm tripping on acid; I'm donning crazy hair and flunky clothing; I'm dancing with a microphone stand; I'm belting lyrics and a melody that I wrote myself; I've got a full band of attractive musicians onstage sharing the experience with me. This rock star in my head is quite different from the person I see in the mirror: a calm, considerate, classical voice major who dabbles in acoustic guitar and only daydreams of rebellion. When I was a sophomore in high school, I found a place where I could let this inner rocker loose. It was an Internet networking site called MySpace.com, where users had a lot of creative options when making a user profile for themselves. My MySpace page was focused on my inner rock star. While I by no means presented false information about myself, I finally was able to publish my inner persona to the virtual world. I listed my favorite bands, told my opinions about albums, posted photos of myself playing guitar, and discussed music with others. I experimented with layouts and fonts and edited my photos constantly, becoming addicted to how easy it was to present myself in whatever way I wished. My experience with MySpace gave me valuable insight into myself and made me reflect on the image I was portraying to the world. The Internet provides us with safe places such as this to explore facets of our personalities that we wouldn't normally let loose, which in turn makes us more well-rounded and aware of our identities.

The essay “Whither Psychoanalysis in a Computer Culture?” by MIT professor Sherry Turkle discusses the relationships that people form with their computers, the relationships they form with other people through
computers, and the relationships they form with themselves using their computers as tools for exploring the self. She describes cyberspace as “a place [for some people] to act out unresolved conflicts, to play and replay characterological difficulties on a new and exotic stage” (315). There are Internet communities that exist for the purpose of letting people explore facets of themselves that they don’t normally get to show. Music and television chat forums let the inner aficionado mingle with others of their own kind; fantasy sports allow fans to pretend they are in charge of a professional team; writing communities allow the inner author to flourish; and online war role-playing games allow the shyest of people to become killing machines. The possibilities are endless.

While some choose to explore their hidden passions or guilty pleasures under an anonymous identity in obscure nooks and crannies of the Net, most use the other of Turkle’s two functions of the Internet. She says, “For others, it provides an opportunity to work through significant personal issues, to use the new materials of cybersociality to reach for new resolutions” (315). The majority of Internet users participate in global networking sites like MySpace and Facebook. These communities were brought into existence by their creators with the intent of helping people keep in touch with one another, but to succeed in creating an active community, we are forced also to project an image of ourselves to the virtual world. Within each site, we fabricate a digital version of ourselves that we display publicly, and since these profiles are user-created, we can emphasize certain aspects of ourselves while brushing others under the table. On MySpace, we can choose to show only attractive photos of ourselves. We can boast that we watch The Office religiously and leave out that we’re also addicted to America’s Next Top Model. We can display our “Top 8” best friends on our page. Turkle says, “Having literally written our online personae into existence, they can be a kind of Rorschach. We can use them to become more aware of what we project into everyday life...” (316). When we are forced to describe ourselves simply and bluntly in only words and pictures, it causes us to reflect on and consider the type of person that we are. Whenever I sat down to edit my MySpace page, I had to evaluate myself: What are my passions? What are my weaknesses? Who are my friends? And above all: Am I comfortable with the entire Internet knowing these things
about me? How much information we reveal online shows whether we are starved for attention or of a more reserved nature.

While we initially create and ultimately have the most control over these profiles, other people who know us add to and embellish them. Seeing what others contribute to our profiles is also very telling of our identities. In particular, a Facebook profile is a collaborative effort. There are areas that we create ourselves but many other parts that others add to. Other people “tag” photos of us, write public messages on our “Walls,” and see our activities posted on their “News Feed,” which is a section of Facebook that reports the activities of each of our friends. There is less room for “faking.” These areas of our Facebook are typically the most telling of how we act in a social setting because they allow us to view clearly what others think of us.

There are also opportunities for us to reflect on our past identities and see how we’ve changed as people. Another Web site that I am an active member of is Livejournal.com, an online journaling community. I write entries describing everything from my day’s events to how I’m feeling. There are five years’ worth of entries in my journal archive, and while looking back on what I’ve written is often painfully embarrassing, it allows me to look objectively at the things I’ve done and helps me to make better judgments for the future. Turkle also acknowledges the importance of paying attention to one’s virtual life when she discusses computers within the context of psychoanalysis. She states, “Now virtual social life can play a role in…dramas of self-reparation. Time in cyberspace works the notion of the moratorium because it may now exist on an always-available ‘window.’ Analysts need to note, respect, and interpret their patients’ ‘life on the screen’ ” (316). Turkle believes that one’s life onscreen provides insight into his or her identity. She also references psychologist Erik Erikson’s “moratorium,” which is the theory that our problems can be caused by unresolved stages of development. If we document our life online, we can clearly see and show others evidence of our unresolved issues and use this information to help fix our problems. My Livejournal is very revealing of my faults as well as my merits, and it is one of the most important windows into my identity.
The Internet has undoubtedly been the most popular way for the current generation to express itself, and I think that it is clear from looking through my peers’ Facebooks that we have a solid idea of who we are. We show what we want to do with our lives, how we treat others, and what changes we hope to make to the world. Years of building profiles and writing electronic messages to one another has taught us how to look at ourselves from an outside perspective and portray ourselves in the way that we desire to be seen.

Work Cited
EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE I CATCH MYSELF LIVING. I CAN’T EVER PREDICT WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN, BUT IT HAPPENS NONETHELESS. SOMETIMES I DON’T EVEN REALIZE I’M LIVING UNTIL I TAKE A MOMENT TO THINK ABOUT IT. IT’S LIKE BREATHING: YOU DO IT ALL THE TIME, BUT HOW OFTEN DO YOU THINK ABOUT IT? IT JUST HAPPENS AND THAT’S IT. I LIVE MY LIFE AS THOMAS DE ZENGOTITA DESCRIBES IN HIS ESSAY “THE NUMBING OF THE AMERICAN MIND: CULTURE AS ANESTHETIC.” I AM NUMB; SOCIETY HAS STIMULATED ME BEYOND THE POINT WHERE I CAN’T FEEL ANYMORE. I HAVE BECOME SO NUMB THAT I NO LONGER LIVE MY LIFE FROM DAY TO DAY.

THOMAS DE ZENGOTITA EXPLAINS WHY I NO LONGER TRULY LIVE ANYMORE. HE EXPLAINS THAT “PEOPLE HAVE NEVER HAD TO COPE WITH SO MUCH STUFF, SO MANY CHOICES. IN KIND AND NUMBER” (343). WE ARE SO OVER STIMULATED BY CHOICES THAT WE CANNOT RELAX AND ENJOY ANYTHING. ZENGOTITA ALSO POINTS OUT OUR INABILITY TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN WHAT IS REAL AND WHAT IS FABRICATED (342). THEREFORE, WE LOSE SIGHT OF WHAT REAL LIFE MEANS. COUPLED WITH A NUMBNESS BROUGHT ON BY “A MULTITUDE OF THRILLS AND TINGLES AT A FREQUENCY BEYOND WHICH YOU FEEL NOTHING,” WE ARE UNABLE TO TRULY LIVE LIFE (348).

MOST DAYS I AM AS ZENGOTITA DESCRIBES IN HIS ESSAY. I WAKE UP IN THE MORNING AND CRAWL OUT OF BED. THEN I BEGIN WHAT MOST LIKE TO CALL THE “MORNING ROUTINE.” MY ROUTINE IS JUST AN AUTOMATED SEQUENCE MY BRAIN HAS MEMORIZED TO THE POINT WHERE I COULD BE SLEEPING AND STILL KNOW WHAT TO DO. THE REST OF MY DAY IS A JUST A COMBINATION OF OTHER ROUTINES. I HAVE AN EXTENSIVE SET OF ROUTINES THAT I CAN USE ON ANY GIVEN DAY. GOING TO CLASS? I’VE GOT A ROUTINE FOR THAT. DOING HOMEWORK? GOT ONE FOR THAT TOO. EATING, READING, WALKING, TALKING, WATCHING, MOVING: I HAVE ONE FOR THEM ALL. MY DAY IS VERY EASY; JUST PICK A ROUTINE AND WATCH IT RUN. I CAN LIVE MY LIFE ON AUTOPilot.
Every once in a while I catch myself living. Zengotita describes how occasionally and accidentally we find ourselves “noticing the breeze, the cracks in the sidewalk, the stillness of things in the shop window” (349). His description resonates with my own experiences. I have often been so busy that when I slow down, I notice the small things, the details of life that are so easily forgotten or ignored. The sensation is indescribable, yet we all know it.

Yesterday, I woke up with absolutely nothing I had to do. I took a shower, feeling the soothing warmth of the water, watching the drips make little circles on the shower floor, the steam swirls engulfing the overhead light, and the condensation droplets combining and running down into the channels between the tiles. After the shower, I relaxed in bed and spent time thinking. Eventually, I had to turn on the TV and watch a few episodes of How It’s Made. After that was over, I had to turn on music to keep myself occupied. I couldn’t just sit there and relax. I had an innate urge to do something.

Zengotita explains that we “soon get restless” because we “can’t take the input reduction. Our psychic metabolism craves more” (349). The society that we live in urges us to move so fast that “we have become human doings instead of human beings” (Wilson). Zengotita also points out that “the feeling of being busy is the feeling of being alive” (348). Life doesn’t seem real if we aren’t constantly busy. I was unable to really live yesterday because I needed to be busy to feel alive.

What is one to do when faced with such a severe problem? How do we change to make our lives meaningful every day? Zengotita diagnoses the disease but offers no solution. It is unclear in Zengotita’s essay whether he believes that our current path, as Nietzsche put it, of “taking recourse in premeditated stupidity,” is the only way to avoid the problem (qtd. in Zengotita 340). If he believes otherwise, he makes no effort to convey his belief. Without a clear statement of a solution, one can only wonder how to fix the problem he described.

Limitation is the only way to fix this problem. Zengotita pinpoints a cause of our numbness to be the “flood” of stimulation. He says “the more-ness of everything ascends inevitably to a threshold in psychic life. A change of state takes place. The discrete display melts into a pudding, and
your mind is forced to certain adaptations if it is to cohere at all” (344). Limiting the “moreness” would allow your brain to interact with your surroundings clearly. Limitation of input is the only way to free your mind from cultural anesthesia.

Limitation has its limitations though. It would be unwise to technologically reduce ourselves in order to reduce stimulation. Technological advances such as the Internet are vital to our society. Without it, we would be virtually without means of communication. Our awareness of what is happening in the world would suffer. This is inevitably part of the problem Zengotita describes, but it is more important to retain certain aspects of our society than to be rid of them for the sake of mental freedom. Limitation, in this sense, would require selectivity that filtered the unnecessary uses of technology while retaining the vital aspects of it.

To fulfill such a goal, our society would have to limit ourselves in areas of excess. As stated before, it would be unwise to eliminate the use of the Internet altogether, but it would be useful to reduce our unnecessary use of it. We really don’t need to spend hours in online communities, writing in our Web log, chatting with friends on Instant Messenger, playing online games, or aimlessly browsing web pages. It is in these areas that we are submerged in the “flood of fabricated surfaces” that numbs us (348). The list of unnecessary activities continues.

Television is another crucial technological advancement that causes over-stimulation. It is something that can be useful for communication, but it is most often used for entertainment. On average, people spend over three hours every day watching TV (American Time Use Survey Summary). This time only contributes to the “flood of fabricated surface” Zengotita targets as the cause of our numbness. He states that despite the inevitable finitude of all the input, we still crave more. We can only “put x shapes and y colors into z permutations” (347), so we compensate by increasing intensity. In turn, we use “sheer clutter on the screen, a way to grab the most possible attention in the least amount of time. But that clutter also accounts for why everything’s already been done, and so it cycles relentlessly” (347). Zengotita’s cycle of repetitious input must be stopped. To free our minds from numbness, we must limit what we watch on TV. We need to stop and ask ourselves, “Is it imperative that I watch the six-
teenth season of *Survivor*? Once we are able to reduce our meaningless input, we will be able to take the time to truly live life.

This feat can only be accomplished if we limit ourselves. We can stop living on auto-pilot and take control. We can actually *feel* alive, not just accept that we are. Just log off Instant Messenger and take a walk with your friends. Close eBay and go shopping at a real store. Take your time. What activities do you really *need* to be doing? Put down the remote, take a deep breath, taste some fresh air, and start living. You're free.

*Works Cited*


Amitava Kumar’s essay, “Flight,” attempts to explain the connection between the different connotations of the concept of human flight. His examination of these connotations can be extended to explain the different connotations of the concept of human life. His essay becomes controversial when he decides to draw connections between immigrants fighting for a free life and the terrorists that perpetrated the attacks on September 11th. I think that this connection is one of the more important points he makes in his essay, and it is particularly powerful. Unfortunately, I feel that some people have previous biases when it comes to September 11th, and the author failed in some respects to convert the most stubborn detractors.

What I liked most about the essay was its close examination of the different ways flight is seen by people in different contexts. Kumar explains how the Indian writer Tagore felt that “to fly was to lose contact with the earth.” Tagore also tells of British bombers who had no problem dropping their payload on people far below (262). In this case, flight is seen as a lack of connection with the world and the people on it. Everyone is bound to the earth in some way. Even if we fly, we must all return to the earth at some point. It is odd that a man can go into a plane and disconnect himself from the earth, killing civilians and soldiers alike, and then land and reconnect as if nothing happened. People back on the ground will congratulate him for a job well done, whether he just destroyed a nuclear arms plant or an aspirin factory.

Another very powerful section in the essay was when Kumar brought up the story of Mohammed Ayaz. Mohammed Ayaz was a man who found his way into the wheel chamber of a passenger jet in order to make his way
to Britain to find a better job. Ayaz was not ready for the lack of oxygen and freezing temperature and died during the flight, his lifeless body falling to earth as the plane lowered its wheels to land. A report of the incident said that “while passengers only a few feet away were being served gin and tonic and settling down to watch in-flight movies, Ayaz would have begun to hallucinate from lack of oxygen” (264). This expands Kumar’s main theme of differing connotations in flight to the differing connotations of life in general. Ayaz is using this plane in order to try to gain the freedom to fight for a job that will earn him, hopefully, enough money to feed his family and himself. The passengers are likely using the plane in order to go on vacation or business or to come home from either. Ayaz and the passengers are both flying, but only Ayaz is really working in the air. Ayaz is representative of the poor, whereas the passengers are representative of everyone else. The upper- and middle-class both have an almost insurmountable advantage over Ayaz. People think that everyone has a chance to live what we in America think of as the American Dream. Ayaz’s only chance is freezing in the bottom of the plane while even the lower-middle-class can scrimp and save enough for a plane ticket. The passengers sit back and enjoy the ride while Ayaz must fight hunger and the cold in order to stay in the air. Unfortunately, Ayaz loses this fight and plummets to the earth before reaching his destination.

Kumar’s connection of his point to the September 11th terrorists was the part in the essay which some people in my class had a problem with. One classmate, for example, felt that Kumar was “defending” the terrorists in his essay. I think Kumar is defending the terrorists in his essay just as much as he is defending the British bombers. The terrorists here serve as a connection between the British bombers and the men like Ayaz who hid in the wheel chambers of planes, looking for a new home. The bombers believed they were killing people that deserved it, even though they were so far away that they could not “in good faith ask [themselves] who is kin and who is stranger” (262). Similarly, the terrorists thought that they were killing people who represented American imperialism. We know that even with the smart technology of today’s bombs, civilian casualties occur at high rates during any bombing raid. Likewise, the terrorists may not have realized that many of the people they had killed were just like them. The
Twin Towers were home to more than just capitalist businessmen. There were definitely people from many different countries who had risen from poverty. Kumar makes the connection between the stowaway Mohammed Ayaz and the “many migrant workers, dishwashers, messengers, cleaners, and restaurant help who perished that day” in the Twin Towers (265).

It is difficult to say whether Kumar stirred more controversy by comparing the terrorists of September 11th to British bombers or by comparing them to immigrants. I think, in either case, the controversy arises from a misunderstanding of the author’s main point and society’s bias to automatically accept all terrorists as inherently evil. What was great about Kumar’s essay was that it was designed to question rather than answer. He writes to show his reader that nothing in life is simple. Nothing is “good” or “evil” if one looks from a different point of view. In the most basic terms, Mohammed Ayaz and the terrorists were both trying to improve their situations through an illegal flight.

The mistake people make when thinking about the September 11th terrorists is one gained from the mistaken thinking of America’s pro-war politicians. We’ve all heard that “Terrorists hate freedom.” This is both racist and blatantly false. This statement stems from the belief that people in other cultures, especially Middle-Easterners, are backwards and completely incomparable to us. If one looked back on the history of any Middle-Eastern country, I’m certain they would find just as many people fighting to keep their homelands free. Terrorists don’t hate freedom. Perhaps they only have a different definition of freedom. Freedom to the average American is the right to choose our own religion (or choose not to have one) without the government forcing one upon us. It’s the right to say what we believe to be true and even to say what we know is a lie. It’s the right to the opportunity to build a life that suits us. In the Middle-East and other impoverished regions, freedom might be the right to eat every day. Freedom to them might be the right to live under their own government or rebel against their own government without a country like America or Britain interfering. These terrorists are not born with the freedom that Americans are born with. They are born to families that have been trying in futility for generations to gain the freedom they want. They are born into a warzone. Freedom is not something that they are fighting to retain but something they are
fighting to have. I am not justifying the actions of terrorists. I think the terrorists are as misguided as the British bombers of which Tagore speaks. Terrorism is a symptom. Bombing raids and troop surges can hide the symptoms, but the disease remains untreated.

These September 11th terrorists believed that their actions would free them. The last thing that went through their minds was probably not the thought of hate for America but perhaps the thought of love for their country, their families, and their god. People fight for themselves more than they fight against others. As the stowaway Mohammed Ayaz froze to death in his wheel chamber, he did not think of going to England to drag down their economy. He thought about how the job he might get would help his family and himself.

The reason Kumar’s statements and other similar statements cause controversy is because they scare people. People like simple solutions. It’s easier to say that all Muslims are evil and bent on our destruction because then we don’t need to feel bad when we destroy their country. It’s easier to say that all illegal immigrants are trying to steal our tax dollars. It’s easier to say that when our bombs hit civilians, it was all for the greater good. It is difficult to stop and look at something from a different angle. It’s difficult to put yourself in the terrorist’s shoes and think about how it feels to be poor and oppressed. Likewise, it’s easy for those poor, oppressed terrorists to place the blame in the wrong place. Doing is easy. Doing right is sometimes impossible.

Work Cited
“A FIST IN THE EYE OF GOD”: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Emily Smith

Millions of years ago, the lives of our ancestors revolved almost entirely around the search for food. They burnt their calories in the quest to find more calories. Food is essential for life and for a stable society. However, most people today know little about providing their own food beyond pushing the start button on their microwave. The constant availability of food is taken for granted in the United States: as they walk down the aisles of abundance in the local grocery store, people do not feel the need to worry about the day when the store cannot even offer the bare necessities. As a result, agricultural issues are seldom discussed by the media and politicians. In her essay, “A Fist in the Eye of God,” biologist Barbara Kingsolver urges the reader to comprehend the significance of issues such as the genetic engineering of crops. She connects society’s choice to sacrifice comprehensive education in biological science to prevent their religious beliefs from being challenged and the lack of ethics in science and business to environmental consequences. Appealing to both logos and pathos, Kingsolver earnestly urges the reader to comprehend the significance of genetic engineering.

Kingsolver starts her essay with a vivid description of a hummingbird who built its nest outside her kitchen window. She speaks of the encounter with the same admiration a devout person would use to describe a religious experience. Kingsolver is not writing the essay to be published in a science magazine that will be read only by her peers in the biological field. Instead, she wants to attract the interest of all types of readers so that more people will become aware of the consequences of genetic engineering. The “hook” works: the reader becomes interested in the essay. The bird becomes a motif
throughout the essay: at various times it is used as a symbol for both religion as well as the fragility of the natural world. An important point that Kingsolver reiterates several times is that the natural world, more specifically genetics, should be treated as a place of worship: “a sacred grove, as ancient as time” (260). Readers who do not share Kingsolver’s passion for science are able to identify with the essay when the natural world is compared to religion because it is a much more accessible topic.

Throughout the essay, Kingsolver is ambiguous about religion. At times the text indicates that she is not influenced by religious dogma, for instance, when she describes events in the natural world: “the population will live on, moving always in the direction of fitness...not because anyone has a master plan, but simply because survival carries fitness forward” (253). Religion, she argues, has no place in the classroom because it detracts from scientific education. Although she observes the negative effects that religion can have, Kingsolver does not advocate abandoning the practice; she is religious, but to her, religion and science are not mutually exclusive. Her goal is neither to confirm nor to deny any religious creed but to convince her readers to use the same reverence when they discuss nature as they do when they discuss religion (Kingsolver 260). To her, the natural world is fragile; she is devoted to understanding and protecting it.

Kingsolver appeals to her readers’ logos when she explains her argument against America’s current education conventions, boldly stating that “religion has no place in the classroom” (259). Her rationale is clear: students in the United States are intellectually hindered because they are not taught the important theories of biological science that contradict the doctrine of Christianity. As a result, too small a percent of the population is able to comprehend issues discussed in the scientific community. People are unable to form rational, comprehensive opinions about problems like global warming and genetic engineering (Kingsolver 251). To emphasize the importance of teaching young Americans about the natural world, she juxtaposes Sputnik and the issues in biological science today. This appeals to older readers’ ethos because they are reminded of the intensity of the race to the moon. By comparing these problems, Kingsolver elevates genetic engineering to be considered one of the most important issues of our time. To her, the risk is that Americans are at a substantial disadvantage: science
is no longer valued as it was during the Space Race. As Kingsolver notes, “scientific illiteracy...is leaving too many of us unprepared to discuss or understand much of the damage we are wreaking in our atmosphere, our habitat, and even the food that enters our mouths” (251).

Kingsolver uses illustrations to make her argument more compelling. She tells the story of an Ethiopian farmer who is fooled by a large agribusiness corporation to buy genetically engineered wheat that ultimately will not survive the Ethiopian climate. He is the embodiment of an uncountable number of farmers who were victimized in rural countries by greedy corporations and corrupt governments. This humanitarian issue may be enough to turn many readers against genetic engineering (Kingsolver 254).

In a second attempt to convince the reader that genetic engineering is hurting the environment, Kingsolver describes the effects of splicing caterpillar-killing bacterium into corn plants. *Bacillus thuringensis* causes caterpillars’ stomachs to explode, but it doesn’t harm humans or other insects. Scientists intended the new corn to kill the caterpillars that climbed onto the plants. However, the Bt corn could easily kill any caterpillars that came in contact with it. And that is just what happened: every cell of every piece of corn contained the ability to kill caterpillars. The pollen of this corn is spread by the wind, and as a result, Bt is dispersed in nature, endangering butterfly larva (Kingsolver 256). But Kingsolver predicted that many readers would not be motivated to protest gene splicing just because it was killing off butterflies.

As Kingsolver continues her argument against genetic engineering, she begins to focus on an issue that is more personal to the reader: food in America. Unlike centuries past in this country, much of the agriculture in the United States is owned by only a few corporations, and the result is little genetic variation in the crops. Appealing to the reader’s logos, Kingsolver cites the Southern Corn Leaf Blight Catastrophe that disrupted the United States in 1970. She explains that the agriculture business was saved by the availability of different strands of corn in Third World nations. Today, however, agribusinesses are attempting to eliminate these crops by selling genetically engineered seeds to farmers (254-5).
Kingsolver appeals to the reader’s fears about genetic engineering:

“...there are so many ways for gene manipulation to work from the inside to destroy our habitat and our food systems that the environmental challenges loom as something on the order of a cancer that might well make personal allergies look like a sneeze” (257).

While addressing the reader’s fear about genetic engineering, Kingsolver refers to cancer—a disease that has impacted many American families. The comparison of gene manipulation to cancer may awaken an emotional reaction in the reader. This passage enables Kingsolver to explain the gravity of the situation. The main problem, she later explains in logical terms, is that the new, genetically engineered crops are vulnerable to being destroyed by the adaptable crop predators or by a single drought (255).

The essay “A Fist in the Eye of God” sheds light on the consequences of genetic engineering and on the corruption in many facets of American society. Kingsolver appeals to all types of readers: for those who value logic, she explains events and concepts in scientific terms, while for those who are motivated by their emotions, she reveals social injustices that have resulted from genetic engineering. Kingsolver’s ultimate motive is to bring about real change. She presents the issues associated with genetic engineering:

What will it mean for a handful of agribusiness to control the world’s ever-narrowing seed banks? What about the chemical dependencies they’re creating for farmers in developing countries, where government deals with multinational corporations are inducing them to grow these engineered crops? What about the business of patenting and owning genes? Can there be any good in this for the flat-out concern of people trying to feed themselves? Does it seem safe, with the world now being what it is, to give up self-sustaining food systems in favor of dependency on the global marketplace? (257)
Kingsolver emphasizes the questions that the reader is already wondering at the conclusion of the text. Her essay stresses that the current practice of genetic engineering is capable of having dangerous consequences; Kingsolver may even inspire some readers to want to change the system. However, she fails to call the reader to activism or to provide any possible solutions, like government regulation of scientific research and international laws to moderate large agribusiness corporations.

Work Cited
Historically, the most visible motive, and the one that best explains the excess of killing, is a type of fear: theriophobia. Fear of the beast. Fear of the beast as an irrational, violent, insatiable creature. Fear of the projected beast in oneself” (Lopez 269). Barry Lopez’s “The Clamor of Justification” explores theriophobia and its place in American history, specifically its role in westward expansion. The beast here is the wolf; those with the fear are the pioneers, ranchers, and hunters of the past three centuries. As Lopez explains, human-wolf relations have been stained with blood since the first settlers looked beyond their outposts and saw, to them, a land that needed to be tamed, overturned, and brought within control. It was only then that the fear and anxieties of these Europeans, living in the shadow of the New World, could be allayed.

This fear translated into hate, hate which exploded into violence against the wolves and all they represented. The unknown, the daunting, a hardship, an obstacle. And so the wolf was cut down. When Europe invaded the eastern coast of North America, settlers killed them for fear of their lives. Pioneers cleared wolves out as they pushed west, enabling towns and cities to be established in their wake. The hunters of the 1860s, armed with the latest in firearm technology, shot them by the thousands over the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains, reducing the population so much that now, instead of endorsing the slaughter of the animal, the U.S. government incriminates all who harm a gray hair.

Lopez writes, “In a historical sense, we are all to blame for the loss of wolves. In the 19th century when the Indians on the plains were telling us that the wolf was a brother, we were preaching another gospel” (268). On
the surface, Lopez’s concern appears to be wolves, their oppression, and the conclusions we can draw about human nature. The passage above, however, hints at a subtle theme running underneath “The Clamor of Justification.” Lopez presents the wolf and Indian as kin, not due to the stereotype of an indigenous connection with the Earth, but because they share the same fate. The wolf of Lopez’s essay can be interchanged with Native Americans, a people who became targets for the anger of Westerners, scapegoats of their paranoid ideology to “tame” the wild.

Parallels are easily drawn. Lopez writes, “This twined sense of wilderness as a place innately dangerous and godless was something that attached itself, inevitably, to the wolf—the most feared denizen of gloomy wilderness” (Lopez 270). Was the wolf the true concern of settlers? Wolves are masters of the environment, able to infiltrate, strike, and melt into the wild, but they are animals, predictable beasts with predictable behavior. They have fangs, not guns; they hunt deer, not raid Deerfield. Indians were masters of the environment, able to infiltrate, strike, and melt into the wild; they were smart, wary of expansion, and set to counter it. The wolf attacks for food; the Indian attacks for revenge, religion, politics, profit, and in defense of home. Lopez’s wolf represents danger, chiefly the hostile Indian. In the Western mind, natives were predators, the muscle of a wilderness determined to push Europeans off the continent.

“To celebrate wilderness was to celebrate the wolf; to want an end to wilderness and all it stood for was to want the wolf’s head” (Lopez 270). To bring down a resident of this wilderness was to score a victory for civilization, hence the low number of wolves today. Likewise, to kill an Indian was to suppress fear, to neutralize the wilderness’ most terrifying threat. Above all diplomatic and military motives, the murder of an Indian satisfied the paranoid mind of the Westerner. Kill or be killed.

“To clear wilderness.” Out of this simple conviction was spawned a war against wolves that culminated in the United States in the late 19th century” (Lopez 273). As the slaughter of wolves reached its peak, so did the wars between Native Americans and the U.S. government. Manifest Destiny was nearly reality, carried out and fueled by fear. Tired of violence, hoping to shed their wolf skin before the eyes of the West, many tribes agreed to become dogs. The Miniconjou Sioux of Wounded Knee, South
Dakota, hoped to harmonize with America and preserve their identity, but this, however innocent an intention, disturbed the Seventh Cavalry. The Indians before them were not those who annihilated their unit at Little Big Horn\(^2\), yet fear gripped the soldiers as they monitored the village. Fear of the savage and the primitive. Fear of wilderness. Fear of those who embody wilderness. Fear of the beast. When the men of the Seventh Cavalry massacred the 200 men, women, and children of Wounded Knee, they were driven by the lashes of fear, paranoia, and hate.\(^3\)

Lopez asks, “Why didn’t we quit, why did we go on killing long after the need was gone?” (Lopez 268). Was there ever a need? As humans, we applaud ourselves for the ability to resist our urges; this is what separates us from the wolf. Yet our dedication to “civilization” turns us into slaves of our primitive fears. We tame wilderness through its destruction; we kill the beast by becoming monsters.

**Notes**

1. In February 1704, a war party of Abenakis, Mohawks, and Hurons, together with their French allies, sacked the town of Deerfield, Massachusetts, carrying off more than a hundred people (Calloway 154).

2. In 1876, General George Custer and the Seventh Cavalry rashly attacked a large Indian village in the valley of the Little Big Horn in present-day Montana. Severely underestimating the forces they faced, Custer and his men were slaughtered. Romantically viewed as a heroic last stand, when in reality a military blunder (Calloway 273).

3. In late 1890, over 200 Native Americans, chiefly Sioux and Lakota, were massacred by U.S. troops at Wounded Knee (Calloway 281).

**Works Cited**


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 in 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 their paper, 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 each writer and 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 (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.
PROVINCETOWN: SEARCH FOR AN IDENTITY

Samantha Denette

“Here a man may stand and put all of America behind him.”
—Henry David Thoreau

The season is about to begin, and before the tourists descend upon us, equipped with their usual myriad of unintelligent questions and awkward stares, it is imperative that we all take a step back and recognize our mutual love of this town. Provincetown has a long history, from the Pilgrims, to the Portuguese fishing community, to the artists, to the gay community, and to the tourists. People from all walks of life have called this town home, and what we need to realize is that, more than our social differences, we share a common bond—our love of the town.

For the last thirty or so years, there has been uneasiness between two communities: the year-rounders and the wealthy gay summer residents. Both have their history here and both are treated unfairly by each other. After the American Revolution, the whaling industry boomed and Provincetown became arguably the largest whaling port in the Northeast. Many Portuguese fishermen were hired to run the whaling ships. It was their families that were among the first to truly settle Provincetown, building schools and churches, forming a real community. The wealth brought in by the whaling industry propelled the residents to the “highest per capita income in all Massachusetts” by the 1880s (Manso 15). During this time, the coast of Provincetown Harbor was covered with more than fifty-five piers. Even as the whaling industry was scaled back due to the intro-
duction of kerosene, Provincetown was recognized as a major fishing port, attracting vessels from Newfoundland to the Azores.

Around the turn of the century, artists worldwide began to use Provincetown’s beauty and tranquility as both a sanctuary and a muse for their work. This was synonymous with the increase in the gay population, who began to call P’town home. There were relatively few problems until the wealthy gay patrons of the arts entered Provincetown’s real estate market, thus raising the value of land in town and pushing out “townies.” Tension grew as wealth flooded the town and reached a high in the summer of ’89 with the Act-Up Gay-Pride Parade. Out-of-town protesters carried signs with explicit messages that offended the townies and those with children. This even sparked a chain of hate crimes, though it is important to recognize that the offensive protesters were from out-of-town. Unfortunately, they were associated with the local gay population, and violence ensued.

Sandra Faiman-Silva recounts the event in her essay “Provincetown in Transition” and explains that, for the gay community, “two issues in particular come to the fore: first, complaints about unfair or unequal police treatment, and second, complaints of gay-bashing activity by the local youths” (17). She goes on to explain, “The straight community saw things differently. Some locals charged that gay men harassed their teenage boys with catcalls or even physical contact.” As for the youths’ gay bashing, Faiman-Silva explains “some parents […] argued that their children were subject to ‘fag-baiting’ by neighboring youth, especially at out-of-town sports events, due to Provincetown’s reputation as a gay resort” (17). She goes on to explicate, “Many blamed the rift [between locals and gays] on the Act-Up activists, seen as ‘outside agitators’ who had destabilized the uneasy truce between the two populations” (17).

Different times of the year represent different personalities of Provincetown, all of which need to find a solution to their differences for the town to continue to function. Although Karen Christel Krahulik claims that the main issue is “Provincetown’s evolution from a Portuguese town into a gay mecca, and Provincetown’s change from a vacation destination with economic diversity to a gentrified resort town” (189), I respectfully disagree, not with Krahulik’s sentiment but rather her choice of word-
ing. I agree that Provincetown has evolved and changed; however, to say that it has evolved into a “gay mecca” and a “gentrified resort town” entirely discounts the residents that do not fall into those categories. Her explanation of Provincetown is extremely superficial and presents the town as no more than a theme park or resort only open from May to October. She leaves out the year-round residents, the fishermen, the family businesses, and the kids in the local school system.

Much more fitting is Jay Critchley’s description: “[the] issue in Provincetown isn’t gay versus straight; it’s the haves and the have-nots” (Manso 87). As a townie who is also gay, he understands both points of view and explains that the issue is money. It is the poor versus the wealthy, and those who work two or three jobs versus the wealthy summer residents in their multi-million dollar houses, whether they are gay, straight, artist, businessman, or anything in between.

So what I ask you is this: why are we still bickering about gay vs. straight? In today’s time of economic recession, it is more important that we reconcile our financial differences for the preservation of the town that we all love. Whose town is this? I say it is all of ours that call it home. The combination of all types of people is what makes Provincetown both unique and attractive, but it is also what is pulling it apart. It is essential that we focus on finding a solution to keep Provincetown accessible to the different communities that rely on it.

Until then, the only common thread is that many of us love these 9.7 square miles of land at the end of the earth. So I ask you all to think twice before making a mean comment towards someone who belongs to a different group from you. Is it really doing anyone any good? We all rely on each other, so further dividing the communities serves no purpose. We need to stick together to preserve our town. I am willing to bet that most of us have more in common than we think. And as Michael Hattersley said: “At the end of the season, drag queens, Portuguese housewives, straight construction workers, and gay artists can still be found exchanging gossip at the Post Office” (39).
Works Cited
Included on my semester bill for UMass is the value meal plan. It offers 224 meals per semester. Since the Berkshire Dinning Commons is the closest to my residence hall, it’s the one I visit most often. I still remember how overwhelming it was during my first few experiences there. After your card is swiped through the register and you pick up a tray, you have no choice but to immerse yourself into an arena with chaotic crowds of young adults, talking and moving in different directions. Now, the setup of the arena is similar to a buffet, except it’s magnified tenfold since there are about nine or ten different food stations to serve yourself. In addition to the typical dinner selection, there’s a sushi bar, a salad bar, a line for stir fry, soup, pizza, cheeseburgers, and a vegan selection to name a few. There are huge bowls of rice, bottomless bins of pasta, pyramids of cookies, and fountains of endless soda and juice. On average, it takes about fifteen to twenty minutes of waiting in lines and wandering around to compile a plate of food and usually you end up with more than you actually intend to eat. Once you are full, it’s time to leave.

This brings me to the final stage of the dinner experience at Berkshire: tossing the leftovers and returning the trays, plates, and silverware. It’s time to navigate your way through the crowd again until you find the dishwashing location. Once there, the only barrier between yourself and whatever actually goes on behind the wall is a large rectangular window. Running through the window is a conveyer belt designed to carry cafeteria trays from the hands of students to the dishwashers. In that respect, the whole experience of throwing away your leftovers is somewhat mysterious. It doesn’t require any thought or consideration—out of sight, out of mind.
So now I’m wondering, what really happens to all of the half-eaten cheeseburgers, the left-over piles of carrots and corn, and the salads that were barely touched?

In most cases, leftover food goes in the trash. It’s true. The same place where you find broken glass, empty containers, and plastic wrappers, you find uneaten food. Now, let’s consider some real statistics. For instance, “923 million people across the world are hungry” and “every day, almost 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes” (Hunger Facts International). In America, there is a bizarre paradox that exists between the availability of food and the number of people who suffer from hunger. Millions of people in the United States of America, one of the wealthiest countries in the world, are starving.

Let’s stray from this idea of hunger for a moment and return the focus to trash. Although it seems unreal, there is a population of people in the United States who survive off of “trash.” Commonly referred to as dumpster divers or trash pickers, they are in most cases frowned upon by society. It’s a dirty job but a necessary one. After all, “in this country every day in every city, more edible food is discarded than is needed to feed those who do not have enough to eat” (Ferrell). Dented cans, blemished fruits, and many otherwise perfectly edible foods are thrown away every day from supermarkets, stores, and also individuals. Inevitably, the dumpster-diver lifestyle was born and now exists side-by-side with the American overconsumption lifestyle. In the book, Empire of Scrounge, Jeff Ferrell says it best when he writes, “as I discovered, the same global economy that drives down wages in the United States, and exports its work [...] to sweatshops in China and Indonesia, spews forth sufficient amounts to provide a modicum of relief for those very Americans whose jobs and wages it has destroyed. Under contemporary conditions of global consumerism, a complex alternative economy—a widespread enterprise of everyday survival within the empire of scrounge—has emerged amidst the excess of American consumerism itself” (Ferrell). This strange “alternative economy” makes the issue of poverty and hunger even more complicated. There are people who actually have become dependent on Americans to consume much more than they need and therefore provide more waste. Realistically, not all of the food that is thrown away will be salvaged (it would be
extremely time consuming to sift through every single dumpster). Furthermore, if the food is perfectly edible then how can supermarkets throw it away, knowing that there are people starving? Maybe it's simply more convenient. It has become a mindless task for everyone involved. It's your job to put your tray on the conveyer belt; it's the dishwasher's job to throw the excess food in the trash; it is the janitor's job to throw the trash in the dumpster; it is the truck driver's job to bring the trash to a landfill. It's no one's job to ask questions or to wonder what the repercussions are. This brings up another interesting concept—landfills.

Pollution has become an increasing problem around the world, especially in the United States. The mere fact that something as valuable as food is contributing to this problem (while there are people starving around the world) makes no sense. On the bright side, “urban scroungers create a complex culture of scavenging, interrupting the inexorable material flow from shopping mall to landfill, and undertaking to redeem contemporary U.S. society from the wreckage of its own failed arrangements” (Ferrell). In other words, if trash-pickers or dumpster divers did not exist, there would be even more trash piling up in landfills and dumps. Keep in mind that most dumpster divers are not environmentalists; they are forced to sort through trash as their only alternative, which is what makes the situation so ironic. Maybe next time before we decide to look down on people who depend on trash-picking, we should look to ourselves as the creators of their often humiliating lifestyle.

On the contrary, there are some individuals and activist groups that refuse to accept the idea of throwing away trash as a mindless task. For instance, “Food Not Bombs” is a direct action group created in 1980 to collect discarded food and serve it to the homeless and other needy people. It's a very respectable job but not an easy one. Since Food Not Bombs generally serves food in public without a permit, they face legal harassment all the time. For example, “in 1988 when servers were confronted (and in some cases beaten) by helmeted riot police in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park...fifty-four were arrested for serving food in public without a permit” (Ferrell). I guess the police officers were just doing their job by arresting a group of people doing something that is technically illegal. On the other hand, it certainly raises questions as to why the policemen couldn't see the
bigger picture. After all, the people they arrested were really harmless; they were volunteers working for a good cause.

Another procedure for recovering food and distributing it to the needy is called gleaning. When farmers harvest their crops, there is a significant percentage of perfectly ripened fruits and vegetables that are left over for not being economically profitable to sell. Gleaners are volunteers from mainly anti-hunger groups, youth service corps, churches, and food banks that rescue the healthy crops and donate them to families in need. Though it seems like a practical idea, federal funding is minimal for these projects. A group called “Salvation Farms” in South Barre, Vermont, provides volunteer crews to salvage farm surpluses. In 2007, the group collected “53,563 pounds of local fresh produce, 148 loaves of bread, 520 packets of seeds and 200 vegetable starts” (Salvation Farms).

Furthermore, over time, food wasting has developed into a bigger and bigger issue. It is falling into “the category that everyone knows is a bad idea but few do anything about, sort of like speeding or reapplying sunscreen” (The Economic Times). Billions of pounds of food are wasted each year. To be exact, “in 1995, 27 percent (96 billion pounds) of the 365 billion pounds of edible food available in the United States was lost to human use” (Kantor). Also, in 1995, the largest losses included vegetables and fruits, fluid milk, and grain products. Additionally, the largest sectors of production responsible for the waste are the consumer, foodservice, and retail levels. Within these three levels there are a number of different causes that include “storage, preparation and plate waste.” For instance, a restaurant is required to throw away leftovers from meals (if the customer does not want to take it home) due to health safety standards. On the other hand, at the retail level, cans that are thrown away for dents, overstocked items, or fruits with blemishes or bruises are considered recoverable foods. In short, there are literally billions of pounds of edible food wasted every year that are otherwise perfectly edible and also nutritious.

On the contrary, these massive amounts of food waste have not been around forever. For instance, Lydia Maria Child told her readers in the 1835 edition of The American Frugal Housewife to sort food waste, “Look frequently at the pails”—the slop pails, which held pig feed—“to see that nothing is thrown to the pigs which should have been in the grease pot”—
where fats were saved for cooking and soap making. “Look to the grease pot, and see that nothing is there which might have served to nourish your family or a poorer one” (Waste and Want). In the 1800’s, there was an attitude to use and preserve everything as much as possible. Otherwise, life would be too expensive. In fact, “most Americans produced little trash before the twentieth century” (Strasser). It was not only food that was viewed as a more valuable commodity in early America, but also clothes. “Many went well beyond mending—remaking their own clothes to suit changing fashion or refashioning the legs of their husbands’ trousers into new pants for their boys. When they finally gave old clothes up, they used them as raw material for rag rugs or quilts” (Strasser). Food and clothes are so accessible at cheap prices in the twenty-first century that it has become much easier to throw them away without minding the consequences. Whereas before, actually sewing a pair of pants or a sweater or preparing a meal took time and effort, it was hard not to value food and clothing as valuable commodities.

Likewise, looking even further back, to the time of our earliest human ancestors, it was a priority to utilize and preserve everything they owned. For example, Neanderthal people “created bedding from additional furs over straw mats. Winter boots could be made from animal hides insulated with native grasses or rabbit fur and waterproofed with the fat from a wooly mammoth kill” (Soper). Additionally, they used the mammoth bones to provide the framework for their shelters. Similar to how people living in the 1800’s valued food because of the work that went into it, our earliest ancestors valued every single piece of the wooly mammoth because it probably took them huge amounts of time and effort to kill it.

The point of this essay is not to suggest that people nowadays should live like people from the Stone Age. However, asking people to consider what they throw in the trash is reasonable even if it brings no immediate change. It is the thoughtless process of throwing away waste that has caused unbelievable amounts of food waste. Additionally, this dispersion of responsibility—from the consumer to the dishwasher, to the janitor, to the truck driver (each fulfilling a respective job) is creating trouble. The issue of trash and pollution comes along with any industrialized nation.
However, wasting massive amounts of something as valuable as food is unacceptable.

Addressing hunger should be a federal and state priority because this is an issue that the world can work on and begin to fix. There are an infinite number of possible resolutions, but the trouble is redirecting the government to focus on social issues as they deal with an already crunched budget. Looking into student loans could be one possibility. Many of the loans administered to college students are federal subsidized loans which they immediately begin repaying after their education. Students should be offered a community service alternative instead of the thousands of dollars of debt. This plan would require a committee to research and decide on a specific list of service opportunities around the United States and also create a credit system to keep track of the hours each student volunteers. Ultimately, every student would be given the opportunity to serve their country through service as an alternative to repaying huge debt. Although this seems like a daunting task, it is very possible.

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It was an August night at camp Beckett almost ten years ago when my cousin Nick started having flu-like symptoms. He was extremely tired; he had a very high fever with vomiting, and it was very hard for him to move his neck. He thought some of these symptoms might have been from being over tired because he had just gotten back from a two-day hike. He went to bed, and by the next morning, he was too weak to walk. The nurse at health services thought he had come down with a bad case of the flu—that is until she lifted up his shirt to find purple blood clots covering his stomach. That’s when she immediately dialed 911.

They took Nick by aircraft to the Baystate Trauma Center in Springfield, Massachusetts. By the time Nick got there, his blood pressure had dropped to almost zero, and the purple blood clots that were on his stomach were quickly spreading to other parts of his body. His organs were shutting down. The doctors diagnosed Nick with meningococcal meningitis, which is a disease that leaves nearly a third of those affected either brain damaged or dead (Kenny 1). When Nick’s parents arrived at the hospital, the doctors told them that Nick wouldn’t live to see dawn. This was a fourteen-year-old kid who loved to hang out with his friends, scuba dive, and play the bagpipes and was now lying in a hospital with a priest standing over him giving the last rights.

Bacterial Meningitis is defined as an infection of the fluid in the spinal cord and the fluid that surrounds the brain (Sande 17). This illness is found worldwide and can affect anyone from infants to seniors. Meningitis is an illness that is increasing in college students and teenagers. Many people
don’t know the dangers of meningitis or how to get it, so our country should educate parents and students about the disease. The United States has tried in some ways to help prevent meningitis by creating a vaccine; however, this vaccine only protects against four strains of meningitis, and more research should go into protecting against the other strains.

This deadly disease has been infecting people of all ages for one hundred years, and the incidence has greatly increased over time. In 1805, the first outbreak of this rare disease occurred in Geneva, Switzerland; however, it wasn’t until 1887 that the bacterium that causes Bacterial Meningitis was identified as Neisseria Meningitis (Tunkel 10). Between 1900 and 1910, seventy-five to eighty percent of people who contracted the illness died. Only twenty percent of the people who became infected survived. That was when this illness became more of a threat to humanity. In 1978, a vaccine became available that protected against Bacterial Meningitis. This led to the United States Army vaccinating all recruits against Bacterial Meningitis in 1982 (Root 2). Creating a vaccine against this illness was a big step in preventing meningitis. But the problem was that not many people knew of this new vaccine. Doctors were not telling their patients because it was not a requirement. They considered meningitis to be a small issue compared to all the other illnesses. The vaccine is eighty-five percent effective against four of the five strains of meningitis; it lasts three to five years, and costs approximately sixty-five dollars (Tunkel 110). This vaccine could have prevented many deaths if there had been a law passed mandating everyone to get the information. For those who do not believe in vaccines because of religious reasons, there could be a government-sanctioned exception.

There are approximately three thousand cases of Bacterial Meningitis a year, and it is most commonly found in teenagers and college students because kissing, sharing water bottles, Chap Stick, and food are common occurrences at this age. The typical way to contract this illness is from nose and mouth discharge, something which teenagers are constantly exposed to (Reynolds 3). Once a person is exposed to the illness, death can result in twenty-four hours. The terrifying thing about contracting this illness is that people can be carriers of the virus, so anyone they come in contact with could pass on the illness. When meningitis enters one’s body, “the organ-
ism is disseminated through the bloodstream and spreads to the cerebral spinal fluid” (Tunkel 110). After the illness is in the bloodstream, the person can develop a fever, lethargy, headache, stiff neck, eye sensitivity to light, skin rashes, and seizures (Kenny 3). The person’s infected body can start shutting down quickly after the symptoms start. If one is lucky enough to survive, there is severe damage that can happen to the body. In her magazine article, “Meningitis Scare,” Karen Manning writes, “Survivors can suffer long-term complications, including hearing loss, mental retardation, paralysis, and seizures” (4). These complications from the virus are harsh and can change a person’s life forever. After contracting meningitis, it can take several months in rehabilitation centers to get adjusted to the changes that have happened to one’s body.

My cousin Nick was in a coma for two months after he first got sick. Seventeen surgeries later, he finally woke up and looked down to see that both his arms from the elbow down, and his legs from right about the knee, had been amputated. It was devastating for Nick’s parents to tell their son what happened to him while he was in a coma. What was truly upsetting to Nick and his parents was the fact that this tragedy could have been avoided. When interviewed for a New York Times article, Nick said, “My parents didn’t know there was a vaccine that could have prevented me from getting this terrible disease, and they didn’t know that by sending me to summer camp, they were putting me in a high-risk situation” (5). It is evident from Nick’s quote that Meningitis is not given adequate attention, and people in the United States are not informed and educated enough about the disease. Some people don’t even know there is a vaccine that could prevent them from contracting the illness. This makes meningitis an increasing problem.

Meningitis is also a problem because not enough money is put into research and cures for the illness. Since 1989, thirteen million dollars have been spent on meningitis research (Warren 1). In the present day, money that could be used for research on this illness is instead going to such expenditures as the Iraq War and to fighting other illness such as cancer. Although cancer is a large problem and the U.S. should not cut down on funding for this disease, it should also place more effort into research for meningitis as well. With more time and money for meningitis research, this
could speed a cure for all meningitis variations because right now the vaccine only prevents four strains of the disease and cannot be given to infants under the age of two. “The vaccine is not 100% effective, but [it is] 85-95% effective against four of five main sero-groups in the US-A, C, Y, W135” (Sande 105). This leaves strain B of meningitis unprotected, thus leaving people with the chance of getting the illness and spreading it. It is clear that because of the lack of money and interest in research, meningitis will continue to be a problem in the United States until more concentration and effort is put into its prevention.

There are many changes that the United States can make that would greatly help so that fewer people would be affected by meningitis. First, they can make sure that the people in our country are informed about the dangers of the illness, how it is spread, and that there is a vaccination. They can do this by creating organizations that visit schools, informing students and parents of the illness. Also, the U.S. can print pamphlets to be given out by doctors, so that people are being informed about the illness. One change that would help prevent meningitis is if the U.S. passed a law saying that every teenager attending college must receive the vaccine. Right now, in Connecticut and Massachusetts, it is a requirement that students get the vaccination before going to school (Root 2). If this were to happen everywhere, the mortality rate for meningitis would see a decrease; everyone can help with the fight against meningitis by informing others of the disease.

Certainly, the research and immunizations for meningitis have come a long way since 1805 when it was first discovered, but there can still be efforts made to help stop the outbreaks of this illness. With more time, money, and awareness of the bacterial infection, more improvements in research and preventions are sure to be found. Preventing this disease is not something that will be easy, but with education it will help prevent future outbreaks of this problem. Last year, there were approximately three thousand cases of bacterial meningitis and that number keeps increasing. No one deserves to have life taken away by such a devastating ailment.

My cousin Nick has come a long way since he first got sick almost ten years ago. He has gone to college, adapted to his new life with his disability, and has never allowed not having any arms and legs to stop him from
doing an activity. He recently just got back from China after winning the gold medal in the Paralympics wheel chair rugby games. As for Nick's parents, they are part of the National Meningitis Association, which is trying to inform everyone about the illness and help to get laws passed mandating the vaccination. Watching Nick get sick and go from hospitals, to burn units, to rehab centers showed me how terrible this illness is. Nick never should have had to go through that terrifying experience and neither should anyone else. Nick’s story should prove to people how devastating this illness is and how it needs more attention than it is getting.

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A SUSTAINABLE SUBURBIA

Mai Kimya Hedayat-Zadeh

In many ways, the state of our environment is a reflection of its people. It reflects our lifestyle, our habits, and our values. Architect Louis Khan understood this when he created an urban design plan for Central Philadelphia in the 1950s, which suffered from “half-a-century of inactive planning and the city’s critical state of decay” (Arkaraprasertkul 178). The historic city of Philadelphia “dealt with problems of not only community collapse, due to the departure of industries and original occupants, but also an inefficient traffic system and inefficient parking spaces for the modern era of motor cars” (Arkaraprasertkul 184). Recognizing Philadelphia’s venerated roots and envisioning an equally great future, Kahn’s design plan for the city sought to replace the inefficient traffic system blocking Philadelphia from a brighter future. Kahn proposed a “walking city”: “Cars would enter the city from a high speed roadway and park at the ramped parking garage, then they would take public transportation provided along the low-vehicular congestion block system to the inner part of the city, creating a modern mode of transportation and allocating the backstreets to pedestrians” (Arkaraprasertkul 185). City planner Edmund Bacon who believed the design to be unrealistic and inconsiderate of the social needs and “public realm” of the city disputed Kahn’s plan (Arkaraprasertkul 178). Though Kahn’s plan may have been drastically different from the usual design of cities, I agree with Massachusetts Institute of Technology Professor Non Arkaraprasertkul in saying that Kahn’s plan was realistic and could have been the most beneficial design for Philadelphia (Arkaraprasertkul 178). I also believe that while this exact design may not apply to all regions, the idea and concepts used to create a spiritually aesthetic, practical, and sustainable
Much of the restructuring of the suburbs and exurbs involves thinking in new ways about transportation, which accounts for much of our environmental and financial woes. According to policy director Maria Zimmerman of Transportation for America, "a coalition which aims to create a world-class transportation system in the U.S.," transportation is the second highest household expense (Zimmerman 1). The nonprofit organization Reconnecting America's call for a "radical restructuring of the way Americans live and get to work" that is not "centered around the automobile" validates Zimmerman's arguments. Their study found that people living in far out exurban communities were spending 25% of their income on transportation, while people living in urban neighborhoods closer to jobs with the option of taking the bus/train or biking/walking spend only 9% of their income—16% percent less—on transportation (Now: “Driven to Despair”). On top of this, evidence suggests that the mortgage crisis was stimulated by transportation cost: “Right about the time gas prices went over $2.00 a gallon, housing prices began to tank. And [it] dropped most heavily in suburban fringe areas around the country... where homeowners have the longest commutes” (Now: “Driven to Despair”).

For this reason, more organizations, architects, planners, and environmental advocates are now turning their attention to restructuring the suburbs (Zimmerman 1). “The problem is that we’ve sprawled too far out. Currently, the connection between jobs and housing has gotten to be very difficult. And with concern[s] about climate change, and especially rising gas prices, it’s no longer tenable for people to drive those kinds of distances,” said vice president of Reconnecting America Gloria Ohland. Thus, the environmentally and financially conscious are seeking to reestablish a connection between jobs and housing through a restructuring of transportation system[s] and a shift in cultural thought about travel: as Zimmerman asserts, “As a critical first step, we need to make a commitment to building an infrastructure for the future on a scale similar to the one we made to the Interstate Highway system 50 years ago. But this time, we need to focus on completing our transportation system with inter-city trains, world-class
public transportation and streets that are safe for walking and biking, as we restore our existing roads and bridges to good repair” (Zimmerman 1).

Increasingly, suburbs/exurbs are starting to envision and implement sustainable structures in neighborhoods and communities. Meridian Village of South Pasadena, California is one example of this endeavor (Urban Land Institute 1). Collaboration between public and private sectors made the design of South Pasadena around a public transit system and a few specific types of housing models successful (Urban Land Institute 1). “The partnership that the private development entity (Creative Housing Associates, Lambert Development, and Wells Fargo Bank Capital Markets Group) formed with the city of South Pasadena, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proved to be the glue that made this remarkable mixed-use, transit-oriented project possible” (Urban Land Institute 1). Though houses tend to be smaller, families like transportation planner Dolores Roybal Satarelli’s manage just fine, actually much better than before: “The scale is…pedestrian” (Now: “Driven to Despair”). All essential needs—a bakery, a pharmacy, stores—are a short bus ride away” (Now: “Driven to Despair”). The Satarelli’s even sold their second car because the public transit system in South Pasadena is so convenient (Now: “Driven to Despair”). The ideas involved in planning a design like South Pasadena’s are actually similar on many levels to Louis Kahn’s vision for Philadelphia: it is a design which takes into account the practical, social, and spiritual needs of an environment and the people living in it. In other words, both Kahn’s design for Philadelphia and the restructuring of South Pasadena represent a symbiotic relationship between the environment and residents. Satarelli agrees that the redesign of South Pasadena has improved personal aspects of her and her family’s life, as well as taking environmental issues into consideration: “I grew up having a very long commute from where I went to school and where I lived [. . .] it took three hours—three hours out of my day. And I never really got to enjoy my neighborhood very much. So I said, as an adult, I really want something different. I don’t want to make commuting my life’s— destiny, I guess” (Now: “Driven to Despair”).

At the same time, commuting by car has become most of America’s destiny, especially in the suburbs and exurbs; it will be difficult to implement
sustainable designs and structures without the cooperation of suburbanites. Currently, there are a number of unsustainable systems within suburbs. Having grown up in a suburban area, the most significant lifestyle issue for me was the need to drive literally everywhere. Many adults in suburban areas that I knew worked 45 minutes to an hour, sometimes more, away from the town; it was common to see a full-size bus with only four or five people on it because the rest of the school population was driving to and from school, even if they didn’t have a job or a sport practice to get to; and parents, including mine, were almost something like chauffeurs, giving their license-less children rides to school—rides virtually everywhere. Driving is a cultural part of the suburbs. It’s weird, even dorky, to take the bus if you are a junior or senior, and for everyone else it is simply the norm to drive everywhere, even if the destination is just down the street. Nevertheless, however “normal” these behaviors and patterns are, we suburbanites need to re-consider whether these behaviors should continue to be the norm, especially since each generation of suburban-raised children will learn to emulate this kind of lifestyle. Perhaps we would do well to consider the advice of environmentally conscious architects and planners like Sim Van der Ryn:

There is no more important community design problem than the redesign and adaptation of the American suburb—the symbol and logos of American affluence and technology and growth in the past forty years. Yet, suburbs are alien territory for most designers. They seem to resist the best intentions we have for them...The literature of planning, design, and social history is replete with criticism of suburban sprawl and its social, ecological and aesthetic effect...It is a pattern that began with the large-scale development in the year following World War II of single-family housing on large tracts of land—the ‘subdivision,’ and since has extended to the creation of an entire auto-centered way of life . . . (74).
Of course, the enthusiasm and cooperation of suburbanites and exurbanites are not the only requisites for designing environmentally, financially, and spiritually conscious systems. Funding and planning among architects, planners, public and private sectors and state governments are necessary as well. However, the consensus of individuals living in suburban and exurban communities is the starting point for such funding and planning. As suburbanites and exurbanites, our recognition and support of sustainable systems will be the basis and the fuel for greater action and implementation of these plans. After all, “We are the people” (*Grapes of Wrath*). We have a voice to express how we envision our communities and towns in the future. We can instigate systematic change to create a positive relationship between people and the environment. We can call for a system that reflects positively on the people living in it.

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“Slide or die” is one of my favorite sayings. It encompasses all I am working towards right now. Thousands of dollars have been spent already, and thousands more need to be spent before completion of my drift machine. My ultimate dream is to become a professional drifter. This dream is shared by thousands of other people throughout the United States, and drifting is growing in popularity across the globe. But not all people who are into drifting can actually do it. There are many people out there who resort to other forms of racing in order to achieve their need for speed, i.e. street racing. These people destroy their cars, endanger other people's lives as well as their own, and are sometimes forced to pay hefty fines once caught, or even have their cars taken away, permanently. As a huge car guy, I would never street race, but other people out there think the law doesn't apply to them. Drifting will help contain the number of street racers because it provides a safer alternative, is a lot more technical than street racing, and one can learn a lot about driving while doing it, which is the ultimate goal of being a racer.

History of Drifting and the Sport Today

Drifting was created in the mountains, aka touge, of Japan back in the mid 1970s. Street racers would go out to the secluded mountains where very few people ever drove their cars. They would use these mountain passes to slide around the ever winding turns of the touge. Here they practiced their drifting skills, copying the movements of rally drivers; the only difference was that these drivers were doing it on dry pavement, not dirt or snow. These drivers also used rear wheel drive vehicles such as the AE86...
Toyota Corolla and the early Nissan Skylines. The touge ranged from very easy courses to extreme courses where the drivers could hone their drifting skills. Granted, drifting on a mountain is not the safest idea, but these people did it effectively. Today in Japan, there are several touge still used for drifting. The most famous driver of those days, Keiichi Tsuchiya, has been dubbed the “Drift King” or “Dori kin” in Japanese. He is retired now and is a Judge for the D1 Grand Prix in Japan (Wikipedia).

Today’s drifting is all about points and showing off to the crowd. Unlike other motor sports, where the individual who comes in first place wins, drifting is all about who can impress the judges the best. The judges look for entry speed, duration of the drift, angle, and how close you can get to the other car without contact. Drifting competitions originally started in Japan but have now gone worldwide. In America, we have the more famous Formula D series, but there are several other drift series that have specific personal championships. Formula D started back in 2004. It was created after the first ever drift event took place in 2003 at Irwindale Speedway.

This event was the famous D1 Grand prix. The event was a huge success and drifting has been booming in America ever since (Wikipedia, formulad.com).

**The Cars of Drifting**

The cars used in drifting are very important. Drifting is not a motor sport where you have to have a car with a tremendous amount of horsepower. Although huge horsepower does help, it is not a necessity. The cars must be rear wheel drive in order to drift effectively, although it is possible to drift with front wheel drive and four wheel drive cars. All of the cars in major competitions are rear wheel drive. Some of the cars used in drifting include: Nissan Skyline, 240sx/Silvia, Cefiro, 350z; Toyota Corolla (AE86), Supra, MR2; Mazda Rx7, Rx8, Miata; BMW 3series, 5 series; and the Ford Mustang, Pontiac Solstice, GTO, and many more. All of these cars are rear wheel drive and are very good drift machines. I personally have a Nissan 240sx now turned Silvia, outfitted with a $5,000 Japanese SR20DET motor. My car will be used for drifting on the track once the swap is completed. A lot of other people who tune their vehicles for drift
usually do go to a track, but there are also a lot of people who tune their cars that don’t drift. They street race.

**The Problem: Street Racing**

Street racing has been around for a very long time. The bad boys of the muscle car era, with their huge Hemi big blocks and their Hurst-Shifting monsters, were the first ever street racers. These guys went out to the streets and raced their hot rods for pink slips, money, and respect. The same applies to the street racers of our era. The cars may be different, but the principle is the same, and that is to prove you are the fastest and to win. Today, street racing is done all over the United States. The venues for street racing include open highways, public streets, or secluded back alleys. Street racing is very dangerous because it involves very high speeds and risky maneuvers. Street racing also puts innocent people’s lives in danger. There is an added risk of wrecking your car and even your life. If the racers are lucky enough, they get off with speeding tickets that range from a couple hundred to a couple thousand dollars! A friend of mine got his license suspended for several months because of street racing, and he cannot live without driving his car! Lucky for me, I have never been stopped by the cops for speeding or street racing, and I never will because I believe that it is wrong. Drag racing is not my type of sport. Drifting, believe it or not, is a much safer alternative than street racing.

**Different Strokes for Different Folks**

Now to be fair, drifting can be done on the streets as well, but it is a lot harder to pull off than driving in a straight line. Japanese street racers drift their touges and streets still today, and it is a huge problem in Japan. As shown in the videos “Real Street Drift” and “Dr1ft. Jp :: Osaka Touge Drift,” street racers use their skills to drift around the touge and public roads. The reason for this is that drifting originated in Japan almost thirty years ago and has been around ever since. Street drag racing evolved in the United States almost fifty years ago, so it is almost like another American pastime. But street racing is a huge problem in America.
The Safer Alternative

There are several places across the nation where people can do drifting in a safe environment. The cost is a lot less than a speeding ticket. There are also organizations that teach how to drift in special places like small tracks or parking lots. Organizations like Drift Day have actual Formula D drivers come out and teach amateur drifters proper techniques (driftday.com). To be next to a Formula D driver is an experience in itself, but to have him teach you how to drift is memorable for life. There are also amateur events that let people come out to show their skills in a safe environment. Club Loose allows drivers to drift in a huge closed off parking lot outside Englishtown Speedway in New Jersey (clubloose.com). These events allow drivers to test their skills and refine their techniques. Some drivers go on to participate in the small series or even graduate to the professional series Formula D (driftday.com).

The Safer Alternative 2

Drifting’s technicality is what will help stop street racing. Since drifting has become more and more popular over the years, more people are starting to go to tracks instead of racing on streets. Drifting is all about getting the car sideways, and there are many ways of doing so. There are easy techniques, which include Side Brake, Shift Lock, and Power Over, which all beginners usually use. There are also some advanced techniques like Feint, Braking Drift, and Lift Off which usually require higher speeds. The other thing about drifting that makes it safer than street racing are the speeds used. If you are drifting at a small course/track, then you are looking at an average speed of about 30-40mph. At the professional level, the average speeds are about 70-90mph on bigger tracks and with high horsepower cars. The entry level drifters would be in the first speed range. Street racing has average speeds of 80-100 mph and that is for low horsepower cars. For cars such as Suprass and Skylines (which are capable of 700+ wheel horsepower), this translates to average speeds of 120mph on the street! These speeds are not acceptable on public roadways and are very dangerous to control. Drifting is a lot slower, but it is a lot more exciting at the same time (Wikipedia).
Conclusion

With all the deaths and injuries that street racing causes each year, there must be a safer alternative in place. Drifting is the answer to the problem. Drifting offers many advantages, such as improvement of the individual’s driving technical skills, the numerous safe places to drive, and the growing popularity of the sport in the United States. Drifting and its followers will continue to “Slide or Die” for years to come, and it will draw attention away from the motor sports world. As more people become involved in Drifting, this could ultimately reduce the number of street racers terrorizing our roads and highways.

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This past summer, I visited New York City with a few of my friends. We decided to go to a midnight stand up comedy show that featured six comedians. The show was very well received, the audience loved it, and I was laughing pretty hard along with them. Not surprisingly though, all six comedians, as well as the host, were men.

Studying and participating in comedy is something that I have always loved to do. I have performed improvisation, played roles in comedic plays, and spent hours watching all different genres of comedy. In my experience of watching and looking up to professional comedians, I have noticed that the great majority of them (and the most successful and popular ones) are male. I began from a very early age to associate humor with maleness, and as I grew older, it became increasingly difficult for me to be confident as a female comedic performer. I became more insecure not only because there were few female comedians for me to look up to, but also because I began to realize that there was an unofficial general consensus that women just are not very funny.

Over the past couple years, there has been a lot of controversy about cultural critic Christopher Hitchens's article in *Vanity Fair* entitled “Why Women Aren’t Funny,” which discusses this previously mentioned general consensus. I have read many online blogs, Internet journals, and magazine
articles by women responding to the article in anger, including *Vanity Fair*’s own Alessandra Stanley in the magazine’s April 2008 edition that featured comedians Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, and Sarah Silverman on the cover. Hitchens has also read these critical reviews. The unrepentant comedian has made his retort through a video response entitled, “Why Women Still Aren’t Funny,” in which he makes a jab about how he should write a sequel to his first article on the subject called “Why Some Women Apparently Can’t Even Read.”

Hitchens believes that the women who disagree with his argument, such as Stanley, have misunderstood his point. I would agree that some women have misunderstood, though others have had legitimate qualms with his argument. The title “Why Women Aren’t Funny” is not really an accurate representation of the article’s content, for Hitchens admits that he thinks women can be funny and that there are, and have been, female comedians who are truly funny. However, the reason why these women are considered funny, he claims, is that they emulate male humor.

I have my own personal problems with parts of his article, namely his mentioning of Stanford University School of Medicine’s “research” about how “some brain regions were activated more in women” during comedic experiments, as his evidence for male and female difference in comedy (Hitchens). For all the intellectual acclaim that institutions such as Stanford have, it is so surprising to me that they would take men and women, who have been intensely socialized along a rigid binary throughout their lives with separate values, experiences, and opportunities, and then claim that men and women’s mental reactions are different due to brain chemistry.

He also rails about certain unfunny subjects that women like to talk about, such as their newborn children and, apparently, the dreams they had last night. Why does Hitchens think that when women are talking about these things that they are trying to be funny? Another criticism is that he only reviews women’s senses of humor in regard to a male audience, without ever considering what other females may find funny. He speaks about how men can make each other laugh in all-male company more easily than in mixed company. Could he not take this same logic and consider that women could be funnier in an all female crowd? The issue here is that
“male” is the norm in society, and so the only opinion usually taken into consideration is the male opinion. Therefore, to impress a man with humor is to impress what is regarded as the “general” audience.

The only portion of his article that I think makes a valid point is in the beginning when he mentions that there is less of a need for a woman to be funny in order to be socially valued. I think that the many women who responded to Hitchens’s article are not only angered by his narrow logic, along with his insensitivity, but are also angered at the reality of living in a society where women are valued for their physical attractiveness above all else, while men are valued for their talents. Put succinctly, men are listened to, and then looked at; women are looked at, and then listened to.

This unfair treatment follows female comedians, like Kristen Schaal, when trying to get booked for television shows. In the interview “Pretty Funny,” conducted by Emily McCombs in BUST Magazine, Schaal recalls a time when network executives put her physical attractiveness before her talent: “They were like, ‘we’re not interested in doing shows with female leads.’ So I was like, ‘Well, what about Sarah Silverman?’ and they were like, ‘Well, she’s really sexy.’ I was like, ‘You could have just said you don’t like the idea!’” (McCombs 60). I suppose the executives could have said that they did not like the idea, but the actual content of Schaal’s pitch was barely on their radar. All they saw was “woman in a leading role,” which they have come to know as a weak attraction to a (male) audience unless the woman is “hot” enough to hold their attention. Again the default audience is male, with no consideration of how a female audience would respond. In fear of signing on for a show that would have few viewers, these executives unapologetically made a statement about the typical American audience; a generalization indeed, but one with quite a bit of substance: a woman must appeal to the audience’s eyes before she can reach their ears.

Female comic Fran Lebowitz, who was contacted by Hitchens in order to prepare for his article, articulates the different scales from which men and women are measured. She explains, “The cultural values are male; for a woman to say a man is funny is the equivalent of a man saying that a woman is pretty” (Hitchens). With so much value placed on female beauty, is it any wonder that women go to extraordinary lengths to keep their bodies looking youthful, their faces covered in make-up, and their
wastelines fashionably thin? When do women have the time to tweak their comedic skills when they are so busy keeping up with looking acceptable to the male gaze? This being so, men in general are able to devote much of their energy to improving their sense of humor, while women will use up most of their energy attaining beauty. This is not to say that women inherently cannot be funny, but rather that society pressures them to put their energies elsewhere.

What happens, then, with women who do not pass the standard beauty test? They must find some other way to attract attention and acceptance, and this outlet may be humor. This has been recognized by comedians like Joan Rivers, who said that, “Any successful female comedian was not beautiful as a child” (Rems 16). Of course, this is a generalization, but one that makes a lot of sense. If a young girl cannot rely on her appearance for social value, then she will work to develop skills in order to attain value in another way.

Hitchens bluntly makes this point early in his article: “In any case, my argument doesn’t say that there are no decent women comedians. Most of them, though, when you come to review the situation, are hefty or dykey or Jewish, or some combo of the three” (Hitchens). These women, maybe because they were able to divert relying on their looks, are the ones who have developed the skills for comedy. If you take Hitchens’s view that the best female comedians are conventionally unattractive and masculine to be true, add to that the experience of Schaal where networks are uninterested in women who are not considered “sexy,” and what do you get? A huge underrepresentation of women in comedy. Either you’re not man enough to be funny, or you’re not woman enough to be even looked at, so get off the stage please.

A successful comedian must not only have talent, but also the confidence to deliver the material in such a way that will make the audience laugh. This is another area where men have an advantage over women. Generally speaking, women are not only less sure of their competencies in front of an audience, but also have the added obstacle of feeling self-conscious about their looks. Anne Hole references feminist author Barbara Brook in her article, “Performing Identity: Dawn French and the Funny Fat Female Body.” Brooks points out this added sense of self-consciousness
that women have that men do not. She writes, “Women’s bodies are organized by a heterosexual economy in which ‘beauty’ is defined as heterosexual attractiveness and women ‘interiorise’ the surveillance of an imagined male observer” (Hole 316).

British critic John Berger claims, “Men act, and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at” (Hole 316). Again, the female focus is forced to shift from the content of her own comedic material to the self-conscious gaze. This is a hurdle that is much higher for women than for men and surely accounts for the lower numbers of women even daring to become comedians.

Some women can move beyond these limitations, such as Roseanne Barr, whose lack of conventional attractiveness does not seem to hinder her confidence in front of a crowd. What is interesting about Barr, though, (and true to Hitchens’s word) is that her stage persona reflects a typically masculine character that is loud, fat, unconcerned with beauty, and unapologetic. Ironically, it is this masculine persona that has enabled Barr to be considered funny, but at the same time largely disliked. It is as though the public is uncomfortable with a woman of this character.

What would happen if you took every part of Barr’s personality and made her into a man? Would America be more willing to accept her? Not only would she be more acceptable, but she would also be considered funnier. Oh, and her name would be Larry the Cable Guy. Roseanne Barr is basically the female equivalent of blue-collar stand up comedian Daniel Lawrence Whitney (better known by his stage name Larry), but in a world of gender inequality, this type of math just does not calculate.

In their article “Toward an Understanding of Humor as Popular Culture in American Society,” Stephen Hall, Larry Keeter, and Jennifer Williamson discuss the popular male rejection of Barr as a comedian. They write, “Roseanne Barr’s humor is rejected by the male power structure which refuses to acknowledge and accept the obesity, strong ego and frankness of a woman” (Hall, Keeter, and Williamson 5). Again, it is not the style of Barr’s comedy that is being rejected; it is the fact that the content is coming from a woman.

Returning to “Performing Identity,” Anne Hole also comments on the audience’s reaction to the large, powerful female body: “It is precisely
mature femaleness that the fat female body forces into view, causing a dis-
taste or disgust born of anxiety at the power she thereby embodies” (Hole 318). Not only is Roseanne Barr physically large, but what she is convey-
ing through her comedic rhetoric is quite large also. Her bold refusal to
give in to what society dictates a woman should be is as intimidating as her
broad physique.

Powerful women like Barr are ridiculed in American society, possibly
out of fear that they may disturb the capitalistic white patriarchy that caters
to men at the expense of women. Strong female politicians, such as Hillary
Clinton, are also met with public hostility. Clinton is constantly ridiculed
in the media for being unfeminine because she frequently wears pantsuits,
cuts her hair short, and speaks in a deep, authoritative voice. Ironically, it is
popularly believed that this is a deliberate attempt on Clinton’s part to be
taken seriously in the heavily male-dominated world of American politics.

In addition to being chastised for her masculinity, she is also equally
chastised for her status as a woman. On January fourth of this election year,
Fox News’ Your World gave airtime to author Marc Rudov’s incredibly sex-
ist opinions about why Hillary Clinton lost the male vote during the pri-
mary democratic election in Iowa. Rudov’s central argument was as follows:
“When Barack Obama speaks, men hear, ‘Take off for the future.’ And
when Hillary Clinton speaks, men hear, ‘Take out the garbage.’ Rudov
apparently speaks for all men in America when he claims: “men won’t vote
for Hillary Clinton because she reminds them of their nagging wives.”

Rudov, who has written the book Under the Clitoral Hood: How to
Crank Her Engine without Cash, Booze, or Jumper Cables, is claiming that
the male rejection of Clinton has nothing to do with her policies, experi-
ence, or credentials, but rather has everything to do with men’s prejudices
against women. Whether there is any real substance to Rudov’s perception
of American men or not, one thing remains clear: this situation seems
eerily similar to Kristen Schaal’s attempt at closing a deal with television
executives. Clinton and Schaal are both auditioning for a position, and
Rudov and the people in charge of the network are both saying that each
has no chance of being heard by an American male audience because of
their gender.
The struggle of the strong female politician is very similar to the struggle of the strong female comedian, especially since comedy can often act as a soapbox for addressing political and social issues that are in need of change. In her article, “Feminist Humor: Rebellious and Self-Affirming,” Hofstra University professor Lisa Merrill writes, “Consequently, satire, irony and comedy pointedly directed can wield enormous social and political power. However, women have been discouraged from embracing this form at even its most basic level, the telling of a joke” (Merrill 272). Whether comically or politically, or both, women’s voices are silenced and their opinions invalidated as their physical appearance takes precedence. What is incredibly ironic and frustrating about this situation is that this injustice done to women needs to be shouted loudly on top of a soapbox for everyone to hear, yet the message will be lost by the nagging voices and manly demeanor that we strong women have.

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Given the progression of student writing through the semester that includes drawing upon lived experience in Unit I, to critical examination of other writers’ works in Unit II, followed by an introduction to a research-based project that adds the student’s own context to a conversation, Unit IV is, in some ways, a culmination of writing styles and skills learned in the previous units. This unit offers students the opportunity to engage in writing that considers multiple possibilities. Unit IV allows the student to envision the world in new ways through their writing. This unit demonstrates how any medium is a source for written articulation. The writing in this unit is varied and diverse as it considers several media including visual art, music, digital storytelling, investigative journalism, the personal journal, and architecture as a source of focus. Unit IV allows students to see and understand that verbal, aural, or material representations are text for further observation and critical written commentary.

One essay selected for this unit is called “Wspomnienie (A Memory),” and it draws upon journal writing. This essay demonstrates how personal memory and journaling can be effectively transcribed not only into coherent prose but analytical prose. Flashback sequences are used to establish a reflective tone in the writing. The writing illustrates a well-crafted balance between sensitive recollections as it avoids the sentimental. Other essays contextualize parts of the UMass campus, illuminating their fascinating histories as well as allowing students to reflect on the purposes the buildings serve, and how they reflect the values instilled in students at UMass. Finally, a student reflects on a special event in his life, analyzing its larger significance in the context of his culture's history, values, and identity. Essays selected for this unit offer a broad range of student submissions that exemplify and showcase the breadth of writing possibilities.
MUCH MORE THAN
A BODY OF WATER

Alyssa Conley

E ach day, thousands of UMass Amherst students and Amherst residents walk by the campus pond. The pond is located in the center of campus, surrounded by the library, fine arts center, and campus center. Thus, it serves as a central landmark, not only physically, but also symbolically. Whether it is used as a shortcut to the other side of campus, or a place to relax and admire the scenery and wildlife, everyone is aware of its existence, and its role as the center of campus and community. The pond was constructed in 1893, and its design and building process included students and alumni who all worked together to improve the campus aesthetically, economically, and recreationally. Due to the long and difficult process of creating the pond in the middle of campus, it not only serves as a decoration, but also as a symbol of The University of Massachusetts Amherst’s emphasis on unity and hard work.

In June of 1892, it was decided that a dam would be constructed to create an artificial pond in the center of campus. These efforts were led by William Wheeler, E. W. Wood, and Henry Hill Goodell. In 1893, the construction was nearly complete, and it was soon realized that the pond would be able to serve as even more than just an improvement in appearance. In the *Thirtieth Annual Report of the Massachusetts Agricultural College*, an article entitled “Report of the Horticultural Department” stated that “The necessity for large quantities of ice for dairy purposes, and in the cold storage room for the preservation of fruit, led to the construc-
tion of a dam across the little stream flowing through the college grounds” (14). As a result of constructing this stone dam, both students and faculty were able to work together, cutting blocks of ice from the pond each winter to refrigerate dairy and fruit products. Through incorporating economical needs and hard work, the pond became a symbol of care and problem solving, two values that are instilled in all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Students embraced the new campus pond in numerous ways. During the winters, the pond served as an ice skating rink; in 1909, intercollegiate hockey games and speed skating competitions were played there. Additionally, a Winter Carnival weekend was held each year in which ice sculptures were constructed and people figure and speed skated. Events such as these brought the community together and made the pond an essential landmark in the university’s campus.

The campus pond not only benefited the community as a whole, but also individual groups. As a way of identifying class, students would participate in freshman and sophomore “rope pulls”; the freshmen were on one side and the sophomores on the other, and they would attempt to pull each other in. The victorious teams won by keeping their clothes dry, while the other team went back to their dorms sopping wet. Along these lines, though not as innocent, fraternities would organize “freshman duckings” in which they would launch freshmen pledges into the water during the middle of the night, usually in cooler weather. Forms of torture such as this were often used involving the campus pond. Another example, one that is quite hilarious, was that older students would make freshmen girls go to the pond all day with live worms to catch fish that did not exist in the tiny pond. This harmless humiliation brought students together, as they either had to suffer, or laugh, as one.

Friendly competition was not the only way students found to identify with the campus pond. In fact, those who were into sports were able to help make this symbol of the UMass community a work of art. In 1984, the university decided that it was necessary to make a bridge in front of the Fine Arts Center so that people could walk back and forth, and gain access to the pond’s little island. They surveyed the public and eventually came up with a design that was agreeable to all. They chose sculptor
George Trakas to design what would later be called the “Isle of View.” Trakas was chosen due to his main objective “to slowly draw people in and make them part of the space.” In order to accomplish this sense of place, he put large flat rocks on the island as a comfortable place for people to relax and enjoy the scenery. This effort was especially crucial to the development of the campus pond because in 1971, it was decided that the pond was unsafe for skating. The decision was made because “the water [was] coming from underground and moving water in warm conditions, so the ice [was] not really thick enough” (The Daily Collegian 3). Thus, a piece of art that also provided a way for the public to enjoy the pond was key. The UMass Amherst community’s appreciation for art and creativity was evident in the celebration of the “Isle of View.” In fact, the permanent artwork designed by Trakas was the main exhibit at the tenth anniversary celebration of the Fine Arts Center. This piece of art, a symbol of the university’s appreciation of a large scope of talents, still maintains its value on campus today.

As a freshman at The University of Massachusetts Amherst, the pond has become a place that I love to go to relax, whether it is alone or with friends. Like me, many students and faculty feel the same way. In fact, many volunteer to maintain the pond’s upkeep. They go around and collect trash that has been left around it that may endanger the wildlife, and they also help to clean up the edges. The Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group is one such organization that has participated in maintaining the campus pond. In fact, in 2002, 80 people gathered and went through brush, mud, and water for an hour and a half to do an environmental cleanup. A school in New England must be concerned for the environment, and it is clearly illustrated in this effort, as students took time to help clean up part of the planet. The joining of students in support of one cause is something that UMass takes pride in and supports, and the campus pond, the focal point of UMass Amherst’s community, helped to do this.

Throughout the years, the campus pond has become an essential landmark in identifying not only the physical landscape of The University of Massachusetts Amherst’s campus, but also in identifying the people. The extensive process and overall enjoyment of the pond symbolizes many
aspects of the UMass community. All of the values exemplified through the history of the pond represent the overall emphasis the university places on community.

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The Murray D. Lincoln Campus Center: A Symbol of Student Involvement

Dominic Emilian

The oddly contrasting architecture all around the campus makes the University of Massachusetts Amherst unique. There are a handful of buildings that just don’t fit into the natural landscape of Western Massachusetts. When I walked past the Campus Center for the first time, I asked myself, “What the hell were they thinking?” However, when I entered the building on “First Week,” I found that it was the center of student activities at UMass Amherst. The Campus Center is lively and diverse, and I have appreciated the atmosphere inside of the Lincoln Campus Center since I first walked in. Looking beyond its rough exterior, I found that its location on the campus is the center of student life, and embodies the University’s principles of getting involved, speaking out, and giving back to your community.

From the outside, the building looks like it belongs in Government Center, Boston. Its structure is made mostly of cement, contrasting with the surrounding trees and hills of the area. When I walked by the entrance for the first time, it looked like the building was some sort of bunker. The first floor of the building is more like a basement than ground level, built almost thirty feet below the normal ground level on campus. Rising above the surrounding walkways, I saw a large patio completely bare of any type of life. On the contrary, a grassy hill right next to the building accommodated myriad sunbathing intellectuals, reading books while simultaneously looking to earn a suntan. One may wonder why the building seems to sink into the ground as they walk into the entrance.
The reason for the strange architecture to the building is partly due to the constrictions of the land that was provided to build the Campus Center upon. However, when it was finally finished in 1970, many saw the style of architecture as very modernistic (“Murray Lincoln Campus Center”). The University had done the best it could with the land they had been given to expand upon the Student Union building. When architects and surveyors first planned the expansion of the Student Union into the Campus Center, they were given terrain that was on a steep decline bordering Hasbrouck Lab. With sloping terrain, they decided to create the first level of the building where one would normally place a basement. At the time, angled cement architecture was perceived as modernistic. This explains the choice of architecture, which many students, including me, now perceive as stingy and ugly. However, I believe that some of the intentions of the designers still seem to work out. Before building the Campus Center, both students and administration wished that the new expansion of what was the Student Union would become a thriving center of campus life. To incorporate this vision into the blueprints of the building, the architects decided that they would create a large plaza connected to and overlooking the Campus Center. The stairs leading up to the plaza have, in fact, become a popular hangout for students. Also, the amphitheatre in front of the entrance, adjacent to the Hasbrouck Lab, has successfully become a popular resort for student gatherings. The access that students have been given to the Campus Center for demonstrations, recruitment, and rallies has developed a sense of place in the hearts of the students who walk its ground.

Upon walking into the Campus Center, I am instantly sidetracked from my original destination. I feel a strong connection to my environment. The dozens of stands set up selling fish, clothes, posters, and music draw my interest, and five minutes later, when I find myself in a conversation with some sort of environmentalist group desperately trying to recruit me, I decide that it is time to get back on task. The freedom and space given to such groups in this building is a large reason for the sense of place it has developed. In “The Making of Place,” David Salvesen of the Urban Land Institute describes what creates a sense of place in a certain territory:
Democratic accessibility—The best spaces allow easy access and equal opportunity to everyone, provided those people respect both the place and others who also wish to use it. Too many spaces purport to be public but exert physical and legal pressures to limit their use to specific groups. (The Making of Place)

Before constructing the Campus Center, both students and administration believed that the new Campus Center would be an expansion of the Student Union complex. In turn, the students would have more space for organizing various events, groups, etc. This building would also allow more space for student government. Clearly, with more space to organize fundraisers and recruit students into organizations, student involvement in the community would thrive. It was then decided that the building would be named after an alumnus from UMass who had contributed greatly to his community: Murray D. Lincoln.

According to the article “Who Was Murray D. Lincoln,” published on the University of Massachusetts Amherst’s Web site, the official name for the Campus Center is the Murray D. Lincoln Campus Center (“Who was Murray D. Lincoln?”). Lincoln received his Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He went on to accumulate a large amount of wealth after becoming the head of four financial companies. His accumulation of wealth prompted him to become a member of many charitable organizations dedicated to solving problems such as hunger and the development of other countries. Because of his work in the world community, Lincoln became an important figure in UMass student organizations. His actions set a positive example of community involvement to all current and former UMass students. The University of Massachusetts built the Campus Center with this man in mind. At the Student Union (part of the Campus Center), there are hundreds of groups and organizations that any student can join, and many of these are charitable organizations.

Every time I walk through the lobby of the Campus Center, I am now able to recognize the contributions UMass students make toward their community. Murray’s contributions to good causes set an example for the students at UMass Amherst because the Student Union at the Campus Center...
Center is the hub of student organizations. The main lobby of the Campus Center is where most clubs at UMass recruit new members. In all of the different types of organizations that the school offers, the Student Union and the Campus Center represent diversity. For example, I often recognize an organization called “S.H.A.R.E.” while strolling through the Campus Center. This acronym is short for Students Helping Area Reach-Out Efforts (“Student Organizations”). Groups such as these set up stands to recruit students every week. There are also stands set up to recruit students into the Army and Air Force Reserves at UMass. During election week, I walked through the lobby and noticed that directly across from the McCain-Palin stand was the Obama-Biden crew. At the Campus Center, it does not matter if you are Republican or Democrat, young or old, black or white. Diversity walks the campus center in the form of the UMass student.

The first time I ate at the Blue Wall, I began to appreciate the diversity of this University. Walking into the Blue Wall, it is immediately recognizable that you are on a college campus. The types of people that roam this building come from all different kinds of backgrounds. So many people here do not come from where I grew up. Suddenly, coming from a small town North of Boston is not the norm. Table after table, students have books and laptops spread out to do their homework at the very last minute. At one table, a young man is folding his pizza from “La Famiglia” so he can shove it down his throat and get to his next class on time. At the other table, a skinny student decked out with a leather jacket, scarf, and pair of designer jeans is sitting down, taking slow bites out of her spinach and goat cheese sandwich from the French restaurant, with a cappuccino from Pura Vida on her right. While the two types of students appear to be exactly opposite in terms of style, they share a common education. Every time I get a cup of coffee at Pura Vida, I sense the unity and life that exists in the building.

Without the addition of the Campus Center, the Student Union and its organizations would not have the same advantages that they have today. It may look unpleasant from the outside, but the Lincoln Campus Center is vital to student life. With my first steps into the building, the atmosphere inside was noticeable. The heart and soul of the Campus Center are the students who inhabit it, and it is students that make the building an important place on campus.
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I have this memory of my great-grandmother that keeps replaying in my mind. It’s a recurring flashback, a glimpse of a moment frozen in time, a piece of a puzzle. I’d like to share it with you.

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My name is Kasia. I am living in Poland. I am ten-years-old. My house and my great-grandmother’s house are right next to each other. I like to visit her, especially on cold, winter days after playing outside—warm-up sitting next to a wood stove, talk and listen to stories of the “old days,” ones that she seems to remember the best as her memory is getting progressively worse at the age of 90. My memory is one of such a winter day.

We’re sitting in a room that serves both as a bedroom and kitchen. In reality, it’s the old kitchen, but she is the only person living in the house since my great-grandfather’s death, and it is enough to accommodate her simple needs. It’s cozy and warm. There’s a living room right next to it, but I never go there. I am never directly told I can’t go there, but the door is always closed. It’s obvious that the room hasn’t been used for years. The furniture is left unmoved. Everything in the room is left untouched. It has a certain vintage atmosphere, like it’s not a part of the same time period that I live in.

In Polish, I call my great-grandmother “Babcia.” She sits on the edge of her bed, eating her dinner. I sit right across from her near the stove, warming up my hands. I’m looking straight at her. She has long, gray, almost
white hair. Locks of it flow about her round face. The rest of it is braided and put into a neat bun, held up with shiny, silver hair pins. I braid it occasionally, but most days she is still able to do it herself. The whole space of the room is bright, clear, light.

In my mind, I see a collage of white and powder blue: a soft, white bedspread with a small, light blue flower print, white curtains with a similar flower motif on each of the two windows, and the light blue of the walls. There’s an old mirror on the wall, its frame cracking on the edges, its glass scratched: another object highlighting the passage of time and the advanced age of my beloved great-grandmother. I feel the crisp, clean winter air. I hear the noise of the traffic outside; people rushing, busy with work and their daily errands.

This memory of my great-grandmother seems incomplete because I don’t remember exactly what we talk about, how I feel, how I look, or what I’m doing that day. I look at her face; I study it like an artist would study a subject before painting it. I notice the wrinkles. Even though time has pressed its mark on this face, it is soft. Pale, but soft. I can feel it when I hug her goodnight, every time before I go back to my house. Since it is usually already dark outside, she stands in her doorway and turns on the outdoor light to guide my way home, even though I live just across the yard. When I get to my house, I yell “I’m here!” I see her slowly shuffling back inside, shutting off the light. This repeats night after night. I stop by her house on my way from school in the afternoon, or bring her dinner or laundry that my grand-mother, her daughter, prepares and sends me out with. This gives me a sense of pride and importance, and I enjoy being given my first, small responsibilities.

I study her face more. Her eyes. That’s what I remember the most. Oceans of wisdom and seas of experience. I love those eyes. They’re light blue, just like the walls and the flowers on her sheets. Just like the cool, harsh winter sky outside. Just like my eyes... These eyes that have seen so much, felt so much, endured so much, cried and laughed. Her eyes are not bright; they don’t glow with that special sparkle. They’re tired and pale, fading away slowly, just like her face, a sign of time that’s passed and can’t be turned back.
My great-grandmother experienced a lot of turmoil in her life, along with all of my grandparents and their generation living in Poland in the early to mid 1900s. WWI and WWII, the poverty and destruction caused by them, then the hardships under the Communist regime shortly after and up until the time when I was born. It was not an easy life, to say the least, but she lived through it with her head held high, a positive attitude that I’ve always admired and looked up to. Whenever I think of this, it gives me strength in times that are stressful and overwhelming.

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My great-grandmother passes away soon after I move to America at the age of twelve. I never get a chance to say goodbye, but I write her a letter a week before her death, which, as I later learn, she had read over to her multiple times. The hug goodbye that I gave her in front of her house before my family and I left for the airport is our last one, forever. I don’t go to the funeral. It’s too short of a notice. If I could turn back time, I’d want to return to Poland and be there. At the same time, I’d rather keep that “door” closed and remember her the way I do. When this is happening, I’m too young to understand it. I’m simply overwhelmed with sadness, grief, and the drastic, recent changes in my life.

Perhaps it is better this way. Perhaps it is easier to deal with the past by keeping it locked away, just like the door to that room was. We all knew it was there, but even as a young girl, I sensed that talking and inquiring about the past might be too saddening to my great-grandmother who dwelled in memories of her youth, her long gone parents and siblings—a way of fooling herself that time could somehow be stopped. I now realize that my great-grandmother must have missed the busyness of everyday life. She wanted to know about what was going on outside. She so desperately wanted to be a part of it. She wanted to feel needed and didn’t want to be forgotten.

My memory of my great-grandmother’s appearance is blurred with time, but I frantically hold on to every detail that I can remember. I could very well just look at a photograph of her, but just like that closed door to her living room, I prefer to keep the past hidden, know it is there and want it there, but try not to go back to it as much, since it might be painful. Because I’ve experienced loss of a significant family member myself, I now
understand my great-grandmother’s nostalgic demeanor about her youth and her family.

This memory will replay in my mind often, long after she is no longer there: when I move to a faraway country, meet new friends, struggle with learning a new language, and eventually completely immerse myself into a new culture. The place that I move away from is a stark contrast to the emptiness and isolation that I experience living in a cramped apartment in America, surrounded by a multitude of houses, but not knowing anyone who lives in them. It’s a strange, new world I find myself in. With the death of my great-grandmother, my life changes. My childhood ends.

However, the memory of her eyes is there. The two of us in a room. The coldness and sharpness of the outside contrasting with the warmth and comfort of her room. The young and the old; the weak and the strong; those that teach and those who learn from them. Who knows where life will take me, which choices I’ll make, or which paths I’ll follow. I know that my Polish roots, my upbringing, and the experiences that shaped who I am today will still linger close by and continue to guide and inspire me, just like looking into my great-grandmother’s blue eyes.
Although we have come a long way from the racism of the past, it will still be a long time before our looks are no longer important. As someone who is multiracial, I have spent my entire life being put into categories that I do not belong to because of my biological mix. Pearl Gaskins addresses this issue and more in her book, *What Are You?: Voices of Mixed Race Young People*. The author, biracial herself, clarifies different terms for those who are not simply one race and compiles the different experiences of mixed race people all across the United States. These accounts are in the form of interviews, poems, and excerpts of essays that focus mainly on self-identity, the inability of others to understand their background, and the acceptance of people of mixed race. By combining these narratives from people of mixed race, Gaskins creates a sense of community within the work.

Figuring out one's identity is a difficult journey in itself, never mind having to work out the complications of being mixed in a society where race is so important. When asked what I am, I have a hard time explaining. At times, I pick one of my many ethnicities, “I’m Lebanese,” I’ll say. If I’m feeling particularly talkative, I’ll explain the full extent of it: my Lebanese, West Indian, French Canadian, Native American background. Although it may seem like my different races would help me fit in to many different cultures, it actually makes me feel alienated from all of them because I am not fully one race. Chela Delgado addresses this in her interview, saying, “It feels so weird when I’m in a room full of white people and...”
I think, ‘Gosh, I’m the only black person in here.’ Or when I’m in a room full of black people and I think, ‘Gosh, I’m the only white person here’” (15). No matter what the situation, she constantly feels on the outside because she is neither one race nor the other.

The matter of self-identity is constantly thrown into disarray by the lines of race and feelings of belonging. Tyonek Glee Ogemageshig is Mexican, Caucasian, and Native American, and was raised to practice Native American culture, and it frustrates him when people do not identify him as such because of his skin color. At one point, he even expresses anger at the fact that he is not dark-skinned enough to elicit racist remarks even though his sister does. Obviously he does not want to be discriminated against, but the fact that his sister is identified as Native American and he is not makes him feel as if he is not truly his own race, and that he must work hard, even within his own family, to prove that he is Quinalt Indian (43). When I try to identify with one group or the other, I feel as if I am an impostor, saying that I’m something I’m really not. When people hear how I talk and see how I act and simply dismiss me as “white,” it makes me upset because I am so much more than that, and it detracts from the importance of my other races.

Not only do mixed people have trouble identifying themselves, but others have trouble putting them into traditional categories. The author herself mentions golf phenom Tiger Woods, who said on national television that it bothers him when he is labeled only as African-American because he was raised in a household with both African-American and Asian heritages. Most were puzzled by his own description of himself, “Cablinasian” (Caucasian, Black, American Indian, and Chinese), and some African-Americans were even offended, claiming that he was “denying his blackness” (4). They cannot understand that just because he embraces his Caucasian, Asian, and American-Indian sides, he is not necessarily denying his African-American side. Another interviewee simply replied to questions about his race with, “I’m Native American” rather than explaining that he is African American, Caucasian, and Native American, and which parents are what. He thinks that it puts people more at ease when they can identify him with one race and place him neatly into one category, and feels that “people are very happy with hearing that response” (23). When peo-
people cannot readily place others in certain groups, they become confused and scramble for some sort of ground to stand on. They jump to the conclusion that something must be wrong with the mixed person because they do not conform to one race or the other.

However uncomfortable this may make others who consider themselves “pure,” biracial and multiracial people are sure to become more common with the coming years. According to a report from MSNBC, more than 7% of 59 million married couples in America are interracial as of 2005, increasing from less than 2% in 1950. With this increase in interracial couples, more and more children will be of mixed race, making the already-blurry racial lines slip more out of focus. It will be harder and harder to emphasize the importance of race as it becomes less stratified, therefore making systems such as the race boxes (Hispanic/Non-white, African-American, Caucasian, etc.) on standardized tests and other government documents illegitimate and obsolete.

When I was younger, I often became confused when presented with these boxes asking me to pick my race. “Choose one,” it said. Well, which one? I opted for “Other” until I consulted my mother, who wasn’t much help. I had been imprinted with the idea that race was simply skin color, and when I asked my mother what I was, my mother simply told me, “A rainbow.” In order to make clear to whoever corrected these tests that I wasn’t just “Other,” I checked off a different box every time. Finally, the day came when I was allowed to check more than one box. Although I could more easily describe myself, there was so much more to it than that. Wasn’t I Lebanese? Where was the Middle Eastern box? Technically, Lebanon is in Asia, but I was sure that wasn’t what they meant. That didn’t stop me. In my own little act of rebellion, I checked off the “Asian” box in addition to three other boxes, because it wasn’t a lie. Let them consider me Thai, or Chinese, or Japanese. In the back of my mind, I knew I was inconsequential, but I still smiled smugly to myself when I thought of upsetting both their views on race and their statistics.

Overall, I have been lucky to have lived in such an accepting environment. Personally, I have not had much trouble growing up mixed. My family loves me just the same, although sometimes they do slip and make racist comments concerning one side or the other. Obviously this makes me
uncomfortable, but the only way to make them see how ridiculous these claims are is to persevere in spite of them. Genia Linear is one of those who has never seen her multiracialism as a problem, seeing it as more of a gift and stating that she had “never heard anybody say, ‘You’re half black, half white? Eww! What happened to you? What’s wrong with your parents?’” (26). However, not all have been so lucky, as one biracial girl heard her classmate say that she “wouldn’t want anyone in [her] family to get into an interracial marriage” (50). Of course, the children of such a marriage will have a somewhat harder time identifying with one race or the other, but that is no reason to object for the sake of racial purity to a marriage between two people who love each other.

What Are You? provides a sense of unity among those who often can’t identify with a certain group. Pearl Gaskins has created a community within these excerpts by connecting those with varying backgrounds but a common goal: to create an identity that includes all of their races, and gain acceptance from both others and themselves. Being a person of mixed race is sometimes difficult, sometimes a blessing. The ability to blend in depending on where you are is always helpful—I can pass for white when it is necessary, or Hispanic, or African-American as well. In the end, learning to balance your racial identity and reconciling it with how others see you is a long journey, but it makes life all the more interesting.

Works Cited


Most westerners don’t know who Liu Changchun is, but he’s a well-known athlete in my home country of China. Liu, a Chinese track and field athlete, was a member of the first Chinese athletic team to ever compete in the Olympic Games. The team members aren’t remembered much for their athletic prowess; none returned home with a medal. They are best remembered for their unique mode of transportation: a three-week-long seafaring voyage across the Pacific Ocean from China to California. When I heard this story, I swelled with respect. Not only were Chinese athletes finally sprinting alongside the best competitors in the world, but they also popularized the idea that it was possible to visit America—having braved the wide ocean that separates our two countries.

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Autumn was a fine season in Sacramento. The leaves of trees nodded in the breeze as I walked along the street. The smell of coffee brought me to a Starbucks Coffee Bar. I sat at a breakfast table and enjoyed my favorite cheese cake and the robust flavor of fresh-brewed coffee. This tiny coffee bar had a pleasant ambience. Soft light and agreeable warmth made me repeatedly thank my good fortune that I was lucky to get a job working for the Beijing Organizing Committee of 2008 Olympics (BOCOG) as a voluntary interpreter and assistant director. This unique experience provided me an opportunity to translate for BOCOG officials on many different occasions.
As our people met with members of the U.S. Olympic Committee and local statesmen, their tone was serious but at times light. Members of each country were meeting to share ideas about world politics, cultural exchanges, environmental issues and possible collaborations. It was a fitting place for the meeting, where the flags of both the U.S. and China waved next to the new flag of the Olympics. The symbol of the Olympics’ five interlocking rings gave me pause for reflection. The Olympic Games are a successful example of encouraging people to join together based on the powerful cohesiveness of pure athletic competition, allowing a break, if only brief, from the disagreement of political, religious, ethnic, and other types of differences. Most importantly, as I translated for Ms. Heather Fargo, mayor of Sacramento, she told us about the history of Chinese immigrants in Sacramento. They had been key contributors in developing the west coast—from the construction of the transcontinental railroad and the earliest days of the Gold Rush.

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The California Gold Rush was one of the most influential historic events in the United States. Its effects were so substantial that the rich cultural and racial diversity of California today has its origins in the Gold Rush. It attracted tens of millions of people to California. Not all the newcomers to California were gold-seekers; many Chinese laborers dedicated themselves to the construction of the transcontinental railroad, which linked the west and east coasts. In fact, this road established a transcontinental mechanized transportation network that revolutionized the economic development of the American west.

In the beginning, work was slow and extremely difficult. It was hard to conquer those natural obstacles, but Chinese workers used the techniques they had learned in China to complete these arduous tasks, one after another. However, these achievements did not directly translate into ethnic equality. The more gold discovered, the more the ethnic tensions increased. Chinese newcomers to gold mines were treated as lower-level laborers, but it was widely acknowledged that Chinese workers were quiet, industrious, and peaceable.

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Time flows away like running water. Chinese people are no longer the underclass laborers but act as members of the international community. As part of the young generation of China, I decided that during my four-day-long stay in Sacramento, I would visit the vestiges of railroad factories where my ancestors worked. I put my overcoat on as I came out from the coffee bar. A cold wind sprang up. I shivered with cold on the doorstep and tried to locate the railroad factory on a local map. People on the street were in different colored overcoats. When they breathed out in the cold air, I could see heat radiate from their noses and mouths. I crossed many streets and blocks, and I saw an abandoned site. The ground was overgrown with weeds. I heard a train whistle softly in the distance; to my surprise, the railroads had been kept in good condition and were still in use up to now.

A tour guide welcomed me with a big, kind smile and shepherded me around in this scenic spot. As we walked on a gravelly path between the two antique factories, I noticed that the site had never been restored. The houses were poorly appointed, and moss covered the corners of rough brick walls. As I looked up at the windows, glass had been broken and various shapes of the shattered glass seemed like the rise and fall of waves. Just like history, these factories are the ships traveling across the tide of time. When I entered a dark workshop, moisture struck me. The smell of rubber and dust filled the room; dust was everywhere: in the air, on the tables, even on this period of history. I sat on the ice-cold ground and took a ruined piece of rusty machinery; it bought me back to that period of history, and I conjured up a fantasy. At this moment, two epochs had been linked...

The tour guide interrupted my thoughts and brought my mind back to reality. He told me that when local government realized that this site was a precious human landscape of the city, they tried to raise funds for the reconstruction of these vestiges. I listened carefully and nodded. Meanwhile, I felt warmth course through my body, and a feeling of happiness filled me.

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I am proud to know that American people remember this history. These abandoned architectures and railroads extend beyond their physical existence. Through the mists and clouds of history, the railroad witnessed the rise and fall of this state. I associate this visit to the railroad with what I had
done for the cultural exchange with the Olympics. I believe, through the bridge of the Olympics, more and more people will begin to see the real spirit and image of each other. Through the Olympics, people from all over the world will know my country as more than an opera mask or the Great Wall, but a complex nation of many cultures, identities, and perspectives.

“One World, One Dream” seems to exude the message of global cohesion. I realized that both the transcontinental railroad and the Olympics embrace the values that support the connection of people and nations. Despite the many differences between the native cultures of each country, there is still far more that unites us than divides us. This experience has widened the vision of my future. I have also crossed the Pacific, albeit less heroically, but I still count it as an important step in my own cultural exchange. I have seen, if only in a small way, the mechanics of international relations. It happens on the ground, when people meet people, shake hands, and see that their similarities overwhelm their differences.
PART III

JUNIOR YEAR

WRITING
This final section of the Anthology includes texts from four of the more than seventy different courses offered in the Junior Year Writing Program. These courses are part of UMass Amherst’s two-part writing requirement. While the essays from Basic and College Writing that preceded this section come from first-year courses on 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. While we have started with just a small section of short texts, including this writing is an important step 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.

The first set of essays, “Object Descriptions,” comes to us from Art 370, the junior-year course for studio art majors. The assignment asks students to choose an object and describe it, then explore connections between some aspect of that object and their current art work or their goals for future work in visual art. The students choose and describe the object without knowing they will eventually be asked, through revision, to discover, define, and explore connections between that object and their artwork.

From Nursing 438 comes “Clinical Patient Narratives,” a critical genre in the field of Nursing. In some contexts, these documents are the central method of recognizing, promoting, and rewarding nurses. More importantly, the clinical narrative was developed as a way for nurses to learn about how they think about their patients, patients’ families, and their colleagues. The narrative is an opportunity for nurses to express their thoughts, emotions, and approaches to patient care.

The third selection of writings, from Landscape Architecture’s Environmental Design 394A, are students’ responses to the course’s first assignment, “Environmental Autobiography.” Students are asked to engage in personal expression, exploring their unique histories of spaces where they have spent time. Critical to the assignment is for students to bring these histories into consciousness for review and analysis as a way of tapping into a valuable source of reference: their own experiences. Having students gain a new awareness of places that hold special meaning to them is an essential process because designers often draw upon personal experience in the environments they create.
Our final selections for SOM390R, Writing and Speaking for Accounting Majors, offer us examples of genres that cross all disciplines: the cover letter and the personal statement. With students seeking internships and full- or part-time jobs in their fields, it is essential that they learn the various conventions of these critical documents. The personal statement assignment has an added dimension: it is geared toward helping business students articulate their background and goals in a narrative that can be used as part of a graduate school or scholarship application. An additional goal of the assignment is that, once committed to writing, the statements can help students better articulate important past and future experiences and share them verbally in a networking opportunity or interview.

It is interesting to note that despite the diversity of the academic disciplines represented here, the goals of these particular assignments all have their roots in some form of narrative. Writers examine and analyze their personal experience in their quest to define or advance an understanding of their place and identity in their chosen major. We did not aim to create this consistency. Yet it does point to one of the most basic and critical considerations in writing. One cannot help but think of the inescapable role that personal context plays, not only in our writing, but in our definitions of our identities and our life choices.
Department of Art, Architecture, and Art History
Studio Art Program

ART 370, Junior Year Writing for Art Majors

Assignment: Object Description

Texts submitted by Laura Holland
This leather wristband once belonged to a homeless guy in Los Angeles named Kerri. Although I never met him, a residue of his experience remains in the deep brown color that has been worn to a soft patina. The smooth outer surface reflects light in the way that leather does. Its glowing durability suggests rugged tales of near misses and of tight squeezes. It features a large red Wonder Woman-style star in the center that seems to say, “I am tough, I have been around, and yes, I still look good.”

After wearing the piece for an entire day, it felt good to undo the two metal snaps that secured it around my left wrist. The suede underside of the band weathered less gracefully than the smooth outer surface. The once light-colored suede, though not filthy, has been stained with the stress and perspiration of continuous wear and life on the streets. Adding color to its history is the secret zippered compartment that runs the length of the underside of the band. I was told that Kerri loved this feature and kept his crack cocaine and crystal meth stored in this hidden stash. The wristband’s odor is that of clean leather, betraying its history and offering no clue to the whereabouts of its former owner.

The previous two paragraphs say a lot about both the artwork I have made and the work I hope to make in the future. All of my work is motivated in one way or another by the desire to examine the human experience. I am an insatiable portraitist, constantly seeking to convey the experiential. I am drawn to worn surfaces like the ones on the wristband.
because these surfaces are the evidence that someone interacted with the thing. Someone's life rubbed up against this leather over and over again and this is the reason it is this beautiful or this repulsive. The important part for me is the life that made it that way.

There is also a romantic or nostalgic quality behind what drives my work. Almost every subject that I have tackled possesses an attractive or appealing quality, and the work is an homage or a courtship to the subject. Making art from this standpoint allows me to love the subject or to represent the subject in a way that I am sometimes incapable of doing in reality. In reality, I often feel incapable of pure expression. Making art that
is an homage to another person is a way of sidestepping the push and pull of human relations. With the camera or with the paint brush, I can better express my regard for the person I am working with. If I can make a gorgeous portrait, it is my way of saying, “this is how beautiful you are” or “this is how much I love you.”

This is not to say that my work is without reaction from the viewer, or that I offer the final word on any subject. That we have a profound effect on one another is inescapable, even in art. But in the making of art, I can be more intentional, more gentle in the handling of my subject because I have less to lose. A bad piece of work can simply be followed by another try with no harm done. As a result, I experience more truth in making art than in
the everyday interactions that unfold on the stage of capitalist culture. In making art, I get more second chances. Making art undermines the hit and run aspect that accompanies life in the fast lane.

My choices in art are made to remind the viewer that we are human. I want to evoke emotion. I want to inspire compassion or anger. This is where all the power of being an artist is wrapped up for me. I was drawn to the leather wristband because it once belonged to a homeless man. However, to focus solely on the wristband is to miss the point. For me, it’s all about Kerri’s experience: his struggle, his strength; his survival or his demise.

It is always important to me, and it is my intention, to convey a sense of integrity and respect for the subject when I approach a new project. It is not enough for me to make a piece that is sensational or controversial or shocking. I want to understand what lies behind my subject. What are the social or cultural influences at play? I want to go below the surface and point fingers. In this case, I am not pointing a finger at Kerri; I am pointing a finger at a society in which a man can become lost as a homeless drug addict.
Tea cozies should not be shaped like chickens. It’s like upholstering an ottoman with the pelt of a dog; the underlying structure gives the animal some form, but it’s a bad fit and the result is that it looks poorly taxidermied. The squat shape of the teapot under the cozy provides the chicken with a round, upright body, but the unsupported head lolls down to the side like a dead thing. A single black eye, perfectly round, protrudes from the head and seems to stare reproachfully up at the ceiling. Its brightly polished curves reflect the light and contrast sharply with the shabby body. The thread that holds the eye loosely to the head is visible, white against the black bead like a sty, and a single crooked white hair has gotten wound around it.

The fabric of the chicken’s body is unadorned but twisted and pilled, like a ratty fleece jacket. Its dull reddish-brown is the kind of innocuously putrid color that would have been found on waiting room chairs of the 1970s. There is a suspicious smell about it as well that indicates a long and unsavory history; perhaps it once belonged to a kitchen where toast was regularly burnt.

The bright blood-red of the cheap felt comb, which protrudes up at an awkward angle from the head, clashes garishly with the body, like a bone poking out through a leg. The two reds together give the impression of ground and withered meat that has been left out too long. With that image in mind, the errant hairs that are stuck to the body become even more
grotesque. The chicken’s reproachful eye and the dejected angle of its head, which droops as far down as it can go, gives the misshapen thing an air of unimpressive sadness that is altogether pathetic.

I like sad things. In this tea cozy I see the tragedy of the everyday, which is generally regarded as unimpressive. In truth, the cozy is not particularly offensive to the eye, nor is it wholly remarkable. I enjoy amplifying the traits of insignificant things to an extreme: either ennobling or debasing them. By manipulating others’ vantage points, I force them to regard something from an unusual point of view. Such an unfamiliar angle can make an object appear radically different: something ordinary and unremarkable can transform into something repulsive or entrancing. Regardless of whether the reaction is positive or negative, the goal of such a transformation is to evoke a fascination towards something that the viewer would not ordinarily find intriguing.

In addition to being such a transformed object, the tea cozy is representative of an ancient and effective method of transformation: ritualization. Teatime is one of the most widespread and commonplace daily rituals. In this day and age, most beverages are consumed on the go, without much thought, but drinking tea remains an involved and ceremonial activity. Ritualizing simple daily tasks infuses them with an almost spiritual intensity. Most people take their surroundings and the objects within them for granted, but I believe that if even the most mundane details are treated with respect and reverence, it opens the mind to a much richer existence. With such a pseudo-religious mindset towards one’s surroundings, the world becomes a much more interesting place, full of meaning and significance. An appreciation for the subtlety, variety, and strangeness of the world is likely to arise from such an outlook.

Turning everyday activities into ceremonies infuses daily life with a sense of importance. Ceremonies are reserved for events of special significance, so to perform such ceremonies in daily life elevates an otherwise mundane day into something special that should be treated with the careful attention that is involved in any ritual.

This ceremonial and celebratory mindset is not commonplace. People tend to be careless, thoughtless, and negligent, and do not generally treat things with respect and care. The lack of ceremony is in itself intriguing;
the sadness of neglect is evocative and poignant. The railroad is such a
place: the side of a train track is quietly overgrown, decayed, and deso-
late—except for the trains, if there are any. These places were created for
specific purposes. A junkyard is a concentrated example: it is full of worn
and abandoned things that have fallen into disuse. Once the usefulness of
the things has lessened, they are abandoned, but not destroyed: they con-
tinue to endure long after the people who made them cease to use them.

Both the ceremonial treatment of the everyday and the general lack of
such a mindset in the world are present in my art. Ritualization is re-
lected in my technical approach to making art, and the lack of ceremony
and celebration in daily life provides me with inspiration for the subject
matter of my work. I draw on comic books as an inspiration for format and
composition, and the deconstruction of space through panels is an
involved ritual that often requires either a repetitive trial-and-error
approach or a methodical construction using traditional methods of panel
division. Within the structures that I ritualistically create, I explore images
of places, people, and objects that are generally considered to be ordinary
or unimpressive. For example, I recently completed a series of paintings
that featured insignificant locations in Oxford, England. In order to elevate
them, I made the paintings in the format of a trading card game, a me-
dium usually populated by wizards, magical creatures, and fantastic places.
When I render these images, I try to infuse them with the mystery,
intrigue, and strangeness I see within them. It is my intention to make a
tribute to these neglected things through my art, so that their abandon-
ment, like that of the tea cozy, may become, if not beautiful, at least note-
worthy.
School of Nursing  
Nursing 438: Junior Year Writing  

Assignment: Clinical Patient Narratives  

Texts submitted by Genevieve Chandler
I have personally felt the pain of the death of relatives, including my mother, and now, professionally, I have seen it from the more objective side as a nurse. It is a less painful experience from this side of the equation, but it still made an impact upon me that I will never forget.

For the first four days of my internship, I was caring for a 71 year-old female I will call B. She was suffering from a multitude of issues of which the most significant was CREST Syndrome, a hardening of connective tissues throughout the body. Unfortunately for her, this was especially evident in her lungs. She was experiencing continued increases in her pulmonary artery pressures that were causing her difficulty with gas exchange. Initially, she was on O2 provided by nasal canula, but eventually she required the use of a Bi Pap machine to generate enough pressure to force air into her lungs. She had lived with this syndrome for most of her life, but its progression was reaching the critical point, and now she could not breathe on her own.

The first day I met her, she was awake and alert. She could talk to us and was aware of her surroundings, but her de-compensation would happen rapidly. Every effort to slow this progression had failed. But she held out hope for something that would prolong her life. Both she and her husband were in denial of the ultimate outcome of her problems until her final day. By day four of my providing her care, she was unable to breathe on her own, and her O2 sats would drop into the low 80s if she took off the
BiPap mask for even a brief period. She could not lift herself off the pillow. She was ashen gray and her legs were swollen and painful. The right side of her heart was failing due to the rapid increase in pulmonary pressure. She could not eat and would only take small sips of water. I knew the end was near before I heard it from her physician.

I was present when the news was delivered. Nothing else could be done, and important decisions needed to be made. The family was present, and the debate was intense. B was very upset, and her husband would not believe the prognosis. B was going to die and this would happen quickly. The physician needed to know if they wanted her to be on a ventilator, but let them know this would only prolong her pain, and she would still die, sedated and unable to communicate.

After the news was delivered to them, the physician left to care for other severely ill patients. There I was, the center of their attention. The family asked so many questions that I can't think of them now. I did my best to explain what I knew and felt very unprepared for this situation. My mentor helped me frequently, but the family had fixated on me, the “kind nursing student” that had been providing her care. They made the decision that she would be a No Code and that the vent would not be used. I tried to comfort both B and the family. The shock of the situation settled in, and the family began to accept the inevitable. The pain was clear in their tear-filled eyes. I too felt the sadness, but I was insulated from the worst of this pain; I had already known and accepted that B was going to die long before the family had come to this conclusion.

I provided B with comfort measures, cleaned her and gave her medications to reduce her pain and anxiety. The family members would come and go in packs, and with each new group it was the same questions, but I had become accustomed to them and was well rehearsed in my delivery of answers. I showed them the greatest of respect and acknowledged both their pain and coming loss.

By the end of my fourth shift caring for B, she was no longer alert and would only occasionally open her eyes. When I was preparing for shift change, I went back into her room and provided her the last care I would be privileged to offer her. I said my farewells to both B and her family, who thanked me for caring for B with compassion. I went to the nurse's station
to give the end of shift report, knowing I would never see B again. B died early the next morning with her family by her side. I was told that she simply stopped breathing, her body no longer able to provide the energy needed to force air into her lungs. I silently wished I had been there to show my respects one last time. But this is the way of it. We cannot be there all the time and have to live our own lives away from caring for our patients. I will never forget B and the privilege she afforded me in providing her care.
A TEA PARTY
WITH MR. P

Anna L. Paskausky

Mr. P was my patient for two days, although he had been in the hospital for about four months. In today’s culture of discharge planning on admission, this means he had literally been “at death’s door,” as he put it. When I met him, he was hoping to get discharged to a rehab facility soon. In report, I was told he had a flat affect that made some of the nurses uncomfortable. I helped Mr. P with the standard set of things people recovering from major surgery and its complications need help with: getting himself clean, using the bathroom, and going for walks around the unit. He had a long list of drugs, and I tried to make the experience entertaining rather than tedious since I had to give him each pill one at a time in applesauce due to his difficulty swallowing. He was also being treated with IV antibiotics and heparin, which required that I be able to focus intently on the drugs and pump setting, all the while maintaining a pleasant presence.

Though I am still a student, I have noticed it is easier to focus on the meds, tubes, and gross needs of patients than the more subtle higher levels of Maslow’s hierarchy. In Mr. P’s case, I recognized his extended stay required a different approach to his care. Not seeing any psycho-social plan of care outside of psychotropic meds, I made it a priority to really talk with Mr. P and to really listen. I made a point to be genuinely cheerful in spite of his flat affect, and used therapeutic communication skills to allow him space to express his nightmare-like recollections of the ICU and his
months in acute care. Eventually, it was clear that he had come to trust me and even liked the extra attention I could give him as a student.

I know it won’t always be my privilege to spend so much time with a patient, but I was able to escort Mr. P to ultrasound to have his legs checked for DVTs after he mentioned pain with walking to me. I suggested he tell his physician, who sent us down for the scan. He was nervous, but I was able to distract him with conversation and word games. His family joined us for a period while we were waiting, and I explained what was happening and what some possible outcomes might be. Unfortunately, the scans showed massive DVTs. Mr. P visibly sunk back into a more depressed state.

After his afternoon meds, I asked him how he was feeling, and he responded honestly, having had a chance to mull his situation over. He was frustrated, isolated, anxious about his future, and feeling powerless to be a regular person. I had suggested earlier in the day we do something special on our last day together, and I invited him to a tea party. Even though he was depressed, I told him I hoped we could keep the date.

At 1600 I showed up with two plates of cookies, toast, jam, and tea. I pulled up a chair to his recliner and sat with him, and we shared his bedside table for our common meal. It felt awkward to eat with a patient in a patient room because the culture of nursing separates Them from Us. My assessment of Mr. P was that he needed to feel like a person not a patient. Thus, eating toast and jam and talking about the book he had been writing was the best way I could think to accomplish that, given my options.

Our afternoon came to an end, but I was sure to do what I could to make sure that Mr. P’s unusual needs were addressed. With his permission, I put in a chaplain counsel visit and made notes in his care plan about his psycho-social needs. Mr. P was a special patient that required more than medication and basic care. Mr. P required the kind of care that is truly in the realm of nursing, care that attends to not just the body, but the social, mental, and spiritual needs of the patient.
Department of Landscape Architecture &
Regional Planning
Junior Year Writing: Environmental Design 394

Assignment: Environmental Autobiography

Texts submitted by Annaliese Bischoff
Throughout my life, the environments that have surrounded me have shaped and molded my perspectives. Places I longed to be, areas I avoided, and situations I found myself in all have worked to develop how I perceive the world. Oftentimes, the places that have had the most significance have been places in my life where I would find myself looking out to see all the landscape spilling out miles before me. No matter where on earth it is, there is always a feeling of accomplishment and awe that I experience when I have climbed higher than all that I see before me, all that I have come from.

My earliest hiking memory that I can recall was hiking Stowe with my family during a summer in Vermont. Looking through old photo albums, I would see how many outdoor places my parents would bring me, carried on my father’s back. It was only when I was old enough to hike on my own strength and had the freedom to explore nature on my own that these trips started taking on memorable significance. On this particular hike, I remember one spot specifically where we stopped for water, a photo opportunity and a chance to take in the surroundings. A large tree had fallen across the trail and made a natural seat for anybody ambitious enough to scramble up and across it. The forest was still damp and cool as we hadn’t broken out of the tree line, but from my seat atop the moss covered bench, I could see through the woods out into the valley below. My excitement and sense of adventure were growing. I could see the portion of the hike I had finished and eagerly awaited all that was ahead.
As I grew older, my summers began to be filled with more responsibility and less free time than those of my younger years: that meant work. During most of high school, I worked in the summers as a mason tender on chimney rebuilds. This kind of work was tough and physically demanding on me. Lugging bricks, mixing mortar, and cutting rock can all get pretty miserable sometimes, but when I was on top of the staging deck or on the peak of a three story roof on a warm summer day, there weren’t many places I would rather have been. Sometimes when I had finished all my work and the mason was busy with his stack of bricks and tub of mortar, I would lie down on my back across a plank with my arms and legs dangling below me and let the sun warm my face. I would listen to the commotion and the busy people below and smile because high up on the rooftops, things move a little slower and problems are a little further away.

As I grew older still, the worries and stresses of the world did not disappear. College can be confusing and overwhelming, just a taste of the world to come I’m sure, but looking out over thousands of lights and people below can somehow help to put some perspective on things. The smokestacks on the university campus are most likely not supposed to be climbed, but when I put my mind to something, there isn’t much that’s going to stop me. Nighttimes, the crow’s-nest of the industrial plant smokestacks is a quiet place. The gray metal handrails always feel cool, even when the air is warm and the mountain ranges in the distance are reduced to silhouettes. In between is a valley of dark buildings and yellow lights, filled with people working, studying, walking, all focusing on whatever is before them, never thinking to look up.

All these places have one thing in common: height. Height allows for reflection and isolation that cannot usually be otherwise attained. The majority of this life is spent on one level, the common level. This is the level where we all work and sleep, socialize and play. It is easy to get lost in this world and forget that there are other places and other levels to explore, but it is only by rising above it all that we can look back in and see exactly what we are, where we have come from, and where we wish to go.
“I’m a firm believer in the theory that people only do their best at things they truly enjoy. It is difficult to excel at something you don’t enjoy.” Jack Nicklaus, arguably one of golf’s greatest athletes ever, summed up the reason for my appreciation for the environment in this brief excerpt taken from one of his past interviews. My passion for the environment stems from one of the most vividly memorable days of my life: the third, yes, the third day of summer following my sixth grade year. This was the day that I had realized what I was destined to do with my life. I had picked up the game of golf in the two years prior to this groundbreaking day and was really gaining more and more interest in it as my game progressed. My friends and I would pick a day every weekend, and even occasionally an afternoon on a school day, provided we were able convince our mothers to lend us some cash and a ride, to go out and play a round of golf.

Money played a major role in what courses we were privileged to play on; because of this, we soon became accustomed to the cheaper, run down courses of our area. I can remember during these years driving by a course near my house called Maplegate Country Club and feeling a sense of wonder and jealousy towards the people who got to play it. The course was (still is) a semi-private country club that required some serious cash for greens fees. Every weekend on our way to Bungay Country Club, a course of less quality and less money, we would pass Maplegate and ask whoever’s mother was driving to slow down for us to admire the plush green fairways and perfectly manicured greens and bunkers that we could see from the street.
It was a seemingly long two years of mystery as to how beautiful the rest of the course was until, finally, the wait had ended. The day had come; we were finally going to play the course we had long awaited. It was the second day of summer after our sixth grade year had come to an end. I met up with one of my golfing buddies, Tyler, who was the first to break the exciting news to me. He told me that the day before, he had played Maplegate with his brother for only ten dollars. I asked him how he pulled it off because, as the two of us were aware, a round of golf there was nearly seventy dollars. His answer left me floored; he told me that Maplegate had introduced a junior deal. At first I was confused; I had never heard of such a thing. He went on to explain that this meant kids under the age of eighteen could make a tee time before 7:00 in the morning and play for a meager ten dollars. Within a matter of no more than an hour, I had called up all of my friends, told them the news, and made a tee time for the following day.

After a sleepless night of anticipation for the morning to come, my friends and I finally made it to the course. During the whole ride there, I felt as though my mother was driving five miles an hour because all I wanted was to step foot on the course for the first time. From the moment we first drove down the entrance way lined with fully mature trees, I knew what we had in store was going to be a thrilling experience. To my surprise, after feeling as if we would never get there, we arrived early for what was already an early tee time, 6:05 in the morning. We spent nearly twenty minutes on the putting green before it was our turn to tee off. As we stepped up to the tee box to take our first shots, we looked up the massively daunting par five's fairway in awe. I will never forget the feelings that were running through my veins at that moment. Gazing up the pristine fairway cut that morning, with an undulating landform bordering both sides, complemented by dense forest following the graceful curves of the design, all while the early mist still lingered in the air, I knew at this moment what I was meant to do with my life. It was as if some higher power came over me, telling me my future held a position in golf course design. Once the group of other excited kids ahead of us was visible, the moment we had all been waiting for had arrived. Feelings of anxiety, anticipation, and absolute joy all clashed at once as I stepped up to be the first to take our shots. After a
shaky progression of practice swings, I finally felt the rhythm I knew would result in a successful shot. I took a deep breath, glanced one more time up the fairway to my target, and took my swing. Upon first contact, I knew I had flushed the ball right in the sweet spot of my driver, looked up, and watched the ball get smaller and smaller as it traveled through the air landing right where I had planned it. The whole day I was in a state of amazement as to how beautiful the course was. Maplegate is an astonishing culmination of dense forest, extreme landform manipulation, wetlands with dense flowering species that give the effect of a purple sea, water features, and artistically crafted bunkers scattered strategically throughout the course. It was because of this mix of amazing design media that the entire time I was on the course, I felt at peace—not a worry or annoyance in the world on my mind. Once we had finally reached the last hole of this amazing course, I could not believe it and did not want to believe that it was coming to an end.

Being the avid golfer I am, I am not too sure my friends appreciated the experience as much I did. For me, the golf course was like being in my own little world. Since that day, my friend’s mother took a job there, which allows us to play anytime for just fifteen dollars. I have been back to Maplegate countless times since that first memorable day, and it never gets old. Now that I have finally started on the road to designing, every new visit is a learning experience. As my skills progress, I see the course in a whole new way and notice entirely new things every time. Maplegate Country Club has left a lasting impression on me, in the game of golf and in the world of design, and I hope I will be able to take the experience and knowledge that I have gathered over the years and eventually accomplish my lifetime goal of becoming a golf course architect. If Jack Nicklaus’ quote regarding passion and its relationship to successfulness holds any true meaning, my goal is entirely possible.
Isenberg School of Management
Business Communication Program

SOM 390R: Writing and Speaking for Accounting Majors

Assignments: Personal Statement and Cover Letter

Texts Submitted by Holly Lawrence
PERSONAL STATEMENT

Jennifer Iaconetti

Accounting is historically a male-dominated field, which causes many to question why I, as a woman, have chosen it as my intended career path. The women in my family are housewives with part-time jobs, and I plan to break this norm by entering a professional industry. As the first woman in my family to attend college, I hope to establish a stable career that sets an example for future generations. The stability of the industry is appealing since the marketplace will always need accountants to audit businesses. I have a great interest in both the subject matter and the industry itself. I have had many experiences in both high school and college that have fashioned this interest into career aspirations.

I was first introduced to accounting during my junior year of high school. My swim team coach happened to be the accounting teacher as well, so I signed up for his class. He began his career in public accounting and traveled internationally before becoming an educator. His passion for the subject, his experiences, and his confidence in my potential, both in and out of the classroom, inspired me to consider a business career. I acted on my mentor’s advice and became an active member of the Future Business Leaders of America chapter at my high school. During my senior year, I was selected to represent our school in accounting and placed fourth in the region. My scores qualified me for the state competition, where I placed fourth in the state of New Jersey in the Accounting II test. I de-
cided to become an accounting major at the University of Massachusetts because of my experience with the subject in high school.

I became especially interested in public accounting, especially the big firms, during my freshman year of college. I decided to apply for sophomore externship opportunities so that I could determine if the industry truly appealed to me. This past summer, I traveled to Hollywood, California for KPMG's Fast Forward National Leadership Program. During this 3-day externship experience, I was exposed to KPMG's practices, strategies, culture, and employee outlook. I had the opportunity to network with and learn first-hand from first-year accountants, managers, partners, and CEOs of the company. As I had hoped, this exposure to the firm's culture gave me insight into the industry I will be working in after graduation.

As a junior accounting major, I have begun to realize many of the professional dreams I will pursue after graduation. This summer, I will be a metro-audit intern in the KPMG, LLP New York City office. I am positive that this opportunity will deepen my interest in the industry and give me invaluable experience before I begin my professional career. After graduation, it is my goal to work at one of the big four accounting firms in audit and become a partner within ten years. During my first two years, I hope to attend graduate school and take CPA preparation courses so that I can take the CPA exam and earn my CPA certificate. The opportunities available to accounting professionals are endless, and I plan to pursue them diligently.
February 19, 2009

Ms. A’ Dora Smith
Campus Development Manager
KLMN, PQR
55 55th Street
Boston, MA 02110

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am very interested in the Internal Audit Regulatory and Compliance Services Internship with KLMN, OPP for the summer of 2009. I found the position on the Isenberg School of Management’s Chase Career Center Website. I am currently pursuing a B.B.A. in Accounting with a minor in Women’s Studies and have maintained a 3.69 GPA. This opportunity would allow me to develop my leadership and communication skills and apply them to the field of accounting.

During my time at this university, I have participated very actively in the University Minuteman Marching Band. As shown on my résumé, I am a Sister of Tau Beta Sigma, a National Honorary Band Sorority, and have served the marching band as a section leader as well. Through these roles, I have gained invaluable leadership skills and have worked with a diverse group of people. Individuals with varying capabilities participate in the marching band, and my ability to effectively accommodate those skill sets will translate very well to the workplace.

My extracurricular experiences have helped me to improve my ability to communicate with others as well. As an officer of my sorority, I am in constant contact with our sponsors, advisors, and other Sisters via email and phone calls. Some correspondence is informal and other discussions involve official business. These exchanges have taught me how to interact with my peers and superiors. This ability would help me to communicate effectively with my team members and those who are overseeing our assignment.

I look forward to meeting with you in the near future. You may contact me by email or by phone. If I do not hear from you within a week, I will contact you to discuss my résumé. I am available for an interview at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Iaconetti