2015/2016

Excellence in First-Year Writing

Featuring student essays by
Sajani Desai
Rachel Woods
Peter Goggin
Thomas Aiello
Jaelyn Jennings
Hyunju Lee
Alexis Low
Ran Ming
Caroline Rothrock

Edited by
Dana Nichols

MICHIGAN PUBLISHING

The English Department Writing Program and
The Gayle Morris Sweetland Center for Writing

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in
First-Year Writing
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Dana Nichols

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Chris Parsons

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Yishai Ribon	Mindy Misener
Alex Rogers	Mindy Misener
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Student Name	Instructor Name
Keerthana Sundar	Scott Beal
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Hannah Thoms	Emily Chew
Madeline Turner	Angela Berkley
Rebecca Uhr	Angela Berkley
Lijing Wang	Mindy Misener
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Amily Yang	Ann Bolotin
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Matt Kelley/Granader Family Prize nominees

Student Name	Instructor Name
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Claire Bartosic	Vlad Beronja
Emma Bergman	Duygu Ula
Samantha Breecher	Megan Wilson
Skylar Burkhardt	Scott Beal
Emily Fishman	Zacharias Andreadakis
Hannah French	Jeff Evans
Melissa George	Sahin Acikgoz
Stephanie Harris	Maximillian Alvarez
Elizabeth Herr	Megan WIlson
Paulina Hodges Adams	Anna Watkins Fisher
Casey Jong	Susan Walton
Lyric Kieber	Anna Watkins Fisher
Branden Levine	Lauren Benjamin
Yeqing Lin	Catherine Badgley
Victoria Lindenfeld	Robin D'Avignon
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Xinshan Li	Jing Xia
Ran Ming	Jing Xia
Sally Park	Scott Beal
Sirwich Pipatprathanporn	Jing Xia
Jessie Song	Lori A. Randall
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Student Name	Instructor Name
Aisha Carter	Gina Brandolino
Rex Chen	Simone Sessolo
Breanna Gilland	Julie Babcock
Tiffany Huynh	Shelley Manis
Jaelyn Jennings	Gina Brandolino
Alex Kahan	Larissa Sano
Alexis Low	Julie Babcock
Rio Mizuno	Larissa Sano
Carrie Yu	Simone Sessolo

Introduction

Learning to write effectively is central to a liberal arts education, and every year first-year writing instructors throughout the College of Literature, Science and the Arts work with thousands of students to help them improve their ways with words. Day in and day out classrooms resound with discussions of effective introductions, with explanations of precision in language, with exchanges in peer response groups. For some students the first writing class at the University marks the moment when they recognize themselves as writers.

This book recognizes students who have been nominated by their instructors for producing writing of exceptional quality, a tradition carried out by the English Department Writing Program and the Sweetland Center for Writing since 2010. With generous support from the Granader family along with Andrew Feinberg and Stacia Smith, each of the students identified as winners will receive a cash prize. By producing this collection, we make the writing of prize-winning students available so that other writers may learn from, and feel inspired by the ways these essays formulate compelling questions, engage in dialogue with other thinkers, incorporate persuasive and illuminating evidence, express powerful and poetic insights, and participate in meaningful conversations.

The award-winning essays are shown to best advantage thanks to the careful editing of Dana Nichols and the design work of Aaron Valdez. Many writers were involved in discussing and selecting these prize-winning essays. Raymond McDaniel, Dana Nichols, and Naomi Silver read submissions for the Granader Family prize for Outstanding Writing Portfolios. Gina Brandolino, Christine Modey, Dana Nichols, Kodi Scheer, and Simone Sessolo read submissions for

the Matt Kelley/Granader Family prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing. Submissions for the Granader Family Prize for Excellence in Multilingual Writing were read by Paul Barron and Louis Cicciarelli. Submissions for the English Department Writing Program's Feinberg Family Writing Prize were read by Kathryne Bevilacqua, Alistair Chetwynd, Maia Farrar, Kyle Frisina, Joseph Gaudet, Michael Hinken, Mika Kennedy, Cassandra Otemuyiwa, Molly Parsons, Adreienne Raw, and Ali Shapiro. We are deeply grateful to all of these writers for putting their own work aside to participate in determining which submissions merit special recognition.

We are also very appreciative of the many instructors who encouraged and supported their students and took the time to nominate them. Mostly, of course, we celebrate all the students who submitted essays for these writing prizes. Each of them contributed significantly to the ongoing project of developing effective writers. As writing teachers we delight in learning from the challenging questions, intellectual energy, and creativity that students bring to the classroom every day and to the pages that follow. We hope you will too.

Anne Ruggles Gere, Director Sweetland Center for Writing
Andrea Zemgulys, Interim Director English Department Writing Program

Feinberg Family Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

On behalf of the selection committee, we are happy to present the three winners of the 2015 Feinberg Family Prize for Excellence in First-Year Composition. These essays emerged from a competitive field nominated by English Department Writing Program (EDWP) instructors; eligible work came from English 124 and 125 classes during the 2015 calendar year. Instructors submitted pieces of writing in three categories that represent genres frequently practiced in EDWP: analytic argument, narrative argument, and research-based argument. As judges, we found the submissions presented us with the best possible situation: rewarding discussions and challenging decisions. The winners stood out for varying reasons, but they also showed patterns of significant merit. Taken as a whole, they used generic conventions and pushed them. They made original arguments and renovated old ones. They conveyed their own voices but tuned them to a frequency that could be heard and responded to by others. To say the least, the winning essays shine as examples of EDWP instructors' unifying goal of helping students "produce complex, analytic, well-supported arguments that matter in academic contexts."

A number of people deserve thanks for service to this all-volunteer EDWP venture. First, Justine Neiderhiser and Danielle Lillge, who served as last year's committee chairs, made propitious changes to the selection process, including the institution of genre-based categories for prize submissions and the creation of clearer shared criteria for judges. We adopted their frameworks this year with only minor adjustments. Second, eleven EDWP instructors served as judges and, through multiple rounds, generously donated their time and expertise in writing assessment to determine the finalists and winners of the Prize. Each conversation

with these judges made us think about student writing in ways we had not before. Finally, the 30-plus students and their instructors who submitted an essay to be considered took a formidable risk. For students, sending a piece of writing outside the friendly confines of a supportive classroom can feel like a dangerous prospect, and, for instructors, nominating essays they assess as excellent makes a contestable yet generative assertion to EDWP as a whole. The program benefits from their openness, for which we are grateful.

Finally, all the nominated essays, and the winners in particular, do EDWP a tremendous service. For those outside the department, they stand as a proxy for the hard work and epistemological values of the teaching and learning that comes from Tisch and Angell Halls. These pieces of writing are part of the way we present ourselves to the university community. For instructors inside the department, this volume functions as an inspiration, an artifact of ongoing conversations about writing, and an invaluable teaching tool. These essays will help EDWP instructors imagine the contours of future student work in their courses and will offer models for students to emulate and interrogate.

The three essays that follow are the seventh set of essays to have won the Feinberg Family Prize from EDWP. We hope they evoke admiration and provoke debate, just as previous winners have for us.

Chris Parsons and Phil Witte
Co-Chairs of the Feinberg Family Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing
Graduate Student Mentors, English Department Writing Program

Childhood as a Checklist of College-Readiness Skills

Sajani Desai

From English 125 (nominated by Ryan McCarty)

A danger of framing arguments around personal narratives is the possibility of falling into the assumption that one perspective can somehow trump broad social understandings. These kinds of arguments say I know this is how everyone understands it but here is my story that shatters everything. These are arguments of a culture where perspectives speak to and not with others.

Sajani's essay is none of that. While she pushes hard against seeing life as a resume, she does so in the most delightfully self-reflective way. Her experiences are not direct opposition but examples of how one individual encountered and rejected reductive notions of growing and learning. Along the way, we see her critique her own thoughts and experiences with the same diligence that she applies to the college application machine, giving her essay an individualized validity that is rare in narrative arguments.

But Sajani's essay is not only rhetorically instructive. It inspires readers to investigate our own less-than-sterling motivations, collecting experiences as credentials. As a teacher, I could probably list this note on a cv somewhere, proof of pedagogical efforts, engagement with students and their writing. We're encouraged to think of the world this way, as a series of characters in self-serving word documents, as Sajani so starkly puts it. But, as she concludes, this reduction of others comes at the cost of our own humanity.

To be both personal and instructive, critical and graceful, these are characteristics I tend to strive for in writing and teaching, as well as in the way I think about my broader experiences as a person among people. I find a good model in Sajani and her writing.

Ryan McCarty

Childhood as a Checklist of College-Readiness Skills

When I was six years old, I had no concept of college. My biggest goals at the time were beating Daniel Weber in a footrace at recess or getting a smiley-face sticker on my weekly vocabulary test. I spent a lot of my time exploring the woods in my backyard while pretending to be in a *Magic Tree House* book, or reading *Calvin and Hobbes* on a picnic blanket while absentmindedly ripping out handfuls of freshly-mown grass around me. Unfortunately, this kind of idyllic childhood is far from universal. In the New York Times article, "Is Your First-Grader College Ready?", a teacher in a first grade classroom had a different idea of how her students should be spending their time. In an increasingly competitive world, Ms. Rigo wanted to give her students an edge: to teach them the value of college education to make them goal-oriented, well-rounded people at a young age. Instead of asking her students, "What do you want to be when you grow up?", she asks, "How will you get there?" (Pappano 2).

Schools around the country have begun to adopt a similar approach; campus tours are now popular field trips, and some argue that an overly-competitive culture has turned wide-open years of childhood into a race to college (Pappano 2). These shifting expectations and increased constraints for children growing up today have immense ramifications, robbing them of a chance to "just be a kid," and to explore their likes and dislikes without the threat of failure limiting their choices. In a more harmful, less-explored way, the enormous pressure of being college-ready leads children to see their experiences in the world around them as potential exploits for a college acceptance letter. It's impossible to ignore the impact of children's entire lives being geared toward college; it demands the question of what is lost in the panic that is inevitably paired with college preparation.

Unlike the first-graders in the New York Times article who already had their campuses picked out, I finally caught on to the college panic around sophomore year of high school. This was about the time everyone joined the National

Honor Society, began volunteering at local food kitchens, and got jobs for the summer. Countless resources with college information had the same checklist: "1. Take challenging courses. 2. Volunteer. 3. Use summers wisely" etc. (Johnson 1). I had the sinking feeling that I wasn't doing enough, so I decided to go across the country for a summer internship in biology. I didn't necessarily want to; spending six weeks in a windowless lab when I could have been doing pretty much anything else wasn't my idea of fun, but I felt I needed to do something to stand out. It was about a year later when I sat down to fill out my college application, put my hands on the keyboard, and forced myself to type did I realize that I could write at most, half of a paragraph on the actual internship itself. The technicalities of it all were unimpressive to me, and likely to the poor soul who had to read hundreds of strikingly similar applications. What I did remember was my family flying out to surprise me for my birthday, an impromptu trip to my favorite city in the whole world, and the laughs we shared while posing for pictures with street performers; but most of all, I remembered this conversation with my mentor:

Me: "Okay, so I just pipet this protein into all twelve of these test tubes? Or just the first six?"

Him: "Hmm? Yeah."

Me: "Everything okay?"

Him: "Yeah, just tired. My wife and I just had a son a few weeks ago.'

Me: "Oh! Congratulations! What's it like being a new dad?"

Him: "It's a little terrifying, actually. You know, it's crazy how tiny and fragile he is. It's not like a science experiment, where if I don't think I'm going to get good results, I can just start over and tweak a few things in the protocol, you know? If I mess up, it'll probably scar him for life. And it just seems way too easy to mess up."

His honesty caught me off-guard; it was an unexpected humanizing moment from an almost stereotypically-stuffy cell biology researcher who barely even said "hi" to anyone when he came into work in the morning, ate lunch alone, and not-so-tactfully avoided any of my initial attempts at small talk. I had never heard him say so many words in one turn before, it was out of character

with his rushed, almost brusque rhetoric. My mentor telling me about his new role as a father and revealing his fears about accidentally screwing his kid up sharply contrasted with the cut-and-dry, objective lab setting, just as my overall goal of spending six weeks in a lab to appear more marketable to universities was incongruous with the people I met and their stories, as well as the new stories I created for myself.

I told myself it'd be the last time I'd get lost in the college tunnel vision; that the cost of missing out on experiences that I couldn't use for my resumé wasn't worth the approval of someone reading a two-paragraph summation of the past decade of my life. It was a little scary to realize that the only thing I gained from the internship happened by accident, not by my own doing, and that if everything had gone as I expected I would have returned no different than when I left. Even more unnerving, however, was finding out the "college tunnel vision" had become innate; that it was how I automatically saw the world without even having to try, and that it wouldn't change until I had been accepted into college.

Of course, the small text box for extra-curricular activities on the Common Application didn't leave much room for reflection. It didn't leave room for me to conclude that what I gained most from the internship was not that I learned how DNA replicates, or how to properly use Centrifuge #2 in Room 640B; it was how I saw the three-dimensionality of everyone around me. No one is just a "scientist" or a "student," and a system set up in a way that wants students to be well-rounded, but gives a guideline on how to quantify being well-rounded doesn't leave room for self-discovery through experience. The New York Times article argues that "the impulse to line up achievements and to consider how a child's record will play on a college application is contagious…you have to join in or you will be left behind" (Pappano 5). This fear of being left behind is exactly what motivated me to change my habits and what I did in my spare time, and in turn, change myself. Arbitrary achievements each student should have, such as a summer internship, ignores the bigger picture: personal goals of self-improvement and gaining a better understanding of ourselves and those around us.

Viewing my life and various experiences I went through in terms of whether or not I could possibly write a 500-word essay on them (one that would make me look good) took away from the purity of "living just to live". Dr. Guddemi, working in child development, was interviewed for the New York Times article and worried that children being pressured to think college and career so early and life "miss the here and now" (Pappano 10). As the threat of the college admission process neared, I exemplified the worst of Dr. Guddemi's concerns. I began to scrutinize the world around me and my place in it from the vantage of a college admission counselor: if I heard a prospective student at the university talking about this specific event, would I believe she'd enrich the university environment?

The thing is, it caused me to reduce myself to being the "ideal" student (or what I thought was the ideal student); someone who already knew everything there is to know about the world, had an altruistic attitude, and came from a diverse background. During a trip to India to visit family in high school, I even found myself thinking, "What if I write my college essay about my experiences seeing poverty and how it makes me appreciate what I have?" Now, even the memory of the thought crossing my mind makes me cringe. Experiencing the trip in terms of whether or not it could be a potential college essay (and a clichéd one at that) made me feel guilty; I felt that I had taken an innocent experience and exploited it to turn into something marketable and self-serving. Trips to India never caused me to feel lucky for my good fortune, or to feel pity for those who don't have the luxuries I do, at least not explicitly. However, the college admissions counselor in my head didn't want to hear about a small village on the other side of the world where I could walk into any house unannounced and be greeted with toothy grins and more food than I could possibly eat in an entire day, because it wasn't really an example of how I'd positively contribute to a university campus.

A few years later when I returned to India (after I had already applied to colleges), something about the trip felt different. Looking back, I saw that finishing the application process led me to transcend the boundaries being a "prospective college student" put on the world around me. I no longer saw everyone

I interacted with as a character in a self-serving word document, I saw them as people. On a more personal level, it led me to make sense of the world from the perspective of people and environments I wasn't used to being around, and I no longer tried to reduce the irreducible. My previous experience was limited to the breadth of what could be covered in a paragraph, but this most recent one gave me a glimpse of my place in the world: one that expanded beyond my role as a future college student.

I ended up writing one of my college essays about my extended family in India, who live in a small village surrounded by mountains hours away from the city. The essay centered around individuals' lives, hardships they went through, and going without luxuries I took for granted. In retrospect, this was a very surface-level analysis of the community. I had been blind to the complex workings of village life, because I saw myself as an outsider looking in. I had trained myself to be this way so that I could objectively decide what would make me stand out on an application, analogous to a scientist in my lab observing disease-ridden mice in the hopes of getting a publication in a prestigious journal. The Scientific Method, however, does not apply to everyday experiences. What I missed was the entire mechanism by which members of the village oriented themselves within the community, and how it impacted the stance they took toward the world. In my essay, I talked about how children had to walk two miles to school in the morning and how hard it must have been, but missed mentioning the songs they sang while walking or the complicated politics of women's rights children as young as ten years old discussed. I talked about how the villagers knew no life outside their small society and felt bad that they'd never know the world around them, but failed to notice that most of them had a far better sense of humanity than I did. No instance proved this better than when our 80-year-old neighbor who was nearly blind but still worked as a seamstress mused, "The West is obsessed with keeping time. You cannot be happy if your primary motivator is fear of time running out."

Preoccupied with defining myself within parameters of a college application, I missed something as obvious as the members of the village having a

completely different definition of time than everyone else I knew. I did this a lot within the four-year timeframe I was aware of the fact that I needed to be college-ready. I played violin for three years then quit because I hated it; I volunteered at a food-donation warehouse putting cans into boxes when I wanted to be reading fiction under the big tree in my backyard. The choices I made to become the definition of "wellrounded" had the opposite effect. Not only did fear of being rejected from college influence my decisions, but it changed how I saw myself. It was impossible for me to see myself as being more than a future college applicant, and I think I lost the better part of high school trying to be one.

For me, preparing to apply for colleges is done with. I'm a lot more absorbed in my own education, because I'm not learning on a timeline. I joined clubs, volunteered, and got a job out of desire, not fear. But for the first-graders in Ms. Rigo's classroom, and similar classrooms across the country, the college application process is only just beginning. Moreover, they are being taught and raised in an environment where everything they do is geared toward college and getting a job, tying their entire self-worth to a goal that they may or may not even want to achieve. It's good to have an edge, and to be prepared, but I think it's vital to remember that what makes us "college material" is often separate from what makes us human.

Works Cited

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Gilman's Message to Proponents of 19th-Century Patriarchal Ideals

Rachel Woods

From English 124 (nominated by Sarah Linwick)

Intrigued by Charlotte Perkins Gilman's surreal and rather cryptic tale, "The Yellow Wallpaper," Rachel devoted herself to researching its historical context and possible meanings with an inspiring fervor. "Gilman's Message to Proponents of 19th-Century Patriarchal Ideals," the culmination of her research and writing process, constitutes an analysis of this classic short story that is both novel and incisive. Clear and engaging at the level of the sentence, Rachel's writing also attests to her knack for organizing her many ideas effectively. What makes her analysis especially compelling, however, is its capacious scope: at the same time that Rachel elucidates key parallels between Gilman and the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper," she attends to the interrelationships among gender, power, resistance, and madness in the text. Highlighting the degree of agency that "madness" affords the marginalized narrator as well as the similarities between the wallpaper's pattern and nineteenth-century feminist discourse, Rachel not only offers a fresh take on a well-known tale but also advances an argument relevant to contemporary social struggles and debates.

Sarah Linwick

Gilman's Message to Proponents of 19th-Century Patriarchal Ideals

Understanding Gilman's Personal Struggles as They Pertain to the Story

Charlotte Perkins Gilman was afflicted with an illness that baffled all of her family, friends, and even physicians. At times, she could neither sleep nor summon the strength to eat. Her husband and doctor labeled her condition "hysteria," although today, it might be interpreted as some combination of depression and anxiety. Gilman's husband in particular puzzled over her condition; she had a home, a husband, and had just given birth to a healthy baby girl. What could be so wrong? It is difficult to pinpoint the causes of any psychological disorder, but Gilman herself seemed to think that it was the fault of the Rest Cure. The Rest Cure was prescribed by her physician and her husband, who told her that she should not participate in any strenuous or intellectual activity, or have stressful social encounters. Gilman argued that this only amplified her "nervous condition" (Bard 261). She was not allowed to see friends or even write, which was her livelihood. In the end, she left her husband, and pursued her career as a writer, eventually publishing "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892). The narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" struggles with the Rest Cure and her relationship with her husband, and, in the end, experiences a cathartic release of a self that she has been pressured to disavow. Gilman shared the narrator's desire to express a self others found threatening. In the presence of her first husband, Gilman felt the need to conceal her innermost thoughts and emotions. Gilman's piece acts as her commentary on various social and cultural issues of the 19th century, including the confining nature of female gender role s and the lack of understanding surrounding mental illness.

In her journals, Gilman expressed her need for freedom and independence – a need that led to great tension and conflict within her first marriage to Charles Stetson (Bard 261). In fact, Gilman refused her first husband's initial proposal, citing how much she loved living alone, as it gave her autonomy and ensured

that she did not belong to anyone. However, during the following years, she experienced a lot of doubt and indecision about her relationship with him, some days regarding him as a lover and others as an enemy (Bard 86). She attempted to express her anxiousness to Stetson, but he became increasingly withdrawn, and began to withhold his affection from Gilman, which left her increasingly paranoid. As Gilman's condition got progressively worse, so did her husband's frustration, which made her withdraw from him as well: "Gilman could not express her true feelings to her husband. When she tried, Stetson did not listen. He simply wanted her to behave like other women…to care for their child, their home, and Stetson himself" (Bard 259-260). Stetson's attitude confirmed all of Gilman's previous fears about marriage; she had desperately tried to hold on to her independence and refrain from becoming a traditional domestic woman, but now her husband was forcing the role upon her.

Gilman's concerns were amplified by the birth of their daughter. Gilman always believed that her career as a writer should be her main focus, so she had made her husband promise to allow her freedom to attend to her writing, instead of domestic duties. However, once her daughter was born, she worried that childcare would overshadow her livelihood: "It seemed clear that Gilman…felt overwhelmed by this responsibility, and, at some level, feared that Katharine's needs would come before her own. She may have feared that she would be devoured or destroyed by her daughter" (Bard 256). Gilman's occupation had suddenly changed dramatically, from writer to mother, a level of domesticity for which she was unprepared. Gilman began to break down, as she felt trapped in the role of housewife. The sensation of being trapped might have triggered trauma or unresolved fears from Gilman's past, particularly revolving around her father. Gilman's father had left the household when she was very young because of her mother's health; having another baby would have greatly endangered her life (Bard 257). Gilman's pregnancy and labor may have induced the feelings of danger and loss that she experienced in her childhood. Eventually, her nervous condition left her incapacitated and unable to care for her child.

The narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" suffers through conflicts similar to Gilman's, particularly concerning the nature of her relationship with her husband. In the story, the narrator is taken to live in a secluded house in the countryside with her husband, John, and their child. As the narrator continues to abide by the Rest Cure, she becomes simultaneously disgusted and horrified by the wallpaper in the nursery where she and her husband sleep. However, when she tries to express her concerns to her husband, he not only dismisses them but also tries to tell her how to think and feel. He uses his stature as a physician to downplay her fears and convince her that she is the source of her own problems: "He laughs at me so about this wallpaper! At first he meant to repaper the room, but afterwards, he said that I was letting it get the better of me, and that nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies" (Gilman 4). The way John discredits the narrator's inner struggles is quite controlling. He not only manages her living environment by controlling which room she sleeps in, which people she sees, etc., he also attempts to manage her inner emotions and thoughts. Their relationship becomes one similar to that of a parent and child (Bard 259). By attempting to think and feel for the narrator, as a parent might for his or her child, John completely removes her autonomy. Because the narrator possesses feelings that are above John's influence, like her doubt in him, his attempts to plant opposing thoughts in her head create a conflict within her mind: "I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes. I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive… But if John says if I feel so, I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself – before him, at least" (Gilman 2). When John attempts to control the narrator's innermost thoughts, he creates an inner conflict that interferes with the development of the narrator's autonomy. As a result, her "self" is split into two different entities: the one that belongs to John, and the one that belongs to her.

Throughout the story, the narrator alternates between these "selves," with the divide between them growing ever deeper. She dons her false persona whenever John is around, but when he leaves, she appeases her innermost feelings, especially through writing: "I did write for a while in spite of them; but it does

exhaust me a good deal – having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition" (Gilman 2). As the narrator continues to struggle with her husband's confining prescription, she attempts to satisfy herself through writing and studying the wallpaper in the nursery. She describes the color of the wallpaper as "repellant, almost revolting; a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight. It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others" (Gilman 3). The color yellow, in this context, could symbolize the narrator's sickness, as yellow is often associated with illnesses (like jaundice or malaria) or poisonous substances (like lead). It also illustrates the differing perspectives on the narrator's illness. The color is described as putrid, which could represent John's feelings of disgust or contempt for her illness. In his eyes, her illness is unclean and repelling, like a problem that needs to be dealt with. However, the narrator later describes her discovery of "new shades of yellow all over [the wallpaper]" (Gilman 11). Just as she is the only one who perceives the nuances of the wallpaper, she is the only one who truly understands the complexities of her illness. There is another aspect of the paper, though, that addresses a different aspect of the social conflict that both the narrator and Gilman experience.

Interpretation of a Changing Pattern

The ambiguity of the yellow wallpaper makes it simultaneously very easy and difficult to interpret. While the bars on the front of the pattern might appear obviously to represent the confinement of women, one cannot say that that particular interpretation corresponds to the wallpaper across the entire narrative. The wallpaper is an ever-evolving object; it almost acts as a living thing, or at least it does in the eyes of the narrator. The difficulty in pinpointing the symbolism of the wallpaper is that the audience only knows it through the biased point of view of the narrator. However, because the narrator's life parallels Gilman's life, it is essential to analyze the statements the narrator gives about the wallpaper so that we can truly understand the commentary that Gilman delivers through the story.

The pattern of the wallpaper and the narrator's initially negative interpretation of it mirror feminist discourse and the revulsion with which it was met in

a patriarchal society. But once the narrator gives into what is perceived as madness, she is able to find the freedom to express the thoughts and feelings she has hidden from her husband, and speak out against the patriarchy. Simultaneously, she begins to appreciate the wallpaper's pattern. The narrator offers many scathing opinions of the pattern of the wallpaper throughout the story. Upon first glance, she comments that the wallpaper is the worst she has seen in her life. She describes the pattern as "dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide… destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions" (Gilman 3). The wallpaper in this instance stands for feminist discourse, and the narrator's attitude towards the wallpaper symbolizes a patriarchal view of that discourse. The narrator's husband and Gilman's husband both reflect how many men viewed the opinions of intellectual women during the 19th century. Both men considered their own words to be gospel in their home, as their disregard for their wives' opinions attest. In the beginning of the story, the narrator attempts to completely submit to her husband's opinions and wishes, which pacifies and pleases him. As she suppresses her own internal opinions out of obedience to her husband, she also wants the wallpaper to obey a pattern, and she is angry when it does not conform. However, as it becomes increasingly difficult to submit to her husband's will, she becomes even more obsessed with the wallpaper, as its unruly pattern reflects her need for independence from her husband's rule.

As the narrator struggles to suppress her feminist thoughts, which ultimately revolve around her desire for self-expression (both through writing and speaking), two distinct "selves" emerge within her. One acts as a façade to hide the other, which contains her innermost thoughts and feelings that her husband would find threatening. The woman in the sub-pattern of the wallpaper mirrors this hidden self. The woman is described as "a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design" (Gilman 6). The description of the woman behind the wallpaper indicates the nature of the narrator's hidden self. It is "formless," as she is unable to embody

her hidden self at all times, and is forced to be inconspicuous around patriarchal figures like her husband. The front pattern is later revealed to be bars, which trap the woman behind the wallpaper (Gilman 10). The narrator is just as trapped as the woman in the wallpaper – until, that is, the narrator discovers the woman's method of escape. When the narrator discovers that the woman in the wallpaper creeps around during the daytime, she immediately describes how she relates to the woman: "I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once" (Gilman 12). The way the woman creeps symbolizes the narrator's secret form of self-expression; the narrator always makes an effort to keep her journals a secret from her husband, so that he doesn't discover her true thoughts and feelings. Meanwhile, she uses the façade she has created to interact with him. The only time she can truly express herself is during the day when John is at work; in the evening, she is required to do all she can to pacify him and hide her innermost feelings.

In a way, the bars both confine the narrator and enable her. The narrator perceives the woman in the wallpaper shaking the bars at nighttime, which represents her desire to break free from the confinement her husband has imposed and, more generally, the patriarchal order of society. The bars also act to hide her actions from her husband. By engaging her façade, she ensures that her hidden self will not be discovered, which allows her to continue creeping in the daytime. However, this splintering of self becomes too much for the narrator, and in the end, her hidden self breaks free.

Perspectives on Madness

Due to the ambiguous ending of "The Yellow Wallpaper," it is unclear whether the actions of the narrator's hidden self, once that self has broken free, can be considered mad. Throughout the story, her husband, who is also her physician, diagnoses her supposed mental illness (what is thought to be some sort of neurasthenia or hysteria). Of course, having a nervous tendency does not make one mad. Madness, within the context of the story, would have been a step above a nervous disorder of the mind, which physicians like John thought were curable.

Madness likely would have been diagnosed when a person was unable to distinguish reality from fantasy, for example, when someone experienced hallucinations. The narrator herself uses the wallpaper to symbolize madness when describing an aspect of the pattern: "Looked at in one way each breadth stands alone, the bloated curves and flourishes – a kind of 'debased Romanesque' with delirium tremens – go waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity" (Gilman 7). Delirium tremens is a condition brought on by withdrawal from a substance (most commonly alcohol), which can manifest itself through both physical and mental symptoms. The mental symptoms can be severe, from confusion to outright auditory and visual hallucinations. Additionally, when the narrator uses the word "fatuity" to describe the columns, most would assume she means foolish or stupid. A more archaic sense of the word, though, is synonymous with dementia, which would suggest that the narrator regards the paper as demented ("fatuity"). However, perhaps the most important aspect of this pattern is that it changes depending on how it is viewed. "Looked at in one way," indicates that the pattern might appear different than it would if it were looked at in another way. The same can be said for the interpretation of the narrator's madness – whether she is mad or not entirely depends on one's perspective.

Through the narrator's final act of destroying the wallpaper, two distinct perspectives concerning her madness become clear. In John's eyes, the narrator's madness is hugely disturbing, but for the narrator, madness offers a certain degree of freedom. The narrator's act of tearing apart the wallpaper simultaneously frees the woman behind it and the narrator herself. Her perspective changes following the act, and she appears to fuse with the woman behind the wallpaper. Now she has the freedom to creep around without fear of entrapment: "'I've got out at last,' said I, 'in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!'" (Gilman 15). Essentially, by pulling off all the paper, the narrator is completely satisfying her need for self-expression while introducing her hidden self to her husband. She is no longer determined to keep hiding from him; by tearing down the bars, she not only destroys her hidden self's confinement but

also allows this self to be vulnerable. By putting her hidden self on display in this manner, she is allowing her actions to come under scrutiny and consequently be interpreted as mad, but she does not care anymore. Her sole desire is to creep, her method of self-expression both inside and outside the wallpaper, and she is now working to appease that desire within herself instead of accommodating all of her husband's desires.

John has a very strong, negative reaction to her transformation: "Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!" (Gilman 15). John sees the tearing of the wallpaper as a frightening act of a mental patient, which causes him to faint. However, his reaction also symbolizes the horror he feels when the narrator dares to shake the established order. She dares to have an opinion outside of her husband's; she dares to take measures to disobey his sentence. Both of these acts alone completely betray the established traditions set forth by the patriarchy. As John is a part of the patriarchy, naturally he is horrified because this act is something incomprehensible to him.

Although madness – or what many would regard as madness – may bring freedom to the narrator, it is unclear whether this freedom is complete. The narrator's freedom of self-expression is symbolized through creeping, but this very word implies that there is some level of secrecy in her actions. Additionally, creeping is usually associated with deviant activity, which may be appropriate given that the story is so groundbreaking in its goal to upset or create a level of doubt concerning the patriarchy. Both the narrator's actions in disobeying the established order and Gilman's actions in creating this story could be categorized as deviant depending on one's perspective. Back when "The Yellow Wallpaper" was originally published, many people did not have a positive opinion of Gilman ("Charlotte Perkins Gilman"). Because she was such a nontraditional woman, she was met with a lot of scrutiny from the general public. She shirked traditional domestic duties like cooking and cleaning, she did not participate in her daughter's care during her infancy, she divorced and remarried, and she preferred her career to domestic life

with her husband. Following the publication of "The Yellow Wallpaper," she was met with further scrutiny for her portrayals of marriage and mental illness. As one flustered individual wrote, "It certainly seems open to serious question if such literature should be permitted in print" (qtd. in Dock 103).

While this story sends a message to society, it also speaks to Gilman's personal experience. The narrator's transformation mirrors Gilman's transformation; her desire for freedom finally leads to a catharsis that allows her to be free to address her true desires instead of obediently heeding her husband. By the time "The Yellow Wallpaper" was published, Gilman had divorced her husband. She also decided to send a copy of her story to the physician who originally prescribed the Rest Cure. Her message to both men was very similar to a statement she wrote in her diary in 1887, "You found me – you remember what I leave you – O remember what, and learn to doubt your judgment before it seeks to mould another life as it has mine" (qtd. in Bard 261). In other words, Gilman condemns the fact that Stetson, before their marriage, said he would allow Gilman to be herself, but when he changed and tried to force her to be someone she was not, it caused her nothing but pain. She is leaving him with that pain, as a reminder not to repeat actions that were so harmful to her, hoping her words will not only deter his past behavior, but also act as a warning for future women who may cross his path.

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What Can We Learn from Serena Williams' Twitter?

Peter Goggin

From English 125 (nominated by Kyle Frisina)

Peter wrote this essay, a research-based revision of an earlier piece, for a 125 class that explored political, athletic, and artistic performance. "What Can We Learn from Serena Williams' Twitter?" is a wonderful illustration of how effectively the self-reflexive writing process leads to rich new driving questions. In the wake of his initial essay, which examined a first-hand account of a high school girls' basketball season, Peter developed a series of questions about representations of female athletes. From subsequent research he gained heightened awareness of the gender dynamics at play in sports media. And then he discovered Serena Williams' profile picture on Twitter…

Peter's essay impresses with an infectious sense of what's at stake in thinking critically about images of female athletes. It also demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the ways in which a vivid framing example can illuminate a broader argument. "If overcoming heteronormative gender roles has been such an important part of Williams' life and legacy," he asks, "then why does she choose such a sexualized image to represent her online presence?" Why indeed? An appealing narrative voice, as clear as it is confident, propels this essay from a detailed close reading of Williams' photo to the development of thoughtful connections between works of sociology, psychology, and gender theory. In the hands of a less gifted writer, the pursuit of such a complex subject could feel unwieldy or glib. Peter's analysis, however, is patient and grounded, his discoveries refreshingly sincere.

In "What Can We Learn from Serena Williams' Twitter?" readers will find Peter's conclusions about constraints on images of women in sports to be both troubling and persuasive. In this remarkable essay they will also recognize a bold challenge to those very constraints.

Kyle Frisina

What Can We Learn from Serena Williams' Twitter?

One of the most prevalent problems in the life of a female athlete is the conflict between the heteronormative gender expectations females are held to and the "masculine" nature of high performance athletic activity. As a female athlete covered heavily by the media, Serena Williams typifies this conflict. Williams has demonstrated a complete domination of the field of women's tennis. By becoming the oldest woman—at 31—to reach and hold a number 1 world ranking, she has set new standards for her sport ("Oldest Female"), yet she has long been criticized for her muscular frame and "masculine" attributes (Williams).

To those who are acquainted with Serena Williams' story, the media's tendency to condemn her nontraditional body type is not new information. More vexing questions arise, however, when you consider how Williams portrays herself—specifically in her Twitter profile picture from December 2015. The most striking quality of the photo is how explicitly unrelated to sports, and how explicitly related to sex it is. To be fair, compared to many past sexualized images of female athletes this image is quite tame: Williams does not seem to be in a sexually demeaning physical position, and she certainly shows less skin than some athletes (think Sports Illustrated) have been known to show. However, the image is still blatantly sexual. The photo is a straightforward frontal shot, which features a smirking, lingerie-clad Williams, whose makeup and hair are far too intricately produced and well-done to even slightly resemble anything that one would see on the court. Some sort of jacket or cloth is conspicuously draped around Williams' shoulders, concealing the muscles that launched her into media notoriety for her apparent masculinity. By obscuring the musculature that would mark her athletic talent and highlighting what is culturally accepted as sexual, it would seem that Williams' Twitter profile picture seeks mainly to sexualize her. Her cleavage is obviously the main subject of the picture, being in the very center of the frame, with concealment of her "masculine" qualities only further substantiating this intent.

If overcoming heteronormative gender roles has been such an important

part of Williams' life and legacy, then why does she choose such a sexualized image to represent her online presence? Does her choice of photo empower women to be confident in their bodies, or does it further perpetuate traditional expectations of how women should look? To assist in finding answers to these questions we will first examine *Media Coverage & Female Athletes*—a recent film made by the University of Minnesota and TPT—in order to gain an understanding of the present-day media portrayal and public perception of female athletics. We will then turn to psychologist Andrea Paloian and social psychologists Traci Giuliano and Jennifer Knight to learn about the gender theory and psychology that has contributed to the current cultural stigmas attached to female athletics (these psychological and gendered theories will also serve as a means with which to analyze the forces affecting Serena Williams' motivation to choose the profile picture in question).

Finally, we will explore the opportunity that women's sports presents for overcoming the confines of gender. We will do this by looking at texts by two authors. The first is by New York Times journalist Madeleine Blais, whose article "They Were Commandos," about the meteoric success of the 1993 Amherst high school girls basketball team, was turned into the bestselling book *In These Girls, Hope is a Muscle*. The second text is a piece by renowned gender theorist Judith Butler analyzing tennis player Martina Navratilova's impact on gender ideals. Through understanding the effect of Navratilova's actions relative to the gender roles which prompted public criticism of her masculine body, we can make an informed judgment of Williams' actions and the effect they have on the rigidity of gender norms.

CURRENT STATE OF FEMALE ATHLETICS IN THE MEDIA

Before going into detail about the specific rhetorical devices that influence the media's portrayal of women's athletics, it is important to clarify some prevailing attitudes that the media and "popular opinion" perpetuate about female sports. In *Media Coverage & Female Athletes* Dr. Mary Jo Kane of the Tucker Center for Girls and Women in Sport establishes two well-evidenced patterns in

the portrayal of female athletes. Kane summarizes that "the first [pattern] has to do with the amount of [media] coverage: even though females represent forty percent of all sports participants nationwide, they only receive—on average—two to four percent of the sports media coverage" ("Media Coverage"). As a result of this disproportionate media coverage, men's sports dominates the awareness of sports fans and media consumers alike.

Kane goes on to describe that there is not just a problem with how often female athletes are portrayed, but there is also an issue with *how* they are portrayed in the rare instances that they are. Kane explains how "female athletes, when compared to their male counterparts, are much more likely to be portrayed off the court, out of uniform, and in highly sexualized poses" ("Media Coverage"). At this point in the documentary, many magazine images of mostly-naked female athletes in sexually compromising positions are flashed across the screen, which provides ample evidence of the prevalence of this type of imagery within popular American media.

Along with providing patterns of media portrayal, *Media Coverage & Female Athletes* also highlights specific forms of scrutiny that the media and public reserve for female athletes. Such forms are described in the documentary interview with Olympic head volleyball coach Hugh McCutcheon:

> I think it's very tough to be a female athlete in society… I think there's a lot of marginalization that goes on—I call it 'bitch or butch'. Generally, if you excel as a female you're either a very nasty person or… there's questions about your sexual orientation, and they'll use that to marginalize someone. ("Media Coverage")

This statement reveals a similarity in the rhetorical tactics that sports media uses to sensationalize and villainize female athletes. Whether a female athlete is outed as a "bitch" or a "butch" by the media, the desired outcome of these classifications is the projection of attributes which are to be perceived as incongruent with culturally-enforced ideas of gender.

Media Coverage & Female Athletes supplies the cultural context with which we can begin to assess the forces that may have influenced Serena Williams

to represent herself with a sexualized image. Through exploration of the piece, one is able to take away that female athletes get drastically less media coverage than male athletes, and that when they do get media coverage they tend to be sexualized and objectified. The piece also sheds light on the fact that when female athletes are targeted in the media, the media usually does so by projecting a misalignment of an athlete's qualities and societally expected female qualities. We will continue to explore the dichotomy between masculine attributes and expectations for females as we dive into the gendered underpinnings of this portrayal. The assignment of an inherent gender to behaviors and personal qualities is inherently flawed, and has resulted in the repeated undermining of women's accomplishments in and outside the arena of athletics. It is an attitude that must be addressed and challenged by female athletes and spectators alike. However, in order to understand how one would go about changing such practices, it is essential to understand the larger forces at play that have resulted in the status-quo.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND GENDERED UNDERPINNINGS

Having established some of the ways in which sports media in particular and American culture more broadly have undermined the accomplishments of female athletes, let us consider some of the root forces causing this marginalization. In her article "The Female/Athlete Paradox" Andrea Paloian highlights how such gendered behaviors cause a direct conflict between the "masculine" attributes associated with athleticism with the "feminine" behaviors that women are expected to exhibit (Paloian). This conflict doesn't just manifest itself in an internal struggle for identity; Paloian asserts that such a conflict seriously affects how the media and other outsiders perceive someone. In her article, Paloian explains how "female athletes are faced with the task of learning to balance hegemonic femininity and athleticism both on and off the field…in order to be accepted in Western culture" (Paloian). By establishing a clear link between adherence to gender norms and acceptance of those roles "in Western culture" Paloian reveals gender roles to not only be a pressure that is put on female athletes to conform, but

also a fundamental rationale for the media and public to choose not to "accept" someone. Whether it be defamatory remarks about Serena Williams' looks or broad generalizations devaluing the worth of professional women's athletics, the constant refrain is that athletics, an activity consisting of "masculine" exertion, does not "fit" with the essentialist qualities thrust upon a "woman."

This incongruence between behavior and expected gender roles as a possible origin for the large-scale dismissal of accomplishments in women's sport is further supported by the work of social psychologists Traci Giuliano and Jennifer Knight of Southwestern University. In their study "He's a Laker; She's a Looker: The Consequences of Gender-stereotypical Portrayals of Male and Female Athletes," Giuliano and Knight offer a psychological explanation for the trivializing aspects of the portrayal of female athletes. They use schema theory, "which proposes that people have implicit cognitive structures that provide them with expectancies when processing information" (Knight, Giuliano, 5) as a psychological underpinning for the degradation of female athletes, explaining that "when people do violate our well-ingrained schemas (as would a female truck driver or a male secretary), they are consequently perceived more negatively than are people who are schema-consistent" (Knight, Giuliano, 5). Giuliano and Knight go on to directly make the connection between this psychological process and widely held dismissive beliefs about women's sports by hypothesizing that:

> It may be, then, that men are readily portrayed by the media as athletes first because being an athlete is consistent with the traditional male role…However, for women, being an athlete contradicts the conventional female role, and thus media coverage emphasizes other aspects of their "femaleness" (such as their attractiveness). (Knight, Giuliano, 5)

Both the schema theory and Paloian's observations about hegemonic femininity and athletics point to culturally-prescribed gender boundaries as one of the main reasons for the drastic difference in public reception between men and women's sports.

Another interesting facet of the public perception of women's sports which demonstrates roots in adherence (or lack thereof) to gender norms is the categorization of certain sports as being more masculine or feminine than others.

Andrea Paloian establishes this categorization by explaining how "stereotypical gender roles created a boundary that delineated which sports were socially acceptable for male and female participation according to perceived degrees of masculinity, femininity, or gender-neutrality" (Paloian). Paloian follows by providing a list of "gender deviant" sports such as "boxing…ice hockey…weight lifting, and motor sports" which are "deemed inappropriate for women" due to the traditionally masculine qualities of those sports, also noting examples of sports which females engage in that are "met with less criticism and fewer encounters with negative consequences" such as "figure skating, gymnastics, and tennis."

Once Paloian establishes the presence of such categories, she goes on to explain how they affect the level of scrutiny that female athletes are forced to endure:

> When athletic women do not appear to be feminine enough or choose to engage in male-dominated sports, they are bound to face a variety of repercussions including: maltreatment from administrators and coaches, verbal harassment by fans, fewer endorsements, decreased media attention, and/or unfair decisions by judges or officials during competitions. (Paloian)

With this statement Paloian very clearly articulates the tangible injustices that female athletes endure as a result of the conflict between sport and gender role. These injustices also put pressure on an athlete to conform more closely with gender-consistent behaviors. This pressure is important to keep in consideration when assessing the full impact of the imagery Williams chooses to contribute to the internet media.

However, the most interesting revelations as they relate to Serena Williams come from Paloian's explanation of female athletes' responses to the pressures caused by this conflict. Paloian describes how "women who participate in 'gender deviant' sports often use identity-controlling strategies to cope with negative feedback from the public" (Paloian). She later lists some of these defensive strategies: "deemphasizing their athletic achievements and what their sport means to them, choosing to participate in a less stigmatized sport, or dropping out of their sport when they can no longer manage being associated with the negative stereotypes."

Although Williams' sport isn't necessarily gender-deviant, her muscular body-type and competitive demeanor is certainly perceived by the media as being outside what is normally expected of a woman. We could go so far as to say that Williams' overtly sexual profile picture is a response to the media's accusations of masculinity—that Williams' choice serves mainly as an identity-controlling strategy.

SUGGESTED ACTION

As we have established, the conflict that Serena Williams faces as a female athlete stems from a misalignment between her identity as a competitive athlete and the behaviors and physical qualities she is expected to possess as a woman. Blais and Butler imply that the best way-—as a female athlete—to respond to media accusations of masculinity is to address fault in the underlying gender roles that caused the media scrutiny, rather than change oneself to conform to those gender roles.

Madeline Blais' article "We Are Commandos," which follows an extremely successful season with the Amherst High School girls' basketball team, doesn't explicitly place her narrative in the broader context of defying gender norms (in the book, this story is framed by a discussion of Title IX). However, a recurring theme in Blais' article is the ability of basketball to push the individual members of the team beyond how the public expects them to act. This is eloquently conveyed by Blais when describing the team's demeanor going into an important game: "When the bus finally pulls in front of the Centrum and it is time to leap off, the girls have faces like masks... they are commandos" (Blais, 6). Commandos, a military word, may typically be seen as a description reserved for men. However, Blais chooses to use this masculine word in an admiring, empowering context: a stark contrast to the defamatory way in which the media has historically used masculine words to describe athletic women. Also, note the use of the word "are" in the phrase "they are commandos." Although "were" may at first seem more accurate, "were" implies that the girls only possessed masculine qualities for the duration of the game—suddenly returning back to their ordinary "feminine" behaviors as

soon as the game was finished. By using "are" Blais implies that the drive, ferocity, and strength exhibited in a commando are just as inherent to women as they are to men. The commando-ism isn't just a set of attitudes the young women on the team pull out for an athletic setting, but it is an essential part of their identity and personality. In this way Blais implies that seemingly accurate gendered associations are in fact flawed, and that it is the place of female athletes to openly challenge and prove wrong those associations.

Blais further portrays the positive tendency of sports to compel young women to act beyond their gender roles when describing "the only underclass starter, Emily Shore," who "is so serious about her chance to play with the famous Jenny and Jamila that she spent the bulk of her summer lifting weights and battling in pickup games on Amherst's cracked and weather-ravaged outdoor courts with a succession of skeptical…young men" (Blais, 4). Blais continues to demonstrate non-normative representation of female athletes with the use of words such as "battling," "cracked," and "weather-ravaged," which convey a grueling sense of dedication and evoke a rugged outdoor setting, both of which tend to be more associated with men. The word "battling" is especially notable, given the many obvious words the author could have used such as "playing" or "scrimmaging" that simply don't possess the same weight that "battling" does.

Although Blais' account portrays the opportunities that athletics presents for women to challenge and defy gender roles on an individual level, her narrative doesn't directly address how these roles can be challenged and hopefully someday dissolved on a larger scale. Turning to Judith Butler's "Athletic Genders: Hyperbolic Instance And/or the Overcoming of Sexual Binarism" we can gain a sense for how the actions of individual athletes in the public eye can transform societal gendered ideals.

The claims that Butler makes about the changing of gender roles circulate around one main example: that of Martina Navratilova. Much like Serena Williams, Martina Navratilova was a professional tennis player who completely dominated her contemporary field of play. Martina was also heavily scrutinized

and degraded by media conversation surrounding her masculinity. Butler further specifies the nature of the media's antagonization of Navratilova by citing continual public "speculation on her hormonal composition, [and] whether she should participate in men's sports rather than women's" (Butler). Once she establishes Navratilova's status as a popular sports media pariah, Butler goes on to describe how Navratilova persevered and overcame the demeaning accusations to "[set] new standard[s] of play" within women's tennis, as well as transform aesthetic and behavioral expectations of womanhood. She continues:

> [How is it that] Martina was once outside the ideal—because outside of recognizable gender, too strong, too muscular, too aggressive—and that she ended her career by exemplifying that very ideal? Such a move could not be possible if gender ideals were not capable of transformation, of becoming more capacious, of responding to the challenge of what is excluded from their terms by expanding the very terms of gender themselves. (Butler)

In two sentences Butler establishes that (1) public opinion about Martina changed from degradation to admiration, and (2) gender roles are transformable, as evidenced by the first assertion. Butler goes on to directly connect these two assertions by explaining how "the category of 'woman' as it is defined and accepted within women's sports can expand and has expanded to embrace the likes of Martina and her athletic progeny." In this relation, Butler—by extension—implies that Martina's handling of media scrutiny not only worked out well for her personally, but also proved to be significantly beneficial to the expanding and questioning of gender norms. In this way, Butler presents an ideal example of how popular female athletes should respond to media if they wish to better the condition of women's sport and gender roles.

Martina Navratilova refused to conform to 1980s ideas of how a woman should look and act; she merely waited for the classification of an exemplary "woman" to expand to include her. In contrast, rather than allowing gender to expand to include her, in choosing a profile picture that concentrated on her attractiveness rather than her ability, Serena Williams put herself inside the box of traditional femininity to gain wider acceptance. In the process Williams gives validation

to the flawed gender-norms that caused the ridicule she endured from the public, and additionally marginalizes the seriousness of women's sports by choosing to play into the mentality that she is valued most as an object of sexual desire.

Some may adopt a "post-feminist" interpretation of Williams' profile picture. It makes sense to see the smiling, confident tennis star and see not sexualization and objectification, but empowerment and happiness. However, while this is a legitimate observation, Dr. Cheryl Cooky introduces the idea that female athletes in the media should weigh the personal benefits they gain from presenting themselves in a sexualized way with the potentially negative messages that imagery may send to young girls and consumers about women's sports:

> [In highly sexualized photos in the media] there is—maybe—this element of empowerment for female athletes. They might feel that they can highlight their femininity as well as their athleticism—which may be empowering to them as a person, but I think the question that we need to ask is "What is this doing for Women's Sport?" ("Media Coverage")

Applying Cooky's question to the case of Serena Williams invites us to remember that while Williams may find individual empowerment and confidence in her decision to make her "sexiness" the focus of her visual internet representation, we must still consider the broader impact of this image in relation to societal gender roles.

CONCLUSION

Based on the evidence presented above, we can surmise that Serena Williams may have indeed chosen to represent herself with an exaggerated image of traditional femininity as a result of deeply ingrained ideas about body types and behaviors to which women are expected to conform. Although Williams' profile picture refutes media claims of masculinity and succeeds in depicting her ability to be beautiful and confident in spite of public body-shaming, it doesn't address the root societal ill of rigid gender roles. Martina Navratilova expanded what it meant to be a woman by flatly rejecting the ideals of her contemporaries. According to the argument put forth in this paper, Williams conforms to the current definition of "woman" by responding to claims of masculinity with a picture

of her being "feminine." When the public told Navratilova that she wasn't good enough, she said "Who are you to tell me what's good enough?" When the public told Serena Williams that she wasn't good enough, it appears she tried to prove that she was.

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Matt Kelley/Granader Family Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing

I'm honored to introduce the winners selected for the Matt Kelley/Granader Family Award for Excellence in First-Year Writing, the Granader Family Award for Excellence in Multilingual Writing, and the Granader Family Prize for Outstanding Writing Portfolio. Thomas Aiello, Jaelyn Jennings, Huynjun Lee, Alexis Low, Ran Ming, and Caroline Rothrock created excellent work that exemplifies the best of first-year writing. These courses prepare students for the rigorous academic writing ahead of them, while also offering them an opportunity to explore their experiences as writers situating themselves in local and global contexts. To write successfully as a freshman requires that students take risks and acknowledge the challenges they face as writers.

The following pages demonstrate the extraordinary ways in which first-year students embrace the challenges their instructors place before them. Our winners took on classic literature, the global refugee crisis, female representation in STEM fields, and turned their attention toward personal arguments about home and identity. These essays are delightfully thought provoking and moving, and give us insight into the world of developing thinkers and writers.

Instructors deserve special thanks for the work you see here. I am grateful for the many teachers who thoughtfully construct courses, craft writing assignments, recognize good student writing when they see it, and nominate their students. Thank you for creating the conditions that encourage student writers to produce their best work, and for sharing that work with all of us.

I am also thankful to my colleagues who served as judges for this year's prizes: Paul Barron, Gina Brandolino, Louis Cicciarelli, Christine, Modey, Simone Sessolo, and Naomi Silver. Special thanks to Raymond McDaniel and Kodi Scheer, who volunteered to serve as members of the Writing Prize

Committee and gracefully accepted extra reading. I am grateful for the generosity of my colleagues who devote their time and expertise to the writing prizes. Finally, this volume would not be possible without the wonderful work of Laura Schuyler and Aaron Valdez, who guide the writing prizes from beginning to end.

We hope you enjoy these essays, and find inspiration in the excellent work these talented first-year students have produced.

Dana Nichols
Lecturer, Sweetland Center for Writing

Challenging Media Representations of the Global Refugee Crisis

Thomas Aiello

From History 195, Saving Africa: Writing Humanitarian History nominated by Robyn D'Avignon

Thomas weaves together a number of the core themes of the course to analyze the pitfalls of the ways in which the media, and major personalities, are representing and framing the current refugee crisis. This paper makes exemplary use of a broad range of sources, and makes surprising comparisons between the current refugee crisis and other historic case studies--namely humanitarian intervention in the aftermath of the Rwandan Genocide. Thomas' analysis of media representations of the refugee crisis is highly sophisticated. Not only does he make sound historical arguments, but he offers a sustained suggestion for how this media representation should change in order to reduce xenophobia and help people who are fleeing violence in Syria. This is a complex and difficult topic. Thomas uses a rich vocabulary, tight paragraph structure, and balanced set of case studies to build a deeply compelling argument.

Robyn D'Avignon

Challenging Perceptions of the Global Refugee Crisis

On December 7th, 2015, United States presidential candidate Donald Trump called for a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States" over fears that Islamic extremists are hiding among the ranks of Syrian refugees entering the country.[1] Although extreme, this statement reflects a fundamental misunderstanding that has long pervaded the perception of refugees in the global media. Westerners have historically mislabeled refugees as a helpless and victimized mass of *others*, thereby inhibiting efforts to assist refugees and integrate them into new communities. The current global refugee crisis has amplified the disastrous effects of these perceptions. Refugees are often portrayed in the media as extreme charity cases or national security threats. As the troubled response to the 1994 Rwandan refugee crisis demonstrates, these simplified narratives undoubtedly harm humanitarian responses. This essay argues for a total paradigm shift in global representation of refugees. In order to better assist and more accurately represent all refugees, media and humanitarian portrayals of displaced persons must shift to better reflect the capable and knowledgeable citizens they truly are.

The sheer scale and severity of today's refugee crisis necessitates close analysis of media and humanitarian perceptions of refugees. The current global refugee crisis has resulted in the largest population displacement since World War II. It is currently estimated that over 60 million people are displaced from regions including Syria, Serbia, North Africa, Eritrea, and Uganda.[2] Over 4 million of these refugees are fleeing Syria, where citizens suffer extreme violence in the war between ISIS, Syria's government, and moderate rebels.[3] This deluge of people has

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[1] Bobic, I. (2015). Donald trump calls for 'complete shutdown' of muslims entering U.S. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/donald-trump-muslim-immigration-us_5665f75de4b072e9d1c7252b
[2] Graham, D. A. (2015). Violence has forced 60 million people from their homes. Retrieved from http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/06/refugees-global-peace-index/396122/
[3] Calamur, K. (2015). The magnitude of the refugee crisis. Retrieved from http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/europe-refugees-migrants-crisis/412465/

greatly strained the humanitarian apparatus of the United Nations and neighboring countries such as Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and Turkey as they struggle to accommodate millions of refugees.[4] In Europe, increasing numbers of Africans and Syrians fleeing violence wash ashore Italy's and Greece's borders aboard small rafts. Many European Union members, especially Germany, have taken in thousands fleeing war and have pledged to accept thousands more. Meanwhile, countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia are deciding how many refugees they will place in resettlement programs.[5]

The sudden influx of refugees to their respective host countries has polarized citizens either in favor of or opposed to opening their borders. The governments of countries such as Germany, Sweden, and Austria view accepting refugees as a moral and legal obligation. Consequently, they have accepted thousands of refugees and pledged to accept hundreds of thousands more over the next few years. However, the sudden and massive flow of refugees has spurred xenophobic fears throughout Europe and countries such as the United States. Fears over Islamic terrorism, severe economic strain, and cultural dilution have boosted the poll numbers of "right-wing ultranationalist" elements in France, Sweden, and many other nations.[6]

The polarization between acceptance and fear emerges from a dominating narrative of refugees as a "confusing, frantic mass" of "pure victims."[7] Years of news broadcasters streaming so-called poverty porn to the televisions of Western audiences has entrenched this narrative in the popular consciousness. Humanitarian critic David Reiff argues that the media often falls into the "humanitarian trap" of simplifying the realities of a crisis "to make the story more morally and

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[4] Ignatieff, M. (2015). The refugee crisis isn't A 'european problem'. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/06/opinion/sunday/the-refugee-crisis-isnt-a-european-problem.html
[5] Malkki, L. H. (1996). Speechless emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization. *Cultural Anthropology*, 11(3), 377-404.
[6] Erlanger, S., & Smale, A. (2015). Migrant influx may give europe's far right a lift. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/08/world/europe/right-wing-european-parties-may-benefit-from-migrant-crisis.html
[7] Ibid, 5.

psychologically palatable." Their coverage creates a misleading yet dominating image of the helpless refugee crafted to elicit support.[8] Similarly, Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie labels this phenomenon of oversimplifying complex narratives about people and events as a "single story" of poverty, disease, and warfare.[9] These simplifications successfully garner many sympathetic donations from far-removed wealthy citizens. However, the single story falls short in addressing the underlying issues that force people to flee their homes in the first place.

Humanitarians themselves too often buy in to the image of the television-ready victim, blinding them to the capability of the refugees in front of them. The humanitarian response to the Rwandan refugee crisis stands as a notorious example of this problem. In 1994, humanitarians working in Rwanda and Zaire failed to respect the knowledge and competence of the Hutu refugees they were assisting because their image of the refugee rigidly dictated a silent and incapable victim. The Rwandan refugee crisis sprang from a conflict between the Hutu-controlled government and Tutsi military force attempting to oust them. In the early 1990's, the Hutu government committed genocide against the Tutsi people in Rwanda. Eventually the Tutsi army ousted the Rwandan government and up to 2.2 million Hutu civilians fled the country in fear of retaliation for the genocide. The humanitarian response soon established refugee camps where journalists relayed graphic stories and images of "exemplary victims" suffering from cholera, dysentery, and unclean water.[10]

In their rush to assist men and women fleeing violence in Rwanda, humanitarians disregarded those they believed to be helpless. Most humanitarian workers favored resettling the Hutu refugees in Rwanda even in the face of desperate protestation from the Hutu themselves, who feared violent retaliation from the Tutsi there. The workers attributed the refugee's fear to a "hysterical,

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[8] Rieff, D. (2003). The humanitarian paradox. *A bed for the night: Humanitarianism in crisis* (1st ed., pp. 31-56) Simon & Schuster.
[9] Adichie, C. (2009). The danger of a single story. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en
[10] Ibid, 5

superstitious, overdramatic frame of mind," even though "numerous historical precedents" existed for retaliatory massacres in the region.[11] After continual encouragement by the U.N. to return to their homes, some Rwandan Hutus faced seizures of land, incarcerations of thousands linked to the Tutsi genocide, and the killings of hundreds by Tutsi forces.[12] The refusal to take the Hutu seriously stemmed from a dominating view of refugees as voiceless and childlike *others*. Humanitarians discounted the people most intimately familiar with the problems of the region because they were incapable of seeing refugees as competent. Ultimately, the "single story" of refugees helped humanitarians secure funding to relieve the immediate needs of the Hutu, but later harmed the long-term recovery of the Hutu and the region.

Today's media often falls into similar traps when covering refugees fleeing Eritrea, Uganda, Afghanistan, and Syria. Currently, images of desperate refugees washing ashore Greece and Italy dominate the news cycle. In particular, the disturbing image of the 3-year-old Syrian Aylan Kurdi dead on a Turkish beach galvanized public outcry over the Syrian refugee crisis when it went viral over traditional and social media in September of 2015.[13] The image demonstrates the great passion depictions of suffering inspire as well as the dubious morality of exploiting images of suffering. Such a photo simultaneously vividly illustrates the tragic toll of the crisis while commoditizing refugee suffering through its viral nature. The single story of a great sea of helpless bodies once again dominates media perceptions, and by extension the public consciousness, of refugees. This "human flood" notion conjures fear of overwhelming economic burden and inevitable security risks, thereby encouraging xenophobia against refugees.

Much anxiety over incoming displaced people stems from economic concerns. Some European citizens fear the refugees will overburden their welfare

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[11] Ibid, 5
[12] Ibid, 5
[13] Bernard, A., & Shoumali, K. (2015). Image of drowned syrian, aylan kurdi, 3, brings migrant crisis into focus. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/04/world/europe/syria-boy-drowning.html

systems, never find adequate housing, and take needed jobs. Right-wing politicians across continental Europe have recently seen increases in poll numbers after raising these concerns.[14] In fact, these worries are misled and reflect an inaccurate view of refugees. Because these citizens view refugees as a large, helpless, singular mass, they fear accepting them will burden their social systems to their breaking point. However, the planned amount of newcomers will reach only 1 percent of the total population of Germany (the country currently accepting the most refugees).[15] In addition, these refugees will eventually become taxpaying citizens with jobs, who will contribute to the welfare system. In fact, the president of the European Commission has stated migrants could serve as needed talent in "an aging continent in demographic decline."[16] The pool of migrants includes doctors, lawyers, inventors, and ordinary citizens who are far from helpless and eager to make a living.

Some citizens also greatly fear the threat of ISIS militants sneaking across Western borders along with the flow of refugees. Recent attacks in Paris and California have amplified those fears. A recent NBC News poll revealed that over half of Americans oppose the United States resettling displaced Syrians within its borders.[17] The dominating narrative of refugees contributes to these fears as well. The single story influences citizens to believe all refugees carry the same motivations, backgrounds, and hopes. This conception breeds confusion and fear as citizens conclude that if some Syrians support ISIS, most Syrians likely sympathize with Islamic extremism in some way. In addition, the human flood notion of refugees raises fears the U.S. government could not possibly ensure every migrant holds no extremist ties. Yet the U.S. already accepts 70,000 refugees a year and conducts an extremely rigorous safety investigation into each

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[14] Ibid, 6
[15] Ibid, 5
[16] Hicks, T. (2015). Europe's refugee crisis: What reader want to know. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/world/europe/europe-refugee-crisis-questions.html
[17] Kopicki, A., Lapinski, J. & Hartig, H. (2015). Poll: A majority of americans oppose accpeting syrian refugees. Retrieved fromhttp://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/poll-majority-americans-oppose-accepting-syrian-refugees-n465816

individual's history before they are settled into new communities.[18] As a result, ISIS infiltrators "sneaking in" to the U.S. remains unlikely. Also, resettling Syrians in the West harms ISIS's cause by demonstrating Western nations truly care about the people of the Middle East. ISIS propagandists operating in countries such as Britain currently recruit Western Muslims by exploiting their sense of alienation within their own country due to Islamophobia.[19] Sheltering thousands of Muslim refugees from Syria and North Africa sends an unequivocal message of Islamic acceptance in the West that might discourage many from ISIS's radical cause.

The single story of refugees may prove pernicious to even those who embrace migrants into their countries. The persistent "othering" of refugees may encourage segregated societies, where Syrians develop relatively isolated communities within their new countries. A similar situation took shape in Germany during the 60's and 70's when thousands of Turkish citizens migrated to the country for work. The Turkish remained mostly isolated within their communities, creating subtle tension between the old and new Germans.[20] Perceptions of refugees as voiceless and undifferentiated may encourage similar cultural splits today. In order to fully integrate refugees into their new homes, citizens will have to perceive refugees as complex and distinct individuals, fundamentally similar to themselves.

This paper by no means argues that the global media or humanitarian field intends to exploit or spread blatantly false information about refugees. Balancing ways to garner sympathy and funds while respecting human dignity inevitably entails many moral and practical compromises. Yet the singular portrayal of refugees as a helpless mass continually proves itself to be ultimately harmful. Refugees are diverse and nuanced individuals, and the public perception of them should reflect that. In order to avoid the multiplicity of problems a single

[18] Welsh, T. (2015). Why the U.S. can't immediately resettle syrian refugees. Retrieved from http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/09/15/why-the-us-cant-immediately-resettle-syrian-refugees

[19] Bennhold, K. (2015). Britain is losing against ISIS recruitment tactics. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/29/world/europe/britain-is-losing-against-isis-recruitment-tactics.html?_r=0

[20] Gorlach, A. (2015). To integrate the new refugees, germany must avoid its past mistakes with turkish immigrants. Retrieved fromhttp://www.huffingtonpost.com/alex-gorlach/refugees-germany-turkey-immigrants_b_8148264.html

narrative of refugees creates, the common perception of migrants must fundamentally shift. Humanitarians themselves possess the most authority to alter the narrative behind any global crisis. NGO's and government agencies are the first and most involved responders to the refugee crisis. They relay information to reporters and decide how to best approach assisting those most desperately in need. Therefore, humanitarians bear the responsibility of viewing refugees as nuanced, capable, and fully realized individuals. Humanitarians must begin respecting the voices of those they assist if they wish to create long-lasting solution to complex problems. Refugees should be viewed as experts in local attitudes and accounted for in the highest levels of decision making. In addition, refugees must be seen as individuals rather than an undifferentiated mass. Each refugee possesses unique needs and motivations and emergency response plans should be able to slightly shift for different refugees. For example, if a family has reason to believe they will face persecution in a country humanitarians want to settle them in, the family should possess options on different locations to settle. If humanitarians begin this shift in perception, the media and public will eventually follow their lead. This conceptual transformation will not magically solve the problems of all refugees, but it will empower them and allow humanitarians to better assist them.

In the long run, simplified and exploitative narratives harm both refugees and the communities in which they ultimately resettle. Refusal or failure to acknowledge the individuality and competence of displaced persons can doom humanitarian endeavors and create dangerous perceptions of refugees in the public consciousness. This is exemplified in the Islamophobic comments of Donald Trump with which this paper opened. The immense magnitude of today's refugee crisis demands a paradigm shift in the perception and representation of refugees. Such a shift may decrease xenophobia and better integrate refugees into new societies. In addition, improved perception and the embrace of refugees may curb radical Islamic terrorism by increasing favorable attitudes toward Western powers in the Middle East. Diverse representation of refugees is fundamentally essential to both the well-being of global refugees and the societies that welcome them.

Walking into Eternity along Sandymount Strand: Regarding the Importance of Walking in the Works of James Joyce

Caroline Rothrock
From RC 100, The Art of Walking
nominated by Karein Goertz

For her final paper, Caroline chose to examine the role of walking in Joyce's Ulysses. Both her analysis and writing style are sophisticated. She did an excellent job of integrating insights from class readings and discussions into her nuanced interpretation. I was particularly impressed by her confident voice. In conjunction with this paper, Caroline gave an excellent oral presentation.

Karein Goertz

Walking into Eternity along Sandymount Strand: Regarding the Importance of Walking in the Works of James Joyce

James Joyce's *Ulysses* is, in all fairness, a book whose formidable size and uncompromising erudition belie how little actually happens within its 800-odd pages. Essentially, it is a chronicle of all the thoughts and encounters in two men's lives as they walk through Dublin. Everything occurs within the span of a single, largely unremarkable June day. The events in the book are frequently confined to internal monologues rife with abstractions as well as allusions to history, literature, music, popular culture (per 1904), and classical mythology. Little wonder it's recommended you invest in a guidebook thicker than the work itself before so much as peeling back the cover. And yet *Ulysses* is frequently regarded as the masterpiece of the Irish literary canon, and arguably one of the most influential novels of the 20th century. It is Homeric in scope and style, but earthy, sensual, and – most importantly – human in focus. The journalist Jonah Lehrer once wrote that if *Homo sapiens* DNA were to have a literary equivalent, it would be written by James Joyce (Lehrer, 2007). The format of this book – the walk around Dublin – is distinctive in that it allows Joyce to conduct stylistic experiments of unprecedented complexity, ranging from a chapter scripted like a play to a chapter written entirely in a succession of questions and answers. The methods of exposition change as rapidly as the locations, and while the characters continue on their paths through Dublin, the passage of time is keenly felt (though seldom quantified).

During the forty years he spent in Dublin, one of Joyce's primary hobbies was navigating the streets and shores, claiming that it helped him to organize his thoughts into a pattern conducive to writing. For a man whose writing process was arguably more passive and unconscious than reliant on periods of active production, the act of walking was especially significant. It became a means of bringing order to his subconscious mind and of allowing ideas to percolate and be altered by the changing environs. In fact, the creative lifestyle of the time period

largely favored walking as a method of gathering and processing ideas – when Joyce moved to Paris in 1922, he found a perambulatory literary community already in place, which nurtured the development of his last novel, *Finnegans Wake*. Although nearly blind during this time period, he threw himself into his ramblings with fervor, if only to feel his feet carry his body through the city (Menand, 2012). He directly bestowed upon his characters his twisting paths through Dublin, but his Paris walks were largely about atmosphere. *Finnegans Wake* isn't traceable like *Ulysses*, but is instead a vision of a Paris obscured and gently transmuted, as though through dreaming (Richard, 1982). There are fragments of *rues* and cafes, certainly, but they can't approach the vividness and immediacy of the Dublin pubs and cobblestone streets. Joyce developed his unique linguistic techniques – the incorporation of made-up words being one, for instance – largely in order to convey the distinct, subjective, and unrestrained impressions with which he was presented along his walks.

The key component of *Ulysses* is constant forward motion (a tribute to the epic seafaring journey of its source material) without becoming lost in a fantastical world. What better way to ground a character than to set his feet firmly on a real path through a real city? The introspective stream-of-consciousness musings provide a suitable balance for the characters' steady progressions through time and space. The world inhabited by protagonists Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom is one of rich, painstaking detail and realism. It is telling that Joyce chose walking as the primary means of developing action in the story and of expanding upon the subjects' manifested personalities and mental landscapes. In essence, the routes they travel give shape to their ruminations and their psyches in equal measure – input and output inextricably linked.

The two principle characters of the novel, Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, represent the immaterial and the material selves respectively, or the "artistic and scientific" temperaments (Ithaca, 635). Stephen is an aspiring poet who has cast off reality in order to afford himself better access to the workings of his mind. James Joyce conceived this character as a (rather merciless) portrait of himself at

age twenty-two – an inverted Irish nationalist, defined by his alienation from his religion, family, and country (Farrell, 1944). He exists almost exclusively within the space of his own head, in a state of profound self-absorption, and shows a high degree of dissociation from his physical body. In Joyce's earlier novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen's conflict with his temporal self was so severe that it frequently drove him to the point of physical illness or acts of deliberate self-destruction. By *Ulysses* he has developed a host of phobias, including a phobia of water, which has prevented him from bathing for nearly a year. Leopold Bloom debates counseling Stephen on matters of personal hygiene, but refrains upon realizing "the incompatibility of aquacity with the erratic originality of genius" (Ithaca, 626). Stephen's guilt over rejecting Catholicism and refusing to pray at his mother's deathbed manifests itself in a phobia of thunder (as it symbolizes "the wrath of God"). Ultimately, these traits represent his inability to process reality, and the fear, delusions, loneliness, and self-loathing that arise in consequence. His surname alludes to the mythical figure Daedalus, a creative genius whose greatest invention brought him nothing but tragedy when it was destroyed by the reality of the sun.

Stephen's remoteness is the antithesis to Leopold Bloom's accessibility. Bloom is Joyce's interpretation of the early twentieth-century everyman, his relatively down-to-earth nature serving as a means of counterbalancing the artist's lofty pretentions. He is something of a hedonist, finding delight in all the sensations he is capable of experiencing. He lusts guiltlessly, eats with gusto, and feels no revulsion towards his body. His carnality is established by the three sentences that introduce him: "Mr. Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls. He liked thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a stuffed roast heart, liver slices fried with crustcrumbs, fried hencods' roes. Most of all he liked grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine" (Calypso, 53). His mind is much easier for readers to enter because it is grounded in reality – in the immediacy of experience and sensation. His mythological counterpart is Odysseus, the man on a journey, who can be characterized more by

his practicality and worldliness than by his genius. Above all, Bloom is relatable, making Stephen's abstract musings seem like hostile territory indeed.

Seldom do these characters meet on their journey, although their paths mirror each other throughout. With this concept in mind, Joyce explores the comradeship that two wandering souls can experience simply by taking the same routes throughout a city on a single day. Even when they are not interacting with one another directly, they are linked to each other by their impressions of locations and the individuals whom they encounter along their paths. The penultimate chapter – Proteus – begins by recapping the characters' physical journeys through Dublin. Directions, street names, and variations in pace and gait are all documented with extreme precision. The terms employed are a startling departure from Joyce's typically lyrical language, obviously in the interest of providing a sense of tangibility to the story. *These are real places*, Joyce wants his readers to understand – points on a map, yes, but also locations that people incorporate into their daily lives. With *Ulysses*, Joyce attempts to place the mundanities of human existence on a mythological scale. As is a befitting tribute to the Homeric source material, the journey is the primary mode of development on all fronts, the only difference being that here it is on foot rather than by sea.

Crucial to all of Joyce's works is the idea of the epiphany – a moment of brilliant insight into a truth about human nature, always unconsciously and unintentionally stumbled upon. His first collection of short stories, *Dubliners*, is potentially the most significant literary exploration of epiphanies. Each standalone chapter concerns a different occupant of the city of Dublin, and his or her struggles against a preordained place in society or the reality of the self in relation to the thrumming crowd of others. The way Joyce portrays it, an epiphany is little more than an elevated coincidence, and is linked strongly to a character's position in a particular environment. The shoreline of Sandymount Strand, for instance, infuses Stephen Dedalus's vision of a girl metamorphosing into a bird with images of gulls, white bathing costumes, lines of seaweed, and an overcast sky. This particular scene is meant to symbolize the first and most magnificent stirring of his

poetic temperament and calling towards "flight." Although this epiphany occurs midway through *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* – several years before the timeline of *Ulysses* – it becomes clear that walking across Sandymount still holds an enormous magnetism for Stephen. It is in Proteus, the chapter concerning this particular location, that the language of his thoughts becomes the most lyrical and poetic. It harkens back to Stephen's first artistic awakening, even if he has occupied a state of creative stasis since.

The Proteus chapter additionally marks the departure from the relatively standard narrative format used in the first two chapters, and the entrance into the uncharted territory of Joycean stream-of-consciousness. As a matter of equal and related significance, Proteus also happens to be the chapter wherein the walking portion of Stephen's journey truly begins. The language is heightened and profoundly lyrical, rising and falling to correspond with the rhythm of Stephen Dedalus's movements along Sandymount Strand. It deals most explicitly with the idea of moving forward, and thus dissociating from your own identity, which becomes submerged by the workings of your imagination. Stephen's thoughts turn towards his future as a poet, and he meditates extensively on the idea of himself as the figure of Hamlet, to the point where he may as well have forgotten about his own place – as he is now – in the world. The new intimacy we have with Stephen's character provides insight into the various sensory experiences of walking along a beach, in particular the visual, textural, and auditory components. The second paragraph is particularly relevant from a sensory perspective: "Stephen closed his eyes to hear his boots crush crackling wrack and shells. You are walking through it howsomever. I am, a stride at a time. A very short space of time through very short times of space. Five, six: the nacheinander. Exactly: and that is the ineluctable modality of the audible… My two feet in his boots are at the end of his legs, nebeneinander… Am I walking into eternity along Sandymount strand? Cush, crack, crick, crick" (Proteus, 37). Here Joyce employs onomatopoeia to give a sense of motion and energy to the surroundings, and also to provide a purely auditory experience – Stephen's eyes are closed; he feels about with his walking stick

like a blind man. By isolating only one of his senses, he can purify his walking experience and hone in on particular details of the environment that might have otherwise gone unnoticed.

Today, James Joyce is most famously credited with pioneering the stream-of-consciousness style that has more or less changed the face of modern literature. Yet at the time of its publication *Ulysses* was derided as obscene and inaccessible, largely for its ruthless commitment to portraying the entire truth of human existence, even at the cost of propriety. In writing *Ulysses*, Joyce aspired to "blur the line between life and literature" by allowing the reader to fully occupy a character's headspace rather than merely witness his actions from a polite distance. The novel possesses qualities of immediacy and obscenity in equal measure, its soaring syntax concealing – often ironically – the lewd *humanness* that defines so much of our day-to-day lives. Even Stephen Dedalus, though he would like to pretend otherwise, can escape neither his body's workings nor the Earth he is bound to. He's forced to tread the ground along with all the other flightless bipeds, much to his chagrin. For him, the duality between the Earth and the sky is a constant presence, manifesting itself in motifs of flight that come to be associated with the life of the creative mind. When Stephen walks through Dublin, he does so with the goal of traversing an internal landscape as opposed to a physical one. He is the ultimate example of the meditative walker, whose surroundings are filtered and refracted through mental lenses until they bear little resemblance to reality.

James Joyce once famously asserted that "if [Dublin] suddenly disappeared from the earth, it could be reconstructed from my book." It's tempting to dismiss such a claim as mere hubris, but the book's stunning faithfulness to reality might make such a thing possible. The landscape of Dublin, as first trekked by Joyce and then immortalized in the paths of Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, is rendered with painstaking specificity, down to the last cobblestones and sewer grates. The simple reality of standing upon Leopold Bloom's doorstep at No. 7 Eccles Street links the reader to the character and gives the character place and meaning in the world at large. In fact, mapping and retracing the paths

in *Ulysses* is a popular hobby amongst Joyce's fans today. Bloomsday, celebrated annually on June sixteenth (the date *Ulysses* takes place as well as the date that Joyce and his wife first walked along the Strand together), traditionally features a walking reenactment of the book. Just as the *Odyssey* has served as an inspiration and template for countless books, spanning across centuries, *Ulysses* will undoubtedly do the same for future generations of writers. The archetype of the journey is constantly evolving. *Ulysses* is a journey for modern civilization – on foot rather than by boat, man's conflict with himself and society featured more prominently than his age-old conflict with nature.

   The second question asked in the second-to-last chapter is: "Of what did the duumvirate deliberate during their itinerary?" (Ithaca, 619). At this point Stephen and Bloom have finally stopped moving, and are now having a quiet discussion over cups of cheap hot cocoa, attempting to reconcile their viewpoints on various subjects that have arisen over the course of the day. They (or at least Bloom) have come full circle, in the tradition of Odysseus: back to Ithaca once more. The answer to the question follows thusly: "Music, literature, Ireland, Dublin, Paris, friendship, woman, prostitution, diet, the influence of gaslight or the light of arc and glowlamps on the growth of adjoining paraheliotropic trees, exposed corporation emergency dustbaskets, the Roman catholic church, ecclesiastical celibacy, the Irish nation, Jesuit education, careers, the study of medicine, the past day, the maleficent influence of the presabbath, Stephen's collapse." An abundance of tangents as comprehensive and interdisciplinary as walking itself – by exploring them, Joyce has created a true portrait of human life, multi-faceted and unpredictable as it is.

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Granader Family Prize for Excellence in Multilingual Writing

What Can You Do on Your Own?

Hyunju Lee
From Writing 120
nominated by Scott Beal

Hyunju's essay explores the gulf between a romanticized view of American college life as a paradise of liberating independence and the actual challenges of navigating an American university as an international student. Hyunju narrates her story in a series of moving scenes that illustrate her resistance to asking for help at home in Saudi Arabia and her disillusionment in the United States when she finds she needs more help than she had thought. Months after reading the essay, I still clearly picture the exhausted narrator greeted in her dorm room by an unmade bed and a trash bin, and later, the evaporation of every salesperson she works up the nerve to ask for assistance. The essay's conclusion offers a tempered vision of hope that convinces the reader through its subtlety.

Scott Beal

What Can You Do On Your Own?

Many people assume that college is a key – a key to open the jail called 'high school' and set you free. When I was a child, I perceived all college students to be 'cool' and 'free,' always wearing a straight face, nice clothes and the 'adult' aura. As I moved to Saudi Arabia from Korea for middle and high school, the restraining life there made me fantasize about college even more. My misconception that I would be able to do everything on my own when I go to college seemed perfect at the time.

Wheels after wheels of cubic blue carts filled with bags, pillows, and books covered the street. People, busily chatting, grunting from physical labor, and sending one last teary kiss on the cheeks, packed the once empty halls and entrances. I could clearly see the various emotions shooting across faces as well as all different thought bubbles shooting up into the sky. As expected, the shaky, worried ones came from parents and sometimes well-aged grandparents. Anxiety and sadness covered their faces as they sent their baby to take his/her first big step towards the world. Most of the excited, adrenaline-pumped auras had their roots in the incoming new students. As the two different parties came to their heartwarming farewell session, international students like me stood afar, thinking about how nice it would have been to have our own parents here with us.

The transition from high school to college accompanied many great challenges. As I received my acceptance letters from various colleges, my parents expressed their concern by vaguely stating that they wanted me to attend university in Korea, suggesting that it would be much easier for me to adapt there with familiar food and culture. I somewhat understood their worriedness since I was the first one to go to college abroad from my family, but the fact that I could not gain any resourceful advice from the people whom I rely on the most frustrated me. Due to my parents' insistence, I had to reach out to others – friends, their families, and sometimes the unfamiliar alumni of my high school – and hold awkward questionnaires about life outside of Saudi Arabia. I hated asking for help. I

thought, and back then I *knew*, that I was capable of doing things on my own. I believed that my future formed a perfect unison with the numerous movies about American teens going off to college and adjusting perfectly fine – a few conflicts here and there to add to the entertainment – academically, socially, and personally. In excitement, I wrote lists of what I would do when I get to college; take care of all the basic livelihood by myself, attend large lectures, and manage my time schedule while having fun with friends from diverse backgrounds.

Of all, the idea of freedom struck me as most attractive. Living by myself, without getting any intervention from my dad or not hearing any more nags from my mom seemed ideal. I could own the room to myself and have no direct supervision regarding sleep time. Imagine having your own world, completely separate from anybody else's, which no one can say anything about. Merely thinking about the perfect college life of going out with friends whenever I wanted to and chilling on grass with an open book during a warm, sunny day allowed me to escape from the rigid and limited life in Saudi Arabia. Those fantasies soon absorbed into my perception of the future, and I was determined to make dreams come true.

The determination bore confidence in what I was doing. I constructed the imaginary dorm room and scheduled a utopic college life during summer. In addition, I took the charge of applying for visa and doing other paperwork for the sake of "I am going to be doing things on my own in the future, why not practice from now on?" I wanted my parents to see me as a grown adult, not as a young girl still in their protection. Although there were some aspects that I needed my parents for, I often rejected their offers and help so I could accomplish my goal and finish all pre-college requirements on my own. When they insisted on helping out, I responded with a cold shoulder, upset that I was still considered 'a child.' As one can see, I was extremely proud of myself and the tiny little successes of planning and organizing added onto my confidence and excitement for independence.

Soon, the day came and I departed to America, where I believed I would succeed greatly on my own. However, only a few hours later, my fantasies were completely shattered as I stood at the Blake Transit Center, wandering around

clueless, trying to figure out how to get to the campus and my dorm. Hiding the disappointment towards myself, I asked for help from passersby, and only then could I reach my destination. Upon arrival, an empty room with a bed, a desk, a drawer, and trash bins greeted me. I desperately needed to lay my exhausted body, but no essentials were present to give me the rest I desired. To buy the beddings, unpack my luggage, clean the room, and squeeze in the time to eat something before the sunset, was too much for a girl who just flew13 hours across the Pacific Ocean. At that moment, I just wanted to sit down and cry, to ask my parents to come here right now and make everything better. What lay before me did not meet any of my expectations, and that shock brought physical and mental breakdowns.

Following the impactful first impression, numerous challenges greeted me with open arms. I did not know that shopping could be so difficult. Trying to sort out whether to buy a medium-hard pillow or a soft one, a comforter or a duvet cover, this laundry bag or that, or even what kind of drawer to buy, I stayed in the store for what seemed like an eternity. I wanted to ask the salespeople, but whenever I approached them with shy hesitations, another braver person asked them a question, and they evaporated in mere seconds. Sometimes, they walked past me, unable to hear my timid and nervous voice. Intimidated by multiple failures, I retracted even more, gradually stepping away from my ideal lifestyle.

Adjusting to a new time zone added on to the sorrow of being alone. As many international students may agree, it is difficult to energetically meet new people and explore a new environment when your days and nights have been reversed. That led to physical exhaustion, which made me become homesick even more. In fact, I found out that the difficulty did not only lie in shopping, but ranged from establishing bank accounts, receiving a phone number, to choosing the dinner menu. While getting rid of the things on the To-Do List one by one, I discovered my ignorance about the world. The jargons used in different sectors of society puzzled me. I felt too embarrassed to ask the clerks again what they have said, but it was too risky to 'smile and nod' and let it go. Even language, the most reliable part about coming to the United States, turned its back on me. The

English I used in Saudi Arabia and Korea was completely different from the one used here in the States, and such difference made me doubt my capabilities.

With decreased confidence in colloquial language, I feared speaking out loud in public. Speaking for myself became the most difficult thing about living alone. Back in Saudi Arabia, I was always with someone when I went to the shopping mall or to a restaurant. I rarely said anything to the waiter or asked the salespeople, it was always my parents or my friends. In Korea, it was rather easier for me as I spoke my native language there. Also, in most East Asian cultures, if a young one expressed one's demands explicitly, that was deemed disrespectful and bold. Thus, raised by those standards, making independent choices was not my specialty. Now I was responsible for my own choices, and I needed to act up and speak up. I was expected to represent my own self and I was definitely not ready to do that.

My misconception caused me to underestimate the difficulty of living independently. The ideal concept of freedom blinded me from discerning the reality and the inability to recognize the importance of family sooner let the feeling of loneliness intrude like a tsunami. I regretted not having my parents hug me longer at the airport, I wished I let them buy me everything they wanted me to take to America, and was upset that I persistently refused to let them come with me to adjust to this new 'home.' However, the more I thought about what I should have done, I felt myself dragged back a few steps. Sure, family and friends have a large impact on your life, but so will the university and its contents. I am not suggesting that people should not be confident or excited about getting freedom and independence, but to beware of the consequences of that boastful attitude.

No one can do everything by themselves, not even in a country with broad, open opportunities protected with fundamental human rights. When I lived in Saudi Arabia, a much secluded country, where women could not drive, had to cover their body with a black robe at all times, and lacked many opportunities compared to men, the idea of freedom seemed so prominent and great in the United States. Living among those restraints, I thought that when I went

to America, people would be very open-minded and would do anything as they please. However, I discovered that the people and the lifestyles are pretty much the same anywhere. People in Saudi Arabia still expressed their freedom and characteristics through fashion, social networking services and bold personalities, and not everyone in America went around doing crazy things justified by their pursuit of happiness. Perhaps it might have been easier for a newbie to jump into the world in a more conservative and secluded society, allowing for gradual independence. I experienced more difficulties as I dove from a tightly packed community to an open one, unable to see the big hole beneath me while jumping for the freedom star. Yet that 'big hole' is not something so detrimental, but it will teach you the cultural, social, and lingual differences between you and your new neighbors, asking you to understand and tolerate.

Now, it may not be an easy jump, especially for international students or even for some introverts like me. Like many others, I came to this country with the American Dream, and I took it for granted that I would be able to succeed on my own, both academically and socially. As I start to adapt and adjust to the new setting and people around me, I respect and envy the people who are brave enough to ask questions, start the conversation, and hold out their hands first. My sense of bravery may not match with the general definition. I don't want to become 'superhero brave' like standing up for the weak and saving people from danger, but I desire some kind of faith in myself that I would recognize my weaknesses and open them up to others in order to turn those faults into merits. What I have learned in these past few weeks of transition is that I am still figuring out how to be brave, and it will take time.

Females in STEM Need a Stronger Voice

Ran Ming
From Writing 120
nominated by Jing Xia

The writer chose to write on female students in STEM fields. I was surprised by the quantity and quality of the external sources Ran identified. She chose to confront the popular belief that female students are less interested in STEM fields by nature and the underrepresentation of females in these fields is natural and should be respected. The paper contains some interesting ideas and the development seems reasonable.

Jing Xia

Females in STEM Need a Stronger Voice

       I always feel sad when reading the stories of Hypatia of Alexandria. Born in a traditional but well-educated family, Hypatia was lucky to lead a life different from that of the other girls living in ancient era of Greece (Mark, 2009). Girls at that time spent their whole lives inside households, but Hypatia was able to develop her own career. Her father, Theon of Alexandria, was a professor at Alexandria University. He taught Hypatia "his own trade"—philosophy, mathematics and astronomy, and that great decision led Hypatia to the glorious palace of mental works and let her see the beauty of science. Hypatia's life was altered entirely. She was addicted to these mental works and found herself good at them. Hypatia was able to assist her father with the research in mathematics and astronomy. She made an advance in computational skills, and discovered several difficult geometry and algebra theorems which were highly advanced at her age. Besides, she dedicated herself in the teaching of Astronomy and Philosophy at Alexandria University. For Hypatia, life with learning and teaching science which she loved so much was so fantastic, until a spring day in 415 C.E., everything was altered. Just like normal days, Hypatia was on her way back from a lecture, but unexpectedly, she was dragged to a church by a group of Christian monks, and beaten to death at the church. It was a tragedy, not only for the loss of the first brilliant female scientist in history, but also for the reason why she was murdered—she was thought to be a witch who violated the traditional role of females in ancient times.

       For thousands of years, science and technology, referred to as STEM fields, seemed to be men's specialties. Although women nowadays would no longer endure life threats for their career choice in science and engineering, STEM fields still don't seem to be attractive enough to females. I believe STEM fields need to engage more females.

       I am pretty sure that at this point, some people would like to argue against me by pointing out the increasing numbers of females in STEM fields in recent years and questioning the necessities of such "time-consuming" and

"seemingly meaningless" engagement. I have read Denise Cummins' (2015) article titled *Why the STEM gender gap is overblown*. In this article, Cummins pointed out the number of women working at psychology and biological science were not underrepresented. She believed among all STEM fields, only in computer sciences and engineering were the percentages of females far less than that of males.

Cummins (2015) also claimed that it might be girls' nature to fancy living things and agents while boys show a great preference on mechanical things. She held the opinion that females were born with a nature to avoid STEM things, and she thought it was natural for women not to choose STEM as their careers. Therefore, she concluded women were not necessary to be encouraged in engaging in STEM fields.

I guess Cummins (2015) would not be the only person raising these arguments. Many people would also hold disagreements. And probably someone just said, "We are not in the ancient era, people are educated to show gender respect to women, and Hypatia's tragedy would not happen in modern time, so why would we bother engaging women in STEM fields?"

Yet not only the federal laws, but also all kinds of social committees are taking care of the safety and well-being of women, so I acknowledge people's insight in the raise of females' social status in the recent thousands of years. However, I can't agree that it is meaningless to attract more female in STEM fields. In other words, I would still like to hold the opinion that the society needs to work hard in engaging females in STEM fields.

Cummins' (2015) opinion that it was female's nature that prevent them from choosing STEM fields as their careers might sound appealing to some people. They might be led by Cummins and say "Why would we force females to do what they are unwilling to do?" But I was not convinced by Cummins. My research also showed that Cummins' beliefs seemed not to be the case. According to Feist and Gorman (1998), previous studies that showed biological aspects, or in other words, nature, would not have an impact on the difference in gender's performance and preference in STEM fields. The reason is related to social psychology.

From a social-psychology perspective, they proposed that boys were encouraged more to study STEM subjects by their teachers and parents, while girls were not encouraged to do so. And in fact, teachers' and parents' encouragements would have more influence on female students. Therefore, it is not the biological aspects, or "nature", that keeps females away from STEM fields, but the social-psychology impacts that really works.

Influenced by Cummins' arguments, some people might also think of whether it was ability that prevent girls from doing well in STEM fields, which further keep them away from choosing STEM works as careers. According to Feist and Gorman (1998), it did not necessarily reveal the incapability of female students' intelligence in doing STEM work that standard tests like SAT Mathematics showed male students might do 4 times better than female students. In fact, in Stanley's study (as cited in Feist and Gorman, 1998) of male and female students' performance under the age of thirteen, girls could perform as good as boys. The authors also pointed out the results in standard tests might only show one's ability in solving test questions, but not his or her ability in doing real scientific research. Convinced by Feist and Gorman's studies, I would like to hold the opinion that females are not incapable in doing STEM jobs, they should be encouraged in working in STEM fields.

So what makes the underrepresentation of females in STEM fields happen? According to the report by Economics and Statistics Administration under the US Department of Commerce (2011), it is the social impact. And I feel the same way. Since the ancient Greek era, when Hypatia of Alexandria lived, people tended to assume men were born to do some external jobs, while women ought to stay with internal work and focus on families and households. In modern days, although people won't explicitly point out women doing external work like STEM jobs are inappropriate, such a social impact still leaves an impression on many people that females shouldn't be encouraged to work in STEM fields. Science and engineering, which are originated from going outside to study nature and hard work in factory respectively, are traditionally acknowledged as

tough and external work, and don't seem to be suitable for girls to get involved. In fact, more "girl-style" subjects, like literature and arts, are assumed to be related to elegant and delicate, which seems more suitable for females. Such social impacts show influence on girls when they were asked to choose school subjects or determine majors. The traditional image of typical female figures kept them away from STEM subjects, which led to a gender gap in STEM fields.

Cummins (2015) also claimed that there was actually no such a large gender gap in STEM fields. However, I doubt the creditability of her statement. In Cummins' article, she used several graphs, which were plotted by herself as she indicated, to show that the percentage of females in most STEM subjects were about the same or even more than that of males. However, she failed to provide the original data as well as the data source, which made me doubt whether these data were reliable. On the other hand, according to the research I have done, that was not the case according to the statistical results from governmental institution. These results have unfortunately shown that not many women were engaged in STEM fields. According to the report provided by the Economics and Statistics Administration, US Development of Commerce (2011), about 48% of all kinds of jobs were occupied by females, while only 24% of the total STEM jobs were taken by women. Although compared with only 9% of women doing STEM jobs in the 1970s, this results seemed to be a great improvement, we still should not lose sight of the huge gender gap in STEM fields.

Cummins (2015) also argued there were fields like psychology and biological sciences where females were not that underrepresented. But I doubted whether women were able to get into the advanced and central work in STEM fields. In fact, according to the result of my research, that was not the case. In other words, when we focusing on the percentage of female STEM students dedicating themselves in a higher diploma, we can feel the gender gap in STEM fields even larger. According to the article written by John Matson (2013), *Women are earning greater share of STEM degrees, but doctorates remain gender skewed*, published on *Scientific American*, the number of females earning bachelor's degrees

was almost the same as male students in chemistry, mathematics and statistics, and earth sciences. And that figure in biological sciences even exceeds that of male students. However, when it comes to higher diploma, as known as master's degrees and doctorates, the gender gap became extremely obvious. These results revealed that although young college women were engaged in STEM fields at a level of undergraduate studies, they were less likely to engage themselves in pursuing higher diplomas, which indicated that probably women in STEM fields were generally doing basic jobs, but were not really being able to involved in core and more advanced research and studies. I believe women have their valuable insights in STEM fields, and this phenomenon, in my opinion, would be a great loss for the future developments of STEM fields. The underrepresentation of female scientists and engineers, not only in terms of the total percentages of female STEM "workers", but also in terms of the occupation of women doing more central and advanced STEM jobs, is disappointing, and it does no good to the long term developments of STEM fields. Therefore, I would like to say, it is high time to call for more females engaging in STEM fields.

People might ask why I would like to say women have valuable insights in STEM fields. I think the answer lies in gender diversity. According to the research by Sangeeta Bharadwaj Badal (2014), business units with better gender diversity earned more profits than those with larger gender gaps. They believed "Men and women have different viewpoints, ideas, and market insights, which enables better problem solving" and "A gender-diverse workforce allows the company to serve an increasingly diverse costumer base."

Now let's consider the effect of gender diversity in companies doing STEM jobs. I would like to say the proposed reasons for gender diversity in general business units also applies in STEM companies. Females are the group of people who know themselves the most. In a STEM company, female scientists and engineers will also be able to know female's needs better than male scientists and male engineers. This can be seen from the example of an invention of a new kind of medication in a medicine company. As illustrated by Del Giudice (2014),

female scientists, as female figures, would have a better understanding on women's bodies and would better predict how women's bodies might react to a certain medication based on their own experiences. He pointed out that in fact, in the development of a kind of cardiovascular drug, how women patients would feel and what problems were likely to be experienced by female patients remained myths until female scientists and engineers became involved in the research team. This drug, aiming to treat cardiovascular diseases, worked "nearly perfectly well on male patients", but had "widely experienced side-effects" on female patients. And due to the lack of female researchers during the synthesis and testing period of the drugs at an early research stage, many of these side-effects featured specifically in female patients "were not realized until months after taken to the market". The article showed that the problem of gender-specific side effects got solved with the involvement of female researchers later on. In this case, the difference between male and female body features made it hard for male scientists to imagine the effects on female patients. We can see that females' engagement in STEM companies has shed light on unique insights in the specific needs of women, and therefore STEM companies can serve a broader customer base. Women's valuable insights bring a gender diversity into STEM fields, which can bring a series of positive effects. I would like to say it is valuable to engage women into STEM fields.

Regardless of the crucial condition of the scarce representation of women in STEM fields, I really appreciate that actions were taken to involve more females into STEM fields. Valerie Straus (2014), the author of *How to get girls more interested in STEM subjects* published on *The Washington Post*, shed light on the approach of applying single sex education in getting female students more engaged into STEM subjects. Straus reasoned the claim by pointing out that more female-characterized learning environments can make young females more comfortable when doing science and engineering. The author also pointed out hanging pictures of eminent female figures in STEM fields could have role-model effects on female students and encourage them to be more engaged. Similarly, Tricia Berry (2014), the author of *I'm a female engineer, and I love science. Stop calling me*

a geek. also figured out that encouraging women to be more engaged into STEM fields by advocating women with male characteristics could be on the wrong track. She claimed we should let the girls realize that women could also do great jobs in STEM fields without having to give up feminine style lives they enjoyed.

Governed by similar principles, in Silverman's (2015) article, readers were glad to see that STEM companies like Google, Facebook and Dow Chemical Co. have provided annual training to their employees in order to help them better understanding their female fellow colleagues. STEM companies were long known for their gender bias and scarcity of female co-workers. Probably for that reason, the minority groups of female workers in these companies would suffer a feeling of loneliness. By making people more aware of what females were thinking, it could be helpful for a better involvement of females as well as encouraging more females to become employees of these STEM companies.

While appreciating the rise of females' social status, especially in recent decades, I can't agree that the gender gap in STEM fields are overblown. I hold the opinion that STEM fields need stronger voices from females. Not only for the fact that women are still underrepresented in STEM fields, but also for women's insight in doing STEM jobs. I really appreciate all actions that have been taken in order to get females more engaged in STEM fields and help people better understand females working in STEM fields. But we have to realize, that these are only the starting steps that we need to take to encourage the voice of females in STEM fields. And yet we still have a long way to go. I hope more actions involving more women in STEM fields can be taken in the near future. And I hope more women will be given the chance to share the joy of working in STEM.

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Granader Family Prize for Outstanding Writing Portfolio

Jaelyn's Page
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Jaelyn Jennings
From Writing 100
nominated by Gina Brandolino

It is my pleasure to nominate Jaelyn Jennings' excellent e-portfolio for the Granader Family Portfolio Prize. Jaelyn was a strong and diligent student consistently, from the first to the last day of the semester, and her e-portfolio demonstrates the thought and care she put into all her work.

What I most admire about Jaelyn's e-portfolio is how plain it makes what really matters to her; the color choices and photos on her welcome page make clear that she is a true-blue Wolverine and also, you learn if you continue to scroll down, a loyal Green Bay Packers fan. Jaelyn is passionate about her philanthropic work with Dance Marathon, which benefits area children's hospitals, and accordingly made that the subject of one of her main site pages. The rest of her pages feature her writing for the course, but by no means are their subjects any less important to Jaelyn. The prefaces you will find on her pages for her first four major assignments give you a taste of the deep investment Jaelyn has in the issues she chose to write about; the papers double-down on that investment: her thoughtful close reading of a passage from Elie Wiesel's memoir Night; her poignant personal narrative about her mother's diagnosis with multiple sclerosis; her earnest argument in defense of the Upper Peninsula; or her incisive research paper exploring what exactly is in our food.

I loved all of these papers, but my favorite was probably "What Is In Our Food Today?" The paper is genuinely interesting (and disturbing!), and Jaelyn's research

included a self-designed survey which asked participants to match a food label to the correct food item based on the list of ingredients. It was an idea that helped her prove the point of her paper expertly; I will let you read for yourself to learn the results of that poll. Another of my favorites is Jaelyn's response to the final course assignment, which asked students to compose writing advice to a group of writers with whom they identified, and they were given free rein in terms of form. Jaelyn chose perhaps the most unique group of writers any student in my class came up with and made an original and extremely impressive, professional-grade video featuring her advice.

Jaelyn's design choices for her site are simple and elegant and, while it contains some interactive elements, her excellent writing is clearly and appropriately the focus.

Gina Brandolino

Reflection: Argumentative Writing Assignment

In Assignment three, we were assigned to write an argumentative paper. This argumentative paper was supposed to be a personal connection back to the writer – something that the writer felt the need to "argue" about.

My argument is very personal to what I encounter on a day-to-day basis. I am form the Upper Peninsula of Michigan – yes, Michigan. The U.P. is not a part of Canada. I am introduced to new individuals almost daily, and nobody that I have met (even students from Michigan), know where I am from. This is extremely frustrating to me because usually, I have a good sense of where other individuals come from.

My argument started out as a rant because I came in contact with so many people who were completely clueless when I said that I was from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The common answers were usually: "Oh, near Traverse City?" or "Oh, so technically you are from Canada?" No. I am not from the northern part of the Lower Peninsula or from Canada.

I am a proud "Yooper" that wants all of these clueless individuals to learn what the U.P. is, and why it is important in today's society. Many important resources originated in the U.P. that are still used today. It is a beautiful place to visit with multiple activities going on all year round.

It is time for the United States to give back to my homeland – the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Argumentative Paper

I am from Iron Mountain which is a small town in the rural area of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (also known as the U.P.). The U.P. is a beautiful place to live and visit. Although the winters are long and harsh, the beauty of the snow and trees is wonderful. These are envious characteristics of the U.P, and are often unknown among the majority of United States citizens. The U.P. is often characterized as being apart of Canada by many people who are unfamiliar of Michigan's geography. Many people believe that the U.P. is not an important part to the U.S. simply because it is geographically small and rural. While there is wilderness in the Upper Peninsula, there is a lot more: modern ways of living, extremely unique natural features, engineering wonders, industries, and multiple recreational activities for the winter and summer.

I have encountered a countless number of people who seem to think that I am from Canada. The U.P. has always and will always be a part of the state of Michigan, and therefore a part of the United States. I have been asked ridiculous questions regarding the U.P.: "Do you have electricity?", "Are your roads paved?", "Do you have a bathroom in your home?" The answers to all of these absurd questions are yes. The U.P. consists of a small population, is very rural, but is like any other place in the U.S. with food at our fingertips, water from our faucets, and homes like any others with bathrooms inside.

Surrounding the state of Michigan are five vast lakes known as the Great Lakes. These lakes make up the Upper and Lower peninsulas. Michigan is the only state in the U.S. that has two separate land masses to make up one state. If the U.P. was not a part of Michigan, there would not be any states in the U.S. that would have this unique characteristic. I find it extremely odd that people are unaware of what the U.P. is even though it makes up the most geographically distinct state on a map of the U.S.

Many major landmarks that are connected with the U.P. should be nationally known to U.S. citizens. The Mackinac Bridge is the fifth longest

suspension bridge in the world, and the second longest suspension bridge in the U.S. The "Mighty Mac" connects the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. This bridge transports roughly 11,000 vehicles every single day which is close to 325,000 vehicles each month. This bridge is unfamiliar to many people who do not live in the state of Michigan – I have been asked if I have to take a boat to get back and forth from the different peninsulas. To me, this question is ridiculous because the Mackinac Bridge is such an outstanding structure, and should be known and studied by U.S. citizens just as I know of and have studied various bridges around the U.S.

The Sault (pronounced "soo") Locks is also another major landmark that connects all of the Great Lakes together. The locks are a set of parallel waterways that transport massive freighter ships to little speed boats from the highly elevated Lake Superior to all the other lowly elevated Great Lakes. About 11,000 ships pass through the locks each year. This was one of the first locks that was ever built in the U.S. It was built simply for freighter ships that were transporting copper and iron-ore to different places in the Lower Peninsula.

There are numerous amounts of resources that were found in the U.P. Copper mining became a very large industry in the U.P. in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Copper was mined in the western portion of the U.P. now known as the "Copper Country". The majority of people living in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan and all of the U.S. are completely unaware that copper mining originated in the U.P. This was an essential way for people to make a living. Now, copper is a widely used resource throughout all different places of the world.

Along with copper mining, iron-ore mining also originated in the U.P., and in my hometown – *Iron* Mountain. Iron-ore mining was a very large industry in the U.P., and it served as an occupation for many many people living during the iron days. Driving through my hometown is like driving over hollow ground because of all of the mining that was done a few hundred years ago.

On May 3, 1940, the Chapin Pit (a very large iron-ore mine in Iron Mountain) had collapsed killing about four or five individuals. This disaster

horrified many citizens of my hometown, but much of this information had never became known to people living outside of the U.P. Although this event had happened way before media and the news, it was an adversity that has gone unnoticed to people living outside the U.P.

Ford vehicles are very common all over the U.S., and even all over the world. Henry Ford, the founder of the Ford vehicles bought almost 450,000 acres of land in the U.P. to establish a Ford plant. Ford hired a new employee, E. J. Kingsford. Kingsford ran the plant just west of Iron Mountain – my hometown. The surrounding environment of this new Ford plant became known as the Ford Edition, the Kingsford Heights, and Breitung. All of these different locations were where the workers from the Ford plant lived – the Ford Edition being the lowest salary workers, the Kingsford Heights residents were paid a little bit more, and the Breitung residents were the very rich people living in the "country". These new living areas became home to a new town known as Kingsford, Michigan. I went to school at Kingsford High School, and I live in the Breitung Township area. As I drive to school each and every day knowing the history behind the streets I am driving on, I could only hope that every other student in the U.S. learns about how and where the origination of the Ford industry began.

All of the history that U.P. carries with it definitely goes unnoticed to all surrounding states in the U.S. Mining of copper and iron-ore and the founding of the first Ford plant originated in the U.P. These findings are so useful to society today, and they will be continued to be used in the future. It is important to know where our resources are coming from, and where they originated from. I only listed a few examples of what has originated in the U.P., but there are many others that I could talk about that explains the significant historic claims coming from the Upper Peninsula.

Along with all of these wonderful historic claims that originated in the U.P., there are multiple recreational activities that attract many tourists. Many people from the Lower Peninsula find their way to the U.P. during the summer time to spend months living on lakes, hiking, fishing, camping, and hunting.

During the winter seasons, tourists are attracted to the U.P. because of winter recreational activities: snowmobiling, skiing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and ice fishing. For people who are familiar with the U.P., they can understand and relate to these amusing and entertaining activities.

In my geography classes, I have learned all about different islands that are not technically connected to the U.S., but I still know that they are part of the U.S. The Florida Keys, Hawaii, Rhode Island, and Hilton Head Island are just a few examples of places on the map that I have studied. These places are claimed by the United States. For example, even though there are multiple islands that make up Hawaii, no one would claim that the smallest island of Hawaii is not a part of Hawaii because it is small. It is the same concept for the U.P. because of its small size compared to the larger size of the Lower Peninsula. It is extremely bizarre that people would have not learned that the Upper Peninsula of Michigan is indeed the same things as the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, and not a part of Canada.

Reflection: Research Paper

If you could pick any question that you would want answered, what would that question be? Would it be about cars? Businesses? Animals? Sports? I decided to write about food. Why did I choose this topic, you may ask? Simply because the food industry these days amazes me. Specifically, I decided figure out what is really in our food.

Research papers are often one of the most difficult things for me to write simply because I never know if my topic is too broad or too specific, or if my information is answering my question or not. It can be really challenging to write research papers, and my paper about food proposed a lot of conflict during the writing process.

My first problem seemed to rise when I was not sure what kinds of evidence I wanted to use in my paper. It is crucial that the author of a research paper includes certain evidence whether it is statistical, anecdotal, empirical, experimental, or authoritative. I decided that statistical and experimental would be the best bet for the kind of paper that I was going to write.

Another issue that I came across when writing this paper was how to organize all of the information that I was researching, and how that was going to have a flow throughout my paper. I ultimately came to a unique, yet fun way of portraying my idea.

What is in Our Food Today?

Over the years, industry has dramatically changed in various occupations so production is completed in a timely fashion, products are made in a much higher quantity, and all products are much less costly for items such as: clothing, cars, furniture, and food. These changes in industry have also led to drastic changes in the quality of the final product. Specifically, I am going to focus on the way the food industry produces their goods, and what is really in the food that we eat. I am going to take a deeper look into the real ingredients of our food, and explain some of the health issues that arise from the ingredients that are present in our food. From chemicals in our food, to the production of food, to the preservatives put into our food, how can an American really know what is in the food that they are eating? So, the pondering question that many people do not want to hear the answer to – what is really in our food today?

Chemicals

There are over six thousand different chemicals that food manufacturers use to produce our food today. The majority of these chemicals are seriously toxic and not supposed to be consumed by humans because of the dangerous substances present within the actual chemicals ("Farm to Fork"). Chemicals are used quite frequently on farms to help aid in the growth of crops and the quantity of product produced. These crops are then sold in large quantities to large food companies, however, keep in mind that the chemicals put in and on farm soil and crops does not just go away. Although chemicals allow crops to grow more quickly and more efficiently, the negative effects of chemicals will still be present in the end result of the food produced. It was estimated that nearly nine hundred *million* pounds of toxic pesticides are used on farmlands every year ("Farm to Fork"). The question that is proposed after reading this alarming information is very straightforward and simple: why do companies now have to use these extremely toxic chemicals?

Back in the early stages of food production, there were obviously little to no harmful chemicals added to our foods. The use of these toxic chemicals results

in faster food production and more product made at one time. For a large company, this is an extremely important aspect to them because it is cheaper and they will continue to have fast production. For example, the use of GMOs (genetically modified organisms) are genes that are put into crops that enhance the growth of the crops. GMOs are more recently being used in foods such as: soy, corn, canola, sugar beets, honey, dairy products, meat, eggs, and hard cheeses (MacDonald). If a company's production is not costly to them, the product of food that is placed in a grocery store will not be costly for the consumer. A cheap food product is very inviting to a customer. Priorities of people have changed. Americans now buy for what is cheap over what the healthy choice may be.

The information about what is in our foods today are sometimes not relayed properly to the customers buying the food. Labels today, are very deceiving. If the customers actually knew what was in the food they were purchasing, there would be no hesitation to not buy that product. According to Mike Adams, an author for Natural News, the majority of the chemicals that are present in food today are extremely prone to causing cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and "billions of dollars in health care costs" (Adams). Adams brings up one chemical called sodium nitrite which is a red coloring chemical that is added to many different processed meats (bacon, hot dogs, lunch meats, and sausage to name a few), and it is used to make meat look fresh. This harmful chemical is linked to the causes of brain tumors, and also to cancers in young children (Adams).

Stated previously, America's priorities have dramatically changed. Our food production process is definitely not what it used to be because there were not even chemicals available to producers. Companies use chemicals and preservatives because it is convenient for their industry, not for the individuals actually purchasing the food. The ingredients that is going into our foods today needs to be known to the people of America. Ultimately, people will begin to really pay the price after harmful chemicals attack the body's immune system.

Corn

"Corn is known to be one of the most productive, inexpensive, and

versatile crops," states Jonathon Foley from Scientific American, "it dominates American agriculture now-a-days." Corn can be turned into ethanol or plastics, made into high fructose corn syrup, or used for animal feed. Corn is used in almost all foods fed to farm animals and humans (Foley). The positive about corn is that it is possible to grow it at any place in our country which makes it very accessible to all food producers and companies. The down side of corn is that it is being used incorrectly. By this statement, I mean that corn is being modified by companies so it is not costly for food companies.

Corn is used in corn flour, cornmeal, grits, and sweet corn which is then fed to hogs, chicken, and cattle. These animal's digestive systems are not supposed to be digesting corn. Animals like hogs and cattle are supposed to be consuming grass as their primary meal. On top of the corn entering the cattle and hog's digestive system, there are also thirteen point five million pounds of antibiotics that are used in human medicine that are added to animal's feed and water. The consequences of eating corn with antibiotics results in an exponential increase in fat in animals, and the food that comes from these animals ends up being very low in quality (Foley). The meat produced from corn-fed animals is unhealthy for humans to eat. Meat, today, causes detrimental diseases and has the ability to cause cancer, especially to young children.

Foley explains primarily what our corn is actually being used for. Roughly forty percent of corn is used to produce ethanol, thirty-six percent of corn is used for animal feed (as mentioned previously), the majority of the rest is exported to other countries, and a very small percent of the corn that is produced is used for feeding Americans. That small fraction that is used to feed Americans is mainly high fructose corn syrup (Foley). These statistics prove that our corn system needs to change simply because it is being used for the wrong things.

Recently, it has been reported that our corn system uses up many natural resources. Corn consumes a very large amount of our fresh water resource. Our water sources are only shrinking, and we need to emphasize that resource, and use it for other things. Corn farmers also use fertilizers on their farms for faster growth

and more quantity. Jonathan Foley states that 5.6 million tons of nitrogen is used through chemical fertilizers (Foley).

Although our corn system provides a high amount of product to our country, American needs to take a step back to actually study and see the detrimental health issues that are arising from this food production system.

Sugar

Sugar is present in almost all foods that we eat today. Sugar provides little to almost no nutritional value, but it definitely has many uses in the food processing industry. It is such a common ingredient found in so many different foods: it improves the flavor, color, and texture of foods and drinks, it prevents certain foods from spoiling, and it keeps baked goods fresh for a longer period of time. Sugar is present in mainly processed foods and beverages as high fructose corn syrup.

According to Kris Gunnars from Authority Nutrition, processed foods have an extremely high concentration in sugar, but mainly high fructose corn syrup. These excessive amounts of sugar can lead to insulin resistance, high triglycerides, increased cholesterol, and increased fat which will then lead to heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and possibly cancer (Gunnars).

These processed foods that contain such a high concentration of sugar are known to lead to overconsumption. The reasons behind this are simple: our body's appetite craves sweet, salty, and fatty tastes. These flavors are always present in some form in processed foods. Our brains naturally consider processed foods with these flavors as "rewards" because of the sweet, salty, and fatty flavors that the food gives us (Gunnars). Unfortunately, these flavors are not very healthy for humans to consume on a daily basis. Companies thrive and compete to make their food the most desirable by adding all of these flavors because they know that customers will buy based on the taste of their product (Gunnars).

Artificial Ingredients

These days, processed foods contain many unknown artificial ingredients. Artificial ingredients are used to preserve food from rotting, to give food a specific color, to give food a "good" or particular flavor, or to give food a certain

texture. All of these artificial ingredients are in the form of chemicals (Gunnars).

It is not required for food processing companies to provide the ingredients that are present in their product, so many companies who use a large number of artificial ingredients will not provide the consumer with all of the ingredients. On food labels, the majority of artificial ingredients are not recognizable simply because these ingredients are not actually food, they are chemicals. Also, many nutrition labels may state "artificial flavors" which could actually mean that ten or more additional chemicals are blended into that certain food to give the food its flavor, color, and texture.
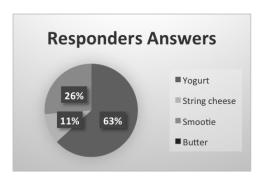
I composed a poll which consisted of three questions asking about a certain food label. I had nineteen responders to my poll. Below is an attachment containing a food label for yogurt that I provided to the responders.

INGREDIENTS: CULTURED PASTEURIZED GRADE A NONFAT MILK, HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP, CHICORY ROOT EXTRACT (INULIN), MODIFIED CORN STARCH, WHEY PROTEIN CONCENTRATE, KOSHER GELATIN, NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL FLAVOR, CITRIC ACID, *ASPARTAME, POTASSIUM SORBATE ADDED TO MAINTAIN FRESHNESS, COLORED WITH CARMINE, VITAMIN A ACETATE, VITAMIN D₃.
*PHENYLKETONURICS: CONTAINS PHENYLALANINE

In my poll, I asked the responders what ingredients they recognize, what ingredients they thought were considered "real" food, and then I asked what kind of food the label was representing. The answers for what individuals recognized on the label were fairly large lists. This lead me to believe that many of the ingredients listed in the label above are frequently used across the board for other foods. The scary part about this is that the majority of the ingredients listed on the label above should not be consumed on a regular basis. As for the question that I asked that regarded what ingredients in this label did individuals believe were considered as "real" food, the answers were much slimmer. The main ingredient that the majority of the respondents thought that was "real", was the nonfat milk and the vitamin D. This is also an alarming statistic simply because humans think that the majority of the ingredients are not real food, but they are still consuming the food. The last question that I asked the responders challenged them to answer what kind of food was being represented, and the results from this question are

quite alarming to me as well. The label above represents a random brand of yogurt. Yogurt was always considered a healthy snack to me, but now majority of people agree that the many of this yogurt's ingredients are not considered as real food?

Below, I have created a pie chart that shows what the answers were for what kind of food the responders thought the label was representing.

Even though the most popular answer out of the options I gave was yogurt, responders still had thought that the label was either string cheese or a smoothie. This poll was able to prove that out of the nineteen responders, nearly half were not able to identify what kind of food was being represented.

7 Grossest Things in Your Food

Here is the part where you may want to stop reading. Do you really want to know what has genetically been found in the food that we eat almost on a daily basis?

Candy. We all eat it because of its sweet tastes that it brings. The shiny coating that covers skittles, M&M's, coffee beans, and even some apples consist of shellac. Shellac is used to make varnish and also used in some different nail products (clear coat), but recently there have been discoveries in different foods that shellac is being used as a coating (Oaklander).

Poultry on the other hand is commonly consumed by individuals who claim that they want to eat healthy. Another horrifying, recent discovery in tested bird feathers finds that there are banned antibiotics, antidepressants, allergy medications, and Benadryl present in our poultry. These over-the-counter drugs are

used to enhance the growth of chickens and make their life a shorter time span so more chickens are made more frequently (Oaklander).

I am a very frequent gum chewer so this recent discovery alarmed me very much. Sheep oil (an oil secretion that sheep's produce in their wool) has been found in gum! The oil helps soften the consistency of gum which allows for an easier chewing process. Sheep oil is also found in beauty products such as: skin products, hair products, and cosmetics (Oaklander).

Wood pulp comes from all different kinds of trees and has been found in shredded cheese, various cereals and salad dressings, and has been used to thicken the consistency of ice cream (Oaklander).

Cow enzymes come from the fourth stomach of a newborn calf, and have been used to aid in the curdling of different cheeses (Oaklander).

This might be the worst finding yet – "duck feathers in your dough!" Processed breads, processed bagels, cookie dough, and pre-made pies are said to be composed of duck feathers (Oaklander). I eat a lot of bread and bagels, so this "fun" fact is extremely horrifying.

Beer is a very common drink now-a-days, and supposedly fish bladders are used to clump the beer yeast so it sinks to the bottom of the liquid which allows for "a clearer brew," says Mandy Oaklander from ABC News. The swimming bladders of fish produces a form of the collagen protein called isinglass which is what is used during the process of making beer (Oaklander).

These findings that Mandy Oaklander describes were never thought to be in our food. It is scary to think that food companies and producers do not take into account what their customers may be buying. It all leads back to what is cheaper for the company, how to make a product in the quickest way possible, and how to make the most of your product. With all new technology allowing America to create food in such a small time period is truly a horrifying thought that we all need to become aware of. Take the time to identify what you are eating, and ask yourself the same question that I have asked you. What is really in my food today?

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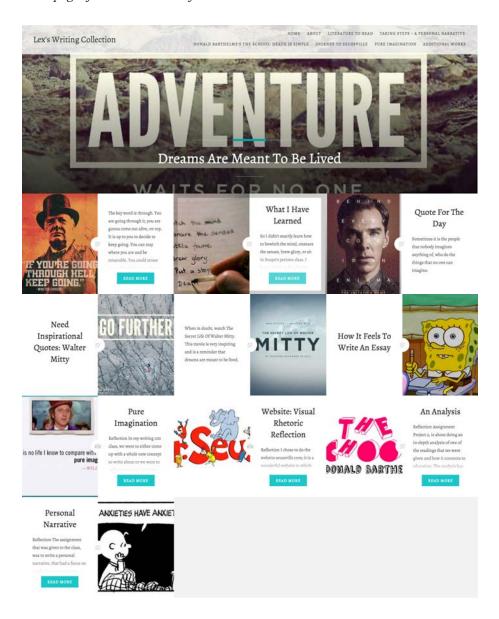
Lex's Writing Collection
alexisclow.wordpress.com

Alexis Low
From Writing 100
nominated by Julie Babcock

Alexis' portfolio goes far beyond the course requirements. It is an extremely vibrant and interactive site. The vibrancy and interactivity are first experienced through the design of the site, and are also articulated in the topic choices for her major writing projects, for instance in her paper "Journey to Seusville," which analyzes the Dr. Seuss website.

Julie Babcock

Homepage of Alexis Low's ePortfolio

Hey!

So…..you have reached my wordpress site and may want to know a little bit about me. I am currently a student at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, planning to major in English.

In my first semester I took classes that integrated together. Political Science was integrated in my Childhood through British and American Literature class. My writing 100 class and Childhood class basically fused together, because the topics of my papers and the class were one. My Black Women, Black Arts class and Political Science class fused on the topics of not only race, but housing, jobs, income, social mobility, and the so called 'American Dream'.

I am learning so much in college and I am very interested in the subjects I take. I am not going to pretend like I just stepped out the car, breathed in the air of college and had control over my college life.

I literally panicked the first month, not first week, not first two, the first month. Well who am I kidding the first two months. I'm gonna quit lying, I am still panicking. I wasn't home sick, because Detroit is only 45 minutes away. I panicked because I realized that I had no idea of what I was doing. I realized college was different and that I needed help.

I sought out tutoring from my program to help me with my homework. I went to office hours for my professors and GSIs. I started being proactive in trying to find help for myself. And well…I have not been panicking as of late, but we'll see how that plays out when I take my finals.

Now on to my rant about stuff that is more interesting.

I love to watch anime and read manga. My favorites are of course Attack on

Titan-Shingeki No Kyojin , Bleach(please continue the anime), Death Parade, Code Geass, Black Butler – Kuroshitsuji, Claymore, Blue Exorcist, Guilty Crown, Fairy Tail, Samurai Champloo, Dragon Ball Z, among others. If you have any anime suggestions let me know!

Just like everyone else in the world I binge watch t.v. Since I am in college and disconnected from prime time television, I only watch a couple of shows such as Teen Wolf (Season 5b!!! I and the fandom are so excited) and Sleepy Hollow, because who doesn't like the American Revolution combined with monsters and ancient evils.

Some of my favorite literary works are Passing, Kindred, Dracula, The Sound and The Fury, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry Into Values, The Odyssey, Hunger Games Trilogy, Harry Potter Series, Where The Mountain Meets the Moon, We Are Seven, The Ode, Lucy Gray, The Goblin Market, The Hobbit, The Outsiders, among others.

As you can tell I mostly watch and read series that are of the fantasy genre. This has to be one of my favorite genres and it also transcribes into my writing. I find writing this genre to be fun and complex, depending how you shape your fantasy world. You can create a whole world like Tolkien or integrate fantasy world with the real world and get Teen Wolf. I believe the reason I like the fantasy genre is because there are no bounds, no limits, to what is possible.

Personal Narrative: Reflection

The assignment that was given to the class, was to write a personal narrative, that had a focus on a collegiate experience or subculture, before or after arriving on The University of Michigan campus. Within this personal narrative, we were to set up a detailed scene and also reflect upon the event you choose to talk about in the narrative. To help the class with this assignment, we had to do 'stop time' exercise, which includes closing our eyes and envisioning a scene of an event. While, reflection is important, we had to first focus on the imagery of the scene to make the reader feel like they actually were there. Scenes could also include dialogue, which strengthen the understanding. I chose to write about my experience going to seek help for my anxiety at Counseling and Psychological Services (or CAPS) at The University of Michigan.

The Biggest challenge I had was giving the reader a 360 view, and my fear of giving too many details of the image and not much content of what actually happened. For privacy reasons I didn't put too much detail as to what was said in my consultation, after feedback, I decided to add some more details about what was said at the consultation, without giving away any very personal statements, so that it could give my paper some 'meat and potatoes'. Going through this experience of writing a personal narrative, taught me that its called personal for a reason, and that I have to open up more.

During our peer edits, the one thing that my peers said was that my scene was great and very detailed. They felt like they were actually in the scene, which was what I was aiming for. In the peer edits they also suggested to add what actually happened in my consultation, to add more plot and content. I felt that was good advice, which I took and revised my paper with. One thing I think that readers will not catch at first, is that my detailing of the scene is part of the action and goes along with my experience because when I was in CAPS I was observing the space around me, which is what I always do when I enter a new room, so that I can familiarize myself with it to calm my anxiety. My detailing of the scene, is part of my

observance, which is a tactic that I use to calm my anxiety, to which, anxiety is the whole reason I wrote this paper, and it goes along well with my experience of getting professional help for my anxiety, through CAPS.

Taking Steps – A Personal Narrative

Anxiety is an issue everyone in their life goes through, whether it be caused by exams, speaking in front of a large crowd, job interview, or a social event. When anxiety enters your life, that effects you daily, it then becomes a disorder. Just like any mental disorder, it develops over time, some effects are apparent, and some not until later years. The sooner the disorder is treated, the better you have control over your life. Over time I have noticed that my anxiety has become a major problem for me, and in my teenage years I did nothing about it. When I went to orientation for Michigan, they introduced Counseling and Psychology Services as a means for people to better their mental health. I had never received professional help for my anxiety, and I decided it was about time I did. I decided to reach out to Counseling and Psychological Services or CAPS at Michigan. They offered extreme help, and is a resource that I plan to take advantage of. Attending and reaching out for help at CAPS is a big step. Realizing that there is a problem and seeking out help for my problem, is a larger step than the one Armstrong made on the moon. My mother once told me that the first step to anything is always the hardest, for it requires the most courage, but the courage you had to make the first step quiets your fears enough that you can take another.

While going through my impending weeks and first week of college, I noticed that my anxiety heightened. I always had anxiety issues, but I never sought out help. It was frightening to feel what I felt, and it was interrupting my everyday and academic life. I was starting to have more anxiety attacks than usual to which I was experiencing more of the physical effects. I was completely overwhelmed, had constant nausea, trembling limbs, and was short of breath. No one likes to feel not in control, overwhelmed, and exceedingly anxious. I didn't want to feel this way anymore, especially while going to a university that demands my whole attention, focus, and stability of mind. I decided to go to CAPS for counseling on how to deal with my anxiety.

When I walk into a room I tend to observe and familiarize with it, so

I can get comfortable. This tactic works to calm my anxiety down, the more comfortable I can get, the better. Entering the CAPS department was no different. CAPS is located on the third floor of the Michigan Union; as I felt my feet transfer from laminated floors to one of carpet, I started to think about turning around and going back to my dorm. I reminded myself that this appointment was going to give me insight on the steps to control and calm my anxiety. I walk up to the receptionist, and wait for her to ask the destined words, 'how may I help you', while waiting I noticed the desk cluttered in flyers of places in the Michigan Union to relax at, self-help brochures, sources of help outside of the University of Michigan, and so on and so on. She asks me how she may help me, and I ask for the counselor that was given to me, she checks the computer, and says that I am signed in, and may take a seat.

The seats are near the entrance to CAPS and not very far away from the reception desk. I sit my bag down and take a seat in the comfy chair. My leg starts to shake nervously, but I try to distract myself by looking around the purple and peach colored clinic. I see to my left six other chairs, and in front of me are five. Behind those five chairs I see the gray cubicles where people fill out their personal information. On the front of these cubicles are self-help posters. One in particular has a variety of posters on it, one has an animated character, colored pink, one side is dressed like a boy and the other a girl. The poster goes on into a paragraph how boys and girls should not let what their gender stereotypes are, define them and how they should liberate themselves from such stereotypes. Another simply states how your words matter. After I see that picture I look down to my left and see a little coffee table with self-help brochures galore. The brochures all had non-striking colors, like burgundy, pale green, pale yellow, and white. They had ones on perfectionism, stress, anxiety, depression, sexuality and gender, anger management, and so on and so forth. I look around at another coffee table not far from me and see color picture drawings. They use this as a technique for people to express themselves and release tension through art. A number of people enter and are asked again and again the destined words 'how may I help you?' and the seats

of the room start to fill up. As I sit there waiting for my counselor to show up, I search the room some more, and look down the hall, and see the offices where I will discuss what is going on.

The more and more I sat there, the more I felt like I was in a clinic. Of course it is a sort of clinic, but I wasn't going to accept the fact that it was until I saw the magazines at a coffee table across from me. I look up and see the white bare ceiling and think about life, and how in the world I am going to get through college. My counselor rounds the corner and says 'Alexis'. I greet her and say her name. She guides me to her office, which is only a right turn from the reception desk, down the hall a little, and her office is on the right. I enter and sit down in a chair, and start to look around the peach colored room.

For the most part, I see all the calming colors depicted on the furniture and the pictures. I think to myself how therapeutic colors schemes can be; I start to see how if there were colors like stark red or blue, how I would probably get a different feel to the place. The chair I am sitting in is grey, and the pillows are yellow, her chair, which is across from mine is the same. To the left of me is another coffee table, except it is blank. In the back part of the room there is a book shelf, a plant, and a desk with a computer on it. The room is painted a peach color, with more of a yellow undertone. There is a painting on the wall next to me and on the back wall. The picture next to me, is a huge painting of an orchestra, but it looks like its mirrored by water. The other picture is more of a bunch of colors, possible depicting country life. As we sit, she pulls out a file of printed papers, which show high and low areas of mental health and the personal information I had to fill out, in order to have the meeting with her. She then proceeds to ask me questions about what I said in the files and what is depicted in those high and low areas. We have this conversation for 45 minutes.

The conversation, though long, did not cover as much we both wanted. She asked me to explain how anxiety effects me. I told her of my lack of sleep and how my anxiety is effecting my school life, because it doesn't allow me to participate. We discussed the intensity of my anxiety attacks, which entails shortness of

breath, incessant crying, overwhelming fear, trembling of limbs especially my legs, and my emotions and thoughts being thrown everywhere. The next thing that we discussed was how these anxiety attacks were started, what were the triggers. Any social and academic events, or incidents that I can't forget, make me have an anxiety or anxiety attacks. There is no pinpoint series of events that, are going to trigger in my mind 'start having an anxiety attack'. That part of the conversation was a relief to finally explain my anxiety and what happens during an anxiety attack, though, I would have felt it more, if I had not been crying most of the time. The second part of the conversation was more personal, which added more tears, and more things that I held in about my anxiety, which I could now actually release.

We actually went over the consultation time. Afterwards, I felt good about myself. We covered a lot of ground in a short amount of time, and I realized new things about myself and how my anxiety is triggered. We established great goals of how to deal with my anxiety and who to go to if it is causing a huge attack or if something more dangerous happens. This one-time experience didn't cure my anxiety issues, but it did set forth a plan that my counselor and I have, which is to have therapy with her and take medication. We both came to the conclusion that medication and therapy work hand in hand. My experience at CAPS, is not a one time, but an introduction to a system of help for my mental health.

Reaching out and finally receiving help for my anxiety was probably the greatest thing that I have ever done for myself. I now have a counselor and impending medication that will help me overcome my anxiety. This experience and the continuing of therapy is going to help my collegiate life so much more, for now I am working towards better participation and how to handle my anxiety when in class. I am so glad that the University of Michigan has this wonderful mental health resource and that I took advantage of it. The thought of no longer living with overwhelming anxiety, is a goal that I am stepping towards. I took the first step, and I am ready to take the next.