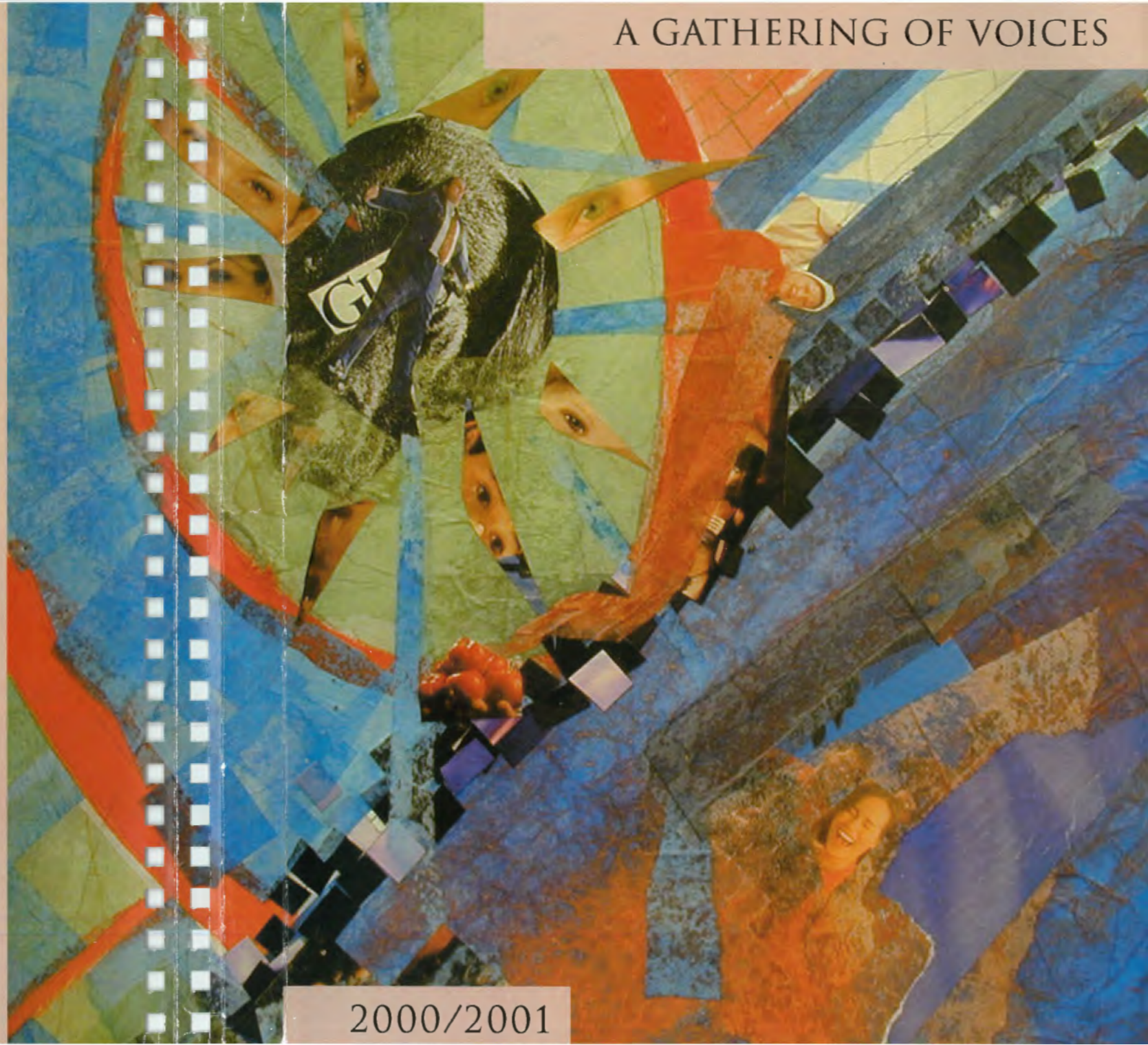


# A GATHERING OF VOICES

*Brian Z. Bassir*  
*Barbara J. Boothby*  
*Katie Suzanne Chapman*  
*Joshua K. Daniels*  
*Lisa Ezrre*  
*Sharon Freeberg*  
*Mary Getaz*  
*Brandii R. Grace*  
*Kelvin Li*  
*Doug Mather*  
*Nozar Nozartash*  
*Yonkela Reinemer*  
*Chris Ritchie*  
*Ron Simoneau*  
*Aaron Westgate*



2000/2001

# A GATHERING OF VOICES

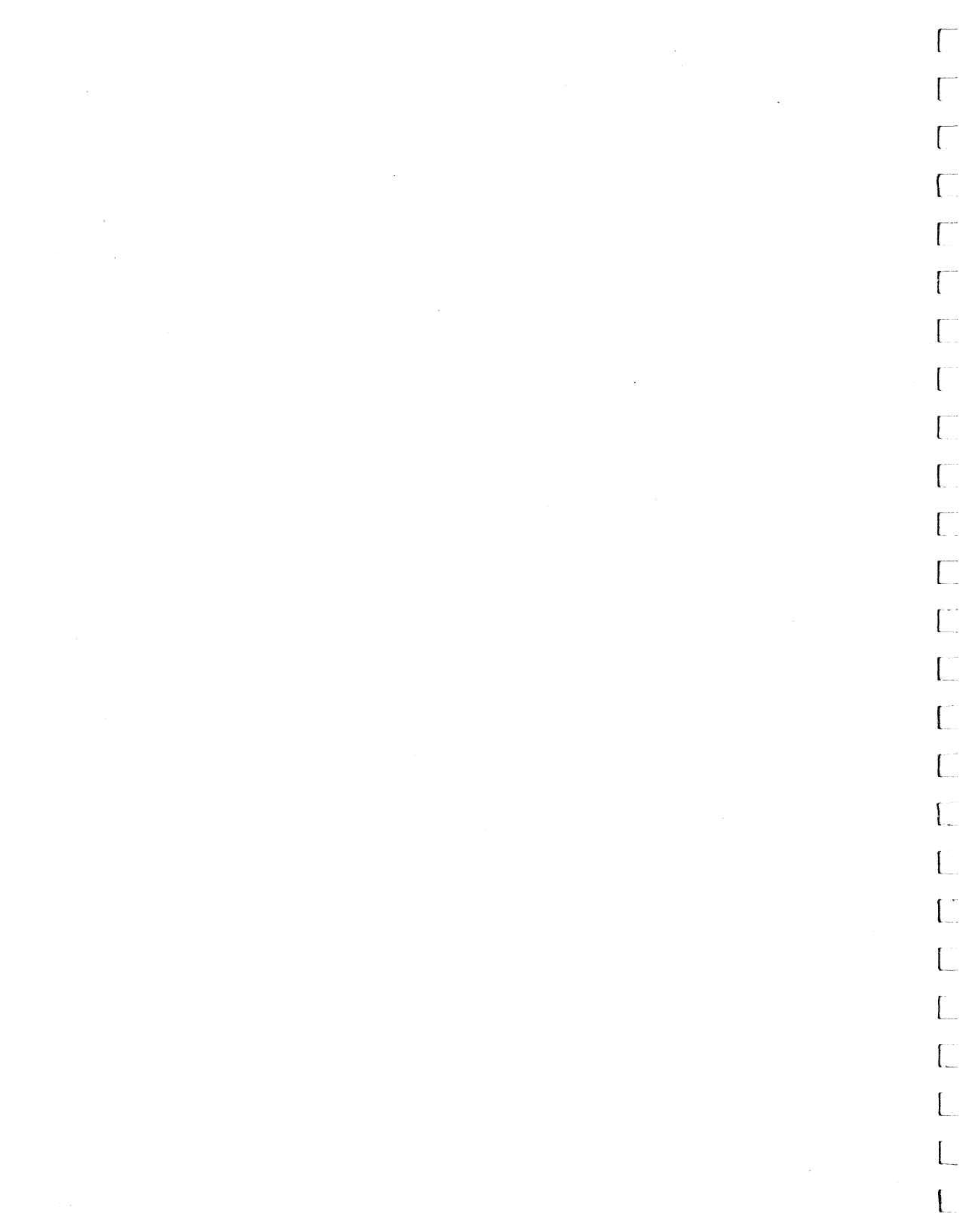


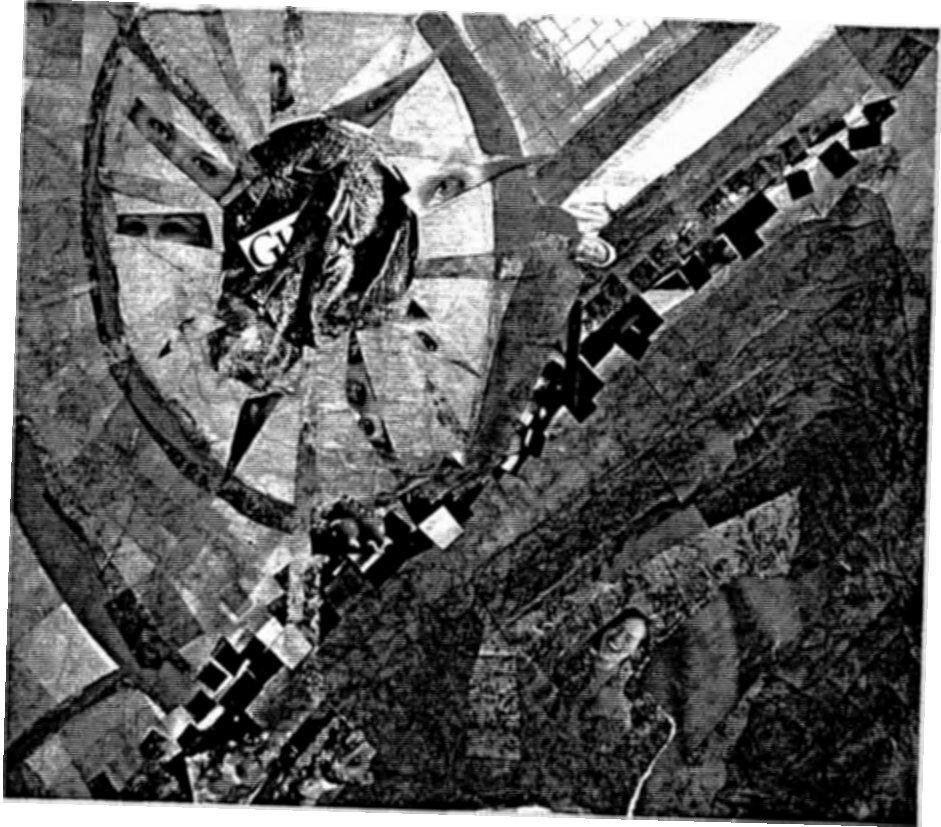
An Anthology of Student Writing

Whatcom Community College

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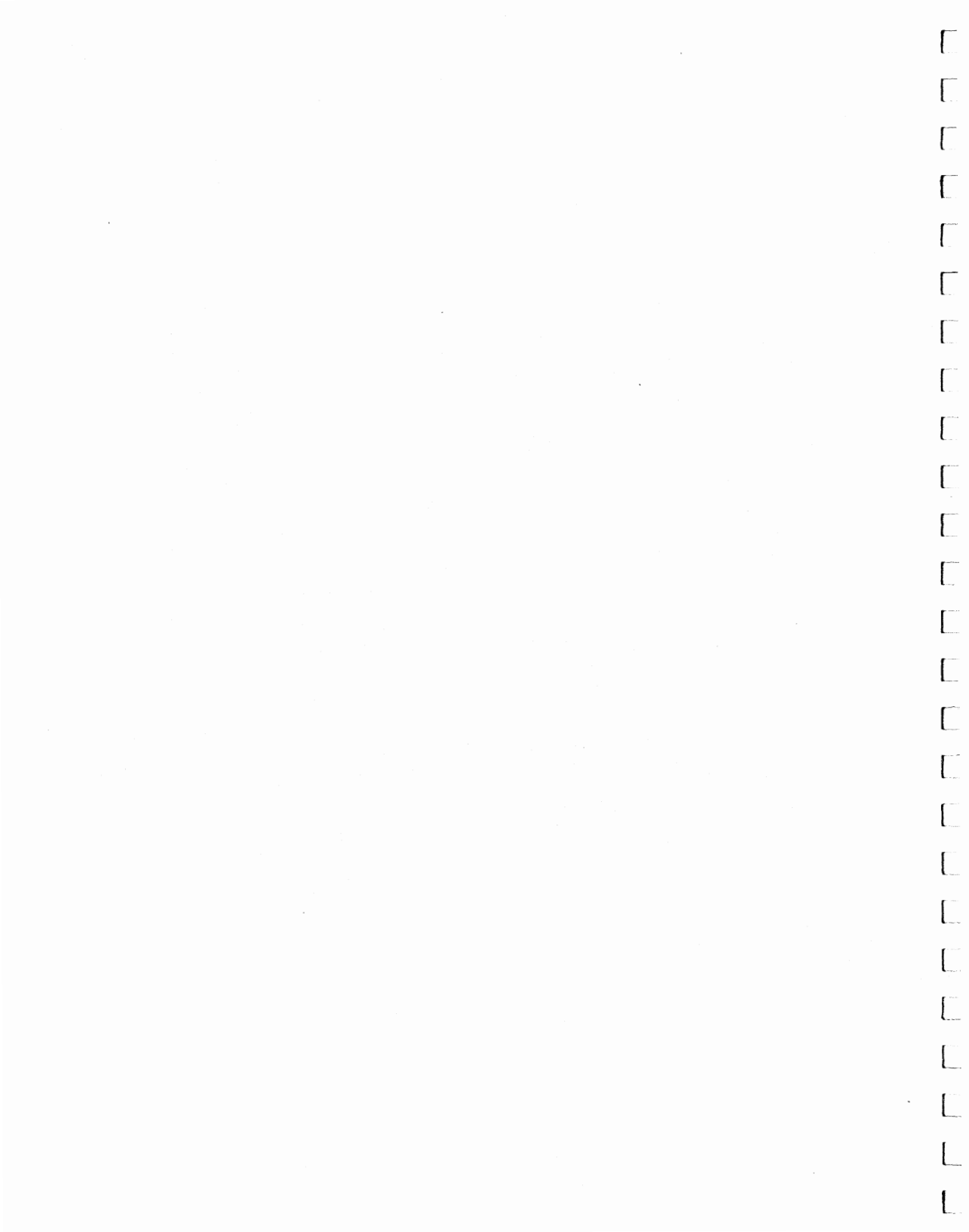
This anthology is the product of an Outcomes project to assess student learning and critical thinking.





Tim Bonds  
*Untitled*  
Mixed media/collage  
12" x 15"





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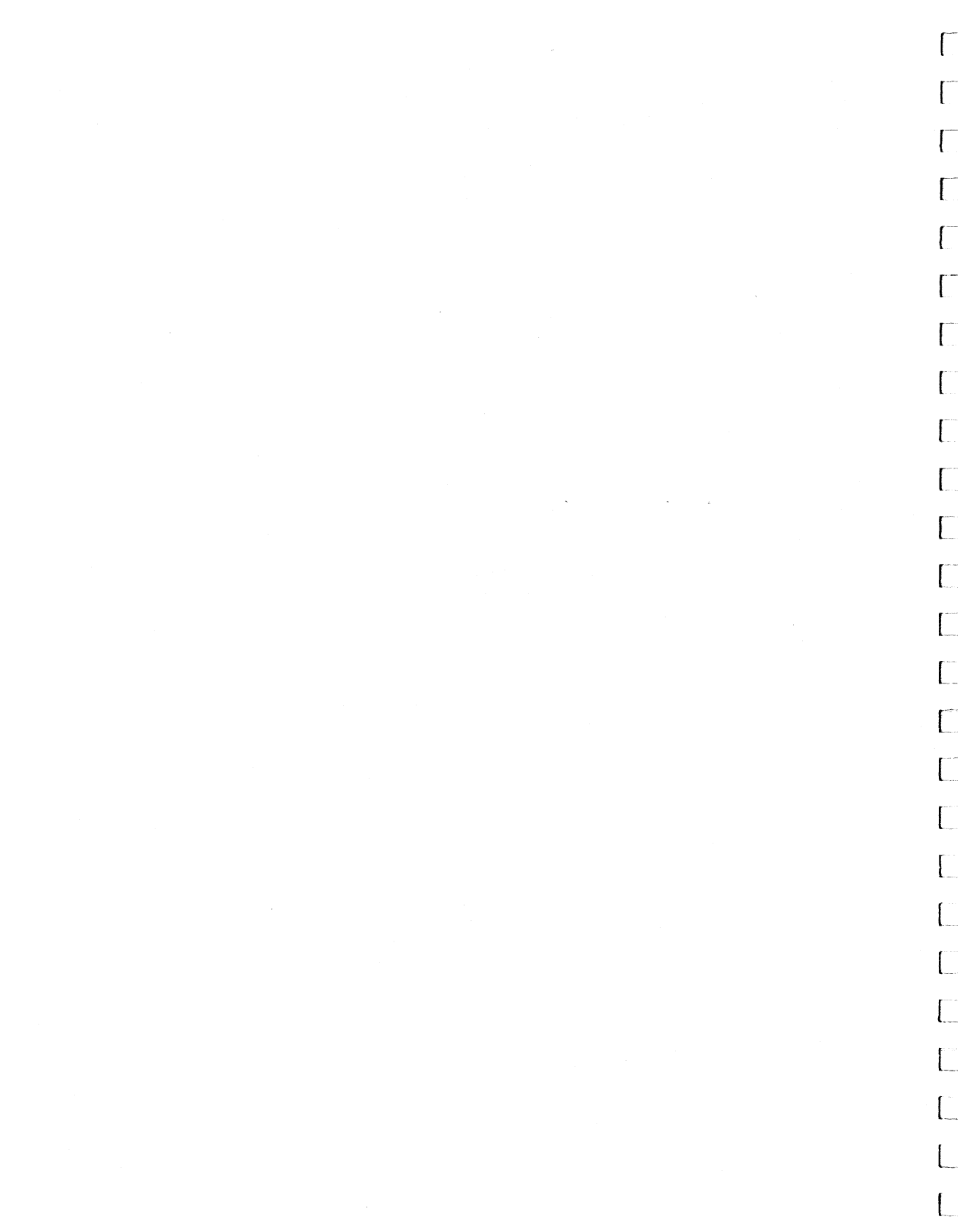
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Karen VerBurg  
*Leaving Weesp*  
Linocut, 6" x 6"



## Introduction

This year's *A Gathering of Voices* represents a true "gathering." The essays represent a variety of international locales, a broad spectrum of perspectives, and the range of academic discourses.

We have a reflection on the difficulties of translating a Chinese idiomatic expression into English (Li), a study of a different communication style in the Cote d'Ivoire (Reinemer), the dramatic story of a life-changing experience during a political revolution in Brazzaville, The Congo (Getaz), a sobering account of life at a reformatory for boys in Florida (Simoneau), a tribute to a father jailed during the revolution in Iran (Nozartash), and a reckoning with the lingering effects of the Holocaust in Europe (Boothby).

We also have divergent perspectives: from an analysis of "radical feminism" (Thorn), an account of a struggle to find the center between two political extremes (Freeburg), an analysis of narrative form in the film *Fight Club* (Bassir), to an argument on Machiavelli's *The Prince* (Chapman).

And as always, our essays represent the myriad discourses which are available on our campus: from symbolic reasoning, mathematics, anthropology, philosophy, history and English.

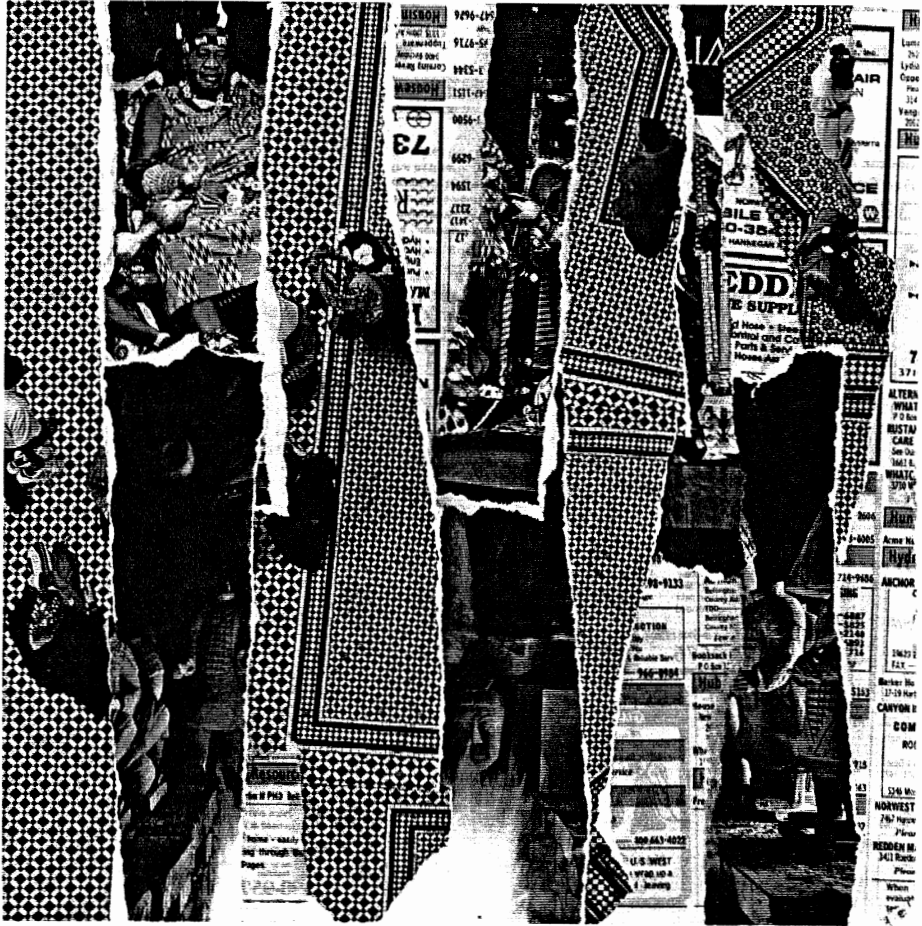
Finally, we have visual rhetoric: the representation of meaning through form. The artwork this year is outstanding, beginning with the lively cover art by Tim Bonds.

We hope you enjoy these essays and artworks—they indicate the degree to which our students' work exhibits the College's five core learning abilities: Communicating, Thinking, Integrating, Relating, and Knowing. They've also been chosen to represent the best of what Whatcom Community College has to offer.

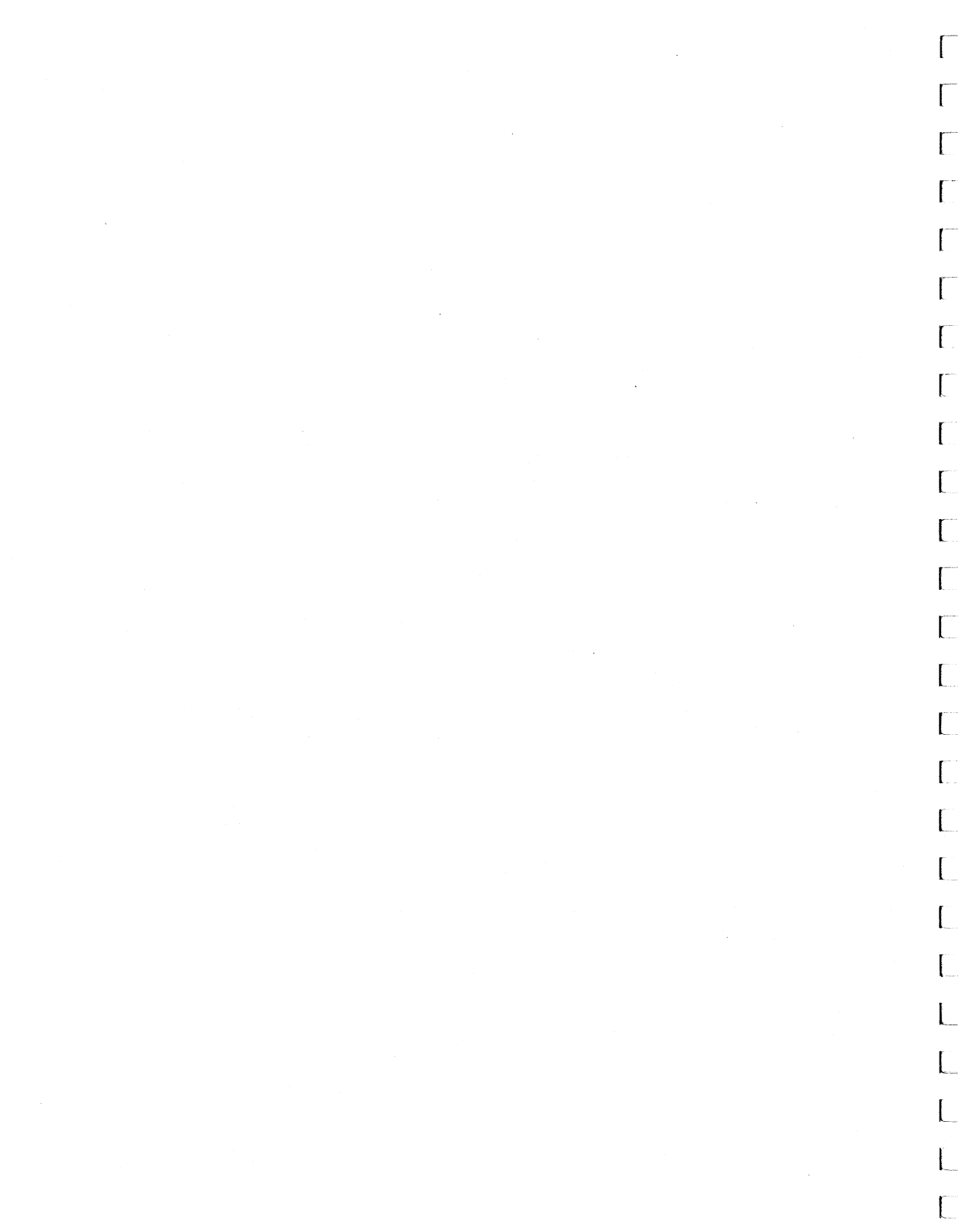


Man does not weave this web of life. He is merely a strand of it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

—Chief Seattle



Keira Schunke  
*Untitled*  
Collage, 10" x 9.5"



## Finding My Own Ground

Sharon Freeberg

Help! I am in the middle of a war. You see, my oldest brother Bernie, my life long hero, is a *bleeding heart liberal*. Don't let this term suggest where I stand. It is a negative, just like radical conservative, and Lui, the love of my life, is a *radical conservative*. I ask myself, "Where do love and politics collide?" I love and respect both of these men. What am I to do? Here I am right smack-dab in the middle, with each of them trying to sell *their* viewpoint to me. I stand on dangerous ground.

Lui is a writer for an American publication in Mexico. He tells me that a newspaper he worked for in the United States fired him because of his conservative views. Bernie is an electrical engineer. He left Montana in 1950 to attend MIT in Boston, where, to the chagrin of his Montana friends and family, he became a Massachusetts Democrat. "Yep, those *Massachusetts Democrats* are the worse kind," says Lui.

"Don't tell me you are crazy about a *right-wing whacko*," says Bernie.

These two haven't met yet. They know each other by what I tell them. I get their viewpoints via the phone and e-mail. Am I looking forward to having them both to dinner? No way! If I could keep them from talking politics, I am sure they would like each other. They both are well educated, loving, and loyal. They both believe in the values of hard work, the importance of caring for their loved ones, and the pride and love of country. But short of binding and gagging them, there is no way that they won't argue politics. I'm not ready for that. Just



this indirect exchange makes me feel like I am in the middle of a rope in a tug of war.

If I suggest to Lui that some people might need a helping hand, I hear the old argument: "Isn't it better to teach them how to help themselves?" But Bernie knows in his heart that these same people need a boost, and the government does need to help them. My loving intended-one points to the inner cities and all the fatherless children that the taxpayers are supporting. He paints a picture of a welfare state, and people abusing the system. My dear older brother points out that welfare is a needed "helping hand." I meekly remind each one that they have some good points, and perhaps they might want to compromise with the other side just a little. No! They don't want to compromise. They know they are right. They are driving me crazy.

Lui says that Clinton has weakened our military, and that we need Cheney and Bush to take the reins and restore a strong defense. Bernie says that the military is now much kinder, and that makes it stronger. Lui is for missile defense. Bernie tends to think that if we are just nice to those people in the Far East, we can all get along.

And then there is the matter of gays, and gay rights. Bernie says that gays love this country as much as heterosexuals do, that they, too, are Americans deserving of the same rights as any other citizen, and that laws need to be enacted to protect their rights. Lui says that he is not against gays, but their sexual orientation is a personal matter, and there should be no government intervention. "Molly (his pet name for me), don't those liberals know that there are some things that the government just shouldn't do?"

I answer, "Well, *I think* . . . Oh, never mind!"

Lui believes in school vouchers. Bernie thinks diverting the money to private schools would devastate our public school system. "What about the millions of dollars the Department of Education can't account for?" Lui asks. Bernie shoots back, "That's just a lot of right-wing propaganda!" I feel like Liza Doolittle shouting: *Words, words, words. I am so sick of words . . .*

And their words just don't stop coming. Sometimes when I listen to Lui, I just have to ask myself, "Good grief, am I really ready to marry Rush Limbaugh?" And sometimes I wonder if Bernie has been to a James Carville Brainwashing Seminar. There are times that I am tempted to tell them both to bug out. But how can I do that when they mean so much to me!

So here I stand on shaky ground, not wanting to disagree with either one of them, and hoping that just once they might agree on something. It's clear to me that I am going to have to find some firmer ground. Now, just how am I going to do that? Well, one thing is sure. I'm going to have to tune both Lui and Bernie out. And here is a novel idea: Why don't I get my own political opinion? Yes, that's what I have to do.

I have to move out of this barrage of political propaganda, and get a clear idea of what is important to me. "What?" you ask, "Don't you know what you believe?" To be honest, sometimes it isn't all that clear. It's like this. I am a *people-pleaser*. I hate confrontation and always worry about hurting someone's feelings. My own ideas and opinions sometimes get lost along the way. This is especially true when it comes to politics. "Stay away from talking politics and religion. It will get you in hot water for sure," my mother always tells me. And so when I disagree on a political position, I usually will not argue. But surely all the people I try to please will still like me, if I state an opposing opinion. Won't they?

I want you to know that I am not some mindless milquetoast, who won't stand up for myself. And there have been plenty of times in my life when I have had to do just that. It is just that, for me, confrontation brings with it a deluge of doubt, dread and distress. And that brings on those never-ending nights. Nasty nights filled with only worry and the relentless ticking of the clock. So I avoid unnecessary confrontation. But recently I had a revelation: Independent thinking doesn't necessarily have to mean confrontation. With that thought in mind, I am moving on to my own ideas.

Traveling to the safer ground of my own political position isn't easy. The road is filled with distractions. I never know who will be throwing ideas at me around the next bend in the road. Not only do fellow travelers I know, love and respect, like Bernie and Lui, try to steer me to their viewpoint, but the noisy horns of the outside world blare at me from every direction. All I need to do is turn on the television these days, and I am blitzed with political ads full of rotten rhetoric. Slanted and charged language designed to lure me into mindlessly buying the candidate they are selling. Sneaky messages that attempt to halt my progress. *Don't check it out. Let us think for you. Let us tell you how to vote.* How will I ever reach the destination of my opinion when I am stuck in such a morass of misinformation? I just have to keep going, move around this pile of word rubble, and keep looking for some truth.

Finding the truth means I am going to have to do something I hate. Make a list! I don't like making lists. I used to be the one who would aimlessly walk through all the aisles in the grocery, throwing into the cart whatever I thought was necessary. Invariably I would come home to find I hadn't got all the things I needed, but I had managed to get a bunch of things I didn't need. So I resigned myself to making lists. What I need to do now is make a political shopping list. I have to list what is important to me. I hesitate. I am tired. Do I really have to think this hard? "List it out Sharon. List out the things you believe," I tell myself. With a white-knuckle grip on my pen I deliberately start to write. It is slow at first, but soon the ideas start flowing.

I believe in equal rights for all Americans, and that includes women! I believe, despite all its pitfalls, our country is the best in the world, and that we should protect democracy. I believe that sometimes people need a helping hand, but I don't think the government is always the best way to help people. I believe our country needs better health care. Health care is extremely important to me, and I believe . . . . The list gets longer and my thoughts get clearer.

At last I have my own ideas, and I can try to find the candidate who will best reflect the values and goals that I think are important. Determining the best candidate means that I can't be lazy. I have to know about the programs they are suggesting, and ask questions. "Do I understand that?" "Is that feasible?" "What does the record really say?" "How do I feel intuitively?" Now I am forming some opinions.

I can't find a candidate who shares all the same values. So I decide on the one who shares the most important ones. If the candidate I prefer isn't elected, I will at least know why I voted for the one I did. And I can express the things that I believe to be true.

Where does that leave me with Lui and Bernie? Maybe it will be enough to please them that once in awhile I might agree with one of them. Suddenly, I realize that love goes much deeper than politics. And even if they disagree with me, they are still going to love me. And for sure I am going to love them. As to where I stand, I will always be somewhere between these two men that are so important to me. But now, I stand on my own ground.

This essay was written for English 201, Advanced Composition  
Instructor: Sherri Winans

*Writer's comments*

I wrote "Finding My Own Ground," shortly before the fall 2000 election. We were studying language and politics, and were to write an essay on how the election process affected our lives. I knew immediately what I wanted to write about. Two important men in my life, my oldest brother Bernie, and love of my life, Lui, have opposite political viewpoints on most every issue. It left me right in the middle, feeling uncomfortable and uncertain of my own political position. Once I started writing I found myself relaxing and becoming more comfortable about stating my own political views. Writing is always work, and I rewrote the essay several times. I had good evaluation from my teacher, Sherri Winans, and my classmates; that made the rewriting process easier. I ended up with an essay that I felt good about, and solved a personal dilemma in the process.

*Instructor's comments*

Sharon Freeberg wrote "Finding My Own Ground" for English 201, Advanced Composition, a class that focuses on writing style and language usage, in American culture, in academia, and in the students' work. The reading material for this assignment covered the topic of language and politics and included George Orwell's "Politics of the English Language" and Donna Woolfolk Cross' "Propaganda: How Not to Be Bamboozled." It was Fall 2000, during a Presidential election; and during class, we had watched portions of the debates and discussed the candidates' use of language. The assignment Sharon was responding to included the following questions: Is there an aspect of the election process that touches your life in some way? What do your family and friends think about politics? What do you think when you see the ads for the different candidates? What did you think of the Presidential debates? Will your life change at all if Bush is elected? Gore? Do you have any special insights into the ways in which the politicians are using language, their use of some of the stylistic techniques we've talked about, their ability to "bamboozle"?

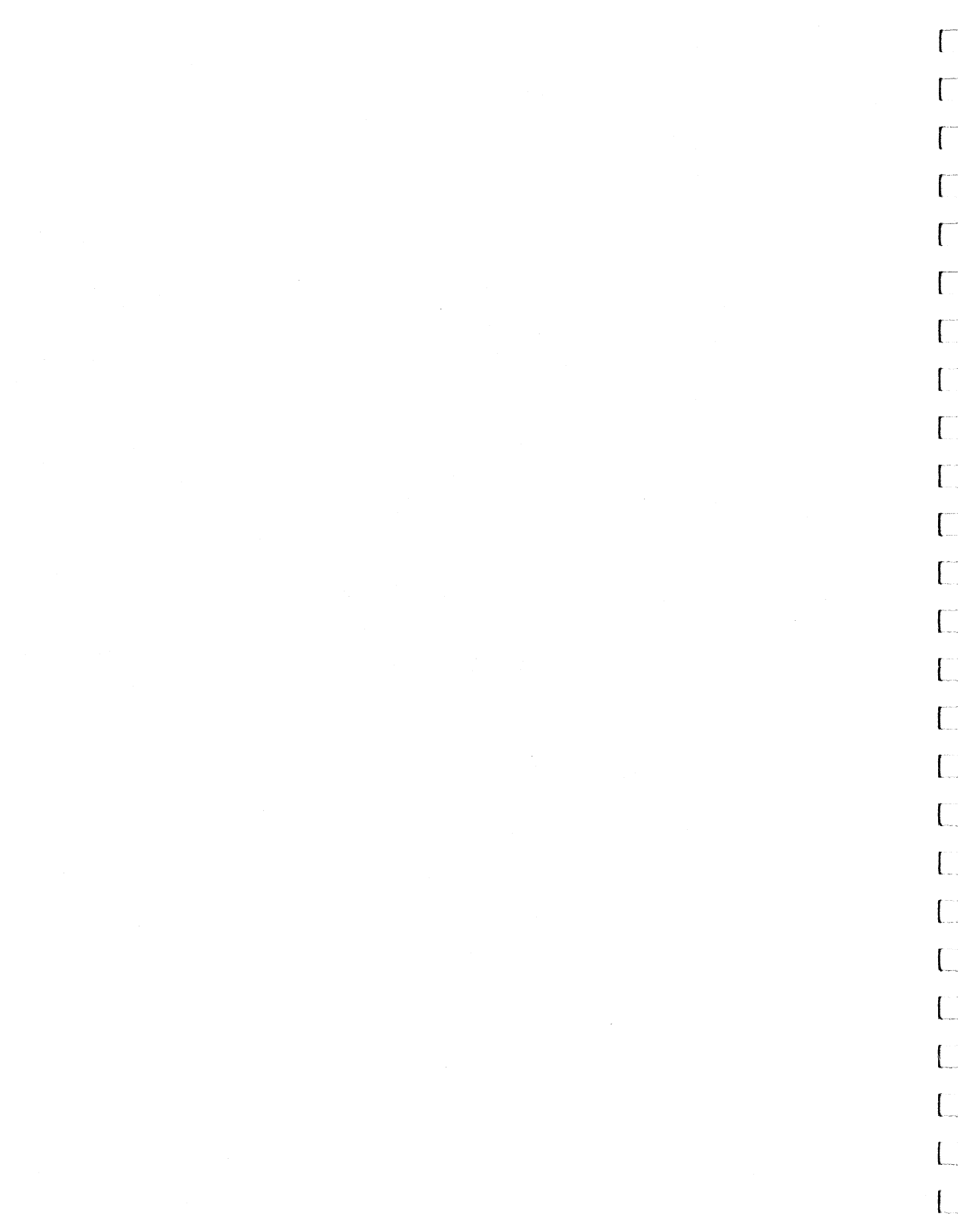
Four of the course outcomes addressed by this assignment were as follows: students will "apply reading material to their own experiences," "apply critical



thinking skills to what is read,” “engage the imagination to explore new possibilities,” and “apply [knowledge] to increase their understanding of themselves and to expand their abilities.” Sharon wrote and rewrote this essay, receiving much feedback from her peers. We were both quite pleased with the final product, a reflective personal essay on a topic of interest to the academic community.



Norifumi Yamaguchi  
*Untitled*  
Ink, 24" x 18"



### A Chinese Encouraging Word: “No Lik”

Kelvin Li

A couple weeks ago, I had a wonderful conversation with my friends in the school cafeteria. It was started because one of my American friends, Andrew, was working very hard on studying while my friends and I were chatting about the latest computer software. Since Andrew is a one of my best friends, I walked away from “the crowd” and went toward him trying to say something to encourage his spirit. At the moment I tried to translate a common cheering Chinese word “No Lik” into English, I couldn’t find any exact translation. Finally, I said “to do his best” was the translation. However, I knew that “No Lik” was different from “doing your best,” so I went back to the table where my Chinese friends were and told them the situation. After thinking about it for a while, they said they couldn’t explain the accurate meaning of the word in English either. Although there are a lot of English expressions that are similar to the Chinese word, we were not able to find any phrase that had the same meaning of “No Lik” in English. *Since we were curious as to how to say “No Lik” in English, we tried to use different expressions to translate it accurately.*

At first, of course, we tried to translate “No Lik” into the phrase “do your best,” but we found that there was actually a difference between their usages. The difference is that the latter one sometimes doesn’t work very well with its object. Let’s say Chris has already been doing his best studying for his examination. His friend, Eddie, wanted to say something to boost his confidence. Without any hesitation, he said to do his best. However, Chris couldn’t be boosted. Instead, he was a little bit upset because he thought that Eddie was trying to say that he

hadn't been doing enough to achieve the goal. Nevertheless, if Eddie had been Chinese and had used the word "*No Lik*," Chris would have been strengthened. It's because Chris would think that Eddie was a great supporter of him. Moreover, he would feel that his hard work was noticed, and so he would keep on working as well as he could. As a result, he would do even better than before.

We also concluded that "*No Lik*" didn't mean "working hard." It's obvious someone is working hard by his/her physical appearance. In other word, we can be told by how busy the person is when s/he is working on his/her assignment. However, s/he may not be "*No Lik*." Aaron, for example, is working so hard on writing his term papers. Although he didn't sleep the night before the due date of his papers, he was actually plagiarizing from his friends' work all night long. We can say that he was working really hard on copying, but we don't use the word "*No Lik*" to describe him since the word itself has only the positive side.

In the discussion, one of my friends asked if there was a connection between the word "*No Lik*" and the prizes from championship. The deduction was induced after some arguments. It's evident that most encouraging phrases have some relationships with championship. Imagine that you are playing in a football game. It is easy for you to hear people shouting a lot of encouraging words toward the home team because they want them to become the champion. However, the word "*No Lik*" would not be used when we are talking about the physical part of championship. We would say "*No Lik*" to those athletes even when they lost their games. It's because they actually did the greatest job when they were playing in their games. Even though they didn't get the championship physically, they did get the "championship" psychologically ~ the encouragement from their supporters.

After talking about the meaning of the word "*No Lik*," we tried to distinguish the uniqueness of it. We brought out four characteristics of what a "*No Lik*" person should have. The first condition is that s/he should be emotionally high when he is "*No Lik*". It means that s/he has to have a lot of motivations to do the work. The second quality is that s/he will work on his/her task effectively. Moreover, s/he can possibly finish the work very well. The third characteristic, which actually can explain the reason of the second quality, is that s/he may forget to eat or even to sleep since the person is totally concentrating on his/her assignment. The person may also forget the date or time when he or she is working. The final characteristic is that the amount of work that the person does

when s/he is “*No Lik*” will be much more than usual, such as 100% more than usual. It’s because the person believes that someone is supporting him/her while s/he is working

Although we tried our best (actually we were so “*No Lik*”) to find an equivalent term to say the word “*No Lik*” in English, it seems there is no such idea in English. We couldn’t believe that such an encouraging word wasn’t able to be found in English. Surprisingly, it was so easy for us to find the corresponding phrase to say “*No Lik*” in Japanese, which is the word “*Gambare*.” According to this finding, we concluded that the idea of “*No Lik*” is one of the unique concepts in Asia because the affection for the concept of Confucianism, which is a very popular belief in Asia.

This essay was written for English as a Second Language 117, Composition and Reading II

Instructor: David Kehe

*Writer’s comments*

ESL—English as a Second Language is a special program for the students who are from different countries studying at Whatcom Community College. In my ESL 117 class, which is the highest level in the ESL program, we have to write 3 out-of-class essays and 3 in-class essays. One of our out-of-class essays was called a “definition essay”: we were required to choose a word or a phrase which was hard to translate or difficult to be understood in English. When my instructor, David Kehe, told us we should do the assignment, all of my classmates were so worried that we couldn’t do it well because we can’t even express our thoughts in English most of the time. I was worrying too, but I suddenly remembered that a couple of days ago my friends and I were talking about a similar thing in the cafeteria, so I tried to recall what we had said, and what we had concluded. It was hard because it was hard to organize all the ideas and conclusions. After questioning some of my friends about the topic and some editing work, the essay was done and handed to David. I was so happy at the moment when he told me that my essay might be published because it is the first time that happens in my life. I am so proud that I can be in this school because my English has improved a lot since I came here.

Also, I am so glad that my essay will be published in the book, A Gathering of Voices.

*Instructor's comments*

Kelvin's extended-definition essay reminded me of the Whorfian hypothesis which states that language influences how a person sees and thinks about the world. This is a clear example of how learning a foreign language (e.g. Chinese) is so much more than just learning a new vocabulary and grammar system; it's a whole new way of looking at life.

## Non-Linguistic Communication

*Yonk Reinemer*

After living in the Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa, for three months, I found myself in a community that uses an enormous amount of non-verbal communication. The people there are much more in touch with themselves and nature than people are in America. Their body movement was peaceful and fluid. I could see it in the way they walked, talked, moved, made decisions, played, worked, and acted throughout daily activities. Eye contact was the most interesting form of nonverbal communication I witnessed. I looked people in the eye and could feel their presence, knowing that person now knew more about me than I knew about myself—as if they were looking into a soul long since forgotten from childhood. The difficulties of talking about and discussing nonverbal communication is that one can only observe the interaction. Some of the aspects which are easier to understand and explain have to do with everyday chores such as shopping for groceries and bargaining for material goods. I will discuss some aspects of nonverbal communication which I witnessed during my time in Cote d'Ivoire.

Bargaining is such a big part of living in West Africa; people have to bargain for everything. It took me awhile to become comfortable with bargaining in Cote d'Ivoire. Travelling to Ghana helped because I was able to experience bargaining in a country where the official language is my own. The idea of bargaining is complex and involves considerable nonverbal language. What I



witnessed and experienced is really only the tip of the iceberg in understanding the nonverbal communication of Cote d'Ivoire.

To grasp a concept of this I will have to describe a couple of different interactions where bargaining was key and I was involved. The first was at the market where food and other household items were purchased. Groceries generally are not bargained for. When white people from western cultures purchase vegetables, the price is raised just a bit. Raising the price is a common and accepted practice throughout the Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana. The people selling the goods are quiet and reserved, sometimes somber in facial expression. Being looked in the eye by some of the old wise women had a lasting impression. I cannot understand or explain how eye contact is perceived but felt like the old woman knew everything she needed to know by looking into my eyes. Holding up prime pieces of fruit, accompanied by a slight lift of one or both eyebrows, is a sign of seeking satisfaction and a common practice rather than asking verbally. The grocery workers move slowly while finding perfect fruits and/or vegetables. Because movement is slow and quiet, there is a tone of calmness throughout the exchange. There is no underlying competitive edge which is often the feeling in other bargaining situations.

The second place where nonverbal communication happens is tourist shops. Tourist shop owners are experienced bargainers. When walking past a shop, often the shop keeper comes to greet his target. This act is nonverbal. The approach is aggressive. He walks swiftly toward you, holding up a craft or something he wants to sell. You are greeted with a big smile and straight eye contact. The craft is waved in your face and, generally, the shop keeper is talking very fast about a price that is very good...just for you. There is physical contact by a hand shake or by grabbing your hand. If the hand shake is accepted, a slight pulling motion takes place toward the shop. If the hand shake is not accepted, gentle pushing from the shoulder often occurs. The shoulder touch attempts to extend a warm comfortable feeling. The facial expression happening now is eye contact and an extremely large smile with pearl white teeth showing proudly.

The nonverbal communication explained in the paragraph above is extremely driven by tourism. When watching two local people interact, the nonverbal actions were more difficult for me to recognize. I did notice when two locals were bargaining there was a moment when one of them would look down and away, indicating a final offer was made, leaving the other one to take a turn

making an offer. When his turn was over, he would look down to either side, and the first person would take another turn to bargain for a lower price. This process could go on for half an hour or more, depending on the importance of the bargain and persistence of both parties.

The above discussion is but a small glimpse as to the complexity of nonverbal communication in the Cote d'Ivoire. I know that nonverbal communication is part of everyday life. A community of people where perfect, efficient nonverbal communication takes place results in a community of people living together in harmony. It would take a lifelong dedication to fully understand Ivorian verbal and nonverbal communication.

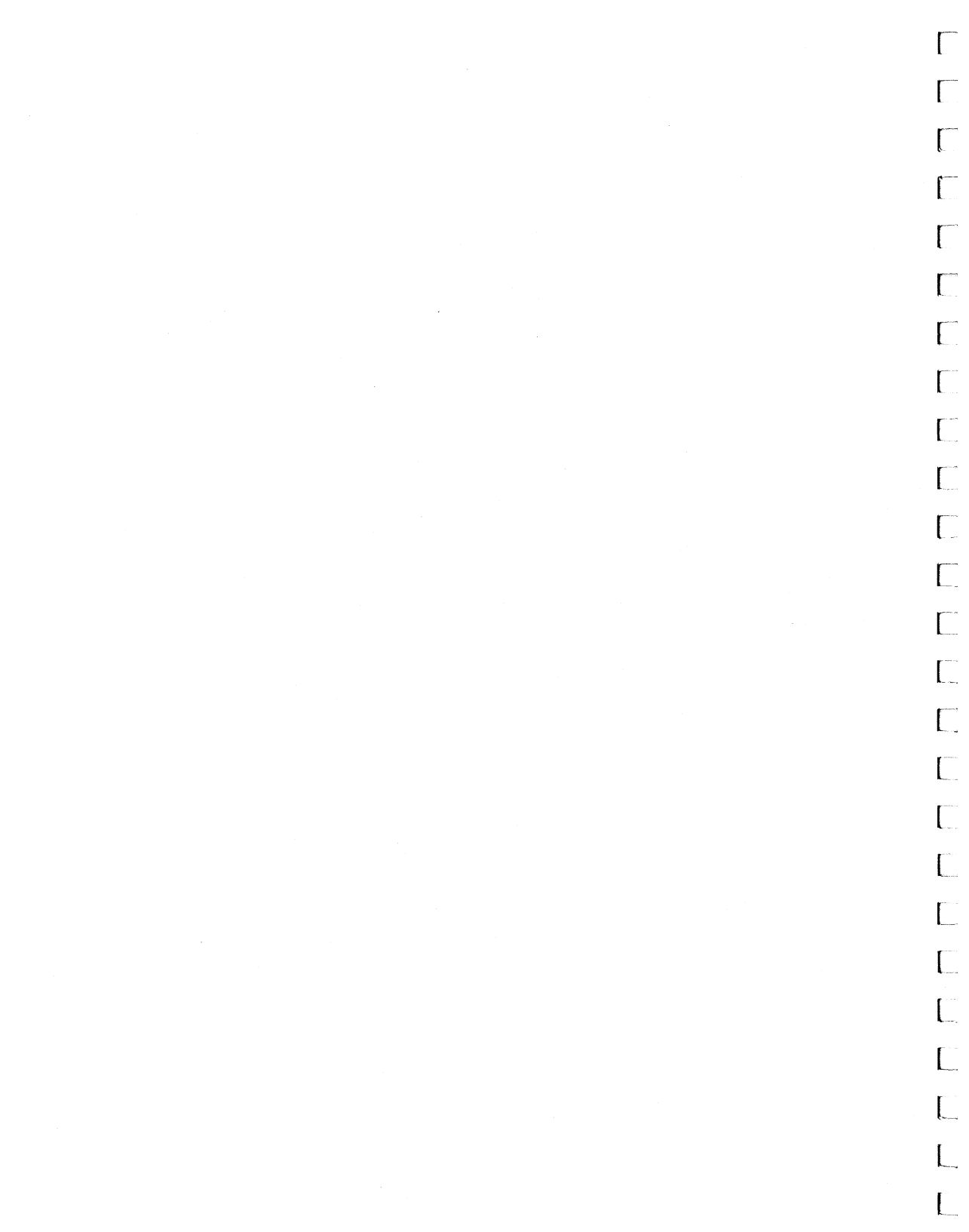
This essay was written for Anthropology 200, Introduction to Linguistics  
Instructor: Allan Richardson

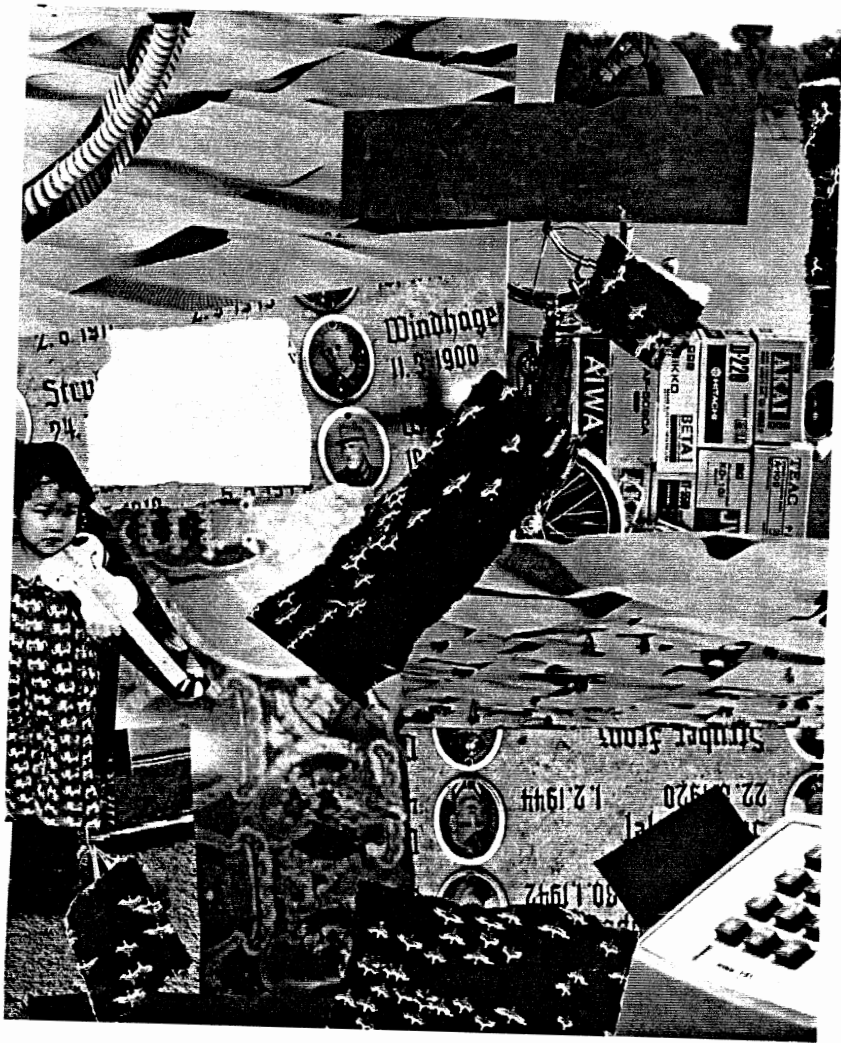
*Writer's comments*

My excitement on writing this essay came from the heart. Since my return to the United States I have had some time to process my experience. To put it bluntly, Africa cracked me open; I have had more life changing events happen in the three months I was in the Ivory Coast than in the past 5 years. My sense begged to release the emotion and stories kept in, tucked behind a smile and a pretty face. I felt I was hoarding the experience for myself. I wanted to share my experience but was not sure how. This essay was a great opportunity. I hope opportunities like this arise in the future.

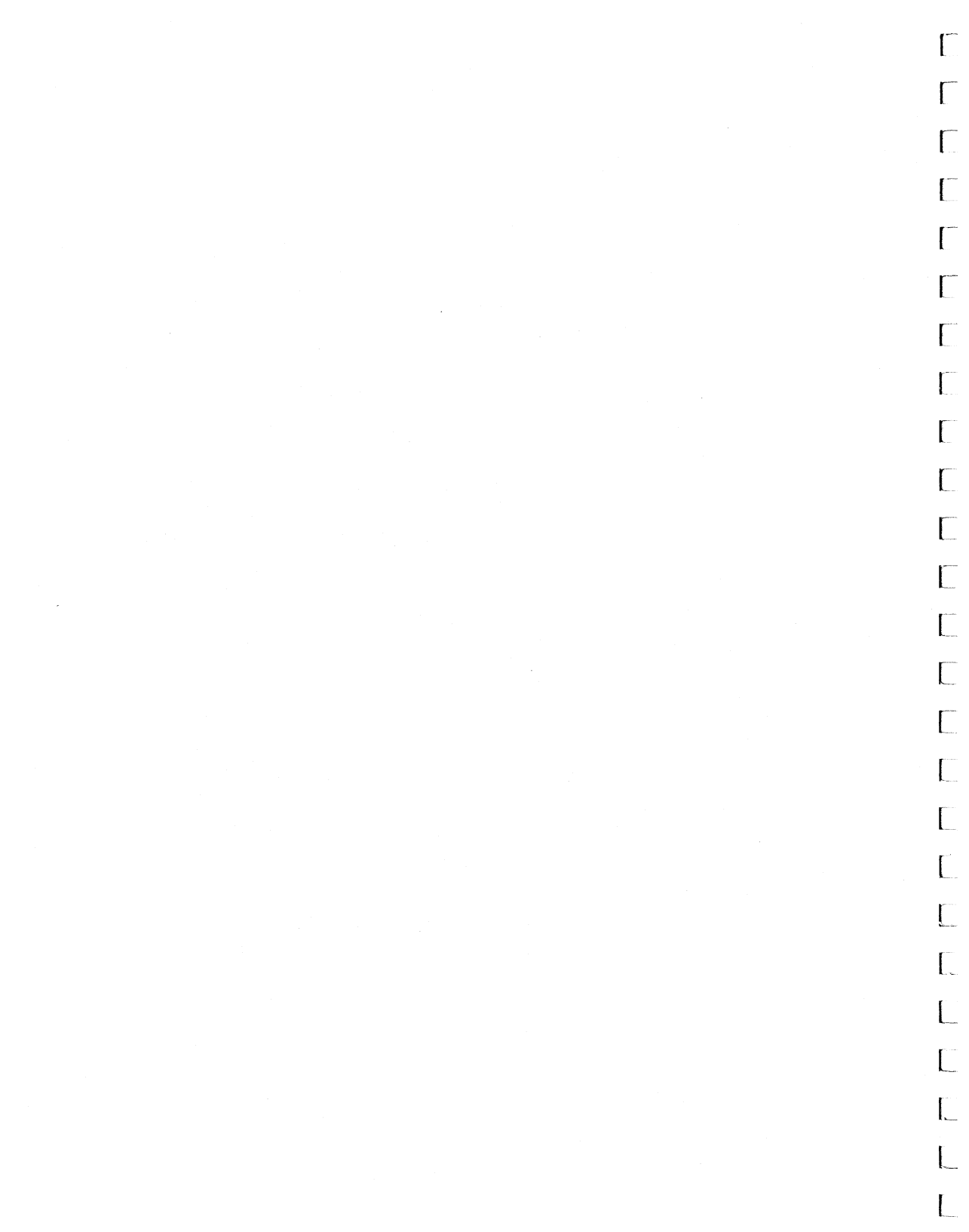
*Instructor's comments*

For this essay in my Linguistics course Yonk chose to write about non-linguistic communication. Despite the importance of language to human existence, non-verbal communication is of tremendous importance in societies throughout the world. Yonk experienced this first hand studying in Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa, this past fall. His essay successfully addresses the topic, and is exciting to read, because of the personal involvement and cross-cultural setting.





Mechille Kiss  
*Untitled*  
Collage, 11.5" x 9"



## The Bird Problem: A Solution

*Chris Ritchie*

### The Problem:

A certain pet shop sells large birds and small birds; each large bird fetches twice the price of a small one. A woman came in and purchased five large birds and three small ones. If, instead, she had bought three large birds and five small birds, she would have spent \$20 less. What is the price of each bird?

### A Solution:

Upon receiving the “Bird Problem” I immediately set about to solve it with the skills I have acquired through traditional mathematical education i.e. “Computation at a Rate.” Rather than listen to my teacher for further instructions, I set off, not necessarily blind, but in a dogmatic fashion. While I was able to solve the problem quickly and efficiently, I was oblivious to the cognitive reasoning skills I employed to reach a solution. It is only upon reflection that I can deduce through metacognition the skills and abilities I have gained from years of practice.

My first step was to read through the problem and identify the important question: “What is the price of each bird?” To answer this is to answer the problem. Here I demonstrated Observation and the Draft 3 ability to “Identify relevant information necessary for mathematical problem solving...”

My next course of action was to sift through the paragraph and separate the “relevant information” from the extraneous information. The synthetic truths of this problem are irrelevant. The fact that a woman is purchasing birds from a

pet shop does not matter. What does matter is that there are two items of a different type (birds) that have a monetary relationship.

Using the first bullet of Draft 3 combined with the ability to “Translate words into mathematical relationships by representing information...numerically,” I condensed the problem into the necessary analytical truths required to deductively solve it:

The first sentence becomes “L” and “S” where “L” = the price of large birds and “S” = the price of small birds

And

Price of  $L=2S$  because “each large bird fetches twice the price of a small one.”

Next, from the following sentence I concluded that the woman’s purchase was  $5L=35$ . In the last statement I learned that if she had bought three large birds and five small ones ( $3L=5S$ ) she would have spent \$20 less.

“Less than what?” I asked myself.

Less than her actual purchase:  $5L=3S$

Thus translating words into mathematical relationships I know that her actual purchase  $5L+3S$  was \$20 more than the hypothetical purchase of  $3L+5S$

Or

The hypothetical purchase was \$20 less than her actual purchase.

Now, from past knowledge I knew that the word “was” in its present form “is” can be translated into the equal sign “=” when used in a mathematical story problem, so...

Because the problem, as I have translated it, says the hypothetical purchase was \$20 less than her actual purchase I can translate this to an algebraic equation known in the Arabic world as “Balance and Opposition”:

Hypothetical purchase was actual purchase minus 20 dollars.

$$3L+5S=5L+35-20$$

What do I do with this information now that I have it?

With the translations complete it is now time to “select a mathematical and/or logical system sufficiently powerful enough to solve it” as it states in Draft 3. I have observed the problem, abstracted necessary information and now I must understand how it all relates to discover how much each bird costs.

Based on previous education in mathematics I identified the presence of the two equations needed to use the algebraic concept of substitution to find the value of “L” and “S”.

Substitution would be my “Mathematical...system”

The two equations necessary are:

$$L=2S$$

from the first sentence and

$$3L+5S=5L+3S-20$$

from the last part. (the actual purchase and the hypothetical \$20 cheaper purchase)

Now, upon reflecting, I realize there was another method I could have used as well as another way to use the method I did use: substitution. However, the analytical, universal nature of mathematics algorithm ensures that as long the premises are true then the logical reasoning is true, it is logically necessary. The phenomenon whereby two or more people arrive at the same conclusion through differing methods is well illustrated by Dewdney with scholars separated both geographically and philosophically working on much more complex problems.

Therefore in my humble case I will stay with my original system because in the end one is as good as any other (if it provides the correct answer of course). From  $3L+5S=5L+3S-20$  I will, from simple algebraic truths, isolate the price of a large bird “L” as a function of “S” the price of a small bird.

$$3L+5S=5L+3S-20$$

$$+20 \qquad \qquad +20$$

$$20+3L+5S=5L+3S$$

$$3L \qquad \qquad 3L$$

$$20+5S=2L+3S$$

$$-3S \qquad \qquad 3S$$



$$\frac{20+2S}{2} = \frac{2L}{2}$$

$$10+S=L$$

We now know that the price of a large bird is \$10 plus the price of a small bird by translating the mathematical relationship back into words. For now, however, I will stay in the realm of numeric symbols. We know have the first equation  $L=2S$  and the reduced second equation  $L=10+S$ . Here is where the concept of substitution comes into play.

If L equals both  $2S$  and  $S+10$  I can make the logical inference that  $2S$  equals  $S+10$

$$2S=S+10$$

Through another algebraic adaption whereby what is done to one side of the equation must be done to the other side we can isolate the "S".

$$2S=S+10$$

$$-S \quad -S$$

$$S=10 \text{ Da Ta Da Daa!}$$

Translation: The price of a small bird "S" is "=" 10 dollars

One part of the question "What is the price of each bird?" has been answered.

Using the equation  $L=2S$  we can solve to last part of the problem

$$\text{If } S=10$$

And

$$L=2S$$

$$\text{Then } L=2(10)$$

$$L=20$$

Thus the large bird costs 20 dollars and the small bird costs 10 dollars

Is this a valid answer? It seems so. It's reasonable to have the larger bird double the smaller. There are no negative prices.

To make sure we can substitute the solutions into one to the relationships:

$$3L+5S=5L+3S-20$$

$$3(20)+5(10)=5(20)+3(10)-20$$

$$60+50=100+30-20$$

$$110=130-20$$

$$110=110$$

The answers are correct.

This essay was written for Interdisciplinary Studies 111, Symbolic Reasoning  
Instructor: Joanne Munroe

*Writer's comments*

If the number of doodles which decorate a textbook can be inversely related to one's interest in the subject then mathematics is by far, my least favorite subject. That is, until these last two quarters. How many noble mathematicians have I desecrated with handlebar mustaches and ink blackened eyes, only to later find their work fascinating and even applicable. "Applicable" is an oxymoron for many students learning mathematics. In Symbolic Reasoning and Ethnomathematics, however, I found that numbers permeate everything around me.

The Bird Problem seems like your typical textbook problem with no application. In itself, I guess it is. I doubt I'll ever have to figure out the price of birds. The pet store owner will probably just tell me. The value of this problem is as a model of cognitive processes; by going back and analyzing the steps I took dogmatically in class, I have gained knowledge into my thought processes. I learned that I am always doing math even if it doesn't entail number crunching or story problems. Even those doodles I made in the past could possibly be modeled with fractals or Euclidean geometry.

Symbolic Reasoning taught me to reconsider my epistemic assumptions about mathematics and to look beyond textbook "ambition distraction uglification and derision" But, as the kids say on the *Reading Rainbow*, "Don't take my word for it."

*Instructor's comments*

Symbolic Reasoning is a course in mathematical reasoning that incorporates the uses of rhetorical modes and emphasizes the importance of the act of writing. In IDS 111, we investigate the works of "literate" mathematicians such as John Paulos and Keith Devlin.

We also use a mathematical novel (*A Mathematical Mystery Tour*) to guide our discussions and to introduce the influence of the history and philosophy of mathematics on our current theoretical and pedagogical assumptions. Chris especially liked the novel. His references to A.K. Dewdney reflect that interest.

This process essay was written as a homework assignment. The problem is one of Raymond Smullyan's "common sense or algebra" problems, and the students were invited to solve the problem either through the use of algebra or through using "common sense" reasoning. The instructions for the assignment required Chris to use the "steps" OBSERVATION, ABSTRACTION, UNDERSTANDING, DESCRIPTION, PROOF in developing his answer. The assignment also required an outline of the metacognitive aspects of mathematical reasoning, an integration of "Draft 3" (Quantitative Skills) criteria, and an identification of the "skills" that were used in arriving at a solution. Chris negotiates it all with "the greatest of ease" and conveys the satisfaction he derives along with the answer to the problem.

## Maxmizing the Volume of a Box

*Brandii R. Grace and Joshua K. Daniels*

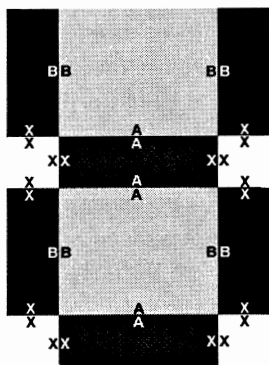


Diagram #1

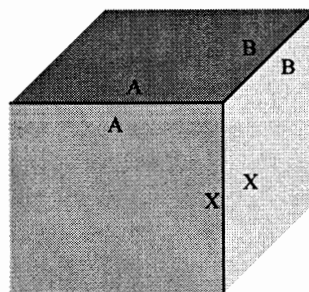


Diagram #2

### Part I - Finding the Initial Volume of the Box

The first step in determining the solution to any problem is to look at what the problem is. In this case, we are trying to find the maximum volume possible for a box created from an  $8\frac{1}{2}$  by 11-inch piece of paper, if the box includes a lid.

Diagram #1 demonstrates how the paper needs to be separated into the different sections, top and bottom, front and back, left and right sides, and the

small excess squares to be cut out. The opposite sides must have exactly the same dimensions in order for the box to be rectangular. It is possible to make the box a bit smaller if we include a lip on the lid; however, since our objective is to reach maximum capacity, such superfluous options are counter-productive.

As Diagram #2 illustrates, we can now establish that we will have a box in which the top and bottom sections will equal  $A$  times  $B$ , the box's length will be  $A$ , its width will be  $B$ , and its height will be  $X$ . Unfortunately, since three variables are too much to work with, we will have to define our variables so they are dependent on a single variable. In this case, our variable will be  $X$ . Thus, we must numerically define  $A$  and  $B$  with respect to  $X$ .

The length of  $A$  is measured with respect to the  $8\frac{1}{2}$ -inch dimensions of the paper. The entire  $8\frac{1}{2}$ -inch side consists of the value  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches  $- 2X - A$ . This equation takes into account the length-wise sides of the two  $X$  by  $X$  squares, both of which we will also be subtracting from the  $8\frac{1}{2}$ -inch dimension of the paper. Simple algebra will allow us to solve for  $A$  and then easily determine the length of  $A$  (with respect to  $X$ ).  $A$  equals  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches  $- 2X$ .

The length of  $B$  is measured with respect to the 11-inch dimensions of the paper. The entire 11-inch side consists of the value 11 inches  $- 2X - 2B$ . This equation takes into account the width-wise sides of the two  $X$  by  $X$  squares we will be subtracting from the 11-inch dimension of the paper, just as we did for the  $8\frac{1}{2}$ -inch side. However, this time we must account for two  $B$  sections on both the bottom and the lid of the box. Thus, finding the length of  $B$  becomes more algebraically involved than the previous equation. The value for  $B$  is shown to equal  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches  $- X$ .

We are now capable of determining the domains for our  $X$  value. The  $A$  side and  $B$  side use the same  $X$ , of course, so we can determine that the limitations placed on  $X$  by either value will apply for both values. In this case, the limits placed on  $X$  by side  $A$  provide greater restrictions than those established by side  $B$ . So we may ignore the domain set by  $B$ , since they are covered by  $A$ 's limitations. The domain is  $(0, \frac{4}{4})$ .

With our limits set for  $X$ , we may now find  $X$ . Using the numerical values we found for both  $A$  and  $B$  (with respect to  $X$ ); we can find Volume ( $V$ ). Volume for a box is defined as length ( $A$ ), times width ( $B$ ), times height ( $X$ ). We can now replace the numbers  $A$ ,  $B$ , and,  $X$ —as we have—with the numerical values we found earlier (with respect to  $X$ ), to give us a nice polynomial ( $V = 2X^3 - 19\frac{1}{2}X^2 + 46$

$\frac{3}{4}X$ ). Now that we have an equation for  $V$ , it is time to find the derivative of the Volume.

The first derivative is how we find candidates for maximum and minimum values in equations. The derivative of a polynomial of this type only requires use of the power rules. You must multiply  $X$  by the value of its exponent, and then reduce the exponent by one. In this case finding the derivative is easy, but setting the derivative equal to zero requires help of the quadratic formula ( $[-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}] / 2a$ : where  $a = 6$ ,  $b = -39$ , and  $c = \frac{463}{4}$ ). The results are approximately  $X \approx 4.915$  inches and  $X \approx 1.585$  inches. However, since 4.915 inches is larger than our domain limit of  $\frac{4}{4}$  we must disregard this possible solution. (And after evaluation, it turns out to be a minimum value anyway.)

Now we use the power rules again to find the second derivative, just as we did to find the first derivative. We then substitute  $X$  with the value  $X$  equals and solve it to see if we get a negative value (indicating a maximum) or a positive value (indicating a minimum). The second derivative test determines, finally, that our answer for a maximum value is indeed  $X \approx 1.585$  inches. We can now use this  $X$  value to determine, with certainty, our  $A$  and  $B$  values. They become,  $A \approx 5.33$  inches and  $B \approx 3.915$  inches. This gives us the maximum volume of our initial box at  $V \approx 33.07412$  inches.

## Part II—Waste Not, Want Not

Now that we have shaped our sheet of paper into a box, let us take another look at our instructions:

“You may cut, fold, tape, glue, or staple (but please do not mutilate) the paper in any way you want. What you need to construct is a 6-sided rectangular box (4 vertical sides, bottom and top) that has a maximum volume.”

Seeing as how our lovely teacher has left so much open for us, we would be remiss not to partake in so glorious an opportunity. In addition, he comments about rewarding “bonus points” for the team with the greatest maximum volume; this indicates that there must be more than one right answer. Let us see what else we can do to this box, shall we?

We now have one box (with lid) and some excess pieces of paper. We could leave the sides on the lid, in order to make the lid stay on better. However, the point here is not user-friendliness—it is maximum volume. Thus, if we remove all unnecessary pieces, we are left with 2 [B by X] pieces, and 4 [X by X] pieces. Tsk, tsk—such a needless waste of paper. Let us see if we can save a few trees.

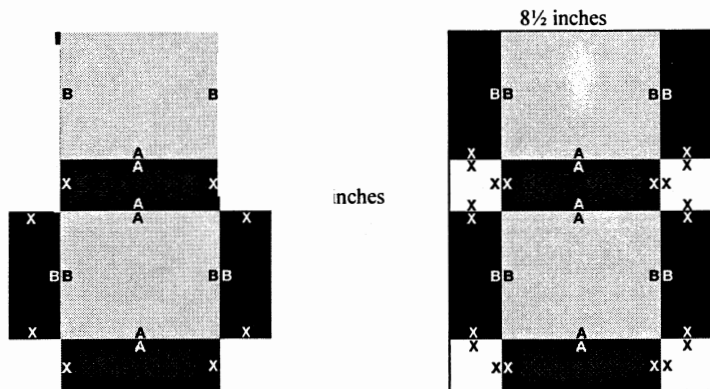
If we add the excess pieces of paper to the sides of our box, we can increase our volume substantially. The 20.19 inches of excess paper only needs to be added to four sides on the box edges. This will increase the volume by either height, width, or length. (Two sides do not need to change if we are only adding to one dimension, no matter which dimension it is, it will not touch two sides.)

This creates a pattern for us, in which there are three options. One, add to the height ( $(20.19/2A+2B)+X$ ); two, add to the length ( $(20.19/2x+2B)+A$ ); or three, add to the width ( $(20.19/2A+2x)+B$ ). Option one gives us a volume of  $V \approx 55.819$  inches, option two gives us a volume of  $V \approx 44.465$  inches, and option three gives us a volume of  $V \approx 45.409$  inches. Our best bet is option one.

We have now obtained a final volume of  $\approx 55.819$  inches! This is much better than our initial  $V \approx 33.074$  inches.

### Part III—Values

As much fun as we have had during this whole ordeal, the facts are facts—this assignment has *educational value*. Generally this is considered an ugly term, but not so at college; we realize that this assignment will help us greatly in our latter years. In fact, this year we plan to start our own business programming databases, video games, web sites, and so forth. Now we can find the maximum volume needed to create the boxes we will use to ship and sell our company's video games and software products in. This will help us to make more money at a smaller cost. We can also teach our children how to maximize the volume they have in those little scratch-paper boxes teachers invariably make students create to store Valentine's Day candies in. Moreover, as any seven-year-old will teach you, the larger the box, the more candy it can hold. We and our future children thank our teacher, Mr. Mooers, for teaching us this important life lesson. We thank him from the bottom of our hearts, wallets, and stomachs. (Although I am sure our children's dentist will want to have a word with him.) /\*-\_\*\



### Mathematics: The Initial Box<sup>1</sup>

To find the length of side A:

$$A + 2X = 8\frac{1}{2} \text{ \{subtract } 2X \text{ from both sides\}}$$

$$A = 8\frac{1}{2} - 2X \text{ \{the length of dimension A\}}$$

To find the length of side B:

$$2B + 2X = 11 \text{ \{subtract } 2X \text{ from both sides\}}$$

$$2B = 11 - 2X \text{ \{divide both sides by 2\}}$$

$$B = 5\frac{1}{2} - X \text{ \{the length of dimension B\}}$$

Smallest REAL measurement possible if cut from an  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inch side = 0

Largest REAL measurement possible if cut from an  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inch side =  $8\frac{1}{2}$

$$0 < A < 8\frac{1}{2} \text{ \{substitute A for the equation A equals\}}$$

$$0 < 8\frac{1}{2} - 2X < 8\frac{1}{2} \text{ \{subtract } 8\frac{1}{2} \text{ from all sides\}}$$

$$-8\frac{1}{2} < -2X < 0 \text{ \{divide all sides by } -2 \text{ (and don't forget to flip the inequality signs!)\}}$$

$$4\frac{1}{4} > X > 0 \text{ \{the domain for X\}}$$

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<sup>1</sup> NOTE: Figures shown are rounded approximations; the actual calculations are far more precise. This may cause numbers to appear to be 'off'.



Smallest REAL measurement possible if cut from an 11 inch side = 0

Largest REAL measurement possible if cut from an 11 inch side = 11

$0 < B < 11$  {substitute B for the equation B equals}

$0 < 5\frac{1}{2} - X < 11$  {subtract  $5\frac{1}{2}$  from all sides}

$-5\frac{1}{2} < -X < 5\frac{1}{2}$  {divide all sides by  $-1$  (and don't forget to flip the inequality signs!)}

$5\frac{1}{2} > X > -5\frac{1}{2}$  {another domain for X}

Volume = Length \* Width \* Height {box volume formula}

$V = A * B * X$  {equation to find the volume of the box}

$V = (8\frac{1}{2} - 2X)*(5\frac{1}{2} - X)*(X)$  {substitute A and B for their equation}

$V = 2X^3 - 19\frac{1}{2}X^2 + 46\frac{3}{4}X$  {equation for finding volume of a box (with respect to X)}

The first derivative at zero gives us the X values for local maximums and minimums of V

$V' = (3)*(2X^{2-1}) - (2)*(19\frac{1}{2}X^{2-1}) + (1)*(46\frac{3}{4}X^{1-1})$  {find the first derivative of V}

$V' = 6X^2 - 39X + 46\frac{3}{4}$  {the first derivative of V after applying power rules}

Let  $V' = 0$  {set the derivative of V equal to zero, use the quadratic formula to find X}

$[-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}] / (2a)$ : where  $a = 6$ ,  $b = -39$ , and  $c = 46\frac{3}{4}$  {solve the formula}

$X = 4.195$ ,  $X = 1.585$  {X candidates when  $V'$  is zero}

Limiting values for A and B:

$4.25 > 4.195 > 0$  {this candidate fails to fall within our domain for X}

$4.25 > 1.585 > 0$  {this candidate passes the test!}

$X = 1.585$  {this is the X value we believe will give us maximum volume}

Solving for the second derivative of V will tell us if X is a local maximum or minimum.

$V'' = (2)*(6X^{2-1}) - (1)*(39X^{1-1}) + (0)*(49\frac{3}{4})$  {find the second derivative}

$V'' = 12X - 39$  {substitute X with the value for X}

$V'' = 12*(1.585) - 39$  {solve the equation}

$V'' = -19.97$  {the answer is negative, that means the curve is concave down, X is a maximum!}

Now we substitute our X value into the equations for A and B

$$A = 8\frac{1}{2} - 2*(1.585) \text{ {solve the equation}}$$

$$A = 5.33 \text{ inches {this is the value for A}}$$

$$B = 5\frac{1}{2} - (1.585) \text{ {solve the equation}}$$

$$B = 3.915 \text{ inches {this is the value for B}}$$

$$V = 5.33 * 3.915 * 1.585 \text{ {solve the equation}}$$

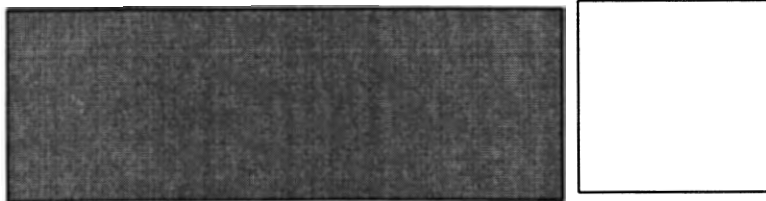
$$V = 33.07412 \text{ inches {this is the MAXIMUM VOLUME for our initial box!}}$$

The End...?

(or is it...)

B = 3.915 inches

X = 1.585 inches

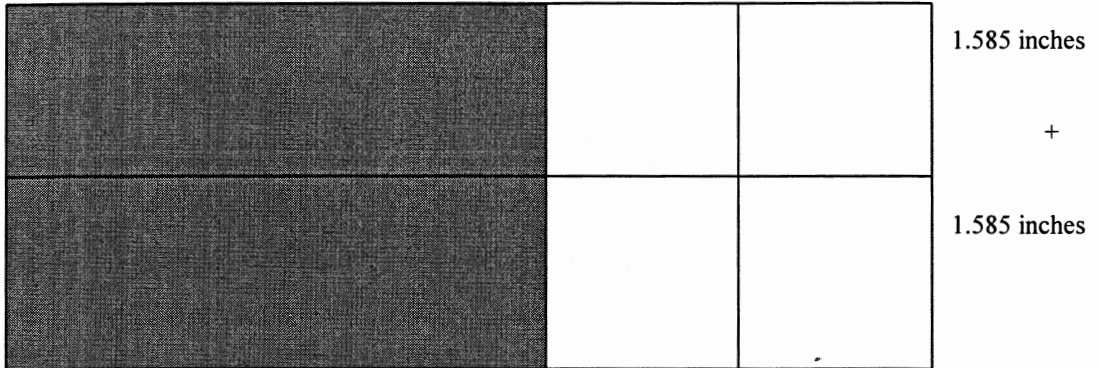


**Mathematics: Excess Added**

Now we have cut and folded our sheet of paper into a cute little box shape. But, there are pieces left over.

We have two (B by X) sides, and four (X by X) sides left over.

$$3.915 \text{ inches} + 1.585 \text{ inches} + 1.585 \text{ inches}$$



Area = Length \* Width {The formula for Area}

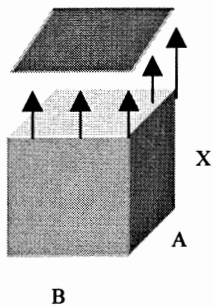
Area =  $(B + X + X) * (X + X)$  {substitute the real values for these variables}

Area =  $7.085 * 3.17$  {solve the equation}

Area = 22.45945 inches {Their total area combined equals 22.46 inches}

If we add the excess pieces of paper to the sides of our box we can increase any of the three dimensions.

If we increase the height, we will be adding the paper strips to the tops of the four sides (left, right, front, back).



You will notice that the A and B directions don't stretch, thus the top and bottom stay the same size. The only part that will change is the X part will stretch. In order to add to the height of the box, we must divide the remaining amount of paper scraps by the amount of space we will be required to cover.

Now we can write an equation for this.

$$2A + 2B = 18.49 \text{ inches } \{\text{this is the amount of space we need to cover}\}$$

$$22.46 / 18.49 = 1.215 \text{ inches } \{\text{this is the amount of extra height we will gain for our box.}\}$$

$$1.215 + 1.585 = 2.800 \text{ inches } \{\text{this is our new height}\}$$

$$V = 2.800 * 3.915 * 5.33 \text{ } \{\text{we plug our new height back into our box's Volume formula}\}$$

$$V = 58.421 \text{ inches } \{\text{this is the new volume for our box, if we increase its height.}\}$$

Likewise, we use the same steps to compare this to the volumes we would get from increasing just the length or the width instead.

$$2X + 2B = 11 \text{ inches } \{\text{this is the amount of space we need to cover}\}$$

$$22.46 / 11 = 2.042 \text{ inches } \{\text{this is the amount of extra length we will gain for our box.}\}$$

$$2.042 + 5.33 = 7.372 \text{ inches } \{\text{this is our new length}\}$$

$$V = 7.372 * 3.915 * 1.585 \text{ } \{\text{we plug our new length back into our box's Volume formula}\}$$

$$V = 45.744 \text{ inches } \{\text{this is the new volume for our box, if we increase its length.}\}$$

$$2X + 2A = 13.83 \text{ inches } \{\text{this is the amount of space we need to cover}\}$$

$$22.46 / 13.83 = 1.624 \text{ inches } \{\text{this is the amount of extra width we will gain for our box.}\}$$

$$1.624 + 3.915 = 5.539 \text{ inches } \{\text{this is our new width}\}$$

$$V = 5.539 * 5.33 * 1.585 \text{ } \{\text{we plug our new width back into our box's Volume formula}\}$$

$$V = 46.793 \text{ inches } \{\text{this is the new volume for our box, if we increase its width.}\}$$

Now we can compare our answers to see that increasing the height is clearly the best choice.

Our box's new volume is now a whopping 58.421 inches!

$33.07412$  (previous box volume)  $<$   $58.412$  (*new* box volume)

**Final Answer:**

The maximum volume of a box made from an  $8\frac{1}{2}$  by 11-inch piece of paper is approximately: 58.421' inches!

Final Note: The REAL maximum volume for ANY box will be a perfect cube. This would require six perfect squares. But that would only require some simple arithmetic or algebra. The point of this assignment was to demonstrate an application of calculus. Thus, we *technically* should have increased all three sides of the box in an attempt to create a perfect cube. We could then have included mathematical proofs as to why a perfect cube always gives a maximum volume (geometric/trigonometric applications). However, the time frame we had to work with and the amount of measuring, cutting, and pasting this would have entailed, simply didn't equal out. For those interested, to find the TRUE maximum volume you would find the area of one side of the box  $[(8.5 \times 11) / 6 = 15.5833333333]$ ; take the square root of that to find the side's length and width  $[\sqrt{15.5833333333} = 3.947573094109]$ ; and multiply that number by itself three times (length x width x height)  $[3.947573094109^3 = 61.5163473832]$ . Thus, the REAL maximum volume for a box created from an  $8\frac{1}{2}$  by 11-inch piece of paper is closer to approximately: 61.5163473832 inches. (About three inches more!)

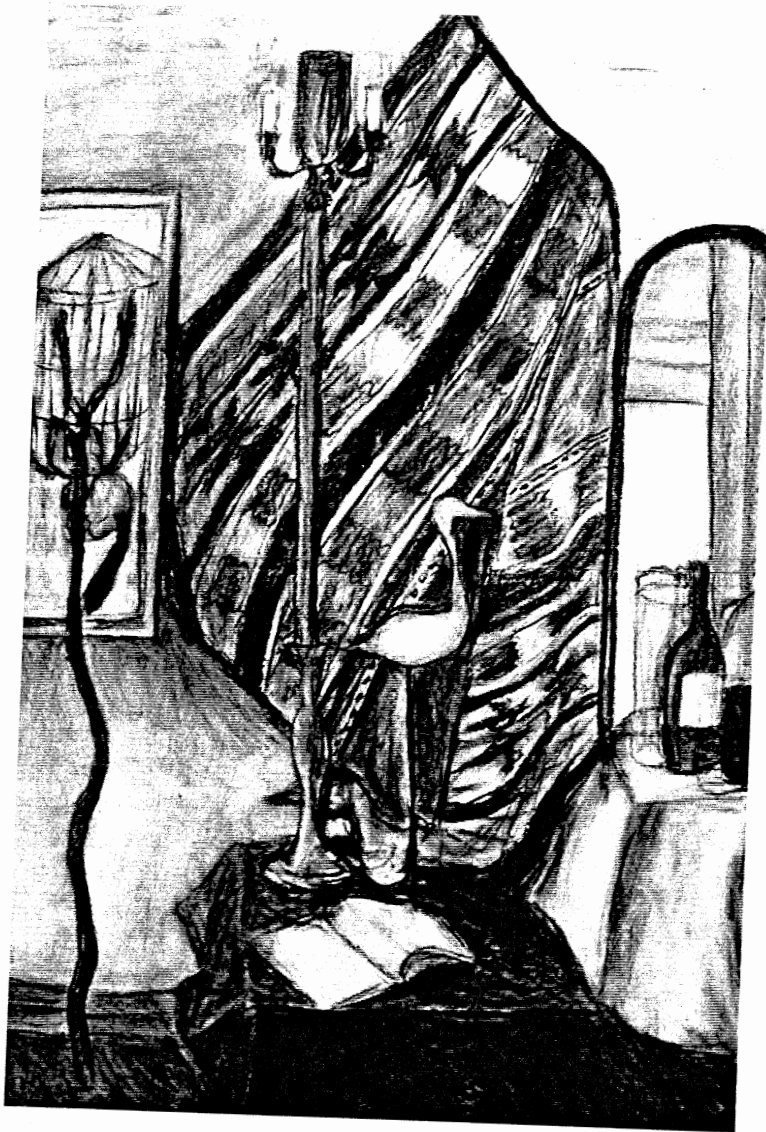
This essay was written for Mathematics 200, Calculus I  
Instructor: Doug Mooers

*Instructor's comments*

"Large pieces of work, like performance tasks, projects, and portfolios, provide opportunities for students to demonstrate growth in mathematical power."  
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Assessment Standards for School Mathematics. Prepared by the Assessment Standards Working Groups of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. May 1995. Page 36.

Students in my Fall Quarter 2000 Calculus I class were given a project which drew together mathematical modeling, analysis, visualization, writing, collaboration, and the construction of a "real" object. The class was divided into groups, and each group was given the task of designing a box (a rectangular solid) with maximum volume. The groups were required to submit their designs with mathematical work and written explanations supporting the dimensions that they had determined would maximize the volume of their creation. The paper by Brandii Grace and Joshua Daniels was exceptional in its presentation. It truly demonstrated their "growth in mathematical power."





Ann Chaikin  
*Still Life with Flamingo*  
Charcoal, 36" x 23"





## A Matter of Life

*Doug Mather*

In America today, religion stills plays a vital role in most aspects of our society. Despite what some would like to believe, religion, specifically a belief in God, is relevant and necessary. Without the moral code that was designed by God, our civilization would crumble. At its roots, and the basis for its design, lies the belief that human life is special and not considered to be expendable through malicious acts. While reading "Things Fall Apart" by Chinua Achebe, one may arrive at the conclusion that the Ibo people had not yet arrived at a comparable stage of their moral evolution as to that of our own society. When the reader considers the slaying of Ikemefuna by Okonkwa and of the twins that were "borne and thrown away" (135), it may be easy to assume that the Ibo people held no esteem for human life. However, a closer examination reveals some striking similarities in the role of religion among the Ibo people and in American society today, particularly in the importance of human life.

In the Bible, Exodus 20:13 says, "You must not murder." This is one of the commandments that God gave Moses to give to the people of Israel and one that we, in America, have readily adopted. It is safe to assume that all major religions in America hold the same belief that life is sacred. As a society, we believe that there is nothing more abhorrent than taking a human life, and the punishment for doing so can be severe. The criminal sanctions against someone who takes another's life intentionally are ostracism from society through incarceration or death of the perpetrator. When a person commits a homicide through an act of negligence, we call that manslaughter and the punishment is less

severe. In either case, the adherence to our moral code derived from our religious perspective demands that we punish those who take a life.

In "Things Fall Apart," it "was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land" (124). Here we read that Okonkwo had just accidentally killed a boy during a burial ceremony and was being punished for his crime. Okonkwo was driven from his home, leaving all of his personal possessions and wealth behind, to spend seven years in exile. Okonkwo was being punished because he had "committed the female [crime] because it had been inadvertent" (124), or manslaughter. Had it been intentional, he would have committed the male crime, or murder, and one can assume the punishment would have been far more severe. For the Ibo people, their adherence to their moral code dictated by their belief in the earth goddess, demanded a punishment for Okonkwo.

The Oracle of the Hills and Caves pronounced the death of Ikemefuna, the adopted son of Okonkwo, as punishment for the murder committed by Ikemefuna's father years before. Even though Ikemefuna stood in his father's stead, their religion demanded punishment for a crime that was as abhorrent to their society as much as it is to ours. The basis for our state-sanctioned death penalty is derived from the same moral code that demands retribution for the crime of murder.

Even though the Ibo seemed to be apathetic toward the deaths of their twins, the death sentence was still based on their religion and no less of a loss to the parents. Okonkwo's wise Uncle Uchendo said, "If you think you are the greatest sufferer in the world, ask my daughter, Akunei, how many twins she has borne and thrown away" (135). "The Earth had decreed that they [twins] were an offense to the land and must be destroyed" (125). One could argue that their justification for the death of twins born to the Ibo people is at least based on religion, while the justification for the children that we throw away is based on selfishness.

For the Ibo, religion plays a key role, as much as it does for us, in how we value our rights as citizens and individuals. No less important for the Ibo as it is for us, is the value that we place on human life. While both our cultures have bizarre idiosyncrasies in the name of religion, we both seem similar in our attitudes towards preserving our cultures through the basis of our belief in the sanctity of human life.

This essay was written for English 100, Introduction to Academic Writing  
Instructor: Jessica Steele

*Writer's comments*

The most interesting portion of this writing experience was resurrecting a portion of my brain that I assumed had long been fossilized. The most enjoyable time was spent interacting with younger people in the class. It gave me a refreshing perspective of thoughts and ideas that made the overall experience enjoyable. As a returning adult who had not seen a college classroom in over twenty years, I found the creative writing process moderately difficult, though it was rewarding to see that I could still apply some of what I thought I had lost. In retrospect, I believe it had just been misplaced and all I needed to do was turn over the right stone to find it again.

*Instructor's comments*

In our Winter quarter English 100 class, we were privileged to be able to read, discuss, and write about Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*. Doug Mather's essay is in response to a question asking students to compare the role that religion plays in the lives of the Ibo people (the main characters in the novel) with the role religion plays in the culture they are a part of. Doug's essay stood out to me for a number of reasons. His paper very clearly demonstrates his ability to communicate a specific, thoughtful main idea. Perhaps even more importantly, Doug shows that even with a topic that is often difficult to approach as maturely as he does here, he can effectively "weigh connections and relationships," and "understand and relate to ... the cultures, perspectives and expressions of others" in a sensitive, compassionate, thoughtful manner.

## The Function and Role of Religion in Human Life

Lisa Ezrre

The function of religion in human life, as outlined in “Experiencing The World’s Religions” by Michael Molloy, is: “Religion helps us relate to the unknown universe around us by answering the basic questions of who we are, where we come from, and where we are going”(3). In addition, Molloy discusses different disciplines that “offer a new look at religion from the perspective of human behavior.” This list includes “Philosophy—love of wisdom, Theology—study of the divine, Anthropology— study of human beings, and Psychology~ soul study (16)(17). These disciplines, in my opinion, “are intrinsic when looking at the role religion plays in human life, while illustrating its purpose for existence.”

Phenomenalism—“A *philosophical theory* of perception and the external world” states that “a material object is not a mysterious something ‘behind’ the appearances that people experience in sensation. If it were, the material world would be unknowable.” I believe that this philosophy describes how sensations or experiences can overwhelm a human so much that the experience or sensation alone can lead a human into believing what is happening is the single source of knowledge. For example, in Malloy’s description of *Makahiki*, a Hawaiian observance of the four -month winter period dedicated to the agricultural god Lono, he describes how “The fact that Captain James Cook arrived during this four-month winter period encouraged the native people to accept him as the god Lono” (33). Since the native Hawaiians were so absorbed in this sacred time of, stories, symbolism and spirits that when Captain James Cook arrived, Lono

arrived. Up until that moment Lono was a story, but when it was observed it became real via the experience and feelings associated with the observance.

I believe I started life with nothing but instinct, and have gained knowledge through teachings, life experiences, books, and self-analysis. At one point in my life, I thought my mother was magical because she could pull candy bars out of the ceiling. I also truly believed that a man in a red suit brought me presents and had flying reindeer. I absolutely believed this to be true. However, nothing is scared in my mind and the truth must be sought. I don't know how I learned that reindeer don't fly? It was probably my own human curiosity that drove me to disprove my scared belief. Or was it when I started to notice inconsistencies with what I thought I saw and what someone else saw? I believe I killed my own belief out of curiosity; although, if I think hard enough, I can almost remember how it felt to truly believe in something that mysterious and awesome. I have asked my mother a hundred times how she did the candy bar trick. She always says, "What trick?" I say, "Mom, you can't pull candy bars out of the ceiling!" She always responds, "How do you know?" To this second, I still believe my mom can pull candy bars out of the ceiling. Because—I saw it happen; therefore it must be true. And, since I can't explain it, it remains true, thus creating my faith and belief in what I saw to be true.

I believe, using Molloy's reference of the German theologian, Rudolf Otto, that Otto's theory's about "the mystery that causes trembling and fascination" and "numinous awe" gives forth to a concept that "Religions emerge when people experience an aspect of reality which is essentially mysterious." Often, as humans, "We take our existence for granted and live with little wonder" until "something happens that disturbs our ordinary view of reality. This gives religions a function, to create a safe place for 'The Things' that inspire 'awe or trembling'" (4)(5). Thus, our minds provide a way to accept and incorporate experiences and sensations that cause us to experience feelings of fear and/or excitement, since the nature of "The Things" cannot be explained. With religion, humans can truly believe in something without having to prove it.

Unfortunately, I have experienced first hand that being human comes with the ability/liability to think outside of my given boundaries. The consequences? Too much time thinking and analyzing, and not enough experiencing and empathizing.

This essay was written for Philosophy 140, Introduction to World Religions  
Instructor: Joanne Munroe

*Writer's comments*

This essay was the result of a take home test question in a Philosophy of world religions class. It compelled me to search and understand how a person could become consumed with faith and dedicate themselves to a religious belief that I rationally dispelled as myth.

“Because...I saw it happen; therefore, it must be true, and since I can't explain it, it remains true: thus creating my faith and belief in what I saw to be true.”

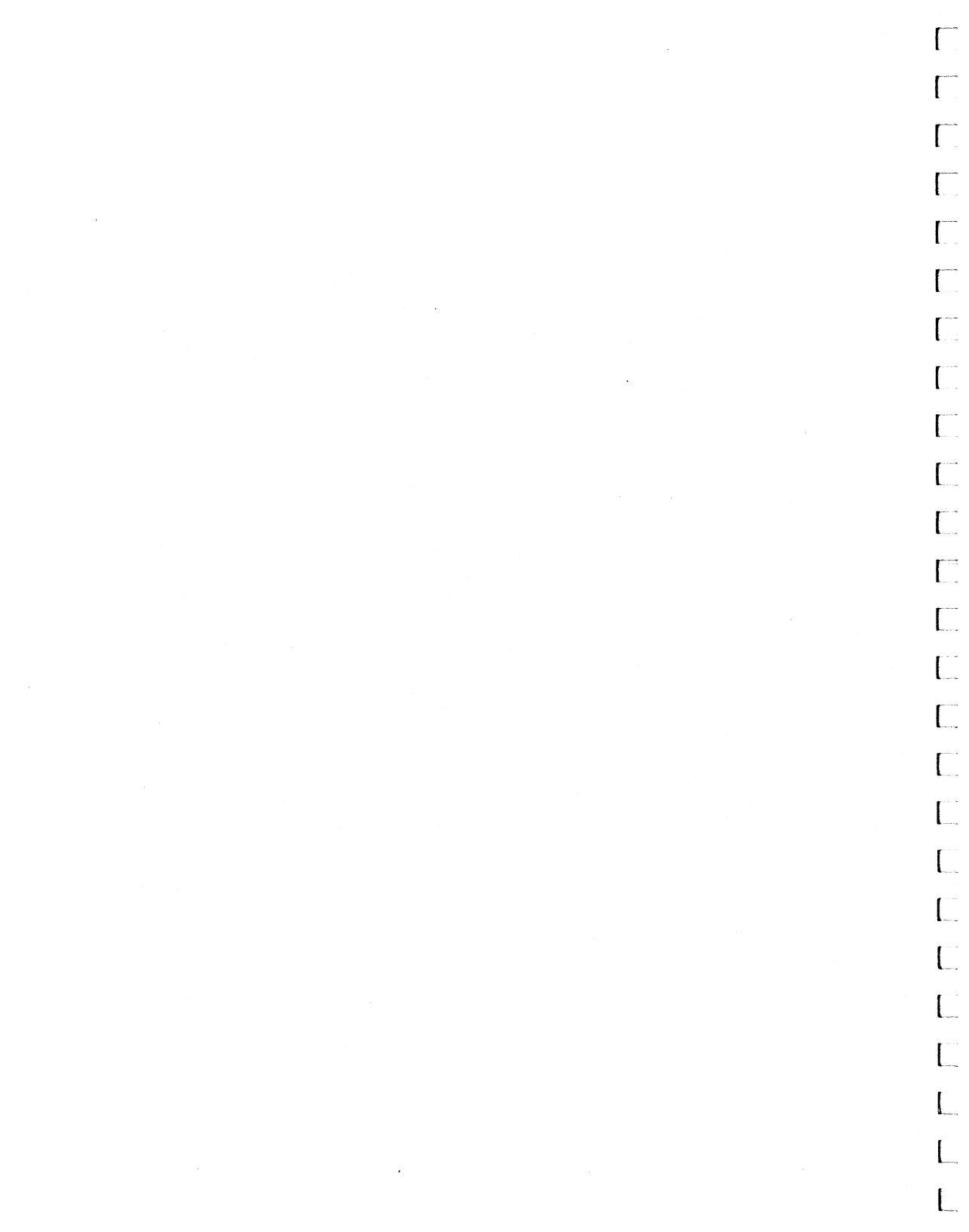
*Instructor's comments*

In this class, we explore various dimensions of world religions. Lisa was most interested in experiential elements. In this paper she recounts her own take on Otto's “numinous awe.” I like Lisa's use of analogy in this essay, particularly her description of “the candy bar trick.”



Patricia Stowell  
*Falling Leaves*  
Linocut, 6" x 6"





## What, Exactly, Is Feminism?

*Sarah Thorn*

Historically, a feminist has been anyone who rejected traditional ideals for women (the cult of domesticity, the feminine mystique), or any woman who acted out against the system. To me, the feminists of history are those women who struggled for property rights, rights within marriage, union recognition, birth control rights, suffrage, and political participation in general. Some of these struggles continue today, and the women behind them will always be called feminists. When examining the history of women's activism, it is a rather daunting task to actually define the term "feminist," but what links all of these women together is that they were all interested in change. Change to improve their wages, living conditions, and basic liberties. Today's feminists also possess an interest in change.

Whether or not I consider myself a feminist depends on how this term is defined, and I think that everyone—through their own actions—defines this for themselves. One question that I frequently encountered while informally polling female friends and family was: Can I be a feminist if I don't act like one? I think that stereotypical notions of feminists outline radical, bra burning and man hating women (an image projected out of the 1960s and 1970s). My answer is yes, I believe that the term feminism covers a whole spectrum of attitudes and actions. Generally, I also found that a feminist stood out as a strong woman who believes in complete sexual equality. One friend replied that she was a feminist, but not a strident one. To her, being a feminist is the ability to be strong and feminine without being criticized for either aspect. I consider myself a feminist because I

believe women should have reproductive/birth control/abortion rights, I believe that women should be paid the same as men for doing the exact same job, but I do not believe in ideas existing from the cult of domesticity and the feminine mystique. These ideals are only a part of what being a feminist means to me.

I feel that I take many things for granted about being a woman, and, in my “quest” to define feminism, I turned to *Ms. magazine*. Susan Estrich, in an excerpt of her book, *Sex and Power*, provides some useful commentary:

What about the sense of power and possibility that comes with the realization that what is is not inevitable, that the struggle is larger than you, that change is possible? Have we taught our daughters that? Do they even have any idea what that means?

In my case, yes, I do know how it feels to have the desire and belief that I can do anything. If I doubt myself in any of my endeavors, I examine what could make me feel less confident. The fact that I am a woman doesn’t even come into play. The author suggests that girls are losing this drive, or never had it instilled in the first place. But it all depends on where a person comes from and what their parents make them believe is possible. Or perhaps this is only true for me, and the sources from which women draw their strength vary greatly. Estrich identifies ambition as the driving force behind realizing one’s potential. She says, “...dropping out, pulling back, letting niceness get the best of you, not asking for enough, not pushing hard enough, is also a selfish decision (as opposed to putting one’s career first) from the collective perspective of feminism. It negatively affects other women. It retards change.” But is being a feminist only about pushing harder to get to the top? What about the value of being a feminist mother and a person to pass on social conscious values? There is definitely something to be said for a feminist identity that is nurturing while strong and intellectual.

Estrich’s story about her young daughter is, in her vision, the embodiment of feminism. This young girl was the only one on her little league team, but stuck it out to prove that girls can play too:

She had a mission, and she fulfilled it...The name of that mission is feminism. Its gift is the idea that a girl can be whoever she wants, that she too can grow up to be president...But with the gift comes the responsibility to fulfill its promise, to stand up as a woman, if not for your own sake, then for the sake of those who come next.

(Sing it sister). After reading over this statement of conviction, I do indeed (in the most positive sense of the word) consider myself a feminist. In the same issue of Ms., I also ran across Anita Roddick's (the creator of the Body Shop) feelings on feminism:

For me, feminism is equality in the eyes of the law, and of employers; it is a broad notion of family protection in the community. Do I like a lot of the language and style of feminism? Not always. But if I was defining myself by my actions, bloody right I'm a feminist.

I can especially appreciate Roddick's sentiments on equality before the law. Another friend that I talked to had similar feelings. She felt that feminists who claim to hate men and are "male bashers" achieve nothing, and look just as sexist as their male counterparts under attack. To her, feminism is about achieving social and legal equality, without elevating one sex over the other. Gloria Steinem also argued against this stance in her 1970 testimony to the U.S. Congress during the Equal Rights Amendment hearings. In arguing against one "sex based myth (That Women Are Biologically Inferior to Men)," she says, "...I do not want to prove the superiority of one sex to another. That would only be repeating a male mistake" (p. 300).

An adult friend of mine said she felt that radical feminism was an over-reaction to something long suppressed. In its earliest stages, feminism was very reactionary, she said, but has mellowed and become more productive with maturity. One difference in modern women is that, generally, they are more physically equal than the women in her day. Perhaps this is a sign of the times. My friend definitely considers herself to be a feminist. She said, "Yes, just by being a woman I'm a feminist." She did, however, describe herself as a *humanist* feminist, which levels the playing field and takes the edge off the word feminism. I don't believe that the word feminism needs to be softened, but there is no doubting the fact that it carries numerous stereotypes.

When discussing its meaning with a fellow seventeen-year-old, the first thing that came to her mind was "Bitches, feminazi," even though she knew that those words were just stereotypes. Thus, the word feminism is sometimes used synonymously with feminazi. This is truly unfortunate for those of us who consider ourselves feminists in the most positive and productive sense of the word.

As for as modern feminism, it is still alive and kicking, but in different ways than in the 60s and 70s. Women are taking up every imaginable occupation,

celebrating each other, and physically matching men in nearly every athletic endeavor. When asked by veteran feminists where all the young feminists are, Gloria Steinem suggests that they “Look for young feminists where they are, not where we used to be.” Times have changed, and women are associating in different places than they used to. Steinem says, “what speak-outs were to us, rock concerts and feminist lyrics are to them.” Steinem also touches on a point made by my friend Jill: “Young women have many things we didn’t, from sexual freedom to women’s history course...Are we minimizing the problems that younger women do have, like AIDS and a raging, multinational, consumer culture?” This is a crucial aspect of appreciating and recognizing modern feminism. We are dealing with issues that were hardly in existence when Steinem and her colleagues were first radicalizing their world, and in our own way, we will define what it is to be a feminist.

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This essay was written for History 206, Women in American History  
Instructor: Mary Haberman

*Instructor's comments*

Sarah wrote this essay in History 206: Women in American History. The reflective essay assignment was a way for students to expand in writing on topics and issues that came up in class or course readings. I hoped in these essays that students would arrive at more in-depth thinking and be able to make connections between what we studied in class and their own lives, experiences and values. Sarah chose to write in response to the following questions: "Do you consider yourself a feminist? Why or why not? What do you think feminism means?"

Sarah's essay shows she spent a lot of time deeply considering the meanings and perceptions of feminism and her own beliefs on the subject. I was really impressed that she went above and beyond the scope of the assignment by discussing ideas with friends and reading articles to stimulate her thinking.

Her ground work and writing demonstrate high quality thinking, analysis and reflections.

## *Fight Club*: Narrative Analysis

Brian Z. Bassir

If there is one thing to be said about *Fightclub*, it should be that this film ought to be watched several times. The intricacies and the complexity of this film are far too great to be covered in this paper alone; however, I will do my best to touch on the narrative elements that play the largest, or rather key, roles in this film. I have broken this film down into two narrative structures that I feel give this film, for the most part, its general form: plot progression and contrast.

One of the most interesting elements of this film is the plot progression. I find it fascinating that this two-and-a-half-hour film takes place in perhaps five to ten minutes of story. We enter the film at a very intense moment, when, who we later find out to be Tyler Durden, is holding a gun down the mouth of the character played out by Edward Norton. Immediately we, the audience, form expectations. Perhaps Norton's character is going to die, be shot; this element creates suspense. It does not stop there however. After Durden takes the gun out of Norton's mouth, the audience then learns of Project Mayhem and, in great detail and visual effect, of the twelve credit card companies that are rigged with homemade dynamite. We are now completely lost and completely intent on the story that's unfolding before us as we unconsciously formulate possible scenarios to take place. Right before we are dropped into Norton's flashback we are left with another crucial question: "Who is Marla Singer?"

Bitch tits. I said *dropped* into Norton's flashback for a particular reason. As we are plunged into Bob's character and his enormous (as you think of God as big) breasts, "dropped" is the feeling the director achieves whether intentionally or unintentionally. In this way, he is playing with our emotions and expectations.

We are taken from this highly intense, almost stressful, scene, where some sort of revolution with guns and dynamite is taking shape, to Bob's breasts' a sad situation, being that the cause was his loss of testicles, made humorous due to the contrast that is created. Bob's breasts are laughable in the sense that we feel relief from the urgency the prior scene induced. We are not with Bob long, though, as we are then taken even further back in time with Norton as he begins to explain to us his problem of insomnia.

At first I wondered why the director brought us to this scene with Bob only to go almost instantaneously back in time to Norton's insomnia. I believe he did this for three reasons. 1) It sets up the contrast I just described, easing the nerves of the viewers while incorporating a morbid sort of comedy. 2) It gives us this feeling of instability that is central to understanding Norton's character, as well as reminds us that we are viewing Norton's memories, not the actual story. 3) This is perhaps the most important reason the director made this decision. I believe that he took us to Bob and then immediately to Norton's insomnia because it first suggests to us that Bob is an important character and at the same time it suggests that, while Bob is important, Norton's problems are more important; thus the director creates emphasis.

When we reach the initial scene about Norton's insomnia, right after we meet Bob, Norton's flashback is pretty much straightforward in its progression, in terms of temporal order, all the way up to the end where we are taken out of the past and into the present. From where we begin with Norton's insomnia, we begin to make sense of what's going on in the film. We see that Norton has insomnia because he feels that something is wrong with his life. We hear his views on the corporate world, such as the example of "Deep Space Exploration." We see Norton go to the doctor to find relief from the pain he's feeling. We see Norton's addiction to self-help groups and his meeting with Bob. We then discover who Marla Singer is and how he ruins Norton's self-help groups. We then meet Tyler Durden, and see Norton's apartment explode. We see the beginning of *Fightclub* and its progression through homework assignments to become Project Mayhem. We see Durden's and Norton's relationship grow apart. We then see Bob's death and Norton's eventual realization that he and Durden are the same person. This brings us back to where we began the film. All the while, up until this point, we have in the back of our mind the beginning of the film because of the fact that the director just left our expectations hanging. What the director is doing by



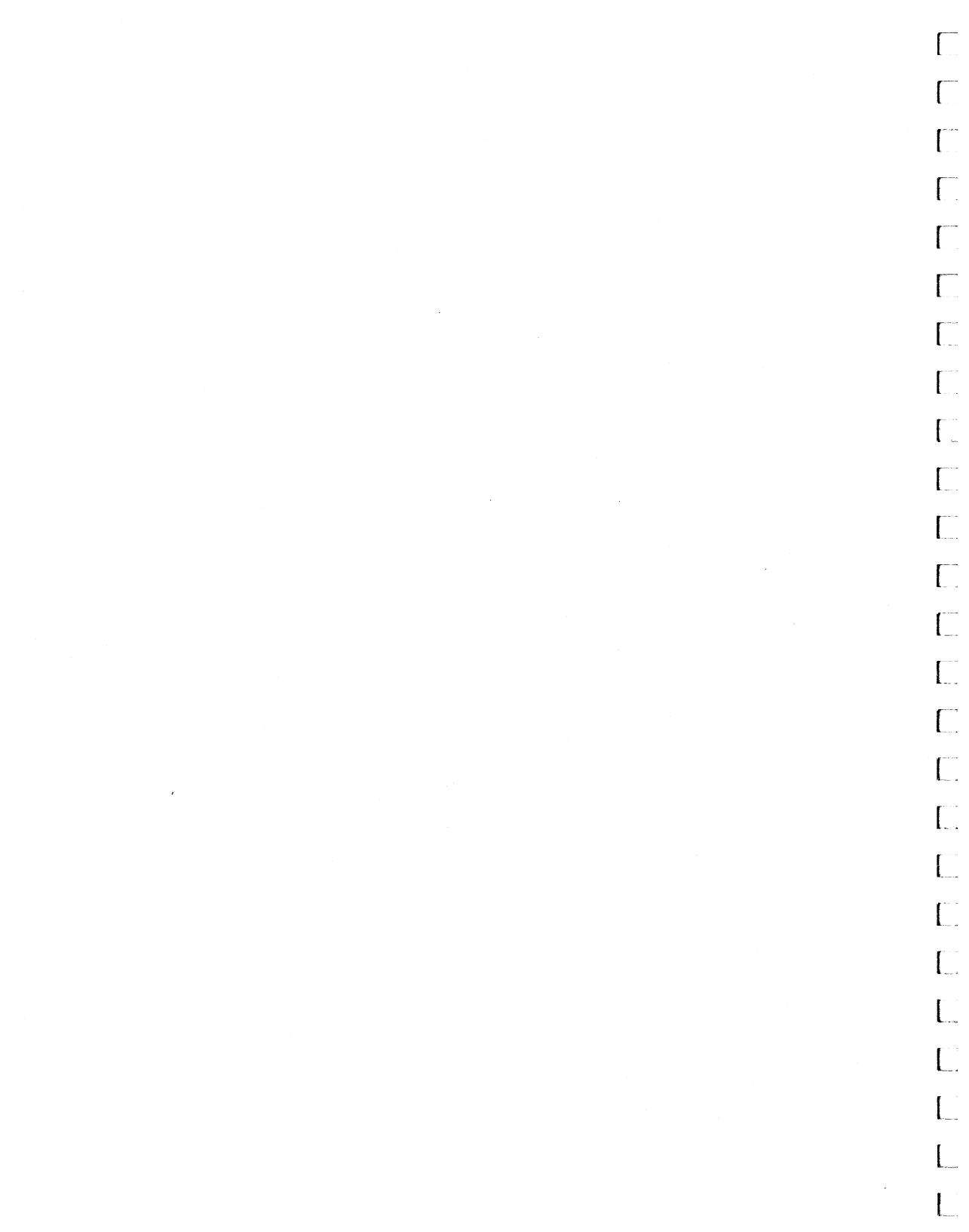
beginning the film near the end is manipulating time, dragging out this few minutes of story through the use of a flashback in the successful attempt to create suspense. As we see the story unfold, we constantly have that image of Durden holding the gun in Norton's mouth.

The other reason that the director begins the film in this way brings me to my next topic. Contrast. By placing us at the end of the film with Durden holding the gun in Norton's mouth, the director is again creating emphasis. This emphasis is on the opposing dynamics of Norton and Durden, which instills in us the ideas of good vs. evil and hero vs. villain. As the film progresses, we begin to gain an understanding for who Norton's character is. Norton has insomnia; he can't sleep. He can't sleep because he's so upset with his life. He views himself as a copy of a copy of a copy, not original and barely recognizable as anything. He views himself as a by-product of a world run by corporations. In the scene on "Deep Space Exploration," we see a bunch of corporate symbols lying crumpled in the bottom of a wastebasket, which give us the connection that he thinks that these corporations are garbage; these things that corporations produce are nothing of any real value. In this same scene, the narration goes on to explain that these corporations are going to be the ones to own everything when deep space exploration ramps up, "deep space exploration" being a metaphor for our future. We find out that Norton does not like his job, does not like his boss, and he is angry with his Dad for leaving him as a boy. Norton feels a slave to the "Ikea Nesting" instinct, a slave to buying merchandise that he does not need in a vain attempt to define himself as a person. Norton eventually comes to the realization that he is no longer a personality, but instead a consumer; Norton very much wants to be somebody else. We hear him entertain this thought when he asks us: "If you wake up in a different time, in a different place, can you wake up as a different person?"

When Norton asks us this question you will see the manifestation of this desire in the background. Tyler Durden. Tyler Durden, as we come to find out later on in the film, is, in fact, just a figment of Norton's imagination; or, as I think it's better put, a fragment of his imagination. Norton and Durden stem from the same mind, but are completely different people. Durden makes soap. He is not concerned with the prestige of his job, nor the money he gets from it. Durden lives in a run-down apartment, not because he has to, but because he wants to. Durden rejects society. Durden rejects the ideas given by church about

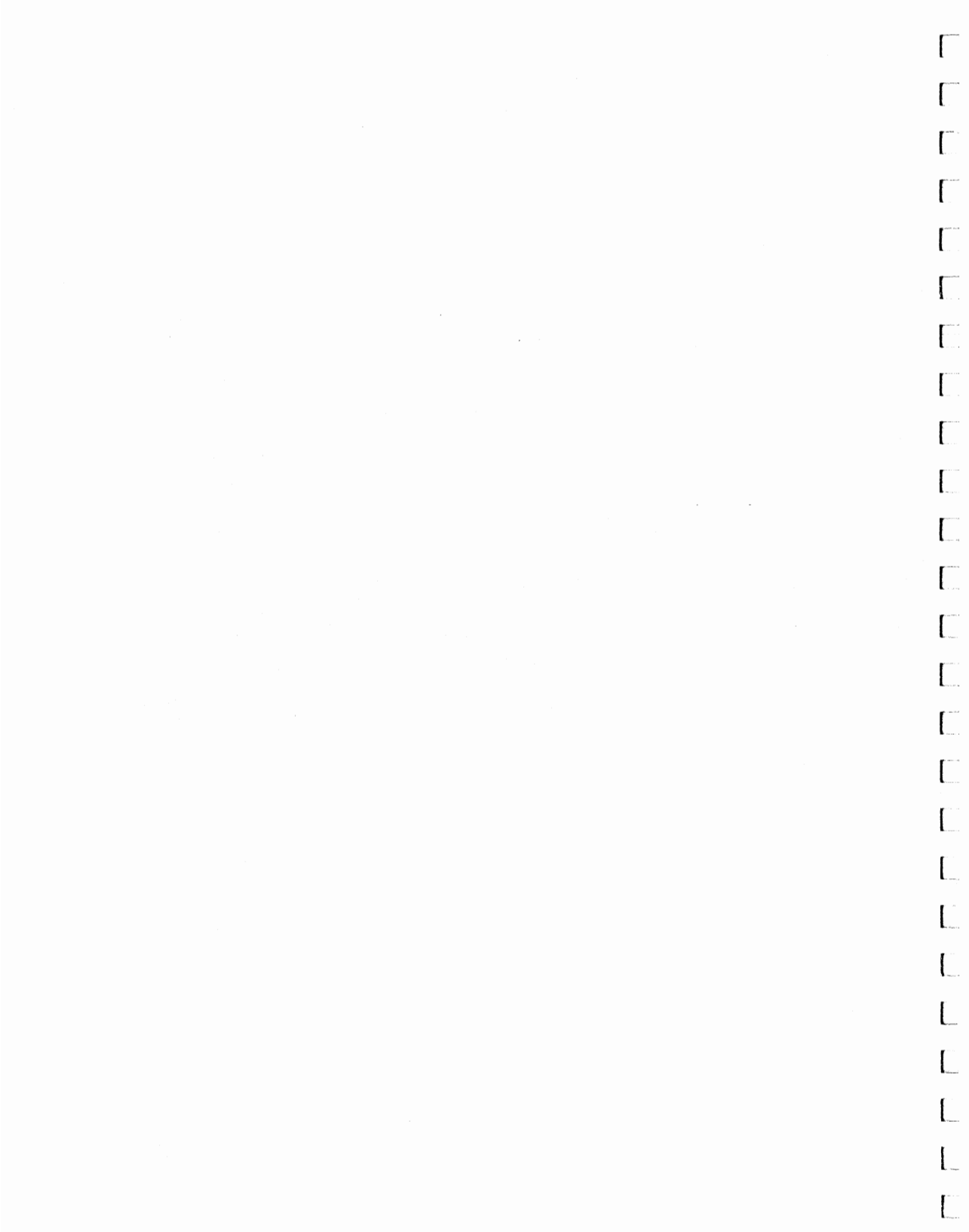
God as being love and salvation, and, most of all, he rejects fear. In one of Durden's lessons to Norton he tells him, "You have to know, not fear, but know that some day you are going to die." Durden rejects worldly possessions; in this sense Durden is free where Norton is a slave. Durden is free in all the ways Norton is not. Toward the end of the film, Durden tells Norton (after Norton figures out that he and Durden are the same) that he looks like he wants to look and fucks like he wants to fuck. Ironically, the end of Durden is his selfishness, his greed. Greed in the sense that Durden wants everything to run his way, with no regard as to how other people feel. In the same way that corporations have brainwashed society, so too does Durden brainwash his smaller society, Project Mayhem. In the same way that corporate society tries to force its will on Norton, so too does Durden try to force his will on Norton. The Norton that we see at the end of the film, the Norton who has found freedom by accepting himself, is shaped both by corporate society (being that this was the cause for Durden in the first place) and Durden. This contrast of elements, this opposition of ideas and values is not only what shapes Norton's character and helps him discover what he believes and who he is, but it is also the driving force, the motivation for this film.

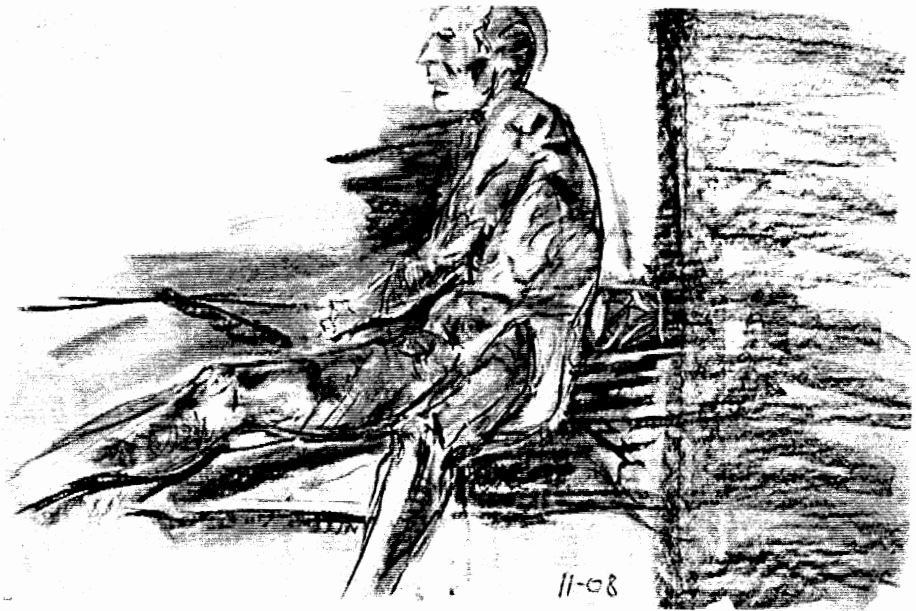
This essay was written for Film 101, Introduction to the Art of Film  
Instructor: Brian Patterson





Laura Greer  
*Tukas*  
Graphite, 23" x 36"





Linda Lovett  
*Dave*  
Charcoal, 23" x 35"



Déja Vu  
*Mary Getaz*

It was a very quiet day in Geneva, Switzerland; my children were in school and my husband was working. At noon, I turned the TV on to watch the news. I thought I would hear the same old things, everything's going up: higher taxes, higher rents, and yet, low milk prices, which hurt the farmers, or about the last music event in Geneva, etc. But the speaker spoke about a revolution in Brazzaville, Congo. My first thought was, "Oh, no! Not again!"

When the political Revolution happened in Brazzaville, armed black soldiers with eyes full of hate had stood over bloodied black bodies covered in dirt. Crying white women and kids shook fearfully and abandoned everything, with nothing but bitterness in their hearts. The first victims were the white people and all the blacks that shared their non-communist ideas. One woman said, "We came here to help them, but now they are ready to kill us. They stole everything we had and broke the rest. They raped most of my friends. Today I am lucky to be alive!" Paralyzed with fear and haunted by the past when I was someone else, I started to cry.

Once upon a time, a twenty-year-old Mary served banana splits to the Congoan president and his two bodyguards at the Blue Teddy Bear ice cream parlor, the only one in Brazzaville. At noon, she took a nap, and then she took a swim before returning to work. As usual, she jumped on her motorcycle, leaving her quiet countryside home for downtown. While she headed downtown, the deathly silence was broken by a loud frightening noise. She stopped her motorcycle, and she was torn between fleeing and investigating.



When she arrived at the Blue Teddy Bear, she saw two tanks facing each other across the street. What was going on? It was not comforting at all, but at the same time, going back home seemed to be less comforting. What about going to one of her French friends' houses? The only problem was that she had to pass between the two tanks, but it was quiet, so it seemed somewhat safe. As she arrived, she knocked and heard a scared voice asking,

"Who is it?"

"It's Mary, let me come in."

"I can't, it's too dangerous out there."

"But what's going on?"

"They killed the president and the soldiers are taking control over the town. There is a revolution out there!"

"Well, I can't go back home, let me in!"

"No, I can't, I am too scared."

Mary couldn't believe it! She just could not believe it! When things are going wrong, people are supposed to help each other! She tried to knock on few more friends' doors, but she always got the same answer. Obviously, the only thing to do was to go back home.

Again, she had to face the same problem, which was to take this road between these two tanks! As she approached, she heard the same loud frightening sound: the two tanks were shooting at each other! She stopped, staring at them, wondering what to do. She couldn't stay in the street; she had to make a quick decision and she thought, "Okay, Mary, you can do it! Just look right in front of you and drive as fast as you can!" As she went through, she was shaking like crazy, not knowing if she would still be alive a few seconds later. She closed her eyes, stepped on the gas, and suddenly thought: "Girl, you'd better keep your eyes open if you want to make it safely!" So she opened them and looked straight in front of her, driving as fast as she was able. The noise of the shooting on both sides filled her head, and her only thought was, "You're going to die, you're going to die--no, you're not going to die, you can make it, you can make it, you have to make it!" At the same time, she prayed, "Lord, I am only twenty, I want to live, I want to fall in love, get married and have children. After all, I didn't do anything wrong, I am kind to these people, I love them, I respect them. Lord, help me to make it safe to my house. I want to see my parents again, my brother and sister. Lord, please help me to do it!"

Her way back wasn't as quiet. People were shooting everywhere, tanks were crushing bicycles, bushes, kids toys, and also a few people on their way; she saw people falling on the ground, yelling and bleeding, children running, going up in the trees to hide.

She finally arrived home--safely. Her father was in the garden, smiling as usual, but when he saw Mary's face so livid, and the way she was shaking, he ran to her, stopped the motorbike, slowly pried her hands off the handlebar, and carried her in his arms into the safe and cool living room. He laid her on the couch and said, "What happened?"

"They...they...they ki...ll...ed the...ppppresident!"

He didn't smile anymore. "What?"

"They killed the president. There are tanks everywhere, shooting everyone. Dad, they are crazy!"

"Are you okay? Did you get hurt? How did you come back home? Why didn't you go to one of your friends' houses? Let me get you something to drink--something strong!"

He filled half a glass of his best brandy, added some coke and ice--her favored drink--and gave it to her as he sat on the couch and took her in his arms. "Now you can cry as much as you want. When you'll feel better, you'll explain me what's going on."

She cried a long time, feeling the fear, the stress, the anger and the incomprehension going away from her. She felt secure in her father's arms, like nothing bad could happen to her anymore as long as she would stay there. She finally calmed down and started to talk; she explained everything that happened.

When she stopped talking, he said, "I am so glad your Mom is already in France, she couldn't handle this. Let me get Phil and Lise (her eight-year-old brother and her seven-year-old sister). They are playing at the neighbor's house. I want them to stay with us all the time from now on--but don't tell them what happened, they are too small, they wouldn't understand. Close all the doors and the windows and fix us something to eat. I'll be right back."

The evening was hot! No fresh air was coming from outside, and the heat of the candles (the soldiers had shut down the electricity) made it even hotter, and even though her father tried to tell funny stories and played with her brother and sister, the fear was there. They could touch it, smell it, as the noise of the shots

outside came closer. They finally went to bed; Dad in the middle and his children around him. They didn't want to be alone; they were too scared.

They didn't sleep much that night. It was like a nightmare, but when the sun came up the nightmare didn't stop. They knew they couldn't stay much longer in the country they loved. They had to find a way to get out if they wanted to save their lives! While they had breakfast, they listened to the news and heard that the cardinal had been killed. The soldiers broke his legs and his arms, and they buried him alive! Mary didn't understand why they did this to him. He was such a nice and gentleman. What had happened to these people? As a missionary, her father was very concerned: "We will go tomorrow to his funeral—the four of us! I am not afraid of them, they don't scare me and they will never scare me!"

The next day, they went to the cardinal's funeral. About 20,000 people were there, all wearing white clothes, which looked whiter on their black skins under this shiny hot sun. They were all singing and dancing. The women who were mourners were crying, rolling themselves in the dust and tearing up their clothes. Everybody wanted to honor him one last time.

One after another, each person passed in front of him with a flower, a shell, or whatever they liked, and left it on the coffin. When it was Mary's turn, she looked at the cardinal's face, thinking that it would be awful to see him after what he suffered. But how come he had such a peaceful look, almost smiling? Now she was sure; she knew he wasn't alone while he was tortured. God had been with him, suffering with him.

It was a long, very long day. The next morning, the president was buried. Mary's Dad wanted to go to this funeral too. So they all went, but it was a rainy day and there were only 5,000 people present. What a difference between these two funerals! The first one was bright and full of emotion, a reflection of love and regret; the second one was dark and quickly done, a reflection of indifference.

They went back home and tried to spend the rest of the afternoon the best way they could. Mary started to draw, Phil played with his cars, and Lise read stories to her dolls. Mary's dad found something to fix and everything was quiet, but it was like everybody was expecting something that didn't come. It finally came. They heard a tank coming. All of them stopped breathing. They heard the noise their broken fence made when the tank drove over it. A Jeep was following the tank and came into the garden, rolling over their mom's beautiful flowers.

The soldiers jumped out of their vehicles. Each of them was holding a submachine gun. They impatiently knocked on the door. Mary's father sent the kids to their bedroom, but Mary didn't want to leave. She wanted to know what was next; she wanted to face the problem. Her Dad opened the door, facing the black soldiers, and the major yelled at him very nervously.

"You must leave the country. You have twenty-four hours to get ready. I'll leave some of my men for the night to make sure that you won't run away. We know the white missionaries killed our president. We don't want you here anymore, go back to your country. We hate you!"

He turned back and left. Mary's dad closed the door and looked at his daughter. "Well, we'd better get ready; we don't have much time!"

He tried to hide his tears behind his smile, but she took him in her arms and said, "Now it's your turn to cry as much as you need."

He cried a long time, holding his daughter tightly, asking, "Why, why, why?"

They put Phil and Lise to bed, started to check what they could take with them, and found out they should leave most of their stuff. Mary said good-bye to her dolls, her books, her souvenirs, the room she'd decorated herself in the colors she loved the most, dark blue and light peach, the furniture she'd painted herself, the cover and the pillows she had sewn. Her Dad said good-bye to his tools and his wife's garden, already destroyed by the soldier. He thought of the Christians at his church and wished he could at least say good-bye to them, but...

Early in the morning, Mary and her dad woke up the children, gave them a cool shower-it was already hot-and fixed a good breakfast. They ate silently: they didn't feel like talking anyway. They didn't clean up the table or wash the dishes. After all, as soon as they left this house, everything would be broken or burned!

They could hear the soldiers laughing outside of the house, burping because of too much beer. Most of them were drunk, and it was scary. Trying to ignore them, Mary's dad took Phil and Lise on his lap and said, "Today we're going to take a plane to go back to France." Phil was already very excited; he loved planes and always wanted to go to one. Because he had been born in Africa, his dream had not yet come true. "You will see Mom," Dad said. Then Lise started to be very excited. She was very close to her Mom and missed her a lot. "You will also meet your grandparents you don't know yet, and your uncles, your aunts, your cousins. It's going to be a lot of fun!"

He talked to them for a long time, explaining how France was; about spring, fall and winter, that they would have to wear warm clothes and shoes all the time. They didn't like this last part, being used to wearing shorts and walking in bare feet all day long. At the same time, Mary was staring at the six suitcases she and her Dad had prepared during the night. In these six suitcases were their whole lives, their memories, and the most precious things they could take with them back to France. Is it possible to put a lifetime into six suitcases?

Their fear came back as the Jeeps stopped at the front door. The major opened the door and yelled at them to hurry. In a few minutes the six suitcases went from the house to the Jeeps and the whole family sat close to each other. No need to close the door this time.

Mary wanted to sit next to her father, but a soldier ordered her to sit in the back and he sat next to her. He was so close she could smell the sour of his sweat. On one hand, he held his submachine-gun, and he put his other hand on her lap. She could hardly breathe. Her father felt her fear, although he sat in the front seat and couldn't see anything. He turned around, stared at the guy the entire trip and held her hand. As they were leaving, they could hear the soldiers still at the house laughing, and making dirty jokes about them.

They arrived at the airport and what a surprise! All the Christians from their church were there. They looked at them with tears in their eyes. They wanted to come and hold the family, but the soldiers didn't allow them. All around were white people and kids crying. Some white men were arguing with the soldiers, eyes full of anger and hate. Some of them were in pajamas and had no suitcases; they were barefoot, and they looked so lost. Mary guessed they were somehow lucky with their six suitcases.

It was time to get on the plane. The soldiers pushed all of them with their guns. As they were leaving the airport, Mary and her Dad heard a good-bye song coming from the side where the Christians were standing. This song said they would always be in their thoughts and in their prayers. It was like a sweet balm to their bleeding hearts. After all, some people loved them in this country! As they sat in the airplane, they knew everything was going to be all right. It would take some time to forget about all of this. It would take awhile before they would stop crying every time they could look at pictures or movies from Africa, but they knew one day they would be all right, because they wanted to.

No, I am not the same anymore. I am not the Mary who arrived and grew up in Africa. The person I am today knows that people can be mean and dangerous. I don't believe in the human justice anymore, and I don't trust people anymore in the same naive way. The ones that came with guns were the ones I saw every day on my way to my job; we had laughed and joked, so what had happened? They didn't need much; only one man telling them the missionaries had killed the president. They didn't try to find out if it was true or not; they just needed an excuse to let their anger and their hate come out. However, I also learned a lot. I learned not to hate them for what they did. I learned that even though some were mean, some others were very kind and still are. I know they could have been white or yellow or even green; it's not the color of their skin that made them bad; it's just the evil that is in all mankind. I still love these people, and I would love to see some of them again, but I don't think that will happen.

This essay was written for English 101, Composition I  
Instructor: Tara Prince-Hughes

*Instructor's comments*

Mary Getaz wrote this essay in response to an English 101 assignment that asked her to report on a significant event that she'd experienced or witnessed. When I read her initial draft, I raced through it, then reread it. I was stunned by its depth and honesty, as well as by Mary's ability to report the events she suffered so long ago in vivid detail. I also was struck by the essay's emotional control; the assignment asked students to convey their feelings about their experience through their language, and Mary used flashback, dialogue, and description to do just that. The biggest challenge Mary faced in revising this essay, I thought, was to clarify the initial time shift from her opening scene in Geneva, Switzerland, watching a recent Brazzaville revolution on TV, to the revolution she witnessed in Africa as a very young woman. One of her most innovative stylistic strategies is her shift in point of view; to mark the radical difference between her past and present selves, Mary uses first person to talk about her current feelings, but uses a third-person narrator to discuss the events in Africa. The distance between her youthful outlook and her mature perspective is the subject of her conclusion. In this way, the essay's style reflects and supports its content.

## Nothing Learned

*Ron Simoneau*

Although the day wasn't muggy, it was bordering on hot when the navy-gray bus turned onto the street. This was not really a street as most people would think, but more a long driveway that led right up to the entrance of a main building painted in light blue that had more than a hint of gray. "Welcome," said the sign, to the Florida State Reformatory for Boys at Lake Okeechobee, Florida. Driving through the gate that was no more than a sign hanging over the road, I smiled, thinking that although I didn't know how long I was to stay it would be easy leaving. This was no big deal.

All of us boys stepped off the bus and the first thing I noticed was that all the buildings were single story with flat roofs painted with the same blue touched with gray. The buildings spread out in all directions with wide green fields dividing one from the other. It was a very pretty sight, and so peaceful looking. As the other boys and I stood in line facing toward the east, to the south was a very long building with small windows. At the very end, a little piece of it stuck out as if it had been added as an afterthought. I stood in line a few minutes before I noticed that I was the youngest boy in the bunch, at twelve years old. I would soon learn that twelve was the youngest they let in here, although there were exceptions. We did have one thing in common, though: the older boys thought of younger boys as just kids. In a place like this, being considered as no more than a little kid was not good.

Soon a man came out and informed us that he was the supervisor of this facility and, with his chest puffed up, he announced, "This is the newest campus in the state."

So ... , I thought, perking up while he explained that although there were no fences I could not escape. He explained, "On one side is the only highway around and it leads into the local town, while on the other three sides you won't find anything but endless miles of swamp. Should anyone try and escape through the swamp, most likely you will be caught, or you will get lost, or you might just disappear for good."

I never believed anything an adult told me. After all, they were all self-serving liars--although I never did test my luck. The stories I heard from the other kids quickly changed my mind. Years later I learned that it was nearly one hundred miles through the swamps--no wonder no one ever came out. I often wondered why no one asked what happened to all those missing boys. Before I left I got part of an answer: This place didn't need to answer to anyone; the 1960s was a time when a poor family's inquires about their son went unanswered.

Soon I was settled into what was called a cottage. Each cottage had two cottage fathers; one for the day and one for the night. These two men were *like* day and night. The daytime man and his family lived on one end of the cottage; he was in charge of all other cottage fathers. Being my usual obstinate self, I soon became his target when he stole my candy out of my locker in order to give it to his own kids. I reported him. "Never learn," that's me. I should have known adults stick together. Those in the main office told him what I'd said. Well, that did it. No one had ever dared question him, until now. First thing would be extra time in a pushup position, then no outside activities, and, as if that was not enough, I had to scrub the red tile floors in the shower room on my hands and knees every night until the day I was released seven months later. I am willing to bet, even to this day, that we had the cleanest bathroom on campus. I often peeked out the door at the other boys while they played volleyball, but not once was I ever allowed to join. God, how I hated that man. He was your typical overweight Southern redneck, but I never complained about anything after that. Here in this place he was like a god.

The night cottage father was a plump, happy, black man who let me sit up with him and just talk. We had to be very quiet, or he would get into deep trouble. Now, I didn't have much use for adults, but he was like a calming hand on my soul, and I listened to everything he said. Back then listening was not one of those



things I did well, yet this man had a heart of gold and, aside from the other boys' horror stories of the swamp, was the main reason I didn't run away. Candy was the only thing allowed from the outside and was worth its weight in gold, and he'd replace whatever candy the daytime father stole, and even helped me hide mine.

I'll give the reformatory credit for this much: they did have a training program, so that when each boy was released he had some usable skills. I got to work on the farm crew. I guess they forgot that a twelve-year-old boy was unemployable; even back then there were laws against child labor. We produced most of our own food. When I arrived I must have started the biggest run of bad luck possible because the farm crew leader was the best friend of my day cottage: if I hated my cottage father, I hated his friend even worst. Under his heavy hands, I learned how to harvest okra, carrots, turnips, sweet potatoes, and sugarcane. It was quite an operation, and I can still see the long rows of carrots which I'd transplanted one carrot at a time. I remember how the rows looked, as though they were half a mile long when, in fact, they were only about three hundred feet. There were tractors here, but they were used mostly to turn the fields, uproot the sweet potatoes, and deliver the food to the cafeteria. Everything else was done by hand. After all, they did have all of this free "slave labor." I learned how to lift fifty- and one-hundred-pound crates. This put a little meat on me, which was good. I'd been very sick as a child and was skinny and underweight.

A dirt road ran from the barn out into the fields and I would push a wheelbarrow full of vegetables, like turnips, along the half-to-two-mile stretch, taking them load by load to the barn for cleaning. One day, when it started raining, the supervisor sent us in with what we had, and, as usual, the other boys got the tractor while I got the wheelbarrow. However, this time he stayed behind instead of riding on the tractor with the other guys, and I was going to find out why. The rain had turned the road into a muddy path, sucking at the wheel, causing me to struggle for each step I took, while he came up from behind, yelling, "Run with it, you lazy piece of shit!" Then he took a two-by-four and began beating me over the head, making me run all the way back to the barn. After that I didn't hate him. I was just scared to death of him.

On another occasion he loaded me up in the truck with two older boys and headed into the fields, where the cattle and horses grazed. No one was talking, and I did not feel like talking either, so it was a very quiet ride. We drove right past all of these fields, past the cattle and horses, and on out to the palmetto groves that

bordered the swamp. We got out of the truck and followed him into the woods. The older boys kept looking back at me with the strangest looks; as if gauging what I was going to do. The farmer began explaining about the palmetto trees, and how we could cut them open and eat the very heart of them. They were very tender. The trees themselves were only about two feet tall and grew in star-like clusters. This made getting at them easy. But today there was something about the farmer that didn't seem right, but I couldn't put my finger on it.

One thing I did notice: he was being very friendly, almost fatherly. There was something wrong here: I could feel my skin begin to crawl up my back as the farmer looked at me out of the corner of his eye while he talked. Moving off to the side, the other boys tried to look busy. They were doing a real bad job of it. It was as if they, too, were waiting for something to happen. As I glanced at the machete the farmer held in his hand, my heart began to sink. Fear began to swallow me up. Fighting to control myself, I acted as dumb as I could. Was he trying to get me to run? If I was never found, no one would ask about me. In that moment I realized how easily I could just disappear, and nothing would ever be done. But he wouldn't do anything with these two boys here, would he? I was worried. Kids disappeared here; not that long before a boy disappeared right out of his bed in the middle of the night. They said he was released, but no one had heard of a release like that. My mind had drifted away when I realized he was talking to me, "Here! Take a closer look at this palm. See the white center inside?" His voice sounded so calm. I wanted to run so badly, but that would be all he'd need for an excuse. Just as I started to lean forward, there was the sound of another truck pulling up and the driver's voice broke the silence.

"Hey! The boys are wanted back to the cottages," he shouted, a godsend. I was still too scared to say much of anything as we loaded back onto the truck. It was then that I realized that we seemed to have come out here for no reason. I will never forget the feeling that my time was up. I do not know if it was just my imagination, or if my life had almost come to an end. One thing I am aware of though, was that if he had been planning something, I just used up one big chunk of luck. He remained my biggest fear until I left.

During my stay I received some letters from my dad. This was unexpected; I hadn't seen my dad for about two years. He'd fled the state because of some bad checks he'd written to support his drinking, and my family had been happy to see him go. Since the day I was born he'd brought only sorrow and misery to our

family. The mere fact that I looked like him had given others in the family a place to focus their anger and frustration. He just didn't evoke any happy thoughts. In his letters he told me how he'd been found in an alley in Washington D.C. and how he was dying. He wanted to tell me how sorry he was for everything he'd done.

Well! I thought at first. So you think that all you have to do is say I'm sorry and everything is just okay?

I wanted to write back and tell him how, ever since I was four years old, he'd done nothing but make my life a living hell. But that isn't what I wrote. Instead I wrote him that life was tough, and that I felt very alone. I didn't tell him about any details of this place because they read all incoming and outgoing mail. "Yes, Mom will take me back," I wrote; but to myself I knew that the family would lose no sleep if I never came back. He wrote me three letters in all, and I responded to two. They were the longest letters I had ever written, and would stay the longest for another ten years. I never saw or heard from him again. Those letters were as close as I ever got to him. He died of emphysema in a veteran's hospital, and only his sisters went to his funeral. To this day the thing that sticks in my mind is that I was the only one to say, "I forgive you." Even my mom just can't forgive him. Ironically, here in this place where I first learned to hate someone, it would be the last time I felt hate for someone too. To harbor ill will towards another human being was just not in me.

Although education was a part of the state program, I'm not sure how important it really was to the reformatory. The only class assignment I was asked to do was to take a book and write word for word, just as it was written in the book. I did it, too, but if you were to ask me what the book was about, I couldn't tell you one thing. I still believe it was the dumbest thing anyone ever asked me to do. That was the sum total of my education for that year.

My real education unfortunately occurred in a one of the administration buildings near the front entrance of the school. All of the buildings had some sort of name, even if it was just called the cafeteria. But the building near the front entrance, however, with its little "L" shaped wing, had no name. What it lacked in name, though, was more than made up by reputation: no one wanted to obtain any actual experiences.

One morning I was sitting in the back of one of those navy-gray pickup trucks with all the other boys who worked on the farm. I was sitting by the tailgate,

looking toward the building the supervisor had just entered. While waiting for the supervisor to return, one of the guys decided to throw a "blanket party." Now a blanket party here was not anything like what most people imagine, but a way to render someone helpless while everyone else hits him. When this kid tried to throw the blanket over me, I had turned around just in time to see him. I threw up my hands, caught the blanket, and, instead, threw it over him. I was giving him a few well-placed blows on his head and back when the supervisor came walking out. Fighting was a major offense and had only one punishment: you paid the building with the wooden box a visit. In no time we were at the main office, and although I tried to explain what happened, it was all in vain. With the help of the supervisor I ended up being the only one to go.

At the door to this nameless building we waited until about three or four other men showed up. They opened the door and we walked in, but I could not have told anyone what that first look revealed, for a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach overwhelmed me. Off to the left I was led, where I got my first good look at this little "L" room. It offered more than enough room for all these men and me to fit in, and was empty, except for a thin mattress about four inches thick on a concrete and tile bed frame. It appeared that one man was in charge here.

"Remove all your clothes," he ordered. Other instructions were given, but I wasn't listening. My eyes and mind were now on that two-and-a-half-foot long and three-quarter-inch thick razor strap. Mechanically I removed my cloths until I was naked. Every boy had heard stories of that strap, and some said it had holes in it, and still others claimed it had coins in it. At least it did not have the silver dollars everyone talked about. My mind had been so fixed on that belt that I failed to hear what he was saying. *What was it he'd said about being still?* I lay down on the bed and put my hands straight out in front. One man grabbed hold of them and pulled them tight while another man held my legs tightly. My heart sank when I turned and saw the man in charge lift the strap way above his head and then slam it down on me. Screaming, my body jerked this way, then that, in a futile effort to break free. My mind had become equally chaotic. This continued for what felt like eternity and my mind began shouting to me. "What did he say?"

I yelled out loud "Okay, okay " over and over until he paused. I was once again told what to do, but this time I heard every word.

"You are not to make any sound, not even a whimper, and you must stay perfectly still and your body must not be stiff," he said in a dry tone.

I knew just what to do, for I had been *here* before. Things like this had been happening to me ever since I was four, and some were nastier than this. I let all feeling slide away and embraced the cold empty fingers of "Nothing," my old friend. Now I would not feel anything--not pain, love, hope, or any kind of caring. All feelings were pushed aside. The beating passed quickly after that, and I was taken into another room where my cuts were all dressed and I was given a robe to wear.

Walking down the hall I'd failed to notice earlier, I could see a long hall about fifteen feet wide and, off to each side, heavy metal doors with slats about chest high in them. They were for passing food trays in and out of the tiny rooms beyond. Leading me into one of the room, he told me, "No sounds are allowed whatsoever." There were no exceptions: my failure to comply would mean a second visit to the back room.

My new room was eight by eight with a little window too high up to see out, and had another one of those concrete-beds on which was a Bible. A metal and sink toilet were on the opposite wall. Each day I was up at six in the morning, then had to make the bed, and then stand and wait until breakfast arrived--when they checked to see if the bed was made right. Then I could sit on it to eat my breakfast. Throughout the long day all I could do was sit in silence or stand pacing back and forth. Lights out was at eight at night, and once a week I was allowed out to shower. After two weeks I was allowed to return to my cottage. For the remainder of my stay at this place I held onto the cold dead feelings of my friend Nothing.

Later I named that place "the building with the wooden box." And later I found out that far too many boys had entered that building only to come out in a box, but this was not the only boys' school to have this happening. There was another state school in the northern part of Florida, and less than a year after I was released from this one, I would spend two more years of my life there before being released. The incidence of deaths at both of these schools occurred almost weekly and only ended when someone began to take notice. I often wonder if any of those men ever went to jail, but I doubt it. Like myself, many of the inmates came from very poor families who were not able to do anything about what happened in these schools. One year after I left Okeechobee Boys School it was closed without explanation.

When it came time to leave, all I could think about was having a cigarette. There was no joy at going home, for home and this place seemed too much alike to me, each in its own way. But the day came for me to return home and, as I stood waiting for the bus, I knew there was someone I would miss: that kindly black gentleman who risked a great deal just talking to me. It is he that I measure a true friend by even to this day. Getting on the bus, I walked to my seat, and as the bus began to leave, I looked back and shrugged my shoulders, nothing learned.

This essay was written for English 100, Introduction to Academic Writing  
Instructor: Jane Frankenfeld

*Writer's comments*

When I was assigned this narrative essay in English 101 I was not sure how personal it should be; I would not speak to anyone, including my wife, of my childhood. I decided on this one particular short period because I believed it was the least painful, with a clear beginning and ending. I wanted the story to be from a twelve-year-old's point of view, so I had to look back as close as possible to the feelings at the time. Those feelings were much closer than I thought, and I found myself actually crying as I wrote each line. I was shocked! Not knowing how to explain this behavior, I finished writing it during three and six a.m., lest someone should see me. In the end, I found myself writing this essay as much as for me as the class assignment. Enabling me to share thoughts that a few years ago I would never think, never mind speak.

*Instructor's comment's*

In this narrative essay assignment, I encouraged students to write about some way in which they overcame adversity and changed their lives for the better. For many, having walked through fire and survived is an accomplishment in itself. To write about that ordeal is often liberating for one's writing as well as one's spirit, as is certainly true in Ron Simoneau's case. In dealing with the difficult challenge of confronting his past, Ron's writing suddenly advanced in all areas. Teachers can only open doors; students must choose to pass through them. Ron did.

## English Language Program

### My Father

*Nozar Nozartash*

My father Sarrash was born fifty-three years ago in Tehran, Iran. He finished basic education and high school in Tehran. He traveled to London, England to continue his education. When he came back to Iran, he had two master's degrees in economics and science, and he was twenty-eight years old. He started to work hard, and after a few years, he established a big factory. In the same year he married my mother, and the next year, 1976, I came to the world; two years later my brother, Nojan, came to the world. In those years our family was very happy. My father was a successful and rich man who loved his small family.

Two or three years later, the revolution happened. The revolutionary government took everything - our factory, house and land. Finally they sent my parents to jail because they were Bahai. At that time, I was five years old and my brother was four. My dad's parents took care of me and Nojan that year.

After three months, my mom was released from jail. Nojan and I were very happy to see our mom. We went to the hospital to visit our mom because, after jail, she was confined to bed in a hospital by my father's parents. When we visited her, we didn't know her. She seemed almost twenty years older. My God, our mom had mental problems. (Several years later, my father told me our mom had gotten sick because her father was killed in front of her eyes.) The doctors said she needed to go to a European country for medical treatment. My grandparents decided to send her to Paris; she left Iran for Paris when I was seven years old, and I did not see her until last year when I came to the US.

Six months later my father was released from jail. He came back home, but his body was very weak. He had had a heart attack in jail, and also his ribs, his teeth, and his feet had been broken by jail personnel. They also pulled out his nails. After a few months' rest, he started to work again, but harder, because he wanted to earn everything that he had lost before. My father worked hard during the day, but when he came home every night, he called us. "Hey, Nozar, Nojan, come here and show your dad what you did in school today." After looking carefully at our homework, he sent us to bed. Then he started to cook the meal for our lunch the next day. He did that for twelve years. He never married after our Mom. He just loved me and Nojan and spent his life on us. He was everything for us: dad, mom, friend. After a few years working, he established a ceramic factory, but the next year the government took that away. My father didn't give up; he started to work again.

During those twelve years, I had one worry, and that was losing my father. (I don't know how I can write about my feelings during those years in English.) Everyday, I saw that my father was suffering from his weak heart. I prayed every night for him. I was just wanting from God that my father would stay alive to be with us. And I promised myself that if my father died I would kill myself to be with him in the other world. That was a part of my feeling at that time.

One night after I finished high school, my dad told me, "Nozar, son, you have two ways you can go in your life. One, you can go into the army, and after two years when you come out, you will need to get married and work until you die. Two, you can go to the US and continue your education; after four or five years, when you finish your education, you will be a useful person for others, and I can be proud of you." I understood that my father wanted me to choose the second way. I didn't want to leave him because I loved him, and also because he was old and needed my help, but I saw that he would be happy if I chose the second way. I told him the next week, "Okay, Dad, I will go to the U.S." He got very happy, and I was happy from his happiness, but in the last part of my heart I was upset to leave him.

I traveled through Turkey, Greece, Armenia, and Pakistan, and my travel took two years. I finally arrived in the US, and I started to work hard and study harder because I wanted to finish my education as soon as possible and go back to Iran and show my dad that "I did your wish, Dad, and now you can be proud of me." I thought that I could return just a little part of his kindness to me,



but...but...but...I lost my everything in the world two weeks ago. My dad went to the sky, to paradise. I can't believe that I can't hear his voice on the phone or read his letters and have his advice anymore. Two weeks ago I wanted to fulfil my promise because I couldn't forgive myself for leaving my father. I don't know, I thought maybe I could do something for him, but I received a letter from him two days before his going. He wrote, "Nozar, I want you to give me a promise that if I die, you will continue your studying harder than before and also bring your brother to the US and let him study the subject that he wants. Be a nice husband to your wife." He stopped me from killing myself by this letter.

His memory and his love are always in each cell of my body. I am just doing his wishes, and I count the seconds until... He was and is and will be the greatest dad in the world.

This essay was written for English Language Program 73, Composition IV  
Instructor: Courtenay Chadwell-Gatz

*Writer's comments*

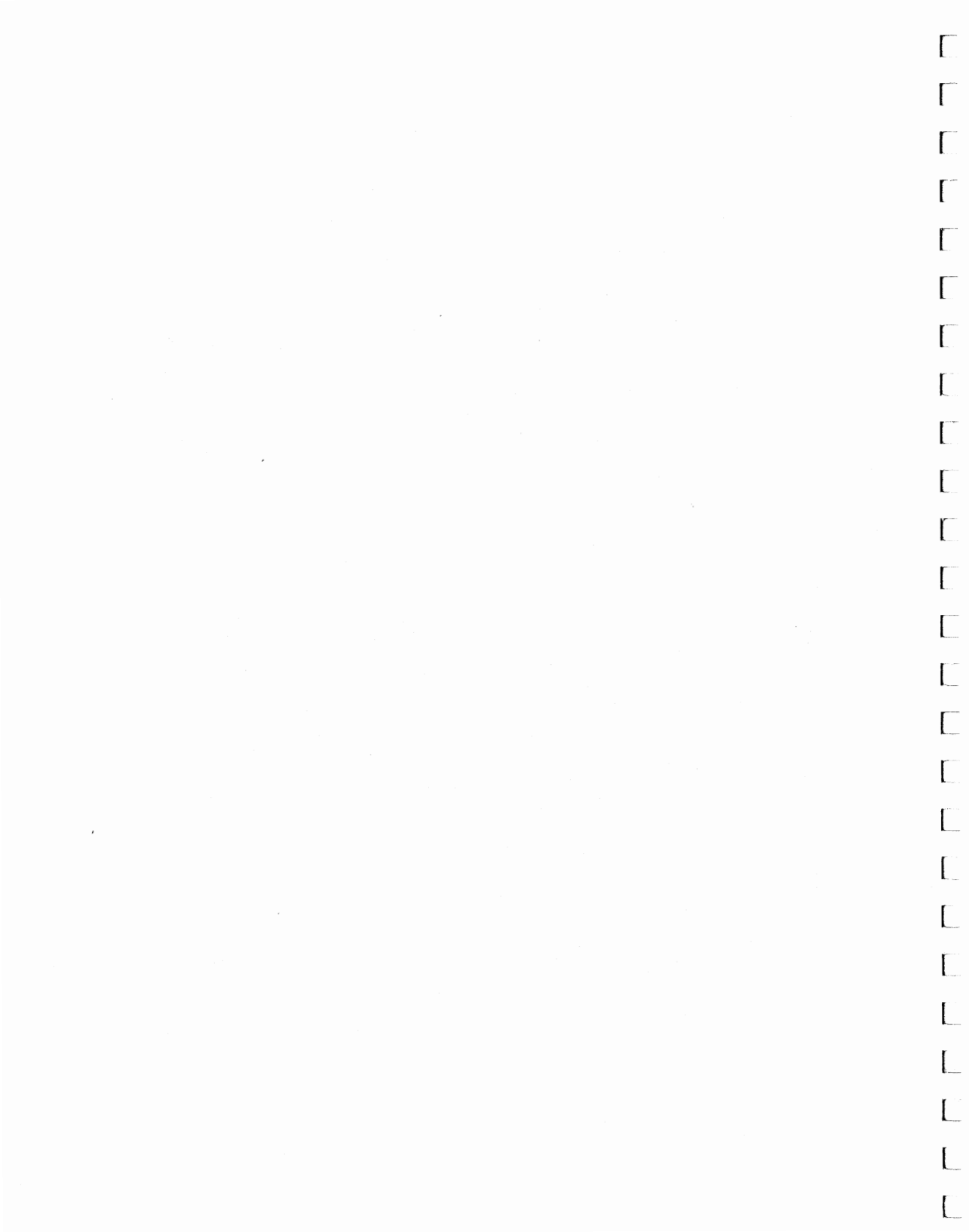
I wrote this essay because my dear father passed away one week before the date of this journal assignment, and I was very sorry because I was not close to him in the last days.

*Instructor's comments*

Sometimes I assign a topic for students to address in their journals. At other times, I ask them to write about whatever they want. These "open topic" journal entries allow me to find out what's going on in my students lives: their problems as well as their positive experiences. Students share feelings in their journals that they would find difficult talking about, and the journal allows us to connect on a more personal level. Nozar used this appropriately to write about his father.



Kate Davies  
*Caged*  
Mixed media  
16" x 20"



## Haunted By Names

Barbara J. Boothby

*I am haunted by names: thousands of names carved in stone, jumbled in the cemetery outside a synagogue in Eastern Europe. Those names haunt me, but the names arranged in neat lines on the walls inside of the same building haunt me even more. . . .*

My husband and I visited Prague one November close to Thanksgiving. Milan had been chilly and damp; Vienna crisp with a crusted layer of snow. There was no snow in Prague, but the city was shrouded in a blanket of deep cold that seemed to come up from the ground and lie pressed against the chilled earth by skies heavy with yellow coal smoke.

The names of the places our train had passed suffered from a paucity of vowels—at least in the numbers I was raised to believe were necessary to form actual words. Odd accents and curlicues appeared above some of the letters on the signboards announcing our arrival in each tired-looking town. Brno. Svetla (upside down caret over the “e”). Havlickuv Brod (upside down caret over the “c,” little circle over the “u”). Prague—littered with billboards, street signs, and the names of businesses—was an alphabet soup. To my untrained eye, though, the oddly accented Roman alphabet used in Eastern Europe—even with all its exotic additions—was still far more familiar than the Hebrew I was to encounter in the city of Prague; the Hebrew Aleph-Bet, formed of strange brush strokes, elegant and foreign.

We visited a section of Prague called the Jewish Quarter. It is a place of paradox. When Adolf Hitler systematically exterminated the Jews, he stole their

belongings with the idea of turning Prague's ghetto into the "Museum of the Extinct Race." He gathered the treasures carefully and left the synagogues in Prague virtually untouched while the rest of Europe's synagogues were smashed, burned, destroyed, turned into warehouses. The greatest paradox of all is this: because Hitler was busy collecting items for his museum, the Prague ghetto was saved from the ravages of the Nazis. When the war was over and Hitler was the one who was exterminated, many beautiful and sacred objects that would otherwise have been destroyed were saved for the future generations to consider in the synagogues that became the Jewish Quarter's museums.

On the edge of Prague's Jewish Quarter is the Pinkas Synagogue. Behind it is the Old Jewish Cemetery. Rambling over about half an acre, its boundaries are marked by the straight, soaring sides of buildings, and a zigging, zagging stone fence threading its crumbling way around the perimeter. In this graveyard there are 12,000 tombstones carved in Hebrew and Roman scripts. The oldest stone dates from 1439. Until burials in this tiny cemetery ceased 350 years after that, over 100,000 people had been buried there. Layer after layer of earth was brought in as the burial ground filled with bodies. Existing graves had been covered, and new earth rose up to create more space. Today, the ancient gravestones tumble over humps of earth and tree roots, and stand stacked almost one on top of another like cards hastily jumbled into a Rolodex. The cemetery is pregnant with human and natural history; it overflows with hills of earth, trees, grass and names.

Traditionally, the Jews believe the body should be buried. Convention holds that the corpus is needed for the day the Messiah comes and all are resurrected. Many modern Jews object to cremation for its association with the Holocaust ovens. The bodies of over 100,000 Jews still exist in that cemetery, bathed and shrouded as tradition requires. Carefully, properly buried, they wait.

The Pinkas Synagogue is no longer used for services but serves instead as a museum. It is a beautiful old building with arches and plaster walls. Its vast sanctuary is empty of objects but for a simple, many-armed candelabra. In the center of the sanctuary is the raised bima with its bare pulpit. There is no Ark, no Torah scrolls. The airy balcony where the women would have worshiped is also empty.

What the synagogue is full of are names: the names of 77,297 people who disappeared from Czechoslovakia during the Nazi campaigns. In one-inch high lettering, thousands upon thousands of names are written. Line after line. Name

after name. One after another. By village, by family, by date of disappearance—floor to ceiling, on every wall in every room. Children, parents, old and young, the names progress around and around the building, covering every single inch of the vast plaster walls. This mute memorial to what was a thriving Jewish society is echoed from the walls as a quiet, recorded voice slowly speaks the name of every person inscribed in the lines of script encircling those rooms.

The people are ash. They have no gravestones. Their bodies no longer exist for the time of the resurrection.

I toured this place with my husband, a Jew whose family witnessed World War II from the relative safety of Cairo. Three generations before the War, his father's family had gone to Egypt from Eastern Europe—Romania—and it is possible that there is a branch of the family tree growing in Czechoslovakia. He and I moved separately through the rooms of the Pinkas Synagogue, each of us caught in a personal thrall at what we were seeing. He paused often to blankly stare at an invisible point just in front of his eyes.

The circling ribbons of names on the walls dazed me. I lost my head for a moment and I thought brightly, "Let's see if we can find any Leboviches!" I started to cross the room to search for my husband's relatives. Mid-stride, I stopped—still as the stones outside the building—as I became aware of the shocking lack of regard I was showing for this place and its names. All around me people searched the walls for the names of loved ones. Tears overflowed their eyes as they moved methodically along the walls of the room and, in the midst of all this sorrow, I had skipped off looking for some sort of Disneyland-esque, it's-a-small-world-after-all connection to my husband's past. I thought, "Hey! *They* are here, and *we* are here, too!"

Sobered, I began my own search of the walls, but those names bore down on me with more weight than I could endure, and I had to step away. We did find some Lebovic's (little smile over the "c") listed there, and it is possible that they are relatives, but who will ever be able to tell us? Not any of those people whose names are written on the walls.

I wonder: Do the people who search and find the names they are looking for in the lines of script on the walls find succor? And what of those who seek but never find? Is there ever an end to their search, or are they forced to sift elsewhere for a tiny bit of evidence to verify the existence of someone gone to ash,

anonymous and naked, when something so simple as a name is missing from a wall?

There are lines and lines and lines of names on the walls of the rooms—the forgotten, remembered, lost and found. They gyre in my mind, those names and names and names.

I am haunted by those names.

This essay was written for English 201, Advanced Composition  
Instructor: Sherri Winans

*Writer's comments*

When Sherri gave this assignment, we had been discussing the writer's voice, and I had identified mine as a wild mix—in essence, a combination of quaint colloquialisms, and ten-dollar words, like my own speech patterns. When I finished this essay, I was surprised to discover that it had a level, measured and restrained tone: so unlike my speaking voice! It was extraordinary to find this very deliberate-sounding person living in my head. I also discovered that good writers are not necessarily born that way. The secrets of word manipulation that result in more engaging and powerful writing were being taught to me in that class. For the first time ever, I “consciously” made specific changes in my writing. I found out that it is possible for “anyone” to learn to be a good writer.

*Instructor's comments*

Barbara Boothby wrote “Haunted by Names” for English 201, Advanced Composition, a class that focuses on writing style and language usage in American culture, in academia, and in the students' work. The reading material for this assignment is found in a chapter called “Names and Naming” in one of our texts, *Language Awareness*, and includes Edite Cunha's “Talking in the New Land” and Louise Erdrich's “The Names of Women.” Here is a short passage from Erdrich's piece:

The history of the woodland Anishinabe—decimated by disease, fighting Plains Indian tribes to the west and squeezed by European settlers to the east—is much like most other Native American stories, a confusion

of loss, a tale of absences, of a culture that was blown apart and changed so radically in such a short time that only the names survive.

And yet, those names.

The names of the first women whose existence is recorded on the rolls of the Turtle Mountain Reservation, in 1892, reveal as much as we can ever recapture of their personalities, complex natures, and relationships. These names tell stories, or half stories, if only we listen closely. (208)

Barbara's essay is a response to this passage and other readings on the topic. It exceeds expectations for the outcomes addressed by this assignment, among them that students will "apply reading material to their own experiences," "apply critical thinking skills to what is read," "engage the imagination to explore new possibilities," and "apply [knowledge] to increase their understanding of themselves and to expand their abilities." Barbara wrote and rewrote this essay, receiving much feedback from her peers. We were both quite pleased with the final product, a reflective personal essay on a topic of interest to the academic community.



Love and Fear: An Argument  
Against Machiavelli's Concept of Power  
*Katie Chapman*

Webster's dictionary defines power as a "great ability to do, act, or affect strongly; vigor; force; strength." One can clearly deduce from this definition that power is a concept defined by someone's or something's actions. From ancient times to the present, power has remained a controversial topic. In the past century, the world has witnessed many deeply effective uses of power. Adolph Hitler used power through fear and effectively massacred millions of Jews. Mahatma Gandhi, on the other hand, used a power through love and succeeded in uniting the oppressed to peacefully gain their independence. In classical literature, many authors have written on power and the most effective way to implement it. In his excerpt, "On the Qualities of the Prince," Niccolo Machiavelli argues that fear is the greatest tool a leader can use to maintain his power. Both Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Martin Luther King, however, argue against this power in favor of a greater one—that power implemented through love.

In his excerpt, "On the Qualities of the Prince," Machiavelli appears to make a sound argument for using power through fear. Upon a closer examination of the text, though, one finds that his writing invalidates the opposing views without genuinely considering them. In the opening paragraph of the section dealing with cruelty and mercy, Machiavelli states that "Cesare Borgia was considered cruel; nonetheless, his cruelty . . . brought order to Romagna . . ." (41).

One may think that Machiavelli's example supports power through fear. However, the author has failed to mention whether any other factors or conditions helped to bring about this order. In his clever way, Machiavelli is able to slide around the issue by refuting opposing views prematurely. The author's use of these questionable methods only weakens his argument for power through fear.

To further support his argument, Machiavelli states that the great general Hannibal successfully united his army only because he employed an "inhuman cruelty"(42). While his example might appear to be valid, Machiavelli failed to concede that other great military leaders successfully united their armies by employing benevolence. The founder of the Islamic religion, Muhammad, treated his followers with a high level of respect and kindness. Because of this, Muhammad successfully united the Bedouin tribes of the Arabian Peninsula to form a powerful Islamic nation. Today, five centuries later, Muhammad's legacy lives on. One-seventh of the current global population consists of Islamic believers. While Machiavelli mentions Hannibal, a leader who employed cruelty to effect temporary gains, he fails to mention Muhammad, a leader who employed humanity to effect a permanent change.

As one can see, Machiavelli's writing does not show the entire picture. While power through fear is a strong force, Machiavelli has painted it in a light that only discredits its effectiveness. Rousseau and King's arguments, however, are much more valid because both authors are careful to mention opposing viewpoints. Through their use of these concessions, both Rousseau and King are able to refute the opposition and clearly illuminate the truer and greater power of love.

From the very beginning of "The Origins of Civil Society," Jean-Jacques Rousseau builds a strong argument for the force of love. To do this, the author carefully examines the opposing views of two well-known men. First, Rousseau mentions that Grotius, a famous lawyer, "denies that political power is ever exercised in the interests of the governed and quotes the institution of slavery in support of his contention"(56). The author further states that Hobbes, a well-known philosopher, ". . . is in agreement with [Grotius]"(56). According to Rousseau, "force made the first slaves. . ."(57). The author implies that a negative power—one that sought to instill fear in the oppressed—created the institution of slavery. As one can see, Rousseau constructs a valid argument by first mentioning the opposition's main point and then cleverly refuting it.

In the section titled, "That We Must Always Go Back to an Original Compact," Jean-Jacques Rousseau makes an interesting reference to such leaders as Alexander the Great. The author states that an "individual may conquer half the world, but he is still an individual"(62). Alexander the Great, like many leaders, united people through despotism; yet his empire crumbled as soon as he died. Rousseau argues that people bound by fear will revolt when certain conditions appear. However, as the author explains in the next section, people bound by love will unite to form a greater, lasting power. As Rousseau logically points out, if one gives his own strength to the group, he is actually gaining the "exact equivalent of what [he] lose[s], as well as an added power to conserve what [he] already [has]"(64). The author further explains in the section titled, "On the Civil State," that an individual experiences enlightenment when he obeys through love and not fear. The force of love will lead one to place a greater value on what he has gained, whereas, the power of fear causes one to despise his enforced "freedom." Unlike Machiavelli, Rousseau presents a sound argument through his use of opposing viewpoints and detailed explanations. Like Rousseau, Martin Luther King also presents a valid argument for the power of love.

In his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Martin Luther King points out that the nonviolent method is the only method that will bring justice for the Negro people. Even when violent riots were breaking out like an epidemic across the United States, King continued to emphasize the need for civil disobedience. Because of his perseverance, King was able to unite the oppressed in a victorious nonviolent movement to help eliminate much of the widespread, blatant prejudice. As president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, King had the power and influence to lead a violent movement. Yet, despite police brutalities, bombings, and numerous injustices, King continued to preach that power fueled by love is greater than power fueled by hate. The success of the civil rights movement is largely due to this man's continuous support for the power of love.

In his letter, King addresses fellow clergymen's complaints about his movement. One complaint that King refutes is that his actions are "extreme"(162). King points out that his movement is actually between two extremes and goes on to state that he has found "the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest"(163). Unlike Machiavelli, King is careful to logically reason why he believes as he does. To answer the ministers' complaint that his actions are

untimely, King lists several reasonable explanations as to why the Negro people cannot wait any longer. The author maintains that the black community has "waited for more than 340 years for [their] constitutional and God-given rights," and that they have witnessed violent acts by "vicious mobs" and "hate-filled policemen"(157). Unlike Machiavelli, King makes many concessions to the opposition's views. In his justification for direct action, King first concedes that the ministers are "quite right in calling for negotiation"(156). Like Rousseau, King uses these rhetorical methods to build a sound argument.

As one can see, both Rousseau and King successfully show that power through love is a greater force than power through fear. It is the binding power of love that compels a group to work toward one common goal and to achieve that goal. Unlike power by force that only brings destruction, power by love is an unanimous pact that brings stability and peace. Most importantly, history has shown, from Mahatma Gandhi to Martin Luther King, that the goal of peace is attainable only through love.

This essay was written for English 102, Composition II  
Instructor: Jennifer Bullis

*Writer's comments*

The familiar adage, "Third times the charm," certainly applies to my writing process on this particular essay. For some reason, I had an extremely exasperating time trying to find the perfect thesis statement that would allow me to develop a solid critical analysis essay. On my second attempt, however, I hit on the idea of writing about the power of love versus the power of fear. As soon as the idea stuck me, the exasperating experience turned into an enlightening one. And so, it was with this exciting idea in mind that I wrote my third, and thankfully final, essay!

*Instructor's comments*

In this essay, Katie Chapman synthesizes philosophies of Rousseau and King to construct a powerful critique of Machiavelli's program for governing. To reinforce her argument, she provides strong historical examples countering some of Machiavelli's. In addition, Katie analyzes successful rhetorical strategies employed by Rousseau and King in order to demonstrate flaws in logic that undermine the persuasiveness of Machiavelli's writing. Katie's attention to all of these factors results in an essay that is effective and sophisticated in its content, structure, and style.

## One World

*Aaron Westgate*

Ominous clouds are beginning to boil over the mountain's ridge in front of me. To the west, the sun is creeping towards the horizon, casting beautiful auburn hues across the haphazardly cultivated valley of central Ecuador. There is an ever-present burning in my lungs as I struggle to keep pace behind Rosa and Luis, my new mother and brother for the next month, who are obviously acclimated to the high altitude. Having only been in the country for a few days, every experience that I'm having is excitingly new, an overwhelming change from my posh life in America. I've been told that we are attending a fiesta for Rosa's maid, an indigenous Incan woman whom I've met once before. The ethnic group that she belongs to is notoriously poverty stricken, her family receiving a monthly governmental stipend of four dollars and struggling to vend dirty vegetables and penny candy on the streets. We've been walking for nearly an hour along a severely potholed road that wanders up the mountainside. As we near the house, my stomach begins to feel unsettled. I'm not sure if it's nervousness or the remarkably tough chicken that I had been served before we left. I don't feel quite prepared for this experience, but, as I told myself before embarking on this five-week whirlwind of adventure, I will strive to fully appreciate and learn from every experience.

I follow Rosa and Luis as they turn into the driveway and I begin to take in the surroundings. A shallow, hand dug ditch surrounds the land, lined with a single strand of corroded barbed wire fence. An emaciated goat is wandering aimlessly along the trench, nibbling at tufts of dead grass. As I let my eyes wander, I see what I'm assuming is the house. Perhaps twenty-five feet on each side, it is

shoddily constructed of cheap brick, crumbling along the corners and roof. One side had begun to be plastered, but now the thin white layer is flaking off in large chunks. I see only one small window, inconspicuously located in the upper corner. Out of nowhere, two skinny dogs with matted hair race by me, snarling at each other.

A young girl wearing a fancy white dress comes trotting out of the door, warmly greeting us with a smile stretched across her face. Her name is Tania, and Rosa informs me that the party is to celebrate her "Primer Commencion," apparently a rite of passage into the church when a child turns twelve. She smiles warmly at me and then grasps Rosa's hand, leading her into the house. My eyes meet with Luis', and he laughs. Tugging at my pant leg, he happily says, "Sigueme, sigueme," pulling me behind him.

The inside of the house is in no better condition than the weathered outside. Chips and divots are pockmarked across the walls and the dirty white paint is peeling in numerous places, revealing a previous coat of stained yellow. The floor is rough cement, small piles of dirt and dust scattered everywhere, gravel and plastic wrappers collected in the corners. We step out of the narrow entry hall and into the main room, where my eyes are quickly overwhelmed by the scene that lies in front of me. Seated in chairs around the perimeter of the room are perhaps twenty-five Incan men and women, who simultaneously swivel their heads to gaze at my unexpected pale face. Rosa's maid, Charito, stands and welcomes us, then introduces me to everyone. I smile as sincerely as I can amidst my anxiety and warmly say, "Hola, mucho gusto." Everyone's smiles grow wider as they chuckle, looking at each other nodding, then all eyes refocus on me, waiting for what, I do not know. Charito leads us to a small table in the corner and tells us that she will bring us food. I smile less than half heartedly, as my stomach is already full of questionable meat and I'm not exactly excited to eat anything from this less than sanitary house. Turning my head, I see that many eyes are unabashedly probing me. I smile at everyone, noticing in particular an elderly man with dark, leathery skin and scattered gray hair. The remaining yellow stained teeth that he has are jutting out of his gums at jagged angles. Behind this worn face, his bold ivory eyes are brilliantly gleaming back at mine. Just as I realize that I'm staring, he laughs to himself and looks away. A genuine smile spreads across my face and my spirits are slightly lifted.

Just as quickly, my smile fades as a bowl is set in front of me. Four tennis-

ball size potatoes are partially submerged in a thin, translucent broth with unrecognizable vegetables floating on the surface. Crowning the dish is the twisted foot of a bird, roughly cut through the leg, claws frozen in its dying agony, as if grasping for its killer. Again I find myself staring and look up at Charito, grinning bleakly as I politely thank her. Similar dishes are served to Rosa and Luis, but being the honored guest, I'm the only one to receive the delicacy of a mangled foot. I watch Luis dive into his bowl, his hands submerged in broth as he tears meat from the bone. My focus grimly returns to my meal and I cautiously pick up the crooked spoon. Timidly, I take a small bite and smile, a strong salty flavor but definitely edible. I manage to rip a piece of stringy meat off of the foot and laboriously chew the rubber-like flesh for minutes. After I eat as much as my aching belly will allow, I slide the bowl to the side and smile at Charito.

In the opposite corner, I see a boy turn on a small radio with a dented speaker grill. A scratchy salsa rhythm flows into the room, and immediately people rise to their feet. I can't help but laugh with delight as I watch these people, old and young, shuffling their feet to the moving beat. Charito tugs at my wrist, trying in vain to get me dancing. I tell her that I will in a little while, and she disappears to the kitchen. After a few seconds, she returns with a bottle of potato vodka and a plastic Dixie cup, a large smile on her face. As she fills the cup and hands it to me, Rosa laughs and tells her to pour some back in the bottle. I tilt the cup back and everyone in the room bursts into a laughter of approval. Charito begins to make rounds, serving everyone drinks out of the communal cup.

She returns to me twice, giving me just enough to burn my throat but not loosen any inhibitions. Finally, she coaxes me onto the dance floor and I awkwardly move my feet to the fast tempo. Slowly, I'm starting to feel the beat and begin to feel slightly more comfortable. Luis is still sitting at the table, stuffing his mouth with stale candy and laughing at my dancing. I feel as if a great weight has been lifted from me and I grin as I look around. A couple in their early twenties dances slowly to the rhythm, their bodies pressed closely together. Tania is dancing with her younger sister, hand in hand, swinging in circles with the cadence, giggling without a care in the world. The old man with bright eyes is dancing with a woman half his age, his lips spread in an excited smile. He looks at me and winks.

As time passes, my legs begin to grow heavy and the party starts to die down. The young couple is the first to leave, amorous hints sparkling in their eyes.



Night has fallen without my noticing, and we head off for our moonlit walk home. Along the way, Luis spouts off a steady commentary on the evening, pausing between giggles to mock my Americanized salsa dancing. His words float by me, however, as I reflect on this cross-cultural experience that I have just survived—but much more so, enjoyed. Preconceived notions of these poverty-stricken people have vanished and I feel a great sense of humanity as I think of their happy faces. In spite of potentially overwhelming destitution, the human spirit lives on, stronger than ever. As I glance up at the sparkling stars of the southern sky, a confident smile appears on my face.

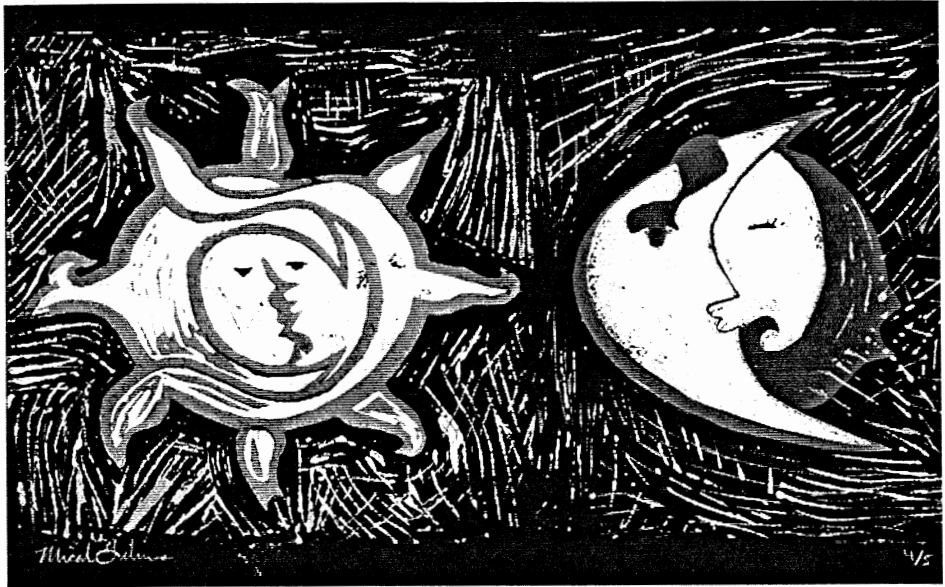
This essay was written for English 101, Composition I  
Instructor: Susan Lonac

*Writer's comments*

This was the first assignment in the class, and my first experience with a college paper. I had spent the past summer in Ecuador, so the topic that I chose was certainly on my mind. I spent several days exploring different angles of approach in my head, and when I decided to write about this experience, the thoughts started flowing freely. It was actually quite an enjoyable experience to write this piece, as I would simply close my eyes for a moment and think of the details that made this cross cultural experience so incredible. From there, it was simply a matter of getting my thoughts onto the page. I feel very fortunate to have written this paper, as it truly captures the subtle memories that would otherwise fade away.

*Instructor's comments*

Aaron wrote "One World" in response to an English 101 assignment that asked students to report on a significant scene or event of their choice. The demands of reportorial writing are complex: The writer has to communicate both on the level of the senses—conveying the subject matter in vivid detail—and on the level of significance—interpreting the meaning of what's observed. Careful, thoughtful writers will also try to capture the spirit of what's observed in their own fresh and individual language, a challenge which Aaron met quite ably. The result is a compelling recreation of a remarkable experience.



Micah L. Gilman  
*Untitled*  
Linocut, 9.5" x 16"

