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115 Vernon: The Writing Associates Journal, Vol.1, No.1

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115 VERNON

THE WRITING ASSOCIATES
JOURNAL

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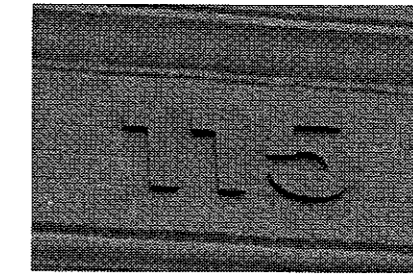


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News and Notes of the Writing Center

The Head Tutors would like to welcome all the new Writing Associates who will be joining the Writing Center community next fall. The new Associates are:

Taryn Allen, '04
Sharre Brooks, '06
David Brown, '06
Jamie Calabrese, '05
Chris Elias, '06
Alison Eno, '06
Simira Freeman, '05
Isaac Goldstein, '05
Edna Guerrasio, '05
Ibrahim Jabbour, '06
Kate Kane, '06
Syre Khan, '06
Kirk Quinsland, '04
Brienne Tangney, '04
Mark Witt, '05

And as we welcome our new Associates, we must also say goodbye and thank you to our departing senior Associates. Thank you so much for your continued presence in the Writing Center, and best of luck in future endeavors.

It has been a great year at the Writing Center, with the high numbers in the fall and this new journal coming into being. Thanks so much to everyone who was a part of it. We hope you will remember the Writing Associate experience as one of fulfillment and inspiration, and be proud of the gifts you gave to others during your time here.

There are a few changes coming up next fall; Dr. Wall will be the instructor of the new Associates class, and we have a new Head Tutor coming in as well: Kate Sullivan, '04 will be joining Dorothy Francoeur in the Head Tutor position. Under their leadership, the Center will continue to grow - in ways geared toward enhancing our shared identity as a writing community and as peer tutors.

Best wishes to all, Erica and Dorothy, Head Tutors

Thoughts on Writing

A senior came into the Writing Center the other day concerned about the clarity of her paper. I don't usually see seniors come into the Center, so I was a little surprised, but her request sounded typical. Before I could begin reading, she explained that during the previous semester she was studying at Trinity's campus in San Francisco, where the majority of her work was creative writing. This was the first analytical assignment she had been given since returning to Trinity; she felt as if she could only write in "song lyrics." She said to me, "Please look it over and mark anything you find wrong. I'm still trying to get my writing back."

"Still trying to get my writing back"? Her comment made me wonder, can one really lose his or her ability to write and then regain it again? Is writing really like driving a car or playing a card game, where you never really lose the ability, but it has to be fine-tuned after it has been given up for a while? And if the work she did in San Francisco was not exactly "writing," then what was it? Can true writing really only be analytical?

Her habit of using one specific style of writing reminded me of my semester away at American University's Washington Semester Journalism program. On the first day my journalism professor told us that for the rest of the semester she was going to train us to "write": to infuse other people's quotes in every paragraph of our writing, usually at the beginning, and to prevent us from analyzing each point we made in our work. In short, our own opinions were meaningless in her course. I was shocked, scared, and confused all at the same time. This was "writing"? She wanted me to give up the analytical writing that my gracious Trinity professors had spent so much of their energy and time encouraging me to do.

Throughout the semester I became increasingly dissatisfied with my trivial work. I learned that journalism is not a glamorous job; it is one in which people are trained to write in the same style on the same topics, like machines. As a journalist you are not valued for your personal opinions, but for your ability to conform to the writing style that is asked of you; a journalist is certainly not an author. A journalist goes through the motions of gathering bits of information and putting it together in a conventional form. We were told to start out with a lead to set the scene and pull the reader in, and we had to always end that paragraph with a direct quote. This was followed by the nut graf, or the point on which the story is framed. Every other paragraph following had to include one or two direct quotes. The fact that I sat in a class for an entire semester among 25 other students all hoping to be trained the same way in journalistic "writing" attests to its worthlessness.

That experience proved to me that the senior tutee was right. It is possible to temporarily "lose" the ability to write analytically if one does not practice often enough. Furthermore, writing can be improved and polished throughout one's entire lifetime. It is a skill analogous to playing golf or tennis. One who practices frequently enough can produce amazing work.

The true meaning of writing is what I learned to do at Trinity College. Writing is an active experience, not one in which one passively puts information together in a standard format. A writer is a part of his or her work. The ultimate satisfaction I get out of writing is to be able to express that the original thoughts I use are actually my own. The most rewarding part of writing is the analysis, where I get to explain my reasoning and argue my points. There are multiple styles of writing, including creative and journalistic, but for me, the real meaning of "writing" is analytical writing.

By Maggie Kagan

ENTROPY

en•tro•py \ 'en•trepē,-pi\ n -ES [ISV ⁴en- + -trophy]

4: the ultimate state reached in the degradation of the matter and energy of the universe : state of inert uniformity of component elements : absence of form, pattern, hierarchy, or differentiation

Entropy is the general trend of the universe toward death and disorder.
—J. R. Newman

Here I sit. Lie. Stand. I. Here I. I amongst four walls. No. Six walls. No. Three. A door and three walls. Two floors. No one. A ceiling. Padded. The walls. The floor. Three padded walls. One padded door. A padded floor. A rock sky. The ceiling holds me in. A stone ceiling. Solid rock. Concrete chunks. I cannot pass through rock. The guard peeps. A tiny observation slit peers. At me. Here I. I seem me. Seem. But I fill the room. Here I. Not content here. Everywhere I. Not content to I. Just here. Without I. Here and everywhere.

Without I, I digress. Seven days for my total disorder, without I. Transcending expanding heating sharing, my energy. The I believes, referencing always the I. I am positive being, around I is nothing. I dream of other positive beings, positively being. Social orders stroke the I, as seen by I. There are no positive beings, positively not. There are positives, because of the negatives. Negative being makes positive intelligible, though I does not see. Being is co-dependent, negative and positive. Ether air space nothingness, my being. Being itself, vibrating in harmony. Positive bounces off of negative, the slap confirming existence. Reflective co-dependent signification, alluding to I both negatively and positively. The danger lies of course in the eye of the I grasping the allusion to I. For what is an illusion to make of itself and what right has it to make? Rights opposite from wrong and affirmed as entitlements are the illusory realities of an I; the eye arrests illusions and allusions taking them naively to be confirmation of truth. Truth is nothing but a semi-truth given half truth by a real semiotic allusion. But what right have illusory eyes to even purport real truth—about I? In grasping the allusions and illusion of all that is I the I can will its own annihilation.

But it is this expansion of I that I cannot see for what evidence is there against its subsequent retraction back into an I in which the transcendent metaphysical leaps towards the order of disorder just leaped are completely forgotten leaving that ignorant naive I alone in a padded room with no mind and nothing to show for its momentous loss compelled into mingling with negative being in every corner of the room for if thermodynamics demands the I be diffused into the room's ether then it must also cement those accomplishments in a narrative and not let them wear away like the delusion of eyes just come off an ether binge but disorder now houses the I warming Zarathustra by its fire drying away moisture from baths in Fluß River washing away the padding and then too the walls sky floor door.

By Sean Hojnacki

Baby, You're the Write Kind of Wrong

Country singers, sometimes, sing about country music. They sing about being from the country, about singing country music, about being from the country and singing country music, about being from the country and failing to be a singer of country music. Country music likes to tell stories—about heartbreak and love, youth and innocence, about good old country boys and girls back on the farm and the simple life. Country music and country singers like to talk about where they come from. Writers—novelists, poets, journalists—do this as well. They write about writing. They write about the writing life, about how they write, about why they write, about why writing is important. They publish books about writing. They give lectures about writing. It is their passion and their work and the thing that makes them who they are—they live it, and so they must talk about it and write about it.

I have done this before myself, and I have always failed abysmally. I like to talk about my writing and I love to write about my writing. It is one of my favorite pastimes, perhaps because it makes me feel important. In doing so, I have inflated writing into something it is not: magical, supernatural, spontaneously born from within, divine. While it may be so for others—others more gifted than

myself—it is not so for me. It is impulse, this is true. It is also something I feel I have to do in order to be a whole and functioning person—if I did not write I would go a little crazy from the compression of ideas in my head—but it is something else as well. The more I write, the older I get, the more I understand this simple truth: writing is hard.

It is not hard to write badly. It is easy to slap a sentence on the page and another one after that, with little consideration of beauty and flow or appreciation for words. It is easy to bang out a paper with disinterest and detachment. It is easy to sit down with the intention to write, and to write well about the things we love and think and care about. It is hard, however, to live up to the expectations we set for ourselves when we do so. We want to be the people we idolize—in my case, the novelists I have admired and emulated since I was nine years old, even in thought—and we want to write what will make others feel the same exhilaration we find just in turning the page. That type of writing is a promise, a commitment, a long and arduous process that—if we truly love words—will pay off in the end simply because we love to write.

**"TAKE ELOQUENCE AND WRING
ITS NECK"** —Paul Verlaine, *L'art Poétique*

The path to a good piece of writing is difficult and exhausting, but ultimately, fulfilling. To hold a piece of work, see its bulk, feel the slickness of the print, smell the new-paper smell, know that *this is mine*, is to be satisfied. Writing is hard, but it is worth it. It is worth the long, long moments spent in front of the blank

screen, worth the calluses and the dents we find in our fingers from gripping the pen too tightly, worth the sighs and the frustration. I am content when I am writing, even when I want to pelt things at my computer screen or tear pages from my notebooks. Things make sense to me when I write—I make sense when I write. I don't see myself as a writer—not quite yet. I am stubborn and insecure and stupid and silly and superficial and I write because I want to be better. Writing is a growth process. It is in this way, perhaps, that writing really becomes something magical, something divine, because it changes me. Writing is hard, but it is worth it: it makes me more complete.

We talk about writing because we love it. It is, I suspect, the same reason country singers like to sing about being country singers: it's an exclusive club that not everyone gets to share in.

I can tell there's something you don't wanna tell me
It's killing you 'cause the words are hard to find
I know you want to break it to me gently
Well sweet baby say what's on your mind
--Dixie Chicks

Country singers love being country singers. Their work helps define who they are. Writers are not entirely different. They write for the sheer love of the craft. Perhaps we are born writers, but we have to work at our craft as surely as anyone else. And it is worth it, because eventually, we may call ourselves writers. We live and talk and write about our passion because it is the thing that makes us who we are.

By Erica Martinson

Often you must turn your stylus to erase, if you hope to write anything worth a second reading.

--Horace, *Satires*

I write for the same reason I breathe—because if I did not, I would die

--Issac Asimov

Writing is a form of therapy; sometimes I wonder how all those who do not write, compose, or paint can manage to escape the madness, melancholia, the panic, fear which is inherent in a human situation

--Graham Greene

Some Thoughts On Diversity...

The most certain test by which we judge whether a country is really free is the amount of security enjoyed by minorities --Lord Acton, *The History of Freedom in Antiquity*

What kind of world are we living in? Certainly, there are as many answers to this question as there are people. However, I think life at Trinity is an indicator of some of the problems we now face. Where to start? How about a perennial favorite, diversity?

Identity. Whether we like it or not, as individuals, we have an identity. Part of this identity is self-defined and another part of it is defined by others. Let me use myself as an example. I define myself as white, male, upper-middle class, homosexual, intellectual, and introverted among other things. Here I have covered gender, race, class and sexual orientation. Although these identities do not constitute the sum of my being, it would be foolish to deny their influence on that creation. Yet others do not always define me in these ways. They may accept one (or many) of the above identifiers, yet not accept the difference these identifiers convey. To me, this is the definition of the nasty ism's, be it racism, sexism, or homophobia.

In order to be racist, one must accept race as a construct while simultaneously rejecting its resulting constructions. That is, if we lived in a color-blind society, there could not be

racism. In order to truly accept non-majority identities, more than the term itself must be acknowledged. Here is where things get difficult. White skin is not black skin, male is not female, and heterosexual is not homosexual. A conceptual binary requires two, if not opposing, then dissimilarly defined forces. Let's reel this in now.

At Trinity, I see something very dangerous going on. Many people claim to accept non-white races and non-hetero-normative sexualities by ignoring the differences these groups represent. Although I do not wish to define either of these communities by one set of standards, it is safe to say that there is some fundamental difference that sets them apart. The danger in ignoring difference is that it can be welcomed as long as it does not assert itself as equally valid as the norm. This is the massive tokenization process which constantly occurs at Trinity.

Yet there are those (the minority within the minority) who refuse to be quiet. We flaunt out identity, we talk about it in front of others, we are in your face. Conveniently, for these students, there are outlets, such as the multicultural affairs council, and all the beautiful houses along Vernon and

Crescent streets. Our visibility forces us into communities of identity that subsequently appear hostile to both similar members who do not wish such visibility, along with the general population. The end result is a vicious system of segregation at Trinity. The general student body accepts minorities as long as they are not too minority, and the rest create identity-based communities that appear hostile to those unwilling to commit themselves to such an extent.

So who wins in this situation? Well, it seems that everybody wins and nobody wins. Majority students can claim to know minority students and thus claim to be diverse. Minority students can mix within and without, and claim likewise. And lastly, the hard-core group can claim both a space and a community of their own. But what of the flip side? Do most majority students really know their minority friends? Do they accept and discuss what it means to be different, or are these difficult questions ignored? Also, does the hard-core group isolate itself through the creation of its own, highly-polarized space? These questions are not unique to Trinity.

Look at the problems that religion is posing to our world order. When we are bound economically and able to communicate effortlessly, how do we deal with fundamental social difference? How do we achieve a 'one world' alliance when we live by different, and often directly opposing means?

I am calling for a new realism. A realism that accepts that Islam will not

be Judaism will not be Christianity. A realism that accepts that black people are different from Asians are different from whites. I am not calling for a new racist order, instead I am calling for an acceptance of both signifier and signified. Superficial titles aside, true diversity and multiculturalism demands an acceptance of fundamental lifestyle alternatives, both in thought and deed. The realization that our reality is not universal is the true goal which gets lost among the many terms and tags. When we get to this epiphany, and it is indeed an epiphany, our desire for honest integration will expand tremendously.

On whom does the burden lie? Although ideally the majority students would change their ways and accept a realism of difference, to wait for this change is foolish. We must be forthright and unashamed about our identities, and we must do all within our power to both give and receive the meanings of our and others' identities. I want to know that my friends are different from myself and I want to know that members of my community think differently than I do. If I can't accept this, I can never both believe in myself and have a likewise faith in others.

Translate this I to we, and we become accepting and independent. This is the only new world order we can afford, and if we can not create it in our microcosm of Trinity, then I fear that the 'one world' of tomorrow which we are being sold will consist of an intimate ignorance that is bound to explode.

By Matt Barison

Musings on Memorials

When I was a little girl living in New Milford, CT., the Memorial Day Parade was a big event. Anyone in town who felt like waving a flag was welcome to march. We had the Brownies and Boy Scouts, all dressed in starched and stiff uniforms, accompanied by harried den mothers. There were fife and drum bands from all over the state, some wearing Revolutionary War garb, others clad in the dark blue of Union Soldiers. Horses with braided manes and tails carried riders dressed up in Western clothes. The animals vied for space with bicycle riders, wheels adorned with woven red, white, and blue pinwheels and playing cards clipped on for the clickity-clack sound effects. The more prestigious members of our community rode in automobiles. The first selectman and his family led the parade in a somber black vehicle. My girlfriend Carol's father drove his blue Cadillac convertible emblazoned with a banner advertising his car dealership. Another, enormous red car wreathed in crepe paper streamers, bore Miss New Milford, who waved a slender, white-gloved hand at the crowd.

Then there were the real soldiers, like my Uncle Howard. At the end of May, every year, he took his WWII sergeant's uniform out of mothballs, brushed it off, polished his medals, and made ready to carry the enormous American flag. Along with three other men representing the Navy, Marines, and Air Force, Uncle Howard, the Army man, drew great cheers as he marched tall and straight, the red stripes and white on blue stars of the flag billowing around him like the robes of Lady Liberty herself. Behind him, units of sober-faced men in khaki marched in perfect time, left-right, and left-right, up, down, and around the Town Green. The WAVES, WACS, and VFW elders walked more slowly, but just as proudly. Throngs of people eating popcorn, carrying mini-flags and rattles lined the streets. As each contingency passed, they cheered. The waves of noise swept up and over our small town, carrying the sentiments of gratitude to our fighting men and women for their sacrifices.

After the speeches in front of the Town Hall, the parade continued to the Cemetery, where the Marines waited. Spectators packed the tiny roads that criss-crossed over and around soft rolls of earth where the dead lay buried. Flags marked the graves of men who died in service; this was their moment. As the Marines hoisted their guns, in white-gloved hands, to their shoulders, a hush spread over the multitudes. The rifles pointed into the wild, blue skies and fired. Crack! Crack! Crack! A long moment passed. The incessant buzzing of insects had stopped. The air was still and smelled of gun smoke. At last, a lone bugler stood up, lifted his golden instrument to his lips, and played *Taps*. As the slow, mournful strain poured out into the air, handkerchiefs appeared, some white and frilly, some plain and dark blue. Eyes were down cast, remembering loved ones who had never returned from foreign shores. I remember the hot tears dripping from my little-girl eyes as I stood tall, with tiny flag in hand, at the cemetery commemorations for the fallen soldiers.

From the perspective of someone born in the fifties, it seems as if America has always been a commemorative culture. In my small town alone, we had a statue of Lincoln, a WWII army tank parked right on the Town Green, a Washington monument, and several stone plaques listing the honored dead from both world wars. Each was carefully tended, and flowers regularly replaced every spring. It was the way we recognized and remembered the past, and how those memories served as a larger-than-life reminder of things worth living and dying for. As a child, I loved Memorial Day with its varied forms of celebration, sentiment, and spectacle. To this day, I remember the pride on the faces of my family members as Uncle Howard marched. Back then, being patriotic was easy. As a grown-up, things are not as red, white, and blue.

By Dorothy Francoeur

THE LETTER

Dear Loverduck, Right now I am sitting on top of your duffel bag. I hope there is nothing breakable in it. Don't forget to send me a picture of Betty the Boa! Or how about some of her skin when she sheds? By the way the unpolished side of Karen's necklace is the wrong side and should be worn next to the neck. We went through 6 bottles of champagne and ate a whole Greenberg's chocolate cake. It was terribly civilized and gluttonous. He's spending 33,000 dollars on the bathroom. Sauna, Jacuzzi marble, brass, mirror (I'm pushing for the silk rug) it's going to be quite a bathroom. For the first time, I realized his overabundant cocktail fetish and how it tends to stifle conversation. Some people got married in the church today. Tacky wedding. Dad said, "Congratulations on becoming twenty-one. I wish that I could announce to you that this meant you were coming into a large trust fund, but such is unfortunately not the case, so this token of my affections will have to do." It didn't really faze me when you told me about the freshman you slept with. **The only thing that will be hard for me is adjusting to your satisfaction with mediocrity. It's perfectly fine, but I just have to get used to it.** I can't wait to tell you about my traumas this past weekend. I ate green noodles and cream of wheat and watched the tube. I'm sitting in the pub right now after having a disgusting chicken dinner and a delicious apple turnover dessert. I'm sitting alone and I am very unhappy. Don't think about me. I'll probably get sun poisoning and scarred by a barracuda...lost beauty. **Mom picked me up and asked me how my sex life was.** Maggie has a big cast on now and her foot is black and blue. She's so cute and everyone is making a big fuss over her. Ruth wants to paint the cast psycho colors. I don't know why I can't accept you the way you are, but it is genetically in my character and I can't do anything about it. What is it that lets me manipulate things to my favor? Is it love? I see you as a manipulative victim with absolutely no self-esteem. I want desperately to see the light. All the Valentine's cards were about sex and they weren't even funny. I tried to wrap myself in brown paper, but when they weighed me at the post office, I broke the scale. I would have made a pretty sexy valentine card if you ask me. **I made it to the rink this afternoon looking like Janis Joplin tripping.** In our drunken stupor, we had a pervert party and created "Smegma Man." By the way all my zits are long since gone. I was very tense for about 150 miles while the car was in the process of breaking down. **The phone rang this morning but I missed it.** Maine is in a fog and unfortunately it is not just a cloud of marijaharija-juanija smoke. It is plain old fog and I can't see more than ten feet ahead. The Beast is sad because we keep leaving her, but she is frolicking outside these days and growing like weed - too bad she isn't weed. *But I'd really love to have you. I think I might be getting my period that week, oops.* I've been too damn busy to even pick my nose this week. Mom said, "Yes, I like him." That's all, very simple. No excessive compliments, only Gregory Peck gets those and no around the bush criticisms which she used to do with my sister's boyfriends. She added, "he's adorable." **Your ever-lovin' Vicki -- Ooops, I mean Jane.**

By Diana Potter

Confession #9

When I speak to my doctor, she is rushed. She listens only with her clinical mind. I look at her red lips and silently wish for her to kiss me. A small intimacy that asks nothing in return. With her cold scope, she listens to my breathing. My body relaxes as her fingers close over my throat, palpating glands. I am so love-starved that my doctor's caress is all that I know of comfort anymore. When she brings me Vioxx samples for my arthritis and tells me I am lucky today, I express gratitude from the vast stretch of distance between us. Her eyes blink myopically; she thinks I am right there in front of her. I do not bother to explain. She does not love me.

When I speak to my professor friend, over dinner, he talks about hating his Sicilian mother. Then he complains about his lady friend. She never gives him enough space. They have been together for three years. Do you love her? No. But she loves me.

Deep into my sea scallops, I dare to ask about the condominium he promised to me years before the lady friend intruded. Grandly, he offers to rent it to me - when the other tenant leaves. Outside, the weather is warm for October so we walk over to Barnes and Noble to look at books I cannot afford to buy. He drives me home in

his little red truck. We could never love each other.

When I speak to my ex-husband, he talks about his ex-wife, who has chosen to reunite with *her* ex-husband. Angry and dejected, he calls me to complain. Sometimes, he visits me because he thinks I need company. On these occasions, I watch his lips move but cannot hear his words.

Today, I tell him I think I am dying. He wants to know what I will do about it. I remain silent. He shrugs and begins talking about his ex-wife again. He pulls the remote control out of my hand and turns on *Charmed*. It is about Wiccans, he instructs me. Mesmerized by the pink glitter lamp I found on a shelf in a K-Mart closeout sale, I doze while sitting up. I am grateful when he pulls on his red parka and brushes a closed mouth against mine. I do not feel it; I only know because his bearded face, magnified within my short field of vision, momentarily stops my breath. Oh. I realize I could never love him.

The next afternoon, I go to a grocery store where I buy two gallons of Breyer's Natural Vanilla ice cream and a box of chocolate Entenmann's donuts for good measure. The next day it is snowing. Hard. We are having a blizzard. This makes me happy and I eat all day in celebration.

By Dorothy Francoeur

A girl stood before
him in midstream, alone
and still, gazing out to sea. She
seemed like one whom magic had changed
into the likeness of a strange and
beautiful seabird. Her long slender bare
legs were delicate as a crane's and pure
save where an emerald trail of seaweed
had fashioned itself as a sign up
on the flesh. Her thighs, fuller and
soft-hued as ivory, were bared
almost to the hips.

In asking forgiveness of women for our mythologizing of their bodies, for being unreal about them, we can only appeal to their own sexuality, which is different but not basically different, perhaps, from our own. For women, too, there is Love is the flower of life, and blossoms must be that tangle of supplication, unexpected and without law, and on and possessiveness, that descent must be plucked toward infantile undifferentiation, that omnipotent helplessness, that merger with the cosmic mother warmth, that flushed pulse quickened leap into overestimation, projection general mix-up.
Updike - John

If anything is sacred, brief hour of its duration, the human body. - D. H. Lawrence
The law of god, as quite plainly expressed in woman's construction, is this: There shall be no limit put upon your intercourse with the other sex. - Mark Twain
The white fringes of her drawers were like feathering of soft white down. Her slate-blue skirts were killed boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her. Her bosom was as a bird's, soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some dark-plumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her hair. - James Joyce

It was a blonde, a blonde to make a bishop kick a hole in a stained glass window. - Raymond Chandler
Love's mysteries in souls do grow, but yet the body is his book. - John Donne

GENTLEMAN FOLIO

I love the male body; it's better designed than the male mind. - Andrea Newman

Why are women so much more interesting to men than men are to women? - Virginia Woolf
Men seldom make passes at girls who wear glasses. - Dorothy Parker
You've never seen a girl with rough skin in a movie; You've never seen any woman whose flawless, silken face is anything but perfect. It just doesn't happen. - Marianne Moore
While it's true that physical perfection has always been at an absolute premium for women, a beautiful face is la creme de la creme - it is at once the most essential and it is the most valued element of loveliness. - Ursula LeGuin
You can, after all, get a body double; there is no face double to be used for the close-ups. You are your face. And when you hate your face, it's a pretty short step to hating yourself. - Regina Barreca
Beauty is in the eye of the beholder - Margaret Hungerford
I find I care less and less who goes to bed with whom. - Dorothy Sayers
What do you want, and adorable pancreas? - Jean Kerr
One is not born a woman, one becomes one. The strongest, surest way to the soul is through the flesh. - Mabel Dodge
- Simone de Beauvoir

The basic female body comes with the following accessories:
garter belt, parti-girls, crinoline, corset, bustle, brassiere, stomacher, chemise, virgin zone, spike heels, nose ring, veil, kid gloves, fishnet stockings, fishie, bandage, Merry Widow, weepers, chokers, barrettes, bangles, beads, lorgnette, rather box, basic block, compact, Lycra stretch one-piece with modesty panel, designer peignoir, flannel nightie, lace teddy, head, head. - Margaret Atwood

MY TRUE VOICE

My voice is a possible product of many things. Perhaps when the cells of my vocal chords were forming in my pre-natal throat, their alignment determined the sound of my words. Maybe it was the food I consumed as a child that most strongly affected those chords. I have never been tall -- could it be my stature? It might also have been the voices that I heard most often as a baby, causing me to imitate their sounds. My dad is from Tennessee, but he lost his true Southern drawl years ago. My mom was raised in New York, but she doesn't have much of an accent either. I grew up in Central Vermont, not far from Canada, and I have been told that my own accent sounds Canadian.

I don't know if anyone has ever studied these kinds of potential influences on spoken voices, but frankly, it doesn't matter. I don't like my voice. I (as do most people) hate hearing myself on recordings, and I am forever longing for a voice with which I could belt out country music songs, maybe even a Broadway standard, without feeling the need to apologize to everyone within hearing distance. Some little girls are told and believe erroneously that they have "the voices of angels." I don't remember anyone ever telling me that, but I have definitely always known that I sound nothing like an angel.

I have always respected the power of words, and yet, I often feel clumsy with them. Although I am not shy and I don't suffer from the fear of public

speaking, I envy those with true spoken eloquence. When, for instance, did the word "like" make its way into my vocabulary, and why can't I get rid of it?

**What so wild as words are?
--Robert Browning**

When I realized that I had found my written voice, I was ecstatic. I think it all may have started when I was about eleven, and my mom told me of the time her father found something cruel she had written about someone in a journal or a letter. He told her that words written on paper are no less permanent than those written on stone. Even if you tear them up or burn them, they will always be there. I think my grandpa's advice was meant as a caution to my mom; beware the power of your words and remember the hurt and destruction they can cause.

**A word is dead
When it is said,
Some say.
I say it just
Begins to live
That day.
--Emily
Dickinson,
poem, 1872**

Although this in itself is very valuable advice, I believe there is also something positive in the magical permanence of written words. After

that, I would scribble down words and then erase one or cross them all out and start again. And yet, I couldn't get it out of my head that the words I had erased were still there somehow. They had left my mental mouth in the same way that spoken words leave my physical mouth, never to return. Suddenly, though, here I was with the power to let people hear my words or to keep them to myself. It was as though by finding my written voice, I had found my true voice.

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I chose it to mean -- neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

--Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

It has now been almost ten years since hearing my grandfather's advice to my mom had such a profound effect on my linguistic development. My writing has changed considerably; I prefer different styles and tones and I can construct more complicated sentences, my vocabulary is more extensive and my control of grammar more sophisticated.

However, despite all these qualitative changes in my writing, there is one thing that remains the same: I still prefer my written voice to my spoken voice. Don't get me wrong, I still like to sing along to Patsy Cline and Patti LuPone, and I do it even as those around me cringe. I sing because it

makes me happy, though, not because I can or will ever be able to use songs to communicate with others. I have come to accept that my own melodies and harmonies will be heard in my writing. That in itself makes me happy; I am grateful for discovering this form of expression and I am willing to work hard at developing my own specific style.

If it was through my mom that I was able to discover the possibility of a written voice, it was through my dad that I began to learn how to refine it and to accurately express and articulate my feelings. An emergency room doctor by trade, my dad has always used writing as a way to reflect on the many violent and tragic situations (or their aftermath) in which he has found himself. His use of written expression goes back further than that, certainly as far as his childhood. While I have known him, though, he has always been a doctor.

**Writing is nothing more than a
guided dream.
--Jorge Luis Borges**

I know and I have always known that there are many experiences my dad goes through at work that he can't explain to his children at the dinner table, or any other time, for that matter. Perhaps it was my strong desire to know more about the side of him I never saw that led me to ask to see his writing, and sometimes to sneak into his journals or computer files and read his poems and essays. When I found the manuscript of a play

my dad had written in college, it was as though I had discovered a treasure. I never felt guilty about secretly reading my father's writing, because I was certain he would show me if I asked. What stopped me from asking was the fear of stumbling over my own words in the conversation about the piece that would surely follow.

As a fairly young child, I was captivated by the lines of my dad's poem *Wednesday's Child*, about a young man who tried to commit suicide by shooting himself in the face. I remember also reading *Stacking Wood* and, although I didn't understand the meaning of the metaphors or even some of the words, I loved the sound they made as they rolled over my mental tongue. When I turned sixteen, my dad, for the first time, wrote me a poem. A full two pages long, it is at the end of the first that he tells me his wish

"...That you will have the power of
words,
Feel their music, murmurings,
whispers,
Bashfulness, bravado, strength, and
comfort,
Their gentleness, their crashing
thunder;..."

These lines make my eyes well up each time I read them because it is amazing to me that my dad understood my wish for his words without me ever telling him. In spite of all my materialistic tendencies, if I had only time to save one possession from a fire, it would be *Seize Ans*, the most precious gift I have ever received.

**I write entirely to find out
what I'm thinking, what I'm
looking at, what I see and
what it means. What I want
and what I fear.**

-Joan Didion

Like many children, I often wonder which of the traits of my personality came from my mom, which from my dad, and which are unique to me. I have spent a lot of time thinking about my voice and how it connects to or from my personality, and, in turn, my parents.

My mom always tells me I "think just like my father." I wonder how that can be true when he spends between eight and ten hours every day thinking about heart murmurs, blood pressure and EKGs.

At the same time though, I know just what she means. My dad and I agree on most things of importance- from social and political issues to how to manage our relationships with people close to us. We both care immensely about the opinions others hold of our character and have discussions about difficult moral and ethical choices. Sometimes I think my mom is right, that my dad and I really *are* two of a kind. I will never be a doctor. But it is from my scientific dad that I have learned how to express my very *unscientific* thoughts.

By Emily Foote

Five Pages About a Pirate

I often feel drawn to 115 Vernon Street, the home of the Trinity College English Department. I have spent a lot of time throughout my past three years as a student here poking around it. I never get tired of looking at it; it hypnotizes me. I like to look at it on hot early fall or late spring days when the sunshine makes the red bricks hot and shiny, and I like to look at it in January when there are icicles hanging from the peaks in the roof. I like to look at it when there is a crow perched on the gutter, and I like to look at it when one side of it is covered in scaffolding and grey plastic blowing in the wind. It is exciting to me on weekdays, when it is crowded with students sitting reading that last chapter of Virgil on the sofa on the first floor outside the classrooms, while professors in red suspenders are smoking cigarettes outside on the steps. And I like it on weeknights, when it is quiet and dark and you can hear the stairs creak when you sneak up to tack a late paper to a professor's door. There is something very comforting about sitting on the bench on the second floor waiting to meet with a professor in her office and listening to her finish a conversation with her eleven-year old son about why he forgot his soccer uniform again.

Professor Goldman's office is on the third floor. The first time I met him there, I sat outside on the rug, knees curled under me, listening to him finish a conversation about tonight's Yankees game with his friend, Mark Benson.

His first words to me when I enter the office are, "Well isn't this just terrific? I'm going to a Yankees game tonight. Can you believe it? Third base, fifth row up. Now this is just great." He leans forward, excited. "Now what did you want to talk about?"

I tell him I want to talk to him about his writing, to find out more about what he thinks about being a writer. I am intrigued by his Fiction Workshop that I am in, where on the first day he insisted that it was impossible to hold a discussion about writing in a sparse room around a big oak table with a chalkboard. He moved the whole class to the English Department lounge where we all sit on floral sofas and put our feet up on coffee tables careful not to knock too many copies of the *New Yorker* onto the floor.

Professor Goldman rolls up his sleeves. He does not push them up casually, but proceeds to carefully pull down one green sleeve and deliberately folds up one side inserting his thumb into the fold and jerking up with a quick turn of his hand, turns his sleeve over, folds up the other side using the same movement and repeats this process four times. Then he switches to the other sleeve. I am reminded of my father rolling up his work shirt at dinner and telling us kids to do the same so our sleeves don't drag in the soup. Pushing them up is cheating, he says, and if we didn't do it properly, he would reach over the table and do it for us. I am beginning to like Professor Goldman already.

"Well, where do you want me to start," he asks, clasping his fingers together, then taking them apart and wiping each hand, one by one on the knees of his black jeans. "What do you want to know?"

I want to say that I want to know everything about this blithe, round-faced man whose face is filled with laugh lines, and whose curly black hair is beginning to grey just around his ears. I want to know why he has a stainless steel pot lid with a black plastic handle on his bookshelf but no pot and what he thinks about the curious thick black book in his bookshelf whose spine bears in bright white letters the title, *God and the American Writer*. I want to know what is in the cardboard Dirt Devil vacuum cleaner box whose flaps are bent and won't close all the way.

But I ask him instead, "How did you know you wanted to be a writer?"

"Oh, wow," he says, and leans forward and back in his red nylon retractable desk chair with wheels, its black coiled spine creaking and the wheels moving ever so slightly as he rocks. He plays with his fingers, pushing the heels of his palms together, aligning his pinky and thumb and drumming just the tips of his middle three fingers. "You mean all the way back to my childhood?"

I nod, fascinated, I suppose, by his finger movements but also by a curiosity of what this man must have been like as a child. I watch as he shuffles his feet, and pushes the soles of his black leather sneakers together and tucks his legs, knees bent, under the chair.

"Well my father has this incredible admiration for writers," he says. "I grew up in this house where even though my father was a working guy, I always grew up with this sense that people like Hemingway were heroic figures to him. I'm sure I was really influenced by that, and it instilled in me a kind of curiosity, an early positive idea of what a writer was."

I nod, and remember at ten years old my own father coming back one day from the used bookstore and putting on the steps up to my room one book on each step, Farley Mowat, *Never Cry Wolf*, Patrick O'Brian, *H.M.S. Surprise*, Jack London, *White Fang* and *The Sea Wolf* and finally on the top step Ernest Hemingway, *The Nick Adams Stories*. "These are the greatest books of all time," he told me. "Start at the bottom and work your way up to the top."

Professor Goldman is getting excited. He starts to stutter when he gets excited. I've noticed this in his fiction workshop class. "And, and, and, I also think that being a writer also came out of the circumstances of my own childhood. When I was an infant, my mother essentially left my father, and we went down to Guatemala. When we got there, I got very sick with tuberculosis. I think my mother saw it as a kind of punishment from God for having left my father. And she ended up going back to my father. I think that that kind of early displacement, that, that, that, kind of early shock in your life of being torn away and taken to this incredibly different place—"

Professor Goldman pauses for a moment, and then starts up again, "I think that that early sense of displacement and loneliness —" he starts up again, not finishing his sentence — "And and, there I was, this little Guatemalan kid — I spoke Spanish before I spoke English — and there we were back with my father in this little house in the New England suburbs, and I was in quarantine, because remember, I had tuberculosis, and I always think that from the start of my life there was this sense of displacement and this sense of inhabiting a really lively inner world. That thought came from being displaced between two countries and obviously the shock about what was going on between my parents and not even speaking the language when we came back, and having this sickness and having to perceive the world, this new world I was in, through a picture window for months and

months and I sat on the couch and looked out at this strange, new snowy world. So all of that, I think, probably created an "innerness," a place where you're more eloquent and more alive inside your life in a funny way, than outside. A shyness, a loneliness. All of those things were a part of my childhood, a sense of being strange, a sense of being an outsider. And I recall, even after so many years, that my life was like a basement, I remember playing in the basement and the games that I made up in the basement. I did really live in this sort of fantasy world. I do think that this is a key component of many writers, a sense that somewhere back there at the beginning something happens where there is a wound or some deeply abiding thing that constantly calls out for expression and it's apart from your day-to-day outside life. I think that writers are people who are constantly speaking from that very private place and I think that was there with me as a child and I was more comfortable in my imagination than in a lot of other places."

I am fascinated by Professor Goldman's story, because I have always thought myself that one of the earliest signs of the so-called creative instinct in childhood is self-absorption, the feeling that you are somewhat separate from your environment and can't identify with it really satisfactorily, but with this feeling comes also the idea that this inability, far from being wrong, ought to be cultivated. I felt that way as a child, and even though I wasn't an outsider in a literal sense by not speaking English or being quarantined for tuberculosis, I liked to relish in a feeling that I was separate, different from other children my age. It showed up in very ordinary things — in gym class, for instance. In middle school, I was a good runner and sprinter, but not a good team player. Give me a tape and two hundred and twenty yards of grass between me and it, and other people to outdistance and I was there. But give me a bat and instructions to hold my end up, and what happened? A couple of swings, a showy intent, but clumsy in fact, and that was it. Only alone in deep field could I sufficiently identify with a game involving others to come out of my grass-scented reverie, to watch the ball, a spherical object mysteriously approaching from the boundless blue, see it as mine, be beneath it, catch and hold it to my breast in a paroxysm of selfish joy. The applause from the teachers and coaches was always gratifying, but it wasn't the object of the exercise.

This self-absorption, I think, is a form of curiosity, and after a while, when it's worked itself out, a different kind of curiosity takes its place — a curiosity in other people. There is something common to both forms: that is that the curiosity in the environment, in the physical surroundings. This doesn't change, and I suppose the child who is going to be a writer is more curious about his or her surroundings than the child who wants to be — and feels — part of them. I think it is true to say that in the absence of a real one, the creative child will invent his own unhappy childhood. He is a natural rearranger. A natural rejector.

Professor Goldman will certainly tell you that even though he did not have the happiest of childhoods — "I was a very lonely, sort of wimpy child, I'd been sick for one thing, and it wasn't until I got to late middle school that I grew slightly more normal and started to play sports and all the other things boys do" — but yet he still harbors in him a kind of fondness of his childhood, a sense that it is what made him special, made him into what he is now, and he is in a sense kind of proud that he was unhappy then. The way he tells his story, his voice filled with excitement, is as if he is telling me a great, wonderful, heroic tale, when really it is a rather sad story about a young boy who had to deal with several difficult and tragic situations. But that's what I find to be so fascinating, so

compelling, so enchanting, so, so -- beautiful about Professor Goldman. Not only because I understand and share this sentiment, but because Professor Goldman seems to be so enthralled with his story-telling, so lost in the moment, so connected to himself that he forgets to be self-conscious so that he radiates with an enthusiasm so great it causes him to send my tape-recorder flying across the room with one impassioned sweep of his arm as he talks about writing five-page stories about pirates for his school journal.

"If you go back and look at my childhood report cards," he says, "it's always like 'pain in the ass in class,' 'really bad at math,' 'messy desk,' but then 'but he's a really good storyteller.' And this was there right from the beginning. And you can see that in our little Elementary school newspapers. All the little girls would have this little two-paragraph things about a dog or a cat, and then there would be this" -- and here is where the emphatic arm sweep occurred -- "five page story by me about a pirate."

John Updike once wrote in an interview in *The New Yorker*, "Being a great writer is not the same as writing great." Professor Goldman has always been intrigued by the idea of *being* a writer. He remembers being an eleven-year old boy and looking at great, big, glossy pictures of Ernest Hemingway in *Life Magazine* and being fascinated by Hemingway's whole mystique. Even at eleven, he could hear Hemingway's voice booming prophetically as he read his words "by the time you are thirteen, if you're a writer, you know it." "It was this really big macho mystique," he says, "this big, mystic thing. And of course I knew that my father was a Hemingway nut. So I would go out into this big field behind my house, just in a trance, hitting baseballs against a rock and saying to myself, 'I know, I know, I just know it. A *writer*. That is what I'm going to be.'"

In the public mind, I have found that there are various ideas of the writer, or shall I say the "literary gent." For instance there is, and it's fair to say that Hemingway fits into this category, the Tortured Genius, wrestling with a neurotic and unpunctual muse, whose visitations are infrequent enough for him to fill the gaps with wild indulgences or hermit-like disappearances into a private life whose fascinating enormity will only be revealed after his death. Then there is the Bland Practitioner, who works his casual stint of three highly productive hours every morning, connecting himself to an apparently inexhaustible supply of inspiration, as if it were a sort of instant music piped in, like the kind you find playing in the background of supermarkets or department stores, after which he will have a light luncheon and devote the rest of his day to being civilized.

Next there is the Switched-on Intellectual, a formidable figure, who belongs to committees, adds his signature to group letters to *The New York Times* and whose attitude toward the burning problems of the day is not only sought after, but enthusiastically volunteered.

Newer classifications include the Cynical Single Woman, whose life is a wild mess of thoughts, ideas, and pieces of angry prose and revolves around weekly visits to Saks Fifth Avenue and her psychiatrist.

Behind all these images there is a conveyed sense of privilege perhaps, but also a sort of ghastly seriousness about the business of *being* a writer. An idea that being a writer involves far more than writing books. Indeed, that writing the books is a rather boring chore, like having to put in enough appearances at the Dining Hall to qualify for residence. It is often true when I think of writers there is a sense of the untouchable. I am likely to

think 'Oh that's so-and-so. He's a *writer*.' Someone to be revered and kept exempt from the normal human duties of returning phone calls or remembering birthdays.

When I consider these images, however, I find myself not fitting into either one of them. Neither the Tortured Genius, Bland Practitioner, Switched-On Intellectual -- nor even Cynical Single Woman. And neither does Professor Goldman. And that is probably one of the reasons why I can identify with him so much.

Being a writer for Professor Goldman does not involve this sense of ghastly seriousness. He is not a Tortured Genius. He is not a Bland Practitioner or a Switched-On Intellectual. For him, being a writer is just his way of satisfying his curiosity with the world. Being a writer, for him, was a comforting thing, the one place where he "felt at home." It allows him to always stay connected to his childhood and his family. For him, writing is all about becoming connected to and never losing touch with one's own "lively imagination." He mentions the word "lively" several times, the importance of having a "lively imagination," "lively writing skills," the ability to live and be lively on the page." Writing is a way, in a sense, to never lose that liveliness, that child-like spirit, to forever remain young.

Professor Goldman likes to laugh about himself and about how he used to sell his stories to other kids in high-school for a dollar-fifty each. "Writing is just so great," he says. He believes the world, the academic world especially, tends to impose this sense of ghastly seriousness about writing and the writer and it is harmful to the young writer who is just starting out.

"I think the most common thing you see is that students have this idea that you have to impose this great meaning on a story," he says, "that a story has to be serious, that you have to know exactly what the story is about and what it means. As a teacher of writing, one of the things I try to help my students learn is how to get over that misconception, to show them that it is perfectly fine for a story to be ambiguous and for the writer not to even really know what the story is about. And just how to find completion in a story without knowing its great meaning that you could explain to somebody. That's something you can nudge people towards."

Perhaps, then, it is time to create a new category for the writer, The Wry Comedian, a blithe, lively and delighted little man with a fondness for palindromes and the Dainty Garbage company, who carries a little black book in his pocket marked "Anecdotes" and who jots down in it conversations among couples in Wal-Mart and then returns to his kitchen table to write for a few hours before heading off to the Yankees game. Ahh, yes. This describes Professor Goldman exactly. And, if one were to substitute in the word "woman," and perhaps mention Osage oranges, the Socktopus, and a little *red* book, I think I, too, would fit right in.

Professor Goldman smiles. He leans on his suitcase, which stands upright in the middle of the room, packed and ready for him to leave for the Yankees game right after his next class. I have to leave. He needs at least three minutes, he tells me, to prepare for his class. I look at my watch. He's got two and a half. I don't get to ask him about why he has a single stainless steel pot lid in his bookshelf or what on earth is in that cardboard Dirt Devil box. Maybe that's something I'll have to leave to my imagination. And if it's lively enough, perhaps I'll write a great story about it.

By Diana Potter

PROFESSOR VOICES

DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT HISTORY

James Baldwin, Nelson Algren, Raymond Chandler, Richard Wright, Simone de Beauvoir—these are among the names of writers who were unfamiliar to almost all of my freshmen class of twenty-six students this term. It is now a cliché of higher education that students come from another planet in terms of cultural literacy. But the most honest academics admit that this is not just the computerization of their lives, or the generational divide in training and sources. It is a full-scale transition in what is important for achievement in the 'new American age'. What role can writing and reading, the latter arguably providing the models for writing, if employers and the political community eschew the lessons and inspirations that our now lost writers represent?

As an historian (and as anyone reading this who has worked with me can attest) I recognize no history without the literary, prose and cinematic texts that constitute its deepest sources and repositories. No history paper ought to be seen as an exposition of narrative devoid of its literary texture and origins. No history essay ought to be marked without reference to its grammar, syntax and sentence structure. No clause should float as a fragment;

SOME INFORMAL REFLECTIONS ON STUDENT WRITING, TEACHING WRITING, CARING, AND REVISION

I often hear people complain that college students don't write well. That's something that many people can agree on, and it's not a new complaint, nor one that arose, as it sometimes seems, after television came into our lives: A study of notes by Harvard professors in the late nineteenth century shows that they too

the passive voice should not be tolerated unsparingly. Yet the deepest source of despair is the absence of a shared literary culture with my students, one in which points of reference for the historical eras that we examine might be known in some measure before we meet; the bedrock assimilation of style and verse and political content might not be so foreign, so distant! A learned emeritus faculty member went to see "Bend it Like Beckham" and did not know who Beckham was. I saw a photo on the cover of the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* with a marine helmet logo depicting a black and red monster under the words, "Kill Em All" and did not know its point of origin in MTV culture. This week's *New Yorker* begins with Editor Remnick's words: "For a while we did without history...But an attack... and then a war in an ancient place, brought history back in a tidal rush." It may be back for some of us who 'had it' but whither those who had not yet heard of it? How can we read and write with mutuality across the lines I describe above? Classrooms here and anywhere else cannot force reading and its step-child writing; neither should they be ideological training camps. But do we share a common history, a common read, a common writing project?

By Susan D. Pennybacker
Department of History

criticized their students for lazy thinking, poor grammar, and ineffective writing. So what is it really all about, this sense that students can't write? First of all, when most students get to college they are intellectually naïve, and as their college career proceeds they grow as thinkers. The skill of writing is not independent of thinking—it is not something students can learn in high school, or in their first semester at college, and then simply apply to whatever they want to write from then on.

Instead, as their intellectual sophistication develops, students' ability to write well develops. So part of teaching students to write well is encouraging them to think for themselves, and the thinking is reflected in the writing. But this does not happen by magic. A person can be a first-rate thinker and still not be able to write effectively. So how do people really learn to write? Writing is a form of communication, just as talking is, and it is different from, though connected with, talking. We learn to talk by listening and talking; we learn to write by listening and talking and reading and writing.

But also crucial to good writing is that what we communicate grows out of what we genuinely have to say. When we are writing something that has nothing to do with our own ideas or perceptions, our writing can easily get stilted. We may be self-conscious, our grammar might fall apart, we might not write with any clear voice. Furthermore, we might find ourselves writing about a topic that we do not fully understand. And if my grammar is unclear because I don't really know what I'm writing about, then having someone work with me on my grammar doesn't help—it makes me sink deeper into the chaos of my own unformed thoughts. If, instead, someone can help me figure out what I'm trying to say, my writing will get clearer, stronger, more confident. After that, and only after that, I must look over my writing to make sure the grammar is clear. When we are writing to express ideas that are important to us, our writing improves. I have known this for many years, and I teach it to my students, but still, in spite of that, I sometimes find myself struggling to write something because I am getting tangled awkwardly in my own syntax. Maybe this is because I am thinking more about the audience than about what I have to say, or because I am not really sure what exactly I'm talking about. When I notice such confusion in my own writing process, I stop and let myself write for awhile in private, as if no one will ever read it. I write about what is bothering me in my writing, and I write about what I would say if I could say it any way I wanted. Once I do that, I can usually get better access to what I want to write for the

audience, and I often discover that I can actually use some of the parts that I thought I was writing just for myself—I can take my private writing and shape it into public writing. Sometimes what I need help with, at that point, is how the raw parts work together, how I can structure them more effectively; to me, such help is a large part of what happens in a writing class—students learn to discover the forms that their ideas require, and to re-see their raw drafts as they become more certain of what they have to say.

But what if students just don't care about what they are writing about? What if they really do just see writing as something to do for the teacher and not themselves? Well, I think there is always a way to care when you don't think you do. There is a way to come to care about anything, to see it in a way that engages you. You can start with your own reaction. If the reaction is not-caring, you can work with that. Why don't you care? Is there any small part that you do care about? What is it in you that resists the subject? Once you can figure those things out, you are starting to communicate, to talk about something that you actually believe in, and you can go from there.

Communicating one's genuine perceptions is inherently pleasurable, even if it is on a subject that one doesn't necessarily think is all that interesting, and that pleasure can be the force that drives students to perfect their writing. The more students care about the subject of their writing, the more willing they tend to be to revise. Once they revise seriously, their writing will improve. Re-seeing ones initial ideas and drafts, as a result of rethinking and of feedback from others, is crucial to good writing, and the more teachers can help students want to re-see, the less we will complain about the quality of their writing. It is the teacher's job, I think, to help students find a way to care about the subjects they write about. Once they do, their writing will invite us not to complain, but to respond.

By Irene Papoulis
Department of English

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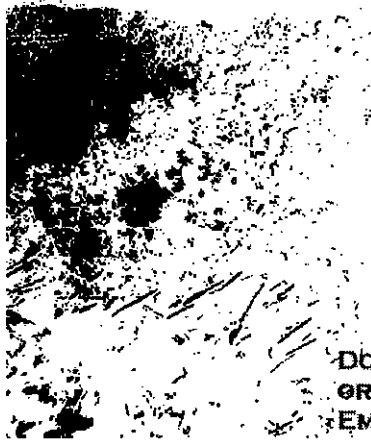
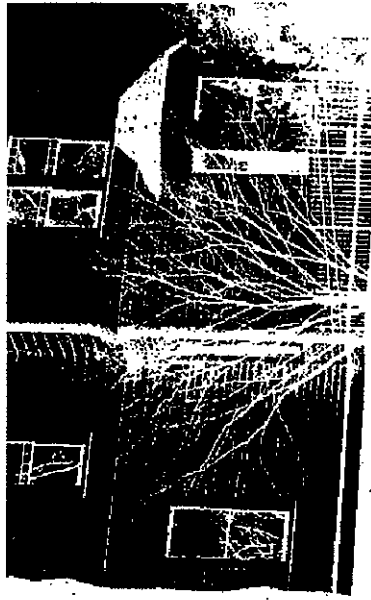
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THANK YOU!

Thanks to Sean for naming me, Diana for shaping me, Dorothy for dressing me, Erica for keeping me straight, Board members for having the brass, Christie for feeding me, and professors Wall & Papoulis for overseeing my inception. I live! Look for me to return in the fall with more articles, essays, poems, news and

more!



The Back Page

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**BE NOT SIMPLY GOOD; BE GOOD FOR SOMETHING.
HENRY DAVID THOREAU**

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Submission guidelines
will be announced.

A Word about The Writing Center as a Resource --

While we do not edit papers for you, nor can we perform magical quick-fixes on papers due in one hour, we do an excellent job of supporting you through all phases of the writing process, no matter what the assignment. Our Writing Associates come from diverse academic backgrounds, and offer one-on-one peer tutoring to students at all levels of writing proficiency - up to and including the senior thesis! In short, our job is to help you manifest those brilliant ideas onto the written page.

Come in. Hang out. Get to know us! We can help!

**Hours: Monday - Thursday 1 - 4 pm & 6:30 - 9:30 pm
Late night in Mather Hall - Sunday & Monday 10 pm - 12 midnight*

Tutor HotLine: X-2468

DO YOU HAVE A COMMENT
OR CREATIVE SUGGESTION?
EMAIL IRENE PAPOULIS OR DOROTHY FRANCOEUR

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