

## “Searching, Ceaselessly,,

When you write, you forever capture pieces of yourself, immutable and undeniable, concrete as flesh or stone. It is by revisiting and re-examining these pieces over a lifetime that an identity might be stitched together. Constant evaluation of the past and present is key to creating a self.

A common theme among my works seemed to be identity, namely the search for identity. I see two possible explanations for this: either this was my adaptation to the course material, or it was an expression of my own uncertainties about identity. I found American multicultural literature to essentially be musings about minority identities, both individual and ethnic. The authors' only constant seemed to be their instability. I am unsure as to whether this is the impression the rest of my class gained, but I chose to approach the pieces studied as expressions of uncertainties. As I see my writing as an expression of my own identity, I found it easy to empathize with the authors, helping me to better analyze their works and compare their experiences with my own.

My essays for this portfolio reflect the balance I have struck between style and function. I am a lyrical writer, and unembellished specificities do not come easily to me. In my first drafts of “De-Generation: The Deterioration of Identity in 'No Name Woman,'”, I found myself continuously caught trying to use specific phrasings or slip in bits of poetry, like flowers pressed between the pages of a textbook. The result was often verbose, unclear, and cluttered. In my first draft, I wanted so dearly to use “In ‘No Name Woman,’ the postmodern ideology of globalization has distorted the narrator's concepts of identity, along with her own,, as my thesis, despite the fact that postmodernism and globalization arose little, if at all, in my paper (Essay 1, Draft 1). I realized that, particularly when writing about stories with nameless characters, that to remove ambiguity and establish my points, I would need to abandon some of my style. My true struggle has been deciding just how much to include: must I silence my own voice for clarity's sake? The answer, it seems, is no. I still see my pieces as a reflection of me, while feeling that they effectively convey my arguments.

Our instructor gave us an incredible amount of freedom in topic choice; we were practically free to choose our own. For the first time, I was faced not only with creating an essay, but creating a starting point on which to build my essay. I have always been an outliner, but primarily a mental one. This semester, I began to put these outlines to paper and found that the structure of my essays improved noticeably. Without outlining, I still manage to find the same ideas, but present them in a manner that is nearly unintelligible. Even I have difficulty following some of my own, un-outlined writings. I have so many thoughts spinning within my mind that, when faced with a composition, I often begin to jot down all those that come to mind. This serves as a functioning brainstorming strategy but is not sustainable as a method for writing papers. As the class progressed, I transferred this process to the preliminary phases of my writing, using it to formulate a topic and possible arguments.

I think it is so difficult for me to edit and rewrite because, to me, it feels as though I am attacking my own work. I do not usually give concessions or back down; I have taught myself to defend fiercely what I have said and what my point was. Changing this mindset for the good of my writing has been very difficult, but I have certainly evolved. It is easier for me to take criticism now, instead of treating it as a personal attack. I view my writing as an extension of myself, and accepting others' views on it had always felt akin to allowing others to control me. I now realize that since I have such a personal investment in my work, it is hard for me to become an objective viewer. I have distanced myself from this type of thinking.

Throughout the course, the opposite of whatever ethnicity we were focusing on was, always, a blue-eyed blonde. Traditional beauty was defined as being a blue-eyed, slender blonde. The imposing, privileged characters were almost exclusively blue-eyed blondes. I suppose I am a majority, and a privileged one at that, but I have never felt the kind of security that supposedly accompanies this physiology. I found myself unable to empathize with the rich whites of upper society, and instead gravitated towards the identity crises that accompanied the majority of characters we studied.

Just like so many of the American minorities we studied, I found myself unable and unwilling to

occupy the space reserved for me in society, a place secure and accommodating, but so strictly defined and refined that it seemed suffocating as a grave. Never have I had to contend with racial slurs or open discrimination; this much is true. Yet I have traveled to other places, places where I was unique and a minority, where eyes followed my procession and uneasiness accompanied by presence. I know what it is like to be a minority, both inside and out. Without any knowledge of me, it would be difficult to understand just how a tiny white girl might empathize with the plights explored in much of what we consider multicultural literature. In my biography, I attempt to outline just how uncertain I am.

Finally, the wild card. My professor had, after returning my first essay, suggested that I try my hand at fiction-writing. The short story is something I had been considering for quite a long time but, at her suggestion, put to paper. It is not strictly autobiographical, but could certainly be mistaken as such. My choice not to name the characters was influenced by my readings in class.

I hope my lyricism, my style, and my self still shine through these academic essays, technical and imposing as cityscapes. I hope that my peer review reflects my investment in my fellow classmates. I hope that this portfolio reflects not only me, but how the world might see me.