



FIRST YEAR
WRITING PRIZE
2020

C o n t e n t s

I INTRODUCTION
Maggie Werner, Hannah Dickinson, Ingrid Keenan

4 JURORS

6 FINALISTS

9 PRIZE WINNERS

ESSAYS

10 IAN ALBRESKI
“Fear not Death”

18 JACKSON DANFORTH
“Unintended Consequences”

33 ANNE HUSBAND
“Sandpaper Tongue”

Introduction

It has become a tradition. At the start of every Spring semester some of HWS' most promising first-year writers learn they have been nominated for the First Year Writing Prize. And then a whirl of activity begins. Students revisit fall semester writing projects; meet with professors, Writing Colleagues, and Writing Fellows; there's an information session; cover letters are written; jurors read, meet, and deliberate. Just as the daffodils and crocuses begin to peek through the warming soil, we gather together to celebrate HWS' vibrant writing culture and thrilling First Year writing.

This year, as the daffodils and crocuses bloom, we are sheltering in place; classes are being taught remotely; and the brilliant, prize-winning essays we planned to celebrate, take on new and untanticipated meanings. Anne Husband's arresting narrative, "Sandpaper Tongue," explores themes of home and displacement in ways that are both individual and collective. In "Fear Not Death," Ian Albreski compellingly argues that perhaps the only thing Socrates and Thomas Nagel agree on is that "death itself is not the evil, it is how one prepares." Jackson Danforth's carefully researched "Unintended Consequences," argues that consumers and companies alike must wrestle with a clothing industry that is exacerbating the existential threat of global climate change. Taken together, these prize winning essays reveal a prescience that neither writers nor jurors could have anticipated, but nonetheless help us set a course for the future: a future in which individual struggles become collective stories, where industry must reckon with consequences beyond their bottom

line, and where philosophical questions have become the stuff of everyday life. We are moved and inspired by the insights of these first-year writers, insights that will contribute to building a more just and a more beautiful world.

Initially awarded for outstanding writing in first-year seminars, the First Year Writing Prize has evolved to include all first-year writing at HWS, broadening the range of genres and writers we recognize as exemplary. The prize celebrates writers, their writing processes, and the culture of writing at HWS. Our nominees learn how to be writers from faculty dedicated to innovative and challenging writing assignments, from Writing Colleagues and Writing Fellows, from their peers, and from their own reviewing, re-visioning, and revising.

Like writing itself, the First Year Writing Prize is a process rather than a product, and we could not do it without the dedication and labor of many in our community. Thank you to Rebecca Burditt, Joe Mink, Kelly Payne, and Ricky Price for your care and thoughtfulness in selecting this year's winners. Thank you to all of the faculty who nominated and worked with their students on writing and revising their essays and to the Writing Colleagues and Writing Fellows for your support and mentorship of the nominees and your commitment to writing at HWS. Thank you to the faculty and Writing Fellows who helped us read and rank essays: Geoff Babbitt, Emma Consoli, Alexandra Curtis, Abbey Frederick, Amy Green, Susan Hess, Bart Lahiff, Kevin Lin, Quinn McFeeters, Canieshia Phillips, Makayla Pydych, Fair Smith, Liz Wells, and Ergisa Xhuvli. Thank you to the Writing and Rhetoric Program, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and the First Year Seminar Program for making this event possible with support for the prize and for writing across our community. Finally and most especially thank you always to Will Hochman '74 for your support in initiating this prize and to Suzanne Rutstein '95 for your support in sustaining it. Your gifts have enriched our community of writers.

We close by offering our thanks and admiration to all of the students who submitted essays this year. Reading your work, seeing the worlds you experience and the ones you plan to build, we believe that readers of the winning works published here will feel similarly.

MAGGIE M. WERNER

Associate Professor and Chair of Writing & Rhetoric

INGRID KEENAN

Assistant Director, Center for Teaching & Learning

HANNAH DICKINSON

Associate Professor, Writing and Rhetoric

Jurors

FACULTY & STAFF

PROFESSOR GEOFFREY BABBITT
Department of Writing and Rhetoric

PROFESSOR REBECCA BURDITT
Department of Media and Society

PROFESSOR HANNAH DICKINSON
Department of Writing and Rhetoric

PROFESSOR AMY GREEN
Department of Writing and Rhetoric

PROFESSOR SUSAN HESS
Assistant Director of the First Year Seminar Program

INGRID KEENAN
Assistant Director, Center for Teaching and Learning

DR. JOE MINK
Assistant Dean, Hobart College

DR. KELLY PAYNE
Assistant Dean, William Smith College

PROFESSOR RICKY PRICE
Department of Political Science

PROFESSOR LIZ WELLS
Department of Writing and Rhetoric

PROFESSOR MAGGIE WERNER
Department of Writing and Rhetoric

WRITING FELLOWS

EMMA CONSOLI '20

ALEXANDRA CURTIS '20

ABIGAIL FREDERICK '20

BART LAHIFF '20
Winner of the 2017 First Year Writing Prize

KEVIN LIN '20
Winner of the 2017 First Year Writing Prize

QUINN McFEETERS '20

CANIESHIA PHILLIPS '19, MAT '20

MAKAYLA PYDYCH '19, MAT '20

FAIR SMITH '21

ERGISA XHUVELI '20

Finalists

STUDENT & NOMINATING PROFESSOR

Aarushi Agarwal
Professor Sherri Martin-Baron

Ian Albreski
Professor Jackie Augustine & Professor Rob Carson

Will Alling Graney
Professor Jackie Augustine

Andrew Barsky
Professor Rob Carson

Hannah Bixby
Professor Michelle Ellwood

Grace Bott
Professor Jenny Tessororf

Julia Cilano
Professor David Weiss

Fatim Cisse
Professor Ben Ristow

Kate Clayton
Professor Nan Crystal Arens

Karina Connolly
Professor Matt Crow

Jackson Danforth
Professor Tom Drennen

Anupam Dhungana
Professor Sherri Martin-Baron

Anne Husband
Professor Ben Ristow

Irini Konstantinou
Professor Amy Green

Felix Lamoureux
Professor Sherri Martin-Baron

Willow Munn Oberg
Professor Michael Dobkowski

Gabriela Nieves
Professor Susan Pliner

Clare O'Connell
Professor Tara Curtin

Molly O'Toole
Professor Laura Free

Malika Panjabi
Professor Michelle Ellwood

Zara Pyle
Professor H May

Haley Sax
Professor Susan Pliner

Taylor Shea
Professor Jackie Augustine

Tess Weber
Professor Michelle Ellwood & Professor Jim Makinster

Katerina Yacoub
Professor Tara Curtin

Prize Winners

IAN ALBRESKI

“Fear not Death”

PHIL 100: Introduction to Philosophy

Nominated by Professor Jackie Augustine

JACKSON DANFORTH

“Unintended Consequences”

FSEM 078: Sustainable Living and Learning

Nominated by Professor Tom Drennen

ANNE HUSBAND

“Sandpaper Tongue”

SUMM 100: Foundations of Writing

Nominated by Professor Ben Ristow

IAN ALBRESKI

PHIL 100: Introduction to Philosophy
Nominated by Professor Jackie Augustine

prompt

At the end of the Apology, Socrates suggests that death might be just a dreamless sleep, and who doesn't love a good night's sleep? In the Phaedo, Socrates explains why he does not fear death and attempts to reassure his friends that there is no reason to mourn.

Why doesn't Socrates hesitate to drink the hemlock? Why are his last words to Crito a request to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to Asclepius, a god of healing/release from illness? Is Socrates' bodily death truly the end of him? Provide textual evidence to support your response.

Nagel presents a different reason why we might fear death and/or mourn the deaths of others. What is Nagel's argument? Does it challenge Socrates' argument or might the two coexist? Defend your answer.

cover letter

I think that I am a stranger to death. Rarely does the frightening consequence of ceasing to be dictate how I live my

life. Writing this feels trivial because I do fear death. But my fear is founded, not by my relationship to death, but by a lack of understanding. I am fortunate to still have my grandparents and even my twenty-year-old cat is only pretending to be dead. But death is there. Forming its existence out of the fleeting nature of the things that I care about.

I work for a funeral home. I am the janitor and am therefore in charge of making the halls of Carmen Funeral Home look alive. But too much life is a bad thing in a funeral home. Its appearance should never remind the living that they are alive. When I go into work over the summer I dust the picture frames, change the lightbulbs, and wear a polo shirt while cutting grass in 90 degree weather. Death moves in and out of the funeral home in the form of flower petals and used tissues. And my job is to silently remove these artifacts of life. Even though I am the janitor, most of the job is in respecting the customer who is dealing with something I still cannot understand.

Grief is a type of chaos. Bringing order around that chaos is my only relationship to the subject. When talking about death I cannot think of the dead, they no longer exist. All I can talk about are the books in the waiting room, the flowers by the entrance and the number of coffee creamers in the kitchen. There is an order to these things that the presence of death ignores. This essay is another one of those things. When writing about death it is the construction of arguments that matter the most. To say what we are afraid death might be. I wrote this essay with the intent of putting Thomas Nagel and Plato's arguments in the same type of order that I associated with death.

This paper feels tidy to me because that is where I land with its subject matter. Tidy because my voice was constrained to trying to explain existential fears. Death is vast and frightening and probably the last thing human beings ever know. This essay was one of my uneasy steps in-between.

FEAR NOT DEATH

Socrates, in the final lines of *Apology*, presents one of his most controversial quotes during his final address to the court. He says, “Now the hour to part has come. I go to die, you go to live. Which of us goes to the better lot is known to no one, except the god.” (*Apology* 42A pp. 44). For a man condemned to death Socrates appears to be not only comfortable with the verdict, but possibly even excited for death. For the observers of this incident it must have appeared to be a demonstration of hubris. To most rational animals a welcoming attitude toward death is shocking and preposterous. Death is frightening, it would not be absurd to suggest the majority of people live their lives with the hope that they will not die during each new day. There are numerous quotes that suggest that people have concluded that the only certainty in life is death. It is under such an understanding, that life is finite, that this essay seeks to explore the moral relevance of death. Should Socrates be considered mad, or is he correct in supposing that, “those of us who believe death to be an evil are certainly mistaken.” (*Apology* 40C pp43).

Although Socrates’ acceptance of his death sentence occurs in the dialogue *Apology* Socrates only presents his main idea, “that death is a blessing” (*Apology* 40E pp43). An idea which receives a deeper exploration in the dialogue *Phaedo*. This dialogue depicts Socrates’ last day alive and the conversation that he had with his friends; namely on the nature of death and why it is not to be feared. Socrates creates a definition for death as, “the separation of the soul from the body” (*Phaedo* 64C pp101) which serves as the basis for how he views death. Under this definition death does not need to be the end of life, only the end of bodily life as

it is understood. From Socrates’ understanding of death, its many benefits are understood in the guise of his railings against the body. Socrates says on the body:

“as long as we have a body and our soul is fused with such an evil we shall never adequately attain what we desire, which we may affirm to be the truth. The body keeps us busy in a thousand ways... it fills us with wants, desires... and so much nonsense, so that... no thought of any kind ever comes to us from the body.” (*Phaedo* 66B pp103)

In order for Socrates to reach a point of pure philosophy he believes that he cannot be weighed down by such things as being alive. It is then not surprising to realize that a person who feels that death is only a continuation of the good in life would be so enthusiastic about death.

Following the declaration that death is but a step toward the greater experiences of the soul; Cebes, one of Socrates’ friends, retorts this belief with the reasonable objection that upon death the soul is destroyed and does not retain consciousness (*Phaedo* 70A pp107). The crux of Socrates’ excitement depends on his perceived immortality, and this argument against it prompts Socrates’ defense of his beliefs. This inspires Socrates to examine the existence of the soul before birth. He presents the concept of the equal, among others as knowledge that exists before birth. There are things in the world such as the greater, smaller, goodness, and beauty that must be so because they are understood at birth, “so we must have acquired knowledge of them all before we were born.” (*Phaedo* 75D pp 113). Although this scene is used as the basis for many Socratic ideas on the nature of the universe, it is importantly used in connection to death as proving the basis for why the soul does not end at death. Primarily that the soul resembles the divine nature and is therefore unchanging. Socrates then prompts that things

exist in two categories: the visible and the invisible. He argues that the visible are always changing while the invisible are not (*Paedo* 78D-79 B pp117). Upon his reflection on the invisible and divine underpinnings of the soul, Socrates concludes that the soul most closely resembles the forms in their unmoving nature. As a result of being invisible the soul is unmoving and eternal — thus it cannot die.

It is with great confidence that Socrates approaches his death. His final words are to his friend Crito to whom he requests the sacrifice of a cock to Asclepius, a sacrifice made in the hopes of alleviating illness (*Phaedo* 118 A pp153). It is widely interpreted that in doing this Socrates is making a statement that death will free him of the pain of life when freeing him from his body. This action conforms with his belief that death is the separation of the body and the soul, where the body exists as a tumorous element on the soul. It is with a stomach full of hemlock and a twinkle in his eyes that Socrates dies eager to venture onto the next chapter of his spiritual existence. For Socrates, his death was not the end.

The canonization of Socrates aside, many people are still highly skeptical of death acting as a cure to the tribulations of life. Even 2400 years after the death of Socrates it is still perfectly reasonable, if not normal, to not want to die. For this reason, philosophy on the topic did not end that afternoon in Athens. One such example of contemporary ideas about death are found in the essay *Death* by Thomas Nagel who explores if fearing death is reasonable or if it should instead be accepted as something that happens to everyone.

In the same way that Socrates started his analysis of death by defining it, so did Nagel. Unlike Socrates, Nagel is interested in death simply as an end to life writing, “I shall simply use the word ‘death’ and its cognates in this discussion to mean *permanent death*, unsupplemented by any form of conscious survival.”(Nagel 74). By excluding the afterlife from this analysis of death Nagel is separating himself from the argument that Socrates made. This

crucial difference directs Nagel’s analysis of death to be quite different from that of Socrates.

While assessing the morality of death, Nagel concludes quickly that there must be a distinction between the parts of life that are good and the parts of death that are more than the denial of these good parts of life (Nagel 74). The important takeaway from this argument is that life should be providing goods, while death remains the end of life. From this conclusion Nagel elaborates on the nature stating that, “like most goods [life] can be manipulated by time: more is better than less.” (Nagel 74). But death does not possess this same quality, having been dead longer is not a good indicator of misfortune. Using famous artists as examples Nagel writes, “Life is a good of which Bach had more of than Schubert simply because he lived longer. Death however is not an evil of which Shakespeare has received a larger portion than Proust. If death is a disadvantage it is not easy to say when a man suffers it.”(Nagel 75). The problem that this argument creates is its lack of self-awareness in accounting for misfortune in the real world, by not taking history or subjectivity into account. Nagel explores the flaw of this argument by presenting an example of a *living* intelligent person who loses mental faculty due to an injury. They are taken care of and have all their needs met other than the fact that they are significantly less intelligent than they were (Nagel 78). This regression is tragic because despite the complacency of the person in question there is no doubt that their capacity has shrunk and that those close to them were not hurt (Nagel 78). The unfortunate qualities of this situation come from the fact that without their injury, the person in question would have had no reason to stop enjoying the good that is life.

Hardly does anyone weep over the children who never existed, because they never reaped the joys of life. Once a person does exist though, it is only death that fully prevents them from enjoying this good any longer. While non-existence before birth is structurally identical to non-existence after death, Nagel argues

that the prospect that the person could have continued living makes it a tragedy (Nagel 79). Nagel identifies the misfortune of death in the loss associated with potential life stating, “the death of Keats at 24 is generally regarded as tragic, that of Tolstoy at 82 is not.”(Nagel 80). Despite death not harboring any overt evil in its existence, death’s prevention of living more life — which would be good, makes the idea of dying one worthy of our fear.

Alongside Socrates’ argument on the nature of death, Nagel’s argument hardly seems to be addressing the same subject matter. This distinction can be identified as early as the respective definitions of what death is. While Socrates plans to have death free him from his earthly ills, Nagel’s rejection of immortality highlights the fact that living itself is a good. Despite the opposite conclusions of these philosophers their works are still able to coexist, as neither of them manage to work to directly oppose the other. Socrates believes that there should be no reason to discuss death as an end, so instead he philosophically explores his belief that death is but a step toward a more perfect existence along with the forms of beauty and truth. By skipping over Nagel’s area of concern, specifically death as an end, the Socratic view on death does nothing to impede Nagel. Furthermore, Nagel does not suggest that immortality, such as what Socrates suggests, is impossible, instead he chooses to address the more tangible loss that is associated with death. The only contentious area between the two of these arguments comes in the form of the idea that life should be considered a good. Socrates appears to reject this idea; however he is a written character whom at other times was appears less scornful of life itself.

There is no doubt that everyone who will ever read this line will also die. The unsettling part is what exactly they intend to do along the way, and how the end of life should be viewed. The Socratic belief would be to prepare for the afterlife while the Nagelian view would be to cling to life. These ideas are able to coexist due to them approaching immortality, an important part

of the puzzle, in completely different ways. They do however both agree that death itself is not the evil, it is how one prepares.

WORKS CITED

Nagel, Thomas. *Death*. *Noûs*, Vol. 4, No. 1(Feb. 1970), pp.73-80. Blackwell Publishing

Plato, “Apology.” *Five Dialogs*. Hackett Publishing, 2002, Pp21-45

Plato, “Phaedo.” *Five Dialogs*. Hackett Publishing, 2002, Pp 93-154

JACKSON DANFORTH

FSEM 078: Sustainable Living and Learning

Nominated by Professor Tom Drennen

prompt

For this semester-long project, you will choose something you consume on a regular basis and explore the sustainability of the object/thing/product (hereafter referred to as the “object”) from different lenses. This project has two primary goals: 1) to develop effective college-level writing and research skills, and, 2) to better understand the impacts of the production and consumption of the object on your lives and our world.

cover letter

Our consumptive behavior is generally considered to be driven by rational thought processes regarding the value of goods, our available means, and our subsequent willingness to pay. Yet our consumption deviates far from rationality. Surely, we must consume as a means to meet our basic needs of health and security, but when do the opportunities to reward ourselves become enticing to the point that we can no longer resist them? Past the threshold of necessity, almost all consumers must explore the realm

of superfluous goods that entice most people to a certain degree. The majority of goods and resources in their very nature take from the Earth as an investment with no ecological return. With the global increase in population size, overarching affluence, and technological innovation, the process of extracting and consuming has become ever so expansive and in turn, environmentally degrading. Our attitudes towards our blind expenditures are often a reflection of today’s reality where the fast-paced nature of the outside world constricts us from recognizing our true impacts. In addition, every good or service consumed is representative of the struggle between economic demand and sustainable responsibility. This framework is what guided my research while I explored the relationship between an immovable object and an unstoppable force and how consumers inadvertently take part in our impending state of affairs.

Through the lens of a simple textile, I sought out to answer the question of how an environmentally conscious clothing company upholds their fundamental beliefs through their practices. The story of one good and its social, environmental, and economic impacts enabled me to refine my perspective on its global influence and contingencies. Initially, I believed that the historical significance of Patagonia’s environmental activism placed them in the realm of ethical purity. I admit that I fell victim to their evasive marketing strategies that seemingly propel Patagonia buyers to a newfound perspective of social justice against the bitter nature of the consumer world. This sensation of belonging to something authentic seduced me into falling in love with their clothing line as a way to prove my devotion. While embarking upon my case study of this company, I quickly realized that I was in fact a stakeholder in this cautionary tale that I set out to unearth. My bias gradually subsided in direct correlation to my understanding of the intrinsic value that came with taking on a disconnected perspective. And in tandem with utilizing my past preconceptions, I had unveiled the tools to conduct thoughtful research used to guide a more

compelling narrative. In effect, my understanding of this multifaceted anecdote grew substantially.

The objective of this essay is to bring to light the exploitative nature of large corporations in a system where the maximization of profit is valued over corporate responsibility. Furthermore, I demonstrate the fascinating relationship between consumers and corporations through the lens of the clothing industry and its unintended consequences. In doing so, I want push readers to reconsider their everyday decisions while gaining an understanding of their inherent consumer privileges.

essay

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Patagonia is the clothing industry's most oxymoronic company. Worth over \$1 billion today, their consumer base continues to grow with no signs of slowing down. Yet this is not what Patagonia set out to achieve when the company was founded in 1973 — they had their sights on staying small-scale. Back then, their message was grounded in adventure, individuality, and upholding a deep appreciation for the Earth. While those values seemingly hold true today, Patagonia's structural foundation has undergone drastic changes. They market to the free-thinking voyagers of the world who are dedicated to “living simply” while preaching responsibility over carelessness and necessity over convenience. Their mission statement reads: “Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis” (Vetter, 2018). While the company faces the reality of operating in a consumer world, it aspires to reverse the norm of disposable clothing.

Patagonia prides themselves on developing sustainable product lines as they continue to research and explore the ecological footprint of their own clothing. Additionally, they constantly seek out new methods to improve their materials in order to raise the overall quality and lifetime of their products. One of these new materials featured in their clothing line is recycled polyester fabric, or rPET. Patagonia has found recycled polyester to be remarkably appealing because it provides the versatility of a synthetic fabric while upholding their principle of sustainability at face value. They began manufacturing rPET products in 1993 by recycling soda bottles as well as existent polyester clothing. Fast forward, and the material has become a trend, feeding into the greenwashing culture of today's clothing industry; not to mention that it is an environmental hazard. While Patagonia preaches environmental sustainability and diverting from the consumeristic norm, they fall short on both of these fronts due to their inadvertent trendsetting and their production of environmentally dangerous products like rPET.

Patagonia was originally a climbing equipment manufacturer called Chouinard Equipment. Founder Yvon Chouinard changed the company name after its introduction of active sportswear opened the eyes of a growing and dedicated community of climbers throughout the United States. Coincidentally, climbing proved to be a beneficial starting point for Patagonia as they learned how to manufacture clothing tailored to the specific needs of athletes. Climbing, as a mentally and physically intensive activity, requires clothing that can keep an athlete comfortable by battling perspiration and providing a great deal of flexibility. Enticed by the beauty in its utility, consumers subsequently fell in love with their products and Patagonia soon realized that they had started a craze throughout the United States. In the 1980s, they introduced synthetic fibers into their clothing line and invested a substantial amount of their revenue into research and design. They were well equipped to meet consumer

demand while staying true to their core values as they scaled up production. Soon enough, their products outside of active sportswear were popularized and their more casual clothing (e.g. their now iconic “Baggies” shorts and bomber jackets) became their most widely sold items (Patagonia History, 2020). Ever since, their clothing has been well recognized for its prevalence among active sportswear, along with its remarkably trendy nature. Make no mistake, the high quality of their products continues to satisfy buyers across the globe, but what truly led to the eventual prosperity of Patagonia was its ability to convey its core beliefs within the products and message that it sold. Slowly but surely, Patagonia began to inspire millions of consumers to pursue individualism and exploration through the marketing of their message and distribution of their clothing.

Despite their dominance in the clothing industry, Patagonia has been a longtime advocate for environmental activism. They began their mission in the early 1970s during the heart of the environmental movement. This time period was of fundamental importance to the growth of the company as environmentalist views of the 60s and 70s shaped Patagonia’s fundamental vision. Today, they put either 10% of their profits or 1% of their sales (whichever is greater) into local grassroots organizations, diverting from funding large NGOs with vested interests. Additionally, Patagonia has always been outspoken towards important issues. Each year, they kickstart a major educational campaign towards environmental concerns, and every eighteen months, they hold a “Tools for Activists” conference which teaches publicity and marketing to different groups of people who seek active involvement. Along with their outside work, they of course pride themselves on manufacturing sustainable clothing. In the clothing industry, sustainability parallels durability as a longer shelf life equates to a decrease in consumption. Although Patagonia is most proud of their commitment to using strictly organic cotton in their products, they have showcased increased quantities of recycled

polyester in their active sportswear clothing line. This fabric has become a cornerstone of Patagonia’s products, along with the clothing lines of many other manufacturers who are finding rPET to be convenient, cheap, and environmentally friendly.

Since the early 20th century, polyester has completely revolutionized the clothing industry. Products of all sorts have seen drastic changes as polyester and other synthetic fabrics have found their way into virtually every textile good. In 1929, Wallace Carothers created the first version of polyester fabric, and despite early technical challenges that halted its circulation in the market, polyester flourished decades later. DuPont, the chemical company where Carothers worked, decided to pursue the development of polyester fabric and after buying the rights to it in 1945 from Imperial Chemical Industries, it went on to commercially produce of the textile in 1953 (Lowe, 2014). Synthetic fibers swept the clothing industry after World War II as functionality and convenience was introduced to a newfound clothing class, allowing manufacturers to develop new colors, silhouettes, and textures. Another aspect which makes synthetic clothing unique from a consumer standpoint is its simple maintenance; it requires little ironing and is easily machine washable. The universal recognition of convenience, utility, and cost-efficiency among buyers and sellers has led to the global dominance of polyester in particular. Today, it has officially surpassed cotton in global consumption. According to a Plastics Insight report in 2016, polyester held a 55% global consumption share of major fibers, whereas cotton was sat at 27% (Plastics Insight, 2016, fig. 7). The overwhelming invasion of polyester fabric certainly meets the economic demands of the fast-growing textile market, yet here lies an inherent flaw within the recycled polyester story, a narrative that is driven by a consumer world.

The economic growth of the polyester market can also be attributed to its relatively cheap and simple manufacturing process. It is generally categorized into three procedures: drying

and shredding plastic bottles, melting the plastic chips and spinning the generated string, and stretching and cutting the string into its required length. While recycled polyester is seen for its sustainable aspects, the production process is highly industrialized, contradicting the standard that it aims to uphold. In an educational video made by National Geographic, the manufacturing process is shown to begin at a recycling center, where bottles are shredded into small parts in order to eliminate any excess liquid. Large quantities of plastic shreds are then sent around the world, primarily to major Chinese cities where polyester consumption is extensive. In this next step, the shredded bits are sorted between clear and colored plastic and then filtered to remove any unneeded components such as labels and bottle caps. A corrosive bath is used to filter out the caps, yet this becomes problematic because workers could breathe in harmful chemicals, and the liquid can easily burn through skin. If unregulated, this step of the manufacturing process subjects employees to dangerous working conditions. Once sorted, the plastic shreds are then sent through a heated, rotating helical pipe in order to be melted down before being funneled through a sieve. The holes in the sieve shape the melted plastic into thread which is dried while on its way to being collected. The thread is then shipped off to be stretched and cut, finally resembling a cotton feel. After it is brushed and spun, it can be packaged and sent to producers for clothing production (National Geographic, 2009). The industrial process of polyester is a blemish to the rPET chain of manufacturing, production, distribution, and use. In its transformation from bottle to thread, the recyclables must go through three factories, each of which expend a considerable amount of energy as a means to improve productive efficiency.

Polyester is now the world's most widely produced textile as it continues to cement itself as an essential stakeholder in the clothing industry. According to *Plastics Insight*, Germany (\$1.1 bn), the United States (\$918 mn), and the Netherlands (\$591 mn)

are the top three exporters of polyester as of 2016. China (\$7.56 bn), Germany (\$3.39 bn), and the United States (\$2.63 bn) are the top three importers of the textile. In 2016, there was a negative trade balance for polyester due to an increased demand (*Plastics Insight*, 2016). This speaks to its cost-efficiency and utility as more clothing companies are deeming it a necessary component of their product lines. The demand for the product is leading to new advancements, as companies are now finding ways to repeatedly recycle the material after it has become a textile. For example, Patagonia has partnered with Teijin, a Japanese company that has developed their own closed loop recycling system. Through this partnership, Patagonia can now incentivize returning used clothing by giving customers discounts when doing so. Yet the market demand for polyester is rising, which means that so is the market for sustainable clothing. Conversely, the influx supply of polyester arises as a major concern after taking into account its eventual harm to the environment.

Polyester fabric contributes to a considerable amount of ocean pollution due to its global consumption. When washed, polyester clothing releases thousands of microfibers which often make their way into the Earth's oceans. A study at the University of Plymouth in the UK found that washing a single load of laundry could discharge roughly 700,000 polyester microfibers (Paddison, 2016). Wastewater from washing machines is sent to treatment plants and due to their microscopic size, microfibers often make their way passed filtration systems and subsequently into the ocean, Figure 1. In effect, microplastics make up roughly 85% of worldwide shoreline debris (Carr, 2017). This startling reality has prompted Patagonia to conduct a series of studies in attempt to uncover the key variables that contribute to microplastic pollution. Patagonia has worked with Arc-teryx, REI, MEC, and Ocean Wise to produce formidable solutions to this problem. As companies that have publicly acknowledged the microfiber issue, they are beginning to explore methods to reform their clothing while identifying

which products discharge the highest amounts of microfibers. They found that different types of clothing shed at very different rates. “Fluffy textiles” like fleeces shed at the highest rate, as well as clothing that has been pre-treated with brushing mechanisms which increase fabric softness. They also found that most fabrics shed high quantities during their first wash compared to their second. Through these studies these companies have identified three methods to mitigate the environmentally harmful effects of microfiber pollution: (1) clothes can be manufactured to be less susceptible to plastic erosion in hot water, (2) clothes can be pre-treated with techniques that remove excess microfibers, and (3) clothes can be pre-washed with proper microfiber filtration technology that removes the initial excess pollutants of common polyester garments (*The Cleanest Line*, 2019). At face value, these studies may pass as equitable measures, but one could argue that to these companies polyester is too valuable of a good to be driven out of the market, and that these studies are a protective measure that save environmentally conscious companies from criticism that their products contradict their claims.



Figure 1, Example of microfibers from washing machine use
(*The Cleanest Line*, 2019)

As of recent, Patagonia has taken a firm stance against consumerism in the clothing industry and its implicit harms. These claims have caught the attention of its consumer base as well as the mass media, solidifying their standing in the realm of environmental activism. Additionally, their status as a private company increases their capacity to take sustainable measures (i.e. they do not have to worry about their stock price in relation to how they conduct their operations). If they issued public stock, Patagonia’s corporate initiatives would not line up with investor interests, yet they continue to grow at a rapid pace despite their consideration of profit maximization to be of less importance. On Black Friday in 2011, Patagonia released an advertisement in the *New York Times* which featured the company’s top selling R2 Fleece captioned “Don’t Buy This Jacket”, Figure 2 (MacKinnon, 2019). The advertisement was a direct hit towards the behaviors of its customers in an eye-opening attempt to push viewers towards responsible consumption practices. With this advertisement, they allude to the idea that competitive markets provoke companies to establish trends in order to pursue profit and argue that consumerism must be predicated upon necessity with responsible practice in mind. Additionally, it urges the customer to reconsider their privilege by reminding them of their financial ability to purchase a high-quality product like theirs. The ensuing result of the advertisement was the exact opposite of what it set out to accomplish; sales of the jacket quickly skyrocketed in a prototypical case of reverse psychology. The message could not have been clearer, yet buyers acted on impulse as they played into the narrative that Patagonia wished to expose. Despite this setback, they have continued to hold true to their claims. In 2013, the company launched its Responsible Economy campaign in which they claim that “growth is a dead end” (MacKinnon, 2019). They continue to support the idea that environmental destruction is a manifestation of a much larger problem — “annual compounded economic growth” (MacKinnon, 2019). In an effort to discourage

complete story of the clothing company's transformation. Today, Patagonia's equitable, free-thinking values merely serve as a justification for many to not feel pretentious for giving into an expensive trend.

The clothing industry today is at a crossroads. While much is being done in attempt to mitigate the destruction of consumerism and greenwashing, these actions are simply not enough. Recycled polyester fabric may serve as a bridge solution to a healthier environmental future in the clothing industry but through its mainstream existence, hazardous problems remain unsolved. Patagonia is also at a crossroads with regard to its unignorable economic value and as the company is now valued over \$1 billion, they must acknowledge their indisputable contribution to consumerism despite their sustainable efforts. Although they do fall victim to a consumer-driven economy, they deserve the credit of serving as an example of a clothing company that can still uphold sustainable values and practices while remaining profitable. Regardless, consumer demand has resulted in a clothing industry which has not acknowledged the importance of the Earth's limited ecological capacity. This economic plague has led to the degradation of natural resources while putting all life in danger. This ignorance is the driving force of climate change — the undeniable concern of our future. This is the same kind of ignorance that blinds the judgement of countless consumers when they use companies like Patagonia to buy into trends which create the illusion of high social stature. These buyers are filled with a false sense of social recognition while exhibiting ignorance towards the unignorable environmental crisis of our future that they contribute to regularly. Reversing this privileged ignorance showcased by consumers and corporations is the fight worth fighting for companies like Patagonia that wish to truly ground their values into the ideologies of their consumers. As Greta Thunberg pointed out in her speech at the U.N. Climate Action Summit, "We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all

[corporations] can talk about is money and fairy tales of economic growth" (NPR, 2019). If the environmental crisis is to be overcome, companies like Patagonia must stop taking half measures and begin utilizing their widespread influence in order to open the eyes of consumers and corporations to their own impact on our world in both the environmental and social spheres in which we live.

REFERENCES

- Carr, Steve A. 2017. "Sources and Dispersive modes of micro-fibers in the environment. *Integrated Environmental Assessment & Management* 13 (3): 466-69. doi:10.1002/ieam.1916
- Don't Buy This Jacket, Black Friday and the New York Times - The Cleanest Line. (2011). *The Cleanest Line*. Retrieved 14 February 2020, from <https://www.patagonia.com/blog/2011/11/dont-buy-this-jacket-black-friday-and-the-new-york-times/>
- Here's the Secret to Creating a Mission Statement That Works (and How to Get Started). (2018). *Inc.com*. Retrieved 14 November 2019, from <https://www.inc.com/amy-vetter/how-do-patagonia-rei-life-is-good-create-loyal-customers-it-starts-with-their-mission-statement.html>
- History of Patagonia - A Company Created by Yvon Chouinard. (2020). *Patagonia.com*. Retrieved 13 November 2019, from <https://www.patagonia.com/company-history.html>
- Lowe, Elizabeth (2014). *Fashion-history.lovetoknow.com*. Retrieved 27 September 2019, from <https://fashion-history.lovetoknow.com/fabrics-fibers/polyester>

MacKinnon, J., Remnick, D., Mayer, J., Glasser, S., Entous, A., & Cassidy, J. et al. (2019). Patagonia's Anti-Growth Strategy. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved 27 September 2019, from <https://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/patagonias-anti-growth-strategy>

National Geographic - How Plastic Bottles Are Recycled Into Polyester. (2019). YouTube. Retrieved 27 September 2019, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyF9MxlcItw>

NPR Choice page. (2019). Npr.org. Retrieved 28 September 2019, from <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/23/763452863/transcript-greta-thunbergs-speech-at-the-u-n-climate-action-summit>

Paddison, L. (2016). Single clothes wash may release 700,000 microplastic fibres, study finds. *the Guardian*. Retrieved 26 September 2019, from <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/sep/27/washing-clothes-releases-water-polluting-fibres-study-finds>

Polyester Production, Price and Market Forecast. (2019). *Plastics Insight*. Retrieved 24 October 2019, from <https://www.plasticsinsight.com/resin-intelligence/resin-prices/polyester/#sales>

Teaming Up to Get to the Bottom of Microfiber Pollution - The Cleanest Line. (2019). *The Cleanest Line*. Retrieved 22 September 2019, from <https://www.patagonia.com/blog/2019/02/teaming-up-to-get-to-the-bottom-of-microfiber-pollution/>

ANNE HUSBAND

SUMM 100: Foundations of Writing
Nominated by Professor Ben Ristow

prompt

We have read and watched a number of vivid and powerful narratives by Martin Luther King Jr., Donald Hall, Gloria Anzaldúa, and in the film *At the River I Stand*. As you have learned through your reading for the course, narratives capture personal stories alongside larger cultural and historical moments. In the narratives you have read, the writers have surrounded their own stories with the stories of others. In addition, the writers have chosen to relate their stories to issues that relate to culture and life as a whole. For this assignment, you should write a narrative that tells a story that captures how you intersect and engage with the world around you.

For this assignment, you should focus on your story rather than a simple theme or idea. Your story should demonstrate the ability to use evocative detail and *showing rather than telling*. Use your story as a vehicle into a conversation that centers in and around culture (language/literacy, identity, family, education, etc.). Ideally, your story will invite the reader to reexamine what they know about themselves and push them to reconsider their relationship to the world around them. This essay is a personal narrative insofar as it asks you to examine your life and the people/places/interactions that surround you. Be imaginative, honest, and take risks in writing.

cover letter

For a person who has spent so much time absorbed in their own mind, the fact that this is the first personal narrative work I've written comes as a shock to myself. But there is a first for everything, and that is no different for finding the words to express an intimate and tumultuous period of my life.

When faced with the prompt for this paper, my biggest roadblock was actually starting. I had convinced myself that my stories weren't worth telling, that I didn't even have any stories to tell. I found that approaching this essay by focusing on myself just wasn't going to work, so I circumvented this struggle by writing about a relationship that played a key role in my life. By focusing on my relationship with my previous cat, and my current cat, I was able to present my state in life at the time, and how I dealt with the challenges the world threw my way. Another strategic choice I made, in the second draft, was not revealing the name of my first cat until well into the paper. With this I was able to center the work around the emotional aspect of the relationship and how it developed within the framework of my changing environment, rather than Annabelle herself.

In my initial draft of this essay, my scene work was lacking, and I mostly narrated the story without bringing it to life visually. I wanted the reader to be able to feel the emotion I felt during those years of my life with my cats and dealing with my family's displacement. So for the next iteration of the work I paid close attention to the structure to find the best places for visually descriptive sentences that would liven up the work and deepen the scenery. I fleshed out moments like when I first brought Annabelle home, and went into further detail about the homemade bed and her sleeping satisfied after a meal. I also delved further into my

emotional state going to a new school after my family's abrupt move. Small snippets of dialogue also helped tie certain scenes together, with the context of the interactions with other people in my life making the moments more tangible. Expanding on those specific scenes helped me place a spotlight on the essential moments in the timeline of those years.

As for the final portion of the work where I introduce my current cat, Kebo, I focused greatly on making the distinction between him and Annabelle. While they are both cats, they existed in my life at very different periods, and they essentially represent an ending and beginning of a chapter in my life respectively.

When looking at this essay months later for this submission, I experienced a much harder time with revising, because to me it was already a polished piece for a portfolio. I ended up making edits in places that weren't completely necessary. But getting some feedback from a pair of fresh eyes at the Writing Fellows gave me great insight into what small changes could actually benefit the paper rather than take away from its success as a good story.

It's only now that I realize the intrinsic value of writing this paper when I did. Being able to unpack that part of my life allowed me to enter college with a fresh perspective on what experiences made me who I am and what I value. Overcoming my struggles with self-reflection and successfully writing this story is an accomplishment I'll carry with me for the rest of my college career, and I'm overwhelmingly happy by the fact that others can, and have, read and appreciated my story.

SANDPAPER TONGUE

I regain my physical senses before consciousness, and in those first hazy moments of the morning, my waking body can feel only one thing.

Sandpaper against my forehead.

My eyes snap open and I'm greeted with a pair of sweet yellow-green ones staring back at me, and a rough tongue digging into my skin. To tell me she means business, she gets on top of me and starts pawing at my chest, releasing soft mews in the process, then I know it's finally time to climb out of bed. I've gotten used to feeling that sandpaper against my face when I wake. Her way of showing love. I can still remember how small and scared she was, hiding in that bush with siblings I couldn't keep. The excitement I felt from watching her little eyes was unlike anything I had experienced in my uneventful life in my boring town. When I brought her inside without my mother's knowledge, she huddled in the makeshift bed I made with an old sweater and a cardboard box. Eyes closed and content, with a warm, comfy cat bed, a full belly, all the affection she could ever desire, and safety from the fate of most stray cats. Not left out in the cold and the rain and subjected to the hostility of other cats. She got lucky and found home with me, and I with her.

And I could never be mad at her.

Not when she pooped under the chair in the living room, as if knowing it was wrong, and purposefully choosing a place I couldn't see.

Not when she rightfully lashed out on my thigh when I screamed on the living room floor solely to act how every

elementary schooler is, annoying.

And definitely not when she posed so perfectly for the umpteenth photo, as if aware of how unbelievably cute she is.

She knew she had charm, that's how she nestled her way in our lives so easily, so carelessly. Every day after school when I walked through the front door, the first thing I'd see is her little gray body running from the living room, her tail curling unconsciously.

It was never-ending, suspended in time. I couldn't imagine what life was like without her, and definitely couldn't grasp that she wouldn't, couldn't stay by my side forever. But not all good things last forever, people come and go and the same can be said for the animals you love.

There was no way for me to understand it at the time, how bad our circumstances had gotten. I mean I was 13, preoccupied with simpler things. But my naivety didn't stop my mother from being laid off from her state tutoring job, losing desperately needed income. And the bills just kept piling up, nipping at my mother's feet like mouths begging to be fed food she just didn't have. It got to the point where she could no longer afford to pay rent in one of the cheapest apartment complexes in the area.

I always go with my mother everywhere, that didn't change on those days when we would pack our things into that cold, unsympathetic storage room. Its endless halls reminding me of the maze of life my family was so desperately trying to navigate, and continuously getting lost in. Somehow I managed to hold on this sliver of hope, that everything would turn out okay, that we would be back home before the next school year. Even when we packed the van with our essentials and started driving across the country into more uncertainty. But that hope didn't stop our circumstances from worsening. It couldn't, because I was 13, and the world didn't care, didn't stop, just because of my lack of understanding. Before I knew it, my simple life in Kissimmee, Florida was coming to an abrupt and ground-shaking end.

And I couldn't possibly fathom how my mother must have felt, single with two children to care for, trying to convince us we'd be back home in sweet old Kissimmee by the summer's end in a nice new house to call our own. But she knew it wasn't possible, maybe she was just trying to trick us, and maybe herself. Anything to relieve the crushing weight of the world's indifference for one family.

I caught a glimpse of the future that day, when we left to never come back. During a pitstop, I had convinced myself that she had crawled in the engine of the car never to be seen again. My mother, occupied with getting us out of town, couldn't be bothered to wait for her to come around, I don't suppose I blame her, she had more important things to worry about. Overcome with inconsolable grief, my hysterical crying was the only thing that could be heard in our car on that vibrating highway. It wasn't until she decided to come out from under my seat that the flip switched off in my head, and suddenly everything was okay again. Such a cruel joke for her to play, or maybe she just needed me to understand what I would be feeling later. And with that, she crawls back under the seat lulled to sleep by the hum of the car running. Even though my family was essentially homeless, everything was okay, because she was still there, with her sweet little face and sandpaper tongue.

Sometimes the world inconveniences you, sometimes it hurts you, people you love. But sometimes it takes it a step further, and deconstructs your entire life, flipping the table on my puzzle of life.

Everything was new and strange and uncomfortable, and I struggled. Struggled with this foreign concept of change after so many years of familiarity. Struggled with the school I was dropped in blind. With my ignorance and lack of connections to any of the other students who had grown up together, there was a closeness I just couldn't reproduce. The only familiar pieces of that puzzle were my mother and brother, and her. Annabelle. Even now I clearly

remember how confused and disoriented she was when she came back to our temporary home in my uncle's basement, freshly spayed from the shelter. Her limbs still wobbly and feelingless from the anesthesia, and struggling to carry her body from the crate to a little corner in that cramped bathroom. Scared and confused, just like me. There was no lantern to light our way, no right or wrongs. With an environment full of unappetizing unknowns and what-ifs, we were uncertain of what the future held for us, and if we'll be happy with the result.

But another cold wall stood in my way, and it came in the form of an uncle's allergies. "In the basement," I said, "She'll stay in the basement with us", hovelling like gremlins beneath the earth. But he didn't care, and I don't suppose I blame him either. In his eyes, she was just a little pest, a nuisance to him and nothing else.

A brief goodbye later, and she was gone. As for me, loneliness seeped into the last crevices of my mind, "It was going to be fine though", I thought to myself, "Cousin Alan found a nice home for her, I can still see her". But after everything, why would this work out for me. She was gone and given away again and again until she was with some man who had no name. Dark hair and an expressionless face were the only clues given to suggest the kind of person she ended up with. A picture of her in a window sill with that nameless man was the only hint that she still existed in some world that wasn't mine.

After that, I moved from place to place. Some circumstance, some threat would always make us leave, and for a long time, I had no sense of home. My mother, possibly unaware of how detached I felt, had only one concern. Our safety. And again I was suspended in time. There was no loving trance, no sweet face, and no sandpaper tongue to wake up to. Everything was foreign, cold, and giving off false signs of welcoming affections. Basement, after basement, after basement, losing my sense of self with every passing day. It wasn't the moves themselves that I held so much disdain for, but the reasons for the moves. Lack of money, lack of support

without catches, lack of legal power. Things that shouldn't dictate how one has to live their life.

After what felt like a blurred lifetime of unwanted nomadic style moves, I settled in a not so nice home in disrepair from the last tenants. Spending a good portion of my freshman year of high school packed into one room with my mother, brother, and aunt wasn't an ideal situation for someone who values their alone time. Far too close to them for comfort. The walls were closing in on me, inescapable noise and eyes, always watching, making my nerves feel like static until they went numb. My only solace staying outside or at school well past dismissal period, for some air, some freedom, a chance to ignore the conditions of my current life. And sometimes school was no safe haven either, persistent feelings of loneliness leaving me stranded, floundering for a place where I could just exist without distress. It was a long process, but my mother and aunt worked on trying to make a home of this ruined puzzle. With no money for a contracted renovation, everything was a DIY. A sloppy painting in the works, piece by piece, stroke by stroke.

But . . . something good was on the way.

On a cold night in my second year of high school, my mother waited for me at my bus stop like she usually does because she just cares too much. Parked in the dark corner of the gas station, with only the flickering lights and moths fluttering above the pumps and the passing headlights flashing in my eyes every couple moments or so. My feet felt heavy stepping off the bus after what felt like another wasted day. Physically, I was moving, yet felt so hopelessly stagnant. Making my way across the station my mind was occupied with nothing or maybe everything. Either way, I forgot when I heard soft distressed meows near my car door. I knew that sound, and I turned around, bent down, and was met with a sweet little face, scared and alone, mirroring my own. He was so quick to climb into my arms, preferring my warmth more than the cold, wet concrete he'd been condemned to for who knows how long. I got in the car and my mother said something along the

lines of "not keeping it blah blah blah no cats in the house blah blah blah". But I was too preoccupied with the shivering creature in my lap, his fuzzy black and white coat grimy and damp. A stop at the grocery store, and a pissed on jean later, and he's in the home where he resides at to this day, an uncertain home but one full of familiars. But this isn't your average Oreo, his name is Kebo.

Call it cliché, call it childish, but in those moments where I lay silently on my bed, watching his whole body rise and fall with his breathing, his green eyes lazily looking at me smile for seemingly no reason, I know I was meant to find him underneath that bin. Where my mother waited for me almost every night. He knew he'd find me there, that I was ready to wake up to another sandpaper tongue. After years of feeling like a stranger to myself, and my surroundings, there he was, ready for unconditional love and pets and hugs (when he's in the mood of course). Ready to be something familiar, warm, and comforting. Even if we have to move again someday, or rather when, as long as he and my mother are by my side, I'll always find those pieces of the puzzle.

For Annabelle, for Kebo, and for my Mother who tries so hard and keeps trying. I'll try my best to be happy for them and for me.

BOZZUTO
BOATHOUSE



Abigail Frederick '20
Booklet Design

Caroline Jones '21
Front Cover Art

Liz Carlson '20
Back Cover Art