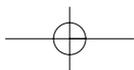
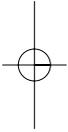
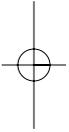

Part I

The Informal Voice: Diaries, Journals, Notebooks, Letters, Lists, Bumper Stickers, Testimony



Christopher Columbus

Land! October 12–14, 1492

Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) landed in the Bahamas on October 12, 1492, seven weeks after setting off to sea in three small boats with a crew of about ninety men. The journal of his first voyage (1492–1493) describes the land and peoples of the Bahamas, Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. The original journal notes were lost; much of what we know today as Columbus’s journals consists of later transcriptions made by Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. The first printed version of the journal appeared in 1825 and was translated into English in 1827. This translation is by Samuel Eliot Morison, a noted biographer of Columbus.

These journal entries describe the arrival of Columbus (here called “the Admiral”) and his first encounters with native people on the island he names San Salvador, or “Holy Savior.” Erecting two flags in honor of his patrons, the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, he claims possession.

Friday, 12 October [1492]

At two hours after midnight appeared the land,¹ at a distance of 2 leagues. They handed all sails and set the *treo*, which is the mainsail without bonnets, and lay-to waiting for daylight Friday, when they arrived at an island of the Bahamas that was called in the Indians’ tongue *Guanahani*. Presently they saw naked people, and the Admiral went ashore in his barge, and Martín Alonso Pinzón and Vicente Yáñez, his brother, who was captain of the *Niña*, followed. The Admiral broke out the royal standard, and the captains [displayed] two banners of the Green Cross, which the Admiral flew on all the vessels as a signal, with an F and a Y,² one at one arm of the cross and the other on the other, and over each letter his or her crown.

Once ashore they saw very green trees, many streams, and fruits of different kinds. The Admiral called to the two captains and to the others who

¹*the land*: San Salvador. —EDs.

²*an F and a Y*: For Ferdinand and Isabella, the king and queen of Spain.

jumped ashore and to Rodrigo de Escobedo, secretary of the whole fleet, and to Rodrigo Sánchez of Segovia, and said that they should bear faith and witness how he before them all was taking, as in fact he took, possession of the said island for the King and Queen, their Lord and Lady, making the declarations that are required, as is set forth at length in the testimonies which were there taken down in writing. Presently there gathered many people of the island. What follows are the formal words of the Admiral, in his Book of the First Navigation and Discovery of these Indies:³

“I,” says he, “in order that they might develop a very friendly disposition towards us, because I knew that they were a people who could better be freed and converted to our Holy Faith by love than by force, gave to some of them red caps and to others glass beads, which they hung on their necks, and many other things of slight value, in which they took much pleasure. They remained so much our [friends] that it was a marvel, later they came swimming to the ships’ boats in which we were, and brought us parrots and cotton thread in skeins and darts and many other things, and we swopped them for other things that we gave them, such as little glass beads and hawks’ bells.⁴ Finally they traded and gave everything they had, with good will; but it appeared to me that these people were very poor in everything. They all go quite naked as their mothers bore them; and also the women, although I didn’t see more than one really young girl. All that I saw were young men, none of them more than 30 years old, very well built, of very handsome bodies and very fine faces; the hair coarse, almost like the hair of a horse’s tail, and short, the hair they wear over their eyebrows, except for a hank behind that they wear long and never cut. Some of them paint themselves black (and they are of the color of the Canary Islanders, neither black nor white), and others paint themselves white, and some red, and others with what they find. And some paint their faces, others the body, some the eyes only, others only the nose. They bear no arms, nor know thereof; for I showed them swords and they grasped them by the blade and cut themselves through ignorance. They have no iron. Their darts are a kind of rod without iron, and some have at the end a fish’s tooth and others, other things. They are generally fairly tall and good looking, well built. I saw some who had marks of wounds on their bodies, and made signs to them to ask what it was, and they showed me that people of other islands which are near came there and wished to capture them, and they defended themselves. And I believed and now believe that people do come here from the mainland to take them as slaves. They ought to be good servants and of good skill, for I see that they repeat very quickly whatever was said to them. I believe that they would easily be made Christians, because it seemed to me that

³*Book of . . . these Indies*: Title of Columbus’s original journal.—EDS.

⁴*hawks’ bells*: Tiny bells used in falconry; these had proved, along with other trifles, popular with African natives.—EDS.

they belonged to no religion. I, please Our Lord, will carry off six of them at my departure to Your Highnesses, that they may learn to speak. I saw no animal of any kind in this island, except parrots.” All these are the words of the Admiral.

Saturday, 13 October [1492]

“At the time of daybreak there came to the beach many of these men, all young men, as I have said, and all of good stature, very handsome people. Their hair is not kinky but straight and coarse like horsehair; the whole forehead and head is very broad, more so than [in] any other race that I have yet seen, and the eyes very handsome and not small. They themselves are not at all black, but of the color of the Canary Islanders; nor should anything else be expected, because this is on the same latitude as the island of Ferro in the Canaries. The legs of all, without exception, are very straight and [they have] no paunch, but are very well proportioned. They came to the ship in dug-outs which are fashioned like a long boat from the trunk of a tree, and all in one piece, and wonderfully made (considering the country), and so big that in some came 40 or 50 men, and others smaller, down to some in which but a single man came. They row with a thing like a baker’s peel and go wonderfully, and if they capsize all begin to swim and right it and bail it out with calabashes⁵ that they carry. They brought skeins of spun cotton, and parrots, and darts, and other trifles that would be tedious to describe, and give all for whatever is given to them. And I was attentive and worked hard to know if there was any gold, and saw that some of them wore a little piece hanging from a thing like a needle case which they have in the nose; and by signs I could understand that, going to the S, or doubling the island to the S, there was a king there who had great vessels of it and possessed a lot. I urged them to go there, and later saw that they were not inclined to the journey. I decided to wait until tomorrow afternoon and then depart to the SW, since, as many of them informed me, there should be land to the S, SW, and NW, and that they of the NW used to come to fight them many times; and so also to go to the SW to search for gold and precious stones. This island is very big and very level; and the trees very green, and many bodies of water, and a very big lake in the middle, but no mountain, and the whole of it so green that it is a pleasure to gaze upon, and this people are very docile, and from their longing to have some of our things, and thinking that they will get nothing unless they give something, and not having it, they take what they can, and soon swim off. But all that they have, they give for whatever is given to them, even bartering for pieces of broken crockery and glass. I even saw 16 skeins of cotton given

⁵*calabashes*: Gourds.—Eds.

for three *ceitis* of Portugal, which is [equivalent to] a *blanca* of Castile,⁶ and in them there was more than an *arroba*⁷ of spun cotton. This I should have forbidden and would not have allowed anyone to take anything, except that I had ordered it all taken for Your Highnesses if there was any there in abundance. It is grown in this island; but from the short time I couldn't say for sure; and also here is found the gold that they wear hanging from the nose. But, to lose no time, I intend to go and see if I can find the Island of *Çipango*.⁸ Now, as it was night, all went ashore in their dugouts."

Sunday, 14 October [1492]

"When day was breaking I ordered the ship's gig and the caravels' barges to be readied, and I went along the coast of the island to the NNE, to see the other side, which was the eastern side, what there was there, and also to see the villages; and soon I saw two or three, and the people who all came to the beach, shouting and giving thanks to God. Some brought us water, others, other things to eat. Others, when they saw that I didn't care to go ashore, plunged into the sea swimming, and came out, and we understood that they asked us if we had come from the sky. And one old man got into the boat, and others shouted in loud voices to all, men and women, 'Come and see the men who come from the sky, bring them food and drink.' Many came and many women, each with something, giving thanks to God, throwing themselves on the ground, they raised their hands to the sky, and then shouted to us to come ashore; but I was afraid to, from seeing a great reef of rocks which surrounded the whole of this island, and inside it was deep water and a harbor to hold all the ships in Christendom, and the entrance of it very narrow. It's true that inside this reef there are some shoal spots, but the sea moves no more than within a well. In order to see all this I kept going this morning, that I might give an account of all to Your Highnesses, and also [to see] where there might be a fortress; and I saw a piece of land which is formed like an island, although it isn't one (and on it there are six houses), the which could in two days be made an island, although I don't see that it would be necessary, because these people are very unskilled in arms, as Your Highnesses will see from the seven that I caused to be taken to carry them off to learn our language and return; unless Your Highnesses should order them all to be taken to Castile or held captive in the same island, for with 50 men they could all be subjected and made to do all that one wished. And, moreover, next to said islet are groves of trees the most beautiful that I have seen, and as green and leafy as those of Castile in the months of April and May; and much water. I inspected all that harbor, and then returned to the ship and made sail, and saw so many islands that I could not decide where

⁶*three ceitis . . . blanca of Castile*: Fractions of a cent.—EDS.

⁷*arroba*: About twenty-five pounds.—EDS.

⁸*Çipango*: Japan; following Marco Polo's report, Columbus thought the island of Japan was approximately fifteen hundred miles from the Asian continent.—EDS.

to go first; and those men whom I had captured made signs to me that they were so many that they could not be counted, and called by their names more than a hundred. Finally I looked for the biggest, and decided to go there, and so I did, and it is probably distant from this island of San Salvador 5 leagues, and some of them more, some less. All are very level, without mountains, and very fertile, and all inhabited, and they make war on one another, although these are very simple people and very fine figures of men.”

The Reader's Presence

1. A ship's log is the captain's legal record of everything that happens on a voyage. What does this portion of Columbus's log emphasize? Why do you think the author focuses on this information? Columbus's original journals were lost; this version was transcribed (and perhaps changed) by Bartolomé de las Casas, who had seen the original log. Does knowing this fact change the way you view the journals' contents? Why or why not?
2. What observations in the log point to misunderstandings between the native people and Columbus's crew? What does each group's overall impression of the other people seem to have been?
3. Compare the perspective in Columbus's logs with George Orwell's description of his feelings about the Burmese in "Shooting an Elephant" (page 221). How much resemblance do you see between the descriptions of native people? How does the "outsider's perspective" differ in these two selections?

Toi Derricotte

From *The Black Notebooks*

In the 1970s Toi Derricotte, a well-known and award-winning African American poet, moved with her husband and young son to an upscale, all-white New Jersey suburb. She soon began keeping a sketchy yet intimate journal of her experiences with friends, neighbors, and family as complex and unpleasant tensions developed. As she wrote, she realized that her disclosures were bringing her face to face with her own shame, her own "internalized racism." She worked at the

notebooks for twenty-five years, slowly revising them until they captured “the language of self-hate, the pain of re-emerging thought and buried memory and consciousness.” The Black Notebooks: An Interior Journey, from which the following selections were extracted, was published in 1997. It won a number of awards and was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. “October” recounts an episode that took place while Derricotte and her husband were house-hunting in New Jersey; the incident in “July” occurred after they had moved to the all-white community.

Born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1941, Derricotte is also the author of four collections of poetry: Natural Birth, The Empress of the Death House, Captivity, and Tender. She currently teaches at the University of Pittsburgh.

OCTOBER

It’s the overriding reality I must get through. Each time I drive down the streets and see only whites, each time I notice no blacks in the local supermarket or walking on the streets, I think, *I’m not supposed to be here.* When I go into real estate agents’ offices, I put on a mask. At first they hope you are in for a quick sell. They show you houses they want to get rid of. But if you stick around, and if you are the “right kind,” they show you ones just newly listed, and sometimes not even on the market. There are neighborhoods that even most white people are not supposed to be in.

I make myself likable, optimistic. I am married, a woman who belongs to a man. Sometimes I reveal I am Catholic, if it might add a feeling of connection. It is not entirely that I am acting. I am myself but slightly strained, like you might strain slightly in order to hear something whispered.

Yesterday an agent took me into the most lily-white neighborhood imaginable, took me right into the spotless kitchen, the dishwasher rumbling, full of the children’s dishes. I opened the closets as if I were a thief, as if I were filthying them, as if I believe about myself what they believe: that I’m “passing,” that my silence is a crime.

The first woman I knew about who “passed” was the bronze-haired daughter of insurance money, one of the wealthiest black families in the United States. I remember my mother telling me stories of her white roadster, how she wrote plays and opened a theater. She had directed several of the plays in which my mother and father had acted. She went to New York to “make it” and was published in the *New York Times*. I was seven when my father went down to meet the midnight train that brought her home: people said she had confessed to her rich fiancé that she was black and he had jilted her. They dressed her in a long bronze dress, a darkened tone of her long auburn hair. She looked like Sleeping Beauty in a casket made especially for her with a glass top.

My mother told me how, when she was young, her mother used to get great pleasure when she would seat her daughter in the white part of the train and then depart, as if she were her servant. She said her mother

would stand alongside the train and wave good-bye with a smile on her face, like a kid who has gotten away with the cookies. And my father told how, during the Detroit riots of 1943, when black men were being pulled off the buses and beaten to death, he used to walk down East Grand Boulevard as a dare.

Of course, we are never caught; it is absolutely inconceivable that we could go unrecognized, that we are that much like them. In fact, we are the same.

When Bruce and I first got married, I had been looking for an apartment for months. Finally, I found a building in a nice neighborhood with a playground nearby, and a school that was integrated. I rang the bell and was relieved when the supervisor who came to the door was black. I loved the apartment. Then I became terrified. Should I tell *him* we're black? Would that make my chances of getting the apartment greater? I wondered if he would be glad to have another black family in the building, or if maybe his job was dependent on his keeping us out. I decided to be silent, to take the chance that he liked me.

When I left, sailing over the George Washington Bridge, I had my first panic attack. I thought I might drive my car right over the edge. I felt so high up there, so disconnected, so completely at my own mercy. Some part of me doesn't give a fuck about boundaries — in fact, sees the boundaries and is determined to dance over them no matter what the consequences are. I am so precarious, strung out between two precipices, that even when I get to the other side, I am still not down, still not so low I can't harm myself.

I could hardly control my car, my heart pounding, my hands sweaty on the wheel. I had to pull off the West Side Highway as soon as I could, and I went into the first place I could find, a meat-packing house. The kind white man let me use the phone to call Bruce before he took me in a big meat truck to the nearest hospital. The doctor said it was anxiety, and I should just go home and rest. For days I was afraid to come out of my house, and even now, though I push myself to do it, every time I go over a high place, or am in a strange territory, I fear I will lose control, that something horrible and destructive will come out of me.

Each night Bruce and I don't talk about it, as if there were no cost to what I'm doing, or as if whatever the cost is I've got to pay.

JULY

This morning I put my car in the shop. The neighborhood shop. When I went to pick it up I had a conversation with the man who had worked on it. I told him I had been afraid to leave the car there at night with the keys in it. "Don't worry," he said. "You don't have to worry about stealing as long as the niggers don't move in." I couldn't believe it. I hoped I had heard him wrong. "What did you say?" I asked. He repeated the same thing without hesitation.

In the past, my anger would have swelled quickly. I would have blurted out something, hotly demanded he take my car down off the rack immediately, though he had not finished working on it, and taken off in a blaze. I love that reaction. The only feeling of power one can possibly have in a situation in which there is such a sudden feeling of powerlessness is to “do” something, handle the situation. When you “do” something, everything is clear. But this is the only repair shop in the city. Might I have to come back here someday in an emergency?

Blowing off steam is supposed to make you feel better. But in this situation it *doesn't*! After responding in anger, I often feel sad, guilty, frightened, and confused. Perhaps my anger isn't just about race. Perhaps it's like those rapid-fire responses to Bruce — a way of dulling the edge of feelings that lie even deeper.

I let the tension stay in my body. I go home and sit with myself for an hour, trying to grasp the feeling — the odor of self-hatred, the biting stench of shame.

The Reader's Presence

1. In what ways does Derricotte try to fit into a white community? What features of an all-white community does she appear to find desirable? What features worry her? What does she mean by “passing”? How does she feel about the act of “passing”?
2. Why doesn't Derricotte express her anger to the auto mechanic? What explanations does she offer? What feelings does her silence lead to?
3. Compare Derricotte's growing awareness of “the odor of self-hatred, the biting stench of shame” (paragraph 14) to Malcolm X's insights at the end of “Homeboy” (page 194). How do the tones of the two pieces compare? What does this comparison tell you about the differences between a journal entry and an essay?

Joan Didion

On Keeping a Notebook

The author of novels, short stories, screenplays, and essays, Joan Didion (b. 1934) began her career in 1956 as a staff writer at Vogue magazine in New York. In 1963 she published her first novel, *Run River*, and the following year returned to her native California. Didion's essays have appeared in periodicals ranging from *Mademoiselle* to the *National Review*. Her essay "On Keeping a Notebook" can be found in her collection of essays, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (1968). Didion's other nonfiction publications include *The White Album* (1979), *Salvador* (1983), *Miami* (1987), *After Henry* (1992), *Political Fictions* (2001), *Fixed Ideas: America since 9.11* (2003), and *Where I Was From* (2003).

Didion has defined a writer as "a person whose most absorbed and passionate hours are spent arranging words on pieces of paper. I write entirely to find out what's on my mind, what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I'm seeing and what it means, what I want and what I'm afraid of." She has also said that "all writing is an attempt to find out what matters, to find the pattern in disorder, to find the grammar in the shimmer. Actually I don't know whether you find the grammar in the shimmer or you impose a grammar on the shimmer, but I am quite specific about the grammar—I mean it literally. The scene that you see in your mind finds its own structure; the structure dictates the arrangement of the words. . . . All the writer has to do really is to find the words." However, she warns, "You have to be alone to do this."

"That woman Estelle," the note reads, "is partly the reason why George Sharp and I are separated today.' *Dirty crepe-de-Chine wrapper, hotel bar, Wilmington RR, 9:45 a.m. August Monday morning.*"

Since the note is in my notebook, it presumably has some meaning to me. I study it for a long while. At first I have only the most general notion of what I was doing on an August Monday morning in the bar of the hotel across from the Pennsylvania Railroad station in Wilmington, Delaware (waiting for a train? missing one? 1960? 1961? why Wilmington?), but I do remember being there. The woman in the dirty crepe-de-Chine wrapper had come down from her room for a beer, and the bartender had heard before the reason why George Sharp and she were separated today. "Sure," he said, and went on mopping the floor. "You told me." At the other end of the bar is a girl. She is talking, pointedly, not to the man beside her but to a cat lying in the triangle of sunlight cast through the open door. She is wearing a plaid silk dress from Peck & Peck, and the hem is coming down.

Here is what it is: The girl has been on the Eastern Shore, and now she is going back to the city, leaving the man beside her, and all she can

see ahead are the viscous summer sidewalks and the 3 A.M. long-distance calls that will make her lie awake and then sleep drugged through all the steaming mornings left in August (1960? 1961?). Because she must go directly from the train to lunch in New York, she wishes that she had a safety pin for the hem of the plaid silk dress, and she also wishes that she could forget about the hem and the lunch and stay in the cool bar that smells of disinfectant and malt and make friends with the woman in the crepe-de-Chine wrapper. She is afflicted by a little self-pity, and she wants to compare Estelles. That is what that was all about.

Why did I write it down? In order to remember, of course, but exactly what was it I wanted to remember? How much of it actually happened? Did any of it? Why do I keep a notebook at all? It is easy to deceive oneself on all those scores. The impulse to write things down is a peculiarly compulsive one, inexplicable to those who do not share it, useful only accidentally, only secondarily, in the way that any compulsion tries to justify itself. I suppose that it begins or does not begin in the cradle. Although I have felt compelled to write things down since I was five years old, I doubt that my daughter ever will, for she is a singularly blessed and accepting child, delighted with life exactly as life presents itself to her, unafraid to go to sleep and unafraid to wake up. Keepers of private notebooks are a different breed altogether, lonely and resistant rearrangers of things, anxious malcontents, children afflicted apparently at birth with some presentiment of loss.

My first notebook was a Big Five tablet, given to me by my mother with the sensible suggestion that I stop whining and learn to amuse myself by writing down my thoughts. She returned the tablet to me a few years ago; the first entry is an account of a woman who believed herself to be freezing to death in the Arctic night, only to find, when day broke, that she had stumbled onto the Sahara Desert, where she would die of the heat before lunch. I have no idea what turn of a five-year-old's mind could have prompted so insistently "ironic" and exotic a story, but it does reveal a certain predilection for the extreme which has dogged me into adult life; perhaps if I were analytically inclined I would find it a truer story than any I might have told about Donald Johnson's birthday party or the day my cousin Brenda put Kitty Litter in the aquarium.

So the point of my keeping a notebook has never been, nor is it now, to have an accurate factual record of what I have been doing or thinking. That would be a different impulse entirely, an instinct for reality which I sometimes envy but do not possess. At no point have I ever been able successfully to keep a diary; my approach to daily life ranges from the grossly negligent to the merely absent, and on those few occasions when I have tried dutifully to record a day's events, boredom has so overcome

me that the results are mysterious at best. What is this business about “shopping, typing piece, dinner with E, depressed”? Shopping for what? Typing what piece? Who is E? Was this “E” depressed, or was I depressed? Who cares?

In fact I have abandoned altogether that kind of pointless entry; instead I tell what some would call lies. “That’s simply not true,” the members of my family frequently tell me when they come up against my memory of a shared event. “The party was *not* for you, the spider was *not* a black widow, *it wasn’t that way at all.*” Very likely they are right, for not only have I always had trouble distinguishing between what happened and what merely might have happened, but I remain unconvinced that the distinction, for my purposes, matters. The cracked crab that I recall having for lunch the day my father came home from Detroit in 1945 must certainly be embroidery, worked into the day’s pattern to lend verisimilitude; I was ten years old and would not now remember the cracked crab. The day’s events did not turn on cracked crab. And yet it is precisely that fictitious crab that makes me see the afternoon all over again, a home movie run all too often, the father bearing gifts, the child weeping, an exercise in family love and guilt. Or that is what it was to me. Similarly, perhaps it never did snow that August in Vermont; perhaps there never were flurries in the night wind, and maybe no one else felt the ground hardening and summer already dead even as we pretended to bask in it, but that was how it felt to me, and it might as well have snowed, could have snowed, did snow.

How it felt to me: that is getting closer to the truth about a notebook. I sometimes delude myself about why I keep a notebook, imagine that some thrifty virtue derives from preserving everything observed. See enough and write it down, I tell myself, and then some morning when the world seems drained of wonder, some day when I am only going through the motions of doing what I am supposed to do, which is write—on that bankrupt morning I will simply open my notebook and there it will all be, a forgotten account with accumulated interest, paid passage back to the world out there: dialogue overheard in hotels and elevators and at the hatcheck counter in Pavillon (one middle-aged man shows his hat check to another and says, “That’s my old football number”); impressions of Bettina Aptheker and Benjamin Sonnenberg and Teddy (“Mr. Acapulco”) Stauffer; careful *aperçus*¹ about tennis bums and failed fashion models and Greek shipping heiresses, one of whom taught me a significant lesson (a lesson I could have learned from F. Scott Fitzgerald, but perhaps we all must meet the very rich for ourselves) by asking, when I arrived to interview her in her orchid-filled sitting room on the second day of a paralyzing New York blizzard, whether it was snowing outside.

¹*aperçus*: Summarizing glimpse or insight (French).—Eds.

I imagine, in other words, that the notebook is about other people. But of course it is not. I have no real business with what one stranger said to another at the hatcheck counter in Pavillon; in fact I suspect that the line "That's my old football number" touched not my own imagination at all, but merely some memory of something once read, probably "The Eighty-Yard Run."² Nor is my concern with a woman in a dirty crepe-de-Chine wrapper in a Wilmington bar. My stake is always, of course, in the unmentioned girl in the plaid silk dress. *Remember what it was to be me*: that is always the point.

It is a difficult point to admit. We are brought up in the ethic that others, any others, all others, are by definition more interesting than ourselves; taught to be diffident, just this side of self-effacing. ("You're the least important person in the room and don't forget it," Jessica Mitford's³ governess would hiss in her ear on the advent of any social occasion; I copied that into my notebook because it is only recently that I have been able to enter a room without hearing some such phrase in my inner ear.) Only the very young and the very old may recount their dreams at breakfast, dwell upon self, interrupt with memories of beach picnics and favorite Liberty lawn dresses and the rainbow trout in a creek near Colorado Springs. The rest of us are expected, rightly, to affect absorption in other people's favorite dresses, other people's trout. 10

And so we do. But our notebooks give us away, for however dutifully we record what we see around us, the common denominator of all we see is always, transparently, shamelessly, the implacable "I." We are not talking here about the kind of notebook that is patently for public consumption, a structural conceit for binding together a series of graceful *pensées*;⁴ we are talking about something private, about bits of the mind's string too short to use, an indiscriminate and erratic assemblage with meaning only for its maker.

And sometimes even the maker has difficulty with the meaning. There does not seem to be, for example, any point in my knowing for the rest of my life that, during 1964, 720 tons of soot fell on every square mile of New York City, yet there it is in my notebook, labeled "FACT." Nor do I really need to remember that Ambrose Bierce liked to spell Leland Stanford's⁵ name "£eland \$tanford" or that "smart women almost always wear black in Cuba," a fashion hint without much potential for practical application. And does not the relevance of these notes seem marginal at best?:

²"*The Eighty-Yard Run*": Popular short story by Irwin Shaw.—Eds.

³*Jessica Mitford* (1917–1996): British satirical writer.—Eds.

⁴*pensées*: Thoughts or reflections (French).—Eds.

⁵*Bierce . . . Stanford's*: Ambrose Bierce (1842–1914?), American journalist and short story writer known for his savage wit; Leland Stanford (1824–1893), wealthy railroad builder who was a governor of California and the founder of Stanford University.—Eds.

In the basement museum of the Inyo County Courthouse in Independence, California, sign pinned to a mandarin coat: "This MANDARIN COAT was often worn by Mrs. Minnie S. Brooks when giving lectures on her TEAPOT COLLECTION."

Redhead getting out of car in front of Beverly Wilshire Hotel, chinchilla stole, Vuitton bags with tags reading:

MRS. LOU FOX
HOTEL SAHARA
VEGAS

Well, perhaps not entirely marginal. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Minnie S. Brooks and her MANDARIN COAT pull me back into my own childhood, for although I never knew Mrs. Brooks and did not visit Inyo County until I was thirty, I grew up in just such a world, in houses cluttered with Indian relics and bits of gold ore and ambergris and the souvenirs my Aunt Mercy Farnsworth brought back from the Orient. It is a long way from that world to Mrs. Lou Fox's world, where we all live now, and is it not just as well to remember that? Might not Mrs. Minnie S. Brooks help me to remember what I am? Might not Mrs. Lou Fox help me to remember what I am not?

But sometimes the point is harder to discern. What exactly did I have in mind when I noted down that it cost the father of someone I know \$650 a month to light the place on the Hudson in which he lived before the Crash? What use was I planning to make of this line by Jimmy Hoffa:⁶ "I may have my faults, but being wrong ain't one of them"? And although I think it interesting to know where the girls who travel with the Syndicate have their hair done when they find themselves on the West Coast, will I ever make suitable use of it? Might I not be better off just passing it on to John O'Hara?⁷ What is a recipe for sauerkraut doing in my notebook? What kind of magpie keeps this notebook? "*He was born the night the Titanic went down.*" That seems a nice enough line, and I even recall who said it, but is it not really a better line in life than it could ever be in fiction?

But of course that is exactly it: not that I should ever use the line, but that I should remember the woman who said it and the afternoon I heard it. We were on her terrace by the sea, and we were finishing the wine left from lunch, trying to get what sun there was, a California winter sun. The woman whose husband was born the night the *Titanic* went down wanted to rent her house, wanted to go back to her children in Paris. I remember wishing that I could afford the house, which cost \$1,000 a

⁶*Jimmy Hoffa* (1913–1975?): Controversial leader of the Teamsters Union who disappeared in the mid-seventies.—Eds.

⁷*John O'Hara* (1905–1970): American novelist who wrote several books about gangsters.—Eds.

month. "Someday you will," she said lazily. "Someday it all comes." There in the sun on her terrace it seemed easy to believe in someday, but later I had a low-grade afternoon hangover and ran over a black snake on the way to the supermarket and was flooded with inexplicable fear when I heard the checkout clerk explaining to the man ahead of me why she was finally divorcing her husband. "He left me no choice," she said over and over as she punched the register. "He has a little seven-month-old baby by her, he left me no choice." I would like to believe that my dread then was for the human condition, but of course it was for me, because I wanted a baby and did not then have one and because I wanted to own the house that cost \$1,000 a month to rent and because I had a hangover.

It all comes back. Perhaps it is difficult to see the value in having one's self back in that kind of mood, but I do see it; I think we are well advised to keep on nodding terms with the people we used to be whether we find them attractive company or not. Otherwise they turn up unannounced and surprise us, come hammering on the mind's door at 4 A.M. of a bad night and demand to know who deserted them, who betrayed them, who is going to make amends. We forget all too soon the things we thought we could never forget. We forget the loves and the betrayals alike, forget what we whispered and what we screamed, forget who we were. I have already lost touch with a couple of people I used to be; one of them, a seventeen-year-old, presents little threat, although it would be of some interest to me to know again what it feels like to sit on a river levee drinking vodka-and-orange-juice and listening to Les Paul and Mary Ford⁸ and their echoes sing "How High the Moon" on the car radio. (You see I still have the scenes, but I no longer perceive myself among those present, no longer could even improvise the dialogue.) The other one, a twenty-three-year-old, bothers me more. She was always a good deal of trouble, and I suspect she will reappear when I least want to see her, skirts too long, shy to the point of aggravation, always the injured party, full of recriminations and little hurts and stories I do not want to hear again, at once saddening me and angering me with her vulnerability and ignorance, an apparition all the more insistent for being so long banished.

It is a good idea, then, to keep in touch, and I suppose that keeping in touch is what notebooks are all about. And we are all on our own when it comes to keeping those lines open to ourselves: your notebook will never help me, nor mine you. "*So what's new in the whiskey business?*" What could that possibly mean to you? To me it means a blonde in a Pucci bathing suit sitting with a couple of fat men by the pool at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Another man approaches, and they all regard one another in silence for a while. "*So what's new in the whiskey business?*" one of the fat men finally says by way of welcome, and the blonde stands up, arches one foot

⁸*Les Paul and Mary Ford*: Husband-and-wife musical team of the forties and fifties who had many hit records.—EDS.

and dips it in the pool, looking all the while at the cabaña where Baby Pignatari is talking on the telephone. That is all there is to that, except that several years later I saw the blonde coming out of Saks Fifth Avenue in New York with her California complexion and a voluminous mink coat. In the harsh wind that day she looked old and irrevocably tired to me, and even the skins in the mink coat were not worked the way they were doing them that year, not the way she would have wanted them done, and there is the point of the story. For a while after that I did not like to look in the mirror, and my eyes would skim the newspapers and pick out only the deaths, the cancer victims, the premature coronaries, the suicides, and I stopped riding the Lexington Avenue IRT because I noticed for the first time that all the strangers I had seen for years—the man with the seeing-eye dog, the spinster who read the classified pages every day, the fat girl who always got off with me at Grand Central—looked older than they once had.

It all comes back. Even that recipe for sauerkraut: even that brings it back. I was on Fire Island when I first made that sauerkraut, and it was raining, and we drank a lot of bourbon and ate the sauerkraut and went to bed at ten, and I listened to the rain and the Atlantic and felt safe. I made the sauerkraut again last night and it did not make me feel any safer, but that is, as they say, another story.

The Reader's Presence

1. Notice that Didion begins her essay not with a general comment about notebooks but with an actual notebook entry. What does the entry sound like at first? What effect do you think Didion wants it to have on you as a reader?
2. Consider the comparison Didion makes in paragraph 6 between a notebook and a diary. How do they differ? Why is she fond of one and not the other? How does her example of a diary entry support her distinction?
3. Didion's notebook entries were never intended to have an audience. How is that apparent from the entries themselves? Compare Didion's ideas about keeping a notebook to Virginia Woolf's diary entries on the writing process (page 66). Focus especially on the first paragraph, in which Woolf discusses the advantages of a form of writing that is for "[her] own eye only." Where do you fit in as a reader of Didion's work? of Woolf's work? Do you think the two writers would agree about the uses of private diaries?

Anne Frank

From *The Diary of a Young Girl*

On her thirteenth birthday (June 12, 1942), and as World War II raged on, Anne Frank began a diary that she called "Kitty." Less than a month later, she and her family went into hiding in a cramped attic in Amsterdam, Holland, in hopes of escaping the Nazis. She continued to keep her diary, addressing it in the form of letters that candidly and freely expressed her most personal thoughts and feelings. Living in conditions that allowed for little privacy, she cherished the secrecy her diary provided: "Who besides me will ever read these letters?" she writes, never dreaming that after her death her intimate diary would be found, published, and read by millions throughout the world.

In August 1944 the Frank family's hiding place was discovered by the Nazis and in March 1945, three months before her sixteenth birthday, Anne died in the concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen. As they searched the attic for valuables and important documents, the Nazis left behind on the floor an insignificant-looking little red-checkered cloth book. Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl was first published in 1952.

THINGS THAT LIE BURIED DEEP IN MY HEART

Saturday, June 20, 1942

I haven't written for a few days, because I wanted first of all to think about my diary. It's an odd idea for someone like me to keep a diary; not only because I have never done so before, but because it seems to me that neither I—nor for that matter anyone else—will be interested in the un-bosomings of a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl. Still, what does that matter? I want to write, but more than that, I want to bring out all kinds of things that lie buried deep in my heart.

There is a saying that "paper is more patient than man"; it came back to me on one of my slightly melancholy days, while I sat chin in hand, feeling too bored and limp even to make up my mind whether to go out or stay at home. Yes, there is no doubt that paper is patient and as I don't intend to show this cardboard-covered notebook, bearing the proud name of "diary," to anyone, unless I find a real friend, boy or girl, probably nobody cares. And now I come to the root of the matter, the reason for my starting a diary: it is that I have no such real friend.

Let me put it more clearly, since no one will believe that a girl of thirteen feels herself quite alone in the world, nor is it so. I have darling parents and a sister of sixteen. I know about thirty people whom one might call friends—I have strings of boy friends, anxious to catch a

glimpse of me and who, failing that, peep at me through mirrors in class. I have relations, aunts and uncles, who are darlings too, a good home, no—I don't seem to lack anything. But it's the same with all my friends, just fun and joking, nothing more. I can never bring myself to talk of anything outside the common round. We don't seem to be able to get any closer, that is the root of the trouble. Perhaps I lack confidence, but anyway, there it is, a stubborn fact and I don't seem to be able to do anything about it.

Hence, this diary. In order to enhance in my mind's eye the picture of the friend for whom I have waited so long, I don't want to set down a series of bald facts in a diary like most people do, but I want this diary itself to be my friend, and I shall call my friend Kitty. No one will grasp what I'm talking about if I begin my letters to Kitty just out of the blue, so albeit unwillingly, I will start by sketching in brief the story of my life.

My father was thirty-six when he married my mother, who was then twenty-five. My sister Margot was born in 1926 in Frankfurt-on-Main, I followed on June 12, 1929, and, as we are Jewish, we emigrated to Holland in 1933, where my father was appointed Managing Director of Travies N.V. This firm is in close relationship with the firm of Kolen & Co. in the same building, of which my father is a partner.

The rest of our family, however, felt the full impact of Hitler's anti-Jewish laws, so life was filled with anxiety. In 1938 after the pogroms, my two uncles (my mother's brothers) escaped to the U.S.A. My old grandmother came to us, she was then seventy-three. After May 1940 good times rapidly fled: first the war, then the capitulation, followed by the arrival of the Germans, which is when the sufferings of us Jews really began. Anti-Jewish decrees followed each other in quick succession. Jews must wear a yellow star, Jews must hand in their bicycles, Jews are banned from trains and are forbidden to drive. Jews are only allowed to do their shopping between three and five o'clock and then only in shops which bear the placard "Jewish shop." Jews must be indoors by eight o'clock and cannot even sit in their own gardens after that hour. Jews are forbidden to visit theaters, cinemas, and other places of entertainment. Jews may not take part in public sports. Swimming baths, tennis courts, hockey fields, and other sports grounds are all prohibited to them. Jews may not visit Christians. Jews must go to Jewish schools, and many more restrictions of a similar kind.

So we could not do this and were forbidden to do that. But life went on in spite of it all. Jopie¹ used to say to me, "You're scared to do anything, because it may be forbidden." Our freedom was strictly limited. Yet things were still bearable.

Granny died in January 1942; no one will ever know how much she is present in my thoughts and how much I love her still.

¹*Jopie*: A girlfriend.—Eds.

In 1934 I went to school at the Montessori Kindergarten and continued there. It was at the end of the school year, I was in form 6B, when I had to say good-bye to Mrs. K. We both wept, it was very sad. In 1941 I went, with my sister Margot, to the Jewish Secondary School, she into the fourth form and I into the first.

So far everything is all right with the four of us and here I come to the present day. 10

I ALWAYS COME BACK TO MY DIARY

Saturday, November 7, 1942

Dear Kitty,

Mummy is frightfully irritable and that always seems to herald unpleasantness for me. Is it just chance that Daddy and Mummy never rebuke Margot and that they always drop on me for everything? Yesterday evening, for instance: Margot was reading a book with lovely drawings in it; she got up and went upstairs, put the book down ready to go on with it later. I wasn't doing anything, so picked up the book and started looking at the pictures. Margot came back, saw "her" book in my hands, wrinkled her forehead and asked for the book back. Just because I wanted to look a little further on, Margot got more and more angry. Then Mummy joined in: "Give the book to Margot; she was reading it," she said. Daddy came into the room. He didn't even know what it was all about, but saw the injured look on Margot's face and promptly dropped on me: "I'd like to see what you'd say if Margot ever started looking at one of your books!" I gave way at once, laid the book down, and left the room—offended, as they thought. It so happened I was neither offended nor cross, just miserable. It wasn't right of Daddy to judge without knowing what the squabble was about. I would have given Margot the book myself, and much more quickly, if Mummy and Daddy hadn't interfered. They took Margot's part at once, as though she were the victim of some great injustice.

It's obvious that Mummy would stick up for Margot; she and Margot always do back each other up. I'm so used to that that I'm utterly indifferent to both Mummy's jawing and Margot's moods.

I love them; but only because they are Mummy and Margot. With Daddy it's different. If he holds Margot up as an example, approves of what she does, praises and caresses her, then something gnaws at me inside, because I adore Daddy. He is the one I look up to. I don't love anyone in the world but him. He doesn't notice that he treats Margot differently from me. Now Margot is just the prettiest, sweetest, most beautiful girl in the world. But all the same I feel I have some right to be taken seriously too. I have always been the dunce, the ne'er-do-well of the family, I've always had to pay double for my deeds, first with the scolding and then

again because of the way my feelings are hurt. Now I'm not satisfied with this apparent favoritism any more. I want something from Daddy that he is not able to give me.

I'm not jealous of Margot, never have been. I don't envy her good looks or her beauty. It is only that I long for Daddy's real love: not only as his child, but for me—Anne, myself.

I cling to Daddy because it is only through him that I am able to retain the remnant of family feeling. Daddy doesn't understand that I need to give vent to my feelings over Mummy sometimes. He doesn't want to talk about it; he simply avoids anything which might lead to remarks about Mummy's failings. Just the same, Mummy and her failings are something I find harder to bear than anything else. I don't know how to keep it all to myself. I can't always be drawing attention to her untidiness, her sarcasm, and her lack of sweetness, neither can I believe that I'm always in the wrong.

We are exact opposites in everything; so naturally we are bound to run up against each other. I don't pronounce judgment on Mummy's character, for that is something I can't judge. I only look at her as a mother, and she just doesn't succeed in being that to me; I have to be my own mother. I've drawn myself apart from them all; I am my own skipper and later on I shall see where I come to land. All this comes about particularly because I have in my mind's eye an image of what a perfect mother and wife should be; and in her whom I must call "Mother" I find no trace of that image.

I am always making resolutions not to notice Mummy's bad example. I want to see only the good side of her and to seek in myself what I cannot find in her. But it doesn't work; and the worst of it is that neither Daddy nor Mummy understands this gap in my life, and I blame them for it. I wonder if anyone can ever succeed in making their children absolutely content.

Sometimes I believe that God wants to try me, both now and later on; I must become good through my own efforts, without examples and without good advice. Then later on I shall be all the stronger. Who besides me will ever read these letters? From whom but myself shall I get comfort? As I need comforting often, I frequently feel weak, and dissatisfied with myself; my shortcomings are too great. I know this, and every day I try to improve myself, again and again.

My treatment varies so much. One day Anne is so sensible and is allowed to know everything; and the next day I hear that Anne is just a silly little goat who doesn't know anything at all and imagines that she's learned a wonderful lot from books. I'm not a baby or a spoiled darling any more, to be laughed at, whatever she does. I have my own views, plans, and ideas, though I can't put them into words yet. Oh, so many things bubble up inside me as I lie in bed, having to put up with people I'm fed up with, who always misinterpret my intentions. That's why in the end I always come back to my diary. That is where I start and finish, because Kitty is always patient. I'll promise her that I shall persevere, in

spite of everything, and find my own way through it all, and swallow my tears. I only wish I could see the results already or occasionally receive encouragement from someone who loves me.

Don't condemn me; remember rather that sometimes I too can reach the bursting point. 20

Yours, Anne

A SWEET SECRET

Wednesday, January 5, 1944

Dear Kitty,

I have two things to confess to you today, which will take a long time. But I must tell someone and you are the best one to tell, as I know that, come what may, you always keep a secret.

The first is about Mummy. You know that I've grumbled a lot about Mummy, yet still tried to be nice to her again. Now it is suddenly clear to me what she lacks. Mummy herself has told us that she looked upon us more as her friends than her daughters. Now that is all very fine, but still, a friend can't take a mother's place. I need my mother as an example which I can follow, I want to be able to respect her. I have the feeling that Margot thinks differently about these things and would never be able to understand what I've just told you. And Daddy avoids all arguments about Mummy.

I imagine a mother as a woman who, in the first place, shows great tact, especially towards her children when they reach our age, and who does not laugh at me if I cry about something—not pain, but other things—like “Mums” does.

One thing, which perhaps may seem rather fatuous, I have never forgiven her. It was on a day that I had to go to the dentist. Mummy and Margot were going to come with me, and agreed that I should take my bicycle. When we had finished at the dentist, and were outside again, Margot and Mummy told me that they were going into the town to look at something or buy something—I don't remember exactly what. I wanted to go, too, but was not allowed to, as I had my bicycle with me. Tears of rage sprang into my eyes, and Mummy and Margot began laughing at me. Then I became so furious that I stuck my tongue out at them in the street just as an old woman happened to pass by, who looked very shocked! I rode home on my bicycle, and I know I cried for a long time.

It is queer that the wound that Mummy made then still burns, when I think of how angry I was that afternoon. 25

The second is something that is very difficult to tell you, because it is about myself.

Yesterday I read an article about blushing by Sis Heyster. This article might have been addressed to me personally. Although I don't blush

Frank / From *The Diary of a Young Girl*

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very easily, the other things in it certainly all fit me. She writes roughly something like this—that a girl in the years of puberty becomes quiet within and begins to think about the wonders that are happening to her body.

I experience that, too, and that is why I get the feeling lately of being embarrassed about Margot, Mummy, and Daddy. Funnily enough, Margot, who is much more shy than I am, isn't at all embarrassed.

I think what is happening to me is so wonderful, and not only what can be seen on my body, but all that is taking place inside. I never discuss myself or any of these things with anybody; that is why I have to talk to myself about them.

Each time I have a period—and that has only been three times—I have the feeling that in spite of all the pain, unpleasantness, and nastiness, I have a sweet secret, and that is why, although it is nothing but a nuisance to me in a way, I always long for the time that I shall feel that secret within me again.

Sis Heyster also writes that girls of this age don't feel quite certain of themselves, and discover that they themselves are individuals with ideas, thoughts, and habits. After I came here, when I was just fourteen, I began to think about myself sooner than most girls, and to know that I am a "person." Sometimes, when I lie in bed at night, I have a terrible desire to feel my breasts and to listen to the quiet rhythmic beat of my heart.

I already had these kinds of feelings subconsciously before I came here, because I remember that once when I slept with a girl friend I had a strong desire to kiss her, and that I did do so. I could not help being terribly inquisitive over her body, for she had always kept it hidden from me. I asked her whether, as proof of our friendship, we should feel one another's breasts, but she refused. I go into ecstasies every time I see the naked figure of a woman, such as Venus, for example. It strikes me as so wonderful and exquisite that I have difficulty in stopping the tears rolling down my cheeks.

If only I had a girl friend!

Yours, Anne

The Reader's Presence

1. Why do you think the thirteen-year-old Frank feels compelled to write? Does she have a purpose for keeping a diary?
2. Speculate why her diary is addressed to "Kitty." What is the effect of personalizing her diary in this way? What does that personalization allow her to do as a person and as a writer?
3. Frank wrote during wartime, but the bulk of her diary is devoted to her relationships with family and friends, and to her experiences

as a teenager whose mind and body are changing. Walt Whitman (page 60), Virginia Woolf (page 66), and Michihiko Hachiya (page 34) also kept journals during wartime. How do these writers deal with what is going on around them? How do they deal with their feelings? How do their ways of expressing context and feelings compare to Frank's?

Michihiko Hachiya

From *Hiroshima Diary*

On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima and introduced a new, devastating weapon into modern war. Two days later, the military dropped another bomb on Nagasaki, forcing the Japanese government into an unconditional surrender. For years, the Japanese survivors of the blasts suffered from unhealing burns, radiation poisoning, cancers, and a score of other illnesses. At first, the Japanese had no idea what had hit them, though rumors of a new secret weapon circulated rapidly. Most Americans today know of the bombing mainly through repeated images of the mushroom cloud itself; rarely do they see photographs or footage of the destruction and casualties. One of the most vivid accounts of the bombing and its immediate aftermath can be found in a diary kept by a Hiroshima physician, Michihiko Hachiya, who, though severely injured himself, miraculously found the time to record both his professional observations of a medical nightmare and his human impressions of an utterly destroyed community. Published on the tenth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, Hiroshima Diary (1955) gained widespread attention. The diary runs only for some two months, from the moment of the blast on the sunny morning of August 6 to the end of September, when the American occupation was well under way.

WHAT HAD HAPPENED?

August 6, 1945

Badly injured from the blast, Dr. Hachiya managed to make his way to the hospital where he served as director and which, fortunately, was quite near his house. He spent several days in bed and did not begin writing his diary until August 8. As we can see from the following passage, however, the events were still fresh in his mind.

The hour was early; the morning still, warm, and beautiful. Shimmering leaves, reflecting sunlight from a cloudless sky, made a pleasant contrast with shadows in my garden as I gazed absently through wide-flung doors opening to the south.

Clad in drawers and undershirt, I was sprawled on the living room floor exhausted because I had just spent a sleepless night on duty as an air warden in my hospital.

Suddenly, a strong flash of light startled me—and then another. So well does one recall little things that I remember vividly how a stone lantern in the garden became brilliantly lit and I debated whether this light was caused by a magnesium flare or sparks from a passing trolley.

Garden shadows disappeared. The view where a moment before all had been so bright and sunny was now dark and hazy. Through swirling dust I could barely discern a wooden column that had supported one corner of my house. It was leaning crazily and the roof sagged dangerously.

Moving instinctively, I tried to escape, but rubble and fallen timbers barred the way. By picking my way cautiously I managed to reach the *rōka*¹ and stepped down into my garden. A profound weakness overcame me, so I stopped to regain my strength. To my surprise I discovered that I was completely naked. How odd! Where were my drawers and undershirt?

What had happened?

All over the right side of my body I was cut and bleeding. A large splinter was protruding from a mangled wound in my thigh, and something warm trickled into my mouth. My cheek was torn, I discovered as I felt it gingerly, with the lower lip laid wide open. Embedded in my neck was a sizable fragment of glass which I matter-of-factly dislodged, and with the detachment of one stunned and shocked I studied it and my blood-stained hand.

Where was my wife?

Suddenly thoroughly alarmed, I began to yell for her: “Yaeko-san! Yaeko-san! Where are you?”

Blood began to spurt. Had my carotid artery been cut? Would I bleed to death? Frightened and irrational, I called out again: “It’s a five-hundred-ton bomb! Yaeko-san, where are you? A five-hundred-ton bomb has fallen!”

Yaeko-san, pale and frightened, her clothes torn and blood-stained, emerged from the ruins of our house holding her elbow. Seeing her, I was reassured. My own panic assuaged, I tried to reassure her.

“We’ll be all right,” I exclaimed. “Only let’s get out of here as fast as we can.”

¹*rōka*: A narrow outside hall.—EDS.

She nodded, and I motioned for her to follow me.

The shortest path to the street lay through the house next door so through the house we went—running, stumbling, falling, and then running again until in headlong flight we tripped over something and fell sprawling into the street. Getting to my feet, I discovered that I had tripped over a man's head.

"Excuse me! Excuse me, please!" I cried hysterically.

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There was no answer. The man was dead. The head had belonged to a young officer whose body was crushed beneath a massive gate.

We stood in the street, uncertain and afraid, until a house across from us began to sway and then with a rending motion fell almost at our feet. Our own house began to sway, and in a minute it, too, collapsed in a cloud of dust. Other buildings caved in or toppled. Fires sprang up and whipped by a vicious wind began to spread.

It finally dawned on us that we could not stay there in the street, so we turned our steps towards the hospital. Our home was gone; we were wounded and needed treatment; and after all, it was my duty to be with my staff. This latter was an irrational thought—what good could I be to anyone, hurt as I was.

We started out, but after twenty or thirty steps I had to stop. My breath became short, my heart pounded, and my legs gave way under me. An overpowering thirst seized me and I begged Yaeko-san to find me some water. But there was no water to be found. After a little my strength somewhat returned and we were able to go on.

I was still naked, and although I did not feel the least bit of shame, I was disturbed to realize that modesty had deserted me. On rounding a corner we came upon a soldier standing idly in the street. He had a towel draped across his shoulder, and I asked if he would give it to me to cover my nakedness. The soldier surrendered the towel quite willingly but said not a word. A little later I lost the towel, and Yaeko-san took off her apron and tied it around my loins.

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Our progress towards the hospital was interminably slow, until finally, my legs, stiff from drying blood, refused to carry me farther. The strength, even the will, to go on deserted me, so I told my wife, who was almost as badly hurt as I, to go on alone. This she objected to, but there was no choice. She had to go ahead and try to find someone to come back for me.

Yaeko-san looked into my face for a moment, and then, without saying a word, turned away and began running towards the hospital. Once, she looked back and waved and in a moment she was swallowed up in the gloom. It was quite dark now, and with my wife gone, a feeling of dreadful loneliness overcame me.

I must have gone out of my head lying there in the road because the next thing I recall was discovering that the clot on my thigh had been dislodged and blood was again spurting from the wound. I pressed my hand to the bleeding area and after a while the bleeding stopped and I felt better.

Could I go on?

I tried. It was all a nightmare—my wounds, the darkness, the road ahead. My movements were ever so slow; only my mind was running at top speed. 25

In time I came to an open space where the houses had been removed to make a fire lane. Through the dim light I could make out ahead of me the hazy outlines of the Communications Bureau's big concrete building, and beyond it the hospital. My spirits rose because I knew that now someone would find me; and if I should die, at least my body would be found.

I paused to rest. Gradually things around me came into focus. There were the shadowy forms of people, some of whom looked like walking ghosts. Others moved as though in pain, like scarecrows, their arms held out from their bodies with forearms and hands dangling. These people puzzled me until I suddenly realized that they had been burned and were holding their arms out to prevent the painful friction of raw surfaces rubbing together. A naked woman carrying a naked baby came into view. I averted my gaze. Perhaps they had been in the bath. But then I saw a naked man, and it occurred to me that, like myself, some strange thing had deprived them of their clothes. An old woman lay near me with an expression of suffering on her face; but she made no sound. Indeed, one thing was common to everyone I saw—complete silence. . . .

PIKADON
August 9, 1945

As the wounded poured into Dr. Hachiya's hospital, the physicians tried to make sense of the symptoms and injuries, which did not resemble those of ordinary bombings. Because many of the patients with horrible symptoms showed no obvious signs of injuries, Dr. Hachiya could only speculate about what might have occurred. He had no idea as yet what type of weapon had been used against them.

Today, Dr. Hanaoka's² report on the patients was more detailed. One observation particularly impressed me. Regardless of the type of injury, nearly everybody had the same symptoms. All had a poor appetite, the majority had nausea and gaseous indigestion, and over half had vomiting.

Not a few had shown improvement since yesterday. Diarrhea, though, continued to be a problem and actually appeared to be increasing. Distinctly alarming was the appearance of blood in the stools of patients who earlier had only diarrhea. The isolation of these people was becoming increasingly difficult.

One seriously ill man complained of a sore mouth yesterday, and today, numerous small hemorrhages began to appear in his mouth and 30

²*Dr. Hanaoka*: Head of Internal Medicine.—EDS.

under his skin. His case was the more puzzling because he came to the hospital complaining of weakness and nausea and did not appear to have been injured at all.

This morning, other patients were beginning to show small subcutaneous hemorrhages, and not a few were coughing and vomiting blood in addition to passing it in their stools. One poor woman was bleeding from her privates. Among these patients there was not one with symptoms typical of anything we knew, unless you could excuse those who developed signs of severe brain disease before they died.

Dr. Hanaoka believed the patients could be divided into three groups:

1. Those with nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea who were improving.
2. Those with nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea who were remaining stationary.
3. Those with nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea who were developing hemorrhage under the skin or elsewhere. 35

Had these patients been burned or otherwise injured, we might have tried to stretch the logic of cause and effect and assume that their bizarre symptoms were related to injury, but so many patients appeared to have received no injury whatsoever that we were obliged to postulate an insult heretofore unknown.

The only other possible cause for the weird symptoms observed was a sudden change in atmospheric pressure. I had read somewhere about bleeding that follows ascent to high altitudes and about bleeding in deep sea divers who ascend too rapidly from the depths. Having never seen such injury I could not give much credence to my thoughts.

Still, it was impossible to dismiss the thought that atmospheric pressure had had something to do with the symptoms of our patients. During my student days at Okayama University, I had seen experiments conducted in a pressure chamber. Sudden, temporary deafness was one symptom everyone complained of if pressure in the chamber was abruptly altered.

Now, I could state positively that I heard nothing like an explosion when we were bombed the other morning, nor did I remember any sound during my walk to the hospital as houses collapsed around me. It was as though I walked through a gloomy, silent motion picture. Others whom I questioned had had the same experience.

Those who experienced the bombing from the outskirts of the city characterized it by the word: *pikadon*.³ 40

³*pikadon*: *Pika* means a glitter, sparkle, or bright flash of light, like a flash of lightning. *Don* means a boom! or loud sound. Together, the words came to mean to the people of Hiroshima an explosion characterized by a flash and a boom. Hence: "flash-boom!" Those who remember the flash only speak of the "*pika*"; those who were far enough from the hypocenter to experience both speak of the "*pikadon*."—EDS.

How then could one account for my failure and the failure of others to hear an explosion except on the premise that a sudden change in atmospheric pressure had rendered those nearby temporarily deaf: Could the bleeding we were beginning to observe be explained on the same basis?

Since all books and journals had been destroyed, there was no way to corroborate my theories except by further appeal to the patients. To that end Dr. Katsube⁴ was asked to discover what else he could when he made ward rounds.

It was pleasing to note my scientific curiosity was reviving, and I lost no opportunity to question everyone who visited me about the bombing of Hiroshima. Their answers were vague and ambiguous, and on one point only were they in agreement: a new weapon had been used. *What* the new weapon was became a burning question. Not only had our books been destroyed, but our newspapers, telephones, and radios as well. . . .

The Reader's Presence

1. In many ways it is fortunate that one of the diaries kept immediately after the atomic blast was written by a medical doctor. Why? How does it contribute to the diary's historical value? Could this be a disadvantage? Would you have preferred to read a patient's diary instead? If so, why?
2. Hachiya's first entry on August 6 was written a few days after the events it depicts. What indications do you receive from the writing that the entry was predated? Can you detect any differences from the second entry (August 9), which was apparently composed on the stated day?
3. Hachiya's confusion reveals itself in his writing in many ways: short paragraphs, multiple questions, and unconfirmed guesses. Throughout, his matter-of-fact language belies his panic. How does Hachiya's characterization of the bombing of Hiroshima compare with Don DeLillo's account of the attack on the World Trade Center (page 361)? Is a survivor's account necessarily more vivid than that of a firsthand witness?

⁴*Dr. Katsube*: Chief of Surgery.—Eds.

Amanda Hesser

Shop Write

Amanda Hesser (b. 1971) has been called “one of the best—if not the best— young food writers.” After graduating in 1993 from Bentley College in Waltham, Massachusetts, with a major in economics and finance, she began to study food and cuisine seriously, interning at restaurants in France and Italy, and finally earning her culinary degree from a renowned French cooking school in 1997. Joining the New York Times as a staff writer that year, she is now the food editor at the New York Times Magazine and editor of the magazine’s Living supplement, which features lifestyle and entertainment trends and reports on the latest in food and wine. Hesser has written two books, The Cook and the Gardener (1999) and Cooking for Mr. Latte (2003), based on her “Food Diary” column in the Times.

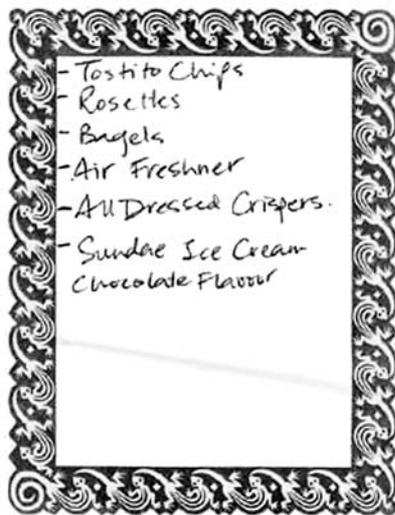
Hesser has said that her writing has tried “to capture that real-life slice of how we live and how we really eat, how we really cook, with all the flaws and sort of satisfaction bundled into one.” “Shop Write” appeared in the New York Times Magazine on October 10, 2004.

If you are what you eat, then you are also what you buy to eat. And mostly what people buy is scrawled onto a grocery list, those ethereal scraps of paper that record the shorthand of where we shop and how we feed ourselves. Most grocery lists end up in the garbage. But if you live in St. Louis, they might have a half-life you never imagined: as a cultural document, posted on the Internet.

For the past decade, Bill Keagy, 33, the features photo editor at *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, has been collecting grocery lists and since 1999 has been posting them online at www.grocerylists.org. The collection, which now numbers more than 500 lists, is strangely addictive.

The lists elicit twofold curiosity—about the kind of meal the person was planning and the kind of person who would make such a meal. What was the shopper with vodka, lighters, milk and ice cream on his list planning to do with them? In what order would they be consumed? Was it a he or a she? Who had written “Tootie food, kitten chow, bird food stick, toaster scrambles, coffee drinks”? Some shoppers organize their lists by aisle; others start with dairy, go to cleaning supplies and then back to dairy before veering off to Home Depot. A few meticulous ones note the price of every item. One shopper had written in large letters on an envelope, simply, “Milk.”

The thin lines of ink and pencil jutting and looping across crinkled and torn pieces of paper have a purely graphic beauty. One of life’s most banal duties, viewed through the curatorial lens, can somehow seem pregnant with possibility. It can even appear poetic, as in the list that reads “meat, cigs, buns, treats.”



PRINT MEDIA PROGRAM
Algonquin College

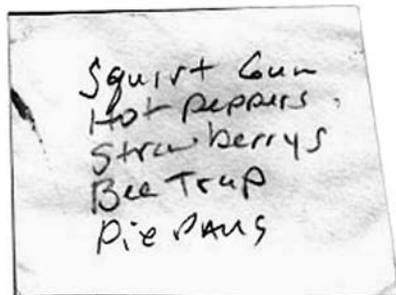
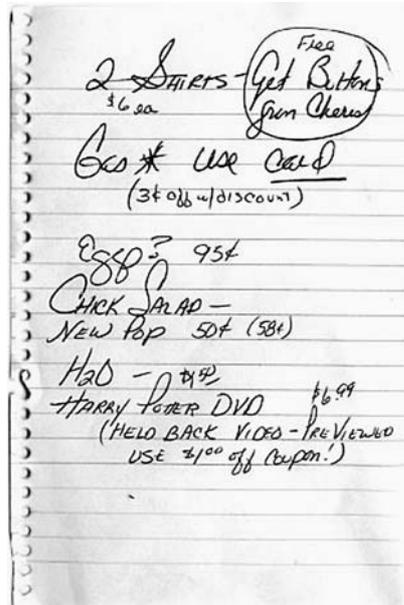
(August). A page called “mageirevo” features “incredibly vague recipes,” including one for “happy fun pork time,” and a page called “found in the

5 One thing Keaggy discovered is that Dan Quayle is not alone—few people can spell bananas and bagels, let alone potato.¹ One list calls for “suchi” and “strimp.” “Some people pass judgment on the things they buy,” Keaggy says. At the end of one list, the shopper wrote “Bud Light” and then “good beer.” Another scribbled “good loaf of white bread.” Some pass judgment on themselves, like the shopper who wrote “read, stay home or go somewhere, I act like my mom, go to Kentucky, underwear, lemon.”

People send messages to one another, too. Buried in one list is this statement: “If you buy more rice, I’ll punch you.” And plenty of shoppers, like the one with both ice cream and diet pills on the list, reveal their vices.

Keaggy has always been a collector and recorder. When he was young, it was rocks and key chains. As a teenager, he published zines on freestyle biking and punk rock. These were just a warm-up. His collection of rocks in the shapes of shoes has been featured at the St. Louis Artists’ Guild. And in addition to his grocery-list Web site, he has an extensive personal Web site, www.keaggy.com (the grocery lists can be found from here). At keaggy.com, there is a segment called “What’s for Dinner?” Every time you click on it, a new dining haiku appears. There is a sandwich Web log, to which he adds photos of the sandwiches he eats every day during National Sandwich Month

¹*potato*: In 1992, Vice president Dan Quayle made headlines when he spelled *potato* wrong (he spelled it *potatoe*) while visiting a New Jersey sixth-grade classroom.—EDs.



street” is dedicated to junk (not what he calls it) that he found when he biked to work from May 1 to May 31. And in “age: 30,” Keaggy posts photos he took of himself every day of his 31st year, along with a brief description of what he was doing that day, which is almost as addictive as the grocery lists.

Keaggy finds most of his grocery lists at Schnucks, a regional chain with a branch down the street from his home. (Some lists have been sent in by a cashier at a grocery store in Iowa and someone in Tucson who once collected grocery lists.) Keaggy spots the lists in grocery carts, mostly, and sometimes in the checkout line or on shelves. “The funny thing is you never find them on the ground,” he says. “On the best day, I’ll find two or three, and on a bad day I’ll find zero.”

As a group, the lists are an enlightening barometer of eating and shopping trends, as well as of attitudes toward food. Almost none of them include fresh herbs, but cumin is surprisingly common. Evaporated milk is still popular, and feta is increasingly so. . . . Many shoppers

are brand loyal: Swiffer, the disposable floor-mopping sheet, is doing a bang-up business in the heartland. And Parkay and Cool Whip are alive and well.

Except for one list, which includes everything from pigs in a blanket and “block cheese” to salmon and anchovy fillets, most lists fall into one of two categories. They seem to have been compiled either by foodies or by convenience junkies. This growing divide has been discussed in the food industry for nearly a decade, but no statistics have measured it. In these lists, however, the gap is as clear as day. A number of people simply write “food,” as if it were like getting gas or picking up dry cleaning.

“You can see their lives from these lists even if you haven’t been in their houses,” Keaggy says.

Which bodes poorly for the the individual who wrote: “Shell corn, bind holder, belt, knife, coolers, map, cellphone, hunting license, say goodbye to wife, kill deer, Mt. View Motel, kill deer.”

The Reader's Presence

1. What meaning does Hesser say can be read from people's grocery lists? What value does Keaggy's collection of lists have? How do the lists themselves function as a kind of journal or diary entry?
2. According to Hesser, what do the grocery lists reveal about American food habits? What kinds of shoppers do the lists exemplify? What might the lists in the essay tell you about the shoppers?
3. Read "On Dumpster Diving" by Lars Eighner (page 379). Do you think the discarded food that Eighner finds reveals information about the people who threw it away? Which would you expect to be more revealing, the items people purchase or the items they discard? Why?

Adam Mayblum

The Price We Pay

Adam Mayblum, the 35-year-old managing director of the May Davis Group private investment firm, was in his office on the eighty-seventh floor of the North Tower of the World Trade Center when one of the hijacked planes struck on September 11, 2001. He escaped just before the tower's collapse. The following day, at his home in New Rochelle, New York, Mayblum composed a terse, harrowing e-mail describing his experience and sent the 2,100-word piece out to friends and family. This e-mail quickly circulated throughout the world, bringing Mayblum more than 1,000 responses from strangers offering thanks, sympathy, and prayers. One woman wrote, "The fact that you survived . . . helped to lift the terrible weight from my heart." Mayblum, who disclaims the label of "hero" by pointing out that firefighters and police officers were the ones who rushed in to save lives, attributes the enormous outpouring of support to the fact that his e-mail "helped a lot of people understand what was going on inside the building at the same time they had seen what was going on outside."

My name is Adam Mayblum. I am alive today. I am committing this to "paper" so I never forget. SO WE NEVER FORGET. I am sure that this is one of thousands of stories that will emerge over the next several days and weeks.

I arrived as usual a little before 8 A.M. My office was on the eighty-seventh floor of 1 World Trade Center, aka: Tower 1, aka: the North Tower. Most of my associates were in by 8:30 A.M. We were standing around, joking around, eating breakfast, checking e-mails, and getting set for the day when the first plane hit just a few stories above us. I must stress that we did not know that it was a plane. The building lurched violently and shook as if it were an earthquake. People screamed. I watched out my window as the building seemed to move ten to twenty feet in each direction. It rumbled and shook long enough for me to get my wits about myself and grab a coworker and seek shelter under a doorway. Light fixtures and parts of the ceiling collapsed. The kitchen was destroyed. We were certain that it was a bomb. We looked out the windows. Reams of paper were flying everywhere, like a ticker tape parade. I looked down at the street. I could see people in Battery Park City looking up. Smoke started billowing in through the holes in the ceiling. I believe that there were thirteen of us.

We did not panic. I can only assume that we thought that the worst was over. The building was standing and we were shaken but alive. We checked the halls. The smoke was thick and white and did not smell like I imagined smoke should smell. Not like your BBQ or your fireplace or even a bonfire. The phones were working. My wife had taken our nine-month-old for his checkup. I called my nanny at home and told her to page my wife, tell her that a bomb went off, I was O.K., and on my way out, I grabbed my laptop. Took off my T-shirt and ripped it into three pieces. Soaked it in water. Gave two pieces to my friends. Tied my piece around my face to act as an air filter. And we all started moving to the staircase. One of my dearest friends said that he was staying until the police or firemen came to get him. In the halls there were tiny fires and sparks. The ceiling had collapsed in the men's bathroom. It was gone along with anyone who may have been in there. We did not go in to look. We missed the staircase on the first run and had to double back. Once in the staircase we picked up fire extinguishers just in case. On the eighty-fifth floor a brave associate of mine and I headed back up to our office to drag out my partner who stayed behind. There was no air, just white smoke. We made the rounds through the office calling his name. No response. He must have succumbed to the smoke. We left defeated in our efforts and made our way back to the stairwell. We proceeded to the seventy-eighth floor where we had to change over to a different stairwell. Seventy-eight is the main junction to switch to the upper floors. I expected to see more people. There were some fifty to sixty more. Not enough. Wires and fires all over the place. Smoke too. A brave man was fighting a fire with the emergency hose. I stopped with friends to make sure that everyone from our office was accounted for. We ushered them and confused people into the stairwell. In retrospect, I recall seeing Harry, my head trader, doing the same several yards behind me. I am only thirty-five. I have known him for over fourteen years. I headed into the stairwell with two friends.

We were moving down very orderly in Stairwell A. Very slowly. No panic. At least not overt panic. My legs could not stop shaking. My heart was pounding. Some nervous jokes and laughter. I made a crack about ruining a brand new pair of Merrells. Even still, they were right, my feet felt great. We all laughed. We checked our cell phones. Surprisingly, there was a very good signal, but the Sprint network was jammed. I heard that the BlackBerry two-way e-mail devices worked perfectly. On the phones, one out of twenty dial attempts got through. I knew I could not reach my wife so I called my parents. I told them what happened and that we were all O.K. and on the way down. Soon, my sister-in-law reached me. I told her we were fine and moving down. I believe that was about the sixty-fifth floor. We were bored and nervous. I called my friend Angel in San Francisco. I knew he would be watching. He was amazed I was on the phone. He told me to get out, that there was another plane on its way. I did not know what he was talking about. By now the second plane had struck Tower 2. We were so deep into the middle of our building that we did not hear or feel anything. We had no idea what was really going on. We kept making way for wounded to go down ahead of us. Not many of them, just a few. No one seemed seriously wounded. Just some cuts and scrapes. Everyone cooperated. Everyone was a hero yesterday. No questions asked. I had coworkers in another office on the seventy-seventh floor. I tried dozens of times to get them on their cell phones or office lines. It was futile. Later I found that they were alive. One of the many miracles on a day of tragedy.

On the fifty-third floor we came across a very heavysset man sitting on the stairs. I asked if he needed help or was he just resting. He needed help. I knew I would have trouble carrying him because I have a very bad back. But my friend and I offered anyway. We told him he could lean on us. He hesitated, I don't know why. I said do you want to come or do you want us to send help for you. He chose for help. I told him he was on the fifty-third floor in Stairwell A and that's what I would tell the rescue workers. He said O.K. and we left.

On the forty-fourth floor my phone rang again. It was my parents. They were hysterical. I said relax, I'm fine. My father said get out, there is a third plane coming. I still did not understand. I was kind of angry. What did my parents think? Like I needed some other reason to get going? I couldn't move the thousand people in front of me any faster. I know they love me, but no one inside understood what the situation really was. My parents did. Starting around this floor the firemen, policemen, WTC K-9 units without the dogs, anyone with a badge, started coming up as we were heading down. I stopped a lot of them and told them about the man on Fifty-three and my friend on Eighty-seven. I later felt terrible about this. They headed up to find those people and met death instead.

On the thirty-third floor I spoke with a man who somehow knew most of the details. He said two small planes hit the building. Now we

all started talking about which terrorist group it was. Was it an internal organization or an external one? The overwhelming but uninformed opinion was Islamic fanatics. Regardless, we now knew that it was not a bomb and there were potentially more planes coming. We understood.

On the third floor the lights went out and we heard and felt this rumbling coming towards us from above. I thought the staircase was collapsing upon itself. It was 10 A.M. now and that was Tower 2 collapsing next door. We did not know that. Someone had a flashlight. We passed it forward and left the stairwell and headed down a dark and cramped corridor to an exit. We could not see at all. I recommended that everyone place a hand on the shoulder of the person in front of them and call out if they hit an obstacle so others would know to avoid it. They did. It worked perfectly. We reached another stairwell and saw a female officer emerge soaking wet and covered in soot. She said we could not go that way, it was blocked. Go up to Four and use the other exit. Just as we started up she said it was O.K. to go down instead. There was water everywhere. I called out for hands on shoulders again and she said that was a great idea. She stayed behind instructing people to do that. I do not know what happened to her.

We emerged into an enormous room. It was light but filled with smoke. I commented to a friend that it must be under construction. Then we realized where we were. It was the second floor. The one that overlooks the lobby. We were ushered out into the courtyard, the one where the fountain used to be. My first thought was of a TV movie I saw once about nuclear winter and fallout. I could not understand where all of the debris came from. There was at least five inches of this gray pasty dusty drywall soot on the ground as well as a thickness of it in the air. Twisted steel and wires. I heard there were bodies and body parts as well, but I did not look. It was bad enough. We hid under the remaining overhangs and moved out to the street. We were told to keep walking towards Houston Street. The odd thing is that there were very few rescue workers around. Less than five. They all must have been trapped under the debris when Tower 2 fell. We did not know that and could not understand where all of that debris came from. It was just my friend Kern and I now. We were hugging but sad. We felt certain that most of our friends ahead of us died and we knew no one behind us.

We came upon a post office several blocks away. We stopped and looked up. Our building, exactly where our office is (was), was engulfed in flame and smoke. A postal worker said that Tower 2 had fallen down. I looked again and sure enough it was gone. My heart was racing. We kept trying to call our families. I could not get in touch with my wife. Finally I got through to my parents. Relieved is not the word to explain their feelings. They got through to my wife, thank G-d, and let her know I was alive. We sat down. A girl on a bike offered us some water. Just as she took the cap off her bottle we heard a rumble. We looked up and our building, Tower 1, collapsed. I did not note the time but I am told it was 10:30 A.M. We had been out less than fifteen minutes.

We were mourning our lost friends, particularly the one who stayed in the office, as we were now sure that he had perished. We started walking towards Union Square. I was going to Beth Israel Medical Center to be looked at. We stopped to hear the president speaking on the radio. My phone rang. It was my wife. I think I fell to my knees crying when I heard her voice. Then she told me the most incredible thing. My partner who had stayed behind called her. He was alive and well. I guess we just lost him in the commotion. We started jumping and hugging and shouting. I told my wife that my brother had arranged for a hotel in midtown. He can be very resourceful in that way. I told her I would call her from there. My brother and I managed to get a gypsy cab to take us home to Westchester instead. I cried on my son and held my wife until I fell asleep. As it turns out, my partner, the one who I thought had stayed behind, was behind us with Harry Ramos, our head trader. This is now secondhand information. They came upon Victor, the heavysset man on the fifty-third floor. They helped him. He could barely move. My partner bravely/stupidly tested the elevator on the fifty-second floor. He rode it down to the sky lobby on Forty-four. The doors opened, it was fine. He rode it back up and got Harry and Victor. I don't yet know if anyone else joined them. Once on Forty-four they made their way back into the stairwell. Someplace around the thirty-ninth to thirty-sixth floors they felt the same rumble I felt on the third floor. It was 10 A.M. and Tower 2 was coming down. They had about thirty minutes to get out. Victor said he could no longer move. They offered to have him lean on them. He said he couldn't do it. My partner hollered at him to sit on his butt and scooch down the steps. He said he was not capable of doing it. Harry told my partner to go ahead of them. Harry once had a heart attack and was worried about this man's heart. It was his nature to be this way. He was/is one of the kindest people I know. He would not leave a man behind. My partner went ahead and made it out. He said he was out maybe ten minutes before the building came down. This means that Harry had maybe twenty-five minutes to move Victor thirty-six floors. I guess they moved one floor every 1.5 minutes. Just a guess. This means Harry was around the twentieth floor when the building collapsed. As of now twelve of thirteen people are accounted for. As of 6 P.M. yesterday his wife had not heard from him. I fear that Harry is lost. However, a short while ago I heard that he may be alive. Apparently there is a Web site with survivor names on it and his appears there. Unfortunately, Ramos is not an uncommon name in New York. Pray for him and all those like him.

With regards to the firemen heading upstairs, I realize that they were going up anyway. But it hurts to know that I may have made them move quicker to find my friend. Rationally, I know this is not true and that I am not the responsible one. The responsible ones are in hiding somewhere on this planet and damn them for making me feel like this. But they should know that they failed in terrorizing us. We were calm. Those men and women that went up were heroes in the face of it all. They must

have known what was going on and they did their jobs. Ordinary people were heroes, too. Today the images that people around the world equate with power and democracy are gone, but “America” is not an image, it is a concept. That concept is only strengthened by our pulling together as a team. If you want to kill us, leave us alone because we will try to do it by ourselves. If you want to make us stronger, attack and we unite. This is the ultimate failure of terrorism against the United States and the ultimate price we pay to be free, to decide where we want to work, what we want to eat, and when and where we want to go on vacation. The very moment the first plane was hijacked, democracy won.

The Reader’s Presence

1. Whom does Mayblum talk to as he moves down the stairs? What subject(s) do they discuss? Whom did you talk to following the attacks on the World Trade Center? To what extent do these conversations confirm Mayblum’s claim that “If you want to make us stronger, attack and we unite” (paragraph 12)?
2. As Mayblum mentions the floors he passes in his descent, how does the countdown affect his overall story? Point to specific parts of his story that are more hurried than other parts. What about the moments in which he pauses? How do these moments affect your reading?
3. Compare Mayblum’s account with Tim Townsend’s in “The First Hours” (page 51). How does each person think of his actions after the disaster? Which account do you find more moving? Why?

Sparrow and Art Chantry

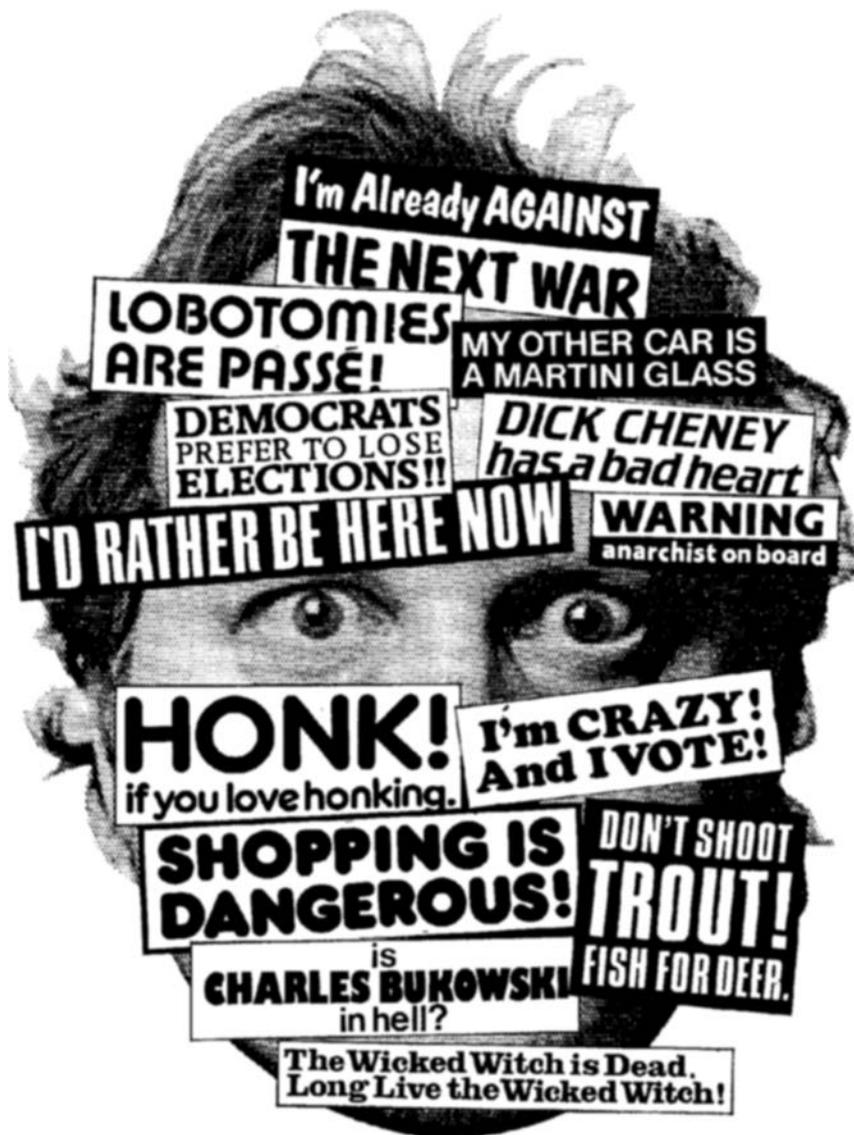
My Career in Bumper Stickers

Sparrow—writer, street poet, social commentator, and gossip columnist—lives and works in the small town of Phoenicia, New York. His columns appear in two local newspapers, the Phoenicia Times and the Olive Press, and in the regional publication Chronogram. Though far from the mainstream in content, his work has also been published in and reviewed by such publications as the Village Voice, Grist Online, and the New Yorker. His books include Republican like Me (1998), in

which he describes his run for president on the "Pajama Party" ticket, and *Yes, You ARE a Revolutionary!* (2002), a blend of "gonzo poetry" and self-help advice.

Art Chantry is the American underground's leading graphic artist-designer. His work has had a profound impact on the history of graphic design in the United States and is found on the covers of hundreds of 45s, LPs, and CDs, and in ads, logos, and various other commercial and not-so-commercial venues. His posters are the subject of numerous books, including *Some People Can't Surf: The Graphic Design of Art Chantry* by Julie Lasky and *45 RPM* by Spencer Drate and Charles L. Granata.

"My Career in Bumper Stickers" appeared in the Op-Ed section of the New York Times in February 2005.



Like many people (most people?), I have always wanted to write bumper stickers. However, I was not willing to invest the money and effort to print my messages, so my ambition languished.

Then, several years ago, I took a new job as a gossip columnist for my local newspaper. In this role, I was to invent fake gossip (as actual gossip might offend the townsfolk). In my column, which is called “Heard by a Bird,” I began to transcribe amusing bumper stickers I saw on Main Street, like this.

Stop Global Whining.

One day it struck me that I could write my own messages, and pretend they were real—just as Jorge Luis Borges suggested it was superior to write reviews of imaginary books, rather than actually write the books. I would create, if not true bumper stickers, then the *rumor* of bumper stickers.

My early bumper stickers were often rural. Phoenicia is a center of fly-fishing, which led me to invent slogans like *If Fishing Is a Religion, I’m a Bishop* and *I’ve Been Fishing So Long, My Worm Gets Social Security*. Gradually I ventured into politics, hiding behind the anonymity of my form: *Stupidity + Rage = War*. I also began reading the Northern Sun catalog, which sells “T-shirts, bumper stickers, buttons, posters, etc., covering a wide variety of issues.” Many of its slogans, I noticed, are parodies of other slogans. I began to play this game, too:

If Thought Is Outlawed, Only Outlaws Will Have Thoughts. Warning: I Brake for Chinese Restaurants. Don’t Blame Me—I Voted for Britney Spears. This Bumper Sticker Is Covering Up My Last Bumper Sticker.

Eventually I realized: bumper stickers are the haiku of the American highway. Could one such slogan actually be a haiku? I turned this thought itself into a haiku:

*Why Can’t a Bumper
Sticker Be a Haiku? No
One Can Quite Explain.*

I am proudest of my one attempt to spread goodness through the world:
*I Transferred Out of the School of Hard Knocks
Into the School of Soft Rubs.*

Above are a few other bumper stickers I have written over the years. I encourage everyone to become one of the proud, nameless writers of adhesive rectangular wisdom. It’s easy: just write down your entire philosophy of life—then remove everything but nine words.

The Reader’s Presence

1. What techniques does Sparrow use to turn ordinary phrases into bumper sticker parodies? Examine a few examples and try to explain each example in full. What is the object of the parody? What is gained by limiting the idea to just a few words?

2. Traditionally, a haiku—a Japanese poetic form consisting of three lines with five, seven, and five syllables—refers to a season. How are bumper stickers “the haiku of the American highway” (paragraph 7)? In what ways does Sparrow’s example serve as a haiku? In what ways might it fall short?
3. Compare Chantry’s illustration with Ho Che Anderson’s image, consisting of photographs, graphics, and words, to depict Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech (page 723). Why do you think these artists chose a collage style for their images? Does this style help each artist make an effective point? Why or why not?

Tim Townsend

The First Hours

Tim Townsend is a 32-year-old financial reporter. He was only a few blocks away from his office at the World Financial Center when the first hijacked plane crashed into the World Trade Center tower on September 11, 2001. The following selection, which appeared in Rolling Stone (October 25, 2001), is based on notes he wrote immediately following the attack.

The first thing I saw in the parking lot across Liberty Street from the South Tower was luggage. Burned luggage. A couple of cars were on fire. Half a block east, a man who’d been working out in a South Tower fitness club was walking barefoot over shards of glass, wearing only a white towel around his waist; he still had shaving cream on the left side of his face. Bits of glass were falling to the ground like hail. I ventured a block south, away from the towers, and that’s when I started seeing body parts. At first, just scattered lumps of mangled flesh dotting the road and the sidewalks, then a leg near the gutter. Someone mentioned a severed head over by a fire hydrant. Hunks of metal—some silver and the size of a fist, others green and as big as toasters—were strewn for blocks south of the building. Shoes were everywhere.

“Oh, Jesus,” I heard someone say. “They’re jumping.” Every few moments a body would fall from the North Tower, from about ninety floors up. The jumpers all seemed to come from the floors that were engulfed in flames. Sometimes they jumped in pairs—one just after the

other. They were up so high, it took ten to twelve seconds for each of them to hit the ground. I counted.

What must have been going through their minds, to choose certain death? Was it a decision between one death and another? Or maybe it wasn't a decision at all, their bodies involuntarily recoiling from the heat, the way you pull your hand off a hot stove.

Moments later, a low metallic whine, quickly followed by a high-pitched whoosh, came out of the south. I looked up to see the white belly of an airplane much closer than it should have been. The South Tower of the Trade Center seemed to suck the plane into itself. For an instant it looked like there would be no trauma to the building—it was as if the plane just slipped through a mail slot in the side of the tower, or simply vanished. But then a fireball ballooned out of the top of the building just five blocks from where we stood.

People were running south down West Street toward Battery Park—the southern tip, the end, of Manhattan—and west toward the Hudson River. I ran with the crowd that veered toward the river, looking back over my shoulder at the new gash in the Trade Center. Once relatively safe among the tree-lined avenues of Battery Park City, people hugged each other and some cried.

After about ten minutes, a wave of calm returned to the streets. Police were trying to get the thousands of people south of the World Trade Center off the West Street, east to the FDR Drive, over the Brooklyn Bridge. And still people were throwing themselves out of the North Tower: You could see suit jackets fluttering in the wind and women's dresses billowing like failed parachutes.

But about five minutes later, a sharp cracking sound momentarily replaced the shrill squeal of sirens, and the top half of the South Tower imploded, bringing the entire thing down. It was the most frightened I've ever been. Screaming and sprinting south toward Battery Park, we all flew from the dark cloud that was slowly funneling toward us. At that moment I believed two things about this cloud. One, that it was made not just of ash and soot, but of metal, glass and concrete; and two, that soon this shrapnel would be whizzing by—and perhaps through—my head. A woman next to me turned to run. Her black bag came off her shoulder and a CD holder went flying, sending bright silver discs clattering across the ground. An older man to my right tripped and took a face-first dive across the pavement, glasses flying off his face.

In the seconds, minutes, and hours following the World Trade Center attacks, hundreds—maybe thousands—of ordinary people would find their best selves and become heroes. And then there were the rest of us, running hard, wanting only to live and to talk to someone we loved, even if it meant leaving an old guy lying in the street, glasses gone, a cloud of death and destruction creeping up on him.

I'd always wondered what I'd do in a life-or-death situation. Until that moment, I'd believed I'd do the right thing, would always help the

helpless, most likely without regard for my own well-being. All across lower Manhattan at that moment, people were making similar decisions, so many of them so much more critical than mine. September 11th, 2001, at 9:45 A.M. was not my finest moment. As I turned back to help, I saw two younger guys scoop the fallen man up, and we all continued running south.

After about three blocks, I hid for a moment behind a large Dumpster on the west side of the street. But when I looked back toward the towers, I could see that my Dumpster was no match for the cloud, and I took off again. I ran the last few blocks into Battery Park, where the cloud finally did catch up with the thousands of us fleeing it. I could see only a few feet in front of me, and so I followed the silhouettes I could make out. Because Battery Park is the tip of the island, it wasn't much of a surprise that the crowd would wind up dead-ending at the water. When it happened, the people in the front panicked. So they turned around, screamed and ran back toward us in a stampede. We had nowhere to go—there were thousands of people behind us and hundreds coming back the other way.

As the crowd doubled back on itself, I jumped over a wrought-iron fence and landed in a flower bed. I stayed down for a second, thinking I'd wait out the panic low to the ground. But then I felt other people jumping the fence and landing near me. Thinking I was about to be trampled, I got up and ran behind a nearby tree. In a minute or two the panic subdued, and I hopped back over the fence and onto a park path. But now the air was heavier with debris and there was no clear path out of the park. I took off my tie and wrapped it around my face. People were coughing and stumbling. Some were crying, others screaming. It was difficult to breathe or even keep my eyes open.

Soon, there was another wave of calm and quiet, and the ash that fell from the sky and settled on the grass and trees gave the park the peaceful feel of a light evening snowfall. Eventually, I found a path that led me out to the east side of the Battery area, and I followed a crowd to the FDR. Thousands participated in the exodus up the highway and into Brooklyn. It was now just past ten, and we looked like refugees. In a way, we were. My tie wasn't doing much good against the ash, so I took off my shirt and tied it around my head. We walked in the falling gray dust for fifteen minutes, still hacking, and rubbing our eyes. Then the cloud broke, and, covered in soot, we were in the sunlight again. There wasn't a lot of talking. Some walked in groups, desperately trying to stay together. Others walked alone, crying out the names of friends, co-workers, or loved ones from whom they'd been separated.

At 10:25, as I was getting ready to cross the bridge, another cracking sound came out of the west. We looked behind us and to the left to see the remaining tower collapse. Soon, that ash reached the Manhattan foot of the Brooklyn Bridge, and the bridge was closed. Three hours later, I was finally back in my apartment in Brooklyn. It was nearly one

o'clock. There was a thin layer of ash all over my kitchen from the blast. I made my phone calls and cried with my fiancée. Then I called some friends who'd left messages, checking on me. I called my friend Sully in Boston, and we went through the list of names of our friends who worked in the financial district. I was one of the last to be accounted for. When we'd gotten through most of the names—Sims, Kane, T-Bone, Molloy—Sully said, "It's not all good news. Beezo called his wife from high up in the second building to say he was OK, but she hasn't heard from him since it fell." Beezo—Tom Brennan to those he didn't go to high school or college with—still hasn't been heard from.

As it turns out, when I was watching that tower fall, I was watching my friend die. His wife was at home, in their brand-new house in Westchester County, amid their still boxed-up life. She'd already turned off the TV when Beezo's building collapsed. Their seventeen-month-old daughter is too young to have seen the images of her father's death, but someday—maybe on a distant anniversary of September 11th when each network commemorates the tragedy—I'm sure she'll be able to see it, along with her little brother or sister who is due in two months.

I hung up with Sully and turned on the television to see what I had seen. Places where I once ate lunch or shopped for a sweater or bought stamps were now buried under piles of concrete and metal, as were thousands of people—some of whom I probably rode the subway with every day. One of whom was my friend.

Since then, I've been freakishly fine, given what I'd seen. Maybe it's because I realize how lucky I was—my experience was like Christmas morning compared to what other people went through. Maybe it's because I lack the imagination, or the will, to realize the scope of what I'd seen. But sadness works in bizarre ways. The second night after the attack, I sat in front of the news, alone with my eighth or ninth beer, and I listened to a report about NFL officials considering a postponement of the second week of games. I thought about what a nice gesture that would be, and I cried and cried.

The Reader's Presence

1. How would you characterize Townsend's actions after the World Trade Center disaster? To what extent do you agree with his assessment that he didn't find his best self or act heroically like so many others? What did he do, or not do, that showed him at less than his best? Townsend describes his movements and thoughts step by step—what would you have done differently? What would you have thought differently?

2. Examine the structure of the first paragraph carefully. What significance can you find in the order in which Townsend presents details or in how he describes relatively mundane sights (“[b]urned luggage”) compared to how he describes gruesome sights (“mangled flesh”)? Does he seem more affected by some things than others, or does each thing he encounters seem to affect him similarly? What indicates his level of emotion or detachment throughout the essay? Townsend reports twice during the narrative that he cried: the first time, when he talked to his fiancée, he “cried” (paragraph 13); the second time, when he heard that the NFL was considering canceling games, he “cried and cried” (paragraph 16). What effect(s) does he produce by repeating “cried” in the second instance? What was it about the more trivial instance that makes him emphasize how much he cried?
3. Compare Townsend’s account with Michihiko Hachiya’s in the excerpt from *Hiroshima Diary* (page 34). What writing strategies do these writers adopt to mark the passing of time? What are the similarities and differences in how they interact with other people trying to escape? How does each person think of his actions after the disaster?

Marine Staff Sergeant Aaron Dean White, Army Pfc. Diego Fernando Rincon, Army Specialist Brett T. Christian

Last Letters Home

Even in an age of instant electronic communication, soldiers continue to put pen or pencil to paper as they write to people far from the war zone. These final letters from American soldiers who died in Iraq in 2003 poignantly indicate both the pain and the banality of war. In the first year of the fighting in Iraq, the average age of the American soldiers killed there was twenty-six. The soldiers—men and

women of all races and ethnicities—came from all over the United States and from all kinds of backgrounds. The following letters were written by twenty-seven-year-old Marine Staff Sergeant Aaron Dean White of Shawnee, Oklahoma; nineteen-year-old Army Pfc. Diego Fernando Rincon of Conyers, Georgia; and twenty-seven-year-old Army Specialist Brett T. Christian of North Royalton, Ohio. “Last Letters Home” is excerpted from letters published in *Esquire* magazine in February 2004.

MARINE STAFF SERGEANT AARON DEAN WHITE

20 Mar 03

Dear Mom + Dad

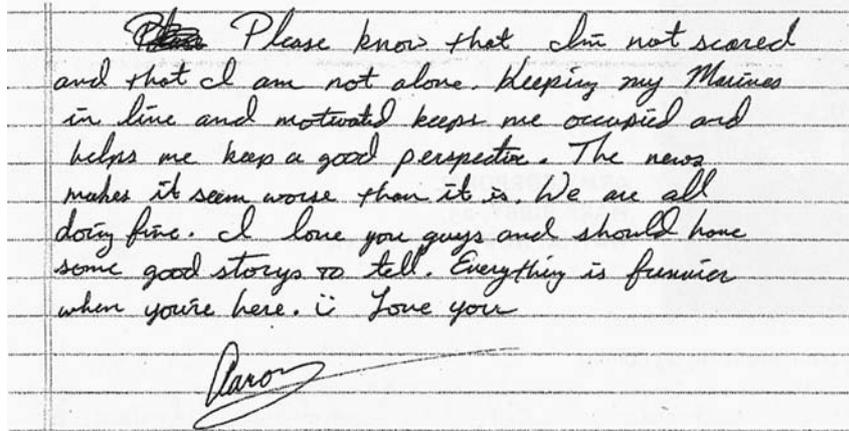
Its the 20th of March here so you can probably guess what my day has been like. We heard first thing this morning about the initial strikes on Iraq. It was somewhat anti-climactic since we were seeing nothing here. Around 11 A.M. we got our first air-raid alarm. It was a Mopp 0¹ alarm, so we only had our flak vest and helmets on. After the all clear was given 3 of us took a Humvee to chow and to get part of our paycheck.

We ate uneventfully and was on our way back to work, almost out of the tent compound where we live. Bet you can guess what happened next. We got an “Alarm Red” with “Bunker Now” orders and MOPP 4 instructions. That meant we hauled ass to the nearest bunker while trying to put on our gas mask and chem suits. It was funny as hell to watch while at the same time I was scared to death. Breathing so hard my mask was sucking up to my face. While in the bunker we felt the impacts of at least two inbound rounds. They were far off. You guys would have been amazed. We were laughing and joking like we were camping or something. After about 45 minutes we were again released as All Clear. We made it out to our Humvee and we’re getting in when . . . You guessed it! Another “Alarm Red.” I made record time for 40 yards. This time we had more company in the Bunker. I was again joking around until some guy started praying. That ruined the mood for me. I wanted to ask him to stop but I guess it was doing him good. Me on the other hand, well it was making me nervous. Like he knew something I didn’t. That was the only time I felt fear. After 20 or so minutes we came out and returned to our work area. A few other Alarms were sounded but it became routine before the end of the day.

So here we are, sitting halfway in our mopp gear, letting the adrenaline leave our bodies. And, you know what, here comes a letter from you two. Made my day. I can’t wait to get out of this airbase. It sucks just sitting here waiting for scuds to hit.

Please know that I’m not scared and that I am not alone. Keeping my Marines in line and motivated keeps me occupied and helps me keep a good perspective. The news makes it seem worse than it is. We are all

¹*Mopp*: Mission-Oriented Protection Posture levels that indicate the protective gear and defensive action required in response to an alarm.—Eds.



doing fine. I love you guys and should have some good stories to tell. Everything is funnier when you're here. 😊 Love you, Aaron

Staff Sergeant White was killed in a helicopter crash on May 19, 2003.

ARMY PFC. DIEGO FERNANDO RINCON

February 22, 2003

Hola Mother,

How are you doing? Good I hope. I'm doing OK I guess. I won't be able to write anymore starting the 28th of this month. We are moving out. We are already packed and ready to move to a tactical Alpha-Alpha (in Iraq). Once that happens, there will not be any mail sent out. We will only receive mail that is less than 12 ounces. At least that's what they said. I'm not sure where exactly we're going to be at yet, but it is said to be a 20-hour drive in the Bradleys.

So I guess the time has finally come for us to see what we are made of, who will crack when the stress level rises and who will be calm all the way through it. Only time will tell. We are at the peak of our training and it's time to put it to the test.

I just want to tell everybody how much you all mean to me and how much I love you all. Mother, I love you so much! I'm not going to give up! I'm living my life one day at a time, sitting here picturing home with a small tear in my eyes, spending time with my brothers who will hold my life in their hands.

I try not to think of what may happen in the future, but I can't stand seeing it in my eyes. There's going to be murders, funerals and tears

rolling down everybody's eyes. But the only thing I can say is, keep my head up and try to keep the faith and pray for better days. All this will pass. I believe God has a path for me.

Whether I make it or not, it's all part of the plan. It can't be changed, only completed.

Mother will be the last word I'll say. Your face will be the last picture that goes through my eyes. I'm not trying to scare you, but it's reality. . . .

I don't know what I'm talking about or why I'm writing it down. Maybe I just want someone to know what goes through my head. . . .

I just hope that you're proud of what I'm doing and have faith in my decisions. I will try hard and not give up. I just want to say sorry for anything I have ever done wrong. And I'm doing it all for you mom. I love you. 15

Your son, Diego Rincon

Pfc. Rincon was killed by a car bomb in central Iraq on March 29, 2003. A Colombian citizen, he was posthumously granted American citizenship.

ARMY SPECIALIST BRETT T. CHRISTIAN

Dear Grandma and Grandpa,

I received the care package you sent, I greatly appreciate it. I shared some of the items with my platoon, so thanks from them too. I hope you both are doing well, as well as my mom and brothers, and Aunt and uncle, if you guys even ever see each other. I've tried to reach you, as well as my mother by phone, with no luck, the numbers I have won't connect for some reason. The phones are pretty bad here, and the mail system is even worse. I'm not sure you'll even receive this letter. I guess the art of delivering mail was lost by the military after the last war. I would appreciate it if you could console my mom, and ask her not to send any red cross messages unless there is an emergency. I have received no mail from her as of yet, and I know I've given her my address. I don't have an address for her, though. No news is good news here, there are worse things that can happen than not hearing from me.

Our living conditions are meager at best. My unit (HHC 2/502 INF of the 101st Airborne Division) is currently occupying the city of Mosul, Iraq, which is in the northern part of the country close to Syria. We are also jointly occupying the city of Falusia (I'm uncertain of the proper spelling) along with 3rd Division. We have occupied other towns in the past, such as Najaf (where the 502nd commandeered the Kufa Cola factory, supplying us with a lifetime supply of soda—its actually pretty good) and the muslim holy city of Kerbela, as well as Baghdad. The closest way I could describe this place is if you could imagine what hell must be like. The days are unbearably hot, and filled with flies. The nights are also hot, but with swarms of mosquitoes instead of flies. The streets are covered

with garbage and sewage, which the livestock enjoys grazing in, and wild packs of dogs seem to run things around here. You can tell these cities were once beautiful, but are now overgrown with weeds and left to decay under years of Saddam's regime. The people are generally pretty nice and seem appreciative of us, no one more than the Kurds. I've been to Kurdistan, and its quite the contrast to here. Its very clean, and there are no beggars or looters there.

This place is still very dangerous. I have been in plenty of fire fights to prove it. As for what you saw on T.V., that wasn't me. Most of the Iraqi military either laid down their weapons, or has been destroyed. We are currently believed to be fighting against members of the former Baath party, and the Fedeyin militia. They are a difficult enemy because they use hit and run tactics, as they would never face us head on. Hopefully some semblance of order will be returned to this area, but regardless of when that happens, we should be returning in September, when I look forward to my first real hamburger in six months. Please give everyone my love, and I hope to see you one day soon.

Love, Brett

Specialist Christian was killed on July 23, 2003, in Mosul, when his convoy came under attack by rocket-propelled grenades. He was posthumously promoted to sergeant.

The Reader's Presence

1. What are the different reasons these soldiers express for communicating with their families? What are their concerns? What do they ask for? How important is it for their families to understand where they are and what they are experiencing?
2. In what ways do the soldiers explicitly or implicitly acknowledge the risks they face? What are their feelings about the danger? How prepared do they seem to be for the possibility of facing injury or death?
3. To what extent do these letters serve as a record of the war in Iraq? How much description do the men give of their daily duties? Compare these letters to the historical accounts of war experiences given by Walt Whitman in the excerpt from *Specimen Days* (page 60) and by Anne Frank in the excerpt from her diary (page 28). How do the various perspectives differ? How does the writer's role (as civilian, nurse, or soldier) affect the story he or she tells?

Walt Whitman

From *Specimen Days:* *Civil War Diary*

If the United States can be said to have a national poet, it would be Walt Whitman (1819–1892). No other American poet has represented the national experience more fully and has had a deeper influence on the shape of our literature. His major work, Leaves of Grass, is almost universally considered a world masterpiece, though when it first appeared in 1855, it was loudly condemned as incoherent and obscene. Born into a working-class family near Huntington, Long Island, Whitman grew up in Brooklyn, New York, where he attended public schools until he dropped out at the age of eleven to start work as an office boy and later as a printer's apprentice. Whitman enjoyed a successful career in newspaper journalism but by the late 1840s decided to concentrate on more literary endeavors, while supporting himself with various jobs and freelance writing. In 1862, as the Civil War intensified, Whitman visited the front in Virginia, where his brother had been wounded. Feeling great sympathy for the average soldier, he settled in Washington, D.C., to perform volunteer work nursing the wounded in military hospitals. He kept notes of this experience and years later included them (with some slight revision) in a volume of reminiscence, Specimen Days (1882), from which the following few passages have been taken.

DOWN AT THE FRONT

*Falmouth, Va., opposite Fredericksburgh,
December 21, 1862*

Whitman kept a diary of his Civil War experiences among the sick and wounded. It now represents one of our literature's most moving on-the-spot accounts of the war's human devastation. Whitman, however, did not intend to compose a literary work when he recorded his entries, which were often written in a hurry and during a pause from emergency duties. When he returned to this diary years later, he sometimes added information in parentheses (his titles, too, are later additions), as you will note in the following passages, but he never allowed himself to edit out the immediacy of his observations and feelings of the moment.

Begin my visits among the camp hospitals in the army of the Potomac. Spend a good part of the day in a large brick mansion on the banks of the Rappahannock, used as a hospital since the battle—seems to have receiv'd only the worst cases. Out doors, at the foot of a tree, within ten yards of the front of the house, I notice a heap of amputated



Wounded soldiers in a Civil War hospital

feet, legs, arms, hands, &c., a full load for a one-horse cart. Several dead bodies lie near, each cover'd with its brown woolen blanket. In the doorway, towards the river, are fresh graves, mostly of officers, their names on pieces of barrel-staves or broken boards, stuck in the dirt. (Most of these bodies were subsequently taken up and transported north to their friends.) The large mansion is quite crowded upstairs and down, everything impromptu, no system, all bad enough, but I have no doubt the best that can be done; all the wounds pretty bad, some frightful, the men in their old clothes, unclean and bloody. Some of the wounded are rebel soldiers and officers, prisoners. One, a Mississippian, a captain, hit badly in leg, I talk'd with some time; he ask'd me for papers, which I gave him. (I saw him three months afterward in Washington, with his leg amputated, doing well.) I went through the rooms, downstairs and up. Some of the men were dying. I had nothing to give at that visit, but wrote a few letters to folks home, mothers, &c. Also talk'd to three or four, who seem'd most susceptible to it, and needing it.

FIFTY HOURS LEFT WOUNDED ON THE FIELD
[undated; most likely late January 1863]

One of the horrors of the war that especially disturbed Whitman was the army's inability to rescue wounded soldiers quickly. Many died unnecessarily in the field on both sides because of inadequate first aid. Whitman noted the following example shortly after he went to the front. Though Whitman was fiercely committed to the Union cause, the entry shows his unwillingness to demonize the Confederate soldier, whom he frequently refers to in his diary as a "secesh" (secessionist).

Here is a case of a soldier I found among the crowded cots in the Patent-office. He likes to have some one to talk to, and we will listen to him. He got badly hit in his leg and side at Fredericksburgh that eventful Saturday, 13th of December. He lay the succeeding two days and nights helpless on the field, between the city and those grim terraces of batteries; his company and regiment had been compell'd to leave him to his fate. To make matters worse, it happen'd he lay with his head slightly down hill, and could not help himself. At the end of some fifty hours he was brought off, with other wounded, under a flag of truce. I ask him how the rebels treated him as he lay during those two days and nights within reach of them—whether they came to him—whether they abused him? He answers that several of the rebels, soldiers and others, came to him at one time and another. A couple of them, who were together, spoke roughly and sarcastically, but nothing worse. One middle-aged man, however, who seem'd to be moving around the field, among the dead and wounded, for benevolent purposes, came to him in a way he will never forget; treated our soldier kindly, bound up his wounds, cheer'd him, gave him a couple of biscuits and a drink of whiskey and water; asked him if he could eat some beef. This good secesh, however, did not change our soldier's position, for it might have caused the blood to burst from the wounds, clotted and stagnated. Our soldier is from Pennsylvania; has had a pretty severe time; the wounds proved to be bad ones. But he retains a good heart, and is at present on the gain. (It is not uncommon for the men to remain on the field this way, one, two, or even four or five days.)

ABRAHAM LINCOLN
August 12, 1863

Whitman was a fervent supporter and great admirer of Lincoln, and throughout his later years often lectured on the assassinated president. His poem on the assassination, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," remains one of America's finest elegies. While in Washington, Whitman saw Lincoln on numerous occasions, though the two never met. In this entry, Whitman obtains a close glimpse of a somber leader.

I see the President almost every day, as I happen to live where he passes to or from his lodgings out of town. He never sleeps at the White House during the hot season, but has quarters at a healthy location some three miles north of the city, the Soldiers' home, a United States military establishment. I saw him this morning about 8½ coming in to business, riding on Vermont avenue, near L street. He always has a company of twenty-five or thirty cavalry, with sabres drawn and held upright over their shoulders. They say this guard was against his personal wish, but he

let his counselors have their way. The party makes no great show in uniform or horses. Mr. Lincoln on the saddle generally rides a good-sized, easy-going gray horse, is dress'd in plain black, somewhat rusty and dusty, wears a black stiff hat, and looks about as ordinary in attire, &c., as the commonest man. A lieutenant, with yellow straps, rides at his left, and following behind, two by two, come the cavalry men, in their yellow-striped jackets. They are generally going at a slow trot, as that is the pace set them by the one they wait upon. The sabres and accoutrements clank, and the entirely unornamental *cortège* as it trots towards Lafayette square arouses no sensation, only some curious stranger stops and gazes. I see very plainly Abraham Lincoln's dark brown face, with the deep-cut lines, the eyes, always to me with a deep latent sadness in the expression. We have got so that we exchange bows, and very cordial ones. Sometimes the President goes and comes in an open barouche. The cavalry always accompany him, with drawn sabres. Often I notice as he goes out evenings—and sometimes in the morning, when he returns early—he turns off and halts at the large and handsome residence of the Secretary of War, on K street, and holds conference there. If in his barouche, I can see from my window he does not alight, but sits in his vehicle, and Mr. Stanton comes out to attend him. Sometimes one of his sons, a boy of ten or twelve, accompanies him, riding at his right on a pony. Earlier in the summer I occasionally saw the President and his wife, toward the latter part of the afternoon, out in a barouche, on a pleasure ride through the city. Mrs. Lincoln was dress'd in complete black, with a long crape veil. The equipage is of the plainest kind, only two horses, and they nothing extra. They pass'd me once very close, and I saw the President in the face fully, as they were moving slowly, and his look, though abstracted, happen'd to be directed steadily in my eye. He bow'd and smiled, but far beneath his smile I noticed well the expression I have alluded to. None of the artists or pictures has caught the deep, though subtle and indirect expression of this man's face. There is something else there. One of the great portrait painters of two or three centuries ago is needed.

TWO BROTHERS, ONE SOUTH, ONE NORTH
May 28–29, 1865

Whitman stayed on to help with the wounded after the South surrendered. In the following entry he personally experiences one of the war's distressing incidents—the way it sometimes resulted in brother battling brother.

I staid to-night a long time by the bedside of a new patient, a young Baltimorean, aged about 19 years, W. S. P., (2d Maryland, southern,) very feeble, right leg amputated, can't sleep hardly at all—has taken a great deal of morphine, which, as usual, is costing more than it comes to. Evidently very intelligent and well bred—very affectionate—held on to

my hand, and put it by his face, not willing to let me leave. As I was lingering, soothing him in his pain, he says to me suddenly, "I hardly think you know who I am—I don't wish to impose upon you—I am a rebel soldier." I said I did not know that, but it made no difference. Visiting him daily for about two weeks after that, while he lived, (death had mark'd him, and he was quite alone,) I loved him much, always kiss'd him, and he did me. In an adjoining ward I found his brother, an officer of rank, a Union soldier, a brave and religious man, (Col. Clifton K. Prentiss, sixth Maryland infantry, Sixth corps, wounded in one of the engagements at Petersburg, April 2—linger'd, suffer'd much, died in Brooklyn, Aug. 20, '65.) It was in the same battle both were hit. One was a strong Unionist, the other Secesh; both fought on their respective sides, both badly wounded, and both brought together here after a separation of four years. Each died for his cause.

THE REAL WAR WILL NEVER GET IN THE BOOKS
[undated]

As he reviewed the page proofs of Specimen Days, Whitman worried that his "diary would prove, at best, but a batch of convulsively written reminiscences." Yet he decided to leave it that way, for the notes "are but parts of the actual distraction, heat, smoke, and excitement of those times." The war itself, he realized, could only be described by the word convulsiveness. In other words, the real war—as he suggests in this famous passage from Specimen Days—will never properly be seen by writers or historians in retrospect. It can perhaps best be conveyed by the spontaneous and fragmentary jottings of a diary.

And so good-bye to the war. I know not how it may have been, or may be, to others—to me the main interest I found, (and still, on recollection, find,) in the rank and file of the armies, both sides, and in those specimens amid the hospitals, and even the dead on the field. To me the points illustrating the latent personal character and eligibilities of these States, in the two or three millions of American young and middle-aged men, North and South, embodied in those armies—and especially the one-third or one-fourth of their number, stricken by wounds or disease at some time in the course of the contest—were of more significance even than the political interests involved. (As so much of a race depends on how it faces death, and how it stands personal anguish and sickness. As, in the glints of emotions under emergencies, and the indirect traits and asides in Plutarch, we get far profounder clues to the antique world than all its more formal history.)

Future years will never know the seething hell and the black infernal background of countless minor scenes and interiors, (not the official surface-courteousness of the Generals, not the few great battles) of the Secession war; and it is best they should not—the real war will never get

in the books. In the mushy influences of current times, too, the fervid atmosphere and typical events of those years are in danger of being totally forgotten. I have at night watch'd by the side of a sick man in the hospital, one who could not live many hours. I have seen his eyes flash and burn as he raised himself and recurr'd to the cruelties of his surrender'd brother, and mutilations of the corpse afterward. . . .

Such was the war. It was not a quadrille in a ball-room. Its interior history will not only never be written—its practicality, minutiae of deeds and passions, will never be even suggested. The actual soldier of 1862–'65, North and South, with all his ways, his incredible dauntlessness, habits, practices, tastes, language, his fierce friendship, his appetite, rankness, his superb strength and animality, lawless gait, and a hundred unnamed lights and shades of camp, I say, will never be written—perhaps must not and should not be.

The preceding notes may furnish a few stray glimpses into that life, and into those lurid interiors, never to be fully convey'd to the future. The hospital part of the drama from '61 to '65, deserves indeed to be recorded. Of that many-threaded drama, with its sudden and strange surprises, its confounding of prophecies, its moments of despair, the dread of foreign interference, the interminable campaigns, the bloody battles, the mighty and cumbrous and green armies, the drafts and bounties—the immense money expenditure, like a heavy-pouring constant rain—with, over the whole land, the last three years of the struggle, an unending, universal mourning-wail of women, parents, orphans—the marrow of the tragedy concentrated in those Army Hospitals—(it seem'd sometimes as if the whole interest of the land, North and South, was one vast central hospital, and all the rest of the affair but flanges)—those forming the untold and unwritten history of the war—ininitely greater (like life's) than the few scraps and distortions that are ever told or written. Think how much, and of importance, will be—how much, civic and military, has already been—buried in the grave, in eternal darkness.

The Reader's Presence

1. In your opinion, what aspects of Whitman's Civil War diary help make the experience of the war vivid and realistic? How are these aspects captured in Whitman's writing?
2. Formulate in your own words what Whitman means by his expression "the real war will never get in the books" (paragraph 6). What sort of book is he thinking about? Do you think he means that it could never be conveyed in language at all?
3. Whitman's poetry is characterized by long lines in which he incorporates the speech of real Americans, or what he called "the blab of the pave." Do you see these stylistic features in his prose? Compare

Whitman's long last sentence (paragraph 8) to one of Jamaica Kincaid's long sentences in "Biography of a Dress" (page 175) or "Girl" (page 921). Does the stylistic similarity produce similar effects? If not, why not? How do the two writers work pauses into their prose?

Virginia Woolf

From *A Writer's Diary*

*At the time of her death, Virginia Woolf (1882–1941), one of modern literature's outstanding creative voices, left twenty-six volumes of a handwritten diary that she had started in 1915. Her diary records her daily activities, social life, reading, and, most important, her thoughts about the writing process. In 1953, her husband, Leonard Woolf, extracted her remarks about writing and published them in a separate volume called *A Writer's Diary*. The following diary entries are taken from this edition. They show Virginia Woolf struggling with creative doubts and aesthetic demands, as well as with social obligations, depression, and, with the onset of World War II, the Nazi bombing of Britain. For more information on Virginia Woolf, see page 619.*

THIS LOOSE, DRIFTING MATERIAL OF LIFE Easter Sunday, April 20, 1919

One of the pleasures of keeping a diary is rereading what we've written. Here, just having completed a newspaper article on the novelist Daniel Defoe, Woolf decides to take a break and think about the different ways she composes when she writes in her diary as opposed to when she writes more formally for publication.

In the idleness which succeeds any long article, and Defoe is the second leader this month, I got out this diary and read, as one always does read one's own writing, with a kind of guilty intensity. I confess that the rough and random style of it, often so ungrammatical, and crying for a word altered, afflicted me somewhat. I am trying to tell whichever self it is that reads this hereafter that I can write very much better; and take no time over this; and forbid her to let the eye of man behold it. And now I may add my little compliment to the effect that it has a slapdash and

vigour and sometimes hits an unexpected bull's eye. But what is more to the point is my belief that the habit of writing thus for my own eye only is good practice. It loosens the ligaments. Never mind the misses and the stumbles. Going at such a pace as I do I must make the most direct and instant shots at my object, and thus have to lay hands on words, choose them and shoot them with no more pause than is needed to put my pen in the ink. I believe that during the past year I can trace some increase of ease in my professional writing which I attribute to my casual half hours after tea. Moreover there looms ahead of me the shadow of some kind of form which a diary might attain to. I might in the course of time learn what it is that one can make of this loose, drifting material of life; finding another use for it than the use I put it to, so much more consciously and scrupulously, in fiction. What sort of diary should I like mine to be? Something loose knit and yet not slovenly, so elastic that it will embrace anything, solemn, slight, or beautiful that comes into my mind. I should like it to resemble some deep old desk, or capacious hold-all, in which one flings a mass of odds and ends without looking them through. I should like to come back, after a year or two, and find that the collection had sorted itself and refined itself and coalesced, as such deposits so mysteriously do, into a mould, transparent enough to reflect the light of our life, and yet steady, tranquil compounds with the aloofness of a work of art. The main requisite, I think on re-reading my old volumes, is not to play the part of censor, but to write as the mood comes or of anything whatever; since I was curious to find how I went for things put in haphazard, and found the significance to lie where I never saw it at the time. But looseness quickly becomes slovenly. A little effort is needed to face a character or an incident which needs to be recorded. . . .

CHAINED TO MY ROCK
Thursday, August 18, 1921

In 1919, Virginia and Leonard (referred to throughout the diaries as L.) purchased a small country house in Sussex. For many years, they divided their time between there and London. In 1921, Virginia Woolf suffered a bout of nervous depression and was advised by a local doctor (who, she wrote, thought of her as a "chronic invalid") to rest and do nothing for a while. In an irritable state of mind, the day after the doctor's visit, she wrote the following entry in which she compares herself to Prometheus, the Greek mythic hero who was chained to a rock by Zeus as punishment for stealing fire from the gods and giving it to human beings.

Nothing to record; only an intolerable fit of the fidgets to write away. Here I am chained to my rock; forced to do nothing; doomed to let every worry, spite, irritation, and obsession scratch and claw and come again. This is a day that I may not walk and must not work. Whatever book I read bubbles up in my mind as part of an article I want to write. No one

in the whole of Sussex is so miserable as I am; or so conscious of an infinite capacity of enjoyment hoarded in me, could I use it. The sun streams (no, never streams; floods rather) down upon all the yellow fields and the long low barns; and what wouldn't I give to be coming through Firle woods, dirty and hot, with my nose turned home, every muscle tired and the brain laid up in sweet lavender, so sane and cool, and ripe for the morrow's task. How I should notice everything—the phrase for it coming the moment after and fitting like a glove; and then on the dusty road, as I ground my pedals, so my story would begin telling itself; and then the sun would be down; and home, and some bout of poetry after dinner, half read, half lived, as if the flesh were dissolved and through it the flowers burst red and white. There! I've written out half my irritation. I hear poor L. driving the lawn mower up and down, for a wife like I am should have a latch to her cage. She bites! And he spent all yesterday running round London for me. Still if one is Prometheus, if the rock is hard and the gadflies pungent, gratitude, affection, none of the nobler feelings have sway. And so this August is wasted.

Only the thought of people suffering more than I do at all consoles; and that is an aberration of egotism, I suppose. I will now make out a time table if I can to get through these odious days. . . .

THEY GET CLOSER EVERY TIME
Wednesday, October 2, 1940

The Woolfs lost their London house during the Nazi bombing raids in 1940. But even in their Sussex house they experienced the incessant raids. They often witnessed air battles above their home. On one occasion, having watched an enemy plane being shot down, Woolf wrote that it "would have been a peaceful matter of fact death to be popped off on the terrace . . . this very fine cool sunny August evening." The thought of death returned during another bombing raid in October. Six months later, on March 28, 1941, she took her own life.

Ought I not to look at the sunset rather than write this? A flush of red in the blue; the haystack on the marsh catches the glow; behind me, the apples are red in the trees. L. is gathering them. Now a plume of smoke goes from the train under Caburn. And all the air a solemn stillness holds. Till 8:30 when the cadaverous twanging in the sky begins; the planes going to London. Well it's an hour still to that. Cows feeding. The elm tree sprinkling its little leaves against the sky. Our pear tree swagged with pears; and the weathercock above the triangular church tower above it. Why try again to make the familiar catalogue, from which something escapes. Should I think of death? Last night a great heavy plunge of bomb under the window. So near we both started. A plane had passed dropping this fruit. We went on to the terrace. Trinkets of stars sprinkled and glittering. All quiet. The bombs dropped on Itford Hill. There are two by the river, marked with

white wooden crosses, still unburst. I said to L.: I don't want to die yet. The chances are against it. But they're aiming at the railway and the power works. They get closer every time. Caburn was crowned with what looked like a settled moth, wings extended—a Messerschmitt it was, shot down on Sunday. . . . Oh I try to imagine how one's killed by a bomb. I've got it fairly vivid—the sensation: but can't see anything but suffocating nonentity following after. I shall think—oh I wanted another 10 years—not this—and shan't, for once, be able to describe it. It—I mean death; no, the scrunching and scrambling, the crushing of my bone shade in on my very active eye and brain: the process of putting out the light—painful? Yes. Terrifying. I suppose so. Then a swoon; a drain; two or three gulps attempting consciousness—and then dot dot dot.

The Reader's Presence

1. In the first excerpt from Woolf's diaries, what positive qualities does she discover about her diary as she rereads it? Does she note any negative tendencies? In what ways does her diary offer her a means of self-discovery?
2. Woolf observed that one of the problems with diaries is that we usually turn to them only in certain moods (for example, loneliness, depression) and that therefore they provide only a limited view of someone's personality. Do you think, from the three excerpts reprinted here, that this observation would pertain to her own diaries? Can you apply her observation to some of the other diary entries in this chapter?
3. In the "Writer at Work" selection on page 161, Edward Hoagland characterizes the essay as "serendipitous or domestic satire or testimony, tongue-in-cheek or wail of grief." What do Woolf's criteria for diaries share with Hoagland's criteria for essays? What possible relationships exist between the "raw material" of an event recorded in a diary and an account of that same event offered in an essay?

