Program Director
Dara Rossman Regaignon

Editor
Stephen Donatelli

Senior Production Editor
Richard Larson

Managing Editor
Tara Parmiter

Advisory Editor
William M. Morgan

Production Editor
Christopher Cappelluti

Development Editors
Helena Keown
Clare Kernie
Lydia Mason

Program Manager
Christine Jensch

Mercer Street Committee
Stephen Donatelli, Chair
Grant Ginder
Matthew Nicholas
Jacqueline Reitzes
Madeleine Stein

EXPOSITORY WRITING PROGRAM
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE
To the Class of 2022:

Welcome to New York University!

An NYU education begins, in part, with writing. This practice reflects the University’s longstanding commitment to the centrality of written inquiry to undergraduate education.

It’s a bit of a cliché to say that reading and writing are connected, but in 2018 it seems important to say it nonetheless. As information circulates more and more quickly—moving ever farther from its origin—we have to read critically and for context: Who was the author? What were they trying to achieve? What is their evidence? This is all the more urgent when we take up what we read, re-posting it or relying on it for insight or opinions of our own.

Over the course of the next four years, you have a wide range of courses open to you; alphabetically, they range from accounting to history to mechanical engineering to woodwind studies. No matter what field you choose, during your time here you will find yourself using writing to think, analyze, investigate, and create. And no matter what path or career you choose after you graduate (that of a scholar, educator, health practitioner, entrepreneur, artist, performer, lawyer, engineer, or activist), you will find yourself using writing for those purposes and others: to propose, to investigate, to analyze, and to represent yourself and your work. Recent research shows that work in the twenty-first century involves more writing than ever before, regardless of the specific occupation. This writing ranges across genres (email, proposals, essays, reports, and more), and encompasses prose that is creative, technical, reflective, and persuasive. It’s writing that seeks to make an impact on its readers, that seeks not only to make audiences see the questions and challenges that face us today in new ways but also to help them imagine new possibilities and perspectives.
The essays collected in this volume represent some of the best work written for Expository Writing Program courses over the course of 2017-18; most were written by first-year students. These essays are smart, moving, funny, analytic, imaginative, and—like us all, and like all written work—incomplete. They open up questions, problems, and puzzles that are not entirely solvable. The faculty of EWP hope that you will both enjoy and learn from them.

Take heart! College is a time to challenge yourself and to nurture your mind both in and out of the classroom. Your most surprising encounters—your most creative or insightful moments—may happen when you least expect them. Be interested. That is always the best way to begin.

With all best wishes,

Dara Rossman Regaignon
Director of the Expository Writing Program
Associate Professor of English
EDITOR’S NOTE

Each year, the appearance of a new Mercer Street allows us to say “the collection of essays you now hold in your hands . . .” But now we can say this only figuratively, since the present edition is coming to you entirely digitally. We hope that the new format will make for easier navigation and more expeditious connection-making through the links you will find throughout the book.

For example, in several independently written essays, we find topics and themes of contemporary relevance. The digital Mercer Street makes it easier to locate them. Cases in point are several essays that investigate the explosive issue of sexual misconduct during the past year. In the arts, other students have questioned the status of “the real” in media that thrive on illusion or deception. In his fine essay, “In Thinking of Evil,” about the moral responsibilities of the citizen, Jesse Schanzer invites his readers to look to the multigenerational depth of their own experience. It encourages us to articulate our personal history in unlikely, non-literal places. It shows us how to connect and coordinate these findings.

It all adds up to being able to write confidently and nimbly with a variety of sources: the facts, the evidence. The book you’re not actually holding in your hands is a gift that last year’s class has left to you. As you move ahead with your own writing, you will feel a deepening respect for the masterful work your predecessors have given you.

Stephen Donatelli
Editor
Director of Writing in the Disciplines
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Expository Writing Program is grateful to Gene Andrew Jarrett, Dean of the College of Arts and Science, for his support of this publication. The Mercer Street Committee—Grant Ginder, Matthew Nicholas, Jacqueline Reitzes, Madeleine Stein, and Richard Larson—and editorial staff are also grateful to EWP Director Dara Rossman Regaignon for her ongoing commitment to student writers’ success and achievement.

Denice Martone, EWP Associate Director, and EWP’s other Directors—William M. Morgan and Benjamin Stewart—contributed shaping and guidance to this project. The Mercer Street editors are very grateful to them, as well as to Assistant Directors Olivia Birdsall, Nicole Callihan, David Cregar, Beth Machlan, Jono Mischkot, and Elizabeth Mikesell, and to the many Writing Program faculty members who read submissions.

Richard Larson’s technical wizardry with the manuscript is in evidence everywhere. We also thank Christine Jensch for the speed and professionalism she has devoted to making Mercer Street possible, year after year. And Managing Editor Tara Parmiter ensured the seamlessness of our operation. Her editorial expertise and decisive management style taught us what production should be like.

Three talented and resourceful undergraduate student editors—Helena Keown, Clare Kernie, and Lydia Mason—brought intense editorial care to the essays published here. And thank you, Christopher Cappelluti, for special editorial assistance.
MERCER STREET

CONTENTS

Writing the Essay

Broken Rules, Broken Silences:  
Audre Lorde and the Power of Language  
*Carolyn Ford* 

The Descent of Woman: Joining the Academic Conversation  
*Adelia Gaffney* 

Juliana Moreira: An Ideal to Strive For  
*Isak Jones* 

Don’t Get Too Comfortable  
*Olivia LeVan* 

The Empty Mask  
*Paul Mapara* 

A Lesson in Horror  
*Dylan Palmer* 

The Empathy Lessons  
*Akiva Thalheim* 

The Carbon Chains That Bind Us  
*Kristen Weatherley*
Keep On Prowling
Emily Yan

Hero Complex: The Oversimplification of Tank Man
Wendy Yang

Language and the Self:
Colonial Exile and Postcolonial Recovery
Jen Khai Yew

Writing the Essay: Tandon School of Engineering

Different, Not Backwards
Isabela Acenas

Writing the Essay: Art and the World

The Forgiving Blue
Lynn Fong

International Writing Workshop I

Photojournalism: What’s True, What’s Beautiful
Haorui Guo

International Writing Workshop II

How To Live With It
Soyoung Yun

International Writing Workshop II: Tandon School of Engineering

The Good Guys with Guns
Cheongho Cho
The Advanced College Essay: Education and the Professions

Gender Hysteria 116
Jennifer Agmon

Signs of the Times 124
Paige Smyth

The Advanced College Essay: Tandon School of Engineering

The Truth Behind Photoshop 133
Tracy Ma

The Advanced College Essay: The World Through Art

We're Not Just Window Dressing:
Asian Representation in Film and Television 143
Jessica Ji

A Cinema of Confusion 155
Erik Oliver

A Spectrum of Essays

In Thinking of Evil 163
Jesse Schanzer

Writing in the Community

Have It Your Way, But At What Cost? 172
Shivali Devjani

The Case of Aziz Ansari: Bridging the Culture Gap 183
Christina Wang
Contributors

Noteworthy Essays