

5-2003

Women's Diaries in an Online Era

Emily Ostendorf

Follow this and additional works at: http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/uhp_theses

Recommended Citation

Ostendorf, Emily, "Women's Diaries in an Online Era" (2003). *Honors Theses*. Paper 151.

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the University Honors Program at OpenSIUC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of OpenSIUC. For more information, please contact opensiuc@lib.siu.edu.

Women's Diaries in an Online Era

Emily Ostendorf
UHON 499: Senior Honors Thesis
Prof. Rick Williams, Honors Program Director
Prof. Kevin Dettmar, Thesis Director
9 May 2003

Women's Diaries in an Online Era

Introduction

A young college undergrad reveals to her friend that she has been keeping a journal and asks if she wants to see it. Which image is most likely to form in the mind: that of a girl, lying stomach-down on a bed, her legs bent at the knees, her feet playfully swinging, her body propped up by her arms, and her hand furiously scribbling away in a composition notebook? Or that of a girl poised in front of the computer typing, multiple windows open, searching for interesting links to complement her points, MP3s playing in the background, an instant-messaging box constantly providing welcomed interruptions?

With the rising popularity of exhibitionist life-chronicling as published through websites such as Blogger, LiveJournal, and Diary X, one might wonder how this affects the world of the old-fashioned, leather-bound journals (which are not always kept daily and which focus on thoughts and ideas) and diaries with lock and key (which are kept almost daily and which focus on people and events). In this study, I will compare the aesthetics of physical journals and their online counterparts, as well as assess the purposes and audiences of both. For the sake of narrowing expansive journal content, I will focus on young female authors, with a preference for non-famous authors and for journals that are not professionally published. The question I seek to answer is: How

does merging media shape the way young women portray their identities in writing, and what does this say about privacy, trust, and common experience today?

These questions are particularly interesting to me, a journal writer of 22 volumes in 15 years. Many times I fight with myself to prohibit self-censoring, fearing what my unborn children might think if they discovered my writing, or my family, upon a sudden, untimely death. I toy with the idea of compiling and typing all my entries, with added editorial comments, and then I wonder, “Why? Who would care?” Additionally, asking what roles weblogs play is particularly interesting to me, since I have been keeping a fictitious blog as an art student in Portland, Oregon, for nine months. I often reflect about the types of things I publish on the web versus the topics I write about in my “real” physical journal. Do they differ? Do they serve different purposes? Do weblogs stand a chance of taking the place of leather-bound journals?

To enhance my study, I focused on scholarly writing by leading theorists on women’s autobiographical writing, as well as articles by important journalists trying to make sense of blogs’ place in society and academia. To supplement these theories, included are descriptions and excerpts from four unpublished diaries kept during the writers’ college years, as well as four weblogs kept by female writers of similar age. (The journals were supplied to me voluntarily from friends of friends who answered an e-mail message. I am acquainted with only one of the authors; the others are strangers. Three of the weblogs are written by women with whom I am acquainted; the other I found by visiting Blogger’s Fresh Blogs list. For the sake of privacy, pseudonyms have been invented for the journal writers; screen names will be used for the bloggers.)

Scholarship About Women's Diaries

The bulk of the academic research surrounding women's personal journals has been conducted within the last 25 years, spurred, in part, by the feminist movement and the second wave of feminism. The introduction of *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries* by editors Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff provides an all-encompassing review of the work dedicated to the topic of women's self-writing. Earlier scholars, such as Roy Pascal, Leigh Gilmore, James Olney, Georges Gusdorf, and Philippe Lejeune, focused their work on distinguishing between diary and autobiography, as well as issues about self-construction. More recent work has been centered upon diary writing as a women's activity, the importance of repetition, omission, and fragmentation in journal entries, as well as the kinds of narratives that are told and the ways these narratives inscribe the self.

The most recent researchers have spent a great deal of time and effort compiling and anthologizing excerpts from women's diaries, the results of which can be seen in Mary Jane Mofatt and Charlotte Painter's *Revelations: Diaries of Women* (1974); *A Day at a Time: The Diary Literature of American Women from 1764 to the Present* (1985); Penelope Franklin's *Private Pages: Diaries of American Women, 1830s-1970s* (1986); Harriet Blodgett's *Centuries of Female Days: Englishwomen's Private Diaries* (1988); and Judy Simons' *Diaries and Journals of Literary Women from Fanny Burney to Virginia Woolf* (1990). This collection and conservation of women's diaries served as a key step in preserving texts, which could have otherwise been lost.

This brings us to a couple of the key questions surrounding scholarship today: audience, canonization, and narrative strategy. In her essay "I Write for Myself and

Strangers': Private Diaries as Public Documents," Lynn Z. Bloom examines diaries spanning from the 1850s-1950s and proposes features of "truly private diaries" and those of "private diaries as public documents." She argues that even diaries written with the intent never to be viewed by another soul often have features which reveal the authors' recognition of a potential reader, be it their future selves, their progeny, or some unknown someone in the future. Truly private diaries, according to Bloom, are "those bare-bones works written primarily to keep records of receipts and expenditures, the weather, visits to and from neighbors, or public occurrences of both the institutional and the sensational sort" (Bloom 25). By contrast, Bloom asserts that private diaries as public documents have a greater selectivity in their entries. Whereas private diaries were once largely written in pre-dated, specially-manufactured books, leaving just a page per day, the form of private diaries as public documents does not constrain itself to daily writing. These diaries (written with a potential audience in mind) favor episodic entries rather than chronological, daily writing. The private diaries as public documents develop characters over the course of entries, and also develop the author as a definite self, following narrative form established in fictional works. In truly private diaries, by contrast, diarists give no special attention to explain characters or their selves as individuals; "as a consequence, the characters, major and minor, are more likely to be identifiable by their roles (midwife, farm wife) and relationships (Martha's daughter, farmwife's husband) than as individuals; drama among them resides largely in the imaginative construction of the beholder" (Bloom 27).

In Bloom's opinion, truly private diaries, then, are sparse, concise daily entries, which leave readers puzzling over the identification of characters. Private diaries as

public documents use literary techniques to avoid dailiness, including “the employment of foreshadowing and flashbacks; emphasis on topics rather than chronology; repetition of philosophical themes and pervasive issues; character depiction; scene setting; and the use of integral metaphors, symbols, and other stylistic devices” all of which “aid in orienting the work to an external audience” (Bloom 29). And while these designations seem to point to the diarists’ intentions (at least when referring to diaries composed by mothers and housewives during the specified hundred years), it by no means applies to all writers, especially when applied to bloggers. Sparse or lengthy entries could verily be a result of time constraints, just as choppy or detailed content could be a result of trust issues, not to mention that fact that diarists, like all writers, have different strengths and motivations for keeping their entries.

Most anthologies of women’s diary writing mentioned above allow the texts to speak for themselves. This is especially true in the case of Lyn Lifshin’s *Ariadne’s Thread: A Collection of Contemporary Women’s Journals* (1982). Lifshin collected excerpts from diaries by sifting through sections diarists sent to her nationwide. In the end, she included many previously-published excerpts composed by professional writers in her collection, which she placed in several key topics (since she felt that these topics would be most interesting and representative), including “work,” “self,” “love and friendship,” “family,” “being somewhere else,” “society,” and “nature.” I was a little disappointed in this choice, since the result is a collection of very polished diary writing, perhaps transformed and tweaked again and again with each reprinting, divorcing itself from the authentic moment in which the entries were composed. Her goal to gain unfiltered perspectives of women’s lives and personal thoughts was not fulfilled, but like

Bloom's work, it gives an indication as to what diarists allow to be public and what details they choose to omit.

Incorporating the Web

Even before the popularity of weblog services such as LiveJournal, Diary X, and Blogger, (all which have arisen in the past five years), some people kept personal websites filled with pictures and prose from their daily lives. The chronicling of lives, however, has become much more technology-friendly with the onset of the programs mentioned above.

The term "blog" is a shorting of the word "web-log," and is a personal site hosted and powered by any number of services, including the three mentioned above. Typing material into the program's easy-to-use template system, bloggers write about their daily lives, their stances on politics, their opinions on movies, and other themes. They respond to current events and news stories; they post photographs of their friends and family; they link to other newsworthy internet sites; and they often are open to feedback and contestation. One of the first known, documented blogs was launched in 1995 (a personal site not powered by special software), but blogs have arisen in prominence only since 1999.

When commentators in mainstream American periodicals such as *Time* and *Newsweek* talk about blogs, they largely discuss them in relation to the future of journalism. Most talk about the rise of pundits and the prominence and credibility they are gaining, as well as print journalists' need to become more technologically advanced to avoid being scooped by amateur writers. Rarely do columnists discuss the historical and literary role blogs might have, though they frequently mention the way blogs shape

how the average American communicates (if only in passing). Critics such as MIT professor Nicholas Negroponte place weblogs in the same category of other self-developed internet sites (customized to only display news in which the user is interested), calling the entire phenomenon, “the Daily Me” (Razdan 84). But other organizations have ridden the wave of online journaling as a way to unite people of different cultures, countries, and ages. One such undertaking is the Diary Project, a “global multimedia resource that encourages teens to write about their day-to-day experiences growing up” (About the Diary Project). The site, launched in 1995, now contains thousands of entries written in 24 categories. It was inspired “by the visit to San Francisco of the young Bosnian diarist, Zlata Filipovic, author of *Zlata’s Diary*, the story of her life growing up in Sarajevo amidst a raging war” (About the Diary Project).

The Diary Project is a very communal endeavor, and some personal blogs and LiveJournals can also be. A few are written with friends who share the password, among the students in a second grade class, or among couples who post entries to one another. But the majority of blogs and LiveJournals are written by individuals. The Blogger software was developed by PyraLabs in 1999, and basic services are available to users free of charge. LiveJournal requires users to network among friends; potential users must offer a fellow user’s code as entry to service, and they must also pay a monthly or yearly fee based on the payment system they select. This makes LiveJournal users a more select group and a tighter knit community, though LiveJournal offers searchable directories so that strangers may find journals based on region, gender, interest, etc. Most Blogger users link to other blogs based on their own preferences; to be added to a link page is almost a star of honor that the content is engaging enough to include on their site.

Sometimes links to links to links is the main way of getting your blog noticed. The people at Blogger, however, keep a list of blogs of notice, and after each user updates his or her blog, the title and link is located briefly in a list of ten “Fresh Blogs” (a list which constantly changes as people update, serving as a smorgasbord of new sites for potential readers browsing the Blogger homepage). (See appendix for screenshots of this site, other blogs, and photocopied pages of diaries mentioned below.)

Meet Christine, Liz, Sarah, and Julia

Christine started a spiral bound journal in January 1998 because “Mrs. Kreigh said she wrote a lot of stuff in her journal when she saw Stomp and that made me think I should keep a journal too and take it with me wherever I go” (Christine I, 1/11/98). What started as a simple daily entry spanned four volumes, from when she was 18 until she was 23, and chronicle her undergraduate days at Butler University in Indianapolis, her brief stint in Minnesota, and the beginnings of her graduate career in the chemistry department at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

The first volume is concerned largely with moving to Butler, becoming assimilated into the college lifestyle, and pining away for the boy she left behind. Christine writes detailed psychological ponderings about whether she believes in love at first sight and interrupts her more mundane scrawlings with brief insights into herself and the way she imagines her future. Squeezed between a comment about only ever seeing one episode of “Dharma and Greg” and declaring that *Titanic* is an excellent movie, she writes, “I want to be proposed to (rather than do the proposing)” (Christine I, 1/11/98). These largely unrelated meanderings fill the pages, smashed solidly in between detailed histories of band events, paragraphs about academic worries, complaints about her

physical appearance, and lists of things to pick up at the grocery. Spontaneous insights are clearly the mark of her journals: “I keep wishing I could quit school, marry Adam, have lots of babies & (somehow) be rich (or at least comfortable)” (Christine I, 1/11/98); “I miss the sound of trains” (Christine I, 1/16/98); and “I want a single bagpipe playing ‘Amazing Grace’ at my funeral. I got that from Katie Courick’s husband’s funeral” (Christine I, 1/27/98).

Of course, not all of Christine’s entries offer such meaningful comments. From an outside viewer’s perspective, Christine seems largely preoccupied with her boyfriend Adam; readers quickly pick up on the repetition of this theme and the way she wavers about breaking up with him or staying with him. But even through this romantic roller coaster, there is definite development in her maturity, as well as her rationale, and when, in the fourth volume, we read that she has met and become engaged to her former stepbrother, we are simply ready to follow her along that path.

Christine writes daily, though she does not constrain herself to keep that regimen. Some entries are supplemented heavily by quotes from professors and celebrities, references from television show plots (specifically Dawson’s Creek) and talk show-hosts (including Oprah and Rosie), verses from scripture and thoughts spurred by Bible study, updates about her family, and records of dreams. Also included are typed entries (once following a drunken party, another time simply for convenience sake), a print-out of a special e-mail from Adam, doodles (including an idea for an art project, as well as a stick-figure cartoon of her severely injuring her ex-fiancé), and a stapled Pixy Stix wrapper (with “Shake candy from straw into mouth” printed on it, beside Christine’s handwritten comment on the stupidity of such instructions).

Christine's journals are written in a manner that suggests they are personal records and a journey to self-discovery. The content of her entries is almost a steady balance of chronological events and philosophical pondering. She uses the second-person "you" almost always in place of the non-specific, third-person "one"; the only instance I found of her addressing something of an audience is: "Did I tell you that I want to learn to sew? Well, I do. I think it is the domestic part of me coming through" (Christine IV, 5/14/02). However, in this instance, I believe the "you" she is addressing is simply the diary itself. The book is as much audience as Christine needs. However, previously, she makes mention of reading from her journal with her roommate, Elizabeth:

Elizabeth & I spent some time tonight reading out of our journals. She wrot read me this awesome poem she wrote & I asked her if I could write it in my journal & she said okay so, here it is. . . (Christine III, 2/21/99)

Besides sharing these tidbits, Christine's writing style shows that she is writing for her own posterity and self-reflection.

Likewise, Liz's journal from 1991 (kept during her junior and senior years at University of Kansas at Lawrence) contains very detailed accounts of parties and trips, as well as many moments of introspection. Her journal is a spiral bound artist's sketchbook; dividing her entries are beautiful watercolor paintings (including a self portrait), pages of paint-mixing tests, and sketches for a garden-plan. Unlike Christine, Liz is very much keyed in to larger political and historical happenings. Whereas Christine includes just a quip from the Rosie O'Donnell show referencing Monica Lewinsky (a major political happening at the time), Liz writes entire entries about the danger, declaration, and progression of the first Gulf War (all hand-printed in crisp, slender capital letters):

Tonight is the U.N. deadline for Sadam [sic.] Hussein to get out of Kuwait. He is not going to leave. We are going to war. Americans are

going to die. I am both afraid and excited. I am afraid for a future without peace, and yet I'm excited to be alive during this tumultuous time. Because it is times like this that make people take sides—there is no room for neutrality. (Liz 1/15/91)

And:

The war had begun. Around 4:30 p.m. our time, the United States began its attack on Iraq. It has been completely an air attack on Iraq's military commanding sites and the report is that we were very successful in this first phase. Cindy and I have been glued to the T.V. set the past 5 hours. It is horrifying but almost unreal and incomprehensible [sic.]. Although I am very much against this war, I found myself tonight hoping we were kicking ass, not so much because I want us to destroy Iraq but because I don't want any of our soldiers to die.

It's startling to think that as I sit here conjugating French verbs and thinking about what I will wear tomorrow, men and women (both American and Iraqi) are dying. The pointlessness of it all is overwhelming. (Liz 1/16/91)

These entries provide valuable historical insights for both the author and any potential reader, especially in light of our more recent United States involvement in Iraq under this new Bush administration. It is the distance of time that allows Liz's journal to have even greater significance.

Of course, like Christine, Liz finds herself writing about and deeply analyzing her relationship with her boyfriend, Steve, flanking her entries with quotations from novels she has read. Her sentences are short and often fragments. Caught in the moment of feeling, she seems to have written things as speedily as possible.

I spent less time delving into the pages of Sarah's and Julia's journals, mostly because the handwriting within was such a challenge to read. Sarah, ages 18 and 19 at the time, writes mostly of daily happenings, the joys of girl nights, and the role God plays in guiding her life. Her journal is a soft cover, natural paper one with flecks of plants and flower petals, bound together by braided fibers. Her handwriting is painfully tiny, filling

entire pages, leaving no room for margins. Julia, a 24-year-old Texan returning to college after a brief sabbatical, kept her scrawling entries safely within the pages of an old-fashioned marble composition book, decorated with Powder Puff stickers on the cover. Her entries are barely legible; they include references to growing up, relationships, questions of spirituality, letters to boys (most likely unsent?), notes from class, e-mail addresses, song lyrics she wrote, and lists of CDs and track numbers (most likely plans for mix tapes she was recording).

Meet The Flame, Jane, Whitbeast, and Anarane Amandil

The Flame, a 21-year-old student at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, started her "Site Dedicated to Procrastination" (powered by Blogger) two months ago. Her entries are sparse and mundane, complaining frequently about physical pain from an injury she received, as well as the overabundance of schoolwork she has to accomplish. She used her blog to explain feelings after breaking up with her boyfriend, as well as to ease her readership into the idea of dating a new boy, following this entry a few days later with declarations about her love for this new boyfriend. Her site features links to friends' blogs, archives, and a comments section after each entry, usually which remains at "0 Comments," a sign that her writing is probably not thought provoking or engaging. Also included on her site are web-graphics from online quizzes she takes, graphics that announce her score and detail her personality by proclaiming "You are Midnight. . ." in answer to the quiz's question "What time of day are you?"

By contrast, Jane at JaneBlog (powered by Blogger) updates several times a day, sometimes commenting about a strange link she discovered and bidding surfers to see for themselves. A graduate student in the literature program at the University of Virginia,

she too comments on academia, usually by ending unrelated entries with a quick line about how she must leave to study her Croatian flashcards or finally begin work on a paper she has been avoiding. JaneBlog is only part of Jane's larger website, bluestocking.org, which contains her poetry, fiction writing, quotes, dedication to Jane Austen, a library of links, and other features. Jane does not usually post web-graphics reflecting her score on personality tests (except in the case of "What ring of hell are you in?" simply because of its literary value); instead she posts excerpts of those pervasive e-mail "get to know me" surveys in the form of "This or That Thursdays" and other special days designated for certain questions. These exercises help fill her entries should she ever lack something to write about, which is infrequent. JaneBlog is dedicated to cultural references, political questions, as well as the day-to-day life of a culturally gifted student.

Whitbeast (age 18, Memphis, TN) and Anarane Amandil (age 25, Jerseyville, IL) each have LiveJournals. Whitbeast's entries span over a year, chronicling her days at work in an Apple computer store, the strange old men who flirt with her, details of her love life, complaints about her parents, her boyfriend's suicide and her reaction to it, and eerie happenings following his death (like being haunted by his presence and electronic devices in his room suddenly turning on). She spills all, telling about losing her virginity, about feelings of depression, how she wrecked her parents' car, and wondering what she should do with her life. Entries scroll down at great length, which is quite different from The Flame's site and JaneBlog; Blogger users tend to keep their entries brief, whereas LiveJournal users tend to write at length, a tendency spurred in part by the archives system of each program, in part because of unwritten rules by writers in each circle, and in part because of financial reasons—LiveJournal users pay for their sites, so they write

as much as possible to get the most value, whereas Blogger users may use the simplest service for free. Some entries include web-graphics from online quizzes, lowercase, punctuation-less free writing, angsty poetry, and most recently, artwork and a photograph of a guitar she hopes to buy. Her entries are supplemented with a comments box, as well as a listing of her current music and mood.

Anarane Amandil's LiveJournal follows a similar format. Previously keeping a journal at The Velma Chronicles, Anarane abandoned this project in favor of the easy-to-use LiveJournal. (Also, many of her friends were using LiveJournal, and the linking system made it easier for her to keep in touch and reference friends' entries.) Anarane writes about all things geek, referencing actors she adores, her love of *Lord of the Rings* and other sci-fi and fantasy works, books she has read, the latest fiasco at the bakery where she works, the progress as her ringworm heals, her debate about whether or not to go back to college, her dreams to move out of the house, ideas for stories, and other topics. Her entries begin with her current music, mood, and animated emoti-kitty icon (which depicts her mood). Frequently within entries she thanks fellow LiveJournal users who have responded to questions she has posted, or who have given her advice. In this way, sometimes parts of her entries act as open letters to members of her online community.

Differences in Aesthetics

Most of the differences in aesthetics between online journals and their "real" physical cousins can be simply attributed to differences in medium. A journal is readily portable; notebooks can be tucked into bags, taken camping, brought to the beach, scrawled in on a bus. This portability allows diarists to write spontaneous thoughts and

brief bursts of description. Blogs are far less portable, which impedes their spontaneity, the result of which is well planned, pre-fathomed writing. (Though I imagine some blog writing is unplanned, most users must have a reason for sitting down to the computer, connecting to the internet—usually through a painfully slow dial-up—and composing an entry. The effort alone means that most writers must surely have a topic in mind as they sit down to type.) To their credit, however, blogs can be accessed wherever there is a computer with internet access (or wherever there is a phone, should the user wish to post AudioBlog entries in the form of recording their voice which appears as an MP3 on their blog).

The media also allows for differences in content. Journals are personal and personalized; they can be any number of kinds of books, notebooks, blank hardcover books, which can be decorated with stickers and supplemented with photos, doodles, sketches, ticket stubs and mementos, and other paper memorabilia. The handwriting alone gives indication to the writer's personality, sense of hurriedness, and mood, as well as level of freedom (does the writer's handwriting slant across the page? Does she sometimes write sideways or upside down to set certain sections apart?). Conversely, blogs largely have a sense of uniformity because of the service providers' set formats and space constraints, though some aspects of the site (such as color preferences) can be customized to the user. But for all the uniformity of format, blogs offer great freedom in what content can be included: writing, art (scanned art or original digital work), scanned mementos, links to other sites, MP3s, listing of current music and mood, bio section, guestbook, comments box, homemade movie clips, real-time cameras, portfolios, photo albums, travelblogs, quiz results, and wishlists. In some ways then, blogs are meant to

give a snapshot look at the “here and now” of a user’s life. Journals, however, seem to build this identity over the course of many entries through steady introspection. Blogs leave it up to the readers to judge what kind of person the user is by piecing together evidence of their musical tastes, their bio section, and other clues scattered throughout the site.

Another important difference is that journal writers actually physically possess their journals. This might seem like a small detail, but Blogger and LiveJournal users do not have this same security; their entries are usually located on someone else’s server miles away from where they live. Should any technological failure occur, entire entries could be lost or deleted.

But even for this fear, some bloggers take comfort in the fact that their writing is already published. Simply by posting an entry online, it becomes part a searchable, reachable opinion, which can be found in large search-engines like Google, and will soon be found by a site specific to weblogs called DayPop. By their very form, blogs are automatically published. But journals are not. Some of the most useful diaries could remain hidden in attics for years, deteriorating, depriving readers of the historical value their words might hold.

Additionally, though neither journals nor blogs are readily searchable once a reader is browsing through one, the very nature of journals allows readers to quickly find a point of reference and follow the narrative by reading pages the same way one reads a book. Entries on blogs are posted in a reverse chronological order with the newest entry on top, shoving all older entries downward, and eventually, to the archives. Should a

reader find an interesting reference, he or she would have to search through untitled links and then read backwards through time in order to make sense of certain episodes.

Motivations for Writing

An article in the January/February 2001 issue of *Health* lists different kinds of journals as remedies for different kinds of ailments: a story book for those who are “depressed, struggling with a sudden crisis or unresolved tragedy, or living with a chronic illness”; a worry book for those who suffer from “anxiety, stress, insomnia, or related complaints”; a log book for those who “want to lose weight, get more fit, spend less money, understand your body’s rhythms, or chart your recovery from illness”; a memory book for those “becoming absentminded, recovering from a head injury, or have a learning disability or bipolar disorder”; a gratitude book for those “inclined to be pessimistic, depressed, stressed-out, or anxious, or if you’re in the throes of a major crisis”; and a scrapbook for those who “have trouble putting feelings into words” (Berg 85-6). Many journal writers do use their entries as a means of self-therapy and self-introspection. “People who write about emotional upheavals in their lives show benefits almost across the board in terms of health problems,” raves James W. Pennebaker, Ph.D., professor of psychology at the University of Texas, in the February 2002 issue of *Ladies’ Home Journal* (Cassidy 102).

But Cassidy suggests that even greater rewards are the result of journaling: “Surprisingly, journal keeping makes you a better person” (Cassidy 102). She continues by mentioning the benefits of revealing personality traits, helping to cope with crisis, and becoming “our personal emissaries to the future.”

In compiling the anthology for *Ariadne's Thread*, Lyn Lifshin, found that one woman began writing because "she knew nothing about herself, and decided to keep track of 'what I called my feelings'" (Lifshin 8). Another said she wanted her journal to be "an intersection between my imagination and the physical world. I want to record history, weather, custom. . ." (Lifshin 9-10). Still others used their journals as companions and measuring sticks for their loneliness:

Though several women started diaries, as was traditional in the 1950s, in their teens with a little locked diary, others began at a time they felt, like Nin, especially lonely. Margaret Ryan began at eight because she was lonely, and continued after her father died when she was nine and her grandfather, her confidant, when she was ten. Many wrote of feeling isolated as teenagers, unhappy, unable to talk to anyone about their feelings. (Lifshin 10)

Even in the midst of booming blog popularity today, teen magazines are turning young writers on to the "lost art" of keeping a journal. The February 2002 issue of *Teen* featured an article titled "Think in Ink," and the January 2003 issue of *Seventeen* featured one called "The Write Stuff." The interesting thing is that while such articles center upon the health benefits of keeping a physical journal, they also stress that if it makes the writer more comfortable, she should save her entries on a computer (password protected, of course) or keep an online journal. It seems that even though online journals, as I have revealed above, do not readily mimic "the real thing," they are becoming a valid alternative for journal writing. And perhaps they are also reminding techno-savvy teens that the old-fashioned method has charm all its own.

Future Research and Development

With hundreds of new Blogger users every day, not to mention new blogs springing up on LiveJournal, Diary X, afrodiary, DeadJournal, and Open Diary, web

providers are trying to find a way to make this expansive content easily catalogued and searchable. Specific screen names can oftentimes be located even in something as simple as a Google search, but DayPop is offering a more consistent, focused search system. Still in development, the site has an area where bloggers can sign up for their site to be included in the webcrawl searches. Currently DayPop features only the most popular blogs, ones that have been quoted in such reputable newspapers as the *New York Times*. For DayPop to be the service that it hopes to become, many bloggers will have to submit their sites. As usual, this is another web-project that involves the support and contributions of the entire web community.

But to collect and preserve physical journals requires much more effort and coordination. Currently, the majority of preserved diaries are housed in special library collections or in the homes of town historians. I do not surmise that there will be a call to action for the preservation of diaries any time soon, but I do imagine that with our “reality TV mindset,” readers will become increasingly interested in exposing diarists and revealing journal content surrounding any number of topics.

Grady Kuhline, a graduate student at Southern Illinois University Carbondale’s interactive multi-media program, proposes an interesting twist on the blogger/journal craze. Instead of online entries instantaneously becoming available on the internet, he suggests a program that would allow diarists to type entries on their computer and save them onto a personalized link, kept inaccessible to search engines for a period of two years. As the entries age this designated time, they could be automatically transferred to the larger, searchable web. Such a distance in time, Kuhline reasons, could allow potentially shy diarists to have security in the fact that they would be relatively distanced

from the events and thoughts recorded in the entries, but the entries themselves would still be preserved. The distance in time could also help dissuade diarists from heavy self-censoring. Such a weblog service could meet the needs of diarists who feel their writing is important and bloggers who wish weblogs were less trivial, and more writer-friendly.

Still, some in academia are hesitant to allow potentially any writer into even an online canon. Questions of authority, identity, and historical value would need to be resolved before anyone would feel comfortable with widely anthologizing journal writing, or writing from blogs, for that matter. (At stake with blogs are also issues of copyright and originality. With such a shared web community, thoughts and questions are widely shared about mutual readers.) It seems strange to imagine the physical pages of a book with a title such as *Top Fifty Bloggers Share Their Insights on _____*. Equally, it seems unimaginable that there would ever be a published collection called *Diarists' Deep Thoughts of 2003* (unless, of course, it would be published in 2103; the distance of time somehow makes diaries interesting and useful).

Conclusion

It is clear that weblogs exist to document “the here and now” and that journals are “for posterity.” Still, we should work at preserving both. The strengths of each medium could help protect and preserve the other medium; by posting online entries, there is a guarantee that someone else has access to the writing, and by penning journal entries, there is a guarantee that the author has full-access to her writing, not dependant on technological changes or company mergers and closures. As a society increasingly interested in self-reflection, in peering inward, it seems plausible to imagine the blending of online and physical journal content becoming a valuable source of leisure reading and

entertainment. Even if preservation is motivated for these reasons, it is an undertaking that would benefit future scholars and readers.

From this study, it is also clear that with all the buzzing new technological advances and bombardment of entertainment options, people are still taking the time to write, reflect, and in doing so, learn about themselves and the society in which they live. Bloggers may tend to write brief, fragmented entries, but in a fast-paced environment, it is a commendable action. Perhaps it will be technology which keeps journal writing alive, for by having an online version of physical diaries, it serves as a reminder of “the real thing,” somehow making “authentic” journal writing more coveted and precious (the same thing happened after e-mail became popularized; a hand-written letter is now a sign of care). And by having the digital storage space, it will serve as a way for readers to have access to journals, online ones, as well as previously unpublished physical diaries. Much can be gained from even the mundane worlds of diarists, and we are perched on the verge of being able to preserve and access these worlds, onscreen and within pages.

Works Consulted

- Anarane Amandil. 5 May 2003. <http://www.livejournal.com/users/neonglow>.
- Berg, Elizabeth. "Getting it Write." *Health*. Jan./Feb. 2001: 82-9.
- Blogger. 5 May 2003. <http://www.blogger.com>.
- Bloom, Lynn Z. "'I Write for Myself and Strangers': Private Diaries as Public Documents." *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996. 23-37.
- Bunkers, Suzanne L. and Cynthia A. Huff, eds. *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996.
- Cassidy, Anne. "The Write Stuff." *Ladies' Home Journal*. Feb. 2002: 102.
- Christine. Personal Journal, volume one. Spiral-bound floral with clasp. 6 x 8½. 114 lined pages. Jan. 11-March 2, 1998.
- Personal Journal, volume two. Spiral-bound coffee-themed. 5¼ x 8½. 84 lined pages. March 2-May 3, 1998.
- Personal Journal, volume three. Spiral-bound with green Astroturf cover. 5 x 7. 90 lined pages. Aug. 21, 1998-Aug. 22, 1999.
- Personal Journal, volume four. Spiral-bound cloth with pink and white vertical stripes. 5 x 7. 90 lined pages. Dec.1998-May 22, 2002.
- DayPop. 5 May 2003. <http://www.daypop.com>.
- The Diary Project. 5 May 2003. <http://www.diaryproject.com>.
- The Flame. 5 May 2003. <http://www.the-flame.blogspot.com/>.
- JaneBlog. 5 May 2003. <http://bluestocking.org/blogger/>.

Julia. Personal Journal. Pen-Tab marble composition book. 7½ x 9¾. 100 lined pages.

Jan. 17-April 5, 2001.

Levy, Steven. "Will Blogs Kill the Old Media?" *Newsweek*. 20 May 2002: 52.

Lifshin, Lyn, ed. *Ariadne's Thread*. New York: Harper and Row, 1982.

LiveJournal. 5 May 2003. <http://www.livejournal.com>.

Liz. Personal Journal. Spiral-bound Academie Sketch Diary. 8 ½ x 11. 70 unlined

pages. Jan. 1-Sept. 29, 1991.

Razdan, Anjula. "The Daily Me." *Utne*. Jan./Feb. 2003: 84.

Rones, Nancy. "Journal Jottings." *Teen*. March 1999: 38.

Sarah. Personal Journal. Fiber-bound thatch-design brown paper cover. 5¾ x 8½. 48

unlined pages. Sept. 12, 2000-Dec. 22, 2001.

Whitbeast. 5 May 2003. <http://www.livejournal.com/users/whitbeast/>.

BLOGGER - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Forward

http://www.blogger.com/

BLOGGER™



FRESH BLOGS

The 10 most recently published blogs

7:04 PM

WHAT'S UP

We're testing a new version of Blogger. Interesting in learning more?
 - Jason G. [5/2/2003 6:47:02 PM]

So, what does this Google thing mean, exactly? You've got questions. We've got answers. A few, anyway.
 - Ev. [2/27/2003 9:35:12 PM] +

Introducing AudioBlogger! So, imagine this: You're driving down the road, chatting at a party, or whatever. You have a phone. You call your blog on the phone. You leave a message. The message gets instantly posted to your blog as an MP3 file for the world to listen to.

ABOUT SUPPORT PRO

YOUR BLOGS

Welcome back! Here are your blogs

- B
- B
- X

what's up?

BLOGGER - Microsoft...

The Diary Project - Microsoft Internet Explorer

http://www.diaryproject.com

DIARY PROJECT

submit entry | about | home | Keyword Search advanced

Diary Entries

- [Body Image](#)
- [Current Events](#)
- [Diary Week Night](#)
- [Discrimination](#)
- [Drugs](#)
- [Family](#)
- [Feelings](#)
- [Friends](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Loss](#)
- [Miscellaneous](#)
- [Rambblings](#)
- [Music](#)
- [Other](#)
- [Poetry](#)
- [Point of View](#)
- [Racism](#)
- [Relationships](#)
- [Religion / Spirituality](#)
- [School](#)
- [Self Esteem](#)
- [Self Harm](#)
- [Sexuality / Gender](#)
- [Stress](#)
- [Tolerance](#)
- [Violence](#)

Latest Entries

Diary Question

OVER 64787 DIARY ENTRIES POSTED SINCE 1995

What in your life worries you the most?
[view responses or contribute an answer](#)

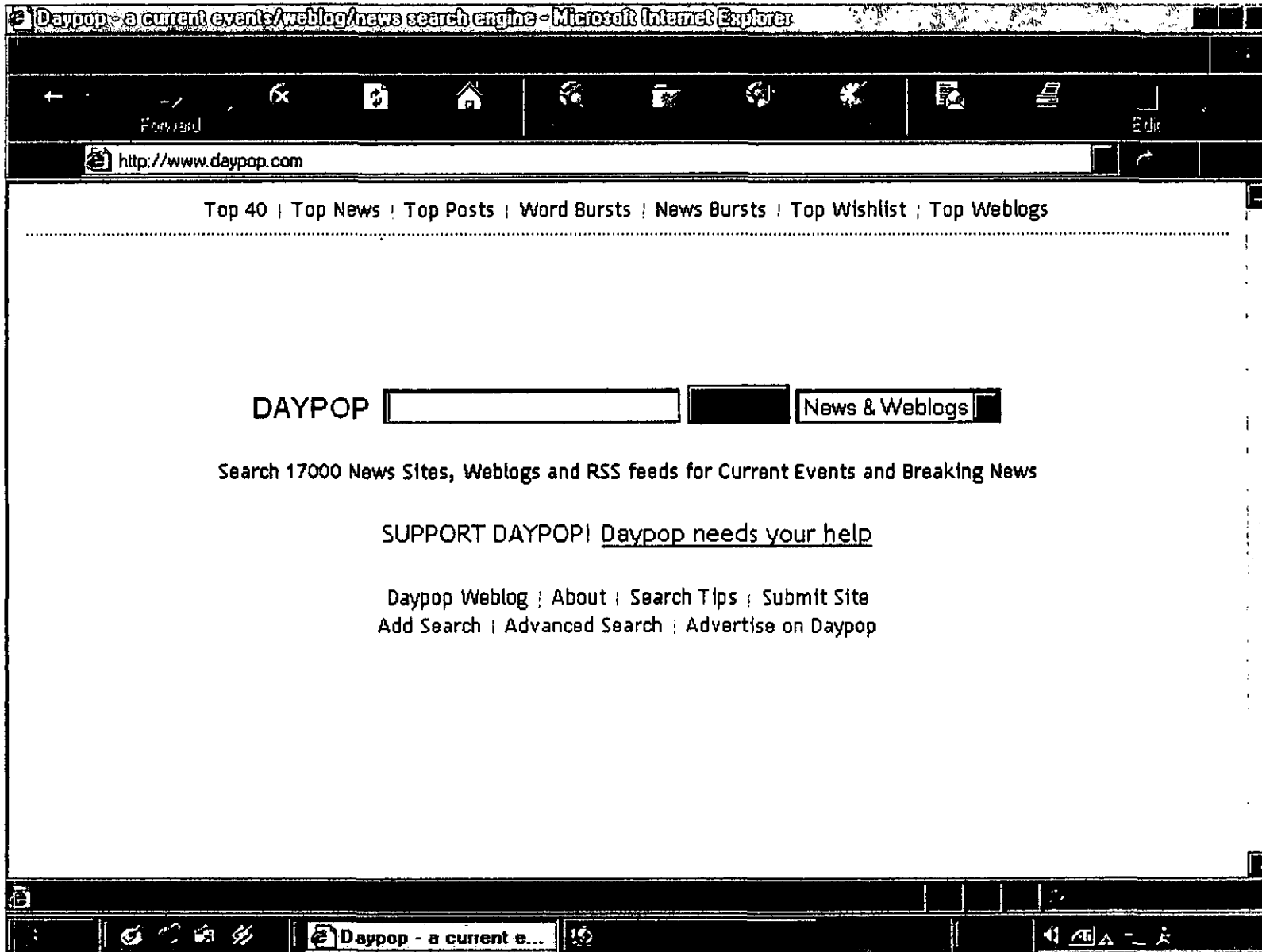
Latest Entries

My Last Days here

Dear Diary, Right now my mom is in Colorado, looking at houses and checking out the neighborhood. I live in Brentwood which is in NY and well, obviously I'm

Author: XIA
 Date: May 4, 2003
 Topic: [Stress](#)

The Diary Project - M...



Oprah would
"I don't know what
the future holds, but I
know who holds the
future."

The only new one
episode of "Dharma
& Greg" and at the
end of it they told
each other (and I
liked the statement)
'Promise to let you
be you and me be me'

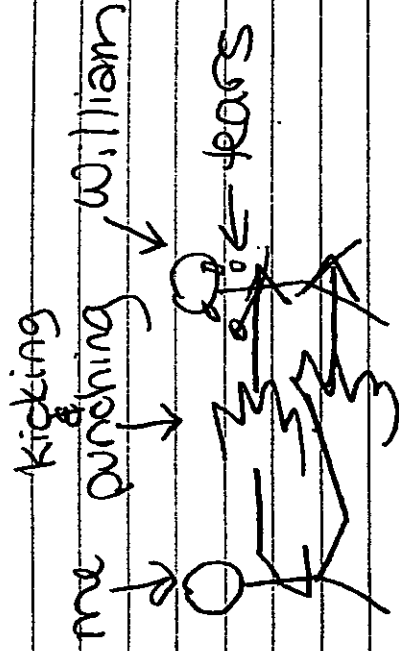
I want to be proposed
to (rather than do
the proposing).

Quinn is an
excellent movie. Probably
my favorite

"Pay no attention to
impeachment behind
me!"

- Rosie O'Donoghue
on how President
is acting toward
public about his
impeachment.

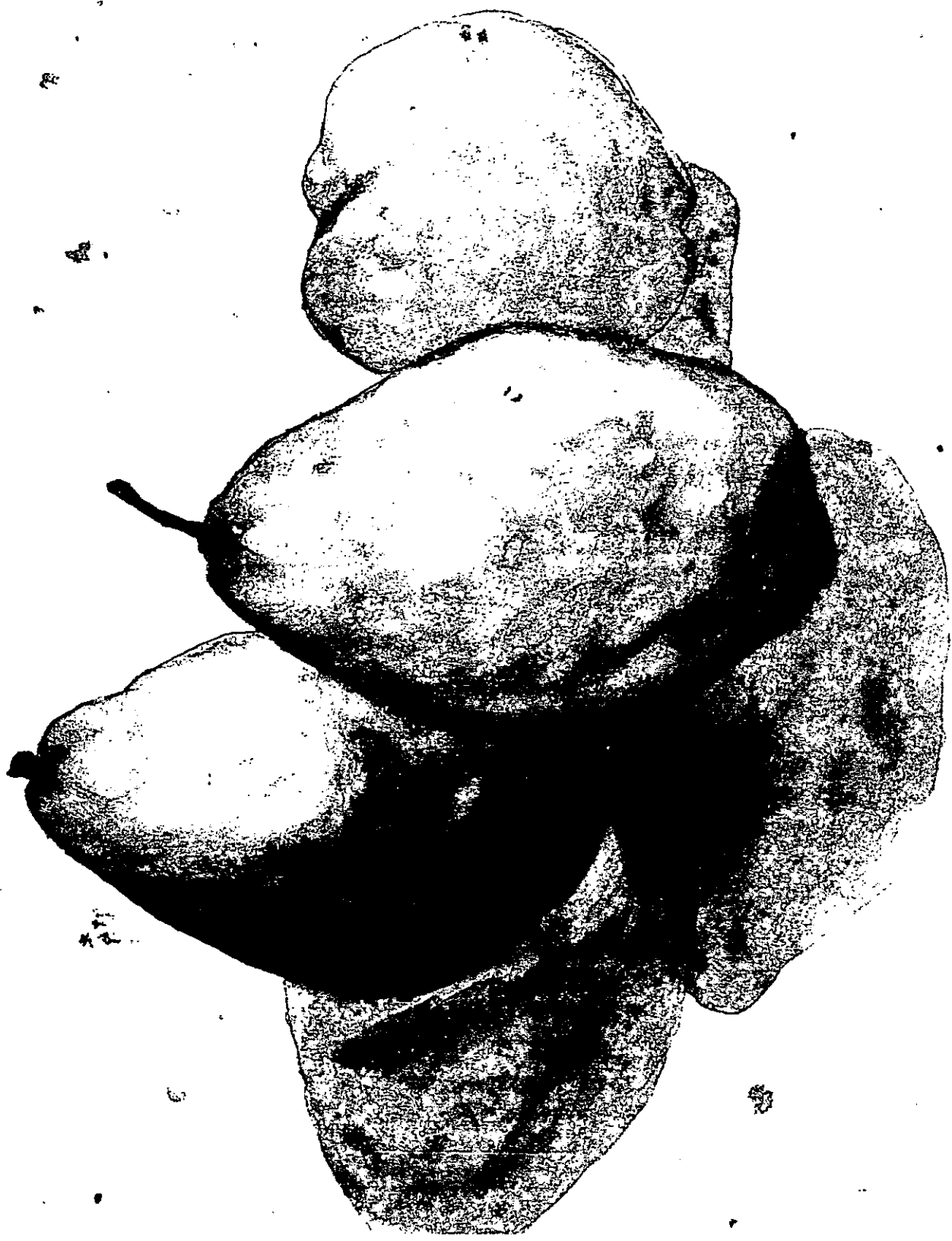
Sun, February 6
Elizabeth & I
some time from
reading out of
your hands. She
I had one th
Lorraine you
write & I
there of I
went to the
Journal & Sh
Johnny Boy
it is.



Ha ha ha,
 I want to know
 more than that,
 why don't you
 call??

- I tried to lay
 down & go to sleep,
 but I can't.
- Maybe I should
 focus on Adam. He
 loved the remembering
 all the great things
 we had & did. Maybe
 it will help me.
- remember what I
 shouldn't care
- if William calls or
 text.
- Adam had
 comforted me
 every day, at least
 once a day. He
 is such a sweet
 boy.

fruit
8 January 1991



I HAVE BEEN SO FRUSTRATED THAT MY ACTIONS, WHAT I MUST DO FOR MYSELF
HURTS SOMEONE I CARE DEEPLY FOR. I GRIEVE ALL DAY FOR ~~FORZ'S~~ BEFORE
I GRIEVED FOR STEVE. I CANNOT EVER SEEM TO SEPARATE MY GRIEF AND
SORROW AND GUILT FROM ~~THE~~ MY LOVE AND JOY AND HAPPINESS LONG ENOUGH
TO ALLOW MYSELF TO FEEL WHAT I'M REALLY FEELING. RESTATED: I CANNOT
SEEM TO SEPARATE MY EMOTIONS FROM WHAT I SUPPOSE TO BE THEIR EMOTIONS
SO THAT I CAN DO WHAT IS RIGHT FOR ME. I AM FILLED WITH THEIR PAIN
AND HURT AND DISAPPOINTMENT—SO FILLED THAT I CANNOT REACH MY OWN
EMOTIONS. SO FILLED THAT I CANNOT FEEL MY OWN FEELINGS. AND SO I FEEL
PARALYZED AND WEAKENED AND INCAPABLE OF DEFINITIVES.

SO STEVE AND I ARE BACK TOGETHER BECAUSE MY MIND SAID THIS WAS RIGHT.
BECAUSE MY MIND SAW HOW SIMILAR ARE OUR BELIEFS, OUR GOALS, OUR DESIRES.
BECAUSE MY MIND ENVISIONED US ON CROSS-COUNTRY ROAD TRIPS; CAMPING OUT
UNDER THE STARS; IN A HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY; WITH JOBS AT A UNIVERSITY
AND A LAW FIRM; WITH CHILDREN AND CATS AND DOGS AND A GARDEN. OUR
LIVES ARE RUNNING VERY NEARLY ON PARALLEL PATHS. MY MIND SAW THIS. MY MIND
WANTED THESE PATHS TO BE JOINED INTO ONE PATH. I'M NOT SURE IF MY
HEART CAN FOLLOW.

IT SEEMS THAT I MUST SURELY LOVE STEVE. IT SEEMS THAT I MUST. I LOVE HIS
BELIEFS. MOSTLY, THEY ARE MINE. I LOVE THE WAY HE TREATS ME NOW. I
LOVE OUR DEEP, DEEP TALKS WHEN OUR SOULS COLLIDE AND CONNECT. I LOVE WHAT
WE DO TOGETHER AND I LOVE WHAT WE WANT TO DO TOGETHER. AND I
MUST CERTAINLY LOVE HIM. AND YET AT THE SAME TIME THAT MY MIND SAYS
I MUST CERTAINLY LOVE HIM, MY HEART RECOILS FROM HIM, FROM THE PHYSICALITY
OF HIM. SOMETIMES AS WE ARE MAKING LOVE, I LOATHE HIM AND YET I DO
NOT WANT HIM TO LEAVE ME. THIS IS STRANGE, THIS LOATHING AND RECOILING
FROM HIM AND STILL THIS INABILITY, THIS UNDESIRING TO EXTRACT MY SELF FROM
HIM AND FROM US AND THE THING WE ARE BUILDING BETWEEN US.

THERE IS NOT ANYTHING MISSING BETWEEN US. IT SEEMS SIMPLY THAT THIS IS ALL
THAT IS POSSIBLE BETWEEN US. THE QUESTION IS: CAN I ACCEPT THIS AND BE
HAPPY WITH IT, OR MUST I HAVE MORE OUT OF LOVE, OUT OF LIFE?

16 JULY 1991

UP AT CLINTON BEACH (BLOOMINGTON PARK) WITH STEVE OVER AND OVER AGAIN
I AM AMAZED AT THE SOOTHING POWERS OF NATURE. LYING HERE ON
THE HOT WINDSUCKER BENCH AND THE OCEAN WINDS AND THE MV CREEKS

I went to my first ever worship service. It was at the church back home. I think I will be there more now, for the near time at least. Then on Sunday I worked on HW. At 6:30 Tommy, I, and the girls went to Sunday night thing - the message was about having dedication and joy on God. After that we went to verses. I just love singing and all that fills the room during that time. That brings us up to today - joy that fills the room during that time. Monday was pretty good - rather nice - because I fell asleep yesterday. Monday was pretty good - went to class and wrote my humanities paper. I am trying to study child prof. but it is a slow process. Anyway I was sewing as get really win and low when I went to check my mail. I got a letter from Mom and it just expressed a lot of feelings that I needed to hear from her - in mom called and we talked for almost an hour. It was so good. I told her about school and things, and we talked about Erik and Story. Hope having twins!! I hope everything turns out great for them. Erik also will have gotten a promotion - so that's very good news too. Um anyway it was a great getting away from school related issues and having a good time being close to the best happening. I am really going to try to focus on the good/blessings of life - instead of the hardship things I don't have. I believe one of my biggest problems is the inability for commitment. I really going to try to stop worrying about tomorrow or about the future. God has a plan for my life - and within that plan I can be the best. We went to a Mission's club Mtg last night and they spoke about something really good for me. Good soap. I love soap with your feet and a light unto your path." But if you have the light too far into the future - ahead of you - then you will stumble and fall over the things at your feet. Anyway it made me think more. I started writing this early last night worked on it hoping - an now at 6:30 in the afternoon I think I should wrap it up. I can study for child psych - yeah!! Todan's words is optimism. I hope I am sure I have lots of million things out, but it's all good. Till later,
XXXX

What an awesome weekend. I went to Nick's crew this weekend. It was so awesome. Well like usual I did fall asleep so this weekend and today were really good. Today afternoon close to 70 of us left and converged to Crew. Eventually I went with Mitch, Rachel, John and Greta. When we got to Credits to the survival center and just hung out so - we had a praise and worship in this little chapel so quiet and adorable. After a little singing we broke into work groups - I was a little nervous about being with a not know - but it turned out great. Our team leader was great. We all worked well - and laughed so much. Anyway I did want to go back to the lodge/visiting and played a lot. I never heard of this, but it is so much fun. I kept seeing no one would vote for him - finally they did - and I was so media. It was so fun there were like 26 people playing and we all just got to know each other as we played. On Sat and Sun and did all that good stuff - can I tell you I got - one bathroom two toilets. No really it was OK. I did all the things up into our work groups - we stayed there Bobby and Rachel's house (they run the survival center) and I did was super off the post and play in the kitchen there lunch. We got more social on each other than the start putting it on we had to wait for one of our guys come back in buson handles. Wrote lunch and a long time till Aaron got the bright idea that we could buson handles there and just replace them with the buson handles. It was a very good idea because even didn't end up on till after 2:30. By then we only had half the rest of we were almost out of social. Bobby came home just in the hardware store before they closed. I volunteered to go to go. get it (oh yeah I forgot to mention that kind - you would never know it though) Anyway him and I thought and I all went into town - which of course was 30 min away. Well I was driving and really went and so much fun. Anyway we talked about created people of the community are good people that have a hard time - and also about how crazy the people is about Halloween. They love it - it is their biggest he couldn't believe all the parents that kids would pull. get the stuff and wear on our own. h... . . .



COMPOSITION BOOK

100 SHEETS • 9 3/4 in. x 7 1/2 in.

My Book 1.7701-4.501
(Mr. Book - according to Riaz)



Pen-Tab Industries, Inc.
Front Royal, VA 22630
Virginia • Kansas City • Los Angeles

MB100/50101



Feb 1, 2001

So I've been pretty hard on myself the past couple of days and I'm not entirely sure where it came from. But I am in a super mood today. I found out that Tomes got the letter today, apparently he called Nick. And ya know - it didn't even upset me that much. Apparently though he's having a tough week something to do w/ a concert he's running lights and sound for and there is not enough money in the budget. So, my timing could have been better on that pt but other than that. So, I feel, I don't know, I think the ~~the~~ closing actually worked. I got a huge compliment at work yesterday. Beccas shrink apparently told Pat that she really liked me and could see that I cared about Becca. I thought that was neat. And Sergio is starting to open

The Flame - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Back Forward Stop Home Refresh Print Edit

http://www.the-flame.blogspot.com/


Navigation

- Film Brats
- Amanda's Journal
- Justin's Head
- Life of a Geek
- Jon's Journal

::Past::

02/01/2003 -
02/28/2003


A site dedicated to procrastination

 **Friday, May 02, 2003**

Well my classes are officially over. While I am coming back to take more classes I will so weird, it doesn't seem like it is even the end of the semester. I know next week is go to class everyday. I know I've experienced all of this end of the year stuff before. Well there's not much left to do now. Most of my projects have been turned in. Now a final, take an exit exam, and go to a few critiques. This shouldn't be too hard. For to take home. See ya.....

9:52 AM

0 Comments

 **Tuesday, April 29, 2003**

Well my sister got into Grad school. Yay for Karen. She was accepted into NOVA So. She's a marine biology major, so I guess Florida would be the place to go for grad s

The Flame



samedi, mai 03, 2003

JaneBlog



Left the par-tay. Athanassios' par-tays are always cool because there's good music, wine and awesome food. Plus there's Athanassios and Zoré. The problem is that the par-tay is always mostly Athanassios' friends from the Classics dept. They are cool, don't get me wrong. The thing is, they mostly talk Classics and I mostly don't. And when they're not talking Classics, they're "pity talking" to you. You know how this is? When it's obvious you're not talking about that so they have this superficial conversation with you? Anyway, I can stay about 3 hours and then I am extremely tired from so much "fake" talking to people. Also from the wine and food :-)

Always feel bad leaving, though, because it IS Athanassios' par-tay, after all, and Athanassios is a pal. Also because it seems silly to run away from superficial conversations. But this time I had a good reason- paper inspiration! So I guess it's all good :-). Still feeling slightly guilty, though. But paper inspiration! I'll take it when I can get it! (if only it had happened last weekend - hehe). Anyway. Paper! Onwards!
 posted @ 11:28 PM - link

At Athanassios' par-tay. Bout the same as the last one. Alex is here too. Nothing else to say.
 posted @ 11:42 PM - link

Whit's Journal Microsoft Internet Explorer

Forward

http://www.livejournal.com/users/whitbeast/

Whit's Journal Recent Entries

Recent Entries
Friends
History
Info
Previous 25
Entries

You are viewing the most recent 25 entries:


5th April 2003

2:04am: WIRED

ok, so it's 1:40 in the morning, and i'm totally wide-awake. i'm dying to just babble to some
nobody's online who wants to listen, so i guess i'll just babble to my journal.

today started out realllllly shitty, but actually ended really great. jesska came over, and we watche
2 discs of evangelion. grant also stopped by to watch a few episodes with us, which was cool.

i've finally figured out a financial plan for myself that will enable me to buy the guitar i want withi
than 4 months. (see picture below)



Anarane Amandil's Journal - Microsoft Internet Explorer

http://www.livejournal.com/users/ncorglow

[entries|friends|calendar]

Anarane Amandil

[userinfo]
[calendar]

[mood] nostalgic

[music] Poes are Red (Aqua)

Forgive the lame song choice, but I've been quite reminiscent lately, and have been listening to all my old things, all tied up in memory. I've been a bit mooney lately, because everyone has moved away, or fallen away, and we don't talk or see each other like we used to, and then when we do, it's a little awkward because we've changed so much. Well, I don't feel I've changed so much as the others, but that's a pretty narrow view, I think. You never think you've changed, but everyone around you can see it. Music holds a lot of memories for me, because I have to have it whenever I go, it's a little soundtrack. Sometimes it's good, but some times it's not. Every time I hear "Hold Me Now" by the Thompson Twins, it's a mixed emotion, because it reminds

[22 Apr 2003|08:57 pm]

11:56 PM