

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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Dialogues@RU: A Journal of Undergraduate Research is an annual peer-reviewed journal of student essays now in its third year of publication. It is unique among journals in providing a multi-disciplinary forum for research writing by students at the beginning of their academic careers. The importance placed on research and writing at Rutgers University is underscored by the awards presented to three of the essays in this volume, a \$500 prize for "Best Essay" and two \$250 prizes for "Distinguished Essay." The essays in the initial three volumes of the journal have been written by students in the Writing Program's research writing courses, Research in the Disciplines (355:201) and College Writing and Research (355:301). However, since our objectives are not only to present the excellent work done in Writing Program courses but to encourage students to continue to write as they move through the university, *Dialogues* is open to submissions from students in all 100-, 200-, and 300-level courses, and this year we were pleased to receive essays from outside the Writing Program for the first time.

For Volume Three, we received a record of seventy submissions, and followed the selection process established for Volumes One and Two. The identities of the authors were removed from the essays, which were divided into three groups of four student editors chaired by a senior editor; each essay, therefore, was assured of five readers. In these editorial groups, we discussed each essay, decided which ones would go forward, and determined the editorial changes that needed to be made. We met again to make the final decision on the essays for the volume, and each student editor worked with one of the authors. We continued the dialogic tradition of Volume Two, in which formal commentaries written by some of the editors and the writer's responses were printed with the essays. This is the kind of intellectual exchange that plays a central role in the pedagogy of the Writing Program, generates the stimulating debates contained in this volume, and expedites the production of knowledge within, and far beyond, the university.

The range of these essays demonstrates how effectively the Writing Program functions to encourage intellectual ambition, intensive research, and independent analysis. These writers vigorously seize the opportunity to engage the great ethical

issues, and boldly test one another's perceptions. In "Confronting Terror: Reasserting Ethical Resolve over Political Realism," Anthony Vitali (Livingston College '05), a psychology major, examines the concepts of "just war" and "holy war" to argue that we must rethink our separation of "the ethical dimension of religious tradition from international relations, especially in terms of war policy" and "carry forward a 'conversation between traditions' that is rooted in their relevant ethical traditions." His editor, Ryan J. Gogol (Rutgers College Honors '06), warns, however, that "[o]n both accounts of Vitali's call for moral resolve in Western foreign policy and a meaningful debate between Western and Islamic traditions, we must exercise the highest degrees of caution, as they can also work against the pursuit of a more principled war on terrorism." Vitali, nevertheless, firmly stands his ground: "Gogol's notion that caution exercised to the highest degree may well trump moral resolve seems fairly rooted in common sense; however, caution when anchored solely in the ebb and flow of pure political realism, without orientation by a resolute ethical compass, stands precariously perched on the precipice of providing a strategy of exculpation for *de facto* moral impotence." This vigorous engagement with complex problems and provocative conversation between positions provide an example of the intelligence, discipline, and conviction of Rutgers students at their best.

Other essays engage, with equal insight and analytic virtuosity, a variety of cultural formations. Philip Krachun (Livingston '06) examines the epistemology of photography in "The Myth of the Thousand Words: Exploring the Role of Narrative in *La Jetée* and *12 Monkeys*." In "Sly Fox: The Cultural Impact of One Network," Reina Singh (Livingston '04) analyzes the ironic inversion of entertainment and reporting on the Fox Network, where *The Simpsons* cartoon provides serious social commentary and *Fox News* a bumptious "three-ring circus." Two essays analyze the cultural function of food and food preparation: Gail Babilonia (Rutgers College '06), examines the culinary and social impacts of one of our new media stars, "The Celebrity Chef," and Joseph DiPiazza (Livingston) studies the intersection of food and culture in "Italian-American Foodways: A personal and academic look into Sunday Dinner."

Other essays address issues linked to globalization. In "The Last Genuine Local Team: Athletic Bilbao Surviving in the Spanish League," Jonathan Shulman (University College '06), an Israeli student majoring in Economics and History,

examines nationalist politics in an increasingly commodified and globalized sport. Boleslaw Czachor (Rutgers College '06), in "The Three Gorges Dam and the Influence of Globalization in Central China," uses the concepts of "obfuscation" and "creative destruction" to evaluate the "environmental-political complexities" of the Three Gorges Dam. Melissa Zappulla ('06) studies the real environmental and social consequences of the recent enthusiasm for "back-to-nature" vacations on environmentally sensitive areas and endangered species in "Ecotourism: Behind the Green Curtain."

Four essays enlist the genre of women's autobiography to explore the ways in which we make meaning of our lives. In "Autobiography as Activism: Linking Oppression, Identity, and Feminism," Laura King (Douglass '06) considers the poet Audre Lorde as an example of an autobiographer who transformed the pain of exclusion into a force for social change. Sarah Pacella (Camden College of Arts and Sciences '05) rereads Elizabeth Wurtzel's autobiography of her addiction, *More, Now, Again* to theorize the concept of protean "momentary selves" in her essay "Momentary Expression Through Addiction." In "The Most Ordinary of Deaths: Madeleine L'Engle's Autobiographical Examination of the Death of Her Mother," Jennifer Wijdenes (Mason Gross School of the Arts '04) argues that L'Engle's experience of her mother's death helped her to connect "to the larger universe . . . and better understand the meaning of her own life." Finally, in "Finding 'Being' through 'Non-Being,'" Art History major Rachelle Wander (Douglass '06), examines the way in which Virginia Woolf expresses her perceptions about what shaped the meaning of her life. In her commentary on the essay, Dixita Patel ('04) observes that Wander "challenges the reader to ponder why we as humans need to explore the past, both the momentous and insignificant experiences . . . to better understand ourselves and the place we hold in society and the world at large." This last statement eloquently expresses not only the substance of Wander's essay, but the importance of all of the essays in this volume, which explore, in different ways, "both the momentous and insignificant experiences" so that we can "better understand ourselves and the place we hold in society and the world at large."