

哈佛 50 篇 essay--1。塑造自我

A Formation of Self

Before even touching the camera, I made a list of some of the photographs I would take: web covered with water, grimace reflected in the calculator screen, hand holding a tiny round mirror where just my eye is visible, cat's striped underbelly as he jumps toward the lens, manhole covers, hand holding a translucent section of orange, pinkies partaking of a pinkie swear, midsection with jeans, hair held out sideways at arm's length, bottom of foot, soap on face. This, I think is akin to a formation of self. Perhaps I have had the revelations even if the photos are never taken.

I already know the dual strains the biographers will talk about, strains twisting through a life. The combination is embodied here: I write joyfully, in the margin of my lab book, beside a diagram of a beaker, "Isolated it today, Beautiful wispy strands, spider webs suspended below the surface, delicate tendrils, cloudy white. Lyrical, elegant DNA! This is DNA! So beautiful!"

I should have been a Renaissance man. It kills me to choose a field (to choose between the sciences and the humanities!). My mind roams, I wide-eyed, into infinite caverns and loops. I should fly! Let me devour the air, dissolve everything into my bloodstream, learn!

The elements are boundless, but, if asked to isolate them, I can see tangles around medicine and writing. The trick will be to integrate them into a whole, and then maybe I can take the photograph. Aahh, is it already there, no? Can't you see it? I invoke the Daedalus in me, everything that has gone into making me, hoping it will be my liberation.

Music is one such element. The experience of plying in an orchestra from the inside is an investigation into subjectivity. It is reminiscent of Heisenberg's

uncertainty principle: the more one knows the speed of a particle, the less one knows its position. Namely the position of the observer matters and affects the substance of the observation; even science is embracing embodiment. I see splashes of bright rain in violin arpeggios fading away in singed circles, a clarinet solo fades blue to black, and a flute harmony leaves us moving sideways, a pregnant silence, the trumpets interrupt with the smell of lightning. Perhaps in the audience you would sense something else.

I think of rowing as meditation. Pshoow, huh, aaah; pshoow, huh, aaah. I can close my eyes and still hear it. We glide over reflected sky... and lean. And defy the request for "leadership positions," laugh at it, because it misses the entire point, that we are integral, one organism: I hear the oars cut the water, shunk shunk; there are no leaders.

Once I heard an echo from all quarters. "Do not rush," said the conductor, "follow the baton." "Do not rush," said the coach, "watch the body in front of you." Do not rush. I write about characters' words: how they use words, how they manipulate them, how they create their own realities; words used dangerously, flippantly, talking at cross purposes, deliberately being vague; the nature of talking, of words and realities. Perhaps mine has been a flight of fancy too. But, come on, it's in the words, a person, a locus, somewhere in the words. It's all words. I love the words.

I should be a writer, but I will be a doctor, and out of the philosophical tension I will create a self.

ANALYSIS

This essay is a good example of an essay that shows rather than tells the reader who the author is. Through excited language and illustrative anecdotes, she offers a complex picture of her multifaceted nature.

The writing is as fluid as its subject matter. One paragraph runs into the next with little break for transition or explicit connection. It has the feel of an ecstatic stream-of-consciousness, moving rapidly toward a climactic end.

The author is as immediate as she is mysterious. She creates an intimate relationship with her reader, while continuously keeping him/her “in the dark” as she jumps from one mental twist to another.

She openly exposes her charged thoughts, yet leaves the ties between them uncemented. This creates an unpredictability that is risky but effective.

Still, one ought to be wary in presenting an essay of this sort. The potential for obliqueness is high, and, even here, the reader is at times left in confusion regarding the coherence of the whole. Granted the essay is about confluence of seeming opposites, but poetic license should not obscure important content. This particular essay could have been made stronger with a more explicit recurring theme to help keep the reader focused.

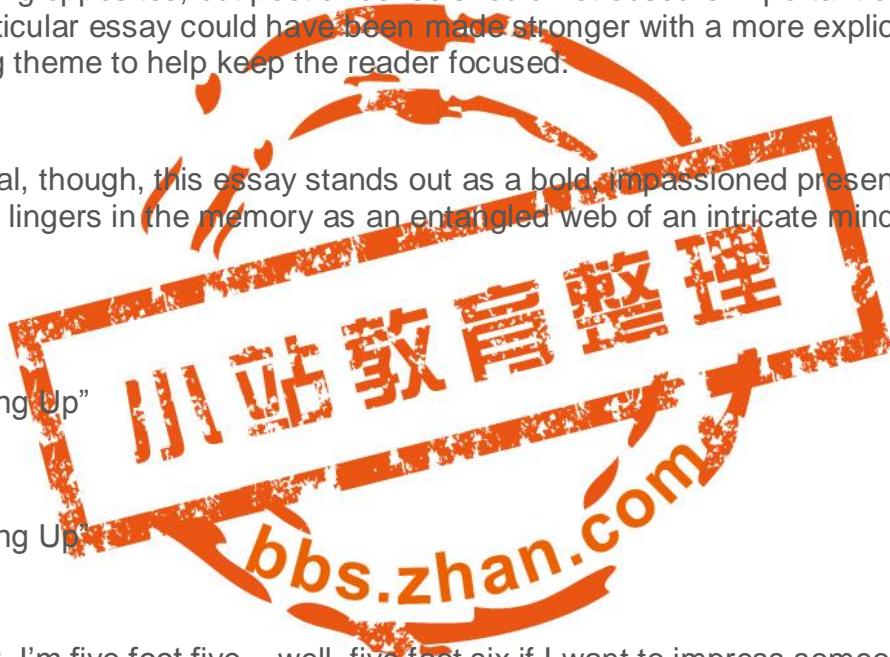
In general, though, this essay stands out as a bold, impassioned presentation of self. It lingers in the memory as an entangled web of an intricate mind.

“Growing Up”

“Growing Up”

I’m short. I’m five foot five – well, five foot six if I want to impress someone. If the average height of American men is five foot ten, that means I’m nearly half a foot shorter than the average Joe out there. And then there are the basketball players. My height has always been something that’s set me apart; it’s helped define me. It’s just that as long as I can remember, I haven’t liked the definition very much. Every Sunday in grade school my dad and I would watch ESPN Primetime Football. Playing with friends at home, I always imagined the booming ESPN voice of Chris Berman giving the play-by-play of our street football games. But no matter how well I performed at home with friends, during school recess the stigma of “short kid” stuck with me while choosing teams.

Still concerned as senior year rolled along, I visited a growth specialist. Pacing the exam room in a shaky, elliptical orbit worried, “What if I’ve stopped growing? Will my social status forever be marked by my shortness?” In a grade school



dream, I imagined Chris “ESPN” Berman’s voice as he analyzed the fantastic catch I had made for a touchdown when – with a start – the doctor strode in. damp with nervous sweat, I sat quietly with my mom as he showed us the X-ray taken of my hand. The bones in my seventeen-year-old body had matured. I would not grow any more.

Whoa. I clenched the steering wheel in frustration as I drove home. What good were my grades and “college transcript” achievements when even my friends poked fun of the short kid? What good was it to pray, or to genuinely live a life of love? No matter how many Taekwondo medals I had won, could I ever be considered truly athletic in a wiry, five foot five frame? I could be dark and handsome, but could I ever be the “tall” in “tall, dark and handsome”? All I wanted was someone special to look up into my eyes; all I wanted was someone to ask, “Could you reach that for me?”

It’s been hard to deal with. I haven’t answered all those questions, but I have learned that height isn’t all it’s made out to be. I’d rather be a shorter, compassionate person than a tall tyrant. I can be a giant in so many other ways: intellectually, spiritually and emotionally.

I’ve ironically grown taller from being short. It’s enriched my life. Being short has certainly had its advantages. During elementary school in earthquake-prone California for example, my teachers constantly praised my “duck and cover” skills. The school budget was tight and the desks were so small an occasional limb could always be seen sticking out. Yet Chris Shim, “blessed” in height, always managed to squeeze himself into a compact and safe fetal position. The same quality has paid off in hide-and-go-seek. (I’m the unofficial champion on my block.)

Lincoln once debated with Senator Stephen A. Douglas – a magnificent orator, nationally recognized as the leader of the Democratic Party of 1858... and barely five feet four inches tall. It seems silly, but standing on the floor of the Senate last year I remembered Senator Douglas and imagined that I would one day debate with a

future president. (It helped to have a tall, lanky, bearded man with a stove-top hat talk with me that afternoon.) But I could just as easily become an astronaut, if not for my childlike, gaping-mouth-eyes-straining wonderment of the stars, then maybe in the hope of growing a few inches (the spine spontaneously expands in the absence of gravity).

Even at five feet, six inches, the actor Dustin Hoffman held his own against Tom Cruise in the movie *Rainman* and went on to win his second Academy Award for Best Actor. Michael J. Fox (5'5") constantly uses taller actors to his comedic advantage. Height has enhanced the athleticism of "Muggsy" Bogues, the shortest player in the history of the NBA at five foot three. He's used that edge to lead his basketball team in steals (they don't call him "Muggsy" for nothing). Their height has put no limits to their work in the arts or athletics. Neither will mine.

I'm five foot five. I've struggled with it at times, but I've realized that being five-five can't stop me from joining the Senate. It won't stem my dream of becoming an astronaut (I even have the application from NASA). My height can't prevent me from directing a movie and excelling in Taekwondo (or even basketball). At five foot five I can laugh, jump, run, dance, write, paint, help, volunteer, pray, love and cry. I can break 100 in bowling. I can sing along to Nat King Cole. I can recite Audrey Hepburn's lines from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. I can run the mile in under six minutes, dance like a wild monkey and be hopelessly wrapped up in a good book (though I have yet to master the ability to do it all at once). I've learned that my height, even as a defining characteristic, is only a part of the whole. It won't limit me. Besides, this way I'll never outgrow my favorite sweater.

ANALYSIS

"Growing Up" follows the form of discussing a physical or character trait, and exploring its impact on one's life. Shim's strategy is for the reader to understand his frustrations with his height, a physical characteristic that has played a great role in the way he sees himself among his family, friends, and peers.

This piece works because it is to the point, honest, and straight-forward. The opening, "I'm short," delivers a clear message to the reader of the essay's main idea. As the essay progresses, Shim reveals his personal feelings and aspirations. He gives us a window into the very moment of discovery that he would no longer be able to grow. We are taken on a tour of what makes Shim tick. Being short has shaped and influenced his outlook on the world, yet it has not diminished his goals. It is personal, yet remains positive. He recognizes

both the benefits and negatives of his short stature and is able to convey them in a thoughtful manner. Furthermore, the essay not only lets us into Shim's thoughts on being small but tells us his varied interests in politics, space exploration, sports, and the arts. Shim hasn't just told us how his height "doesn't limit him" he has shown us why.

"Pieces of Me"

"Pieces of Me"

---Sandra E. Pullman

The black and white composition book is faded, and the corners are bent. It doesn't lie flat as many paper clips mark favorite places. Almost every sheet is covered with writing—some in bold handwriting hardly revised, others uncertainly jotted down completely marked up and rewritten. Flipping through the thin pages, I smile, remembering from careless thoughts to assassinate prose to precisely worded poems, this journal marks a year of my life as a writer.

In junior year, my English teacher asked us to keep a journal for creative writing, as a release from otherwise stressful days. We were free to write on any topic we chose. From then on as often as I could, I would steal away to the old wooden rocking chair in the corner of my room and take time off to write.

As I now try to answer the question of who am I for this essay, I immediately think of my journal.

I am a writer.

My writing is the most intensely personal part of me. I pour my heart out into my journal and am incredibly protective of it. It's difficult for me to handle criticism or change rejection:

I can tell he wouldn't read it right wouldn't let the meaning sink into him slow and delicious it would sound awful through his careless eyes I want him to open himself up to it and let in a piece of me I want him to know this side of me no one ever has I want him to be the one to understand let me see he prods once more I tell myself this time I'll do it I let myself go but as it passes into his rough hands I see it for the first time it's awkward and wrong just like me I snatch it back from him and crumble it it falls with hardly a noise into the trash

I am a child.

Growing up, I would always ride my bike over to the elementary school across the street and into the woods behind it. Crab apple trees scented the fall air and the winding dirt paths went on forever. I'd drop my bike at the base of a tree and climb as high as I could. All afternoon I would sit in these trees whose branches curved out a seat seemingly made just for me.

One day I biked across the street to come face to face with construction trucks. Those woods are now a parking lot. I cry every time I see cars parked where my crab apple trees once stood.

He allowed the sweet sadness to linger As he contemplated a world

