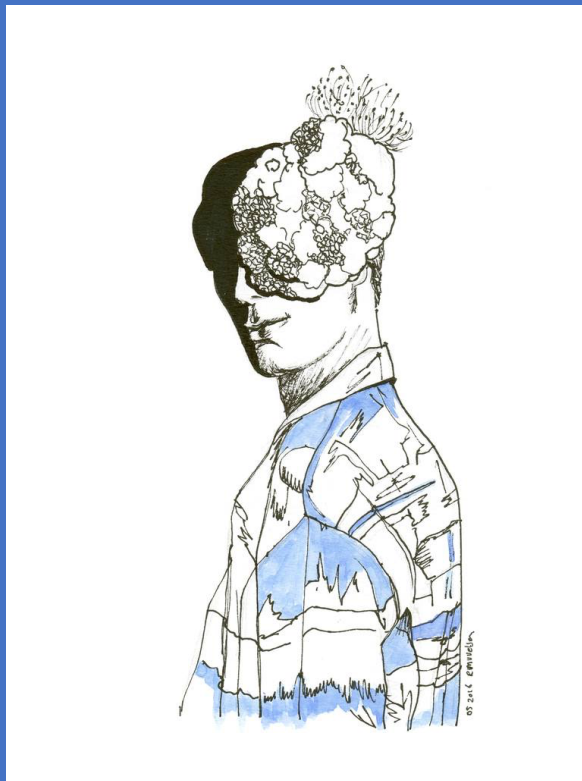


IN THE WORLD OF ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL MIND



Wilbert Rodriguez
Photo credit: Rosalie Mignonhe van Velsen, 'Creative Mind'

Final Reflection:

This was quite the ride through the semester with all the things going on in the world. The assignments throughout the semester made it manageable to say the least. Writing was always something I believed I had some skill to perform in. After writing so many ‘focused’ papers, I thought it’d be best to branch out a bit. Branching out to me was being able to do everything this class required without thinking about a rubric to follow. There was always a question or two to answer in depth, but the tasks in this class never restricted the creative freedom. Creative freedom in itself was a foreign concept I needed to exercise a bit, so I think I chose the right class to do just that. A few of the things that made this class a learning experience for me was picking up on my reading habits based on different readings, adjusting my work to improve for future use, and writing different kinds of literary work. I’m usually very resistant to change, but let’s see how I’ve progressed.

Firstly, I’ll talk about my odd reading habits. My reading habits tend to change depending on what I’m reading. I start to have an unreasonably difficult time when I’m reading something I don’t find enjoyable. When it comes to those situations, I’m quick to skim through it and pick up on the larger details wherever they be. That will inevitably lead to some confusion when I don’t read enough; I end up going back for another round of reading to catch everything in between to get an understanding. It may take me a few minutes to pick on something that may be very obvious to others. For example, in “The Wife’s Story” by Ursula K. Leguin, I was not able to make any sense out of the last half until I read it three-four times. There were so many questions in my head that needed to be answered, and I still couldn’t get the answers until the class ended up having a discussion about it. In that reading main ‘characters’ were wolves, and the husband of the protagonist (the mother) had transformed into a human towards the end. At the time, I was

not able to pick up on the idea of him being a werewolf. This reading was worth bringing up as it was the first reading I had realized where my reading ability lacked. My pace was much slower on readings that had a lot of detail and using surrounding lines for context clue was a bit rough. Denser readings had opened my eyes quite a bit in comparison to less detailed work.

Moving on, were the noticeable adjustments in my literary work that needed to happen. Writing with no boundaries was a foreign concept to me at the start, and I'd say I've adjusted well. I've wrote different bits of writing that have ranged from something as personal as memoirs to creating short stories (which weren't my strong suit). I can confidently say that I struggled badly in every step of the way. For some insight, I was taught to perfect the art of writing research, document-based-question, and argumentative essays over the span of my high school years. As you can imagine, very few tasks throughout that time allowed for the creative freedom that is allowed in this class. Due to that reason, I noticed how much detail I lacked in the initial assignments within the course. I noticed my writing was jumping from one point to another as if the reader knew any background information. I have a tendency to lay out the thoughts in a simple form, but not everyone knows what's going in the thought process. I knew I needed to work with clarification and transitions early on to make my work as readable as possible. Clarity was something I lacked on in my literary work for quite a number of years, and this year was no exception. Other than that, I tried to rely on the inputs of those in my cohort. There were times where the gentlemen in my cohort had been thinking the same things I had in mind for myself; the advice given would lead to some small changes/revisions, but I felt like there was more to improve on. Those were the days that I had reached out to the professor to get the most critical advisement. Taking that extra step to reach out to the professor was the result of the hard-wired

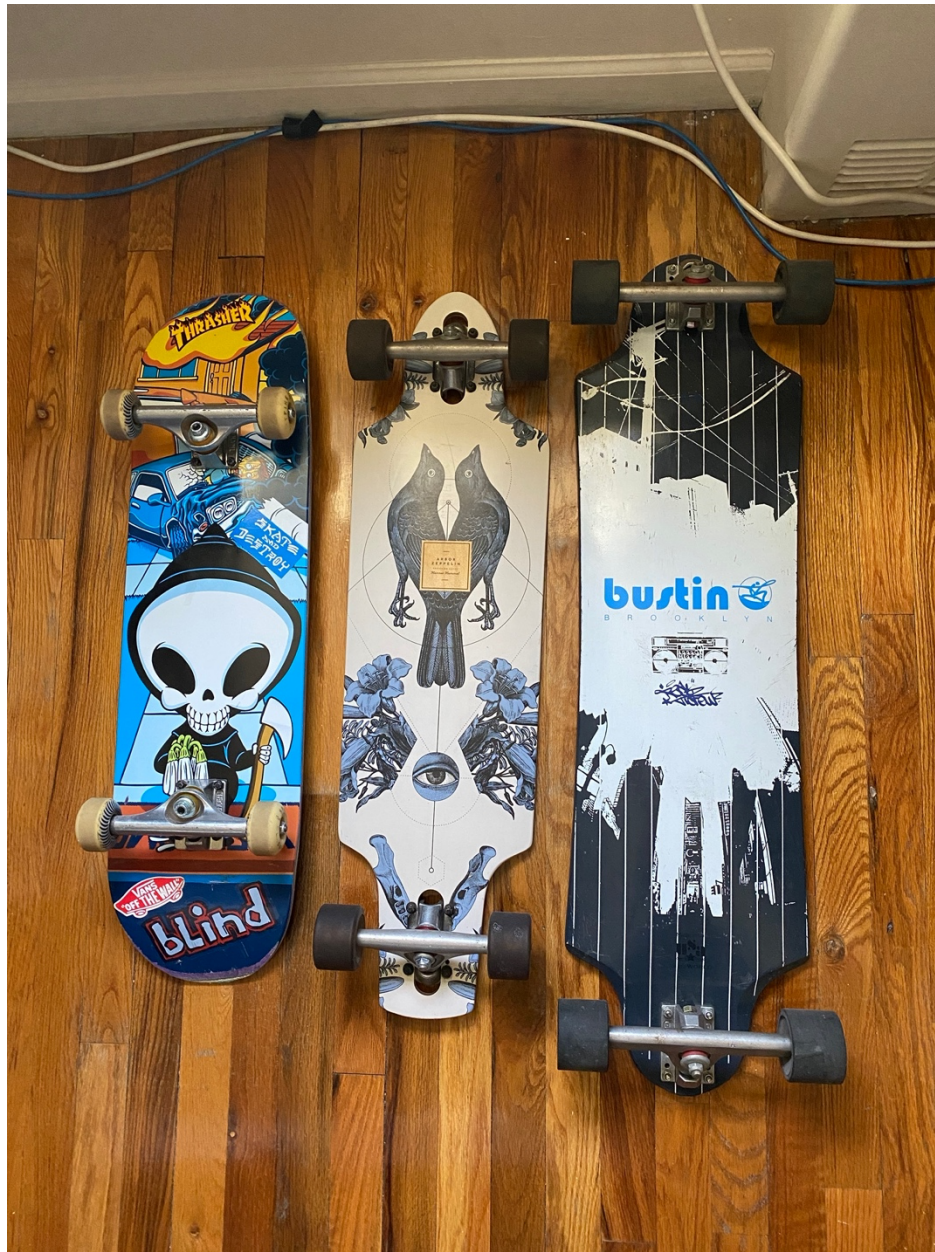
'rubric' mindset. In order for some peace of mind, I needed more suggestions/questions to make sure I'm doing the assignment as best as I can.

Furthermore, the approach to different kinds of literary work. Coming from what I'd call a very 'objective' style of writing background to creative writing was not the easiest thing. I was able to get through the memoirs rather nicely after some suggestions from classmates. My memoirs lacked some smooth transitions as mentioned earlier, but I was able to get through them. They were significantly easier to write compared to anything else as they were memories I had gone through; all the details were in the mind, and I just needed to translate that to paper. Due to the reasons mentioned, writing those were my favorite assignments. After a decent amount of time, the class landed on writing short stories. My writing ability lacks when it comes to short stories as mentioned earlier. The thought of writing short stories gets complicated quickly because the goal is to ultimately create a movie in the reader's mind. If I was not able to do that successfully, then there was something I didn't include. I usually miss out on quite a few details because I do not have it all planned out in my head at the time of writing it. Thankfully, the classmates in my cohort were able to assist with suggestions that made it easier for me to consider what needed to be added/taken away. I took note of the suggestions to make the reading easier for the mind to interpret. Other than that, every assignment in between the memoirs and short stories were doable. Nothing else posed the level of difficult short stories did, or the level of enjoyment from sharing a memory in time.

Lastly, the semester's been a roller coaster. Levels of stress have never stayed the same as time went on throughout the semester, but I was able to improve my abilities in the class despite the circumstances we're in. I was able to pick up (and improve) on how rusty of a writer and reader that I am by branching out from what I considered the norm. The creative freedom

that I needed to use in this class can translate to future projects; those future projects may be a paper or the next untold short story. Hopefully these things will carry onto to future work with practice, but I'll need to keep working at it. Like most things in life, we're always working on our craft.

Memoir: Meet My Boards



I have five different boards that are unique to their shape and style. In this writing piece, I'll keep it simple and write about the three I use most. While I must admit early on that I do have some sort of addiction when it comes to getting more boards. I genuinely can't help it! I'll try to give a bit of information to help you (the reader) understand each one since all three are vastly different from one another.

The traditional skateboard I use is 8.25 inches wide (one on the left), and that's usually determined by your foot size or what honestly feels the most comfortable to you. Wheel size is also another preferred part that makes a noticeable difference on the ride. I don't do tricks all that often, but if I were to do tricks then the distance between the ground and the board is something to think about. The wheels for a traditional skateboard are usually a lot harder than cruisers to last since they'll be sliding against surfaces and taking a lot of impact.

Moving onto the cruisers, I have two coffin style boards. Using the word 'coffin' to describe the very rectangular/boxy shape of the boards is a bit odd, but it is the technical term for them. I'm not sure about the width of either board in all honesty. Just know that both boards allow my shoes to stand on top of them without them hanging off the edge on either side (I'm a size 10 for reference). The only main difference between them besides aesthetic things are the length, and the wheels of course. One of them is about half a foot shorter in length than the other and is also made from bamboo (the one in the middle). It's extremely easy to ride with how light it is in comparison to the larger maple wood board. The wheels are also smaller which makes it easier to pick up speed. On the other hand, the larger board is just a behemoth in size, and it weighs like one too. The wheels are also larger, but the larger board will have a much better time handling the speed between the two. It all comes down to preference at the end of the day, but I generally stick with the bamboo board most of the time.

Their designs are unique to the aesthetic that each board encompasses as well. Granted, I was only allowed to choose the design for two of them. The only ones that I had the chance of choosing were the ones in the middle and the left. I had chosen the design on the left as it was a brand that extremely familiar to me as a child. The name of the brand is 'Blind', and the large

skulled grim reaper is like their mascot (like the Michelin man for Michelin tires!). As for the middle board, I fell in love the symmetric design. It was kind of mesmerizing at first sight with the simplicity and the color choices. Throw that one top of the desire to get a bamboo board for years, and I felt the need to have it when I saw it.

Now that I've showcased these, it's only fair to give some backstory as to how I managed to get into this. At some point in time, my mom had shown me some footage of Tony Hawk at the X games on tv at home. I remembered seeing what almost felt like him floating in the air doing the first ever 900 on a half-pipe (2 and a half spins in the air). Just to give a better idea of the ramp, it's essentially a large 'U' shape which is why it's called a halfpipe. Besides the fact that he had literally made history in the skateboarding scene, it was the spark I needed to start.

I had started by the time I was eight years old. I remember getting my first skate deck at the old Toys R Us in Manhattan like it was yesterday. It was probably one of the most memorable times of my childhood. I had started out with gear from head to toe as my mom was not happy that I had picked this up as a hobby. Just a reminder, it is her fault for showing me that legendary footage. As years passed, I found that I was mainly attracted to the speed and the movement. I had felt like I was surfing on the sidewalks of the Bronx every time I went out to ride. I could just feel the wind in my face while it went through my hair like water. I used to zoom past people like obstacles on a road course... it was always fun. There were always people yelling at me to "SLOW DOWN", but where's the fun in that? I always find myself skating at high speeds, and my friends are no different. They don't have any skateboards of their own, so I'd let them pick one of mine to ride. I usually end up riding alone with how far everyone, but that's alright with me. You can call me an adrenaline junkie if you'd like, but you would need to experience it to

understand it. There are dozens of things that deserve to be experienced in life by those who dare, and I think it's fair to add skating onto that list!

If there's truly anything that I can suggest from my years of skating... it's to pick what you like and be curious. You can go into a shop and pick it all out yourself. Find the size for you, find your style of a design, and everything else you can possibly imagine. Think about it as an extension of yourself if that helps. Even if skating isn't something of interest to get you moving, I hope the person reading this manages to find something they enjoy!

Short Story: Ball Game

Do you ever wonder what it's like to win a long baseball game? The crowd of people watching cheer you on (or boo you off) after you win? That's the glory a young man and his best friend had sought after during their varsity years in high school.

The young man's name is Howard Miller, and he strived to be the best outfielder he could be. He was a schoolboy at heart as he would spend all his time on his schoolwork in attempt to get a head start on everything to have all the time in the world to do what he pleases after. He was a man with discipline on the mind to do whatever it took to handle priorities.

At this point in time, it's after school hours when the normal school days been done. Howard decided to use the time before baseball practice to catch up on some homework. His best friend decided to tag along and keep the guy some company before practice began.

His best friend goes by the name of Charles Harris. Charles had met Howard back in the 7th grade. The brotherly bond happened over games of baseball in the season of that time. Baseball had been the game they started together, and it's the game they'll play once more. They've never enjoyed anything more than winning games on the field together. Charles was always quick to say something about the mistakes that Howard made with the progress he was making, but he never took it to heart. Howard knew he was a faster runner and that's what mattered to him on the field when he's catching fly balls.

They were sitting in a classroom with their math teacher in case they needed some help with their geometry homework. Both of them had switched their regular uniforms into wearing their gym uniforms in preparation for later. Charles had already made the decision to do the

homework another time. He always looked over the assignment(s) and puts his stuff away to make sure he knows what to expect later. He had looked at Howard and gave him the look to get him to hurry up. Howard knew Charles never liked to finish tasks early on, and he always reminded him of it. He would just laugh at his impatience.

“Look man, we have another 20 minutes before we gotta go to practice so I’m going to help myself a bit by getting something done.”

Charles would just shrug his shoulders as he fiddled with a baseball in his baseball glove. About 10 minutes later, some of the other players came barging into the room.

One of the players asked, “Y’all coming to practice? Practice is starting up a bit earlier since it’s going to rain soon.”

They looked a bit tense from the drills that the coach had them doing already.

Everyone already knew the coach and his ways. The practice was going to run through the rain if it wasn’t heavy enough, so they already prepared themselves for that mentally. Howard and Charles acknowledged what they said. They shook their heads up and down to let them know they’ll be going. They had only come into the classroom since the coach had seen them earlier and was wondering if they were skipping practice. The players had left the room in a hurry to report back to the coach and get back to practice.

Even Howard couldn’t hold himself from putting the time into the game as all he’s ever gotten from the sport were good memories. He enjoyed baseball as much as Charles did. It was one of the few ways he was able to keep his mind off things, but he has a tendency to think of what

needs to be done. In this case, his best friend had to get him going to go. He was noticing how stressed Howard was just trying to finish up the assignment he's working on before practice. He'll remind him of practice, and that'll usually open up his eyes instead of living in his head.

Charles would just say, "You know we have practice today, right?"

"I know I know... I just need to figure this- "

"You can handle it later, for now it's practice. Tomorrow's game day, and you gotta step your game up if you wanna be my right-hand man."

Charles had to get the competitiveness of Howard out of him in order to get him going. At that point, Howard knew the man was right. The next day was the first bracket of knockouts to get to the finals in the school league. Howard put all his work into his backpack while thanking the teacher for taking the time to be in the classroom. Charles was already at the door of the room holding the door open as Howard was grabbing his duffel bag with his equipment to get out. When Howard stood up, he looked where he was sitting to make sure he didn't leave anything behind and managed to get on a move. They left the room and went downstairs to head outside for practice.

Poem: The Life

I've sat in this car for five minutes or so, and I still think it's a dream. I've been given the opportunity to drive it with the only time limit being the tires. It's myself, and I with no one to bother besides the tires underneath me. I've always wondered, 'what would it be like to live behind the wheel of a race car?' Well, let me share something with you, it's as exhilarating to drive one as it is to say the word. It's not just a machine, a tool, a hobby, or a word... it's a lifestyle.

Dialogue: Wait Time

My friend was on his way in the train to get something from me. He was currently in Manhattan waiting for the train as I'm at my favorite restaurant getting some hot food to bring home. The restaurant was only 5 minutes down the hill from where the train station was located at.

Will

Alright I'll see ya soon. A good 20 [minutes] away?

[Rest on the nearest seat and scroll through your phone until the foods ready.]

Chad

Just about

Will

Alright

The food is ready at the cashier.

[Go to the cashier and pay. Pick up the bag of food and walk out the restaurant to go 'home'.]

Chad

Yo I'm here.

Will

Good, now you gotta wait.

[Stand still while you read the text. After you read the text, put your phone away and shrug your head in a frustrated manner.]

Chad

Haha alright

Will

I bought some food and brought it home so mom can eat hot food. I'm on my way back though, give me 15 minutes if anything.

[After reading that text on the phone while you're walking, begin to walk quicker.]

Journal #1: Stubborn Love

I have my fair share of constant disagreements with people in general, but the one that sticks out the most is the one about shopping with the woman that put me in this world. She enjoys shopping therapy the most as a way to keep her sane, so I try not to say much but it's impossible for me not. There are two sides to this disagreement as there is with everything else, but there's really no right answer in this case.

Let's start with something small that gradually gets more expensive, clothes shopping. If she's up for that lovely drive, we will always find ourselves outside the city to go to the outlets. If you're anything like me, you would more than likely go into the store and look for what you came to get. If you're anything like the lovely woman who put me in this world, you'll look at everything on the way to the item you're looking for. I'm going to throw this out early on, we're both stubborn so keep that in mind. At some point throughout the trip, I'll casually ask something along the lines of "Why are you getting this when you came for something else?" That's one button pressed, just another million to go. She'll casually give me a straight face and say something along the lines of "Because I can."

I'm not going to take that away from her because how else are you going to respond to that? But again, we're both stubborn so it obviously doesn't stop here, right? If you thought that, you'd be right. Once we leave the store we came for, we somehow go into the next five stores down the lane at the outlets. It's no longer just about her... it is now about the boots her mom was thinking about getting, it is now about her father's perfectly good jacket that she wants to replace, it is now about the white shoes I had told her about 8 months ago, and the list goes on. She's extremely conscious about family. Now, as sweet as that may seem... what needs to be

understood is that this isn't just a trip she's doing – it's the trip we are all doing (whether anyone else decides to come along the journey). At that point, I just make a questionnaire out of the trip before she asks me to stay outside the store before the blood boils beyond her self-control. I swear I'm not doing this for a reaction, but it sure as heck is a treat to see her get that lively.

Eventually, the argument comes to a standstill because there's nothing else that can be discussed. These kind arguments have been happening for as long as I can remember. The amusing thing is that these kinds of arguments tend to happen every other time. This how we bond though, so it's okay.

Journal #2: Accidents Happen

A moment from my past that managed to change me in a serious manner was when I managed to fracture a bone in the 10th grade of high school. The bone I ended up fracturing was the tibia in my left leg (which is right next to the shin in your lower leg for reference). I won't go too much into detail about how it happened, but just know I slid to base wrong in a baseball scrimmage game... not a good day to say the least.

I ended up having to have a cast on my leg, and I was given crutches to maneuver if I needed to. The incident happened in early March when the weather was just starting to clear up unfortunately. That led to me having to struggle with a leg cast up until late June. That experience was honestly a nightmare. I vividly remember how heart wrenching it felt having to watch everyone enjoy themselves on the trips towards the end of the year. Just watching people do everyday things like walking to the classroom was depressing. I was the type to skate/bike to school and back home because I enjoyed the thrill of beating the clock for class. I was very active during that time clearly, so I'm hoping you (the reader) can imagine how difficult it must've been.

I did try to make the most of the situation, and my balance had improved tremendously because of it. Quick disclaimer: I'm no example to follow. I had disregarded the doc's orders and continued to get into activities I really shouldn't have. I had brought my baseball glove to catch with my best friend as I had leaned on the wall with one leg to keep up with practice. I had gone up/downstairs with the help of my best friend to go where I needed to be. I genuinely owe a lot to the guy for all the support provided throughout that entire experience. It just came down to me

doing everything I could with the willpower I had, and that was usually enough for me to get by.

It still effects my ability to do what I enjoy the most, but I make it work.