

Letter from the Editors

Innovation can exist in any realm, from scientific discovery and development in pharmacology and the rethinking of existing systems to the study of the self and thoughts about social ideologies, like feminism. The perception and execution of writing itself can also become innovative. What constitutes innovation in the writing process? What qualifies as writing? While the contents of each piece uniquely define and subtly explore the complexities of innovation, the diversity of styles, formats, techniques, and media in this issue of NU Writing also test the norms of writing.

Innovation introduces new ideas or products that have the potential to change the world. In pharmacology, new drugs are innovative. Innovation not only changes the ways in which scientists and researchers interact with pharmacology, however, but also it can directly impact the ways in which the common individual interacts with the world of pharmacology. “The Effects of Direct-to-Consumer Antidepressant Advertisements on Young Adults” demonstrates innovation in the meshing of business and medicine through advertising; it transforms the consumer perception of antidepressants. Similarly, the “Birth Control Pill Infographic” allows non-scientists to understand the pill, transforming complex pharmacologic information into an increasingly common and aesthetically-appealing format with simple text. The innovation of the piece lies in its simplicity, while the innovation of the pharmacology behind the piece lies in its complexity. In “Pharmacists vs. Drug Misuse and Diversion,” the relationship between the pharmacist and the patient overshadows the medical innovations, and thus, the new idea of a relationship becomes the innovation.

Defined as “mak[ing] changes in something established, especially by introducing new methods, ideas, or products,” innovation requires an original system to be in place before any changes can be made to it. When a surrounding structure cannot be avoided, innovation within the system involves working with and flexing its boundaries. Essentially, if the existing structure is a box, innovation is thinking outside of it. Lauren Takakjian exemplifies this concept in “Testing, Testing... Is the SAT Working?,” which suggests supplementing the SAT with other measures that account for the varied forms intelligence can take. The following case study, “Shepard Fairey – Hope, Change, and Lawsuits,” brings up interesting questions of the limited freedom of artistic commentary when forced to align with copyright laws. Looking at innovation in a more negative way, “Los Zetas: Organizational Structure, Tactics, and the Innovation of a Modern Cartel” explores the creative and constantly shifting tactics that a powerful drug cartel uses in order to succeed without being discovered and punished by law enforcement. Rather than changing the systems themselves, all three scenarios suggest working within them in new, radical ways. The necessary structures remain in place, but innovation frees the limits they impose, simultaneously following the rules and breaking them.

Innovation should not just be looked at in the context of the world around us. Some of the most pressing forms of innovation are happening everyday within ourselves and our peers. The human capacity for change and self-improvement is centrally important in relation to the way in which we view and define ourselves. In her essay “The Male-to-Female Transgender Voice”, Emily Manny delves into the often forgotten dilemma of biological voice changes transgender individuals face in the process of transitioning to improve their quality of life. John Jamieson

also translates the concept of innovation to physical self improvement. In his piece “Reprogramming Cells to Fight Disease”, Jamieson shares his findings on new research that aims to change cells within the human body so that they may fight disease without the aid of external medication or therapy. Finally, Taja Kysilovsky’s creative photo essay “Past vs. Present” comes as a visual depiction of changes in the artist’s life. The accompanying captions are a unique combination of personal reminiscence, and advice to a future self. In each of these essays, the necessity of individualized change is highlighted, and especially how this specific type of change fits into a more global narrative of our consistently innovative society.

Feminism was founded and is defined by innovation: the reinvention of the perception and role of women in society. Feminist thought continues to grow and change today in all forms, especially the entertainment industry, including music and film and the job industry. Kira Bornemann discusses popular 90’s rock soloist Tori Amos, whose songs were celebrated both for their beauty and uniqueness, but also for their feminist messages. Bornemann shows how Tori used a new and innovative way to express voicelessness of women... ironically through song. In her film review, Rena Nyman shows the danger of a lack of innovation, especially in the entertainment and media industry, as seen by the making of the The Hunger Games films. She critiques makers of The Hunger Games movies for taking this strong female protagonist, and focusing not on her many skills, bravery, or intelligence, but on which guy she likes best. In “Where Did the Women Go?” Beatrice Zhang discusses how the lack of female employees in the computer science industry prevents innovation within the field and suggests that there is a need to reinvent the culture and perception around computer science and the stereotype of the male “nerd.”

—Jessica, Melissa, Lindsay, and Ivy