Excerpt from essay “House Calls,” from *The Youngest Scugge* by Lewis Thomas.

"... My father’s only instructions to me, sitting in the front of his car on his rounds, were that I should be careful not to believe this (the ability to save life) of myself when I became a doctor. Nevertheless, despite his skepticism, he carried his prescriptions pedantically and gave voluminous prescriptions for all his patients.... When the time for psychosomatic disease arrived, he remained a skeptic. He was very good at it (surgery), and his innate skepticism made him unusually successful as a surgical consultant..."

(note the word “skepticism” occurring three times in the 2-page narrative)

**SAMPLE ESSAY #1 (Lucie’s 1st Draft)**

I noticed a conceptual misalignment in the way the change in the author’s view in “Labyrinthine” goes from enthusiasm to skepticism, and how clearly this exemplifies in the viewpoint of the author’s father “House Calls” who people thought of his work as an miracle maker but he kept skeptic and viewed medicine as the medicine he would describe how now, medically aged, he understands the service in his parents’ faces, as a way of saying, these are all the magic I’ve been through... I’m done... The author would....

(meaning association between “Labyrinthine” and “House Calls”, use of “skepticism” similar to yet different from that in “House Calls”... Two narratives here are associated by the author’s own understanding of “skepticism”, i.e., shift from enthusiasm as a child to skepticism in a way as adult in “Labyrinthine” vs. positive skepticism and modesty in “House Calls”).

**SAMPLE ESSAY #2 (Year 1’s Draft)**

"What makes his father succeed? Is the skepticism of his father to the value of medicine, surgery, and even doctor’s ability to heal patient... In this essay, Lewis Thomas basically gives the significant meaning to the father’s love of medicine which is represented by skepticism... also he exaggerate his father’s skepticism as the obvious reason for successful reputation. Throughout this essay, he re-examines his father’s skepticism by relating to his own experiences as by introducing other’s words...

(followed by discussion of another narrative existed “Happiness”)

(note use of “skepticism”)

**SAMPLE ESSAY #3 (Year 1’s Revised Draft after the Global Peer Review based on Lucie’s 1st Draft)**

"... In House Calls, the main ideological shift is made in the author allowed new values to what his father had done during his childhood. He could become to re-evaluate his father’s skepticism philosophy in the medicine... The author repeatedly see his father’s arrogance on the effect of medical therapy, the author first re-examines his father’s those kinds of doubts in the medicine as skepticism, but later he came to realize that it was necessary to help himself as a doctor and modesty to his ability. And he evaluated his father’s contributions to the medicine as a basis of building a reputation. Through his childhood, the author saw his father’s innate reluctance to the medical treatment somewhat in three-story point of view and simply dealt with skepticism. Yet later he became to understand and evaluate a whole the author got through his own medical experience and found those his father’s accomplishment from people who knew his father..."

(note the words “modesty” and “skepticism” which occurred in Lucie’s 1st Draft, now meaning for these words, congruent in the new division context, a network of meaning around “skepticism” as the basis of writing, creative appropriation from peer and from text)
Example: Personal narrative constructed on metaphor

SAMPLE ESSAY # 4 (Kimura's personal narrative)

Models

Whenever I had spare time, I would usually pay a visit to the model-making shop with my younger brother—though it is a long way from my home. The shop is not so large, around 500 square feet, I suppose. Because I was small, boxes of models built up like mini-buildings to me...

I did not know why I was so crazy with these tiny and brittle plastic models but time. I could even recognize which were the new arrivals. Robert's toys were my favorites. They had attractive body. Their shells look impermeable. Entry-ways, laser guns, and long-range rifles were kinds of weapons. All these were boys' favorites.

Every time I opened the package of a model, there would always be scientists and model girls next to me. The girl had a strong pungent chemical smell. However, I showed no rejection to it because I often needed its help.

At my arranging stage, I wanted to make models other than robots, like replicas of vehicles, helicopters and military hardware. My brother was a color-painting expert. He gave lives to these monotonous plastic models only with the help of different colors of markers, model dyes, and brush tools. I took a deep breath and then had a great sense of satisfaction every time I finished making a model.

When I was young, confusions over the common things that always existed between me and my younger brother. My parents always stood on my brother's side. They always wanted me to make the conclusion. The result was: My models became the real sufferers. Nearly every time when I had an argument with my brother, he usually showed off his power by destroying my models like a giant monster destroying a city. My models often had broken arms or legs after every war. He never had any punishment. Nevertheless, I was generally gaining more and more patience. Maybe this was only training. My brother initially wanted to teach me to tolerate unequal things. I thought this assumption could make me feel better. As I am growing up, I realize that tolerance is really important in maintaining and enhancing human relationships.

It is a bitter-sadness and loneliness with the models in my home now. I am in the States and my brother is in Canada. Both of us have gone and those models are left in our heart far away from where we are. It's hard for them to see how arguments between me and my brother again in the near future.

III. Student comments

EXCERPT FROM MID-SEMESTER QUESTIONNAIRE: (Student: Leonardo) Question: "Throughout the span of these past few months in our writing class, in what areas of writing do you think you have grown or changed the most?"

Answer: "During the three whole winter months that I have been here studying ESL, I really feel I have improved my writing techniques. First of all, I learned to listen to other people's points of view when the discussion of a certain assignment arises; in such the essays we have to do, we as a class have opportunities to read and give out our own views on others' essays. This is very new for me, since in high school I used to write my essay and hand it directly to the teacher, he gave me a grade and that was it. Here, we totally get deep into the discussion of our own essay and we definitely learn from each other. This has changed me in the way that writing probably is not just an individual task where only your mind works. It can be a recapitulation of ideas as even teamwork.

STUDENTS' COMMENTARY IN PORTFOLIO COVER PIECES

(1) Night
...I have heard from my research that elderly people who did 100 hours of volunteer work live happier and healthier than those who didn't. This made me consider the idea of volunteerism when I am old myself.

(2) Maria
...What I learned about this essay, was not to jump out, but all of them is that they can be compared somehow to life, because each one of them at the time that I am writing it has its ups and downs, but most downs than ups, and I believe that that's life too, that we sometimes are very happy, but that in the instant of minutes or days all of our happiness can change into sadness.

(3) Jesica
...I looked at how I began not only this semester, but last semester as well and believe they have been able to shape me into a more critical person with very strong views and opinions. This paper is extremely rewarding to me because I feel I've gained a step, I can not only at sides of issues which I disagree with but I am now also able to look at things which are due to me and find (or at least try to find) flaws if it has any.
First Tell Me What Kind of Reader You Are

in his words—without reading impeccable high ground I will
presume to put myself in the mind of a given black just to this
extent: I believe if I were such a juror listening to Johnnie Cochran
represent a black defendant, I'd be thinking, "Let's remake To Kill
a Mockingbird with this brother here as Atojou Finch!"

I don't throw juggling at people of the Northeast lightly, but I
do feel say y'all. The language needs a second-person plural, and
y'all is manifestly more precise, more mazzerly and friendlier than
you people or y'alls. When Northerners tell me they have heard
Southerners use y'all in the singular, I tell them the lack structural
linguistic understanding. And when they ask me to explain grist, I
look at them like an Irishman who's been asked to explain po-
tatoes.

All too often in the Northeast, writers themselves seem to regard
being a writer as normal. When people ask a Northeaster's writer
what kind he or she is, instead of expositing, "What do you
mean, what kind? Getting-by-the-best-can kind! Trying-some-
somekind-of-determining-sensible-sense-of-the-game-of-the-cosmos-
kind! If you're interested, see if you can't find a way to read
something I wrote. If I knew it by heart, would recite the stanzas
in Mary and Barns where the fire ants drive the one-legged boy
insane (which I'll admit I think almost came up to what it might
have been, but it's not simple enough, there are too many ifs in it,
I couldn't get enough of it to save my life!), but I don't
carry it around in my head—I was trying to get it out of my head;
and even if I did, reciting it wouldn't do it justice. You have to read
it"—a Northeaster's writer will mutter away about being post-struc-
turalist or something. And everybody's happy. Writers fitting into
the social scheme of things—it don't seem right to me.

Get's is normal.

BERNARD COOPER

1997 Best American Essays

Labyrinthine

FROM THE PARIS REVIEW
and, from one end of the bed to the other, I traced the air between the tendrils. Soon I didn't need to use a finger, mapping my path by sight, moving through the veins of the marble heart, through the space between the petals on my mother's house. At the age of seven it had always been easier, like watching the Christ on the pole in a barn or peering up from a corn mout. Everywhere I looked, a labyrinth meandered.

I was looking at the coloring books in the section of the Sunday paper, or in the placemat of the coffee shop that served children's meals. My father's dress shirts were folded around when they came back from the cleaner's. My frugal mother, hoarder of jelly jars and rubber bands, had saved a stack of them. She was happy to put the cardboard to use, if a bit mystified by my new obsession.

The best method to start from the center and work outward with a sharpened pencil, creating layers of complexity. I left a few gaps in every line, and after I'd gotten a feel for the architecture of the whole, I'd close off openings; reinforce walls, a slave creating the pharaoh's tomb. Monkey statues were especially treacherous, I constructed them so that, by the time one realized he'd gotten stuck, turning back would be an exquisitely odious task.

My hobby required a twofold concentration: carefully planning a maze while allowing myself the fresh pleasure of moving through it. I'd sometimes spend the better part of an afternoon on a single maze, worked with the patience of a redwood growing rings. Drawing myself into corners, creating really all else failed. I fooled and baffled and freed myself.

Eventually I used shelf paper, tearing off larger and larger sheets to accommodate my burgeoning ambition. Once I brought a huge maze to my mother, who was drinking a cup of coffee in the kitchen. It tattooed behind me like an ontagonal cape. I draped it over the table and challenged her to go. She didn't look at it for more than a second before she exclaimed, "You've got to be kidding," she said, blotting her lips with a paper napkin. "I'm lost enough as it is."

When my father returned from work that night, he heaved his briefcase into the closet, his hat wet and dripping from the rain. "Later," he said (this code word for "later") when I waved the banner of my labyrinth before him.

It was inconceivable to me that someone wouldn't want to enter a maze, wouldn't have to. I'd turned a few, my parents were going to eat at night, through the forest of midpoint after their mortgage had doubled. The plumbing rusted. Old friends grew sick or moved away. The trees in their skin deepened, so complex a network of lines, my maze tangled by comparison. Father's hair receded, Mother's grated.

"When you've lived as long as we have..." they'd say, which meant no surprises loomed in their future; it was repetition from here on out. The endless succession of burdens and concerns was enough to make anyone forgetful. Eggs were boiled until they turned brown, sprinklers left on all the lawns grew soggy, keys and glasses and watches misplaced. When I asked my parents about their past, they cocked their heads, stared into the distance, and often couldn't recall the details.

Fifteen years later, I understand my parents' refusal. Why would anyone choose to get mired in a maze when the days are so bright and loopy and confusing? Remembered events merge together as a formless fog:

Places and dates grow模糊, a jumble of visitors and speculation. What's new and slandering replace the bright particular.

Recollaborating the past becomes as unreliable as forecasting the future; you consult yourself with certain trepidation and take your answer with a grain of salt. The friends you turn to for confirmation are just as undecided; they furrow their brow and look at you blankly. Of course, once in a while you find the tiny, poignant details poised on your tongue, like caviar. But more often than not, you settle for apologetic approximations — I was visiting Texas of Colorado in 1975 or '76 — and the anecdote rambles on regardless. When the face of a friend from childhood suddenly comes back to me, it's sad to think that if a certain synapse hadn't fired just then, I may never have recalled that friend again. Sometimes I'm not sure if I've overheard a story in conversation, read it in a book, or if I'm the person to whom it happened: whose adventures, besides my own, are welded in my memory? Then there are the things I've dreamed and mistaken as facts. When you've lived as
long as I have) uncertainty is virtually indistinguishable from the truth, which as far as I know is never naked, but always wearing some disguise.

→ Mother, Father: I’m growing middle-aged in the folds and bones of my body. It gets harder to remember the days when you were here. I suppose it was inevitable, that, gazing down at this piece of paper. I’d feel your weary expressions on my face. What have things been like since you’ve been gone? (The Labyrinth) The very sound of that word sums it up — as slippery as thought, as perplexing as the truth, as long and convoluted as a life.