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Choose Your Own "Other": Reflection

Choose Your Own "Other" has potentially been the most introspective work of my academic career thus far. Focusing on both the themes of the "other" and processes of "othering" that we have explored this semester through Asian American literature have brought me to think much more critically about hegemonic structures and the idea of being "lost" within society and within the world. Particularly, the Greater Than/Less Than chapter of *Choose Your Own "Other"*, discusses class othering and the ways in which what one "has" can affect their worth in the eyes of society. This section is what I view as the narrators realization that he/she/they have been othered by getting lost on this camping trip. In being separated from society, they have also become relatively non-existent to society. In this sense, the affects of class othering are distinctly personal, and have great affect on the individual. Moreover, the ambiguous "you" as the lead character of *Choose Your Own "Other"* allows the reader to be othered with the work as well. Strangely, through writing in this manner, I was othered as well. By writing with the intent of othering, I could not help but feel separated myself. *Choose Your Own Other* in this way is a medium through which one can discover the atrocities of othering in modern western society. Only a restricted few fit society's narrow interpretation of the norm, and it is these few who are given power and status within the economic and social systems we all exist within. The other, in contrast, suffers by the hand of these very same structures. *Choose Your Own Other* is therefore designed to give the feeling of othering even to those rare few that fit the norm. It forces the reader to examine the processes of othering in their lives, whether they are the ones traditionally othered or those who are traditionally othering. I went through this examination myself while writing, and it has allowed me to learn so much more about myself, the world around me, and the way I operate within an othering society.

Objectively, *Choose Your Own "Other"* was a challenge for me as a writer. In fact, this work is the first full piece of creative writing I have ever produced. I had intended in the projects inception, to have more stories of othering and illustrations included. However, when I added these components, the piece seemed to lose some of their serious reflective properties. By this I mean that, in adding the stories about gender or the illustrations of my own experiences, the main character lost all ambiguity, making their relationship more tangential to the audience than how it exists as a finished project. While it is regrettable that these stories did not work within the piece, I feel that by omitting them the aforementioned reliability of the work is able to be much more poignant to the reader. Furthermore, I do believe that my creative writing could use more work. Given that this is my first true work of creative writing, I feel as though I really do need to spend time honing my craft. Perhaps with more practice and skill in the creative and narrative field, the illustrations and stories could be subsequently added with a more complementary affect.

As a whole, *Choose Your Own "Other"* I feel is an artistic expression of what it means to be othered in the eyes of society. While it is a topic we discuss often as scholars, it is not one that society discusses as a whole. Hopefully with the production of more works focus on the theme of othering like *Choose Your Own "Other"*, the topic of the other can move into a public forum, and we can begin to elicit societal changes in the world.