

Anne Marie Venezia, for her senior seminar, wrote an auto-ethnography to explore construction of identity through her own unique lens and lived experience. Using journals she had compiled for over a decade of her childhood and adolescence as artifactual evidence, she reflected on her past in the hopes of offering insight into what her journals and experiences had to say about how we construct our identities in the face of trauma, stigma, and shame. She incorporated images and text from the journals to imbue the work with a sense of the emotional and temporal tone of her youth, as an homage to who she was, and to show how that has both shifted and shaped the person she is now.

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“The selves we construct are not solely our internal self, nor are they solely based on how others perceive and interpret us. There exists a third entity, and interplay of the internal self and the world’s perception, wherein the self truly exists...and oftentimes, especially in adolescence when we are sincerely shaping our “selves” and in particular our sexual identities, we give in to those compulsions to create a self we are comfortable with the world seeing; we submit to a certain specific identity because to be a more vast, dynamic, nonconforming self is too scary. Humans do things because we have an innate urge as social beings to fit in in order to survive, and adolescents bear the brunt of this psycho-social shapeshifting.”

“The gaps of my recorded recollections are filled with the deepest traumas, pains, and fears of my soul, and looking back now I can understand why I could not let them seep into those pages—or, by extension, fully absorb them into my psyche. Because even as I wrote my own narrative and divulged my deepest passions, fears, and mistakes, I was hiding from my trauma and its accordant shame. I disassociated from the darkest or most muddled, confusing parts of my experience and my mind in order to survive.”