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Audio Project Reflection

I would like to dedicate my audio project to my Grandma Beth. The story of the poem (which I wrote in my Intro to Poetry class my freshmen year at Pitt) comes from my memory of sitting in the hospital’s family kitchen area as my family members reheated Thanksgiving food in the microwave. I remember listening to “What Sarah Said” by Death Cab for Cutie on my iPod and the line “love is watching someone die” could not have been more fitting and powerful in that moment. We all love orchids on my mom’s side of my family, and I remember pink orchids sitting on the windowsill with light shining through them. My Grandma passed away later that night from ovarian cancer, but we are all thankful still that we shared that Thanksgiving meal by her bedside.

I chose to include a cover of “What Sarah Said” in my project. This cover is by Michael Dale, and it can be found on Soundcloud at <https://soundcloud.com/michael_dale/what-sarah-said>. I only used a small portion of it for my educational project, which I created for non-commercial use. I also chose a beautiful piano piece to accompany my poem; it is called “Passando” by Mattia Vlad Morleo and can be found at <https://www.jamendo.com/track/1394528/passando> . Morleo put an Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike Creative Commons license on his song, so I will honor that by placing a BY-NC-SA license on my project as well. The other track I used in my piece is the sound of a heartbeat, which I downloaded from <https://freesound.org/people/urupin/sounds/92036/>. It has an Attribution license, so I would like to give credit to urupin. For the two musical tracks, I only used pieces of the originals and used them primarily to enhance the recording of my poem. I also credited both at the end of my piece (I realize now that I also have to add the attribution credit of the heartbreak track to the end of my piece. I realized this late, but I will change this.) I chose these three tracks to emphasis the somber yet peaceful tone of my poem. I didn’t want to add a flat lining heartbeat or any other sound effects (I considered a microwave dinging sound, for example) out of respect for the seriousness of the topic of my poem.

Day one sitting in front of my laptop with Audacity open I realized WOW I do not know how to do a single thing. I have edited audio in Adobe Premiere before, but that was an after-thought only to accompany video. Even that basic knowledge did not transfer over well to Audacity. So before I could even upload audio into Audacity, I watched the whole Audacity tutorial series in Lynda. I learned how to import, record, cut, split, join, envelope, fade in/out, etc. all through these tutorials, and I eventually ended up becoming very comfortable with all of those functions as my time working on my project went on. I also watched the suggested [Quick Trick to Eliminate Sibilance](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_0ZMH2NwUs) tutorial, and tried to apply that to my piece. Ultimately, I do not think I solved the sibilance problem, and I want to continue working to make it sound even better, but I do think that what I have done so far has helped make the s’s quieter and shorter. I also worked to make the transition into “What Sarah Said” smoother by cross fading and adding more of the piano of the track into the beginning to make the shift less jarring. Again, I do not think it is perfect yet, but I think it sounds good. Also another challenge was uploading to Github, but now I can confidently use the command line, so that was a huge bonus for my own computer competency confidence! Ultimately, I think I successfully accomplished my goal of creating a tribute to my Grandma, and I like the way that the tracks work together to create a somber and peaceful tone. I didn’t want to change the meaning of my poem; I just wanted to enhance its power. My goal was to create a more complete representation of my memory because “What Sarah Said”, the heart monitors, and the peaceful quiet of the day are all important parts of the memory that did not show up in the poem alone.

One design element that I wanted to achieve was emphasis on the word “silently” at the beginning of the poem through contrast. I deleted all other tracks during that part of the poem’s recording to make everything silent except the word to catch attention while also making the mood somewhat uncomfortable because it is meant to be jarring. I aligned the heartbeat sound to then come in before I start talking again to set the scene of a hospital room.