

O F F
C E N T E R



ISSUE 1 : FALL 2016

EDITORS: AMY HARRIS- ABER AND HILLARY YEAGER



ISSUE 1
FALL 2016

Our Founding Issue: Fall 2016

A NOTE FROM THE FOUNDING EDITORS

Dear Readers,

We are excited and honored to share the first issue of *Off Center: A Writer's Magazine for the MTSU Community* with you. Our magazine started with a hopeful aspiration: We wanted to establish a publication that would have the capacity to share the voices of writers across our campus community. We thought it was important to showcase the creative work of the students and writing consultants we have encountered through the Margaret H. Ordoubadian Writing Center. They have always, and continue, to impact our lives with their brilliance. The ability to share their work with you is a dream come true for us.

In the following pages, you'll find literacy narratives, poetry, short essays, fiction, art, perspectives on the writer-consulting process, photographs, process pieces from writers, and more. You'll get an inside look into the creative process from some of the writers that created these amazing pieces, as well as beautiful visuals meant to inspire. We've also interspersed these pages with a few of our favorite sayings about writing and the writing process.

Sit back, take a look, and enjoy this first issue. And please, be inspired to create: Write a few lines, paint a glorious picture, make your mark on this world, and then, if you're feeling generous and willing to share, submit to our next issue!

Amy Harris-Aber and Hillary Yeager

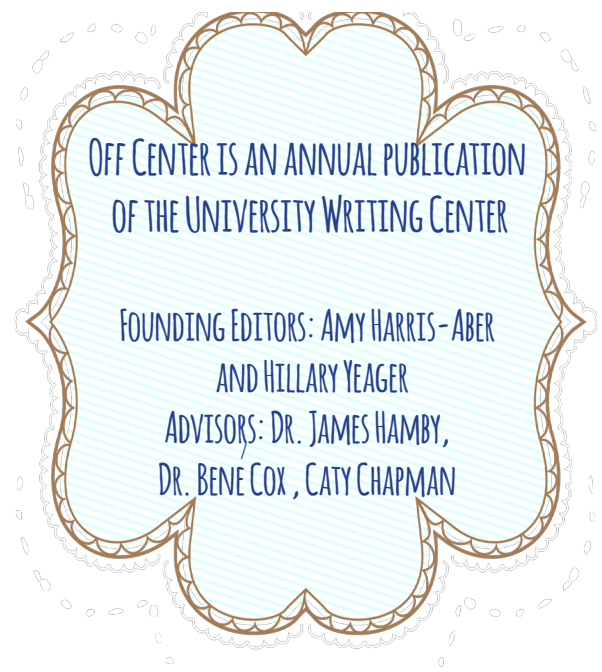


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Layout and Design of Off Center by Hillary Yeager

ILL - LITERACY NARRATIVE

DAVID BRYANT AND WILL UNDERLAND

IN COMPOSING A COLLABORATIVE LITERACY NARRATIVE
IN A FORM BOTH UNIQUE AND POTENTIALLY EMBARRASSIN',
WE WILL TRY (WITH A WINK AND AN APOLOGY)
TO UNDERMINE THE VERY WESTERN IDEOLOGY
WHICH LIMITS THESE ENDEAVORS TO THE SCOPE OF INDIVIDUAL,
WHICH, OF COURSE, IS COMMON AND HELPFUL IN GENERAL.
PERHAPS COLLABORATION, THOUGH, CAN AID US IN OUR NARRATIVES.
TO BEGIN, MY FRIEND DAVID'S GONNA TELL YOU WHAT HIS PARENTS DID.

A MIDDLE CLASS SUBURBAN KID, I FOUND TWO LITERACY SPONSORS
BEFORE SCHOOL OR PEERS IN MY MOTHER AND MY FATHER.
THE FIRST THING I READ WASN'T HOOKED ON PHONICS—
INSTEAD, I STARTED OUT WITH A STACK OF MY DAD'S COMICS.
MOM ALWAYS WANTED ME TO READ BOOKS WITH HER
(THEN I'D RETURN THE FAVOR TO MY NEW BABY SISTER).
I DIDN'T KNOW, THEN, THAT I WAS ACTING AS A TUTOR,
(OR THAT I'D BE DOING MORE OF THAT IN THE FUTURE).
COUNTING "ONE FISH, TWO FISH" MADE MY WHOLE FAMILY GRIN
SO MUCH I NEVER FELT BEHIND MY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FRIENDS.
INSIDE SOCIAL PRESSURE, THERE'S A SPONSOR TO BE SEEN—
IT FOSTERED THE FOUNDATION OF WILL'S OWN LITERACY:

JUST LIKE TYING YOUR SHOES OR MAKING A FRIEND,
WHEN YOU'RE YOUNG, LEARNING TO READ IS A WAY TO FIT IN.
SO THE FIRST BOOK THAT I EVER READ SOLO
HAD ME STRESSED OUT, STRUNG OUT LIKE A YOYO.
FROG AND TOAD WAS TOUGH, BUT LET ME TELL YA,
WHEN I FINISHED, I WAS PUMPED, AND BOTH MY PARENTS SAID, "HELL YEAH!"
SO MY FROG AND TOAD WAS DAVID'S COMICS.
TO TAKE ACCESS FOR GRANTED'S TO IGNORE ECONOMICS
WHICH IS WHY WE NEED UNIVERSAL, FAR-REACHING
SPONSORSHIP, NAMELY, GOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHING.
IT'S ALL ABOUT ACCESS, ALL ABOUT MENTORS.
ALL ABOUT HAVING SOMEONE YOU RESPECT ENDORSE
READING AS A NORMAL THING, READING AS A NEAT THING,
NOT JUST SOMETHING THAT THE NERDS DO ON TV.
SO I WASN'T READING MUCH IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
IT DIDN'T SEEM FUN, AND I KNEW IT WASN'T COOL.
BUT IN THE 5TH GRADE WE GOT AN ASSIGNMENT
TO WRITE A NATURE POEM, AND I REALLY KIND OF LIKED IT.
EVEN THOUGH WE ONLY HAD LESS THAN AN HOUR

I STILL REMEMBER IT, IT GOES LIKE THIS:
"IF I WERE A FLOWER, IT'D BE KIND OF NICE
DOWN IN THE DIRT WITH THE ROACHES AND THE MICE.
IF I WERE A FLOWER, I THINK IT'D BE FUN
STAYING OUT ALL DAY, LAYING OUT IN THE SUN.
IF I WERE A FLOWER, I'D ALWAYS BE DIRTY.
IF I WERE A FLOWER, OF COURSE I'D BE PURDY."
I WAS SO PROUD I WENT AND MEMORIZED IT.
EVERYONE I SAID IT TO THOUGHT I PLAGIARIZED IT,
AND THAT'S HOW I KNEW THAT IT MUST BE PRETTY CLEVER.
DAVID, TELL US ABOUT YOUR CREATIVE ENDEAVORS

THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SECOND GRADERS
IF YOU WANT TO KEEP THEM ON THEIR BEST BEHAVIOR:
ALL KIDS NEED TO HARNESS THEIR CREATIVE POWER
(IT'S WHY MS. STONE LET US WRITE STORIES FOR AN HOUR).
EACH DAY, AS WE WROTE, WE'D MAKE NEW WORLDS APPEAR,
THEN WE'D SIT IN A CIRCLE AND SHARE IT ALL WITH OUR PEERS.
I PLAYED WITH FORMS, PUT WORDS AROUND PAGES' SIDES,
LEFT THE PLOT TO THE READER—THIS PAGE, LIVE; THIS PAGE, DIE.
WRITING WAS A GAME; SOON I STARTED TO LOOK
FOR NEW FORMS I COULD PLAY WITH INSIDE OF NEW BOOKS.
AT HOME, I'D TYPE STORIES, AND MOM WOULD CHECK GRAMMAR.
MY SENTENCES IMPROVED; MY PUNCTUATION GOT BETTER.
I'VE GOT TO GIVE CREDIT TO MY SECOND GRADE TEACHER:
IT'S BECAUSE OF HER SPONSORSHIP THAT I REACH FOR
NEW BOOKS, AND WHY IN FIFTH GRADE I WAS PROUD
WHEN THE WHOLE CLASS HEARD ONE OF MY STORIES OUT LOUD.
IT'S WHY I STILL WRITE PROSE, POETRY, SONGS.
IN WRITING, I FOUND A PLACE WHERE I FELT LIKE I BELONGED.
SEE, PERSONAL PRESSURE IS A SPONSOR, TOO,
AND CREATIVE LITERACY BRINGS THE SELF INTO VIEW.

7TH GRADE: LOW POINT IN MY READING CAREER.
DROP EVERYTHING AND READ, TEACHERS CALLED IT D. E. A. R.
NOT TO MENTION THE LINGERING ACCELERATED READER
EARLY DAYS OF THE COMPUTER WERE CONDUCTIVE TO THE CHEATER.
PLUS, IN MIDDLE SCHOOL YOU HAD TO KNOW THE RIGHT PEOPLE
AND BUY THE RIGHT CLOTHES FROM AMERICAN EAGLE.
SO MY READING DISENGAGEMENT WAS PARTLY ENVIRONMENTAL,
THUS GETTING ME TO READ WAS NOT GONNA BE AS SIMPLE

AS JUST HANDING ME A BOOK AFTER LUNCH AND SAYING, "READ IT,"
AS IF THAT WERE REAL GUIDANCE, AS IF TEENS WERE GONNA HEED IT,
AS IF LEARNING TAKES PLACE ALL ALONE IN A VACUUM
IN A TOO-COLD, FLUORESCENT-LIT, PIECE OF SHIT CLASSROOM.
READING WITH NO CONTEXT HAS GOT TO BE THE WORST WAY.
REMINDED ME OF WRITE-OFFS I DID IN THE 3RD GRADE:
"THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPED OVER THE LAZY DOG'S BACK,"
BUT I WANTED TO KNOW WHY AND WHAT HE DID AFTER THAT,
BUT WE NEVER FOUND OUT, JUST WROTE IT OVER AND OVER.
I WAS ONLY, LIKE, 10, BUT WAS REGRETTING I WAS SOBER,
SO WITH WRITING AS PUNISHMENT I WAS ALREADY FAMILIAR,
AND 7TH GRADE READING WAS STARTING TO SEEM SIMILAR.
THAT YEAR, EVERY DAY I'D SPEND AN HOUR STARING
AT A BOOK I TOOK FROM A PRE-EISENHOWER LIBRARY.
READING WASN'T BREEDING HEALTHY APPRECIATION.
NO, IT FELT MORE LIKE A BEATING, IT WAS TEACHING ME TO HATE IT.
HOW IN HIGH SCHOOL WAS I EVER GONNA MAKE IT?
IT SEEMED SO OVERWHELMING, HOW 'BOUT YOU, DAVID?

MIDDLE SCHOOL WAS A DRAG.

HIGH SCHOOL WAS WORSE.

JANE EYRE...

SOME OLD GUY'S BLANK VERSE.

"FIND THE SI-MI-LES, KIDS! FIND EVERY ME-TA-PHOR, TOO!

WHAT'S THE THEME, WHAT'S THE TONE?

WHAT'S THE SCHEME, WHAT'S THE MOOD?

THIS IS AL-LE-GOR-Y! THIS IS A-NA-LO-GY!

THESE ARE THE THINGS THAT MAKE SOMETHING A TRA-GE-DY!

CLASS, IS THIS I-RO-NY? IS THIS CA-CO-PHO-NY?

IS THIS HY-PER-BO-LE? IS THIS SY-NEC-DO-CHE?

SHOW ME THE LI-TO-TES, THEN SHOW ME THE MO-TIF!

NOW, WE'LL TAKE A BREAK, AND LOOK AT ME-TO-NY-MY.

SINCE THE COURSE LEVEL'S AP, YOU'LL LEARN THE RHYME SCHEME'S AB,

AND THAT IT'S PEN-TA-ME-TER IN THE SO-LI-LO-QUY SCENE.

IS IT A BIL-DUNGS-RO-MAN? WHAT KIND OF SONNET IS IT—

PETRARCH OR SHAKESPEARE?" WHY DO WE STUDY THIS SHIT?

NOWADAYS, HIGH SCHOOL'S LIKE A HAZE TO ME,
BUT I KNOW I WAS ALWAYS WATCHING MOVIES INSATIABLY,
AND CONSPIRACY THEORY WAS A PRETTY COOL THRILLER
ABOUT AN ANTI-SEMITIC, OCD, POLITICAL KILLER,
AND CONSPIRACY THEORY HAD PUT A QUERY IN MY MIND
IN ITS REFERENCES TO SALINGER'S THE CATCHER IN THE RYE.

SO MY MOM BOUGHT ME A COPY AFTER I IMPLORER HER,
THE SMALL WHITE EDITION WITH THE RAINBOW IN THE CORNER?
EVERY NIGHT ONE SUMMER, I CAME HOME FROM THE BALL FIELD
AND HAD MY EYES OPENED BY HOLDEN CAUTFIELD.
LIKE, "HEY, THIS GUY'S BRAIN KIND OF WORKS LIKE MINE DOES,"
PLUS HE CUSSER A LOT AND WAS AS ANGRY AS I WAS.
A SIMILAR THING SEEMED TO HAPPEN WITH FIGHT CLUB.
IT WAS CULTURALLY ENGAGED, SCHOOL BOOKS MADE MY MIND NUMB.
BUT READING WASN'T COOL, NOT ACCEPTED IN MY NICHE-
SEE, I WAS KIND OF A JOCK, BUT I STILL HAD THE ITCH TO READ,
WHICH IS A RECIPE FOR A LONELY KID.
SOMETIMES, I'D FEEL LIKE THE ONLY KID
IN THE WORLD WHO KNOWS WHO TOLSTOY IS.
IT'S LIKE DAVID FOSTER WALLACE SAID, READING IS FOR LONELINESS.

HIGH SCHOOL LEFT ME FEELING LIKE AN OXYMORON.

MAYBE BOOKS WEREN'T FOR ME, MAYBE I WAS WRONG

ABOUT LOVING WRITING, ABOUT LOVING TO READ.

WE'D HAD A GOOD TIME, BUT STICK AROUND FOR THIS? PLEASE...

THINGS HAD GONE WELL, BUT WHEN I MET THE CANON,

I REJECTED LITERACY WITH ABANDON,

AND THERE WEREN'T ANY TEACHERS TO SAVE ME, OF COURSE—

BUT, THEN AGAIN, I GUESS THAT'S WHAT REAL FRIENDS ARE FOR.

IN SPITE OF IT ALL, I STILL WANTED TO WRITE,

AND MY BEST FRIEND WROTE, TOO—TIME TO TIME HE'D INVITE

ME TO COME TO A SLIP OF THE PEN CLUB MEETING.

THAT'S WHEN I FOUND OUT ABOUT MY SCHOOL'S CREATIVE MAGAZINE.

I MET KEROUAC TYPES, TRANSCENDENTALIST GIRLS,

A FEW PEERS I'D STILL CALL THE BEST WRITERS IN THE WORLD.

WE SHARED TEENAGE ANGST POEMS, HARD-HITTING FICTION;

WE TALKED ABOUT DIALOGUE, PLOT, SETTING, DICTION.

WE TALKED ABOUT BOOKS, ONES I THAT HAD NEVER

HEARD OF, SO I'D GO TO BOOKSTORES AND ENDEAVOR

TO FIND HEMINGWAY, CAMUS, THE CATCHER IN THE RYE,

DELILLO, MCCARTHY, JOYCE, SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE.

WHEN SCHOOL LET ME DOWN, MY PEERS PICKED ME BACK UP—

THE DRIVE I FOUND IN THEM WAS, FOR ME, MORE THAN ENOUGH.

SO ALL THE THINGS I DESPISED TO STUDY IN CLASS, SEE,

CAME TO ME FROM NEW SPONSORS—PEER-TO-PEER LITERACY.

BUT IF MY CREATIVE WRITING MADE ME WANT TO READ,

IT WAS WILL'S READING BOOKS THAT INSPIRED CREATIVITY

YEAH, I'D READ A FEW BOOKS BY THE TIME I GOT TO COLLEGE,
HAD A GRASP ON LANGUAGE, AND SOME GENERAL KNOWLEDGE.

BUT I WASN'T READING BOOKS TO ENGAGE WITH THE WORLD.
I WAS PROB'LY READING BOOKS TO ENGAGE WITH GIRLS.
SO, MY FIRST SEMESTER STUDYING ENGLISH
I WAS MENTALLY DWARFED AND UNDISTINGUISHED.
BACKGROUNDS OF MODERN LIT. WITH MOSTLY SENIORS,
LIKE, AM I REALLY EVEN SUPPOSED TO BE HERE?
I WAS STRUGGLING JUST TO STAY AFLOAT.
IT TOOK SERIOUS WORK. I TOOK SERIOUS NOTES.
I WAS WRITING SO FAST, YOU COULD SEE SPARKS,
PUTTING MARX QUOTATIONS IN QUOTATION MARKS.
WE READ HIM, FREUD, DARWIN, NIETZSCHE,
CAMUS, SARTRE, BUT THE BEST PART WAS THE TEACHER:
DR. STRAWMAN, WITH HIS LONG GRAY HAIR.
AND HE USED SOCRATIC METHOD SO YOU KNEW THAT HE CARED.
PLUS, HE SEEMED TO HAVE A REVERENCE FOR HUMAN BEINGS,
AND IT WAS CLEAR THAT IT CAME FROM THE BOOKS HE WAS READING.
AND I WANTED THAT, SO I READ THOSE BOOKS,
THEN KEPT GOING BACK FOR SECOND AND THIRD LOOKS
AT DOSTOEVSKY, KAFKA, AND A WHOLE LOT ELSE.
THEN, NATURALLY, BEGAN TO WRITE STORIES MYSELF.
AND YEAH, THEY WERE BAD, BUT IT WAS WORTH MY WHILE
BECAUSE I KEPT ON WRITING AND FOUND MY STYLE.
AND NOW HERE I AM, AND GRAD SCHOOL'S FUN,
BUT I LONG FOR THE DAY I READ AND WRITE WHAT I WANT
AND LET MYSELF DICTATE THE BOOKS THAT I AM READING
RATHER THAN THE DEMANDS OF DR. PANTELIDES.

REMEMBER WHEN I SAID THAT FRIENDS ALWAYS COME THROUGH?
WELL, HERE'S THE TIME, FOR ME, THAT THAT WAS THE MOST TRUE:
THE SAME FRIEND WHO INVITED ME TO SLIP OF THE PEN
TOLD ME ABOUT A GOOD BOOK THAT HE'D READ THAT WEEKEND:
EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED, PUBLISHED '02,
BY JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER, AMERICAN JEW.
WHEN I READ THAT BOOK, IT WAS LIKE DAY AND NIGHT:
IT STIRRED UP ALL THE WONDER RESTING, DORMANT, INSIDE.
I FOUND BEAUTY IN THE EMOTIONAL EXTREMES IT BLENDS
AND FELT A PERSONAL CONNECTION TO IT, END-TO-END.
I'M NOT JEWISH, UKRAINIAN, ANYTHING IN THE PLOT—
WHY'D I CONNECT SO STRONGLY TO A BOOK ABOUT THINGS I'M NOT?
THAT'S A QUESTION WHOSE ANSWER I'M STILL TRYING TO FIND,
BUT I KNOW THAT IT'S SOMETHING IN THE WAY THAT FOER WRITES.
I WANTED MORE LIKE IT, MORE BOOKS THAT CONTAINED
SOMETHING UNIVERSALLY HUMAN—LOVE, JOY, LOSS, PAIN.
IT MADE ME WANT TO WRITE THE VERY SAME TYPE OF BOOK,
AND BECAUSE OF IT... WELL, YOU SEE WHERE I AM; LOOK.

ALL MY READING, MY LIT CONSUMPTION'S
WHAT IGNITED MY DESIRE FOR CREATIVE PRODUCTION.
AND VICE VERSA FOR DAVID, HIS WRITING LED TO READING,
SO IN DIFFERENT WAYS WE CAME TO DO THE SAME THINGS, REALLY.
BUT SAMENESS IS NOT THE POINT, WE NEED A NEW CONTEXT.
COMMON GROUND SHOULD NOT BE A PREREQUISITE FOR RESPECT.
IT SHOULD JUST BE FREELY GIVEN, ASSUMED LIKE BREATHING.
AND LITERACY NARRATIVES ARE WORLD-VIEW REVEALING.
AND WORLD-VIEW REVEALING= WORLD-VIEWS CHANGING.
AND WORLD-VIEWS CHANGING= WORLD REARRANGING.
WITH A WORLD REARRANGING, MAYBE WE'LL BEGIN TO SEE
A LITTLE MORE DIALOGUE, A LITTLE MORE EMPATHY,
'CUZ EMPATHY IS LACKING IN THE AGE OF THE DRONE
DROPPING BOMBS ON ANYONE WHOSE CREED IS NOT OUR OWN.
AND THAT'S THE POINT WE'RE MAKIN' WITH COLLABORATION:
IT AND INTROSPECTION FOSTER THOUGHTFUL ENGAGEMENT.

REFLECTING ON MY LEARNING HAS HELPED ME TO SEE
THE SCOPE OF ALL I'VE COME TO LOVE THROUGH LITERACY.
I'VE HAD ALL TYPES OF SPONSORS: PARENTS, TEACHERS, PEERS,
TO KEEP ME MOVING FORWARD, YEAR AFTER YEAR,
AND I KNOW THAT THEY'RE ALL THINGS THAT WOULDN'T BE
IF I HAD A DIFFERENT PLACE IN SOCIETY.
BUT WHEN I THINK OF MY OWN LITERACY, MINE ALONE,
CREATION AND CONNECTION ARE ALL I'VE KNOWN.
IF I KEEP LOOKING INWARD, ONLY WHAT'S THERE WILL SHOW,
BUT THAT'S JUST INVENTORY; IT'S NOT A WAY TO GROW.
BY COMPARING MY OWN LITERACY WITH WILL'S,
I'VE BEEN ABLE TO CONSIDER HIS OWN DRIVE: THE PHIL-
-LOSOPHICAL, THE UNIVERSAL THEMES INSIDE
THE VERY SAME BOOKS I'VE READ, LIKE THE CATCHER IN THE RYE,
AND HOW DIFFERENT MEANS CAN LEAD TO SIMILAR PLACES:
A FRIEND'S SUGGESTION AND A MOVIE WITH A RACIST
BROUGHT TWO SEPARATE PEOPLE TO THE EXACT SAME BOOK,
BUT WHEN WE FINISHED IT, IT WAS THE THINGS WE TOOK
THAT SHAPED US—FOR ME, EMOTIONS, FOR HIM, BELIEFS,
OUR CONSTANT STRUGGLE THROUGH THE PROCESS WE CALL LITERACY.



REPOSE, DIGITAL SAI BY SAVANNA TEAGUE

WHITE NOISE

SAVANNAH BAILEY

I AM SHIPWRECKED.
MY BODY BECOMES THE BEACH ITSELF,
A SAND COVERED DUNE.
YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO CLIMB ME,
BUT YOU ALWAYS DO.
THE WAVES NIP AT MY PARTS AND PIECES.
FROTH CLINGS TO MY LIFELESS FORM.
THE BIG BLUE IS A BIG REMINDER
OF MY PURPOSE WHEN I WAS BORN.
THE SAME THAT I ABANDONED
WHEN THE SEA BETRAYED ME.
NOW I CAN BUT WATCH FROM AFAR
AS YOU AND THE ELEMENTS MAIM ME.
WITHOUT CAUSE TO DEFEND MYSELF,
I CAN FAR FROM EVEN MANAGE TO SPEAK.
TO CRY OUT IN DEFENSE OF MY LONG FORGOTTEN LIFE.
THE WORDS ECHO THROUGH MY EMPTY HEAD
AND YOU CAN'T EVEN PRETEND TO HEAR
MY WHITE NOISE,
MY WHALE NOISE.

FACTORUM

Savanna Teague

When the words flow free, unrestrained by daily worry,
the urge to pick up a pen is lightning crackling at the writer's fingertips.

It is wild and rushed, full of energy and potential.

However, when those words won't loose themselves from the confines of the subconscious;
when pulling them from one's brain is like scrambling to unstick taffy from a wrapper,

leaving chunks behind in the struggle;

when even articulating thoughts makes syllables cling to the tongue,
never to reach the air,

that is a pain beyond measure for the active writer.

So quickly from lofty climbs falls the wordsmith to deepest despair!

And yet, it is a fleeting torment.

From that frustration rises the scene, the dialogue, the thesis, the very first syllable,
and thus the circuit begins anew.



SYMPHONY, DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY: HILLARY YEAGER



ST. LOUIS BRIDGE, DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY
AMY HARRIS-ABER

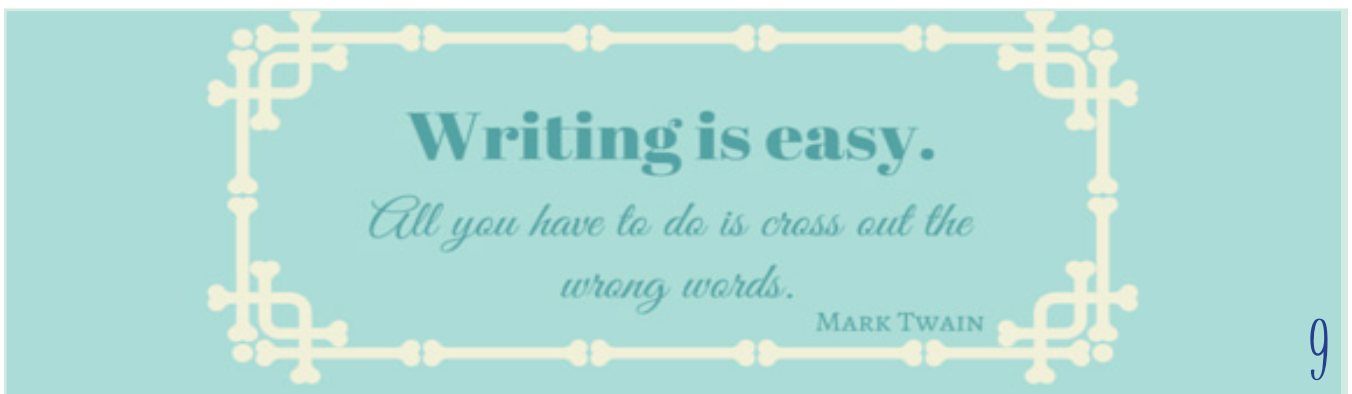
WHY BRAINSTORMING IS BEST

Although I enjoy working in all kinds of writing projects with students, my favorite type of session definitely involves brainstorming. During these sessions, not only do I get to help students create their project from the beginning, but I also learn from them. Just because those of us who work at the Writing Center spend most of our time with writing-based activities, there is not a day that goes by that I do not learn something from my students.

Since becoming a tutor, I have thrived during brainstorming sessions. I do not see myself as a teacher, but rather as a collaborator. For the past year, I have worked with a few students regularly. During our brainstorming sessions, my job is to plant the seed: introduce the topic or discuss the project at hand, and they run with it. Together, we create a piece of writing that they leave the Writing Center with proudly. Of course, I am the one who really learns. I think that sometimes we as tutors can lose ourselves because we have so many roles we must play.

Because of these many roles, we forget that our minds are just as malleable and we can learn from the students that we tutor. I find that brainstorming allows me to tutor a student while still learning about things myself. The students I have collaborated with have grown as writers, and I always look forward to working with them, hearing their latest ideas and reading their newest essays and literary projects. These students help add to my belief that we are all writers inside. Sometimes all it takes is a fellow writer to recognize the talent and ability a student has.

- Bridget Carlson





however you create, we can help

INTRODUCING THE MULTIMEDIA COMPOSITION CENTER AT THE UWC

The Multimedia Composition Center specializes in helping visitors prepare for speeches, poster presentations, video or audio assignments, and more, including ePortfolio based projects. Multimedia specialists will talk with project organizers about their composing process and help them brainstorm, revise, or troubleshoot their work-in-progress.

We have a suite of Macintosh and PC computers loaded with MS Office, Adobe Creative Suite, and a host of tools that will help you get ready to rock your presentation, proposal, or D2L ePortfolio project at any stage of your creative process. Our goal is to make you feel confident in what you create!

We will be hosting a series of informative and interactive workshops throughout the year. This fall, our workshops include how to make the most out of your D2L ePortfolio, building PowerPoint presentations that will wow your audience, and finding free fonts and rights-free images for your projects. The fall semester will culminate with an interactive workshop for graduate students about how to create a brilliant CV with Dr. Julie Myatt Barger and Dr. Kate Lisbeth Pantelides from the English Lower Division office. Dr. Barger and Dr. Pantelides will be offering valuable insight for cultivating the best vitae for the job market and workshopping attendee's vitae.

For the writers planning a poster presentation for Scholars Week, now is not too soon to start planning your project and we can help. You can work with our consultants to craft a beautiful, on-point poster presentation that gets your ideas across with detailed accuracy. Thinking about entering the MT Engage scholarships for a stunning E-portfolio? Come and see us for how to make your portfolio stand out at the sophomore and senior level. We have the tips, tricks, and resources to make sure you have the best product that represents your vision and your work.

Our website will be updated with workshops and events, so be sure to visit often, or follow us on social media for updates!

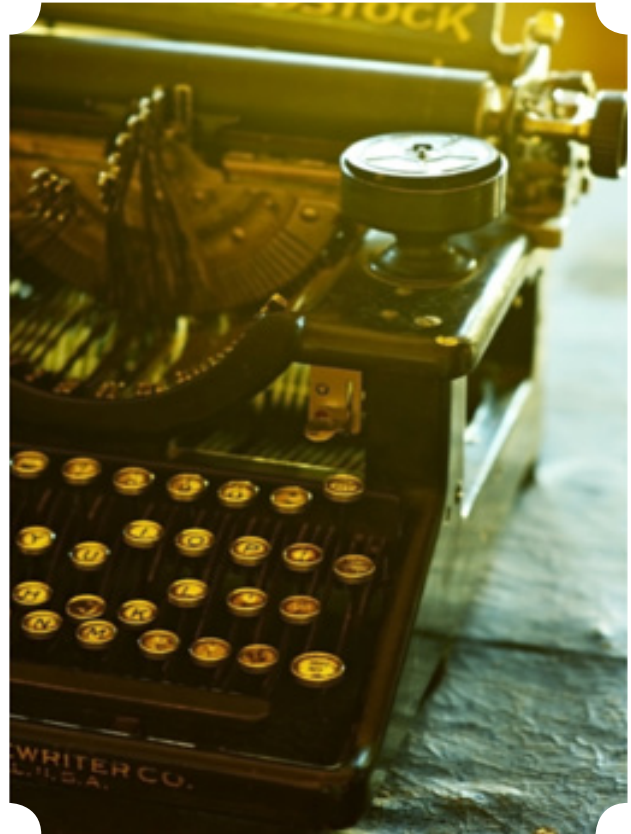
When the Typist Writes

Nick Bush

Oh Johnny [Carson], Norman [Mailer]'s not a good writer, but he is a good typist. —Truman Capote

Face outlined in white light, the typist
skips his fingers across keys,
letter'd squares turn worded lines
like seamstress' lined squares.
Palms flex and hover like
the dancer's foot, mid-arabesque,
head nodding in syncopation,
to beats through buds, plot
and wordplay formed
in 4/4 time.

His deep exhale
unsettles the quiet,
startling even himself
as his protagonist survives.
Plot and theme in tact,
neat as timpani drum heads—
saved then emailed to himself,
one more of many infinite
universes, created
in secluded, quiet chaos.
Through love.



Visit us at the 3rd floor of the library or on social media to find out more

Join

A Creative Writing Group this fall!

Flower no. 11

--for A.D.

We have gone-on together for some time, without a name like troubadors
in a long-running gypsy band You, the mandolin; I, a woody bass and both
our voices crashing the hurdling stars with liting concert It has been enough

in a small town with orangepeel mornings & grassy afternoons with light
from your reading lamp landing on nape & touching-toes, the painting of an
apple (scotched with purpling ripeness), a teacup crusted with daisies & dregs with

enjambment of schedules, our overlapping durance mixed with apertif & fume
as the radio listens in on us, there on your porch at dusk, admiring the clouds
We are foundlings, sharing our second parents. Their voices peak through the

breeze, saying Slowly to indicate the friendship & Truly to nod at fidelity among
bandits Some have seen us shaking our tits at the moon, our rattles rousing
a throng to abandon all sense some, our quiet ladle over a crockpot of beans &

a board of pain cheese grapes. Listen feel the vibration oscillate beyond a dusty
road, a Carolina vista It goes on and on We do not require the rose-bushes
begging questions in your neighbor's yard, mistasting our sophisticated red. I

will boil the water, put a minty sachet in the cup, fill just above halfway You
will come down, silken & nodding take the steaming bouquet & the cooling
napkin as declaration enough to continue to the next town--bristling and high,

anticipating the revelers-- dirge & stomp ticking from our blouses

--- William Brown



INDIFFERENCE

EBON'E MERRIMON

COVERED IN MY ANCESTOR'S WORRIES -
WORRIES FROM OPPRESSION, INEQUALITY, AND INEQUITIES -
BEING PUSHED TO LAST AND HOPING FOR FIRST,
DREAMING OF EQUALITY WHILE FIGHTING POVERTY,
MOTIVATION FROM LEADERS WHO FOUGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS AND BLEED UPON A ROAD CALLED
FREEDOM.
ALWAYS WONDERING HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE, WHAT LAST BACK WILL BREAK TRYING TO CARRY
THE FATE OF A MILLION TEARS AND OBLITERATE ALL FEARS -
FEARS OF THE HOODED MASKED IN WHITE COVERING THE FACES OF OUR ENEMIES USING A BURN-
ING CROSS AS THEIR SIGN.
HANGING ON THE TREES BEING BRUSHED BY THE BREEZE BURIED IN TRENCHES AND WASHED IN
MUD,
RAPED IN THE SHADOWS AND MURDERED IN PLAIN SIGHT, HATRED WAS THEIR OCCUPATION -
INEQUALITY THE ONLY DETERMINATION
SEPARATE ME,
KEEPS ME FROM SOCIETY.
BACK TO THE MOTHER SHIP, THEY SAY -
BACK TO THE JUNGLE STRIPPED OF CLOTHING, RUNNING AS AN ANIMAL BUT FREE.
PUSH US BACK TO OUR CAGES - CONFINE US IN LIMITED SPACES,
EATING FROM GRASS, SLEEPING ON DIRT, AND DRINKING FROM THE WATERS OF WHICH WE BATHE.
WHATEVER IT TAKES FOR THOSE OF A DIFFERENT BREED TO NOT BE NEAR ME, NOR MY FAMILY.
LET'S LOOK INTO THE EYES OF A MAN WHO HAS A FAMILY LIKE MINE - CHILDREN OF THE SAME AGE
AND WHOSE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS HIS KIND, AND TAKE AWAY WHAT I BELIEVE HE CAN'T DESERVE,
HIS LIFE,
HIS DREAMS,
THE VISION OF JUSTICE FOR HIS FAMILY.
I MUST DO WHAT I HAVE TO DO TO KEEP THEM FROM OUR SCHOOLS -
FROM OUR EDUCATION,
FROM TAKING OUR WORK - MAKING THE SAME WAGE I MAKE,
BEING ABLE TO AFFORD MORE THAN AN ACRE AND A MULE.
WE MUST FIGHT - TAKE NOT WHAT'S OURS, BUT WHAT SHOULD BE RIGHTFULLY SHARED - NOT DI-
VIDED NOR LABELED, BUT PLACED ON THE TABLE FOR EVERYONE'S BENEFIT.
BUT ONCE WE CAN COME TOGETHER AND BREAK BREAD - LEARN EACH OTHER'S CUSTOMS, AND
TURN TO ONE ANOTHER AS SISTER AND BROTHER - WHO THEN WILL BE THE OUTCAST?
IF WE CAN'T BE DIVIDED BY RACES, THEN WHAT WILL BE OUR BORDER LINE?
WHAT SPIRIT OF HATRED WILL WE MIX WITH IGNORANCE, ONLY TO GET HUNGOVER - REGRETTING
THE FIRST SIP?
THE SIP THAT STARTED IT ALL - THE FIRST SHOT, OR BURNING CHURCH THAT TURNED INTO A RIOT.
A RIOT TO FIGHT FOR THE INDIFFERENCE OF ONE'S RACE, GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND EVERYTHING
THAT COMPLETES ONE'S BEING.
FOR WE TRY TO BE ALL THREE - THE JUDGE, EXECUTIONER, AND JURY.
LIVING BY THE PHRASE, "ONLY GOD CAN JUDGE ME."
BUT NOT EVEN PRAISING HIS GLORY.
INDIFFERENCE IN RELIGION,
INDIFFERENCE IN SOCIETY,
INDIFFERENCE - IT'S THE ONLY WAY WE CAN BE.

THE WHERE I'M FROM POEM: PROCESS PIECE

Megan Donelson

I began asking my students to write a “Where I’m From” poem several years ago after finding a template for it online. I thought it was a good opportunity to help students write about themselves. Personal writing is often difficult for students who are in courses focused on academic genres, but I have always found creative writing exercises helpful in helping students think about why other writing tasks matter to them - who are you and what are you trying to say?

It was only later that I discovered that this poem template is adapted from a poem by poet George Ella Lyon, who wrote her own version in response to a collection of poetry that moved her. Lyon then adapted that structure and used it with other writers, and she now takes inspiration from how widely this exercise has been used. Numerous templates like the one my students used can be found online, and I’d recommend this exercise to beginning poets and seasoned writers alike.

I AM NICOTINE

GRANT GRADY

I AM FROM NICOTINE, FROM SHELVES AND WAL-MARTS
I AM FROM THE 906 HAZELWOOD HOUSE; I AM FROM THE
NEIGHBOR’S GARDEN WITH THE SETTING SUN
I AM FROM CHRISTMAS AND IRISH HOLIDAYS
I AM FROM THE ARGUMENTS AND SCREAMING, THE ENDLESS
BULLSHIT AND EVIL LIES
I AM FROM MEMPHIS, SUSHI AND GORGEOUS WOMEN
FROM THE FORMAL FLOW OF UNCLE RON WHO FELL WITH A
MIGHTY BLOW
I AM FROM NICOTINE, HIDDEN HIGH AND HIDDEN LOW.

An Evening of Laughter

Lava Asaad

I approached my grandma and had to bend myself low so I could hug her. As she was kissing me, she called me by my sister's name instead of mine, just like she does with everyone. I congenially helped her out saying "dâpîr, ez Lava" – Grandma, it's Lava.

She could barely stand. Putting her weight on her weak knees was unbearable for more than 5 minutes. She leaned her fragile body on our outstretched hands – my sister's and mine. I felt her scrawny hands in my youthful grip. At one point, I was afraid I was squeezing her hand too much, so I loosened my grip so as not to harm her frail child-like hands. We reached her room and she immediately threw herself on the carpeted floor. She crawled on her hands and knees till she reached the mat on which she usually sits. My sister and I unlaced our shoes and entered my grandma's cozy, barely-furnished room. She cannot bear having two pieces of furniture around her. She always seeks wide open space in this square room. I sat on the couch and looked at the space that my grandma occupied on the mat. She has shrunk in size to barely four feet. I saw how age has treated her by taking almost half of her height. She tucked herself in and looked at us laughing. With her coarse Kurdish language, she mimicked her brother's voice:

"My brother came the other day and said 'Nora, how do you go to the bathroom? You have become an animal walking on four limbs.' I said, 'Well brother, the bathroom sometimes comes to my room if I cannot crawl.'"

The grandma's laughter grows louder. Both girls giggle.

Her remark is a sad one yet she succeeded in making her condition less painful by making fun of it. A strategy of survival. My sister asked her how her knees were to which she replied that they are getting worse. Her son, the doctor, injects fluids into her knees monthly just to numb their throbbing pain.

It was late at night when we arrived to my hometown, Hasaka. My sister and I decided to travel to my grandma's for the spring break. I was a freshman in the Department of English Literature at Damascus University in 2006. My sister was doing her Master's degree in Math. My uncle's wife served us dinner, and by the time we finished eating it was 11 p.m. My sister and I were exhausted because we traveled for eight hours in the bus. My grandma's body was weak yet she could talk for days nonstop. We were expected to sleep in the same room. I put myself in bed, but my grandma started sharing stories about her past.

My uncle's wife, Malka, came again to say good night and started to tease my grandma that she had a long, tiring day cleaning the house. It is true, my grandma is obsessive with cleanliness. Although she can barely walk, she supervises all the work in the house to make sure that everything is clean and in its place.

My grandma was born in the 1940's. No exact date of birth. She was born in A'mouda, a village in the northeastern part of Syria, almost on the Syrian-Turkish border. She started to talk about the daily work she used to do in contrast to women's work nowadays. The northeastern part of Syria was and mostly is devoted to agriculture. She used to work in the fields, mostly with cotton and wheat. The men in the village used to go to other nearby villages to do other kinds of work. Field work was kept for women. She was so energetic in describing how she used to cover her face from the sun as a teenager. She took off the veil on her head and put it on her face to show us how she used to hide her face.

The girls howl with laughter. Their grandma chokes with laughter while adjusting the veil back on her head.

It was comical. She looked like a caricatured novice thief. Despite our drowsiness, my sister and I were engaged in her story. Her father's house in the village was only one big room. When it was cold, the sheep they had were kept in the same room the family was in. The sheep had their special corner in the house. She continued with more catchy details. When it rained, the droplets were dripping through the roof and on to the sheep's wool. When this happened, the smell was an awful, moistened sheepy smell.

The grandma stops and starts to rub her knees. She starts to laugh again. Her eyes get teared up and the girls know that she is starting to cry.

“When I married your grandpa at the age of sixteen, we moved to a village nearer to the town. My work changed. I had to collect goats' feces and go sell them in the town square. I had to walk miles and miles to reach the square. Yes, that's why my knees are weak.”

The grandma grows pensive, but she continues with her story laughing.

My sister and I looked at her with gaped mouths. I started to envision her walking on a sandy road with heavy clothes on, not to mention the sweat her body poured, moving from one shop to another to see who would offer the highest price for her goods.

“The funny thing was I knew very little Arabic, I could not negotiate with the buyers. I always mix the female ending of a word with the masculine. This is what I am told I am saying.”

She then moved to how her job got cleaner when she started to collect wood, branches, and twigs to sell them. This was in the beginning of the 1960s when they moved to the town, Hasaka.

Grandma touches the wall next to her:

“Your grandpa and I built this two-story brick house. Mostly I did the work because he had a job in the morning and afternoon. My weak knees and hands used to hold buckets of cement, helping some of the workers we hired.”

She was all this time sitting, but now she laid her back on the bed, and I started to look at her face in profile. I tried to imagine how it was once young. She got up again and undid her veil for the second time, revealing her two henna-red braids underneath. Most of the elderly women in my hometown use henna. They do not want to apply chemical dyes on their hair. She touched her wrinkly face and adjusted with her fingers her un-plucked eyebrows. Her crinkled skin around her eyes almost covered her blue pupils. I looked deep into them and found that they had turned gray, but no, they were once blue.

My grandma has seven children, four sons and three girls. She started to rub her deeply furrowed hands. She turned her face to our side and started to tell us the story of her dead children for the hundredth time or so. My mother is the fourth child, but before her, there were two dead girls.

“With this hand I choked my daughter.”

Yes, both my grandma and her child were sleeping next to each other. The girl was a week old. My grandma’s hand fell on the girl’s nose blocking any space for her to breathe. She was suffocated to death. My grandma never mentions when she tells the story of how she felt when seeing that she had killed her daughter unknowingly. Maybe her feelings cannot be expressed in words or maybe it was easy to just give birth to another child. The second girl was weak, but at the time, my grandparents could not afford to go to a doctor who would have been far and inefficient. The doctors they had around had only general ideas about medicine. That’s all. The girl died when she was two years old.

What fascinates me about my grandma is her relationship with her children. My grandma dedicated her life to her remaining children. She always talks about how she stayed in the house even when my grandpa had a second wife. She mentioned this story once again with the usual introduction of how she is now used to sleeping alone after my grandpa’s death. He died of lung cancer. They were constantly fighting, cursing, and hitting each other. Let me be honest, she used to hit him, and he never hit her. She started to laugh upon mentioning that infamous story of hers.

The grandma’s abrupt laughter fills the silence of the room after mentioning her husband’s death.

“Just a year before he died when we two old people were fighting, I held the broom and hit him with it.” As she said, he did not get angry. He never did. All his anger and frustration were directed against the Syrian government in secret, of course, like all Kurds do. He instead fantasized over a socialist and maybe a communist country to be built in Syria. I grew up admiring his Lenin books. Not the content - I was too young to understand anything, but I just marveled at how his name was unpronounceable and different, Ve-la-de-meer or VI-di-mr!! My grandpa was a poised but unpredictable person. He would have gone mad at something trivial, but he would not be angry when his wife hit him. This was trivial to him. But this is not a story about my grandpa.

She became interested in her own story, knowing what direction her narration would take: the story of her life with my grandpa.

“During one of our fights shortly after his second marriage, he pronounced the words, ‘you are divorced,’ three times, but I stayed with him nevertheless. I had no willingness to leave my children just because he got married again. I am more interested in them than in him.

I am not sure if we can still be regarded as a married couple after what he said.”

The girls' laughter is mixed with astonishment.

In Islam, when a man says the word “divorced” to his wife three times, they are no longer married. Sure there are exceptions, as when the man is angry and he says them, it does not count.

My grandpa’s second marriage failed. He brought the son he begot of the other woman for my grandma to raise. I never knew that my fifth uncle was another woman’s son. She raised and treated him as one of hers.

She changed the direction of her storytelling to how she made all of her children successful. This is another side of my grandma. If she had gone to school, she would have been a nerd. Or let’s say highly ambitious. Despite her inability to read, write, or even speak proper Arabic, the standard language in Syria, she was the essential component that helped her children succeed.

“I used to scare the birds who would stand at my son’s window while he was studying. I did not want my son to be distracted even by the sound of a bird.”

“I avoided visiting the women in the neighborhood so that they would not come to our house and disturb my children with their voices.”

Sometimes she does take things to an extreme. Till recently, she kept telling her younger son’s wife about how lazy he was, and how each time she woke him up in the morning, she would return and find him asleep again. My grandma always emphasized that we were Kurds and that the only way for us to succeed under a dictatorship in Syria is through hard work and good grades. She always repeated in Kurdish “ez kurdim ser bilindim” meaning, I am Kurdish and I keep my head high.

It was already past 1 a.m. I was not sleepy by then, my fatigue was gone because I found for myself something to think about that kept me awake. In an instant, my grandma started to snore loudly and my sister’s breathing thickened. My grandma left me perplexed. I wanted so much to ask her whether she is happy and satisfied at this age. She had a difficult life, a life that she cannot possibly call her own because it was solely for her children to seize better opportunities in life. She still lives in the house that she and my grandpa built, but the only son who lives there in her house with his wife is the second wife’s son, not one of her own children. She often complains that her children left her. They did not, but they just pay more attention to their spouses and children. The waste and pine of my grandma’s life! I had a mixture of emotions for her that night, I regarded her as a strong woman, but I pitied her. I kept staring at her while she was fast asleep. I tried to make sense of her life and struggle; it was beyond my comprehension. I fell short in understanding or analyzing her emotions, ambitions, and motivations.

I failed.

I slept.

RAISING A CHILD IN 12 EASY STEPS

JENNIFER KICKLITER

BEGIN WITH A CHILD.
BRIGHT, WILLING, EAGER TO PLEASE.

1. IS REVERENT, FRIENDLY, CONSIDERATE, FOLLOWS DIRECTIONS, WORKS INDEPENDENTLY.
2. OBEYS CHEERFULLY, FOLLOWS CLASS RULES, COMPLETES ASSIGNMENTS.

UPEND THE WORLD.
SNATCH OUT ALL THE SUPPORTS.
APPLY BODY-SHAMING TECHNIQUES AND MENTAL CRUELTY.

3. IS CAPABLE OF BETTER WORK. HAVE HAD TO DISCIPLINE JENNIFER VERY FREQUENTLY THIS MARKING PERIOD.
4. IMPROVEMENTS IN CONDUCT AND EFFORT SHOULD DIRECTLY IMPROVE HER GRADES. SHE IS A SMART GIRL.
5. YOU COULD BE AN A STUDENT WITH LESS PLAYING AND MORE EFFORT.

IMPLEMENT REGULAR ASSESSMENTS OF WORTH.
SUCCESSFUL MEASURES INCLUDE:

“YOU’RE JUST LIKE YOUR OLDER SISTER” (THE ONE WE GOT RID OF)
AND

“WHY CAN’T YOU BE MORE LIKE YOUR BROTHER” (THE ONE WE WANTED)

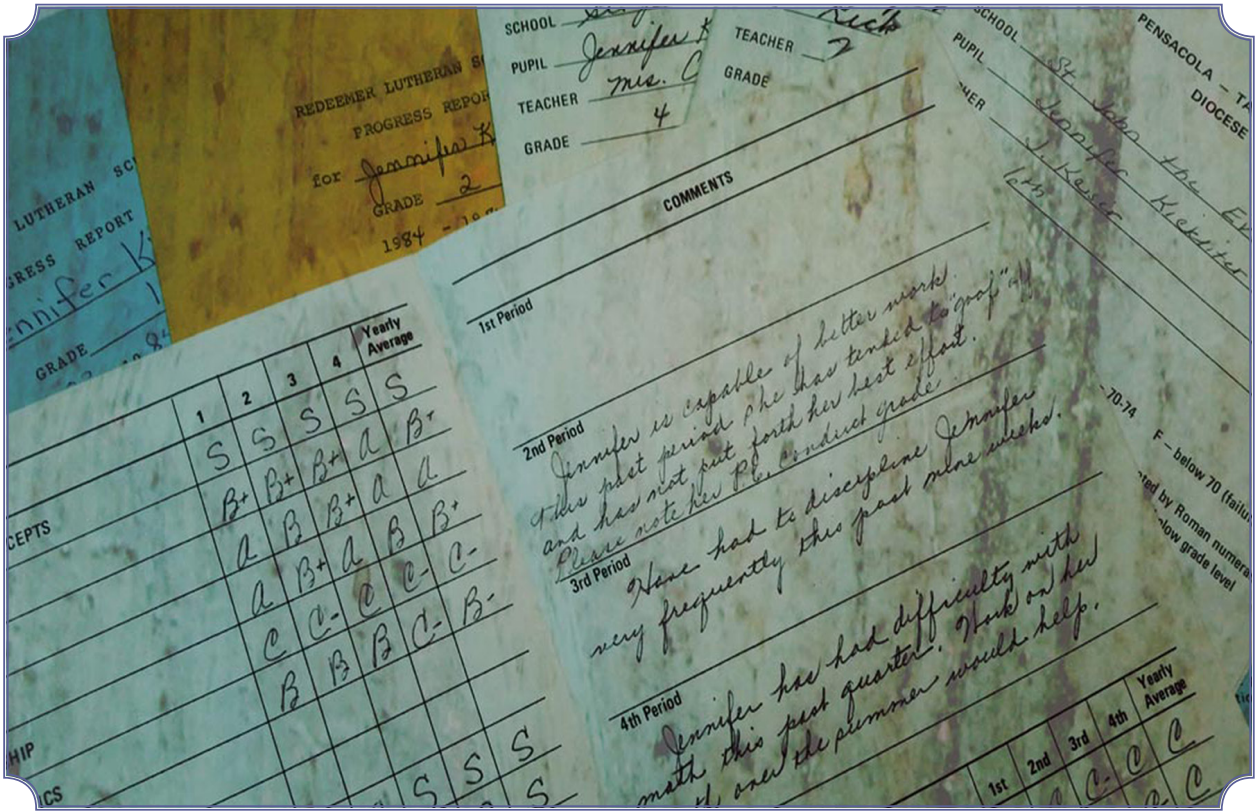
6. YOU HAVE A LOT OF POTENTIAL, BUT LATE ASSIGNMENTS BRING YOUR GRADE DOWN!
7. LACKS SELF-CONFIDENCE. MESSY WORK, OFTEN LATE OR INCOMPLETE. DOESN’T LISTEN VERY WELL.
8. DOES NOT WORK TO FULL POTENTIAL.

PRACTICE UNPREDICTABLE BUT FREQUENT APPLICATION OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE.

9. POOR CONDUCT, INCOMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS, DOES NOT FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS, POOR WORK HABITS AND USE OF TIME, INATTENTIVE IN CLASS.
10. INATTENTIVE IN CLASS, POOR CONDUCT.
11. INCOMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS, POOR CONDUCT.
12. POOR CONDUCT, INCOMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS, INATTENTIVE IN CLASS.

MAINTAIN AN AIR OF DISAPPOINTED SURPRISE THROUGHOUT.
GARNISH WITH REMINDERS OF MONEY SPENT FOR THE CHILD’S MAINTENANCE AND CONTINUAL EXPRESSIONS OF DISSATISFACTION IN THE REPAYMENT THEREOF.

Editor’s Note: Please note the companion image at right to this piece.



RAISING A CHILD IN 12 EASY STEPS -- DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY -- BY JENNIFER KICKLITER



1972

Amy Harris-Aber

“Ich bin klein, Mein Herz is rein,
Niemand kann drin wohnen, Als Jesu allein.
Amen”
-Trad. Mennonite Prayer

“Your great grandmother was always a lady.”

This is remembered to me.

“Even chasing that goat thru the house with her cane, she was polite.”

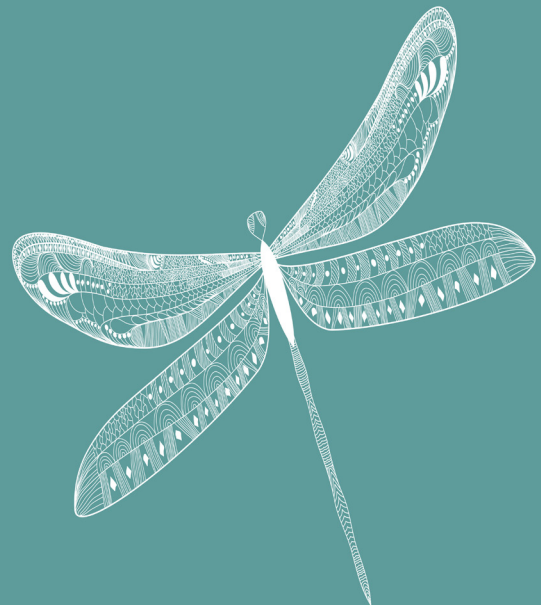
This is also remembered, a seed
tucked into my ear, and given time
to take root.

The picture is simple –
black and white.

Silver wire hair held fast,
crown-like above
an elvish face,
cleft chin.

She is looking into the lens - laughing,
face creasing into lines like the map
of a life lived,
cheek half covered
in a Hollyhock’s shadow,

and I only know what I see in pictures,
or what I was given –
words that form an idea,
pebbles from larger stones
I cannot see.



Elizabeth, who wrung chicken necks and wore only efficient cotton.
Elizabeth, who made zwieback, told her daughters
that you must use potato water for your bread,
that you can never make good dough when it's raining –

she pickled hills of cucumbers in high summer,
made the wooden floor, cabinets, table of our kitchen
echo sharp twinges of vinegar smell trapped in the grain
until the cool of late fall came.

Elizabeth,
prettiest of all her siblings
had, as a girl, hair the color of Turkey Red Wheat,
she'd braid it for every day,
pin it under a white stiff cap,
put combs in for church on Sunday.
This is what I dream.
This is the story.

1972 – Process Piece

I graduated with an M.A. in creative nonfiction in 2011, but writing was important to me long before that. I come from a family of storytellers – most people do. The anecdotes we hear from the people who raise us – from the people we grow up around – qualify each one of us to bear witness to stories. Those stories either remain alive by being remembered, or they are forgotten. Stories can and do die.

These choices – of what stories to give voice to, and which ones we choose to forget - become our identities.

My identity is a common one.

I was raised in Kansas.

My family background is German Mennonite.

My great greats got on a boat in Russia in 1874, landed in the northeastern United States, and took a train to the area they eventually settled.

I grew up in a kitchen listening to my grandmother telling stories about her mother, sisters, brothers, and children.

I grew up listening to my grandmother speaking Plautdietsch on the phone.

I make a conscious effort to let these memories and stories live with me, even though most writers will tell you that memory is really just a reconstruction of the most recent recollection of some past event.

Nevertheless, I will continue to recreate my patchwork stories.

I'll sew up any tears. I'll keep adding to the length of it all until I have someone to give my stories to.

Vocation

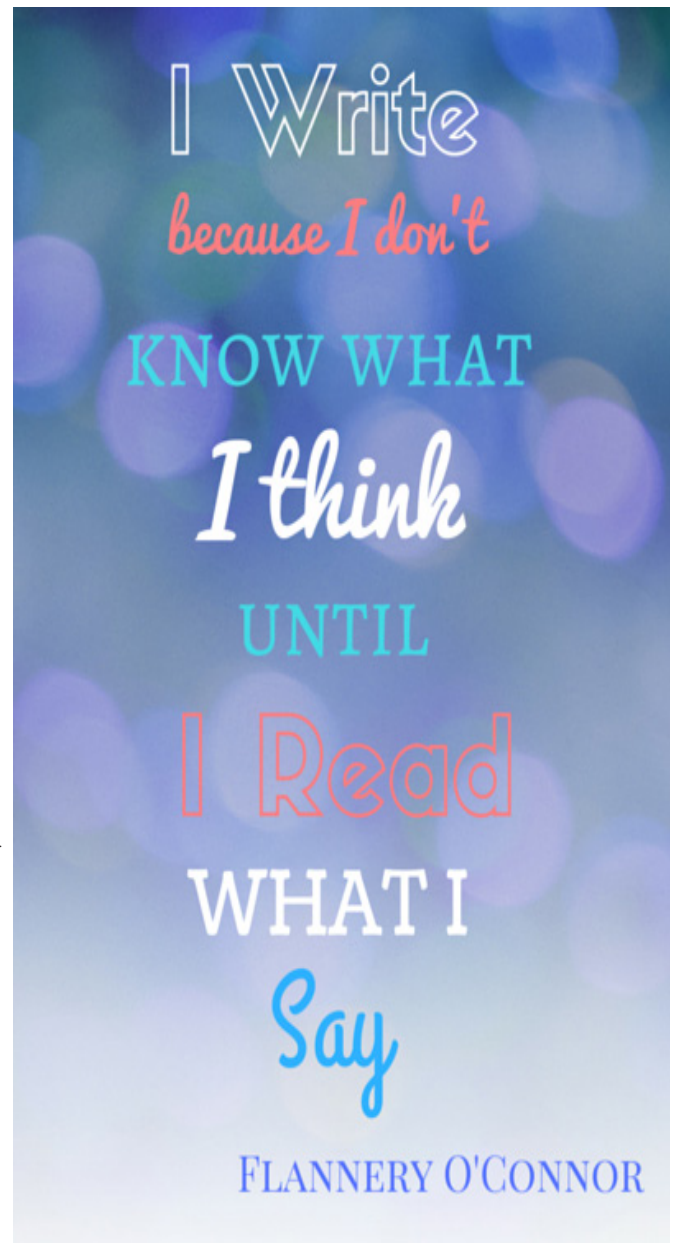
I.

An old futon, sagging in its
fourth apartment (at least),
a fleece jacket flung over it (not hung
on the hook by the door),
notebooks and planners,
a cup of coffee growing cold,
fresh Post It Notes, worn volumes of poetry,
books and books and books and me
adding flags to their pages
like a breadcrumb trail
or a bird feathering her nest.

II.

Cool and steady fluorescent lights
long tables, hard wooden
chairs, an occasional figure
bent over an open textbook,
notecards and highlighters piled all around.
Windows showing life outside
to the cloistered.
But in here, we have
rows and rows and rows
of books,
and space to do the work.

Megan Donelson



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and more!

END OF THE SEMESTER BLUES

Tierney Ja'Kei Letcher

Late nights with warm coffee and endless stress because of long papers, homework and final tests. Due dates and deadlines, still can't seem to find the time to work on the miscellaneous To-Do List that's stored in my mind.

Internship opportunities, summer job applications, side-tracked from the thoughts of fun, upcoming family vacations. Hungry, overwhelmed and sleep deprived. Dark spots and bags forming under my eyes.

Parties and events that I have to miss because assignments won't get done. Building emotions of anger and jealousy towards the relaxed people who are soaking up the sun.

A mouth that lies saying, "I'm fine!" - every time I'm asked what's wrong. The annoying sound of my alarm clock blasting at an unbearably loud tone. Mentally calculating my GPA and the points in my class alongside the anticipation of waiting to see if I actually passed.

Regret for not using extra credit opportunities or answering the bonus questions on the test. My brain is still trying to gain an understanding of this unorganized mess. However...when my final grades arrived, I was as happy as could be. I passed. Therefore, the end of semester blues didn't defeat me.



however you create, we can help

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

RIMA ABDALLAH

This statement keeps coming into my head whenever I feel that I am about to give up on something. My journey with writing has been a little difficult. I moved to the USA and decided to complete my master degree in English. The only barrier I faced in excelling in English was writing. My professors say I have so many marvelous thoughts. Therefore, I need to share it with others so that they can learn from it. It was frustrating a little bit in the beginning. I decided to master the writing skill by concentrating more, asking for advice, utilizing resources, and listening to some professional's inspiring stories. I really used to feel so frustrated when I got my papers back with so many suggestions and corrections. However, I have never given up.

Learning requires hard work. I went to the Writing Center, but the people in charge there could not help me because I am non-native. They could not understand my mistakes, since most of my mistakes which I figured out later on were from literal translating. Then, I got to know the best teacher ever in the writing center. Her name is Taffy. She could understand my needs, and she was able to figure out what my weak points were to help me develop them.

The semester is over, and Mrs. Taffy has graduated. I learned from my attempts and experience that writing in English requires you to think in English and not in your native language. Of course, my attempts didn't finish. I started reading articles in English every day, listening more to scholars, and I bought some books and started learning from them. I started feeling that I have so many different structures and vocabulary that help me write in understandable ways. What helped me a lot was re-writing and copying the articles, I would read to help engrain and implant its writing structure in my head. Now when I write, I put my Arabic thoughts to the side and install into my brain the chip of the English language. Now, I really enjoy writing in English more than ever before.

PERSPECTIVE MAKES PROGRESS

TAFFY XU

Rima has been one of many international students I have had the pleasure of working with over the past ten years. She is just one of many examples of students who have wonderful, insightful thoughts to express but are frustrated because they cannot be easily understood and are, therefore, often dismissed.

Many times, when people of one culture or language interact with a foreigner and when there is a communication gap, it has been my observation the native usually reacts by speaking more loudly, slowly, and/or condescendingly. In the case of a language learner, this tactic does not work. I do not speak Russian, and if a Russian speaker comes up to me and speaks slowly and loudly, this does not change the fact that I still cannot understand Russian. In fact, just the opposite: I am made even more aware of the fact that I cannot understand Russian. So it is with Rima and other international students. This blatant patronization is nothing but insulting, embarrassing, and discouraging, and it hurts all areas of their language learning—including their writing.

In the minds of the native, when there is a misunderstanding, it is often assumed that the fault is because the other is incapable of understanding. That is simply not the case. It is imperative to remember that the foreigner's mind is working twice as hard to process information. In Rima's case, I know that she has a degree from Jordan; that she speaks German fluently and has taught it as an instructor; that she is far away from her home, family, and friends; that English is her third language; that she is taking university-level courses in this third language; and that she has two children and a family to take care of on top of everything else. This is not an unintelligent woman. There is just a wall between us, and it is the job of both of us to tear down that wall.

For students like Rima, they tear down the wall by trying to use the target language as often as possible. I've encouraged some students to keep a journal not only to use for writing new vocabulary words they come across but also to use it as an English language diary. Some students like Rima have found this especially helpful. By practicing freewriting and writing without the pressure of a grade, students become more comfortable with expressing themselves and making the connection between the head and the fingers.

For native speakers, they tear down the wall by being respectful, understanding, and patient. By seeing past the fact the foreigner speaks or looks differently than the other and is (gasp!) a complex human being with a rich history, the native taps into his/her empathy reserves, and it is much easier to want to understand that person. It makes the language gap not so big after all, and it makes the experience better for everyone involved.

write
UNTIL IT BECOMES
as natural as
breathing

»»»»»»
««««««

write
UNTIL NOT WRITING
makes you
anxious



"WHEN ASKED

"how do you write"

I invariably answer "ONE WORD AT A TIME"

-Stephen King

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- Please include your full name, class standing (or faculty standing) on the manuscript.
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