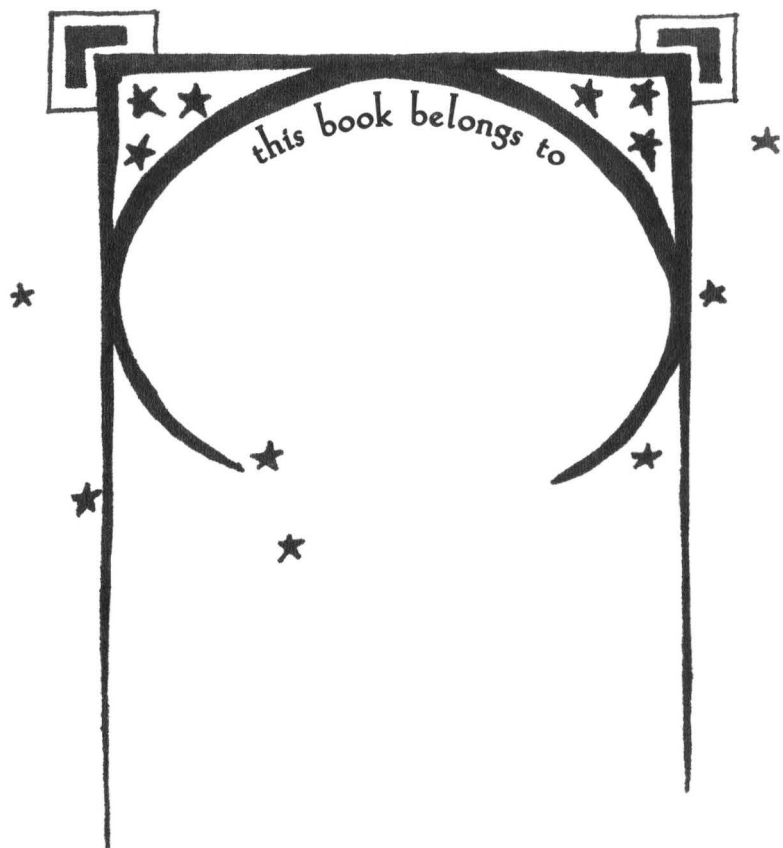


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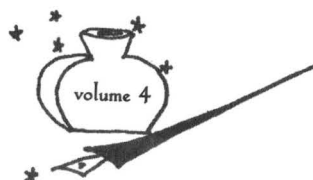


This Inkwell is dedicated to
Books,
Creativity,
and Ernestine Kimbro,
who nurtured both.

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The Evergreen State College
Olympia Washington
2009

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* inkwell *



Books are people,
worlds of people,
both real and imagined,
perceived by
and peopled by
other people.



editor's note

You can slip a book into your pocket and take it along on a train ride, into the forest, up to a mountaintop; a book can keep you company at any dreary party, on any rainy day; a book can connect you to the hearts of other people, and allow you insight into humanity.

Thanks to books, we can study ourselves all the way back to Babylon. Words written by other people in totally different times and totally different spaces show us how we are different, and how we are the same.

Books can educate us, and they can brainwash us; they can fill us with images - for better and worse - and open us to perspectives that don't exist in our own experience.

Books can frame us, and books can liberate us;
You'd do well to keep your critical wits about you when you are deep inside one.

In these pivotal times, writing is an all important tool for communicating, for exchanging our stories. Books carry many voices, across waters and walls, and if there is one thing the Writing Center at Evergreen hopes to do, it is to cultivate voice.

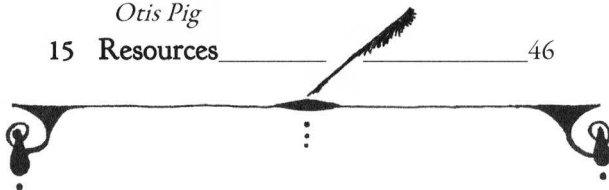
Contained in this little book are vignettes from various voices for you to dip into; we hope they will help push your craft along a little farther. It is your journey: write in the margins, argue with us, rewrite us. We are ready.

The mysterious worlds that await us in books ~
By opening this book, you have stepped inside...

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Writing Books

Steven Hendricks



He sees his body as a librarian might, as a librarian might regard an estate, penetrated by divergent patterns, each claiming a new hold on his nature; and this particular librarian daydreams that, when the sun is finally insufficient and the lamps must be lit, then the wild penumbra of other orders will present themselves, and so, burned orange in the lamplight, the world is available for reinvention on the same tired shelves.

A pair of wonderful book titles: The first, by Keith Smith – book artist and photographer – is a slim volume titled *Text in the Book Format*. It's a detailed exploration of the visual grammar of the space of the page – what happens when words are allowed to float free, to run into the gutter, to rotate, blur, change sizes...what happens when words behave like things? The title is the simple gesture of not taking for granted how text should fit into the “book format,” and for me, it opens up a host of questions and possibilities, takes the proverbial cork out of the bottle. Let's adjust the title though, make it more familiar (*text* is plain, *format* is clinical): let's consider “writing in books.” It's so romantic.

The second title is from a survey of a number of book artists – makers of “artists' books.” Artists' books are works of art in which the form, or variations on the form, of the book is central to the idea or theme of the work; the book is the medium, sometimes the canvas of such work. Artists' books can tend to challenge our notion of what a book is or what a book should contain; they compel us to read differently and to manage a range of sensations: imagery, textures, sculptural elements, strange openings, and non-linear courses. The title is *The Cutting Edge of Reading* (Hubert & Hubert).

For me, the cutting edge of reading is the reading that challenges us deeply, that stops us in our tracks, that leads our brains down some

winding road and leaves us gaping into a void, a blank. The cutting edge of reading compels us to write, maybe in a notebook, or in the margins of the book – anywhere. But this writing at the cutting edge isn't necessarily a response; it might be a break with the text, even a dismissal. Most books won't be jealous if they lead us right out of their gates. This cutting, slicing, separating edge of reading breaks with us as it breaks with the familiar landscape of meaningful phrases, sensible ideas, known quantities. It welcomes us to our own ignorance.

He wrote: "Stories don't live in books, but between them, in that noise in search of signal – but no matter the signal, the noise remains!" In this way, he resumed from the tension between books – his notes, his marginal and metaphorical presence less and less unsure. A rearrangement of texts produced a new body and the same old body, renewed the prospect of it speaking in the terms of story, in readable terms, through him, to take the shape of the noise immediately lost as it is gathered.

What of books? I could wax poetic on the qualities of a well-bound blank book, the beauty and immediacy of writing in books, the non-linear, bodily process of pouring one's ideas onto pages that gain shape as they thicken and warp with ink.

Of interest to me here, though, is the subtle deceitfulness of books. Books offer the lies of wholeness, sequence, and permanence. Books offer, in this sense, an image counter to the disruptive cutting edge of reading, something counter to the possibility that something more can be written. Part of the deceit rests in the apparent unification of text and book; to most literate people, the two seem inextricably conjoined: the text begins at the beginning of the book (or near enough) and ends at the end; one writes simultaneously a "novel" and a "book," as if the two were the same thing.

The simple phrase "writing in books" draws me toward a different image. I see, on the one hand, books, a wall of books, all spine and shoulders and joints, pages well-packed between dividing covers. On the other hand, I can conjure the sense of the words, lines, and paragraphs of those numerous volumes as divisible again and again: unbound and rebound in some new order: all contain mere writings, gestures of thought that for every reader carry distinct vibrations, send out new

spectral airs, sentient, fibrous interweavings that illuminate the space between books. That is where writing and reading might coexist.

...the long unending lines of formless forms, stories crammed against the walls by the dozens, thousands even, lines woven tightly together to form substantial apparitions among the pages, between books: stories leap and hold to one another like lovers and like enemies and unearth a new desire, a desire that takes its own form, a form in the grid and in the mass of the reader, like a haunting, a lonely form, waiting and all the same engrossed in the gruesome possession that lets us read and write as if with liveliness: he could then speak, could then move and orient himself as a character, beneath the necessary clouds one day as a character, and what's called a speaker, with verbs and objects and articles arrayed as torches, and by his own rhetoric become a place where voices can intersect, where lurks an eye that translates between the dead subject and the living object, not the precious intricacies of feeling and image, but the very pattern that warms blood in the reader's cheek: in the intimacy of marginal writing, that margin where readings intersect, there, he would become the moment of reading with no recourse to memory.

We write in the desperate attempt to repeat the experience of reading in ourselves, *from* ourselves. We write toward the idea of a book in order to reproduce the pleasure of deception, perhaps the pleasure of coming upon our own book one day, finding it lovely and romantic and recognizing in it someone altogether strange, a voice started and stopped.

And we write as a gift, a voluntary failure to use language properly. We compose for the book form, and we compose toward the cutting edge of reading because the edge is the ignorance we hope to reveal and the form is the body that breaks beautifully as it is reanimated on the shelf with its lovers and its enemies.





Considering the Role of Silence

David Hunter



Silence is the “third speaker in a conversation.”¹
Without silence, all communication would be noise with no center.
Moments of silence allow time for thoughts and emotions to process.
Silence embodies a philosophy of openness to others;
A dedication to being open provides space to cultivate
the whole human person.
Using reading and writing, we can experience both silence and
non-silence while reflecting.
These spaces are opportunities for critical thinking, to witness
that which lies there:
Our deeper selves.

The reader has the space to
understand and interpret what they have read;
The writer finds the space
to reflect: Is this what I want to say?

There is more to communication and writing than just filling space;
Come to a space of silence, and then move beyond...

1. Picard, Max. *The World of Silence*. trans. Stanley Goodman. Chicago: H. Regnery, 1952. p 25.



Tutoring as a State of Being

Victoria Larkin



Three years ago, for the first incarnation of *Inkwell*, I wrote an essay titled, “Tutoring as a Radical Act: Changing the World One by One.” I’d been a writing tutor for a little over a year by then, and I had experienced much of what makes being a tutor so amazing; but in the two years since, my insight has deepened and solidified into a conviction: Not only is tutoring a radical act, it is a state of being: one where openness and attention are founding principles, where dedication, rigor, and service meet curiosity and delight, and where the goal is to assist another person in the task of representing their self.

I sometimes joke that I get paid to have conversations all day, but it is true: I meet with a writer, and we have a conversation. We talk about the piece of writing, them, their process, their class, the world, philosophy, politics, poetry, whatever the conversation requires. But one thing that every conversation requires is engagement: I must bring my mind and my empathy to the table if I’m to be of any use to the writer. It is my duty to be attentive, and to ask genuine questions about their ideas and needs; not formulaic questions I’ve copied down from the latest management technique manual, but questions that arise from the content and form of their writing, and my own curiosity and concern about that content and the student.

A good tutoring session can empower a student to become a more critical thinker, and can give birth to a new philosopher, poet, or community organizer. A good tutoring session can be frustrating, yet yield sweeter and richer fruit for the author, as well as for the tutor. A good tutoring session can give a writer, every writer, wings.

I often hear students say: Oh, I'm not a writer; I hate to write. And I think: But you *are* a writer: you are writing every day, with every choice you make, and every sentence you utter.

I suppose if all you do is parrot your lines from tv shows and movies, then you are just performing someone else's script; but even that is a choice: you are still writing, you just aren't being very original. It can be safer and easier to perform what someone else has written – less risky than cultivating your own style and imagination. Besides, most schools have a habit of slapping your own style and imagination right out of you.

But you can reclaim that.

Some students come into the Writing Center asking to be “edited,” “fixed,” asking someone to make their paper “right.” And I wonder: What is right? Yes, there are standard conventions we employ – writing includes, after all, the idea of the desire to communicate to the outside world, and that requires consensus as to symbols, and a degree of skill with those symbols – but “right” seems to imply there is some absolute model of perfection. And I wonder: What is perfection?

Perfection is most certainly a relative concept. It is different for Virginia Woolf than it is for Ernest Hemingway, different for John Steinbeck than it is for Lemony Snicket, different for Jane Austen than it is for Toni Morrison. And it follows that one teacher's idea of perfection might be another's idea of nightmare. Just because some folks want it one way doesn't mean it works for everyone, or anyone, else.

Ultimately, one must rely on one's own inner ideals, and these can be hard to establish, let alone achieve. From early on, our ideas are shaped and judged for us. And most of the definitive right and wrong stuff, especially when it comes to what is and isn't “acceptable” in writing, stems from cultural biases and models.

The cultural model we're working with is Hierarchical, with a Patriarchal bias. And more specifically, we're deep in American Standard. This gives us things like Rational Thought being valued over Emotional Content, Logic over Intuition, Active Voice over Passive Voice, and Thesis-Driven papers: Take a Stand, get straight to the Point and PROVE it; Don't Pull Out, don't doubt yourself, do as you're told, and don't dawdle along the way to look at the flowers, or the bees...

This model also determines the general practices of our academic institutions: the experts hand information down to the students whom they are watching and assessing, and from whom they want little argument. In this model, teachers dictate and Show You How, especially How To Write. They often write for you, in blaring red across all of your precious and hard-wrought words, showing you how it **SHOULD** be done, how they want it.

And perhaps over time it becomes easier to let someone else make these determinations; you might even get the knack of writing just the way they want you to. Many students try writing the way they think their professors want, and get sick of it and bored, even resentful, of the whole process. Who wouldn't? These students are no longer writing for themselves, they are no longer thinking for themselves; their hearts are no longer in it. Of course, it is challenging when your grade or your evaluation, your movement forward, depends on someone who has power over you (again with the hierarchy), but ultimately, it is your own life, and it is important that you discover what is true and right for you.

I get uncomfortable if someone wants to abdicate all their authority to me. I prefer a more Humanistic experience, one that is more circular, where there is sharing of knowledge, ideas, and opinions. It is when things get mixed together that newness flourishes, and we already have enough of the mass-produced monocrop business.

I am not a tutor so I can show someone the "right" way to write; I am a tutor because I believe in each person's radical, creative, and thinking self. I am there to share with them whatever I have learned about writing and reading, thinking, even about grammatical mechanicals; and I am there to kindle each writer's own abilities and own voice. And though a tutoring session focuses on the work of the writer, as a tutor I am often the beneficiary of the exchange.

When a writer invites me into conversation, I enter with my whole being engaged, curious, attentive, and open to possibility, and we embark on a journey. Together we work to excavate their ideas, to uncover their perspectives, to enhance their skills; together we unravel the content before us and their process. Together we explore philosophies. Together we spark and create new planets for both of us to play on.

It would not serve my ego to know that a student merely left a tutoring session with a paper I'd "perfected" for them from some vision I have of perfection, which very likely ascribes to someone else's vision of perfection.

What does serve my ego is to see a light go on in a writer's face, a sense of empowerment rising up in them. When a writer leaves a session a few grammar tips richer and glowing with the realization that they have more to say than they'd thought, I feel I've done my job. Over time, with practice, and a little bit of encouragement, that writer will become able to tutor their own writing, and that's when our conversation, and their writing, will deepen.

Out of all the billions of people on earth, no two are alike. As our culture heads deeper into conformity and quotas and standardized tests, our uniqueness is more threatened than ever. Being a writing tutor is one way I connect with the humanity and uniqueness of people, and help them to connect with the humanity and uniqueness of themselves.

I encourage each writer to learn as much as they can, to think for themselves, then speak with their own authority, and craft their written words with the style and flourish their own imagination deserves.

And I encourage us all to practice being tutors: genuinely engage in conversations, listen and attend to each other, ask questions, seek out deeper content, and cultivate each other's voices.

So go ahead, open your windows, open your doors, and experience the world in a radical state.



Getting Started

Wendy McCutchen



You are a blender
Strung out
on an oblong piece of wind-swept August sky.
Choose a muted television,
and a nice cup of the elusive.
A Death Metal paradox of distraction
could single you
out.

Moseying thoughts ease in without getting snagged;
a deadline invites you into its mouth
As you are rocked by a cello interaction.
Process all of your nerve-rackings.
Roll inspiration into paper,
Light one end and puff frantically.
Unravel the taste of pressure
and get closer to its center-scented Creation.
Smoke sneaks out from the spaces between the spaces.



The Procrastination Station

Theodora Ranelli



When I'm supposed to be writing I clean my apartment, take my clothes to the laundry, get organized, make lists, do the dishes. I would never do a dish unless I had to write.

- Fran Lebowitz¹

This essay comes out of my own procrastination. I have lists of to-dos floating around in my brain. When I start writing, it is hard to get to the place where I can even make an outline.

So you have to write a paper. How do you get inside your head and make it flow? How do you translate your thoughts to the page? What if you don't want to get started at all? Some people, including myself, are worried about what will happen once they turn in the paper. Some people, including myself, are worried that they're not enough of an expert to write on certain topics.

Timothy Pychyl, a guy who does research on procrastination, says that telling a procrastinator to "just do it" is like telling a depressed person to "just get over it." Most procrastination is a form of resistance. But what does that mean?

"What is really going on here?" I ask myself when I get stuck. Hey, with writing, there are usually some kinds of demons afoot. These demons come in all sorts: You were assigned an essay about your mother and you didn't have the greatest relationship with her; you have to write about noxious weeds which is something that's really personal to you and you don't know how to organize it in an academic manner; or you have to write about the rise of Burger King and you really do not care. Or maybe you weren't engaged in the class or had to miss a lot due to some reasons out of your control. Or maybe reasons out of your control are eating at the page.

1. qtd. in Klausner, Henriette Anne. *Writing on Both Sides of the Brain: Breakthrough Techniques for People Who Write*. New York: HarperOne, 1987. n.pg.

In the ideal world, I would process everything before I write about it. But class deadlines really don't center around processing time. So how does one balance a deadline and self-care? Read on.

There have been periods in my life of prolific writing and deep revising. And there have been times when I have been almost catatonic, too rocked by issues of this world to write anything. Believe me, all the varieties of writer's block, I got 'em. And most writers do, at some point. It's important to acknowledge procrastination instead of to condemn it. Condemning it makes procrastination worse.

There are some strategies for working around procrastination. Timothy Pynchyl suggests structured procrastination. This can work well when your due date is not 24 hours later. Structured procrastination happens when someone like me has this big list of things to do and conveniently ignores some of the most urgent ones, but presses on with some other tasks that are low-priority. That'd be turning in a stellar CD sample for a performing arts company two months before the deadline, while saying that you'll do your paper later. It's (eventually) win-win. The trick to keeping structured procrastination alive is the knowledge that eventually, maybe someday, probably soon, you'll work on that thing you're putting off.

Brainstorming is also a good technique when you're stuck. I know that, if you've read *Inkwell* before, you're probably sick of hearing about brainstorming. But my mom is right when she says, "You'll feel better when you at least make a list." I like the free-association technique where I put one word on my paper that reminds me of my project and then branch out from there. It gets me thinking and often leads to something larger.

Another way to start is to journal. One of my favorite kinds of journaling is to write a letter to someone. I had a writing mentor a few years ago to whom I wrote letters, often several times a day. She ended up returning my letters so that I could create a project. I still write her many letters, but I keep copies of them in my journal. It's a good brainstorming exercise. It's also a way to process ideas that I am sending out into the world. What my mentor doesn't know is that I have a bunch of unsent letters written to her that I use for writing prompts. The lesson of her sending those letters back isn't lost – ideas seem to come in an easier manner when it's informal writing. And we all

have to trust our voice to carry us through at all times. Voice doesn't have to be written. It's good to talk some of this stuff out with a friend (or a shrink) (or a tutor in the Writing Center).

So go ahead and try it. Put "Dear Whoever" on the top of your paper and go.

It is also important to break things into small, manageable chunks. They say the brain works in forty-five minute cycles, so take a fifteen-minute break after every forty-five minutes. Work to break your task into bite-sized bits. Try busting off a chunk of the assignment at a time and working from there. It is also good to reward yourself as you are working with tea or something like that. Also, this may sound weird, but sometimes while we are working we forget to get up and go to the bathroom when nature calls, eat when we are hungry, or drink when we are thirsty. Please do these things.

On the opposite side, there's also the Shit-Or-Get-Off-The-Pot approach, the Power-Through: it's the fire under your butt. This approach is great, but requires plenty of skill and stamina. It involves writing for three hours straight, or from the afternoon until the birds are chirping in the morning, focusing all your energy on the task.

At the very end of the day (or the deadline I don't meet), some parts of procrastination are about not getting on with life itself. I can break things into small chunks and write letters till the cows come home, but if I really don't want to move on or get anything accomplished, that's a different story. I'm stuck in a time warp.

Eh, procrastination. It's something to reclaim, to work around, and yes, an impetus to get things done. However you get the thing done, though, is up to you. But don't forget to thank procrastination for your clean kitchen.



Getting a “Sense” of Writing

Derek Ryan Hain



You will write differently with different technologies. Try it. With a pencil, you may be careless. You may write quickly, because you can just as quickly erase and correct errors with an eraser and a few more quick strokes. Pencils are good for “drafting” or “brainstorming,” because they make impermanent lines on paper; drafts and brainstorming are intended to be impermanent.

A pen, however, has some limitations, relative to a pencil. Pen marks cannot be erased. (Erasable ink is ugly and not taken seriously by serious writers.) A smoothly gliding pen, a consistent line of ink, a finely penned sentence, these are fine things. But you must get them right the first time. If you have strong, aesthetically pleasing handwriting, a page of handwritten ink can look as immutable as a printed page. But, for some, a messy, angry page of inked scribbles, cross-outs, and marginal comments is more satisfying than either a polished document or an oft-erased (but well-composed) page of pencil.

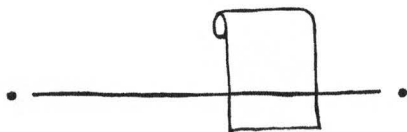
The typewriter is an increasingly rare tool for writing. I recommend it highly. You must attack its keys in a way that computer keyboards (especially the ultra-thin Mac keywafer) do not even approximate. A helpful analogy: a typewriter is to a keyboard as a piano is to an electronic keyboard. In one instance, you are faced with a heavy, clunking piece of machinery; in the other, you are faced with a piece of technology that wants to be quiet, unobtrusive, and mysterious (even to you) in its methods. A typewriter inks a page with hammers, a computer does not.

Nonetheless, computers are certainly handy. If you don’t mind immersing yourself in the world of operating systems and RGB for a while, a simple word processor can do wonders with words. By no

other manner can you make or unmake a word so quickly as you can with a computer. By no other means can you so quickly copy and paste, edit and publish, insert obscure characters and format. A computer is an efficient writing technology, and with the advent of the internet, a computer makes it easy to type, chat, watch videos, and listen to music all at the same time. Such an experience is wholly different than, say, William Blake's ideal vision of the writer, sitting in a room large enough for only a desk, and accompanied only by an angelic muse; also different from Marcel Proust's favorite writing habitat, a padded room.

I have not listed all the technologies for writing. For instance, you might enjoy dictating your words. Most likely, a dictated text will be riddled with stutters and clumsy sentence constructions, but you may be more frank (and, by extension, more truthful) in speech than you are in writing. Once you have your spoken words on paper, you can easily edit the clumsier parts. You might also compose on a hand-held device, such as a 9-key cellular phone. But you shouldn't. Text messages use T9 "predictive text technology," which is the technological equivalent of someone finishing not just every sentence for you, but every word. So you see: cell phones are not only rude to bystanders, but to users as well.

Finally, here is some good advice: Disable auto-spell-check (the squiggly red lines) if you're using a word processor. Instead, learn to pay attention to the words you write. When you're uncertain of a spelling, be patient enough to look the word up in a good dictionary. If you let MS Word quickly correct your work, you're less likely to learn anything from your mistake. When you page through a real, fat dictionary, you have time to think about your error and to think of possible spellings. You may even encounter new or related words that you weren't looking for. This is good: when you do this, you're beginning to pay attention to the differences between what you know and what others know. That's how you learn, and that's how you learn to be a good writer regardless of the technology you use.



How to NOT Give up Writing

David Hunter



I was always frustrated with writing. That really bothered me because I wanted to be a writer. I wanted to express my good ideas, but it wasn't happening with writing. I hated high school, so I avoided writing for the three years I spent there. In community college, I struggled through essays. I passed English Composition I and tested out of English Composition II, but I was yet to be satisfied with anything I wrote. The quarter before I graduated I was in an honors-level class. I had to write a research paper. A couple of days after I handed it in, my professor asked me if I knew how to write a college-level essay. I didn't know if I did, but judging by his question, I figured I didn't. He sighed and gave me a B-.

Outside of school, I was done with college-level essays. I worked on some fiction that I always imagined writing. It was hard at first. I never wanted to write. I was always putting it off. I had to force myself to start and I spent months writing before I went back to reread. It all sucked. I started over and rewrote the first 70 pages of the novel. I reread it again, and it still sucked. My writing sucked.

When I came back to school at Evergreen, I wanted to give writing another shot. I was excited and intrigued by the Writing Center. I stopped by a couple of times and asked some broad questions about writing, hoping I would find the key to writing well. I was given a copy of *Inkwell*, which I read, also looking for this key.

Now, a couple of years later, I'm excited to write my own article for *Inkwell*. When I was thinking about what to write, I remembered the frustrations I had with writing, and the hopes I had placed on *Inkwell*. I thought about helpful writing techniques I could share. I considered writing about basic essay structure. Ironically, I got stuck. I couldn't

finish that article. I couldn't figure out how to explain what helped me get comfortable with writing.

I was looking through the *Inkwell* I was given on my first visit to the Writing Center, but I couldn't really find any articles telling me exactly how to write. What the articles *did* show me is that everyone has a different way of taking ideas out of their head and putting them on paper. You need to discover what steps get your ideas out. It takes a bit of self-reflection. I realized that writing is a process, and so is learning to write.

Writing doesn't usually look presentable until late in the game. It isn't fair to judge a piece of writing without taking into account what stage it is at. Each step has its place.

Writing starts before you even sit down to write. Coming up with ideas, researching, studying, and just plain thinking: these are all part of prewriting. Even with great ideas and research, I feel I can't sit down to write a draft. Some people find it helpful to simply start writing; I usually need to organize ideas and see how to put them together. After that, I can finally produce a draft. This can be the most embarrassing part, because it looks like it is trying to be writing, but isn't developed yet. It is a first draft. I can let it look bad. I can take risks.

An unrefined first draft is not a reflection on me as a writer. This draft can be revised. I can organize these ideas and make them clear. Would they make sense to someone else? Do these ideas flow like a mixtape? When I get these ideas lined up, then I can work on the words. Do these words express my ideas? I hang out here. I work on it all I want. Draw in the details, tighten up the corners. Then I can do all that spell-checking and grammar stuff. I don't even let myself do that until I think I am done. Proofreading, grammar, and checking spelling is important, but not while I'm still working on ideas or tuning my words.

I struggled before because I was giving up writing when I wasn't practiced enough. It was just like when I was a kid and wanted to learn to play the electric guitar. I couldn't play any Def Leppard songs after a month, so I gave up. I didn't understand that gaining skill requires a continuous learning process. I was giving up in the middle, when it is okay for my writing to still be developing.

Applying a process to my writing changed the way I looked at it. For my college papers, I concentrated more on organizing the ideas, and that helped me to recognize the use of introductory paragraphs, theses, and conclusions – all things that used to make me feel uncomfortable. For my novel, I needed to shape what writing I had already put down. The ideas were there and fine, but the wording could be arranged to sound better.

Learning to write is hard to explain. But by understanding the process involved, I could figure out where I needed to grow and what parts of my writing weren't working for me. I could focus on growing strong where I felt weak. If I could make small parts of my writing better, overall I'd become a better writer.

Even now, having written quite a few pieces I am very proud of, it is hard for me to believe I am a writer. Sometimes I will get stuck on a piece, like I did on the original version of this article. It is times like those I revert back to the idea that I can't write. I get through because I believe that everyone is a writer, and I am no exception.



Digital Mutiny

Jais Brohinsky



Brian stared at the cursor blinking in the corner of his word document. This essay, Dr. Menken had made clear while wagging a finger at the class, was the most important of fall quarter. Brian knew he needed something good, but was unsure how to start. After reviewing some notes, he pecked his name and date at the top of the page. Brian typed on, slowly finding his rhythm, and soon words danced across the screen.

Upon completing his first paragraph, Brian remembered Dr. Menken's demand that the last sentence state the thesis, so Brian went back to rewrite. As he deleted his words, though, his left index finger began to twitch and shake, then flail like an eel out of water until it jerked away from his palm. The finger severed cleanly at the knuckle, crawled across the keyboard, and propped itself up against the computer screen.

Brian stared as his finger transformed into a three-inch miniature of Dr. Menken with savage teeth, red eyes, and a nose as long as its face was wide. The finger-monster spat as it read Brian's paragraph in a phlegmy voice, and as the creature drawled, Brian's other fingers began to twitch and flail, and one by one they crawled away from his hands.

Like plump worms, Brian's thumbs inched toward each other and twisted into a lumpy version of his third grade teacher, Mrs. Bartlebough. His right pinky hiccupped and shivered until it resembled Mr. Pecklish, Brian's high school English instructor. The other pinky, two ring fingers, and the remaining index spasmed into his current professors just as his middle fingers sprung straight up, one as his mother and the other, Ernest Hemingway.

Dr. Menken leapt onto the delete key and stomped it repeatedly. Brian's mother took one glance at the vanishing work and marched to the edge of his desk, demanding to know what he meant by the fetishization of commodities and threatening to wash his mouth out with soap if he didn't come clean. In

the middle of the scolding, Ernest crapped into his hand and hurled his shit at the computer screen. As the splatter slid down the monitor, the digits began to sing. Fat Mrs. Bartlebough yodeled about proper punctuation in a high falsetto while plopping comma after comma between Brian's words. Mr. Pecklish scrambled behind Mrs. Bartlebough, humming as he changed her commas into periods, semicolons, and the occasional em dash. The four professors skipped arm in arm, adding words here, deleting others there, and caroling joyfully as sentences rose and fell beneath their frolicking stampede.

As Brian watched the digits rip apart and rearrange his writing, he tried to speak, but his voice slipped from him like his fingers from his hands. He pawed the keyboard with his palms, mashing buttons with the stumps, but the finger-monsters quickly edited his mess. Like some mutinous choir disposed of their conductor, the digits sang the words as they typed their paper across Brian's screen.

"Stop!" Brian tried to scream but couldn't, and, as if aware of the failed effort, Mr. Pecklish stuck out his tongue and cackled.

Brian, forgetting his fingerlessness, tried to flick at Mr. Pecklish, only to be laughed at even harder by the finger-instructor. However, as Brian imagined his finger flicking, one of the professors doubled over and then sprung straight up, screaming into the air. At the sound of the professor's cry, the other fingers stopped singing and scurried to catch their falling comrade. Despite watching his renegade digits run across the keyboard, Brian suddenly felt as if they were still attached to his palms. He imagined his hands balling into fists, and as he did, the finger-monsters all bent in half, including the still-falling professor, who crashed into his three colleagues.

"Brian – " Mrs. Bartlebough admonished, hopping forward with the full force of her weight and authority.

Brian gave her no chance to finish. With a howl Mrs. Bartlebough ripped apart, the thumbs unraveling and crawling like scolded puppies back into place on Brian's palms.

"That," his mother warned, trembling slightly, "is no way to behave. After all, we are trying to help!"

The professors cheered support, and Hemingway trumpeted a jolly fart conveying his agreement. Only Dr. Menken stood aside in silence.

"Now, Brian," his mother said once the hurrahs subsided, "it's time to stop this nonsense and return Mrs. Bartlebough to us."

"Now, Mom," Brian retorted, surprised to find his words again. "it *is* time to stop this nonsense; however, it's not Mrs. Bartlebough who'll be returned to you, but my fingers to my hand!"

And with a yelp, the professors, Pecklish, and Brian's finger-mother leapt back into place on Brian's palm. His right hand complete, Brian scooped Hemingway up and shoved him back into his knuckle, waving his arm to dispel Ernest's flatulence.

"That's right, kid," Dr. Menken smirked, hopping around the keyboard spitting, deleting, and typing. "Drop the extra baggage. Now keep quiet while I finish this paper. We both know you need something decent."

"Actually," Brian's voice still sounded a little funny in his mouth, "I've been thinking –"

"That's good." The deranged digit didn't look up. "I told you I'd have you thinking for yourself by the time you left my class."

"I'm glad we agree," Brian said as he grabbed Dr. Menken. He turned the squirming finger-monster upside down and jammed its head into the delete key. When the last of the co-opted paper vanished, Dr. Menken was once again a regular left index finger.

Brian began his paper anew, slowly finding his rhythm, and though he heard whispers about theses and punctuation, they were never more than textures, harmonies within his orchestration, and soon Brian's words danced across his screen again.



Ottawa via 101

Richard Taggesell



I'm going to tell you how to get to Ottawa today, and make yourself look good. Stick with me, kid, and you'll learn something. It's all about planning, structure, and the fine art of faking it.

First, what is structure? It is the internal logic of an essay, and without it, you're sunk. Why? Because it is what guides the reader through your work. Like everyone and their freakin' mother in this publication will tell you, writing is a journey. And if writing is a journey, structure is your map. Without it, the reader can become lost in your words, which can be a wonderful thing, but can be detrimental to your goal. This brings up the question of what *is* your goal. Ideally, it is communication. Communication is the goal of writing. Now writing can serve other goals, easily, but without the communication portion, you're sunk. You just stayed up all night, pounding back the coffee, the booze, the whatever, for no good reason beyond killing a tree or three. And let me tell you, the more trees you kill, the more you need structure.

Wha? Yeah. The bigger the paper you are writing, the more you need to help your poor reader through your thought process. For example, if you are writing a sentence, you don't need to say, "In this sentence, I'm going to discuss 'structure in a sentence.'" However, if that sentence is seventy pages long, your reader is going to be lost without some guidance.

So you're sold on the idea of using a deliberate structure in your paper. Or at least you've gotten a barely legible scrawl from your faculty that you need more structure, and you want that credit, so here you are, reading this essay. Here's the hard part: actually finding some structure. You've got a few tools at your disposal. You can write a five paragraph theme (intro, thesis, support, support, support, conclusion, including

pithy restatement of your thesis), which is fine if you don't mind writing an essay whose form came about roughly three thousand years ago (I'm not exaggerating). You can find a logical order for your essay, and this is a little trickier, because there is no real answer for where to find that logic.

You can pick one of the old standbys, and if it's ten o'clock at night, and you need a paper by nine in the morning, I highly encourage this. They're the ones like spatial (good for describing things – left to right, up to down, clockwise – for example: if you were describing the changes made to a shopping mall and how that affects the consumers, making them long to purchase useless crap), chronological (excellent for history: begin at the beginning and end at the end), comparison (combined with one of the others, for example: chronological and comparison would be France compared with Spain in 1830, then France compared with Spain in 1945), and degree (big to little, unimportant to important – good for ideas and other abstractions).

But these are certainly not the only structures out there. Any logic works. I personally would love to see an essay arranged by the spectrum red to orange to yellow and so forth, creating the good ol' ROYGBIV. It doesn't really matter. What you need to remember though, is your poor reader. Structure is order, and order is what makes sense. Let's say you're writing an essay on how to drive a car. Please start with how to turn it on (and when you talk about turning, you need to talk first about how to signal, not after).

But at the same time, keep your writing to the point: don't tell me how pushing down the little knobby thing causes a piece of metal to touch another piece of metal that sends a little baby bit of electricity to another piece of metal. Remember your goal: to communicate with your reader, and in this case the information being communicated is how to drive a car, not how to rewire a turn signal.

Is this making sense to you? Let's work with the driving analogy, pull back the lens a bit. As I snidely pointed out at the beginning, the essay is a journey, and the structure is your map. It doesn't matter where you start, and it doesn't matter where you stop. If you are starting in Olympia and you want to go to California, you can take 101, or you can

take I-5, or you can take a hundred little windy paths, but you probably can't get there through Ottawa. For example, let's return to driving: let's say you went for a drive: you can look at a map and trace your route ahead of time, carefully planning where you're going to take your breaks and get gas (outlining would be the writing equivalent), or you can just drive, and when someone asks you why you're in Ottawa, you can say that this is where you meant to go all along (this would be freewriting, and then writing an introduction at the end of the writing process). So, to follow the analogy, structure is the fine art of proving you meant to be in Ottawa all along.

And the great part about writing is that you give the reader the map and the journey at the same time, so no one ever need know that you're full of it and just totally made up the structure and faked the start of the paper so that it looks like you planned it all the time. A real example? I inserted the line about everyone and their mothers and the essay as a journey at the beginning, right before writing this paragraph. So fake it and enjoy, or plan it and be smug, but, for the love of Mike, do it.



Bubbles and Tabletops

Andrew Olmsted



On the tabletop simmers a puddle of a brainstorm wet with ghost-fluid.
Look closer. Touch.
A gentle professor blows bubbles. She hands you a wand.
What do you want to say?

The writer puts a book, closed, on the kitchen tabletop –
opens the lid, twisting.
She raises the wand to her mouth,
the passage to her voice.

Another writer rips paper places pieces on the tabletop.

Feel, writer, as you blow a cascade of colored bubbles into the world.
Watch some stick and line up on the tabletop.

Within bubble film, every shade. Image into imagery.
You see your angles and curves. You ask another writer what she sees.

A self-contained object on a flat surface. A word floats. A paper floats.
A voice floats.

Breath and echoes of words, reverberating sounds
in a larger space, unspecialized and welcoming.
An interior space, a clean walk-in nook.
What happened to the concrete? Where is the weatherman?

Window-dark and electric ceiling bulb-light
track bubbles and reflect on Formica surfaces.
At noon on a spring day, the entire bubble shines.

Spilt bubble juice next to an overturned inkwell. We share our tabletop.
This is our mess.

Where our words can rest and ask questions about themselves,
where your bubble-wand is wet.

Smear and wipe it with paper and cloth. Sing as you clean.
Remember how to spill when you press your palms on the tabletop and
stand.

Somebody turned a carton of letters on its head.
Each fell and the carton overflowed.
What will you do?

What are you concocting? What are you stirring? What are you
cooking? What are you serving? How does it taste?
It's not ready. It tastes like soap. It's verbing. It's steeping.

A line of poetry measured by breath. String the bubbles together.

An unpopped bubble:
each draft hovers until
it settles atop the Formica.

How can your hands and breath pool resources?

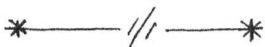
Somebody has left scissors on the tabletop – school-scissors. Lift them.
Set your wand back in the bubble-well on the tabletop.

You're ready to pop and breathe, ready to deflate and inflate again.



What My Teacher Never Told Me About Citation

Bridget Flanagan



As I reach the end of my undergraduate career, I thought I'd share some of the wisdom that I *didn't* learn from my teachers and professors about citation. One of the most mystifying (and miff-tifying) parts of practical learning is citation. The whole process seems to be made intentionally inaccessible for the average student by "the establishment" of academia. For instance, did anybody tell *you* that it's not plagiarism if you forget to include a hanging indent, or misplace a comma in your bibliography? Now I'm not advocating sloppy work, but it seems like educators miss the point when teaching the mystical art of citation.

It's ironic to me that citation, as a device for aiding in academic discourse, is so absolutely convoluted and obtuse. I digress; the real point of citation is to help the reader understand what you are writing about, and where you got it from. That's it. So here's an attempt to make something that's commonly thought of as incredibly frustrating into a useful tool.

What is Plagiarism?

Most teachers take the "abstinence only" approach to teaching about plagiarism: they'll tell you to avoid it, but not what it is. At the Writing Center, we advocate full awareness of plagiary, and here's the definition:

Failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas.

Failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks.

Failing to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words.

(See Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference* 6th edition, page 359.)

What is Citation?

Citation is just a way to show where you borrowed ideas from. These ideas can be paraphrased by putting them into your own words, or quoted directly from the original author. The real point here is to

allow your readers to trace the ideas back to the original source so they can learn what you've learned from the author. Those in the biz call this "aiding in academic discourse," and we call it "giving credit where credit is due." Citing also helps us, the eggheads-in-training (aka the students), prove our learning and legitimize our new and exciting ideas to stodgy old professors who won't just "take your word for it."

Citation comes in as many styles as there are fish in the sea, but the most commonly used are Modern Language Association (MLA), American Psychological Association (APA), and Chicago Style. These styles are usually assigned, but if you're given the choice, it's a good idea to select a style based on the area of study for which you're writing. For instance, if you're writing a treatise on abnormal psychology, you'll probably want to use APA, but if you're doing a literary comparison of postmodern and neo-futurist dystopias, MLA will probably be better equipped to serve your citation needs.

Aside from the different styles, citation has two forms with distinct roles in a piece of writing: in-text and end citation.

In-text citation

In-text citation is different for every style:

MLA

With MLA, generally you'll want simply to put the author's name and the page number inside parentheses, like so (Flanagan 1). Of course there will be variations. For instance, if you don't have the author's name, you will use the title ("What My Teacher Never Told Me About Citation" 1), or if it's an organization's publication, such as the Writing Center's fabulous yearly *Inkwell*, you would use the organization's name (Evergreen Writing Center 32).

APA

APA in-text citation is very similar to that of MLA, except that you'll want to put the year of publication in addition to the author's name and page number (Flanagan, 2009, p. 1). For in-depth information on MLA and APA citation, you'll want to read the article, "Why We Cite" in last year's *Inkwell* (Radelich & Flanagan, 2008, pp. 71-83).

Chicago Style

Chicago Style is not used heavily anymore at Evergreen, but it used to be a mainstay of the social sciences. I had to use Chicago for my U.S. history class, and I'd spend two hours on my paper and twice as much working on my foot and endnotes. Needless to say, the hours of sleep that I lost on this style of citation give license to my editorial decision to relegate Chicago to the place of "(dis)honorable mention." However, I've included an example of Chicago footnotes as per the request of world-renowned social scientist Christopher Rotondo, who says, "I love Chicago style; I like to put it in my boots to feel that citation sensation between my toes."¹

End Citation

End citation is pretty formulaic in almost every style. The common names for this form of citation are: bibliography, reference page, works cited, endnotes, etc. The biggest hang-up with end citation is that people don't understand the basic formula and therefore can't alter it for the different kinds of sources they need to cite.

To keep it simple, I'm going to give an example of a substitution method in MLA style. This way, you can use a basic formula, but substitute different information as needed.

This is an example of the standard "one book, one author" works cited entry:

Gouda, Brie. *Blue, Bleu, Blew, and Blue: A Lactatious Anthology of Dairy Farming Anecdotes Gone Wrong*. Milwaukee: Roquefort Printing, 2000.

But, what if this book is a collection of essays, and you've only used one of the essays? For this, you would take the citation you have and plug in the title of the essay as well:

Gouda, Brie. "Cultured Comparisons: Probiotic Bacteria in Yogurt." *Blue, Bleu, Blew, and Blue: A Lactatious Anthology of Dairy Farming Anecdotes Gone Wrong*. Milwaukee: Roquefort Printing, 2000.

1. Christopher V. Rotondo, in discussion with the author, March 2009.

But, what if this essay, which is part of an anthology, was found on a website? You'll take the citation you have (as above) and plug in the date you saw the article on the web, and the URL:

Gouda, Brie. "Cultured Comparisons: Probiotic Bacteria in Yogurt." *Blue, Bleu, Blew, and Blue: A Lactatious Anthology of Dairy Farming Anecdotes Gone Wrong*. Milwaukee: Roquefort Printing, 2000. 19 February 2009 <<http://www.cheesus.org>>.

Even though the citation will be slightly different for APA or Chicago, the same principle of modifying the reference by substituting applicable information applies. By learning a few basic entry types for works cited pages, you will be able to mix and match so that your citation looks shiny and perfect, just like mine.

And there are plenty of resources both in books and on the web, notably Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*, 6th edition, and website <<http://www.dianahacker.com>>; also the Purdue Online Writing Lab website, <<http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu>>.

Final Thoughts

The last thing that I've learned is this: Don't get hung up on the technical aspects of citation; just do your thing and make sure you support your arguments and give yourself plenty of source material for analysis. As long as you give credit, you're usually in the clear.



Feedback From First Grade

Sandra Yannonne



I have an artifact from my childhood that I treasure: a little blue book with wide-lined pages. My first grade teacher, Mrs. Bassett, wrote my name, Sandy Y, in big black letters on the front cover and gave it to me. I penned my first stories in my own handwriting in that book, and I am particularly grateful for the lessons it has taught me all these years later about the significance of teacher feedback.

At the end of one of my stories, “The Strange Thing from Mars,” Mrs. Bassett wrote, “Great job, Sandy! I’d like to know more about how the boy felt when he found this strange thing. What did the strange thing look like?” Mrs. Bassett’s comments obviously made an impression on me; all I have to do is turn a few pages ahead and read one of my next stories.

“The Strange Thing from Jupiter” has a predictable familiarity to it, with a few exceptions. In this story, you can see where I made an effort to incorporate Mrs. Bassett’s feedback from the Mars story. Clearly, Mrs. Bassett’s comments invited me to dip deeper into my imagination’s well and trust that I could develop a story further.

Mrs. Bassett was the first in a long line of teachers whose feedback respectfully encouraged me in my process, and the long-term effects of such thoughtful reinforcement cultivated a Ph.D. in poetry, a gratifying publishing career, and most importantly, a rewarding faculty position directing Evergreen’s Writing Center.

In graduate school, I read an article that also made a lasting impression on how I approach commenting on students’ writing. I now share this article with students who take my spring quarter class, *Cultivating Voice: A Writing Tutor’s Craft*. Nancy Sommers’ “Responding to Student Writing” illuminates a study she conducted regarding faculty comments on student

papers. The findings reveal the confusion that well-intentioned faculty can inflict on student writers when faculty offer feedback that is inconsistent with their students' writing process. Sommers identifies that when "[the] processes of revising, editing, and proofreading are collapsed and reduced to a single trivial activity. . . the students' misunderstanding of the revision process as a rewording activity is reinforced by their teachers' comments" (151). In a single paper, a student writer can recover from the potential confusion; over time and as the stakes get higher, however, the accumulation of these experiences tends to dishearten, instead of empower, a writer. Sommers' findings echo what Evergreen writers have shared with me and other Writing Center staff.

Sommers also notes that this awkward textual exchange between writer and teacher is not indicative of a teacher's desire to inflict harm on the writer, but instead a reflection of the faculty's lack of effective training in "the process of reading a student text for meaning or in offering commentary to motivate revision" (154). At Evergreen, faculty members clearly value the significance of using writing as a mode of inquiry: each year faculty report assigning writing in almost every program on campus. And while some faculty are amazingly adept at commenting on students' work, what we in the Writing Center hear from students and witness in their papers is that faculty comments often discourage students from continuing to pursue what they want to say.

As a student, how can you change this dynamic? Poet, essayist, and political activist Muriel Rukeyser suggests that "we need to know our resources and ourselves" (Rukeyser 8). A powerful resource designed to lend support to your authority as a writer is a document I've asked my students to include with each piece of writing they share with me or their peers. The Author's Note will take you ten minutes to write, but in that ten minutes, you can request feedback appropriate to the current stage of your writing process and redirect faculty from ineffective commenting practices.

The three components to the Author's Note include:

A history of the draft, including how you arrived at your ideas, what stage of the writing process you currently are in, and how your draft has changed, if this is a revision of a previous draft;

An identification of the draft's current strengths, so you can acknowledge your best practices and hopefully learn to repeat these;

An acknowledgement of areas where you believe you can improve, including questions you have for your reader. These questions will assure that you receive at least some feedback that addresses your current concerns.

If you find the third section difficult to write, you might try something Keith Hjortshoj, Director of Writing in the Majors at Cornell University, once shared with me: Imagine you are turning in your paper. Your faculty asks you to consider what you might do to your draft if you had another day to revise and edit. Now take these answers and transform them into questions for your reader.

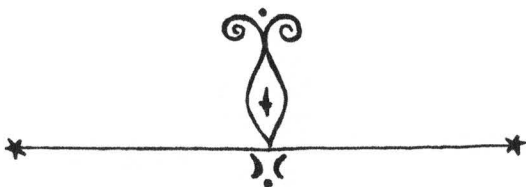
In the years since I've introduced the Author's Note to students, I've never heard a report of a faculty member being upset with a student for including this additional reflection. In fact, students often have commented that they felt the Author's Note improved their chances of a stronger evaluation since the presence of the Note suggested a student's deeper engagement with critical thinking.

I'm imagining now how different my strange stories in first grade might have been if I had been encouraged to share even briefly how I came up with these ideas. I'd not only have the story as an artifact, but I'd also have a portal, a window into how a precocious seven-year-old girl in Bloomfield, Connecticut in 1971 began to understand the development of her imagination. Alongside Mrs. Bassett's comments printed in large letters in blue ink at the end of the story would be my comments, my voice, my ink, emerging, forging ahead to the future here at Evergreen.

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The Slacker's Guide to Writing Evals

Dana Oride



Ready, set, reflect?

I've always struggled with writing my evaluations, and while there are a wealth of resources available to help students with the process of reflection and revision, my issue is not about asking myself good questions, or about reflecting deeply, but just some sort of mental block around the enormity of the self-evaluation. I know that it's really important, that I might need to provide it to someone as some sort of evidence of my education, that it's my chance to capture and frame my education. I genuinely do believe that it's supposed to be empowering. I know and believe all of this, and yet for four years I wrote drafts of my evaluations and never really wrote an eval that I was satisfied with. I "filed" my drafts with the evaluations from my professors, or with my other work from the program, or somewhere else that I thought was clever; was thankful that I wasn't on top of my game enough to apply to grad school or a professional job (and thus actually need my transcript); and trained my creative energy on my school work.

When senior year came, I started thinking that a transcript would be a nice thing to have, and I suddenly had seven evaluations to write. Even though I had drafts of most of them (which ranged in tone from perfunctory to tortured to super analytical), it was a painful, painful process to write seven evaluations at once. But I learned things. In reading through the various drafts I had written, I realized that by my junior year I had actually cobbled together a process that worked pretty well for me, but this process could have been so much better if I was conscious of what I was doing at the time. I also learned that many, many other students shared similar blocks around writing evaluations, and that sharing my evaluation hang-ups could be useful to others.

Procrastination and Perfectionism

I'll talk more about perfectionism later, but procrastination and perfectionism have a particularly unhelpful way of reinforcing each other. There's always something more immediately satisfying to be done than writing your self-evaluation, especially if you think that you're not going to do a good enough job on it anyway. It's really easy to not write your eval when it's so wise and rewarding to get excited about your next program. Recognize these tendencies. Call them out. Now move on.

Time to Reflect

Yes, consciousness and empowerment can be about continual awareness and reflection, but it's not that easy. I need some distance, and the best thing I've done for myself is to give myself permission to take time. Here's the thing about Evergreen: you don't actually have to *submit* your final evaluation at the end of the quarter (unless otherwise specified by your professor). You need to submit your perfect, signed evaluations before you want your transcript to go out to grad schools or potential employers, but until that time comes, you can have your almost-perfect evals (or your as-good-as-they-can-be evals) sitting at the ready on your my.evergreen.edu account. By God, make sure you have your best draft saved on that my.evergreen account, especially if your filing system is anything like mine. Drafts on paper get lost. Flash drives get lost.

Pressure to Have Something Really Really Good Because You Know it's Really Really Important

Don't. Don't feel the need to write something transcript-worthy, especially not during week ten, when you might be finishing an actual academic project, and trying to make your academic content as good as possible. Your project needs to be as good as it can possibly be by the end of the quarter so that the work can be reflected in your professor's evaluation of you. Your own self-evaluation, however, only needs to be *conference-worthy*.

I finally hit upon the idea of a conference-worthy evaluation during the final quarter of my junior year. By conference-worthy, I mean that none of this matters: length, things being too listy or bullet-pointed, things being out of focus or mis-focused, being too self-critical or critical of the program, talking too much about academic content

or how much you hated everybody else in the class or that one book you read. The first conference-worthy eval I wrote was four pages long and included a page about my father's recent death, my embrace of academics as emotional escapism (and subsequent surprise at the inadequacy of that escape), and the tension of traveling home for very personal reasons while studying that same home. In this far too personal page, I unraveled questions about where I belonged as a daughter, as a native scholar interested in the institution of education, and as a person. It was far too navel-gazing for anything that I would want to present in my transcript, but it was honestly where I was at, and set the ground for a genuine, affirmative evaluation conference with my professor.

Yes, the whole thing was too long, too personal, had too many unanswered questions, and even had too much academic content. But it was obvious that I knew all of this when I handed it in, and my professor didn't waste time talking about any of these things. Instead, she affirmed strengths, pointed out themes that could be refined and used to frame the eval as a whole, and highlighted where my self-evaluation echoed and complicated things that she had written about in her evaluation of me.

I'm convinced that we had such a rich conversation because I wrote a "conference-worthy" eval instead of attempting to hand in a "transcript-worthy" eval. And I eventually did write my transcript-worthy eval. The page of writing I talked about earlier was eventually reduced down to, "Family obligations necessitated that I made four trips home during the course of this program," followed by a tighter discussion of ethnographic trauma and native scholars.

The conference-worthy eval works for me as a procrastinator and a perfectionist, because it forces me to do something very specific and have it done for a specific time. I know that it's not going to be the version that goes in my transcript, and I can be hopeful that what I write will actually provide a foundation for a really good conversation that I can use as I move towards that transcript-worthy eval. Writing the conference-worthy eval is also necessary because of what I risk losing if I don't: That moment.

My favorite evals go beyond simply presenting my education and somehow capture something essential – a moment in my development as a person, a photograph of something that would be impossible to draw from memory. I became more skilled in editing these photographs (learning, for example, to pay attention to tensions, to honor my authority in my experience), but first I had to learn to see the conference-worthy eval and the transcript-worthy eval as two completely different animals. I learned all of this pretty late in my academic career, but I hope that some of you are reading this a bit earlier and that you might be able to recognize your own process for writing evals.

So don't panic; let yourself take the moment, and let your writing go all over the place; you will revise it all later.



o, dear things.

Otis Pig



Please, see this thing
drifting outside your window.

i know

that your head hasn't grown so heavy

to keep you from looking up.

you stay indoors when it looks like rain,
but staying indoors is what brings clouds to cry.

clouds are bending backwards
just to be as beautiful as you.

so look at the things you cannot reach
& imagine building bridges

& build bridges.

•

please, see this thing

that bobs alone in the middle of the ocean:
all the hopes of a stranded sailor

cast back.
the hopes, they dream

of land & human hearts.

they hold their breaths when violent storms
thrust them into the dark.

& remind each other who they are
through holding hands & sign language.

the ocean spans seventy percent of the earth;
& all the hope in the world will fit

inside a single bottle.

•

please, see this thing

leaking from the fallen soldiers
you carry in your arms.

they meant to kill, but they didn't mean to die;

the holes in murderous hearts
now manifest.

with a world so small, & so much goddamn life,

we'll all have to share the same grave.

soon, our beliefs will seep
through the rosewood of our coffins –

splinter by splinter

– as birth.

•

please, see this thing

sprouting from some sacred soil
to grow into the greatest good;

maybe we'll get saved after all.

& if the good won't grow on it's own,
we'll build it as the biggest heart.

it's what we've learned to do as a people
when growing takes too long.

you can build love out of love,
to stand upon, or step inside

but to travel from one body to another
first it has to leave you.



Resources

Books



(available in the Writing Center, Library 2304)

Grammatical Mechanicals

The Deluxe Transitive Vampire, by Karen Elizabeth Gordon

The Least You Should Know About English,
by Paige Wilson & Teresa Ferster Glazier

Punctuation

Eats, Shoots & Leaves, by Lynne Truss

The Well-Tempered Sentence, by Karen Elizabeth Gordon

General Reference

A Writer's Reference, 6th Edition, by Diana Hacker

Elements of Style, 4th Edition, by Strunk & White

General Encouragement

Learning Outside the Lines: Two Ivy League Students with

Learning Disabilities and ADHD Give You the Tools,

by Jonathan Mooney & David Cole

Writing Down the Bones, by Natalie Goldberg

Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life, by Anne Lamott

On Writing Well: An Informal Guide to Writing Non-Fiction,

by William K. Zinsser

Becoming a Writer, by Dorothea Brande

Writing a Woman's Life, by Carolyn G. Heilbrun

What If? Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers,

by Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter

Snoopy's Guide to the Writing Life, edited by Barnaby Conrad

& Monte Schulz

Internet



Purdue: <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu>>

Diana Hacker: <<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc>>

Capitol Community College:

<<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar>>



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Printer.....	ABC Printing, Lacey WA

printed on Grays Harbor recycled paper,
set in Goudy Bookletter 1911,
Garamond Premier Pro,
& Koch-Antiqua Zier

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Thanks to
Sandra Yannone,
Director of the Evergreen Writing Center,
for cultivating the space, and providing guidance,
encouragement, and energy;
Shaun Johnson for giving birth to this wonderful vessel;
Mike at ABC Printing for being enthusiastic and conscientious;
Steven Hendricks for his contribution to book love;
San Francisco Bakery for hours of hospitality;
Joel for weeks of patient mentoring;
and especially
to
all former, current, and future tutors
and all writers everywhere



