Final Portfolio

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Self Evaluation

Where do I begin? As a writer, my biggest struggle may very well be knowing where to start, yet as soon as that spark ignites, the flow feels unbelievable. I can’t wrap my head around it. Words begin to take shape as my thoughts flood on to the page, I maneuver through memories in my head, and it gives me sanctity. From a young age, I felt interconnected with writing -- it’s always been my calling. Each summer, my mother would give me a notebook and since then, I haven’t stopped writing. I feel blessed. My soul excites every time I gain support from family and friends, encouraging me to take this passion and give my life purpose, meaning.

I write to remember my experiences. I write to show readers the way I view this world: colorful, loving, and at times, surprisingly metaphysical. Language is erotic. I mold sound and syntax to create a rhythmic sensation; creativity grabs hold of me, twisting the gears in the lock box known as my mind. There’s something about ink and the way it’s able to manipulate my secrets to pour out like silk. Give me pandemonium, I’ll sell you poetry from the tip of my tongue. Show me gold, I’ll melt it to match the thoughts that drown me. I’m obsessed. I work with words, it’s my own personal obligation to better my talent and persistently use it to my advantage.

I want to write as long as the thoughts inside my mind are chaotic. This class has helped me further my self-discovery because when given the opportunity to work with other writers and mentors, I make sense of the mess inside my head. I progressively take the next step at becoming a better writer. I’ve been workshopping since I was fifteen, and since the beginning, I leave every workshop feeling excited and appreciated. Past experience has taught me the essential skills necessary for a workshop to flow as efficiently as possible; there needs be a common ground where every participant communicates on the same page.

This semester, however, was remarkably different. I remember walking into Church Street, not
knowing what to expect, but also very curious about the different types of notebooks that decorated each of the desks. I was surrounded by diverse thinkers, independent voices, poets who didn’t even know writing is their identity. The girl next to me always seemed like the quiet type, but I swear her lungs are stronger than we think because she fires like a paintball gun, brilliantly chromatic, it's marveling.

For days, I listened. For weeks, I began to recognize each of my classmates’ writing style. I took their criticisms as compliments to the heart. In the past, I’ve always grown close to my peers within the workshop, establishing bonds that last outside of the classroom, and although I was distant with the majority of the students this semester, the few times I did interact with them made a difference in the classroom. In fact, this course actually brought me to meet one of my now-closest friends, Nicole. Had we not met this semester, I truly believe the entirety of these past months would have been metamorphosed from one experience to the next.

Similarly, one of my classmates, specifically my partner for the midterm assignment, challenged me to go outside my comfort zone with constraints that made writing poetry feel like a foreign language. I struggled, I stressed, but I pushed myself to finish only once I felt satisfied, which--believe me--took forever to find. For the first time, I worked outside the lines, and I discovered a form that allowed me to mimic the way our thought speed like a panicked train on tangled railways. I got twisted.

I grew comfortable with risk. This semester, I encountered more restrictions, limitations, constraints and constrictions, everything that challenges you as a writer to respond a certain way. Surprisingly enough, I enjoyed the variety of prompts because each lesson offered more than I expected. Structure requires you to change the way you think, guidance manipulates your direction. The outcome of each of assignments was a product from parts of my mind I had never accessed prior. I’ve always been a free thinker, but now I recognize that guidelines aren’t there to take away your voice, but instead, amplify it.

I’ve always been overenthusiastic about imagery, synesthesia, and sound -- I feel like a creative
maniac when my thoughts transform from conceptual abstraction to visual cogitation. This course reinforced the skills I already utilize while revealing new strategies along the way. I know that the first line isn’t necessarily the starting point, that ending on an image is inviting. Words are capsules, each carries its own weight in meaning and each helps travel sounds downstream. Thanks to the work and progress I’ve made in this class, I now know all that and more; I only feel that my love for writing will continue growing. Let’s see where this takes me.
How do you do it? That was the first thing I wrote when she asked us to begin. We were at Oblongs, Rhinebeck’s local bookstore, seated in a circle of comfortable reading chairs and fold-ups, and some of us were leaning against shelves stacked with titles that were, let’s just say “interesting” -- I even wrote down some of their names: Bad Sex on Speed, Wake, Lovers at the Chameleon Club. The environment was just the right type of creative stimulation. I’m embarrassed that I don’t remember her name, but I hope she knows I still do remember her. She went to Bard and majored in Creative Writing; coincidently, she was encouraged to teach a workshop and I was encouraged to participate.

Although my memories of that workshop are foggy, the lesson still resonates and I credited much of my progress to the outcome of that experience. She was a stranger, but I so deeply wanted to emulate her growth. She was welcoming, her prompts spoke to me, and all the while, she was human. She wrote and it was enough.

When Professor Finch revealed to us that we would be able to participate in a similar class workshop, I encountered an immediate flashback and knew this was something I had to do. It was more for me than it ever would be for the students I was encountering, but that was the fun in it, the challenge, the momentum, the experience in itself. The experience, however, was inevitably different than I had expected. Many of the students were mentally exhausted to begin with, we could see it on their notebooks. Their teacher was thoroughly excited, however, and suggested it was an outcome of one of those days. It didn’t matter, just the initial scribble was satisfying enough, to say the least. The program alone offers an experience, and each one is different depending on the students and their initiative. If given the opportunity to do it again, I would most certainly opt yes.
he
convinced me
that home is built from a broken body
and blankets.

his temple
although tattered
gave me shelter,
safety. I found sanctity
in the sound of his heart beat --
knocking at the front door --

and I remember
being warned about his
unfinished foundation
that let rain
leak through his attic
and soil the thoughts
he stowed away
in boxes
or how
it’s a bad habit --
to make homes
out of human beings,

but that never mattered
to me.
I became an architect
obsessed
with his blueprint.
Gimme Shelter

I heard his footsteps first
running outside wild,
he burst
through the entrance
“I’m gonna fade away”
he exasperated.

His temple
although tattered
gave me shelter,
safety. I found sanctity
in the sound of his heart beat --
knocking at the front door --

I always thought
empty flowerpots
were optimistic,
he tried
to think so too

and I remember
being warned about his
unfinished foundation
that let rain
leak through his attic
and soil the thoughts
he stowed away
in boxes
or how
it’s a bad habit --
to make homes
out of human beings,

He said,
It’s just a kiss away
but that never mattered
to me.
I became an architect
obsessed
with a blueprint.
En route

The moon thinks we’re crazy when we fly;
when we are maniacs in motion
traveling in tangled lines
as the street lights beam into luminescent streaks,
as the engine rumbles and roars,
and as the wind hits and whispers
“Keep going” -- Keep the radio raised to its zenith,
slide your fingers out the window slit,
watch around the corner from your rearview mirror,
but don’t think about turning back;
think about the blurry trees passing by,
pay mind to the clouds picking up pace;
don’t hide from the trip, look for it in the horizon;
revel in adventure, ride like you’re chasing the dragon;
notice how he holds the steering wheel with one hand
and thinks speed limits are suggestions --
we drive with danger in the back seat,
we live recklessly because the road is bewitching --
the night sky darkens and dips the city in ink;
when people sleep and dream,
we rouse the streets on the grounds that
risk is what fuels the race;
chance is our mistress, negligence is our biggest mistake --
we know no boundaries on an open lane;
we are lunatics on an expressway to freedom.
En route

Keep the radio raised to its zenith,  
slide your fingers out the window slit,  
watch around the corner  
from your rearview mirror, but don’t  
think about turning back; think about  
us -- Don’t hide from the trip, look for it in the horizon.

Revel in adventure, because we ride  
like we’re chasing rapid dragons; I notice  
how you hold the steering wheel with one hand  
and think speed limits are suggestions --  
You say risk is what fuels the race, and you  
believe chance is our mistress, but I know  
that you know negligence is our greatest mistake.

The sky quiets, and night  
dips the city in ink. When  
people sleep, we dream --  
we rouse the streets, driving  
with danger in the back seat,  
living recklessly because  
the road is bewitching, and I think  
I’m falling

We’re crazy. Tell me again, why does  
the moon think we’re lunatics  
when we fly, when we act like maniacs  
in motion, traveling in tangled lines  
as streetlights beam into luminescent streaks,  
the engine rumbles -- it roars  
the wind hits and whispers  
Keep going
Sonnet

Mending

You are the dirt stuffed underneath your fingernails.
You are the calluses that cover your palms.
You are the blue and boysenberry bruises that paint your face.
You are the chip in your front tooth, the blister in your lip.
You are the sawdust tangled in your tuscan-sun locks.
You are a goddamn mess
whose wreckage stuffs and stows in my bones.
But it’s tempting
how your lungs are empty,
yet they fill me with wonder...
How your skin is rough, yet to touch is contagious.
I run my fingers like criminals chasing the thrill of your body.
It’s tempting
how you can kiss me broken, yet somehow I am healed.
Mending

You are the dirt
tucked underneath your fingernails,
the calluses that cover your palms,
the blister on your lip,
the chip in your front tooth,
the blue and boysenberry bruises
that paint your face,
the sawdust
tangled in your tuscan-sun locks.

You are a goddamn mess.

I touch you
and your skin is rough --
sandpaper for a smooth finish.
Your lungs are empty,
exhaling to fill me with wonder.
Your wreckage is contagious.
I run my fingers like criminals
chasing the thrill of your body.
You kiss me broken,
I am healed.
Untitled

When the scent of last night
stitches into my clothes,
and I breathe in
every past--good or bad--decision
we committed in moonlight,

I hear his lullaby echo in my bones
encouraging sweet dreams.
I feel him encompassing my body.
He holds me,
and I sleep at ease.

I sleep at ease.

I stink of him.
The mint on his lips...
The pine he wore home from work...
Even the planted whiskey kisses
that blossom overnight.

The trace of time
sticks to my skin
as if the air were incense.
Our smoke clings to the ceiling.
It covers the walls.
It drapes over us like a daydream.

His fragrance sits with me.
The aroma cloaks and holds shapes
like impressions left on the couch
or ripples coiling in the ocean.

It’s temporary. It’s tempting.
I watch as morning rise
like the steam ascending from my mug
and I realize how
he holds me
even when the sheets are empty.
He holds me
until daybreak reawakens reality.
Linger

I sleep at ease
when the scent of last night
stitches into my clothes.

I breathe --
and every past
good or bad decision
we enacted in moonlight
perfumes the room.

His fragrance envelopes me.
The aroma cloaks and holds
shapes, impressions left on the couch,
incense coiling to the ceiling,
the mint on his lips,
the trace of pine he wears
home from work,
even the planted whiskey kisses
that blossom overnight.

I watch as morning rise
like the steam ascending
from my mug
and I realize how
he holds me
the way citrus sticks
to your fingertips.
He holds me.
His lullaby echos in my bones,
encouraging sweet dreams.
I feel him,
he holds me, and

I sleep at ease.
Gold Dust

You are the earth; I am its spirit
and together the trees act as our lungs
that breathe under starlight and rustle
when we are excited -- leaves wisp around
in our wind, and I hear maracas sound
in a hollow room -- my hips sigh and we
glide methodically -- call it organic
chemistry, the way our atoms repel
from lips that give nuclear kisses. I
am disillusioned when you ground me. I
am found by curious fingers searching
the contour symmetry of my body.
You are the earth; I am its spirit
and together we are limitless -- a
cosmic collision in constant motion.
Gold Dust

You are the earth; I am its spirit
and together the trees act as our lungs
that breathe under starlight and rustle
when we are excited -- leaves wisp
in our wind, and I hear maracas sound.
My hips sigh and we glide methodically --
call it organic chemistry, the way our lips
trigger nuclear kisses that repel atoms
in every direction -- Naturally -- We speak,
and our words radiate as subtle energies that
translate to pure phenomena. Please,
muse me. You are the earth; I am its spirit
and together we experience living.
FRESH

Oh when you feel it --
you know.

There’s a rush that swells your chest
and suddenly
you discover lust in slow motion.
My heart is ripe.
It’s ruddy

I look at you
and I’m diced into pieces.
My heart puckers
and pomegranate pulp now drips
from my ribs.

I can’t tell if it’s endemic or addictive
to touch your smile and watch that contagious glow go
from you to me.

You and me.
FRESH

There’s a rush that swells your chest
and suddenly
you discover lust in slow motion.

My heart is ripe.
It’s ruddy

I look at you
and I atomize --
My heart puckers
and pomegranate pulp begins to drip
from my ribs.

We explore each morning
self-confessed, your words
Tango about me. It’s passion
tapping the earth -- wonderfully
exotic, curiously human

You and me.

Oh

when you feel it,
you know.