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An alternative academic creative writing pedagogy? The research and development of theorised teaching principles and processes for a BA honours degree in creative writing and an MA degree in the teaching of creative writing

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APPENDICES

An Alternative Academic Creative Writing Pedagogy?

The Research and Development of Theorised Teaching Principles and Processes for a B.A. Honours Degree in Creative Writing and an M.A. Degree in the Teaching of Creative Writing

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Appendix 1: Handbook Fiction Examples – Full Texts

Restricted to Short stories

149 Example short story texts

15 Janet Burroway Imaginative Writing

Specialist short story essay/anthologies account for ... *The Art of the Short Story* 64, *On Writing Short Stories* 18, 82 short story samples. *Writing Fiction* Janet Burroway 27, *Narrative Design* Madison Smartt Bell 12 all contemporary American short story writers, Robert de Maria *The College Handbook of Creative Writing*, 12 mixture contemporary American, traditional short story authors.

Most Popular Authors
Raymond Carver, 3 texts, five examples, 4 handbooks, "Cathedral" 3 exposures.
Anton Chekhov, 4 texts, five examples, 4 handbooks, "The Lady with the Pet Dog" 2 exposures.
Flannery O'Connor, 3 texts, 4 examples, 3 handbooks, "Everything That Rises Must Converge" 2 exposures.
Eudora Welty, 3 texts, 4 examples, 3 handbooks, "Why I Live at the PO" 2 exposures.
Guy de Maupassant, 3 examples, 3 handbooks, "The Necklace" 2 exposures.
William Faulkner, 3 examples, 2 handbooks, "A Rose for Emily" 2 exposures.
Katherine Mansfield, 3 examples, 2 handbooks, "Miss Brill" 2 exposures.
Joyce Carol Oates, 3 examples, 3 handbooks, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" 2 exposures.

Following authors have their texts used as examples twice:
Margaret Atwood, "Happy Endings"
James Baldwin – "Sonny's Blues"
Charles Baxter – "Gryphon" and "Snow"
Kate Chopin, "The Storm" and "The Story of an Hour"
John Cheever, "The Swimmer"
Louise Erdrich – "Sister Godzilla" and "Saint Marie"
Nadine Gordimer "The Diamond Mine" and "A Company of Laughing Faces"
Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Birthmark" and "Young Goodman Brown"
Ha Jin "In the Kindergarten" and "Saboteur"
D.H. Lawrence, "The Rocking-Horse Winner" and "Odour of Chrysanthemums"
Tim O'Brien – "The Things They Carried"
Robert Olen Butler – "Hotel Tourine" and "Missing"
Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Tell-Tale Heart"
James Joyce, "Araby" and "The Dead"

Contemporary American Authors – 58
American Authors Earlier Periods – 17
Academic degreed and or teaching – 37
Iowa Writers' Workshop Graduates – 8
Pulitzer Award Winners – 8
National Book Award Winners – 4
Nobel Prize for Literature – 7

Non-American Authors – 20
English Authors – 4
Russian Authors – 3
French Authors – 3
1 each German, Canadian, New Zealander, Nigerian, Swedish, Argentinian, Colombian, Japanese, Irish, and South African

Appendix 2: Handbook Fiction Examples – Excerpts

10 Handbooks

481 Excerpt Examples

Most Popular Authors of Excerpt Examples

Raymond Carver, 23 excerpts, from 3 texts, in 4 handbooks, 20 excerpts from "Cathedral."

Ernest Hemingway, 14 excerpts, from 10 texts, in 8 handbooks, 4 excerpts from "Hills Like White Elephants."

Flannery O'Connor, 10 excerpts, from 6 texts, in 5 handbooks, 4 excerpts from "Everything That Rises Must Converge."

James Joyce, 8 excerpts, from 4 texts, in 5 handbooks, 4 excerpts from *Ulysses*.

Charles Dickens, 8 excerpts, from 8 texts, in 4 handbooks.

Anton Chekov, 8 excerpts, from 5 texts, in 3 handbooks, 4 excerpts from "The Lady with the Dog."

Margaret Atwood, 7 excerpts, from 7 texts, in 4 handbooks.

William Faulkner, 7 excerpts, from 5 texts, in 5 handbooks, 3 excerpts from "A Rose for Emily."

John Cheever, 5 excerpts, from 5 texts, in 3 handbooks.

Stephen Crane, 5 excerpts, from 3 texts, in 1 handbook, 3 excerpts from "The Blue Hotel."

Toni Morrison, 5 excerpts, from 4 texts, in 3 handbooks, 2 excerpts from *Beloved*.

Mark Twain, 5 excerpts, from 4 texts, in 4 handbooks, 3 excerpts from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Leo Tolstoy, 5 excerpts, from 4 texts, in 3 handbooks, 2 excerpts from *The Death of Ivan Illich*.

Following authors have had excerpts from their texts used 4 times in 3 or more different handbooks with most used text in brackets:

Edgar Allan Poe ("The Fall of the House of Usher"); Joyce Carol Oates ("Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"); Tim O'Brien ("The Things They Carried"); Lorrie Moore ("People Like That Are the Only People Here"); Gabriel Garcia Marquez (*One Hundred Years Of Solitude*); Barbara Kingsolver (*The Poisonwood Bible*); Charles Baxter ("Gryphon"); Mary Gaitskill ("The Girl on the Plane"); F. Scott Fitzgerald (*The Great Gatsby*); John Updike.

Contemporary American Authors – 127
American Authors Earlier Periods – 17
Academic degreed and or teaching – 89
Iowa Writers' Workshop Graduates – 19
Pulitzer Award Winners – 8
National Book Award Winners – 8
Nobel Prize for Literature – 10
Non-American Authors – 73
English Authors – 31
Russian Authors – 7
German Authors – 5
French Authors – 4
Irish Authors – 3
Japanese Authors – 3
Scottish Authors – 3
Canadian Authors – 2
Australian Authors – 2
Spanish Authors – 2
1 each: Colombian, Czechoslovakian, New Zealander, Danish, Greek, Italian, Polish, South African, Egyptian and Indian.

Appendix 3: Handbook Fiction Examples – References

References

618
16 handbooks

[16] Charles Dickens – *David Copperfield* (5), *Bleak House* (4), *A Tale of Two Cities* (2), *A Christmas Carol* (2), *Great Expectations* (1) Nicolas *Nickleby* (1) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1).
(8 Handbooks)

[14] James Joyce – *Ulysses* (8), *Portraits of the Artist as a Young Man* (2), "The Dead" (2) and *Finnegan's Wake* (2).
(7 Handbooks)

[14] Leo Tolstoy – *Anne Karenina* (5), "The Death of Ivan Illich" (3), *War and Peace* (2), *Resurrection* (2), *Childhood* (2)
(6 Handbooks)

[12] William Faulkner – *The Sound and the Fury* (4), *Absalom, Absalom!* (4), "A Rose for Emily" (1), *Requiem for a* Nun (1), *As I Lay DyingI* (1) and *Go Down* (1).
(10 Handbooks)

[12] Henry James – *The Wings of the Dove* (3), *The Portrait of a Lady* (2), *The Turn of the Screw* (2), *Roderick Hudson* (1), *Daisy Miller* (1), *The Spoils of Poynton* (1), *The Princess Casamassima* (1) and "The Beast in the Jungle" (1).
(6 Handbooks)

[12] Franz Kafka – *Metamorphosis* (8), *Amerika* (1), "A Country Doctor" (1), "A Crossbreed" (1) and "A Judgment" (1).
(9 Handbooks)

[11] Ernest Hemingway – "Hills Like White Elephants" (3), *For Whom The Bell Tolls* (2) *The Sun Also Arises* (1), *In Our Time* (1), *A Movable Feast* (1), *The Old Man and the Sea* (1), "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (1) and "Clean, Well-Lighted Place" (1).
(9 Handbooks)

[11] Virginia Woolf – *Mrs Dalloway* (4), *To the Lighthouse* (2), "Kew Gardens" (2), *A Room of One's Own* (1), *The Waves* (1) and *The Voyage Out* (1).
(4 Handbooks)

[9] Margaret Atwood – *Bodily Harm* (2), *Cat's Eye* (2), *Alias Grace* (1), *Life Before Man* (1), *Surfacing* (1), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1) and *Murder In The Dark* (1).
(3 Handbooks)

[6] Anton Chekhov – "The Lady with the Dog" (4), "In the Ravine" (1) and "Ward Six" (1).
(4 Handbooks)

[6] Joseph Conrad – *Heart of Darkness* (4), *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1) and *Lord Jim* (1).
(3 Handbooks)

[6] Fyodor Dostoyevski – *Crime and Punishment* (3), *Notes From Underground* (2) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1).
(3 Handbooks)

[5] John Fowles – *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (4) and *The Magus* (1).
(4 Handbooks)

[5] D. H. Lawrence *The Fox* (2), *Sons and Lovers* (1), *The Rainbow* (1) and "The Blind Man" (1).
(4 Handbooks)

[5] Herman Melville – *Moby Dick* (4) and *The Confidence Man* (1).
(5 Handbooks)

[5] Vladimir Nabokov – *Lolita* (5).
(5 Handbooks)

[5] Edgar Allan Poe – *The Raven* (1), "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1), "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1), "Ligeia" (1) and "The Pit and the Pendulum" (1).
(4 Handbooks)

[5] Jane Austen – *Pride and Prejudice* (3), *Sense and Sensibility* (1) and *Persuasion* (1).
(2 Handbooks)

Appendix 4: Quantitative Questionnaire

The Design and Development of an Undergraduate Creative Writing Programme
Research Questionnaire

Surname: _____ First name(s): _____

Student No: _____ Telephone No: _____ Cellphone No:_____

Email Address: _____

Field of Study (eg Psychology, Journalism, Dramatic Art): _____

Is English your first language? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Answer each of the following questions by putting a tick (✓) in the ONE box, which most accurately reflects your answer.

1. Based on your writing experiences during your final school year, how would you describe your Creative Writing **learning experience**?

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
very negative	negative	average	positive	very positive

2. Based on your writing experiences during your final year at school, how would you rate your **level of interest** in Creative Writing on a scale from 1 to 5 if 1 represents No Interest and 5 Very Interested?

No interest	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very interested
	1	2	3	4	5	

3. Is Creative Writing an activity you have pursued for **personal enjoyment**, in your 'free time', outside of the school's formal requirements?

☐	☐
No	Yes

4. If the University were to offer a Creative Writing **module** at undergraduate level, how would you rate your level of interest in enrolling for that Creative Writing module, on a scale of 1 to 5 if 1 represents No Interest and 5 Very Interested?

No interest	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very interested
	1	2	3	4	5	

5. If the University were to offer Creative Writing as a **Major subject** at undergraduate level, how would you rate your level of interest in enrolling for that three-year Creative Writing programme, on a scale of 1 to 5 if 1 represents No Interest and 5 Very Interested?

No interest	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very interested
	1	2	3	4	5	

6. If selected, would you be interested in **participating** in a series of extra-curricular **creative writing workshops** during 2006?

☐ No ☐ Undecided ☐ Yes

Consent Form

Project Title:	*The Design and Development of an Undergraduate Creative Writing Programme.*
Student:	Pieter Oberholzer (0218420H).
Contact Details:	0829021825 rezlo@mweb.co.za
Supervisor:	Dr Pamela Nichols
Contact Details:	7174136 nicholsp@wcentre.wits.ac.za
Degree:	PhD
Research Sample:	First-year English Literature students.
Purpose of the Study:	The quantitative research component of the project is aimed at identifying and tracking the level of student interest in Creative Writing and selecting students to participate in the second phase of the study (Creative Writing Workshops) with the objective of identifying student experiences of the teaching and learning of Creative Writing, which will influence the design and development of the undergraduate creative writing modules and programme.
Benefits of the Study:	The benefits of this study relate to the identification of student Creative Writing needs and experiences as a vital component of the design and development of Creative Writing modules and/or courses.
Confidentiality:	Although the information contained in the completed questionnaire will be used in the PhD Thesis, the identity of the student respondent will remain strictly confidential between the student respondent and the researcher.

Consent

1. Your completion of this research questionnaire and your participation in this research study is voluntary and you have the right to decline to participate at any time.
2. By signing in the space provided below you confirm your willingness to participate in the study.

   Full Names _____ Student No. _____

   Signature_____ Date _____

3. You are entitled to a copy of this signed consent form and, on request, one will be provided to you.

Appendix 5: Email Communication Extract

I offer these creative writing workshops as a part of the research for my PhD Thesis, which is aimed at developing an undergraduate creative writing programme. You have already received a copy of the agenda items discussed at the meetings in November as well as a summary of the proposed format and content of the workshops for this year. It may prove to be a worthwhile and rewarding programme for you and the other students, who have a desire to write and improve their writing and your participation is certainly of fundamental importance to my creative writing research.

The workshops will run for two hours, ideally from 2 pm to 4 pm. So as not to interfere with your academic work, there will only be 10 workshop sessions spread throughout the year, commencing next quarter and ending in October. These workshops will not fall in exam preparation, exam writing, study break or vacation times and there are at least two weeks between each session, with up to 6 weeks between sessions during the holiday times.

Once you have had the time to assess all these workshop details, I would appreciate it if you would let me know whether you intend to participate or not. If you are keen to take part, let me know which afternoons you have available for attending the workshops. Once I receive details of your availability, I will put the groups together and advise you as to the make up of your group and on which dates the workshops will take place.

Appendix 6: Workshop Research Consent Form

Consent Form

Project Title:	The Research, Design and Development of an Undergraduate Creative Writing Programme and a Postgraduate Creative Writing-Teaching Course.
Student:	Pieter Oberholzer (0218420H).
Contact Details:	0829021825 rezlo@mweb.co.za
Supervisor:	Dr Pamela Nichols
Contact Details:	7174136 pamela.nichols@wits.ac.za
Degree:	PhD thesis.
Research Sample:	Second, third and Honours-year students participating in the extra-curricular Creative Writing Workshops.
Purpose of the Study:	The PhD thesis is aimed at providing undergraduate creative writing modules and a programme based on a practical, teaching and learning foundation.
Benefits of the Study:	The benefits of this study relate to the identification of the practical processes and pedagogies necessary for the design and development of creative writing modules, which will enhance the teaching and learning of creative writing amongst undergraduate students and graduate students who wish to teach creative writing.
Confidentiality:	Although the students' responses to the workshop processes and activities will be transcribed, interpreted and evaluated and will be used in the thesis, the identity of the student respondent will remain strictly confidential between the student respondent and the researcher.

Consent

4. Your participation in the extra-curricular creative writing workshops is voluntary and you have the right to decline to participate at any time.
5. By signing in the space provided below you confirm your willingness to participate in the workshops and agree to your responses to the processes forming a part of the thesis study.

   Full Names _____ Student No. _____

   Signature _____ Date _____

6. You are entitled to a copy of this signed consent form and, on request, one will be provided to you.

Appendix 7: Student Profiles – Phase 1 2005

Benjamin

Benjamin is a qualified technician in the computer industry, who, having worked in his native Dublin for a number of years, decided, once he turned 30 years of age that he wanted to study in a different field and experience new horizons. He travelled to Johannesburg and is studying English Literature and History as his major subjects, while spending his spare time exploring South Africa and teaching matric students at a school in Soweto as a way of contributing socially to his host society.

Benjamin remembers himself as isolated during his childhood, while at school and describes how he would "write stories as a way of passing the time." More recently, however, his writing has been confined to diary pieces and social commentary, because he has struggled to identify topics that he feels committed to writing about.

His favourite authors are Terry Pratchett, Douglas Adams and Nick Hornby. His heroes are the writers Roy and Terry Fisher, his role model is his father and his current locational inspirations Dublin and specifically Johannesburg, with its "contrasts and contradictions," which Benjamin finds irritating and frustrating, as well as fascinating.

Despite appearing to be a regular, committed diary and journal writer, **Benjamin** provided no journal entries during his participation in the workshop process. He also did not continue into the second workshop phase in 2006 due to academic work commitments and his determination to continue to contribute in some way and add social value during his stay in Johannesburg.

Kathryn

Kathryn is an English Literature and Media Studies major, who seems intent on entering the world of journalism, but she is still unsure of what she really wants to do with her life. She is in her early twenties and her desire to write and become a writer stems from her love of reading, the praise she received from teachers for her imaginative writing and the encouragement she received from her father.

Kathryn's home life was a disrupted one and she makes use of extensive diary-writing as an outlet for her tensions and frustrations. She describes her role models as being "strong and independent woman" and the writers she admires are Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath and Anne-Marie McDonald, whose book, *Fall on Your Knees* inspired her to be a writer more than any other book she has read.

In terms of her writing surroundings, Kathryn prefers to write in solitude, whether outside or inside, her location must be secluded and ultimately she must be isolated. Most of her writing is done at night, when everyone else is asleep.

Kathryn entered the workshop process with an ongoing, frustrating dialogue with herself about her own writing. This frustration stems from a persistent striving for perfection:

> I distance myself from my work, because I'm afraid of what other people might think.
> I have all these ideas for writing, they just won't sit on the page.
> I want everything to be perfect. It's so tempting just to tear the page up.

Kathryn admits that she likes stories that "pull your heart out of your chest while it's still beating," and that she enjoys reading "spontaneous and honest writing," but that her writing is exactly the opposite.

During the workshop process Kathryn began to see her own writing as more of a place for self-expression than exposure. For her it was a "break-through moment" when she realised that all her frustration stemmed from her perfectionism and her own excessive criticism of her work.

Kathryn was a dedicated, active participant in all aspects of the workshop process and continued as a workshop group-member beyond the second phase in 2006 into a third year in 2007 during her academic Honours year.

Sylvia

Sylvia is 20 years of age, a fine arts student at the School of the Arts and she entered the workshop programme after being told about it by a friend. She describes her home life as being a "small and empty family circle," which only communicates superficially. In response Sylvia writes "self-pity poetry as a means of escape and self-definition, and records significant moments in writing."

Books have been her "umbilical cord to the world" and she wants her own writing to represent to others the solace and comfort that poets and novelists such as Ted Hughes and Niall Griffiths have meant to her.

The contrast in surroundings of Brighton England, with its youth hostels, buskers and beggars, and Johannesburg, with its "isolated little worlds behind walls and spikes and electric fences," inspire her to write.

Sylvia describes herself as a perfectionist, "never able to let loose and allow" herself to write something or an experience, which is not her own. She finds this type of writing to be "incredibly intimidating" and she is envious of her fellow workshop-participants, who appear to display high degrees of imagination in their stories and " their ability to create characters and lives" she assumes are not their own.

Sylvia only completed the first of the two workshop programmes, taking a break from her studies for a year before returning to complete a fine arts degree. She is still experimenting with the writing and I have given her feedback on a children's story, with illustrations, that she has been working on.

Taryn

Taryn, a 20-year-old English Literature and Law major is an immigrant, who arrived in Johannesburg during her primary school years, as a child who was unable to speak English. Consequently she was a loner, with no friends, spending school breaks eating her sandwiches alone, "on the sidelines," watching and observing people.

She read to improve her English and then, when she "ran out of English to practice," she continued to read. Because she could speak no English, music was more of an influence in life than reading, before she mastered English language. Bands such as Pink Floyd, Queen and Police were positive influences, while her role models were largely based on "people in power" such as her grade 9 English teacher, Mister Jacobs.

Currently Taryn is inspired by the novelist J. M. Coetzee and his book *Disgrace*. Her fellow-students mock her reverence for J. M. Coetzee evident in her insistence on calling him Mr. Coetzee. While J. M. Coetzee is a positive writing influence, he also plays a negative, restricting role as Taryn admits that she is sometimes aware of him looking over her shoulder, judging her work, while she is writing.

Taryn writes a great deal about Johannesburg, particularly in her journal entries, which record her travels around the city to university and home and what she observes during her time on the road.

She writes immersed in self-doubt and agonises over every word and sentence and admits to being so "acutely aware of [her] audience that [she] can't write." For Taryn writing and reading are inseparable and she is not able to anticipate doing the one without the other. As a result, her "writing reflects" her reading "almost immediately." "If I *don't* read, I feel as though trying to write would be like trying to drive a car without petrol in its tank."

Taryn also admits to an inability or unwillingness to name her characters and to select a title for her stories as this, for her, represents the "transition from personal writing to writing for an audience." It is her own self-doubt as to her ability to write to the levels or standards of the authors she reads and has read, which has led Taryn to conclude that "English Literature may lead to low self-esteem."

Interestingly, Taryn it is also a part-time karate instructor and, from arriving in Johannesburg with English as a new language to her, her mastery of that language has enabled her to undertake the challenging task of completing a Masters degree in English alongside an LLB degree during the two-years 2008 and 2009.

Dorothy attended the first four workshops, but did not provide any biographical detail and **David**, who became the longest-standing workshop participant, from 2005 through to 2008, did not submit any profile details until 2006. His profile will be recorded along with the second-year students of 2006.

Appendix 8: Student Profiles – Group 1 Phase 1 2006

Jonathan

Jonathan did not provide any specific details of his childhood, but does lament being sent to remedial school and having to leave his old school, where he was always very happy. His first positive writing experience occurred at that school when his response to a writing task, to rewrite an existing short story, was deemed to be so good that he received the applause of the audience when he read it during school assembly.

While initially Jonathan intended to become an actor, his lack of physical coordination severely disrupted his plans and he began taking an interest in theatre and film and most of his early writing initiatives were in the form of movie reviews. More recently Jonathan has written personal renditions of soap-opera-type scripts for TV series such as *Isidingo* and an episode for the American series *Desperate Housewives*.

Jonathan is determined to break into the United States film industry and lists Charlize Theron as an inspiration to him. The first book that influenced him as a prospective writer was Roald Dahl's *Matilda* and, more recently, he has been influenced by Ian McEwan's *Atonement* and *Enduring Love*. He also considers the film *Brokeback Mountain* to have played an important role in his writing practice.

Jonathan lists the university itself and his old school as being locations, which inspire him to write. While participating in the workshop programme, he also undertook a playwriting module at the School of the Arts and was active with various campus-based initiatives and projects such as the establishment of a student-based, produced and published university magazine.

Jonathan remained a participant of the workshop programme from 2006 through to its completion in 2008 and went on to complete his Masters degree in English Literature.

Seballius

Seballius, a 21 year old, third-year music student, specialising in jazz guitar, has spent his whole life living in Johannesburg. He is the youngest of two sons with a younger sister. His father is an architect and his mother a teacher. Before entering the university to study music, he spent a year travelling around the United States and he intends to focus on music production once he completes his Music Honours degree.

Seballius explains that he started writing at the age of 16 in an effort to release some of his "inner pressures" and that it seemed easier for him to write creatively when he "let go of [his] instinct to censor [his] mind," but that he later learned that "good writing was not merely so simple a matter."

He continues to read voraciously and describes his older brother as his primary role model because of his special 'Gary Larson' type wit and sense of humour. Seballius lists Chuck Palahniuk's *Flight Club* as one of the best books that he has ever read.

While Seballius attended every workshop of Phase 1 series of 2006, he did not participate actively from an exercise and assignment response prospective and did very little writing at all. As the second series of the workshops coincided with his Honours year as a music student at the School of the Arts he was not able to continue with the workshops due to his music-work pressure.

Spacemother

Spacemother is an occasional student studying English Literature I and practising as a pathologist two days per week. Her father is a cardio-thoracic surgeon and the head of the department at a medical school, and her mother is a previous mayor of Sandton.

She loved reading from the age of nine years and onwards, but suffered from myopia, so severe "it allowed her to see a fly crawling across [her] cornea." "Relatively lonely and constitutionally introverted" she immersed herself in "academic work and found comfort in reading and dreaming."

Using her father as a role model, she followed in his medical footsteps. Her husband and his family serve as role models of "generosity and selflessness" to counter the lack of these characteristics in her own family.

Spacemother's most influential writing experiences came from her kindergarten teacher, "who encouraged, rather than scorned" and her grade 8 English teacher, who set weekly topics and emphasise that "creative writing was a matter of practice." She lists the following as the books, stories and authors, who have had the most significant effect on her as a prospective writer.

John Banville – *The Sea*
Andre Brink – *Before I Forget*
J. M. Coetzee – *Disgrace*
Salman Rushdi – "Perforated Sheet"
Githa Hariharan – "Remains of the Feast"
Kate Atkinson – *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*
Jean Rhys – *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Good Morning Midnight*
Zakes Mda

She describes Lionel Shriver's *We Need to Talk About Kevin* as the book she would like to write one day and the film *Brokeback Mountain* as the most emotionally successful film she had seen in recent years.

Spacemother completed the first series of writing workshops contributing intriguing, experience and perspective rich texts and valuable feedback to her fellow workshop attendees, but she did not continue into the second leg of the programme. She had a number of overseas travel commitments and confided that she did not have the energy or confidence of "the typical university student" and that at the stage of her life that she had reached she had been unable to continue with her writing.

Olivia

Olivia is a 21 year old Commercial Law student, who grew up in a family environment "filled with great spaces of happiness, love, magic and imagination," but also containing "a couple of clouds of loneliness and a few dark patches of emotional abuse, 'middle-child syndrome'" and a grandmother, who hated her. These clouds and dark patches caused her to have "intense feelings of incongruity and a low self-esteem." She describes herself as being "hollow in high-school" where her outlet was "her dark and disturbing art." Once she had started a diary, it became an addict practice so that she would "literally shake if [she] wasn't allowed to write." In her diary she was free, she didn't have to worry about what people would think or how anything looks. She calls her diary writing "pure freedom in ink."

Olivia lists her family and her closest friends as her role models. She admires and appreciates the "brilliant ... almost militant outflow of detail in *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the "simple originality" of Eve Ensler's play *The Good Body* and Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*.

She requires a variation in locations to stimulate her writing process and claims that school was a source of inspiration for her, while more recently, visiting the airport has "inundated [her] mind with ideas because "the vast volumes of people that scurry in and out of airports, all have a purpose, whether they're saying goodbye or hello and people always seem to be essentially good."

While Olivia participated in both Phases of the writing workshops, she attended less workshops than the other more dedicated students, but interestingly she always seemed to be more active and more experimental in her own writing activities, not always responding to the workshop writing tasks and assignments, but seemingly always writing something different. Olivia is one of the students, who responded most positively and vigourously to the 'Sentences with Soul' writing routine. She is also the only student I have encountered, in the workshops and from all the research reading I have done for the foundation of this thesis, that dared to venture into the seemingly 'forbidden' realm of humour and comedic writing, which, while very risky, is certainly a refreshing and very rewarding when it does come off successfully.

Towards the end of the 2007 third-year workshops, Olivia was forced to withdraw from the programme to focus on her academic studies as she reached the end of her degree.

Myle

Myle is a 21 year old English Literature student, who has already obtained a BA Degree in Live Performance, but due to the inherent uncertainties of her future as an actor decided to return to university to study English Literature and Journalism, which could provide her with a more secure economic future.

Myle's mother was a writer and she emphasised the importance of reading and the need for her to "chart her life by means of keeping a writing journal." Myle is inspired by the books of Sidney Sheldon and all she needs to be able to write is a desk with some paper and a pen.

Myle did not continue with the Phase 2 workshops in 2007.

Bateman attended four workshops, but did not participate in terms of completing any tasks, exercises or assignments. **Tsepo Veleto** attended two workshops and **Naomi** and **Adelaide** only attended one workshop each.

Appendix 9: Student Profiles – Group 2 Phase 1 2006

David

David is one of the original participants in the 2005 workshops, but did not submit a biographical description nor did he respond to the first four questions of the *Introduction to Creative Writing* CD. He subsequently participated in both the Phase 2 workshops of 2006 and the Phase 2 workshops of 2007 and 2008.

David is a 20-year-old, hearing impaired, English Literature and Media Studies major. He describes himself as a "shy kid" and his childhood as a lonely one during which he became an avid reader because of the lack of TV sub-titles in those years. He particularly enjoyed *Tin Tin* and the *Hardy Boys* and he and his brother were encouraged to create with Lego and to draw and to develop their imaginations by inventing characters and stories, which played a "pretty important role in their lives."

David is determined to become a published writer and has and continues to develop his own alphabet for a science-fiction series here is going to write. He explains that once he is in a writing state of mind and that state of mind is disturbed or disrupted, he can become aggressive because that state of mind is valuable and rare and worthy of defending and maintaining.

David's reaction to one of the questions contained in the multimedia CD appears to support the appropriateness and the success of the four questions as a means to gaining an insight into each individual student in terms of their make-up as participants of the workshops:

> Sometimes, bad things happen to us to show or teach us something, and we must learn from them, stimulate ideas for stories. Sorry if this is longer than you would have liked, thinking about the question brought back a lot of memories, if not nostalgia. Whew.

David, as an elected representative, served on the University Students' Council for two years and was the founder and 'champion' of the highly successful annual campus Pillow Fight, which raised money for charity and gave students an excuse to blow off some steam.

Vicky

Vicky is a 21-year-old Journalism student, who moved from India to South Africa in 1995. She lives at home with her mother and father and enjoys reading, listening to music and dancing. She has had to teach herself to speak English and has done so by reading extensively, focusing particularly on fictional texts.

Her role model is her grandmother, who lives in India and is married to Vicky's polygamous grandfather, who has a second wife in South Africa. Vicky admires her grandmother, who, as a single parent and a schoolteacher, has raised and educated, unsupported, five children on her own.

Vicky's heroes are "mythical creatures like fairies and witches." She enjoys romance novels, the *Harry Potter* books and the *Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown. She prefers to write in exotic locations such as holiday destinations, which inspire her more than being at home.

Vicky participated in the workshops in 2006 and 2007.

Bryony

Bryony is a 20-year-old English Literature major who comes from a mixed religion family, her father is English and a Christian and her mother is Jewish and was born in Zambia. She describes her "culturally mixed" upbringing with her brother as vibrant with childhood memories of gatherings of family and family friends and grandmothers and grandfathers. When she was a teenager her parents marriage dissolved and her father moved overseas, but she had "acclimatised" to his absence.

Bryony thrived at school mastering English, Geography, History and Art. She started writing at the age of eight and planned to write a trilogy of books, but by the time she had completed 180 pages of the first one, she found she had outgrown her story and has been unable to write anything substantial since.

Her favourite early books include Enid Blyton's *The Magical Faraway Tree* and the Tales of King Arthur. She was drawn to magical situations. It was *The Crystal Cave* by Mary Stuart that had her writing her own book at the age of 13.

Bryony prefers a silent environment when she writes, quiet, familiar surroundings, when everyone else is asleep. She describes her writing as "more descriptive and crisper" when she writes in a less noisy and less disturbing environment. Nature influences her creativity and she also enjoys writing in her garden because "magic rests in nature."

She has enjoyed the *Harry Potter* series of novels and *1984* and baulks at the idea of writing a biography or an auto-biography, preferring to focus on texts consisting of magical realism.

Bryony is a dedicated participant of the workshop programme and attended the workshops for three years into her Honours year in 2008.

Crazy

Crazy is a 19-year-old Media Studies major, who was born in a coloured township in Port Elizabeth to a coloured father and Xhosa mother. She considers herself to be black and relishes the fact that she had not been affected by apartheid because she was fortunate enough to go to private schools and began to speak English from an early age as it was her family's 'chosen' language. She started the routine of keeping a journal from the age of 13 and she believes this has had a significant effect on her writing skills.

While she had to do English Literature at school, Crazy hated the subject initially, especially poetry, but, once she had been introduced to the South African plays of Athol Fugard and John Kani, she began to enjoy reading and appreciating how her own writing allowed her to "break loose from the world into a world of one's own," through a "third eye" allowing her to "let go of any anger one may feel at that point of time, to express one's joy and excitement."

Crazy has "high interest" in writing and aims to become a published writer and to be "read by many." Her favourite childhood stories are the fairy tales read to her by her grandparents: "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "The Tortoise and the Rabbit," and "Cinderella."

She is influenced by people, who are determined and believes that people, who persist, always have hope and will eventually rise to greatness. Her role models are journalist Deborah Patta and TV personality Oprah Winfrey. Her favourite books are *48 Laws of Power* by Robert Greene, *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe and *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens. Crazy's favourite film is *Thelma and Louise*.

The fact that she lives in Braamfontein causes Crazy to believe that her writing will be influenced by the issues of crime, violence and fear instilled in the residents of the neighbouring suburb of Hillbrow.

Crazy only attended Phase 1 of the workshop programme.

Charles

Charles's father's exile status necessitated that his childhood was disrupted by repeated relocations. His primary homes were in Seattle in the United States and Zurich in Switzerland before he and his family returned to South Africa in the early 1990s. The biggest impact these moves had on his life was that English became his first language and on his return he was out of place and out of synch with his peers as he could not communicate in what was originally his mother tongue. So growing up, Charles describes himself as a loner, not able to fit in, without friends and having the constant feeling of "being judged." As a result he became a "couch potato," reading, watching TV and writing entries in his journal. His writing consisted of perspectives on his changing environments and a few poems and songs, but he eventually became bored and stopped writing completely, until now, when he feels the need to express himself in different forms, with new interests.

Charles's heroes are Oprah Winfrey, Baz Lurhmann, and William Shakespeare, because they have "re-defined history" with their work and their activities. His own objective is to be "distinct." "The world of movies, media and literature" inspire him every day.

Roald Dahl was the first author he ever read and loved. His favourite texts include *Macbeth*, Dan Brown's *Angels and Daemons*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Toni Morrison's *Sula*.

Charles prefers diverse, varied locations as ideal writing environments, like parks, restaurants and vacation destinations that are different to every day, routine surroundings, with long trips also providing the source and inspiration for his writing practice.

Noor

Noor is a 22-year-old third-year LLB student, who is active outside of his studies as a youth programme presenter on DSTV and a radio personality for a community-based radio station in which his aim is to assist young people in learning about life and the notions of accountability and responsibility.

Noor lives with his parents and younger brother and sister and is trained in the singing of a genre of music called Naat-e-Rasool. He describes his life, so far, as fulfilling, but has experienced the "rougher side of life, but does not regret any of these experiences and considers them to be [his] strongest weapons in this world."

In terms of role models, he bemoans the fact that his era has grown up idolising "superstars and famous people" and he personally has shifted his gaze to heroes such as Nelson Mandela, with his unique ability to forgive.

Noor's favourite TV series is *Roots* by Alex Haley and he expresses negative sentiments of the world he finds himself in, the concrete jungle he lives in, but he is sometimes inspired by people and by nature.

Noor only joined the workshop group during the second half of the programme and he worked diligently to catch up and complete the tasks and assignments he had missed earlier in the year. Due to work pressure as a Law student, he did not take any further part in the Phase 2 workshops of 2007.

Zee and **Jabu** attended 2 and 3 workshops, respectively, and contributed little in the way of writing and exercise responses.

Appendix 10: Student Profiles –Phase 1 2007

Antonio

Antonio lives at home in Lenasia with her older brother, father and mother. Her older sister is an attorney, her father a civil engineer and her mother a housewife. She attended Parktown High School for girls and is studying a BA degree with three majors, English Literature, Law and International Relations.

She believes her time at Parktown High instilled in her certain disciplines and ethics, but is thoroughly enjoying the freedom and diversity of studying at university. Antonio enjoys cooking and reading and watching movies. As a practised sitar and sarod player, she teaches the sitar at a local community school and at the Lenasia School of Music. She enjoys listening to an array of music types including Rock, dance and Eastern and Western classical music, as well as opera.

Antonio, as a "Hindu by religion, is more culturally than religiously orientated because Hinduism is also a way of life." While attending a "white or Model C school" she found it "challenging to find the middle ground between her own values and the activities and habits of [her] peers."

Antonio completed both the first and second phases of the workshop programme in 2007 and 2008.

Kahlan Amnell

Kahlan Amnell has lived her entire life in Johannesburg and spent her primary school years at an Afrikaans school and moved across to an English School to complete her school education. She lives with her older sister, a quantitative analyst, who is busy with her Ph.D. degree in CAM at the university. Her parents were lecturers in Theatre and Drama at the Johannesburg College of Education and have retired and are living in the Drakensberg.

Kahlan Amnell is 20 years of age and is currently studying second-year English Literature and Philosophy with no idea of what she wants to do after her studies except that she would enjoy continuing to study overseas.

She studied drama at school, is interested in the arts, reading and films and lists her favourite books as *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Fountainhead* and the *Sword of Truth* series. Her favourite films include *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Moulin Rouge*.

Knives

Knives is 20 years old and is studying English Literature and Philosophy and is from a Christian family. He lives with his Dutch parents and younger sister and did well at both primary and high school in Weltevreden Park. He is proud of his Christian upbringing, which has "impacted the way [he] approaches and views life as a faithful and involved human being."

Knives is a social and competitive volleyball player, he enjoys computer gaming, socialising and watching movies with his friends, but his main spare-time interest is in reading and writing and he has read many books, especially fantasy novels. He started experimenting with writing towards his latter years at primary school. In grade 7 he wrote an unfinished novel of over 50,000 words in length and in grade 11 progressed with the writing of a second novel to 52,000 words, written specifically for a writing competition, but stopped when the competition was cancelled. Since then he has been less active as a writer.

Jonny Rage

Jonny Rage is a 20-year-old first-year engineering student, who attended King David High School and enjoyed public speaking, organising the school's weekly newsletter and playing rugby. He is very interested in everything that goes on in the world around him, "within the university, developments in the country and around the world."

After school he spent a year teaching English and travelling in Brazil and has developed a passion for travel, new languages and experiencing different cultures and the opportunity to be alone, "to reflect and create an interest in [his] own personal development and future." Johnny Rage plans to travel again after completing his engineering degree, to teach and travel in China and India and then to enter the business and financial world once he has qualified as an engineer.

His other interests include reading science fiction, fantasy and alternate reality books, art, drawing, cycling and "sometimes invading a small feudal country."

Johnny Rage was an active participant during the 2007 second-year workshops, but due to the increasing pressure on his time relative to his engineering studies, he was unable to continue with the Phase 2 workshops of 2008.

Raymond

Raymond's response to the request for some biographical details about herself provides a glimpse of her overall profile and personality. She is a 20-year-old Bachelor of Arts student, who is hoping to major in English Literature and Media Studies, but her personal life and emotions appear to be predominate and override her logical and structured academic role and responsibilities.

> *Okay, I am a happy person. I think my heart is made of wet cement; it's getting tougher – if it doesn't rain. And people are leaving their handprints and names on it all the time."*
>
> *I have a full unit family, I adore my sister and I have been through many great friends."*
>
> *My recent background involves a boy who broke my heart – and sometimes I can't see much before it.*
>
> *One of my really fantastic memories from high school was sitting with a girl called Biara. I said to her: "I know this sounds terrible, but I wish someone would die, or I'd be in a car accident so that something could happen in my life. I know it sounds wrong, but I do." Later on Brendan committed suicide, I wrote my car off, my boyfriend of two years left me for a 14-year-old girl. And I can tell you – I hope it never happens again. So the people in my life now, they just flooded my life with new ideas, I hope they don't leave.*

Raymond has always loved to write, ever since she realised she could. Her interests include "everything that isn't mathematical."

Chadwick

Chadwick is a 21-year-old second year TV and Film Theory student in the Dramatic Arts department at the School of the Arts having spent two years at the AFDA Film School. He attended Sandringham High School and has aspirations of becoming a 'working' filmmaker and a screenwriter of feature films.

Sophie

Sophie is 18 years of age and is majoring in English Literature, History and Maths and lives with her family in Auckland Park. Her favourite book is "Franny" and *Zooey* by J.D. Salinger, which she has read many times over a few years until she was able to understand it. The last sentence in **Sophie**'s biography encapsulates her personality and is what sets her apart from her fellow workshop participants:

> I am a bit shy and unsure about what to say, but I think I will be able to open up gradually over time. Thank you for your time.

Sophie was a consistent participant and completed both phases of the workshop programme.

Bunny

Bunny is a 23-year-old BA student majoring in English Literature and Psychology having completed a three-year BA degree at Vega, the Advertising and Brand Communications School. During her school years Bunny excelled with seven distinctions and while studying at Vega she was an au pair and tutor and it was her work with children, which persuaded her to follow a psychological career.

Bunny's father is a civil engineer and her mother a nursery-school teacher and she felt as if she was an only child growing up because of the seven-year gap between her and her sister.

The primary passion in her life is photography and she also enjoys reading, watching movies, thinking, philosophising, exercising, cooking, nature, self-growth, psychology and people-watching.

Bunny attended the first four workshops and had to stop due to her academic work commitments, particularly her psychology workload.

Lemon

Lemon is a 20-year-old third year English and Psychology major, who is fascinated by people and the workings of the mind with writing being one of her favourite activities. She grew up as an only child and as a result, values the company of others. Her upper-to-middle-class school career was relatively uneventful with her doing "pretty well" academically and "neglecting any forms of physical activity." Lemon finds philosophy "mind-blowing" and would study more of it if she could.

She loves to help others, read, cook, eat, jog, spend time in nature, play with any feline available and, "of course, write."

Lemon was an active member of the Phase 1 workshops, but could not continue into the Phase 2 due to the workload and time requirements of her Psychological course in what was her Honours year.

Nom de Plume

Nom de Plume's reading habits and voracity resulted from the breakup in her parents' marriage as she "devoured books as a form of escapism." She had always been "insatiable" when it came to books and stories and she would "terrorise their parents, grandparents and innocent bystanders to read her bedtime stories." She spent hours reading "Green Eggs and Ham" and frequently directed and "staged puppet shows for [her] other toys."

She is a 20-year-old English Literature and Media Studies major whose love for literature started in primary school when she "met Dahl and Tolkien" in the school library. The work of Hans Christian Andersen "sealed [her] fate as someone determined to become a writer." She played the lead in a play of "The Little Mermaid" and her penchant for dramatics became a passion during high school with her writing and directing the 'House Plays' throughout her high school career. Her refined taste for literature developed to include Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot, William Blake, W.B. Yeats, with Louis de Bernieres, C.S. Lewis and Terry Pratchett becoming her inspirational authors. Nom de Plume believes that "literature bridges gaps between people and allows us all to feel less alone."

While Nom de Plume was an energetic and passionate workshop member initially, her participation and influence dissipated towards the latter half of the Phase 1 workshop year.

Lily

Lily did not submit any biographical details, but did participate in the workshops even though she did not attend as many as the majority of the students. While she did also not submit many exercise and assignment responses, those that she did provide and the workshop sessions she did attend, were transformed and somehow uplifted by her strangely different perspectives, her use of language and general idiosyncratic, non-conformance.

Cornelius attended the first workshop only and, while he did submit responses to one or two assignments, he never really participated in a meaningful way.

Appendix 11: Student Workshop Attendance – 2005 to 2008

Workshop Attendance

2005 Phase 1 Students	31/3	25/4	9/5	23/5	18/7	1/8	15/8	29/8	19/9	3/10	17/10
Benjamin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
Kathryn	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sylvia	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Taryn	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dorothy	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
David	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

2006 Phase 2 Students	5/4	3/5	19/7	2/8	13/9	4/10
Kathryn	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Taryn	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
David	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓

2006 phase 1 Students	7/4	21/4	5/5	21/7	4/8	1/9	15/9	29/9	4/10
Group 1									
Jonathan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Seballius	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spacemother	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-
Olivia	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓
Myle	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bateman	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
Tsepo Veleto	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Naomi	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adelaide	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

2006 Phase 1 Students	7/4	21/4	5/5	21/7	4/8	1/9	15/9	29/9	4/10
Group 1									
Jonathan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Seballius	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spacemother	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-
Olivia	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓
Myle	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bateman	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
Tsepo Veleto	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Naomi	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adelaide	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

2007 Phase 1 Students	10/4	24/4	8/5	22/5	24/7	7/8	21/8	4/9	18/9	2/10	16/10
Antonio	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
Kahlan Amnell	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
Knives	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jonny Rage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Raymond	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Chadwick	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sophie	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
Bunny	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lemon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nom de Plume	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	-

Lilly	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
Cornelius	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

2007 Phase 2 Students	16/4	7/5	21/5	30/7	15/8	29/8	26/9
Bryony	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jonathan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Olivia	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-
Vicky	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Noor	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Kathryn (Hons)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Taryn (Hons)	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-
David (Hons)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

2008 Phase 2 Students	27/11	31/1	21/2	13/3	10/4	8/5	10/7	7/8	28/8	11/9	25/9
Group 2	2007										
Antonio	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kahlan Amnell	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Knives	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jonny Rage	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chadwick	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sophie	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Nom de Plume	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lilly	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Emily Lyre	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bryony (Hons)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
Jonathan (Hons)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Olivia (Hons)	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
David (Hons)	-		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-

Appendix 12: Phase 1 Workshops 2005
Structure, Content and Teaching Materials

Workshop Structure and Content

Workshop 1

1. Workshop Dates and Times
2. Ground Rules and Processes

    - Workshop Structure and Content
    - Communication – distributing work prior to sessions
    - Critical Feedback – parameters

3. Relationship

    - PhD student and fellow writer – developing undergraduate writing programme based on teaching and learning experiences and experimentation
    - Facilitator and objective assessor
    - Collaboration an ongoing feature
    - Balance between instruction and participation
    - Provide an environment conducive to writing and learning about writing

4. Structure and Framework provided – passion, self-discipline and dedication required

5. Assignments

    - Provide best piece of writing – for comparison at end of workshop process
    - Set up a Writer's Journal
    - 9 tasks on *A Conversation with Two Writers* CD – 6 Journal entries and 3 writing tasks ***(Handout)***
    - Evaluate learning effectiveness of CD module

Workshop 2

1. Workshop Structure and Content

    - Writing Process
    - Writing Craft
    - Genres include Short Story, One-Act Play and Children's Stories
    - Research and Publication Submission Preparation
    - Also submission to university-based writing competitions

2. Discuss and Agree Critical Feedback Process and Parameters ***(Handout – Peter Elbow)***

3. Readership and Audience ***(Handout – Peter Elbow)***

    - Reader Response ***(Handout – Wolfgang Iser)***
    - Reader Imagination ***(Handout – Wolfgang Iser)***

4. Workshop Exercises

    - *Write an Untrue Poem About Yourself*
    - *Showing and not Telling*

5. Assignments

    - Continue with the CD Writing Tasks
    - Evaluate CD effectiveness as a learning instrument
    - Detail the workshop experience of writing and reading the 'Lies' poem, the concept of reader response and the Showing not Telling exercise

Workshop 3

1. Review

    - Audience and feedback parameters
    - Reader Response
    - Show, not Tell

2. Writer's Journal *(Handout)*

    - Can assist in tracking and nurturing writer development
    - Recorded dialogue with your writing self
    - Solidifies experiences and progress
    - Track writing processes, emotions, struggles and breakthroughs
    - Can become the source of writing ideas
    - Source of input for the reflexive essay

3. Participant and Spectator Writing

    - Perspectives and Originality
    - Writer's Voice
    - Reader's Imagination
    - Examples *(Handout)*

4. Workshop Exercises

    - Write about one positive and one negative element of last workshop
    - Read and discuss Journal extract example
    - *Show, not Tell Exercise*
    - Read and discuss two Participant/Spectator texts

6. Assignments

    - Continue with CD Writing Tasks
    - Write a Participant and a Spectator paragraph based on a mundane and boring event or routine in your life – distribute to attendees for feedback at next workshop

Workshop 4

1. Review

    - Show, not Tell exercise
    - The Writer's Journal
    - Participant/Spectator Writing
    - Positive and Negative elements of the Workshops thus far

2. The Short Story *(Handout)*

3. Writing Process *(Handouts)*

    - Messiness *(Janet Emig)*
    - Work-in-Progress *(Julia Bell)*
    - The Dangerous Method *(Peter Elbow)*
    - Redrafting, Editing *(Peter Elbow)*
    - Freewriting *(Peter Elbow)*

4. Feedback Session – Participant/Spectator Writing

5. Workshop Exercise *(Handouts)*

    - Read and discuss short story examples – *Lamb to the Slaughter*, *Scarlatti's Tilt*, *Where Was I?*

- Free Writing – Glass Eye, Crystal Ball, Antique Bellows Camera – all or none – write for 10 minutes without lifting your pen from the page – read your freewriting 'result' to the group (no feedback)

6. Assignments

   - Complete CD Tasks
   - Read the handouts on the short story – Become fully conversant with the short story 'parameters' or 'rules'
   - Consider the spectrum of short story examples
   - Convert free writing exercise into short story rough draft and distribute for feedback at next workshop

Workshop 5

1. Review

   - Feedback – first 4 workshops
   - Responses to writing feedback process
   - Workshop benefits – discipline and completion of tasks – no discipline, no benefit
   - Slow down – focus on process – limit genres?

2. Lack of Writing

   - Not a writer if you don't write – writing improves as you write
   - Successful writers, not the most talented, most obsessive, determined
   - Discipline and routine – find and maintain your writing time even if you don't write a thing

3. "The Soul Inside the Sentence." *(Handout William Gass)*

4. The Short Story

   - Short story is a song, the novel is a symphony
   - Short story foundation for story telling and writing for all genres

5. Loop Writing *(Handout Peter Elbow)*

6. Feedback Session – Free Writing Exercise and Story

7. Workshop Exercise

   - Read Topics *(Handout Philip Larkin & Bob Dylan)*
   - Free Write a Topic or Topics or anything
   - Loop Write – 3 perspectives – different audience, writer and in different time

8. Assignment

   - Create a Short Story to 2nd Draft stage in a traditional story telling form
   - Distribute by the deadline to workshop members

Workshop 6

1. Review

   - Feedback – first 5 workshops
   - Readership – reader response, reader imagination and show, not tell
   - Spectator and participant – voice, perspective and reader imagination
   - Put your writing out there and keep it alive – entering competitions
   - Writer's Journal – tracking and nurturing, experiences and progress, source of writing ideas
   - Process and genre – explore and experiment with writing processes and genres
   - The 'messiness' of the writing process
   - Writing – work-in-progress
   - The dangerous method: trying to write it right the first time

- Redrafting, editing and freewriting
- The short story
- Freewriting – revisit importance
- The short story – the 'rules' and breaking the 'rules'
- Loop writing – perspective changes

2. Experiencing and Practising Writing Freedom *(Handout Dickens & Dylan)*

   - Excessive self-consciousness, control and pre-judgment is a severe obstacle to writing
   - Just write and the story will unfold – freewriting, loop writing, participant and spectator – perspectives
   - Freewriting effectiveness particularly focusing on specific topic – valuable examples
   - Don't think too much when you are writing – write more and think less – think when you restructure, revise and edit

3. Characterisation and Successful Storylines

   - Freewriting effectiveness particularly focusing on specific topic – valuable examples
   - Originality comes from the perspective or the topic – successful writing makes the ordinary extraordinary and the extraordinary ordinary
   - Writers through the ages have used the strengths and weaknesses of human beings as the basis for their characters and stories
   - The strengths and weaknesses embodied in the human condition are of universal interest and fascination to us because we all possess and suffer these strengths and weaknesses
   - These are universal and enduring topics for stories and motivations for characters and character relationships and interaction:

     - The Seven Deadly Sins
     - The Cardinal Virtues
     - The Heavenly Graces

4. Feedback Session – Short Story Rough Drafts

5. Assignments *(Handout)*

   - **Assignment 1** – Select a card containing one of the deadly Sins, *research* that Sin and write a 'back story' or profile of a character whose primary character trait is the Sin you have drawn giving the historical reasons behind the character's propensity to commit the Sin and how the Sin is currently portrayed in the character's life.
   - **Assignment 2** – Select a card containing one of the Virtues or Graces, *research* that Virtue or Grace and write a 'back story' or profile of a character whose primary character trait is the Virtue or Grace you have drawn giving the historical reasons behind the character's propensity to embody the Virtue or Grace and how the Virtue or Grace is currently portrayed in the character's life.
   - **Assignment 3** – Write a short story pushing these two characters together, using their interaction and their relationship as the hub of the conflict of the storyline.

Workshop 7

1. Storyline and Characterisation

   - Viewing *Seinfeld* episode – *The Fix Up* as an example of storyline and characterisation
   - Example as a basis for short stories, novels, plays and screenplays
   - Most successful American TV series of the 90s – written by stand up comedians – Irony of pivotal character, who is the comedian and the least comedic of the characters
   - Deals with 'nothing' type universal issues in a comedic dramatic fashion – makes the ordinary extraordinary through storyline and characterisation
   - Brevity of genre – 22 minutes

2. Reading of Sins Virtues and Graces Characterisations

3. Feedback Session – Short Story Rough Drafts

4. Assignments

- Short Story Draft
- Sins Virtues Graces Story Draft

Workshop 8

1. Storyline and Characterisation

2. Doing your Writing Justice – Presentation Style and Format for Poems, Short Stories, One-Act Plays, Cover Page and Covering Letter *(Handout)*

   - Typestyles
   - Spacing
   - Paragraphs
   - Quotation marks
   - Layout
   - Print Quality
   - Binding Options

3. Reading of Sins Virtues and Graces 1st Drafts

4. Feedback Session – 2nd draft of Short Stories

Workshop 9

1. Competition Submissions
2. One-act Play Example
3. Notes on Plays *(Handout)*

   - Characters
   - Conflict
   - Settings
   - Plots
   - Subtext
   - Themes
   - Titles
   - Voice
   - Format

4. One-act Play Storyline Planning
5. Reflexive Essay Briefing
6. Feedback Session – General

Workshop 10

1. Plot and Storyline – The Hero's Journey *(Handout)*
2. Writing Children's Stories *(Handout)*
3. Reflexive Essay discussions
4. Feedback Session – One-Act Play 1st Drafts

Workshop 11

1. Submission Reflexive Essays
2. Submitting work to Publishers and Agents – Research, Proposals, Presentation, Copyright, Rejection. *(Handout)*
3. Planning and Discussion of Structure and Content of 2006 Writing Workshop Programme
4. Feedback Session – One-Act Play 1st Drafts

Workshop Teaching Materials

Workshop 1

A Conversation with Two Writers **CD – 6 Journal entries and 3 writing tasks**

An Introduction To Creative Writing
A "Conversation" with Two Writers

As you start your journey into the personal and highly individual world of creative writing, it is crucial that you establish a solid recognition and acceptance of your creative identity; of who you are as a writer. You must learn to know yourself: what has and what will influence and inspire you; what has contributed to your desire to write; and what experiences, strengths and weaknesses boost or hinder your growth as a writer.

The Writer's Journal

Your *Writer's Journal* will become your personal and confidential record of your journey of self-discovery by tracking your creative processes, your thoughts and emotions, your struggles, triumphs and discoveries. Your *Writer's Journal* will become your constant companion, enabling you to reflect on and assess your personal creative process as you grow and develop as a writer.

This introductory Creative Writing module has been designed to guide and ease your first serious steps in discovering your creative self. We will start by recording the primary objectives of keeping a *Writer's Journal*. These objectives should serve as a constant reminder of the reasons for and the benefits of keeping a *Journal*.

Task 1:
Turn to the first page of your *Writer's Journal* and write down the following as your own personal objectives for keeping your *Writer's Journal*:

Personal Objectives

1. I will learn to trust and accept myself;
2. I will learn how my mind works so that I can learn to work with myself;
3. I will find a sense of myself and embrace the possibilities that there are for me;
4. I will learn to have enough faith in my perceptions and decisions to make them paramount; and
5. I will discover my passion and embrace it.

A "Conversation" with Two Writers

Self-reflection and self-analysis can be excruciatingly lonely and isolating experiences especially when one is embarking on the process for the first time. It is for this reason that this module has been designed around the creative experiences and insights of two highly successful writers. These writers will answer questions, which may be on the minds of "new" writers, thereby providing you with examples of and practical guidelines to your own self-analysis and self-reflexive processes. You will not be alone if you imagine yourself as a participant in a three-way "conversation" on the topic of creative writing, with personal access to the actual experiences, first-hand knowledge and

insights of two renowned writers. The writers' words are their own and have been gleaned from biographies, interviews, letters and speeches and carefully reconstructed to provide answers to the questions, which you may ask if you were given the opportunity to speak to them.

The writers' answers have been supplemented with additional textual, audio and visual material, which will explain and amplify their responses, allowing you to immerse yourself in the time, atmosphere and nuances of their writing worlds thereby assisting you in the unlocking of your process of self-discovery.

Follow the module's icons, record the answers to all the tasks in your *Writer's Journal* and remember that self-reflection and self-analysis are draining, time-consuming processes, which must be undertaken thoroughly if any long lasting benefits are to be gained.

The Writers

The two writers have been carefully chosen for the purposes of this introductory module: they are from different countries and different centuries; they were both "originals" in their time, they represent two contrasting creative genres; they have contrasting personalities; both were popular yet serious artists for whom writing was a calling; and they both wrote during periods in history marked by turmoil, upheaval and change.

The two writers are Bob Dylan and Charles Dickens.



Bob Dylan was born Robert Allen Zimmerman on May 24, 1941 in Duluth, Minnesota, and grew up in the small town of Hibbing, Minnesota, the son of a hardware store owner. While still in high school he began to play guitar and harmonica, playing in a teen band called the Golden Chords. In 1959 Dylan went on to the University of Minnesota, where he spent more time playing folk music in local coffeehouses than studying. After one year he dropped out and hitchhiked to New York City where his first New York job earned him $2 for a one-night stand in a Greenwich Village coffee joint.[13]

From that obscure beginning Bob Dylan blew into mythology to become the poet laureate of a generation. He introduced the protest song to rock and made the words of his songs more important than the melody, more important than the beat. With his smoky, nasal voice he sang songs with a logic all their own, with words that could take the dark out of the night time and paint the daytime black.

As a singer and songwriter, Bob Dylan established himself as one of the twentieth century's most influential creators of popular music. His lyrics became part of the American language and articulated the feelings of a generation.



Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth, England, in 1812, and spent his early years in Chatham, a town in the coastal county of Kent. When he was about 12 years old, his father was arrested for debt and committed to London's Marshalsea Prison, whereupon Charles was sent to earn his own keep in a blacking (shoe polish) warehouse. Forced to support himself on the meagre wages of a child labourer, Dickens was plunged into a period of misery that continued to haunt him for the rest of his life. Partly as a

result of his early hardships, his novels show a remarkably developed social conscience.

Charles Dickens became one of the greatest and most popular writers in the history of literature. In his novels he combines masterly storytelling, humour, pathos, and irony with sharp social criticism and acute observation of people and places, both real and imagined.

The popularity of his writing spanned the great English class-divide. His novels were read by the working class people – something not achieved by any other novelist of his stature – and his contribution to English literature was acknowledged with his burial in Westminster Abbey.

Questions, Answers and Reflections

Q: What influence did your childhood have on your becoming a writer?



My grandmother raised me. She was a fantastic lady, and if I had any advantage over anybody at all, it's the advantage that I was all alone and could think and do what I wanted to.[18] I hated school and wanted to get away from Hibbing. The first time I tried to leave home, I was 10. With only my guitar and harmonica I got 900 miles away before police picked me up and sent me home by train. I got walloped, but not hard enough to make me stay. I took off again at 12 and five times after that, getting caught and walloped each time. But when I was 18, I made it.[22]



I was a lonely boy and would have given anything for a normal family life, to be able to attend school like other boys, but my father always lived far beyond his means. Two days after my 12th birthday my father and mother sent me to work in a blacking (shoe polish) warehouse.[19] From that day on I had to rely on my imagination to escape from the terrifying realities of my dark days in London.[30]

Task 2: Describe how your childhood may have influenced your desire to become a writer?

Q: Did you have any heroes or role models that you wanted to be like?



I cannot remember having any "human" heroes. My "the role models" were confined to those characters I discovered in my reading and theatrical exploits. To bring amusement to my solitary existence as a very small and neglected boy[27] I read, visited the theatre, daydreamed, pretended, acted in plays and made juvenile attempts at writing. I begin to see wonders in the commonplace[28] and could make an imaginative world out of strange experiences and sordid things.[62]



When I grew up, in the beginning, my biggest idol, when I was on stage, the one that ran through my head all that time, was Charlie Chaplin. And, well it would take a while to explain it, but I'd say he was one of the *men*.[56] Obviously Woody Guthrie was my first musical influence, followed by Little Richard and Hank Williams and, later on, the Beatles were doing some amazing stuff.

Charlie Chaplin
Woody Guthrie

Song

Lyrics

This Land Is Your Land

by Woody Guthrie

This land is your land
This land is my land
From California to
The New York Island

From the Redwood Forest
To the Gulf stream waters
This land was made for
You and me

As I went walking
That ribbon of highway
And saw above me
That endless skyway

Saw below me
That golden valley
This land was made for
You and me
➚

I roamed and rambled
And I followed my footsteps
To the sparkling sands
Of her diamond deserts

All around me
A voice was sounding
This land was made for
You and me

When the sun come shining
Then I was strolling
And the wheat fields waving
And the dust clouds rolling

The voice was chanting
As the fog was lifting
This land was made for
You and me
➚

This land is your land
This land is my land
From California to
The New York Island

From the Redwood Forest
To the Gulf stream waters
This land was made for
You and me

When the sun come shining
Then I was strolling
And the wheat fields waving
And the dust clouds rolling

The voice was chanting
And the fog was lifting
This land was made for
You and me

Little Richard

Song

Lyrics

Tutti Frutti

Lyrics by Dorothy LaBostrie/Little Richard/Joe Lubin

Wop bop a loo bop
A lop bomp bomp

Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
A wop bop a loo bop
A lop bomp bomp

I got a girl named Sue
She knows just what to do
I got a girl named Sue
She knows just what to do

She rock to the East
She rock to the West
But she`s the girl
That I love best

Tutti frutti, oh, rutti

I got a girl named Sue
She knows just what to do
I got a girl named Sue
She knows just what to do

She rock to the East
She rock to the West
But she`s the girl
That I love best

Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
A wop bop a loo bop
A lop bomp bomp

I got a girl named Daisy
She almost drive me crazy

Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
A wop bop a loo bop
A lop bomp bomp

I got a girl named Daisy
She almost drive me crazy
Got a girl named Daisy
She almost drive me crazy

She knows how
To love me, yes, indeed
Boy, you don`t know
What she`s doing to me

Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti

Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
A wop bop a loo
bop
A lop bomp bomp
↗

Got a girl named
Daisy
She almost drive me
crazy

She knows how
To love me, yes,
indeed
Boy, you don`t
know
What she`s doing to
me ↗

Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
Tutti frutti, oh, rutti
A wop bop a loo
bop
A lop bam boom

The Beatles

Song

Lyrics

Eleanor Rigby by Lennon & MacCartney

Ah, look at all the lonely people
Ah, look at all the lonely people

Eleanor Rigby
Picks up the rice in the church
Where a wedding has been
Lives in a dream

Waits at the window
Wearing the face that she
Keeps in a jar by the door
Who is it for

All the lonely people
Where do they all come from
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong ↗

Father McKenzie
Writing the words of a sermon
That no one will hear
No one comes near

Look at him working
Darning his socks in the night
When there`s nobody there
What does he care

All the lonely people
Where do they all come from
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong

Ah, look at all the lonely people
Ah, look at all the lonely people ↗

Eleanor Rigby
Died in the church and was
Buried along with her name
Nobody came

Father McKenzie
Wiping the dirt from his hands
As he walks from the grave
No one was saved

All the lonely people
Where do they all come from
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong

Task 3: Who are your heroes or role models? Explain why you want to follow their example or be like them?

Q: Were there any books or writers that inspired you?



All books inspired me, but those that left the most lasting impression were the books from my childhood. When I was still a young boy, I found an old spare room in our house at Chatham. It contained a store of books and I still remember some of their titles: Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, the Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, Robinson Crusoe, and of course the Arabian Nights. They were a host of friends when I had no single friend.[61]

Audio

From ***The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker***
by Tobias Smollett

Y*ou must know, the poor preacher, Humphry Clinker, is now exercising his ministry among the felons in Clerkenwell prison -- A postilion having sworn a robbery against him, no bail could be taken, and he was committed to jail, notwithstanding all the remonstrances and interest my uncle could make in his behalf. All things considered, the poor fellow cannot possibly be guilty, and yet, I believe, he runs some risque of being hanged. Upon his examination, he answered with such hesitation and reserve as persuaded most of the people, who crowded the place, that he was really a knave, and the justice's remarks confirmed their opinion. Exclusive of my uncle and myself, there was only one person who seemed inclined to favour the culprit. -- He was a young man, well dressed, and, from the manner in which he cross-examined the evidence, we took it for granted, that he was a student in one of the inns of court. -- He freely checked the justice for some uncharitable inferences he made to the prejudice of the prisoner, and even ventured to dispute with his worship on certain points of law.*

My uncle, provoked at the unconnected and dubious answers of Clinker, who seemed in danger of falling a sacrifice to his own simplicity, exclaimed, 'In the name of God, if you are innocent, say so.' 'No (cried he) God forbid that I should call myself innocent, while my conscience is burthened with sin.' 'What then, you did commit this robbery?' resumed his master. 'No, sure (said he) blessed be the Lord, I'm free of that guilt.'

Here the justice interposed, observing, that the man seemed inclined to make a discovery by turning king's evidence, and desired the clerk to take his confession; upon which Humphry declared, that he looked upon confession to be a popish fraud, invented by the whore of Babylon. The Templar affirmed, that the poor fellow was non compos; and exhorted the justice to discharge him as a lunatic.

Audio

The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle
by Tobias Smollett

It was now broad day, and all the servants of the inn were afoot. Peregrine, seeing it would be impossible to obtain any sort of indemnification for the time he had lost, and the perturbation of his spirits hindering him from enjoying repose, which was moreover obstructed by the noise of Pallet and his attendants, put on his clothes at once, and, in exceeding ill-humour, arrived at the spot where this triumvirate stood debating about the means of overpowering the furious painter, who still continued his song of oaths and execrations, and made sundry efforts to break open the door. Chagrined as our hero was, he could not help laughing when he heard how the patient had been treated; and his indignation changing into compassion, he called to him through the keyhole, desiring to know the reason of his distracted behaviour. Pallet no sooner recognized his voice than, lowering his own to a whimpering tone, "My dear friend!" said he, "I have at last detected the ruffians who have persecuted me so much. I caught them in the fact of suffocating me with cold water; and by the Lord, I will be revenged, or may I never live to finish my Cleopatra. For the love of God! open the door, and I will make that conceited pagan, that pretender to taste, that false devotee of the ancients, who poisons people with sillykicabies and devil's dung--I say, I will make him a monument of my wrath, and an example to all the cheats and impostors of the faculty; and as for that thick-headed insolent pedant, his confederate, who emptied my own jordan upon me while I slept, he had better have been in his beloved Paris, botching schemes for his friend the Pretender, than incur the effects of my resentment. Gadsbodikins! I won't leave him a windpipe for the hangman to stop, at the end of another rebellion."

Audio

From ***Don Quixote***
By Miguel de Cervantes

In converse of this sort the whole of that day went by, as did the four succeeding ones, without anything occurring to interrupt their journey, but on the fifth as they entered a village they found a great number of people at the door of an inn enjoying themselves, as it was a holiday. Upon Don Quixote's approach a peasant called out, "One of these two gentlemen who come here, and who don't know the parties, will tell us what we ought to do about our wager."

"That I will, certainly," said Don Quixote, "and according to the rights of the case, if I can manage to understand it."

"Well, here it is, worthy sir, "said the peasant; "a man of this village who is so fat that he weighs 20 stone challenged another, a neighbour of his, who does not weigh more than nine, to run a race. The agreement was that they were to run a distance of a hundred paces with equal weights; and when the challenger was asked how the weights were to be equalised he said that the other, as he weighed nine stone, should put eleven in iron on his back, and that in this way that twenty stone of the thin man would equal the twenty stone of the fat one."

"Not at all," exclaimed Sancho at once, before Don Quixote could answer; "it's for me, that only a few days ago left off being a governor and a judge, as all the world knows, to settle these doubtful questions and give an opinion in disputes of all sorts."

"Answer in God's name, Sancho my friend," said Don Quixote, "for I am not fit to give crumbs to a cat, my wits are so confused and upset."

With this permission Sancho said to the peasants who stood clustered round him, waiting with open mouths for the decision to come from his, "Brothers, what the fat man requires is not in reason, nor has it a shadow of justice in it; because, if it be true, as they say, that the challenged may choose the weapons, the other has no right to choose such as will prevent and keep him from winning. My decision, therefore, is that the fat challenger prune, peel, thin, trim and correct himself, and take eleven stone of his flesh off his body, here or there, as he pleases, and as suits him best; and being in this way reduced to nine stone weight, he will make himself equal and even with nine stone of his opponent, and they will be able to run on equal terms."

"By all that's good," said one of the peasants as he heard Sancho's decision, "but the gentleman has spoken like a saint, and given judgment like a canon! But I'll be bound the fat man won't part with an ounce of his flesh, not to say eleven stone."

"The best plan will be for them not to run," said another, "so that neither the thin man break down under the weight, nor the fat strip himself of his flesh; let half the wager be spent in wine, and let's take these gentlemen to the tavern where there's the best, and 'over me be the cloak when it rains."

"I thank you, sirs," said Don Quixote; "but I cannot stop for an instant, for sad thoughts and unhappy circumstances force me to seem discourteous and to travel apace;" and spurring Rocinante he pushed on, leaving them wondering at what they had seen and heard, at his own strange figure and at the shrewdness of his servant, for such as they took Sancho to be; and another of them observed, "If the servant is so clever, what must the master be? I'll bet, if they are going to Salamanca to study, they'll come to be alcaldes of the Court in a trice; for it's a mere joke – only to read and read, and have interest and good luck; and before a man knows where he is he finds himself with a staff in his hand or a miter on his head."

Audio

From ***Robinson Crusoe***
By Daniel Defoe

He was a comely, handsome fellow, perfectly well made, with straight, strong limbs, not too large, tall, and well-shaped, and, as I reckoned, about twenty-six years of age. He had a very good countenance, not a fierce and surly aspect, but seemed to have something very manly in his face; and yet he had all the sweetness and softness of an European in his countenance too, especially when he smiled. His hair was long and black, not curled like wool; his forehead very high and large; and a great vivacity and sparkling sharpness in his eyes. The color of his skin was not quite black, but very tawny; and yet not of an ugly, yellow, nauseous tawny, as the Brazilians and Virginians, and other natives of America are, but of a bright kind of a dun olive color, that had in it something very agreeable, though not very easy to describe. His face was round and plump; his nose small, not flat like the negroes; a very good mouth, thin lips, and his fine teeth well set, and white as ivory.

After he had slumbered, rather than slept, about half an hour, he waked again, and comes out of the cave to me, for I had been milking my goats, which I had in the enclosure just by. When he espied me, he came running to me, laying himself down again upon the ground, with all the possible signs of an humble, thankful disposition, making as many antic gestures to show it. At last he lays his head flat upon the ground, close to my foot, and sets my other foot upon his head, as he had done before, and after this made all the signs to me of subjection, servitude, and submission imaginable, to let me know how he would serve me as long as he lived. I understood him in many things, and let him know I was very well pleased with him. In a little time I began to speak to him, and teach him to speak to me; and, first, I made him know his name should be Friday, which was the day I saved his life. I called him so for the memory of the time. I likewise taught him to say master, and then let him know that was to be my name. I likewise taught him to say Yes and No, and to know the meaning of them. I gave him some milk in an earthen pot, and let him see me drink it before him, and sop my bread in it; and I gave him a cake of bread to do the like, which he quickly complied with, and made signs that it was very good for him.



I like Joseph Conrad a lot, and I loved what I have read of James Joyce. Allen Ginsberg is always a great inspiration.[57] William Blake is one of my favourite poets[58] and of course, I've always been fascinated by the simplicity of Byron's lines: *"What is it you buy so dear/With your pain and with your fear?"* Now that's a Byron line, but that could have been one of my lines.[59]

Allen Ginsberg

Audio

A Supermarket in California *by Allen Ginsberg*

What thoughts I have of you tonight, Walt Whitman, for I walked down the sidestreets under the trees with a headache self-conscious looking at the full moon.
In my hungry fatigue, and shopping for images,
I went into the neon fruit supermarket, dreaming of your enumerations!
What peaches and what penumbras! Whole families shopping at night! Aisles full of husbands! Wives in the avocados, babies in the tomatoes!--and you, Garcia Lorca, what were you doing down by the watermelons?
I saw you, Walt Whitman, childless, lonely old

Audio

A Poison Tree by William Balke

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I watered it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunnèd it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

grubber, poking among the meats in the refrigerator and eyeing the grocery boys.
I heard you asking questions of each: Who killed the pork chops? What price bananas? Are you my Angel?
I wandered in and out of the brilliant stacks of cans following you, and followed in my imagination by the store detective.
We strode down the open corridors together in our solitary fancy tasting artichokes, possessing every frozen delicacy, and never passing the cashier.
Where are we going, Walt Whitman? The doors close in an hour. Which way does your beard point tonight?
(I touch your book and dream of our odyssey in the supermarket and feel absurd.)
Will we walk all night through solitary streets?
The trees add shade to shade, lights out in the houses, we'll both be lonely.
Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love past blue automobiles in driveways, home to our silent cottage?
Ah, dear father, graybeard, lonely old courage-teacher, what America did you have when Charon quit poling his ferry and you got out on a smoking bank and stood watching the boat disappear on the black waters of Lethe?

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright;
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veiled the pole:
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

Excerpt from ***Don Juan*** by Lord Byron Audio

But words are things, and a small drop of ink,
Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think;
'Tis strange, the shortest letter which man uses
Instead of speech, may form a lasting link
Of ages; to what straits old Time reduces
Frail man, when paper - even a rag like this - ,
Survives himself, his tomb, and all that's his.

Task 4: What books or writers have inspired you? Describe what you find inspirational about them.

Q: How did your surroundings influence your writing?



My hometown, Hibbing Minnesota, would have been a slow, painful death for me. I never really came across anything until I lived in New York. New York was a dream,[78] a dream of cosmopolitan riches of the mind. It was special because it was a great place for me to learn and to meet others, who were on similar journeys. You know, just being there in that area, that part of the world was enlightening. And I love the sounds of the city, the sounds of the streets. It's an outdoor sound that drifts even into open windows that you can hear. The sound of bells and distant railroad trains and arguments in apartments and the clinking of silverware and knives and forks and beating with leather straps. It's all there.

1960's New York Film Footage



I used to call London my magic lantern. The City was indispensable, both to my imagination and my physical need to walk extensively while working on my books. Without the streets and crowds, my ideas seemed to stagnate. London was both wicked and detestable and wonderfully attractive. I was intimately familiar with the two faces of London; the dark, frightening city of my youth and the fascinating playground of my young manhood. The bustle and noise of the city were vital to my writing process.

19th Century London
Dickens' London

Text
Audio

Imagine yourself in the London of the early 19th century. Victorian London is the largest, most spectacular city in the world. England is in the throes of the Industrial Revolution and the coming of the railroad has displaced thousands and accelerated the expansion of the city from 1 million to 4.5 million people.

The homes of the upper and middle class exist in close proximity to areas of unbelievable poverty and filth. Rich and poor alike are thrown together in the crowded city streets. Street sweepers attempt to keep the streets clean of manure, the result of thousands of horse-drawn vehicles. The city's thousands of chimney pots are belching coal smoke, resulting in soot which seems to settle everywhere. Indoors personal cleanliness is not a big priority, nor is clean laundry. In close, crowded rooms the smell of unwashed bodies is stifling. It is unbearably hot by the fire, numbingly cold away from it. A candle or oil lamp struggles against the darkness and blacken the ceilings.

At night the major streets are lit with feeble gas lamps. Side and secondary streets may not be lit at all and link bearers are hired to guide the travellers to their destination. In many parts of the city raw sewage flows in gutters that empty into the Thames. Street vendors hawking their wares add to the cacophony of street noises. Pick-pockets, prostitutes, drunks, beggars, and vagabonds of every description add to the colourful multitude.

In *Little Dorrit* Dickens describes a London rainstorm:

> *In the country, the rain would have developed a thousand fresh scents, and every drop would have had its bright association with some beautiful form of growth or life. In the city, it developed only foul stale smells, and was a sickly, lukewarm, dirt- stained, wretched addition to the gutters.*

Task 5: How do your surroundings influence your writing? List the places that influence your creativity and explain why those specific locations inspire you.

Q: What was the biggest single factor that got your writing noticed?



My songs were original, if anything can be called original. When I came onto the scene all of the songs that were being sung were about love and romance. It was so easy to be different. It influenced me in the beginning when nobody had heard my style. The top acts were singing *"If I give my heart to you, will you handle it with care?"* or *"I'm giving sentimental over you."* The top hits on the Hot 100 were sung by people like Jimmy Gilmer and the Fireballs, Nino Tempo and April Stevens, Dale and Gracie, Bobby Vinton and the Singing Nun.[70] I tried to give a message that went beyond the traditional focus on the boy-meets-girl stereotype.[152] I call my earlier songs my finger-pointing songs. I jumped into the scene to be heard and I didn't see anybody else doing that kind of thing, you know pointing to all the things that are wrong.[156]

Jimmy Gilmer and the Fireballs

Song

Lyrics

Sugar Shack by Keith McCormick & Faye Voss

Theres a crazy little shack beyond the tracks
And evrybody calls it the sugar shack
Well, its just a coffeehouse and its made out of wood
Expresso coffee tastes mighty good
Thats not the reason why Ive got to get back
To that sugar shack, whoa baby
To that sugar shack.

Theres this cute little girlie, shes aworkin there
A black leotard and her feet are bare
Im gonna drink a lotta coffee, spend a little cash
Make that girl love me when I put on some trash
You can understand why I've got to get back

To that sugar shack, whoa baby
To that sugar shack, yeah honey
To that sugar shack, whoa yes
To that sugar shack.

Now that sugar shack queen is a married to me, yeah yeah.
We just sit around and dream of those old memories
Ah, but one of these days Im gonna lay down tracks
In the direction of that sugar shack
Just me and her yes were gonna go back

To that sugar shack,, whoa uh oh
To that sugar shack, yeah honey
To our sugar shack
yeh, yeh, yeh, our sugar shack

April Stevens

Lyrics

Song

Deep Purple Mitchell Parish & Peter de Rose

When the deep purple falls over sleepy garden walls
And the stars begin to flicker in the sky
Through the mist of a memory you wander back to me
Breathing my name with a sigh
In the still of the night once again I hold you tight
Though youre gone, your love lives on when moonlight beams
And as long as my heart will beat, lover well always meet
Here in my deep purple dreams
Here in my deep purple dreams

Bobby Vinton

Lyrics

Song

I Love How You Love Me by Bobby Vinton

I love how your eyes close whenever you kiss me
And when I'm away from you I love how you miss me
I love the way you always treat me tenderly
But, darling, most of all I love how you love me
(love how you love me)

I love how your heart beats whenever I hold you
I love how you think of me without being told to
I love the way your touch is always heavenly
But, darling, most of all I love how you love me
(love how you love me)

I love how your eyes close whenever you kiss me
And when I'm away from you I love how you miss me
I love the way your touch is always heavenly
But, darling, most of all I love how you love me (love how you love me)

I love how you hug me (love how you hug me)
I love how you squeeze me, tease me, please me
Love---how you love me
I love how you love me

Bob Dylan

Lyrics

Song

Blowin' in the Wind by Bob Dylan

How many roads must a man walk down
Before you call him a man?
Yes, 'n' how many seas must a white dove sail
Before she sleeps in the sand?
Yes, 'n' how many times must the cannon balls fly
Before they're forever banned?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

How many times must a man look up
Before he can see the sky?
Yes, 'n' how many ears must one man have
Before he can hear people cry?
Yes, 'n' how many deaths will it take till he knows
That too many people have died?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

How many years can a mountain exist
Before it's washed to the sea?
Yes, 'n' how many years can some people exist
Before they're allowed to be free?
Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn his head,
Pretending he just doesn't see?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

Lyrics

Song

The Times They are a Changin' by Bob Dylan

Come gather 'round people
Wherever you roam

Come mothers and fathers
Throughout the land

And admit that the waters
Around you have grown
And accept it that soon
You'll be drenched to the bone.
If your time to you
Is worth savin'
Then you better start swimmin'
Or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changin'.

Come writers and critics
Who prophesize with your pen
And keep your eyes wide
The chance won't come again
And don't speak too soon
For the wheel's still in spin
And there's no tellin' who
That it's namin'.
For the loser now
Will be later to win
For the times they are a-changin'.

Come senators, congressmen
Please heed the call
Don't stand in the doorway
Don't block up the hall
For he that gets hurt
Will be he who has stalled
There's a battle outside
And it is ragin'.
It'll soon shake your windows
And rattle your walls
For the times they are a-changin'.

And don't criticize
What you can't understand
Your sons and your daughters
Are beyond your command
Your old road is
Rapidly agin'.
Please get out of the new one
If you can't lend your hand
For the times they are a-changin'.

The line it is drawn
The curse it is cast
The slow one now
Will later be fast
As the present now
Will later be past
The order is
Rapidly fadin'.
And the first one now
Will later be last
For the times they are a-changin'.



My writing was unusual. There was a sharp difference between the world of my novels and the traditional literary offerings of silver-fork novels, the Annuals, romantic-historical thrillers and political-economy tales.[68] My books dealt with the issues and troubles affecting mid-Victorian England.[149]

Dickens' *Originality*

Audio

"The success of Dickens' first novel owes more to its newness than to what it has in common with familiar recipes.[175] *Dickens is a completely original writer. Dickens should be compared to no one, since no one has ever written like him – no one has ever combined the nicety of observation, the fineness of tact, the exquisite humour, the wit, heartiness, sympathy with all things good and beautiful – with the same force that he has done."*[176]

Silver-fork Novel

Audio

From ***The Old Grey Church***

There they are, and Miss Lushington, no doubt, quite safe; for she is under the holy guidance of Pope Eustace the First, who has, of course, been delivering to her an edifying homily on the wickedness of the heathens of yore, who~ as tradition tells us, in this very place let loose the wild *beasties* on poor St. Paul! -- Oh, no! by-the-bye, I believe I am wrong, and betraying my want of clergy, and that it was not at all St. Paul, nor was it here. But no matter, it would equally serve as a text to preach from, and from which to diverge to the degenerate *heathen* Christians of the present day, and all their naughty practices, and so end with an exhortation to 'come out from among them, and be separate';- and I am sure, Miss Lushington, you have most scrupulously conformed to that injunction this evening, for we have seen nothing of you since our arrival. But every one seems agreed it has been a charming party of pleasure, and I am sure we all feel much indebted to Mr. Grey for having suggested it; and as he seems so capital a cicerone, I hope he will think of something else equally agreeable to all. (George Elliot Essay)

Romantic-historical Novel

Audio

From ***Ivanhoe***

by Sir Walter Scott

When the first moments of surprise were over, Wilfred of Ivanhoe demanded of the Grand Master, as judge of the field, if he had manfully and rightfully done his duty in the combat?

"Manfully and rightfully hath it been done," said the Grand Master; "I pronounce the maiden free and guiltless—The arms and the body of the deceased knight are at the will of the victor."

"I will not despoil him of his weapons," said the Knight of Ivanhoe, "nor condemn his corpse to shame—he hath fought for Christendom—God's arm, no human hand, hath this day struck him down. But let his obsequies be private, as becomes those of a man who died in an unjust quarrel.—And for the maiden—"

He was interrupted by a clattering of horses' feet, advancing in such numbers, and so rapidly, as to shake the ground before them; and the Black Knight galloped into the lists. He was followed by a numerous band of men-at-arms, and several knights in complete armour.

"I am too late," he said, looking around him. "I had doomed Bois-Guilbert for mine own property.—Ivanhoe, was this well, to take on thee such a venture, and thou scarce able to keep thy saddle?"

"Heaven, my Liege," answered Ivanhoe, "hath taken this proud man for its victim. He was not to be honoured in dying as your will had designed."

"Peace be with him," said Richard, looking steadfastly on the corpse, "if it may be so—he was a gallant knight, and has died in his steel harness full knightly. But we must waste no time.—Bohun, do thine office!"

A knight stepped forward from the King's attendants, and, laying his hand on the shoulder of Albert de Malvoisin, said, "I arrest thee of high treason."

The Grand Master had hitherto stood astonished at the appearance of so many warriors.—He now spoke.

"Who dares to arrest a Knight of the Temple of Zion, within the girth of his own Preceptory, and in the presence of the Grand Master? and by whose authority is this bold outrage offered?"

"I make the arrest," replied the Knight—"I, Henry Bohun, Earl of Essex, Lord High Constable of England."

"And he arrests Malvoisin," said the King, raising his visor, "by the order of Richard Plantagenet, here present.—Conrade Mont-Fitchet, it is well for thee thou art born no subject of mine.—But for thee, Malvoisin, thou diest with thy brother Philip, ere the world be a week older."

"I will resist thy doom," said the Grand Master.

"Proud Templar," said the King, "thou canst not—look up, and behold the Royal Standard of England floats over thy towers instead of thy Temple banner!—Be wise, Beaumanoir, and make no bootless opposition.—Thy hand is in the lion's mouth."

Audio

From ***Bleak House***

It must be a strange state to be like Jo! To shuffle through the streets, unfamiliar with the shapes, and in utter darkness as to the meaning, of those mysterious symbols, so abundant over the shops, and at the corners of streets, and on the doors, and in the windows! To see people read, and to see people write, and to see the postman deliver letters, and not, to have the least idea of all that language – to be, to every scrap of it, stone blind and dumb! It must be very puzzling to see the good company going to the churches on Sundays, with their books in their hands, and to think (for perhaps Jo *does* think, at odd times) what does it all mean, and if it means anything to anybody, how comes it that it means nothing to me? To be hustled, and jostled, and moved on; and really to feel that it would appear to be perfectly true that I have no business, here, or there, or anywhere; and yet to be perplexed by the consideration that I *am* here somehow, too, and everybody overlooked me until I became the creature that I am! It must be a strange state, not merely to be told that I am scarcely human (as in the case of my offering myself for a witness), but to feel it of my own knowledge all my life! To see the horses, dogs, and cattle, go by me, and to know that in ignorance I belong to them, and not to the superior beings in my shape, whose delicacy I offend! Jo's ideas of a Criminal Trial, or a Judge, or a Bishop, or a Government, or that inestimable jewel to him (if he only knew it) the Constitution, should be strange! His whole material and immaterial life is wonderfully strange; his death, the strangest thing of all. (258)

Task 6: Describe how you would define originality. How will you make your writing different so that it is noticed?

Q: How do you find originality in the familiarity of everyday life?



I looked at the world around me from a different viewpoint. My books dealt with the issues and troubles affecting nineteen-century England.[149] It was a deeply divided, class-ridden society driven by the desire for wealth, for position and for affluence.[150] Most authors focused on the lives of the affluent society in their writing. I created a picture of the condition of England from a different perspective. I presented its downtrodden, the vice and hunger and emphasised the injustices, the inefficiencies and abuses of power.[155] From my perspective, the purpose of my writing was to expose those things that society was unwilling or afraid to look at, but to do so in a humane and entertaining manner.[153]



I look for the areas where no precedent has been set and try to do something that I don't think has ever been done before[170] by coming at things from different sides to get a different perspective, a different angle on what I am trying to focus on.[171] I've always seen things that other people don't see. I feel things other people don't feel. It's terrible. They laugh. I felt like that my whole life.[172] My thinking has always been that if I didn't have any thing different to say to people then what would be the point of it?[174]

Perspectives

Creative writing is all about looking at the world and life from different or unusual perspectives. The writer's perspective should always give the reader a refreshingly different view of a subject and this "new" perspective often entails extensive research into the writer's subject matter.

Task 7: Carefully study Eddie Adams' famous photograph, "Saigon Execution".

1. **Write a five hundred word dialogue between three soldiers at the South Vietnamese army barracks the evening after the execution took place. The main character in the dialogue is the South Vietnamese soldier standing on the extreme left of the photograph.**
2. **Read the background information on the circumstances surrounding the execution and then write a five hundred word monologue of the thoughts going through the mind of Eddie Adams, the photographer, immediately prior to and after the execution.**

Execution Background

"Saigon Execution" was probably the most well known photograph from the Vietnam War, so famous that it ended up winning Eddie Adams, the photographer, a Pulitzer Prize. Yet this image was a very unsettling one; it portrayed General Nguyen Ngoc Loan of the South Vietnamese Army, the United States Ally, brutally murdering a harmless man in the middle of the street. One look into that poor man's face, and anyone can clearly see the fear and desperation that were overwhelming him. This photograph would emerge to be a prominent symbol of all that was wrong with the war. And this made Americans question what they were doing in Vietnam and why the U.S. was fighting in defense of these brutal killers.

But Eddie Adams explained that most people who saw "Saigon Execution" merely saw a scared, cowering man being executed in cold blood, but what they didn't see was the eight South Vietnamese that this Vietcong prisoner had murdered, including a policeman and his family, just previous to his capture and execution.

"The general killed the Viet Cong; I killed the general with my camera. Still photographs are the most powerful weapon in the world. People believe them, but photographs do lie, even without manipulation. They are only half-truths. What the photograph didn't say was, 'What would you do if you were the general at that time and place on that hot day, and you caught the so-called bad guy after he blew away one, two or three American soldiers?"

Q: What is the most important skill a writer can develop?



Observation and memory are the source of the writer's materials. I was fortunate that I always had an eager curiosity for the sights to be found in everyday life.[39] My fascination with and observations of everyday life, coupled with my desire to entertain, were the driving force behind my literary accomplishments.[42] I taught myself to observe and to absorb what I observed. I trained my eyes and ears to such an extent that nothing escaped me and in that way I received the most valuable suggestions and hints of character.[137] I used to stride through the crowded streets, looking seemingly neither right nor left, but at the same time I was looking at and into everything. London life provided a myriad of aspects. It was an ever-changing raree-sshow, a spectacle, and endless roundabout, an infinite kaleidoscope of wealth and pauperism, aare the happiness and misery, of good and evil.[138] I observed and dealt with real life by looking on my mind as a sort of capitally prepared and highly sensitive plate, which received impressions of people and places from all walks of life, and then stored that the information for later use. My mind made little fanciful photographs of everything that impressed me.[142]



I would have is to say observing, seeing and hearing. People are bombarded by sights, sounds, random thoughts and outside impulses. I pick something and create a song out of them.[140] In New York there was a constant movement of people, musicians, painters, people who travel. I'd go everywhere where there are people. I listened to them talking. I listened to them chatting and pick up on their feelings.[74] Sometimes I'd spend whole days sitting at a corner table in coffee house looking at people for hours, making things up about them.[135] I suppose you could say that I absorb the world's information before creating my songs, grasp a moment, sing it for that moment and then keep the experience within myself.[136]

Task 8: Pay a visit to your local coffee shop. Listen to the conversations of the people around you. Capture and record authentic fragments of dialogue. Pay attention to how people really talk, including the slang they use, their pauses or incomplete thoughts. Listen until you have enough dialogue to tell a story. Write a scene that tells a five hundred word story – about the people, about the place, about that moment in time – through the dialogue.

Q: If there is one tip you could give young writers, what would it be?



Fiction should always supply readers with an emotional and imaginative experience.[214] The intensely human quality of the novel should not be avoided. It should be sogged with humanity. Some people may hate humanity, but I believe that if it is exorcised or even purified, the novel wilts and little is left, but a bunch of words.[215]

Write to move your reader. Readers expect to be moved. They don't read to kill time or have the words show them something they are aware of. They want to be moved because that's what writing is supposed to do. It's supposed to take you out of your chair. It's supposed to move you from one space to another.[220]



Task 9: Reflect on a reading-, film- or music-experience that has affected you, either emotionally or intellectually, and describe what elements or qualities of the text, film or song caused you to be "moved".

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Workshop 2

Critical Feedback – Parameters

Some Guidelines

Peter Elbow*

Feedback Parameters

1. Writing groups are not therapy.
2. A writing group should be a safe house.
3. Writers are in control of what they submit and read to the group. The following method ensures that writers have reasonable control over the discussion of their writing:

    - The writers tell the group what they should listen for and what specific feedback they want.
    - The writer reads the text or extract aloud. Reading aloud lets writers hear their words and will often prompt self-correction or revision and is a powerful way to establish ownership of their words.
    - Readers respond to the writer's concerns first.
    - The group should offer suggestions rather than directions.
    - All writing should be distributed and read before the meeting of the writing group

4. The writer doesn't need to follow every piece of advice.
5. Constructive criticism with reasons
6. No interruptions

7. Humane responses
8. Feedback should be Reader-Based and not Criterion-Based

Criterion-based feedback helps you find out how your writing measures up to certain criteria. To get criterion-based feedback you ask readers four broad, fundamental questions:

- What is the quality of the content of the writing: the ideas, the perceptions, the point of view?
- How well he is the writing organised?
- How effective is the language?
- Are their mistakes or inappropriate choices in usage?

Reader-based feedback, instead of telling you how your writing measures up to the established criteria, tells you what your writing does to particular readers. To get reader-based feedback you ask readers three broad fundamental questions:

- What was happening to you, moment by moment, as you were reading the piece of writing?
- Summarise the writing: give your understanding of what it says or what happened in it.
- Make up some images for the writing and the transaction it creates with you.

Criterion-based feedback tells you how your writing measures up, reader-based feedback tells you what it does to readers. What is its quality? versus How does it work?

**Writing with Power*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 240-1.

The group is a great sounding board for the writers, who will hear surprising and diverse readings of their work. It is a great privilege to have one's work read attentively. However, the writers are in control of what they say and how they say it and their job is not to please everybody, but to use the responses in a way that helps them realise what seems right to them. Writers must retain ownership of their work.

Audience or Readership

General Comments

Peter Elbow* explains the readership dilemma in the following terms and highlights the issues, which should concern all writers during their writing processes:

- Some audiences are inviting or enabling, while others are inhibitory. What usually happens is that audience awareness disturbs our writing without completely blocking it.
- Writers need to learn when their audience awareness is getting in the way.
- The ideal is to write with a writer focus and revise with audience awareness.
- Writers start out social and plugged into others and need to learn to unplug in order to function in a more differentiated fashion. The ability to turn off the audience and move to desert island mode is a valuable skill, not to consider their readers, but to learn how to engage in a reflective process with the self.
- The writer can never really be isolated, is always in the crowd. The self can be an audience as well. Even though, there is always an audience, the writer can escape the inhibiting one and have an inviting one, making the self an inviting audience as well.
- If writers need to suppress the external audience in order to write well, suppressing the self as audience will also enhance their writing skills

**Writing with Power*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 191-8.

Reader Response*

Wolfgang Iser

In considering a literary work, one must take into account not only the actual text, but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to that text. The literary work has two poles, which are what

we might call the artistic and the esthetic: the artistic refers to the text created by the author, and the esthetic to the realisation accomplished by the reader.

The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence. As the reader uses the various perspectives offered him by the text in order to relate the patterns and the schematised views to one another, he sets the work in motion, and this very process results ultimately in the awakening of responses within himself. Thus, reading causes the literary work to unfold its inherently dynamic character.

Reader Imagination

Wolfgang Iser

The truest respect, which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to ... leave him something to imagine. The conception of a literary text is that it is something like an arena in which reader and author participate in a game of the imagination. If the reader were given the whole story, and there were nothing left for him to do, then his imagination would never enter the field. The result would be the boredom, which inevitably arises when everything is laid out cut and dried before us. Reading is only a pleasure when it is active and creative. In this process of creativity, the text may either not go far enough, or may go too far, so we may say that boredom and overstrain form the boundaries beyond which the reader will leave the field of play.

The fact that completely different readers can be differently affected by the 'reality' of a particular text is ample evidence of the degree to which the literary texts transform reading into a creative process that he is far above mere conception of what is written. The literary text activates our own faculties, enabling us to recreate the world it presents. The product of this creative activity is what we might call the virtual dimension of the text, which endows it with its reality. This virtual dimensional is not the text itself, nor is it the imagination of the reader: it is the coming together of text and imagination.

* J.P. Tompkins, *Reader Response Criticism*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980, pp. 50-4.

Descriptive Writing – Showing, not Telling

As writers, our words are nothing more than black ink on white paper. To engage the reader, our use of words must generate images and emotions, which capture the reader's attention and imagination ensuring his or her involvement and participation in our written work. Our writing becomes animated and intriguing through the effective use of descriptive language, which *shows*, *not tells*, the reader what we are conveying through the written word.

Showing is a form of description, which invites and entices readers to formulate images and emotions in their own minds, forcing them to jump into our writing. Anything less cheats the reader from experiencing our imaginary world. However, when a writer *tells*, the writer stands between the reader and the written word causing the reader to feel removed and detached from the words on the page. *Showing* brings your language closer to the reader, while *telling* excludes the reader.

Consider the following examples:

Telling: *The woman was sad.*
Showing: *The woman wept.*

Telling: *Simon was so angry that George was afraid of him.*
Showing: *Simon grabbed the front of George's shirt and slammed him into the wall.*
George fought to breathe, his heart hammering.

To *show*, *not to tell*, your readers, is the most fundamental, and valuable, principle of descriptive writing and it applies to all creative writing genres including prose fiction, drama and poetry.

Some Guidelines

- The use of vivid **adjectives and adverbs** is a relatively simple technique, which we can use to enhance our descriptive language, to *show* our readers the "colour" of our imaginary world.

But, adverbs and adjectives should always be used selectively, with care and restraint as they quickly start to sound artificial and tend to bog down sentences if used inappropriately, for example

The graceful white gulls hovered lazily above the shimmering blue sea as the glistening, golden sun beamed brightly.

- Our inappropriate use of adjectives can result in our *telling* the readers rather than *showing* them our stories. We can overcome this obstacle by using verbs that *show* instead of adjectives that *tell*. **Verbs-of-doing** *show* our readers, while verbs-of-being merely *tell* them our story.

  For example in the lyrics of their song, *Change the World,* Westlife's predominant use of verbs-of-being have a passive, *telling* effect on their lyrics:

  *I **know** that I've/Lost much more than pride*
  ***Seems** like everything is wrong*
  I **need** a miracle now

In the lyrics of his song, *Hard* Rain, Bob Dylan uses verbs-of-doing as an alternative to using adjectives:

tongues were all **broken** instead of **useless** tongues
hands were a-**blazin**' instead of **fast** hands

- *When we use language that is broad, general and abstract we are invariably* telling *readers our stories, but, when our writing is filled with detailed descriptions in language that is* ***specific and concrete****, we* show *readers our imaginary world. Notice how Bob Dylan employs this technique in* Hard Rain *with his use of concrete, specific nouns and strong verbs (and vivid adjectives):*

  *Heard one hundred **drummers** whose hands were a-**blazin***
  *I've walked and I've **crawled** on six crooked **highways***
  *I've **stumbled** on the side of twelve misty **mountains***

- The effective use of descriptive language and *showing, not telling* the reader can generate memorable images in the minds of readers and can be powerful enough to contain a whole story in one line. Consider these lines from *Hard Rain*:

  I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children,
  Heard the roar of a wave that could drown the whole world.
  Heard ten thousand whisperin' and nobody listenin'.
  I saw a newborn baby with wild wolves all around it.
  Heard the sound of a clown who cried in the alley.

Show, not Tell – Exercise

She could barely restrain her anger at this comment.

Rewrite this sentence showing, and not telling, the reader about her anger.

She smiled in response and her knuckles creaked as her fingers twisted the cloth serviette into tight little knots.

Roger knew that he had said the wrong thing when his wife smiled and twisted his finger under the table until tears filled his eyes.

Workshop 3

Writing Journal Extract Example

The exercises in left-hand and right-hand, left-brain and right-brain response was fascinating. Strangely, using the non-dominant hand was enlightening both in terms of drawing and writing, less

logical and structured, more of an adventure, more emotion and fantasy emerging. A recalled memory suddenly had extra dimensions of tension, aromas and danger, which were not there when using the dominant hand. There was also less writer's anxiety, almost as if the left hand was revelling in being given some freedom to act out and communicate with the outside world at last, to give an alternate perspective to the dominant, stifled, suppressed and regulated by customs and rules and expectations of the right hand. Maybe the dominant hand and the dominant side of the mind can be symbolic of the mature, adult, indoctrinated self always conforming and doing what is right, while the left hand remains innocent, childlike, experimental, but dominated and suppressed and hardly ever allowed to reveal itself. Perhaps this is my constant "writing battle", the child wanting to escape, but the emotion and spontaneity being muzzled by expectations and "doing and writing the right things", restricted by convention and forced to adhere to the standards of all literature, the traditional boxes of genre and style.

But why do I want to write and fight the never ending, seemingly insurmountable or "unwinable" "writing battle"? That is the annoying question that is always at the back of my mind. Charles Dickens said that he *"writes to be read"*. That was easy for him to say and do in his time when the novel was all there was and the volume of writing was far less than it is today. He also didn't have the proliferation of "texts" to compete against. His society was a reading society. Today we are living in a world that looks and listens. Individuals find using their imaginations an onerous and taxing exercise. The obstacles a writer faces are daunting to say the least. So isn't the effort you put into writing actually a total waste of time? The ultimate goal is obviously to "write to be read", to have one's work published, but how much chance is there of that happening? Even the pre-eminent University of East Anglia warns prospective students *"Writing successfully needs strong gifts, considerable resilience, and a certain amount of luck."* It seems a writer must be strong and persistent, but has little chance of being published. It conjures up an image of a gambler with a stubbly beard, weary eyes, a dirty collared shirt, skew tie and sweat soaked armpits bent over a green-clothed table clutching his remaining chips in his shaking fingers. If being a "successful" writer is all about chance, beating the odds, having your writing recognised and plucked from the mass of billions, maybe trillions of words written by other writers every year, why, like a compulsive gambler, do writers persist in putting in the time, emotion, passion and effort for no practical return?

So the answer to the question of what to write is really quite simple: you write for yourself, you write about what intrigues you, what excites you, what you are passionate about and if your writing finds an audience, who shares your feelings and can associate with your words, that's the ultimate prize, but you are never going to pre-guess what your audience is going enjoy or appreciate.

I must not put any obstacles in the way or be restricted by convention or expectations. I must let the writing choose its own style and form and let's see what happens. It is more of an adventure this way. If, as a writer, I am actually a gambler, then surely I am free to choose and devise the "game of chance" that I want to play. If I am not going to "win" then I must at least gain the excitement and satisfaction if I am wagering my passion, time and effort.

Participant and Spectator Texts*

*Judith and Geoffrey Summerfield, Texts and Contexts: A Contribution to the Theory and Practice of Teaching Composition, **New York: Random House, 1988** and as developed as a writing exercise by Dr Pamela Nichols, *Writing: Theory and Praxis*, University of the Witwatersrand.

Example 1

[written in response to Participant and Spectator Exercise in *Writing: Theory and Praxis* module 2004]

Untitled by Mpho Molefe

Participant

A consistent, haunting eye suspended effortlessly in the sky. The chilling, biting and crispy breeze wafts it home. A tidy and dreary expedition we call life beckons him to our long awaited destiny. He reigns on it like Freud psychoanalysing his patients. You listen to its purring resonances and reverberations of its heart. Its veins, arteries, atriums, ventricles as it swiftly drifts along. A crimson beverage gushing like sea waves, bolt through the dark crevices and cavities of its torso, as it is propelled and hurled in a violent motion.

The consistent, haunting eye stalks it as it ravenously gobbles at life's hills and everlasting valleys. It drones in a terrifying growl as his eyes relish in ejaculation, a rash helicopter glimpse of the scenic view. A lilting voice of Rodney Trudgeon echoes through its knocks and alcoves the enchanting music of *Alger*, *Grieg*, *Wagner* and *Telemann*. A crimson beverage continues to pump like adrenalin feeding the wild demon into a frenzy spur as you hold it in subjugation. It hastens quietly in its bidding as he revels in his domain. A tardy and dreary expedition we call life continues weaving, entwining and twisting to a sure destiny.

Patience fails him. The thing keeps on muttering as it laps and licks. Its round erectile gadget evokes an erotic feeling as he manipulates and massages it. He lords over it. It can be fatal if one is a novice, but with his skilled mastery, he is safe. It proceeds majestically pecking obstacles away. He reigns over the Japanese modern technology. Flashing neon winks, links and nictitates as the night falls upon the face of the earth. Its bright set of eyes cut through incisively and dartingly swallowing the dark blanket. He continues to reign over it as it submits unquestioningly to his whim. His heart pounds in awe. The expedition keeps on unfolding almost endlessly. He touches it. He throws his read-blooded, libidinous weight on it – his hands, his feet, his buttocks and the thing with no sign of rebellion keeps whispering: 'Yes My Lord'. From Radio classic, he switches over to radio Setswana and the music appropriately goes: 'Nanana take me home, take me home six mabone'.
The chasm widens further.
His head spins.
He can't believe his eyes.
The gate opens.
Finally Home.

Spectator

It is Monday evening after the Master's writing class at Wits. He is driving home in a Toyota motor car at a deadly speed. The powerful engine purrs like a cat as the petrol pumps through all engine parts of the car as though giving it a bath. His foot rests flat on the accelerator. The road seems endlessly long. He is exhausted, cold and hungry. She is tuned to radio classic with Rodney Trudgeon's voice booming as he plays his favourite classical tunes soothing the pain of his long journey home. He feels in control as his car ferries him swiftly through the fully lit long Ontdekkers Road towards Krugersdorp. While driving he begins to fantasise about two lovers in a romantic mood as he swirls and swerves the steering wheel of his car, this gives him a pleasurable and triumphant feeling. He decides to tune to radio Setswana, the words of his favourite song: 'Nanana take me home, take me home six mabone', are heard on the radio. Nanana is 'tsotsi taal' for a car in English. Not very long the gate opens and alas! he is home.

Participant

Example 2

[written in response to Participant and Spectator Exercise in *Writing: Theory and Praxis* module 2004]

Shopping by Pieter Oberholzer

Liars. They're all liars. I didn't see any flash of white light. My life didn't pass before my eyes. There was no superspeed-rewind of my existence. It was a lie, all lies.

So this is what it looks like? I open my eyes and look around me, my head shifting from side to side, up and down. I feel the comfort of Julie's hand on mine as she squeezes, smiles and says "Hi." A little fist punches my arm. "Hey, dad."

Stunned with shock and disbelief, my eyes explore the room. *So this is it? This is what it looks like.* Wood-panelled walls, famous paintings in gilt frames. There's the *Mona Lisa*. Is that a *Piccaso*? That is one of *Van Gogh*'s, but I can't remember its name. This sofa sure is comfortable. It looks like a Chesterfield, a rich burgundy colour and soothing to the touch. *This is certainly not the way I imagined it would be.*

I jump with a start at the sound of a gong as a large red electronic arrow on the wall flashes down for several seconds and goes dark. I noticed a white arrow above it pointing up. *So that is how it works*. I jump again, my fascination interrupted by a deep voice.

"How are you here?" For the first time I notice that we are not alone. Sitting upright in a dark brown Chesterfield chair is a middle-aged man in a tuxedo. He is twirling a luxuriant, black moustache like the one I could never have and always secretly wanted.

"How are you here?" he asked again with a patient tone. I could feel my brow tighten as I struggled to comprehend his question until I felt the tightness in the centre of my forehead. I passed my hand across my brow and located a hole with my finger and understood what he meant.

"Oh yeah. How am I here?"

"Bullet", I said sticking my pinkie into the hole in my head.

"Small calibre. Instantaneous", I added feeling the smile on my face. I turned to Julie and pointed to a hole in her blouse and she responded.

"It hit my heart, the left ventricle I think. It took about five minutes. The blood flooded my lungs and chest cavity. Not too painful, but I obviously would have preferred instantaneous, but that was not to be."

"That's nothing," my boy Luke interrupted. "Look at this." He stood up, turned around with his back to moustache-man and pointed to the gaping hole in the back of his head. "It must have been a 9 mm at least to make such a big hole, don't you think? He turned to face the man. "I tried to run away, but he was quite a good shot. I almost made it to the door", he said with a grin of pride.

"Robbery?" tuxedo asked.

"No. Shopping", I replied and he nodded knowingly.

"And you", I asked him. "How are you here?"

"Arterial Thrombosis. Heart attack." The words dripped from his lips, while his hand stroked his hairy caterpillar. "Cholesterol?" I inquired, feigning interest.

"No. Infidelity", he responded clenching his fist and banging it on the arm of the chair.

"I came home early from a business cocktail party and went to the kitchen for a glass of water. My wife and brother were busy on the kitchen table."

"Did they take you to the hospital?"

"No. I didn't make it." A sudden grin strains under the weight of his hairy upper lip showing his perfect white teeth as he reaches into his jacket's inside pocket.

"But neither did my wife and brother." He pulls out a bloodied carving knife and, holding it between two fingers, he offers it to us for inspection.

"You just missed them. They got the red arrow down. Exactly what they deserved. It was disgusting." His voice became a growl.

"Lying there, in amongst the breakfast things, plates, knives and forks, orange juice, *Rice Crispies* and *All Bran Flakes* …"

What am I thinking? I must stay calm. I've never been a pessimist and I won't start now. I mustn't panic for Julie and Luke's sake. I'm the man, the pillar of strength and control. I must stay calm, keep my mind off our situation. *All Bran Flakes*. Read a cereal box. I didn't know that *All Bran Flakes* may contain traces of peanuts. What do peanuts have to do with cereal products? Are their rogue peanuts skulking around the cereal factory jumping into the cereal mixture in protest at their exclusion from the cereal making process? And what is Pantothenic acid? Would you look at the dust under these shelves? Do health inspectors still exist? And just look at the cracks in these tiles. Bacteria heaven …

Are those footsteps? Let me put my ear to the dirty floor. They are coming closer … closer … THIS IS IT.

A blue boot. Oh no. It's a blue boot. A blue boot means only one thing. Bullets, blood, guts and mayhem. The blue boot philosophy is quite simple: kill anything that moves. You can always ask questions and clean up the mess later.

"You can get up sir", the blue boot said. "The perpetrators have been apprehended. You're safe now. Please make your way to the entrance. Yes sir, you can take your box of cereal with you, just be sure to pay for it at the checkout."

Workshop 4

The Short Story (Handout)

- It is a 'story'.
- Its traditional structure consists of a beginning, a middle and an end.
- It should capture and maintain the reader's attention.
- It should have some purpose in mind.
- It can be written in its 'traditional' form, but can be the subject of experimentation.

It is the most economic writing format for developing writing skills in terms of elements such as plot, characterisation, description and dialogue for 'larger' genres such as the novel, plays and screenplays.

> *It is important to understand the basic elements of fiction writing before you consider how to put everything together. This process is comparable to producing something delectable in the kitchen – any ingredient that you put into your bowl of dough impacts your finished loaf of bread. To create a perfect loaf, you must balance ingredients baked for the correct amount of time and enhanced with the right polishing glaze. (Laurel Yourke)*

The Elements of the Short Story

1. Plot · series of related events that make up a story
2. Conflict · struggle between opposing forces
    - human vs. human · external struggle between two or more individuals
    - human vs. him/herself · internal struggle concerning emotion and decision
    - human vs. nature · external struggle between man and an element of nature
3. Complication · mini-conflicts that contribute to the rise in action
4. Climax · turning point of the story; emotional high point (for the character, not the reader)
5. Falling action · events that lead to resolution
6. Resolution · outcome of the conflict

Four Types of Characterization · techniques the writer uses to develop character

- Physical description
- Speech and actions of the character
- Direct comment from the narrator
- Speech and actions of other characters

Themes of Literature

1. Motivation · cause of actions
2. Behaviour · actions of the character
3. Consequences · results of actions
4. Responsibility · moral, legal, or mental accountability
5. Expectations

Setting/Description

1. Sensory details · words that appeal to the senses
2. Figurative language
    - Simile
    - Metaphor
    - Personification

The Theme

Have a clear theme. The theme refers to the point you are expressing in the story. What is the underlying message or statement behind the words? Get this right and your story will have more resonance in the minds of your readers. Every piece of writing must have a message or thread of meaning running through it, and this theme is the skeleton or framework on which you hang your plot, characters and setting. As you write, make sure that every word is related to this theme. Every excess word is a word that dilutes the impact of your story. The best stories are the ones that follow a narrow subject line. Stories that work express themselves without the feeling of didacticism, or that one is being taught a moral lesson; rather, the lesson of the story sits within the plot and development of character naturally, and therefore powerfully.

Collect stories from everyone you meet. Keep the amazing, the unusual, the strange, the irrational stories you hear and use them for your own purposes. Study them for the underlying meaning and apply them to your understanding of the human condition.

Plot

Begin with a first paragraph or lead, arresting enough to grab the readers and make them curious to know what happens next. Make sure your plot works - there must be a beginning, a middle and an end. But don't spend too much time on the build-up, so that the climax or denouement (as in the twist ending) is relegated to one sentence, leaving the reader bothered and bemused but sadly, not bewitched. And don't signal the twist ending too soon - try to keep the reader guessing until the last moment. If you're telling a fast-moving story then keep your paragraphs and sentences short. It's a trick that sets the pace and adds to the atmosphere you're conveying to the reader.

Plot is what happens, the storyline, the action. “A plot is a series of events deliberately arranged so as to reveal their dramatic, thematic, and emotional significance.” (*Janet Burroway*) Understanding these story elements for developing actions and their end results will help you plot your short story:

- **Explosion or "Hook."** A thrilling, gripping, stirring event or problem that grabs the reader's attention right away.
- **Conflict.** A character versus the *internal* self or an *external* something or someone.
- **Exposition.** Background information required for seeing the characters in context.
- **Complication.** One or more problems that keep characters from their intended goal.
- **Transition.** Image, symbol, dialogue that joins paragraphs and scenes together.
- **Flashback.** Remembering something that happened before the short story takes place.
- **Climax.** When the rising action of the story reaches the peak.
- **Falling Action.** Releasing the action of the story after the climax.
- **Resolution.** When the internal or external conflict is resolved.

Hooking the Reader

- Begin a story in the middle of a conversation.
- Begin with a description
- Begin with background information
- Begin with a peek into a character’s mind
- Start with a simile, metaphor, hyperbole, or pun
- Start with a startling statement
- Start with a question
- Begin with a quote from a song, movie, famous person or book

Create Conflict and Tension

> *Conflict is the fundamental element of fiction, fundamental because in literature only trouble is interesting. It takes trouble to turn the great themes of life into a story: birth, love, sex, work, and death. (Janet Burroway)*

Conflict produces tension that makes the story begin. Tension is created by opposition between the character or characters and internal or external forces or conditions. By balancing the opposing forces of

the conflict, you keep readers glued to the pages wondering how the story will end. Possible conflicts Include:

- The protagonist against another individual
- The protagonist against nature (or technology)
- The protagonist against society
- The protagonist against God
- The protagonist against himself or herself.

Conflict Checklist

- **Mystery.** Explain just enough to tease readers. Never give everything away.
- **Empowerment.** Give both sides options.
- **Progression.** Keep intensifying the number and type of obstacles the protagonist faces.
- **Causality.** Hold fictional characters more accountable than real people. Characters who make mistakes frequently pay, and, at least in fiction, commendable folks often reap rewards.
- **Surprise.** Provide sufficient complexity to prevent readers predicting events too far in advance.
- **Empathy.** Encourage reader identification with characters and scenarios that pleasantly or (unpleasantly) resonate with their own sweet dreams (or night sweats).
- **Insight.** Reveal something about human nature.
- **Universality.** Present a struggle that most readers find meaningful, even if the details of that struggle reflect a unique place and time.
- **High Stakes.** Convince readers that the outcome matters because someone they care about could lose something precious. Trivial clashes often produce trivial fiction.

Build to a Crisis or Climax

This is the turning point of the story – the most exciting or dramatic moment. The crisis may be a recognition, a decision, or a resolution. The character understands what hasn't been seen before, or realizes what must be done, or finally decides to do it. It's when the worm turns. Timing is crucial. “If the crisis occurs too early, readers will expect still another turning point. If it occurs too late, readers will get impatient – the character will seem rather thick.” (*Jerome Stern*) *Janet Burroway* says that the crisis "must always be presented as a scene. It is ‘the moment’ the reader has been waiting for. In Cinderella's case, ‘the payoff is when the slipper fits.’" While a good story needs a crisis, a random event such as a car crash or a sudden illness is simply an emergency – unless it somehow involves a conflict that makes the reader care about the characters.

Find a Resolution

The solution to the conflict. In short fiction, it is difficult to provide a complete resolution and you often need to just show that characters are beginning to change in some way or starting to see things differently. The following are some ways to end a short story:

- **Open.** Readers determine the meaning.
- **Resolved.** Clear-cut outcome.
- **Parallel to Beginning.** Similar to beginning situation or image.
- **Monologue.** Character comments.
- **Dialogue.** Characters converse.
- **Literal Image.** Setting or aspect of setting resolves the plot.
- **Symbolic Image.** Details represent a meaning beyond the literal one.

Choose a Point of View

Point of view is the narration of the story from the perspective of first, second, or third person. As a writer, you need to determine who is going to tell the story and how much information is available for the narrator to reveal in the short story. The narrator can be directly involved in the action subjectively, or the narrator might only report the action objectively.

- **First Person.** The story is told from the view of *"I"*. The narrator is either the *protagonist* (main character) and directly affected by unfolding events, or the narrator is a *secondary*

character telling the story revolving around the protagonist. This is a good choice for beginning writers because it is the easiest to write.

- **Second Person.** The story is told directly to *"you"*, with the reader as a participant in the action.
- **Third Person.** The story tells what *"he"*, *"she"*, or *"it"* does. The third-person narrator's perspective can be *limited* (telling the story from one character's viewpoint) or *omniscient* (where the narrator knows everything about all of the characters).
- Your narrator might take sides in the conflict you present, might be as transparent as possible, or might advocate a position that you want your reader to challenge (this is the *unreliable narrator* strategy).

Point of View

- **First Person.** Unites narrator and reader through a series of secrets when they enter one character's perceptions. However, it can lead to "telling" and limits readers connections to other characters in the short story.
- **Second Person.** Puts readers within the actual scene so that readers confront possibilities directly. However, it is important to place your characters in a tangible environment so you don't omit the details readers need for clarity.
- **Third Person Omniscient.** Allows you to explore all of the characters' thoughts and motivations. Transitions are extremely important as you move from character to character.
- **Third Person Limited.** Offers the intimacy of one character's perceptions. However, the writer must deal with character absence from particular scenes.

Short Time Span

An effective short story covers a very short time span. It may be one single event that proves pivotal in the life of the character, and that event will illustrate the theme. An effective short story covers a very short time span and must, therefore, get off to a fast start.

Write a catchy first paragraph. In today's fast-moving world, the first sentence of your short story should catch your reader's attention with the unusual, the unexpected, an action, or a conflict. Begin with tension and immediacy. Remember that a short story needs to start close to its end. Compare:

I heard my neighbour through the wall.

to

The neighbour behind us practiced scream therapy in his shower almost every day.

or

The first time I heard him, I stood in the bathroom listening at our shared wall for ten minutes, debating the wisdom of calling the police. It was very different from living in the flat above middle-aged Mr. and Mrs. Van Rooyen and their two young sons in Pietermaritzburg.

Setting and Context

Setting moves readers most when it contributes to an organic whole. So close your eyes and picture your characters within desert, jungle, or suburb--whichever setting shaped them. Imagining this helps balance location and characterization. Right from the start, view your characters inhabiting a distinct place. (Laurel Yourke)

Because you have such a limited number of words to convey your message, you must choose your settings carefully. That doesn't mean you have to be trite or predictable when deciding on settings. Setting includes the *time, location*, *context*, and *atmosphere* where the plot takes place.

- Remember to combine setting with characterization and plot.
- Include enough detail to let your readers picture the scene, but only details that actually add something to the story.
- Use two or more senses in your descriptions of setting.

Rather than feed your readers information about the weather, population statistics, or how far it is to the grocery store, substitute descriptive details so your reader can experience the location the way your characters do. A *snapshot* is one way you can develop an idea in a piece of writing. You show the reader a "photograph" of the scene. It involves taking time to show the picture through sensory details, concrete words, and poetic language (similes, for example).

Characters

Don't have too many characters. Each new character will bring a new dimension to the story, and for an effective short story too many diverse dimensions (or directions) will dilute the theme. Have only enough characters to effectively illustrate the theme. Around three main characters is all a short story can effectively deal with because too many will distract you from your theme. Don't give in to the urge to provide detailed background on your characters ... decide on the characteristics that are important for your theme and stick to those.

In stories that work, the characters are more than cardboard caricatures with wooden hands. When you look at your first draft, consider character motivation. Do they react reasonably in proportion with the traits you have granted them? Do they speak naturally, or does the dialogue sound like an actor reading lines? It might be a good idea to make up a history for your characters, known only by you, which isn't necessarily expressed in the story. A writer should know more about each character than he or she tells. This gives each character an aura of mystery and believability. Here is a partial list of character details to help you get started:

Name	Pets
Age	Religion
Job	Hobbies
Ethnicity	Single or married?
Appearance	Children?
Residence	Temperament
Favourite colour	Something hated?
Friends	Secrets?
Favorite foods	Strong memories?
Drinking patterns	Any illnesses?
Phobias	Nervous gestures?
Faults	Sleep patterns

Imagining all these details will help you get to know your character and will allow you to reveal your character in the following 8 ways:

- **Appearance.** Gives your reader a visual understanding of the character.
- **Action.** Show the reader what kind of person your character is, by describing actions rather than simply listing adjectives.
- **Speech.** Develop the character as a person -- don't merely have your character announce important plot details.
- **Thought.** Bring the reader into your character's mind, to show them your character's unexpressed memories, fears, and hopes.
- **Idiosyncracies.**
- **Objects/Possessions.**
- **Reactions.**
- **Background Information.**

Dialogue

Never underestimate the power of dialogue in conveying character, but it must contribute to the main focus of the story - don't just use it to pad out your characters. Every word you put into the mouth of your characters must contribute to revealing your theme ... if it doesn't, be ruthless and cut it. Write meaningful dialogue by making your "readers hear the pauses between the sentences. Let them see characters lean forward, fidget with their cuticles, avert their eyes, uncross their legs". (*Jerome Stern*) Dialogue is what your characters say to each other (or to themselves). Each speaker gets his/her own paragraph, and the paragraph includes whatever you wish to say about what the character is doing when speaking.

The Rules for Quotation Marks

Use quotation marks to show the exact words of a character.

> "I don't know when he will be back," Jeff said as he stared down at Cindy's feet.
> She bent down slightly to catch his eyes. "Yes, you do, Jeff. Don't you lie to me."

New speaker means new paragraph.

> I knew about Frankie and all the trouble he had at Glendale. He had spent more time in detention than Algebra class. "So, Frankie, are you trying to be the valedictorian or what?" I whispered to him as he sat there in the library staring intently at a book of poetry. He did not reply at first. He just remained focused. I stood up and shook my head. "You sure are different than what I expected," I said.
> "People change," he said. "Maybe you should think about it."
> "Yeah, right," I mumbled as I made my way toward the library doors.

Quotation marks stop when the direct words stop. They start up again when the direct quote begins again.

> "I can't tell you," Paula whispered, "because this could be really dangerous."

Punctuation goes inside the quotation marks in dialogue.

> She growled across the room, "Shut up."

Don't use quotation marks with indirect quotes.

> William said he wanted to stop the violence, but he was too late.

Process

The Passionate First Draft

Don't write out of a sense of duty. Good writers do not try to teach a lesson, or to be socially or politically correct. It is far too easy to censor your good writing, to mentally project some authority figure looking over your shoulder. A first draft should lie on the page spontaneously, buzzing with the joy of creative energy, regardless of form or quality of content. As you learn to write, your stories will tend to shape themselves in the first draft, since the basic rules become basic to one's nature, but beginner's needn't worry if the first draft is messy. Learning to write a short story that works is like learning anything else: a child rides a bike shakily at first, and scrawls his name with huge and awkward letters. It is the same with the art of short story writing.

Revisions

After you write a first draft, it is a good idea to let the story sit for a while, for a few days. It is easy to love one's own writing in the same way that we can each put up with our own singing, even when others cannot. Wait a while. When you come back to the story for its first revision, start to notice a few things. Does the story have the basic elements? Does it have a believable plot? What is the theme, or the point of the story? Are the characters real? How does the plot build to the point of tension wherein everything is resolved in the denouement? Is the conclusion satisfying?

A short story is not a novel; it is more like a poem, where every word and sentence counts. You make each word count by deleting extraneous material. Don't be afraid to revise. You are the creator, the writer, and you have it in your power to produce something exceptional. This means revision, which is not an act of mutilation, but of creation – though it may feel temporarily painful now and then. Re-read your story with a critical mind when you are in different moods, and re-write it accordingly. A story that works does not just "happen", but it is the fruit of rewriting and revision. You will discover that you will see it differently and find various new things you want to change according to your various moods.

Conclusion

Once you have the basics down, you can begin to work on your own style and unique voice. But these come later. Short story writing takes skill as well as an artistic temper; you must learn the skills before you can shape it into art.

- Create Memorable Characters
- Create Authentic Settings
- Fit your Character to his/her Surroundings
- Physical Appearance vs. Imagination
- Write Realistic Dialogue
- Use Action Tags
- Find Outstanding Ideas
- Use Point of View
- Write Dazzling Opening Sentences
- Use Emotion, Conflict, and Motivation
- Write a Twist at the End
- Create Stunning Titles
- Show, Don't Tell

Originality

Creative short stories need not all look alike, but they do all share a basic structure that makes them "work": they're readable, entertaining or profound. This involves learning certain basic skills that support all successful writing. Once these skills are developed, you may want to explore various ways of using them, or even of breaking the rules; but as all serious artists know, you must know the rules before they can be broken.

Acknowledgements

http://www.write101.com/shortstory.htm
http://www.shortstorygroup.com/storytips.htm
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Kentucky Educational Television, 2000

Writing Process

The 'Messiness' of the Writing Process

And Janet Emig knows exactly what a writer goes through and is not ashamed to describe the dirty details of the writing process:

> Writing involves commerce with the unconscious self and because it does, it is often a sloppy and inefficient procedure for even the most disciplined and long-writing of professional authors. Nowhere are their hints about preverbal anguishing and the hell of getting underway; of the compulsions and fetishes governing placement of the first word or phrase on the page – the "getting black on a white"; of subsequent verbal anguishing; of desert places; of the necessary resorting to the id as organiser and energiser ... One longs for them to make at least a small obeisance in the direction of the untidy, of the convoluted, of the not-wholly-known, of a more intricate self and process.*

* Janet Emig, "Literacy and Freedom," in *The Web of Meaning: Essays on Writing, Teaching, Learning and Thinking*, eds. Dixie Goswami and Maureen Butler, Upper Montclair, New Jersey: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1983 pp. 171-178.

Writing Work-in-Progress

> *The fumbling, half-realised nature of work-in-progress is an inevitable part of the writing process: no text arrives to a writer fully formed. We tend to forget that a good novel or story is the product of endless redrafting. Writers must free themselves up, allow themselves to make mistakes, write whole scenes they might end up cutting. Only by letting themselves loose on the page will a writer ever stand a chance of wrapping their abstract demons up in words.**

* Julia Bell, "Introduction – Abstracts", in *The Creative Writing Coursebook*, eds. Julia Bell and Paul Magrs, London: Macmillan, 2001, p.49.

The Dangerous Method: Trying to Write it Right the First Time

- When you manage to decide on your meaning before you start writing, sticking with that meaning as you write stops all creativity and the generation of new ideas.
- Trying to write things right usually means writing very slowly and carefully. This often leads to overwriting hand overintricacy.
- Trying to write it right the first time not only increases the danger of dull writing, it also increases the danger of writing that is cloyingly precious.

> If you let yourself write things *wrong* the first time – perhaps even the second or third time to – something wonderful happens: when you feel a story or an idea in mind but can't quite get hold of it, you discover that by just starting to write and forcing yourself to keep on, you eventually find what you are looking for. And you didn't even know what you're looking for. You discover you can write almost anything you want to write. You get braver. Trying to get it right the first time, on other hand, often makes people timid – less willing even to try writing things – because it often leads them to the experience of struggling and getting stuck and finally giving up with nothing to show for their efforts. The need to get things write the first time, is often the culprit in the case of people who want to write but don't do so poor start doing so.*

* Peter Elbow, *Writing With Power*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 14.

Redrafting, Editing and Freewriting

Redrafting and editing means being tough enough to make sure someone will actually read your work:

> Don't look on throwing words away as something having gone wrong. To write ten pages and throw them away end up with one paragraph that someone actually reads – *one paragraph that is actually worth sixty seconds of someone's time* – is a huge and magical and efficient process. The alternative which is much more common is to write (more carefully) five pages that *avoid the errors or egregious shit of the above ten pages – but not one single paragraph worth reading!* So though it seems that one has done better when one has five whole pages of non-shit, really it is utterly worthless since it is not worth reading.*

The early stages of writing focus on the transaction between the writer and his or her words. In redrafting and editing, writers finally deal with the hard reality of readers.

> Every word omitted keeps another reader with you. Every word retained saps strength from the others. Think of throwing away not as negative – not as crumpling up sheets of paper in helplessness and rage – but as a positive, creative, generative act. Learn to play the role of the sculptor pulling off layers of stone with his chisel to reveal the figure beneath. Leaving things out makes the backbone or structure show better.*

* Peter Elbow, *Writing Without Teachers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 41-42.

Freewriting

- Freewriting makes writing easier by helping you with the root psychological or existential difficulty in writing: finding words in your head and putting them down on a blank piece of paper. So much writing time and energy is spent *not* writing: wondering, worrying, crossing out, having second, third, and fourth thoughts.
- Free writing is the best way to learn – in practice, not just in theory – to separate the producing process from the revising process. Freewriting is an exercise in withholding judgment as you produce so that afterwards you can judge better.
- Freewriting helps you learn to write when you don't feel like writing.

- Freewriting teaches you to write without thinking about writing.
- Freewriting helps you avoid the awkward and sometimes paralysing *translating* process in writing and helps make the writing process *transparent*.
- Freewriting helps you to think of topics to write about.
- Freewriting improves your writing, it doesn't always produce powerful writing itself, but it leads to powerful writing.
- Freewriting produces syntactic coherence and global energy, which gradually transfer to your more careful writing.*

* Peter Elbow, *Writing With Power*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 16-17.

Lamb to the Slaughter

Roald Dahl

[*Lamb to the Slaughter and Other Stories*, Penguin: New York, 1995.]

***T**he room was warm and clean, the curtains drawn, the two table lamps alight – hers and the one by the empty chair opposite. On the sideboard behind her, two tall glasses, soda water, whisky. Fresh ice cubes in the Thermos bucket.*

Mary Maloney was waiting for her husband to come home from work.

Now and again she would glance up at the clock, but without anxiety, merely to please herself with the thought that each minute gone by made it nearer the time when he would come. There was a slow smiling air about her, and about everything she did. The drop of the head as she bent over her sewing was curiously tranquil. Her skin – for this was her sixth month with child – had acquired a wonderful translucent quality, the mouth was soft, and the eyes, with their new placid look, seemed larger, darker than before.

When the clock said ten minutes to five, she began to listen, and a few moments later, punctually as always she heard the tyres on the gravel outside, and the car door slamming, the footsteps passing the window, the key turning in the lock. She laid aside her sewing, stood up, and went forward to kiss him as he came in.

"Hullo, darling," she said.

"Hullo," he answered.

She took his coat and hung it in the closet. Then she walked over and made the drinks, a strongish one for him, a weak one for herself; and soon she was back again in her chair with the sewing, and he in the other, opposite, holding the tall glass with both his hands, rocking it so the ice cubes tinkled against the side.

For her, this was always a blissful time of day. She knew he didn't want to speak much until the first drink was finished, and she, on her side, was content to sit quietly, enjoying his company after the long hours alone in the house. She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man, and to feel – almost as a sunbather feels the sun – that warm male glow that came out of him to her when they were alone together. She loved him for the way he sat loosely in the chair, for the way he came in a door, or moved slowly across the room with long strides. She loved the intent, far look in his eyes when they rested on her, the funny shape of the mouth, and especially the way he remained silent about his tiredness, sitting still with himself until the whisky had taken some of it away.

"Tired, darling?"

"Yes," he said. "I am tired." And as he spoke, he did an unusual thing. He lifted his glass and drained it in one swallow although there was still half of it, at least half of it, left. She wasn't really watching him but she knew what he had done because she heard the ice cubes falling back against the bottom of the empty glass when he lowered his arm. He paused a moment, leaning forward in the chair, then he got up and went slowly over to fetch himself another.

"I'll get it!" She cried, jumping up.

"Sit down," he said.

When he came back, she noticed that the new drink was dark amber with the quantity of whisky in it.

"Darling, shall I get your slippers?"

"No."

She watched him as he began to sip the dark yellow drink, and she could see little oily swirls in the liquid because it was so strong.

"I think it's a shame," she said, "that when a policeman gets to be as senior as you and they keep him walking about on his feet all day long."

He didn't answer, so she bent her head again and went on with her sewing; but each time he lifted the drink to his lips, she heard the ice cubes clinking against the side of the glass.

"Darling," she said. "Would you like me to get you some cheese? I haven't made any supper because it's Thursday."

"No," he said.

"If you're too tired to eat out," she went on, "it's still not too late. There's plenty of meat and stuff in the freezer, and you can have it right here and not even move out of the chair."

Her eyes waited on him for an answer, a smile, a little nod, but he made no sign.

"Anyway," she went on, "I'll get you some cheese and crackers frst."

"I don't want it," he said.

She moved uneasily in her chair, the large eyes still watching his face. "But you *must* have supper. I can easily do it here. I'd like to do it. We can have lamb chops. Or pork. Anything you want. Everything is in the freezer."

"Forget it," he said.

"But, darling, you *must* eat! I'll fix it anyway, and then you can have it or not, as you like."

She stood up and placed her sewing on the table by the lamp.

"Sit down," he said. "Just for a minute, sit down."

It wasn't till then that she began to get frightened.

"Go on," he said. "Sit down."

She lowered herself back slowly into the chair, watching him all the time with those large, bewildered eyes. He had finished the second drink and was staring down into the glass, frowning. "Listen," he said, "I have got something to tell you."

"What is it, darling? What's the matter?"

He had become absolutely motionless, and he kept his head down, so that the light from the lamp beside him fell across the upper part of his face, leaving the chin and mouth in shadow. She noticed there was a little muscle moving near the corner of his left eye.

"This is going to be a bit of a shock to you, I'm afraid," he said. "But I have thought about it a good deal and I decided the only thing to do is tell you right away. I hope you won't blame me too much."

And he told her. It didn't take long, four or five minutes at most, and she sat very still through it all, watching him with a kind of dazed horror as he went further and further away from her with each word.

"So there it is," he added. "And I know its kind of a bad time to be telling you, but there simply wasn't any other way. Of course I'll give you money and see you're looked after. But their needn't really be any fuss. I hope not anyway. It wouldn't be very good for my job."

Her first instinct was not to believe any of it, to reject it all. It occurred to her that perhaps he hadn't even spoken, that she herself had imagined the whole thing. Maybe, if she went about your business and acted as though she hadn't been listening, then later, when she sort of woke up again, she might find none of it had ever happened.

"I'll get the supper," she managed to whisper, and this time he didn't stop her.

When she walked across the room she couldn't feel her feet touching the floor. She couldn't feel any thing at all – except a slight nausea and a desire to vomit. Everything was automatic now – down the stairs to the cellar, the light switch, the deep freeze, the hand inside the cabinet taking hold of the first object it met. She lifted it out, and looked at it. It was wrapped in paper, so she took off the paper and looked at it again.

A leg of lamb.

All right then, they would have lamb for supper. She carried it upstairs, holding the thin bone-end of it with both her hands, and as she went through the living-room, she saw him standing over by the window with his back to her, and she stopped.

"For God's sake," he said, hearing her, but not turning round. "Don't make supper for me. I'm going out."

At that point, Mary Maloney simply walked up behind him and without any pause she swung the big frozen leg of lamb high in the air and brought it down as hard as she could on the back of his head.
She might just as well have hit him with a steel club.

She stepped back a pace, waiting, and the funny thing was that he remained standing there for at least four or five seconds, gently swaying. Then he crashed to the carpet.

The violence of the crash, the noise, the small table overturning, helped bring her out of the shock. She came out slowly, feeling cold and surprised, and she stood for a while blinking at the body, still holding the ridiculous piece of meat tight with both hands.

All the right she told herself. So I've killed him.

It was extraordinary, now, how clear her mind became all of a sudden. She began thinking very fast. As the wife of a detective, she knew quite well what the penalty would be. That was fine. It made no difference to her. In fact, it would be a relief. On the other hand, what about the child? What were the laws about murderers with unborn children? Did they kill them both – mother and child? Or did they wait until the tenth month? What did they do?

Mary Maloney didn't know. And she certainly wasn't prepared to take a chance.

She carried the meat into the kitchen, placed it in a pan, turned the oven on high, and shoved it inside. Then she washed her hands and ran upstairs to the bedroom. She sat down before the mirror, tidied her face, touched up her lips and face. She tried a smile. It came out rather peculiar. She tried again.

"Hullo Sam," she said brightly, aloud.

The voice sounded peculiar too.

"I want some potatoes please, Sam. Yes, and I think a can of peas."

That was better. Both the smile and the voice were coming out better now. She rehearsed it several times more. Then she ran downstairs, took her coat, went out the back door, down the garden, into the street.

It wasn't six o'clock yet and the lights were still on in the grocery shop.

"Hello Sam," she said brightly, smiling at the man behind the counter.

"Why, good evening, Mrs Maloney. How're *you*?"

"I want some potatoes please, Sam. Yes, and I think a can of peas."

The man turned and reached up behind him on the shelf for the peas.

"Patrick's decided he's tired and doesn't want to eat out tonight," she told him. "We usually go out Thursdays, you know, and now he's caught me without any vegetables in the house."

"Then how about meat, Mrs Maloney?"

"No, I've got meat, thanks. I got a nice leg of lamb, from the freezer."

"Oh."

"I don't much like cooking it frozen. Sam, but I'm taking a chance on it this time. You think it'll be all right?"

"Personally," the grocer said, "I don't believe it makes any difference. You want these Idaho potatoes?"

"Oh yes, that'll be fine. Two of those."

"Anything else?" The grocer cocked his head on one side, looking at her pleasantly. "How about afterwards? What you going to give him for afterwards?"

"Well – what would you suggest, Sam?"

The man glanced around his shop. "How about a nice big slice of cheesecake? I know he likes that."

"Perfect," she said. "He loves it."

And when it was all wrapped and she had paid, she put on her brightest smile and said, "Thank you, Sam. Good night."

"Good night, Mrs Maloney. And thank *you*."

And now, she told herself as she hurried back, all she was doing now, she was returning home to her husband and he was waiting for his supper; and she must cook it good, and make it as tasty as possible because the poor man was tired; and if, when she entered the house, she happened to find anything unusual, or tragic, or a terrible, then naturally it would be a shock and she'd become frantic with grief and horror. Mind you, she wasn't *expecting* to find anything. She was just going home with the vegetables. Mrs Patrick Maloney going home with the vegetables on Thursday evening to cook supper for her husband.

That's the way, she told herself. Do everything right and natural. Keep things absolutely natural and there'll be no need for any acting at all.

Therefore, when she entered the kitchen by the back door, she was humming a little tune to herself and smiling.

"Patrick!" She called. "How are you, darling?"

She put the parcel down on the table and went through into the living-room; and when she saw him lying there are on the floor with his legs doubled up and one arm twisted back underneath his body, it really was rather a shock. All the old love and longing for him welled up inside her, and she ran over to him, knelt down beside him, and began to cry her heart out. It was easy. No acting was necessary.

A few minutes later she got up and went to the phone. She knew the number of the police station, and when the man at the other end answered, she cried to him, "Quick! Come quick! Patrick's dead!"

"Who's speaking?"

"Mrs Maloney. Mrs Patrick Maloney."

"You mean Patrick Maloney's dead?"

"I think so," she sobbed. "He is lying on the floor and I think he's dead."

"Be right over," the man said.

The car came very quickly, and when she opened the front door, two policemen walked in. She knew them both – she knew nearly all the men at that precinct – and she fell right into Jack Noonan's arms, weeping hysterically. He put her gently into a chair, then went over to join the other one, who was called O'Malley, kneeling by the body.

"Is he dead?" she cried.

"I am afraid he is. What happened?"

Briefly, she told her story about going out to the grocer and coming back to find him on the floor. While she was talking, crying and talking, Noonan discovered a small patch of congealed blood on the dead man's head. He showed it to O'Malley who got up at once and hurried to the phone.

Soon, other men began to come into the house. First a doctor, then two detectives, one of whom she knew by name. Later, a police photographer arrived and took pictures, and a man who knew about

fingerprints. There was a great deal of whispering and muttering beside the corpse, and the detectives kept asking her a lot of questions. But they always treated her kindly. She told her story again, this time right from the beginning, when Patrick had come in, and she was sewing, and he was tired, so tired he hadn't wanted to go out for supper. She told how she'd put the meat in the oven – "it's there now, cooking" – and how she'd slipped out to the grocer for vegetables, and come back to find him lying on the floor.

"Which grocer?" One of the detectives asked.

She told him, and he turned and whispered something to the other detective who immediately went outside into the street.

In fifteen minutes he was back with a page of notes and there was more whispering, and through her sobbing she heard a few of the whispered phrases – " … acted quite normal … very cheerful … wanted to give him a good supper … peas … cheesecake … impossible that she …"

After a while, the photographer and the doctor departed and two other men came in and took the corpse away on a stretcher. Then the fingerprint man went away. The two detectives remained, and so did the two policemen. They were exceptionally nice to her, and Jack Noonan asked if she wouldn't rather go somewhere else, to her sister's house perhaps, or to his own wife who would take care of her and put her up for the night.

No, she said. She didn't feel she could move even a yard at the moment. Would they mind awfully if she stayed just where she was until she felt better? She didn't feel too good at the moment, she really didn't.

Then hadn't she better lie down on the bed? Jack Noonan asked.

No, she said, she'd like to stay right where she was, in this chair. A little later perhaps, when she felt better, she would move.

So they left her there while they went about their business, searching the house. Occasionally one of the detectives asked her another question. Sometimes Jack Noonan spoke to her gently as he passed by. Her husband, he told her, had been killed by a blow on the back of the head administered with a heavy blunt instrument, almost certainly a large piece of metal. They were looking for the weapon. The murderer may have taken it with him, but on the other hand he may've thrown it away or hidden it somewhere on the premises.

"It's the old story," he said. "Get the weapon, and you've got the man."

Later, one of the detectives came up and sat beside her. Did she know, he asked, of anything in the house that could have been used as the weapon? Would she mind having a look around to see if anything was missing – a very big spanner, for example, or a heavy metal vase.

They didn't have any heavy metal vases, she said.

"Or a big spanner?"

She didn't think they had a big spanner. But there might be some things like that in the garage.

The search went on. She knew that there were other policemen in the garden all around the house. She could hear their footsteps on the gravel outside, and sometimes she saw the flash of a torch through a chink in the curtains. It began to get late, nearly nine she noticed by the clock on the mantel. The four men searching the rooms seemed to be growing weary, a trifle exasperated.

"Jack," she said, the next time Sergeant Noonan went by. "Would you mind giving me a drink?"

"Sure I'll give you a drink. You mean this whisky?"

"Yes, please. But just a small one. It might make me feel better."

He handed her the glass.

"Why don't you have one yourself," she said. "You must be awfully tired. Please do. You have been very good to me."

"Well," he answered. "It's not strictly allowed, but I might take just a drop to keep me going."

One by one the others came in and were persuaded to take a little nip of whisky. They stood around rather awkwardly with the drinks in their hands, uncomfortable in her presence, trying to say consoling things to her. Sergeant Noonan wandered into the kitchen, came out quickly and said, "Look, Mrs Maloney. You know that oven of yours is still on, and the meat still inside."

"Oh *dear* me!" She cried. "So it is!"

"I'd better turn it off for you, hadn't I?"

"Will you do that, Jack. Thank you so much."

When the sergeant returned the second time, she looked at him with her large, dark, tearful eyes. "Jack Noonan," she said.

"Yes?"

"Would you do me a small favour – you and these others?"

"We can try, Mrs Maloney."

"Well," she said. "Here you all are, and good friends of dear Patrick's too, and helping to catch the man who killed him. You must be terribly hungry by now because it's long past your supper time, and I know Patrick would never forgive me, God bless his soul, if I allowed you to remain in his house without offering you decent hospitality. Why don't you eat up that lamb that's in the oven? It'll be cooked just right by now."

"Wouldn't dream of it," Sergeant Noonan said.

"Please," she begged. "Please eat it. Personally I couldn't touch a thing, certainly not what's been in the house when he was here. But it's all right for you. It'd be a favour to me if you'd eat it up. Then you can go on with your work again afterwards."

There was a good deal of hesitating among the four policemen, but they were clearly hungry, and in the end they were persuaded to go into the kitchen and help themselves. The woman stayed where she was, listening to them through the open door, and she could hear them speaking among themselves, their voices thick and sloppy because their mouths were full of meat.

"Have some more, Charlie?"

"No. Better not finish it."

"She *wants* us to finish it. She said so. Be doing her a favour."

"Okay then. Give me some more."

"That's a hell of a big club the guy must've used to hit poor Patrick," one of them was saying. "The doc says his skull was smashed all to pieces just like from a sledgehammer."

"That's why it ought to be easy to find."

"Exactly what I say."

"Whoever done it, they're not going to be carrying a thing like that around with them longer than they need."

One of them belched.

"Personally, I think it's right here on the premises."

"Probably right under our very noses. What you think, Jack?"

And in the other room, Mary Maloney began to giggle.

The Scarlatti Tilt

RICHARD BRAUTIGAN

"It's very hard to live in a studio apartment in San Jose with a man who's learning to play the violin." That's what she told the police when she handed them the empty revolver."

Where was I? – Pauline Olivia Wainstein

Hey Debs. Sorry I'm so late. Duduzile, the dragon, the animal print queen, had another crisis. As if people can't see she's an African, she insists on wearing zebra, leopard and giraffe – yes, can you believe it – giraffe skin dresses. And it's not as if she is – how can I put it politely – an insubstantial woman. She's big Debs, huge in fact. She looks like a Hippo in zebra clothing. By the way Debs, new top? Ralph Lauren from Stutties? Fifty percent sale? I thought so. Nothing fools Shelli's fashion eye.

Where was I? Oh yes. Well Godzilla—that's what we call her behind her back – needed me for a rush job – again – to revise a document for her. With her everything is always late, always urgent, always badly written. She can't even pronounce *Makketing* let alone spell it or do it. So Shelli, the white girl, has to come to the rescue, to fix everything to make dear Dudu, the boss, look good. You can imagine how Shelli has to bite her wagging tongue. God knows, it's not easy, but it's a sign of the times Debs, the oppression and struggle of the white working girl to survive.

Debs. Don't look now, but here comes Rochelle Johnson … Hi Rochelle, you're looking well … Thank you. I do my best … She had them done in April. Dr Jacobson's receptionist told me. She went from fried eggs to spanspeks. That's overdoing it a bit don't you think? But there is nothing subtle about Rochelle … and just look how she's shoving them into his face. She has no shame. By the way Debs, your crows feet are starting to show. It may be time for you to consider a Botox refill.

Where was I? Oh yes, you want to know about my good news … No, I'll never get over what Frank did to me. At least not until I've done something about it. He's a man. He was my man and I can forgive him, but I must be honest, when I discovered what he'd done, I could have killed him. I must say I was tempted to cut *it* off like that Bobbitt woman … but I'd miss *it*. Don't you sometimes think it would be great to have *it* without the man attached? … No! It's all her fault. It's all that bitch Sarah's doing. He'll come back to me when she's gone … of that you can be sure. To Frank she's merely a fling, an indiscretion. It's in men's genes. For them the arse is always tighter on the other side. He'll come back to me. I'll guarantee that he will. …

Yes, I'll admit it, Frank is a pig, but he's an intelligent, wealthy, sexy pig and he was my pig before she came along. … We had such a good thing going. I miss the sunset drives in the Porsche with the top down and the way he used to call me his cupcake – peel away the outer wrapper to get to the moist, tasty centre – he used to say. … Oh, and I did enjoy being *peeled* …

Where was I? Oh yes, my good news. Well I've investigated the killer for hire thing. You know the botched hijacking, but it's been done to death and it's messy and the police are onto the scam. Cheap though. After shopping around a bit, the best price I could get was four thousand rand; two thousand upfront and two when it's done. But, I've decided poison is cleaner, more civilised and more stylish. Don't you think?

I found the solution to my problem on the Web – it is definitely the source of the knowledge of all good and evil. I found an amazing site called laboratory.com, named after a poem by Robert Browning. His poem is the founding statement of the movement. It's a secret fellowship of poisoners. It's the ultimate feminist website. And the poison is state of the art, designed by the chemists, who create the performance enhancing drugs for athletes for the Olympics … Untraceable. Did you know that it's

estimated that, worldwide, there are twenty thousand poison related deaths each year … all undetected? Impressive and comforting, don't you think?

Oh, by the way, before I forget, Microsoft has just launched this new keyboard called *SoftTouch*. It's amazing. It has cushioned keypads, which are gentle on the nails. I got myself one on Friday. I remembered that you're always complaining about your broken nails from typing. You should get yourself one. I don't know how I lived without it. Oh yes, and another thing, Judith emailed me from Israel. No, Judith Abrahamovitz, her husband's an accountant. I don't know what got into her head. … Yeah, she's hating it. No shopping centres, no Woollies, just dust and camels and suicide bombers. Strange that just after she arrived there they started building that huge wall to keep the Palestinians in – or out – I can never work out which. I wouldn't be surprised if she had something to do with that. She was always sticking her nose into other people's business. You know her house had the highest wall in Morningside, in Gauteng in fact? Special planning permission and a red light on top, you know, to warn planes and helicopters.

But where was I before I interrupted myself? Oh yes, laboratory.com and Robert Browning. I've got his poem here. Listen to this.

> Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
> May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,
> As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's smithy—
> Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

Doesn't that sound deliciously wicked? I like Browning's woman. She's got real style. She goes to watch the poison being made in anticipation of killing her man's new lover. Browning was a very devious man. He could have been a woman. I wonder if he wasn't a closet gay? Gays weren't allowed in those days, against the law, prison if guys got caught buggering around. Anyway, Browning was married to a woman, who also wrote poems. … I wonder whether they recited poems to each other to get hot in bed? Maybe not. I think she was disabled. Shame.

Where was I? Oh yes. Daisy de Melker is laboratory.com's local figurehead. You remember the woman who poisoned her two husbands and her son? Talk about a bad hair day. Daisy had a bad hair and bad face life. She should have got the death penalty for letting herself go the way she did. Anyway, she was only the second woman in South Africa to receive the death penalty. The men were scared shitless that their wives would poison their food so they had to make an example of her. And Daisy, what kind of name is that for a woman? And who would ever have thought that someone with the name Daisy could ever become a murderer. Goes to show how strange life can be, hey Debs? Appearances and names can be deceiving. Everyone's got dark secrets and something to hide … Hey Debs?

Don't look now, but there's Maxine … Yeah, she's not bright hey? She's got Botox for brains … but she's successful. She's climbed the corporate ladder with her legs open, her eyes closed, dreaming of Brad Pitt. It's amazing how far some women will bend over to be successful, hey Debs? No shame.

Where was I? Oh yeah, listen to this. I do like Browning's woman. We're very similar and we could have been great friends.

> He is with her, and they know that I know
> Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears flow
> While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear
> Into the Church, to pray God in, for them! – I am here.

I know what Frank and Sarah are doing, they are laughing at me and they think I'm crying, but I'll have the last laugh. You just watch. You'll see …

Of course I'm serious, Debs. How can you doubt me? You know that I am the easy-goingest and happy-go-luckiest girl around, but *no one* messes with my man. Surely you haven't forgotten how I

'Shellied' Pearl Paterson in matric when she kept flirting with Shane. And I still can't believe her nerve in asking him to the matric dance. But I sorted her out. Ruined her social and sex life. The family had to move to Cape Town after I spread the rumour that she had AIDS. No one dared to even look at my boyfriends after that. … Ah, those were good times, hey Debs? I was popular, I had respect and I was a school legend.

Besides, I've already made my first contact to get the poison. A cell phone number. An African man. Strange accent, not South African. Most probably Nigerian. They're into everything these days. I paid the fifty percent deposit. I had to sell the diamond belly-stud Frank gave me. I feel naked without it. The sparkler was half the size of my belly button. But it's all for a good cause. It's ironic that his gift of love will pay for Sarah's death. Irony and death can be so delicious don't you think? Listen to this.

> Not that I bid you spare her the pain!
> Let death be felt and the proof remain;
> Brand, burn up, bite into its grace –
> He is sure to remember her dying face!

I want Sarah to die in pain and I want Frank to see the pain on her face. … Daisy did her second husband by putting strychnine in his beer … Yes, his beer. *Cheeky Daisy*.

Have some more Chardonnay Debs … Waiter, bring us two more glasses of Chardonnay … It's strange. Daisy had a thing for plumbers. All three of her husbands were plumbers … But then again, I suppose it's not so strange. We have a thing for doctors, dentists and accountants.

Anyway, husband number two took five days to die. … Sarah deserves lots of pain, the bitch, taking Frank away from me, but they say with this modern poison, it takes less than 30 minutes … Pity. Daisy did it for the money, I'm doing it for the satisfaction of revenge. Listen to this.

> Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give
> And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!
> But to light a pastille, and Elise, with her head
> And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead.

Maybe you can help me understand this verse, Debs. I assume that the King's is a club where they all used to meet and that Pauline is the bitch that she wants to kill. But who is Elise? Who is this mystery woman? Do you suppose that there are two women? Is she going to poison the second woman as well? …….

No, I'm fine Debs, but don't be long, we still have plenty to talk about and I do want you to help me solve this riddle. …….

*Just two, tiny, pretty blue drops. That's all it takes. Debs, Debs, Debs, my closest, dearest friend, you of all people should know that no one **fucks** with Shelli's man and gets away with it.*

Workshop 5

["The Soul Inside the Sentence," *Habitations of the Word: Essays*, William H. Gass, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985, pp. 113-142.]

Current Popularity of Creativity

'Creativity' has become a healthy, even a holy word. Its popularity is recent, its followers alarmingly American. The command has gone out from gurus of every persuasion: be creative! an injunction which is followed by the assurance that it's actually better for you than bowling; and millions have eagerly, anxiously responded. The pursuit and practice of something labeled creativity is now as epidemic as tennis or jogging, and apparently will be as difficult to discourage, now it's here, as trailer parks, poverty, or moviegoing. (p. 118)

Characteristics of Creativity

Alcohol, like illness, may momentarily reduce the writer's level of repression, cigarettes may give the nerves something to do, sex may strengthen a weakened ego, drugs may dull the sense of failure, coffee may produce an illusion of alertness, seasons may supply subjects or encourage moods, energies may ebb and flow through times of the day like sunlight among clouds, little rituals may give comfort, anal ordering some security, sensory cues, like those apples whose odor as they spoiled gave Schiller a lift, may stimulate the flow of that saliva which moistens the pen in poets who work like dogs. Creative rites are rites of magic, and, like magic, cannot explain success. Concentration, of course is necessary. Fears, petty worries must be put aside. And as one's relation to one's work deepens, the level of tension rises, anxiety accompanies accomplishment, skepticism, like a skull, grins at one's approval, and the fear, when things are going well, that this thread will be lost, the onward rush cease, the next word fail to appear, becomes nearly intolerable, as is the thought that it may go on, winding one tight and toward a resolution which will never come; for climaxes in writing are rare, and mostly it is plod, mostly it is routine – the same cold flesh on the same old spouse – mostly it is dull and tense and hard, and rarely does it seem creative. (p. 118)

The Joy of Creativity

Only some things in this life can be unambiguously, unironically, celebrated. The poet wanders among the animals and flowers, in landscapes finds his freedom, amid luminous skies lets his soul soar like a kestrel; for what *is* the way I want the world? wholly in my power; and the more powerless I may have found myself as in growing up we all find ourselves, the more completely, as a writer, will I rest within the word, because as difficult as its management is: listen! I speak and these friendly syllables surround me; they have never done me any harm, for even when I ascribe them to my enemies, make up villains in a tale to torment victims I have also fabricated, the words they speak are mine, the sentiments indeed are mine, coming from every corner, the villainies as well … ah, yes, those *especially*. (p. 137)

Freewriting

> If you let yourself write things *wrong* the first time – perhaps even the second or third time too – something wonderful happens: when you feel a story or an idea in mind but can't quite get hold of it, you discover that by just starting to write and forcing yourself to keep on, you eventually find what you are looking for. And you didn't even know what you're looking for. You discover you can write almost anything you want to write. You get braver. Trying to get it right the first time, on other hand, often makes people timid – less willing even to try writing things – because it often leads them to the experience of struggling and getting stuck and finally giving up with nothing to show for their efforts. The need to get things right the first time, is often the culprit in the case of people who want to write but don't do so or stop doing so.*

* Peter Elbow, *Writing With Power*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 43.

Editing

> Every word omitted keeps another reader with you. Every word retained saps strength from the others. Think of throwing away not as negative – not as crumpling up sheets of paper in helplessness and rage – but as a positive, creative, generative act. Learn to play the role of the sculptor pulling off layers of

stone with his chisel to reveal the figure beneath. Leaving things out makes the backbone or structure show better.*

* Peter Elbow, *Writing Without Teachers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 41-42.

Loop Writing

We have looked at the two ends of the spectrum of writing processes. One extreme is the *dangerous method* of painstaking writing where you figure out your meaning entirely before you start and thereby maintain complete control while you write. The other extreme is the open-ended process of freewriting where you let the writing steer itself and let yourself be ignorant of where you might end up.

The loop writing process is a way to get to the best of both worlds: both control and creativity. Loop writing is directed freewriting and Peter Elbow* suggests that there are thirteen procedures for loop writing, but that usually three are enough for any one piece of writing. The loop writing procedures can be equated to thirteen different perspectives from which your mind can view, interpret and write about a theme or topic:

- First thoughts
- Prejudices
- Instant version
- Dialogues
- Narrative thinking
- Stories
- Scenes
- Portraits
- Vary the audience
- Vary the writer
- Vary the time
- Errors
- Lies

* Peter Elbow, *Writing Without Teachers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 66-7.

Loop Writing Topics

They fuck you up, your mom and dad.
They may not mean to, but they do.
They fill you with the faults they had
And add some extra, just for you.[1]

Two riders were approaching and
The wind began to howl. [2]

Heard the sound of a clown who cried in the alley.[3]

1 *This Be The Verse* – Philip Larkin
2 *All Along the Watchtower* – Bob Dylan
3 *Hard Rain* – Bob Dylan

Workshop 6

Experiencing and Practising Writing Freedom

Dickens: When I was a young man, I was a fluent writer. I was able to drive myself to work all day. My hand would have to race to keep pace with my mind's conceptions. But at the height of my powers – that's a flattering phrase for as I got older – I would make frequent erasures and interlineations because I found it more difficult to satisfy myself.

> *Dylan:* You know I've experienced that same thing. As you get older, you get smarter and that can hinder you because you try to gain control over the creative impulse. Creativity is not like a freight train going down the tracks. It's something that has to be caressed and treated with a great deal of respect. If your mind is intellectually in the way, it will stop you. You've got to programme your brain not to think too much.*

* From *The Bull and Dragon: Dickens and Dylan – A Creative Dialogue* by Pieter Oberholzer

Successful Storylines and Characterisation
The Seven Deadly Sins
Envy, Gluttony, Greed, Sloth, Lust, Anger, Pride

People have always been immoral, shiftless, self-gratifying, good-for-nothing beings. But for ages, humankind struggled to find a conceptual system to operationalize their spiritual shortcomings. The challenge was formidable: the system had to be complex and inclusive enough to implicate a vast range of disgusting behavior, yet simple and memorable enough to inspire guilt in an illiterate peasant.

Greek monastic theologian Evagrius of Pontus first drew up a list of eight offenses and wicked human passions. In the late 6th century, Pope Gregory the Great reduced the list to seven items. Throughout the Middle Ages, Church hierarchy emphasized teaching all lay people the Deadly Sins, Cardinal Virtues and Heavenly Graces. Other spiritual manuals embellished on this tradition. Gerson presented a list of Contrary Virtues. He believed these virtues would help counteract temptation toward the Deadly Sins.

According to *The Picture Book of Devils, Demons and Witchcraft*, by Ernst and Johanna Lehner, each of the Sins was associated with a specific punishment in Hell. Sixteenth-century engravings by George Pencz used animals in their depictions of the Sins. These prints also used women to symbolize all the Sins, which was probably okay in the sociopolitical climate of the 16th century but probably wouldn't be encouraged nowadays.

Sin	Punishment in Hell	Animal	Color
Pride	broken on the wheel	Horse	Violet
Envy	put in freezing water	Dog	Green
Anger	dismembered alive	Bear	Red
Sloth	thrown into a snake pit	Goat	Light Blue
Greed	put in cauldrons of boiling oil	Frog	Yellow
Gluttony	forced to eat rats, toads, and snakes	Pig	Orange
Lust	smothered in fire and brimstone	Cow	Blue

The Cardinal Virtues
Justice, Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude

Classical Greek philosophers considered the foremost virtues to be prudence, temperance, courage (fortitude), and justice.
The Heavenly Graces
Faith, Hope, Charity

Christian Church authorities called these Graces the three theological virtues because they believed the virtues were not natural to man in his fallen state, but were conferred at Baptism.

The Seven Contrary Virtues

humility, kindness, abstinence, chastity, patience, liberality, diligence

The Contrary Virtues were derived from the Psychomachia ("Battle for the Soul"), an epic poem written by Prudentius (c. 410). Practicing these virtues is alleged to protect one against temptation toward the Seven Deadly Sins: *humility* against pride, *kindness* against envy, *abstinence* against gluttony, *chastity* against lust, *patience* against anger, *liberality* against greed, and *diligence* against sloth.

Definitions
The Sins

Envy – a feeling of discontented or resentful longing aroused by someone else's possessions, qualities, or luck; from Old French *envie* (noun), from Latin from *invidere 'regard maliciously, grudge*
Gluttony – habitual greed or excess in eating. greed, greediness, overeating, gourmandism, gourmandizing, voracity, insatiability; informal piggishness.
Greed – intense and selfish desire for something, esp. wealth, power, or food.
Sloth – reluctance to work or make an effort; laziness : laziness, idleness, indolence, slothfulness, inactivity, inertia, sluggishness, shiftlessness, apathy, acedia, listlessness, lassitude, lethargy, languor, torpidity.
Lust – very strong sexual desire, a passionate desire for something.
Anger – a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility: rage, vexation, exasperation, displeasure, crossness, irritation, irritability, indignation, pique; annoyance, fury, wrath, ire, outrage, irascibility, ill temper/humor
Pride – a feeling or deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired; the consciousness of one's own dignity; the quality of having an excessively high opinion of oneself or one's importance.

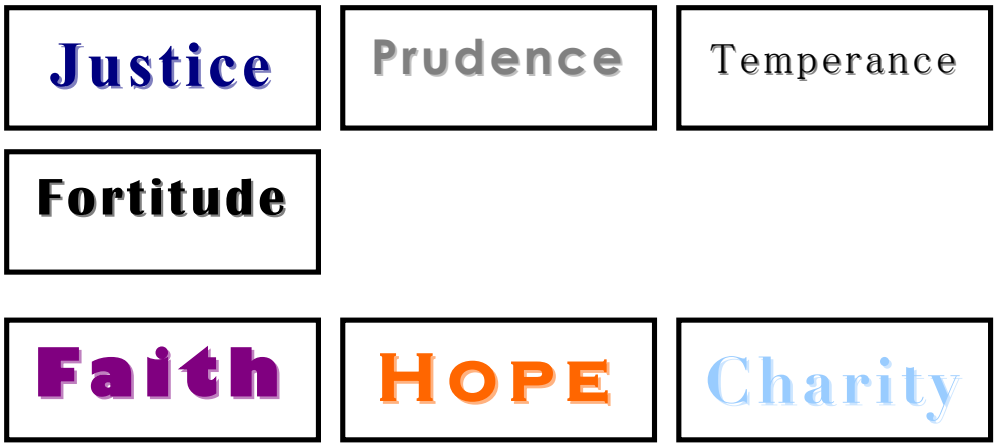
The Virtues

Justice – the quality of being fair and reasonable: fairness, justness, fair play, fair-mindedness, equity, evenhandedness, impartiality, objectivity, neutrality, disinterestedness, honesty, righteousness, morals, morality.
Prudence – care and thought for the future: wisdom, judgment, good judgment, common sense, sense, sagacity, shrewdness, advisability. antonym folly, recklessness; caution, care, providence, farsightedness, foresight, forethought, shrewdness, circumspection; thrift, economy. antonym extravagance.
Temperance – abstinence from alcoholic drink; moderation or self-restraint, esp. in eating and drinking.
Fortitude – courage in pain or adversity: courage, bravery, endurance, resilience, mettle, moral fiber, strength of mind, strength of character, strong-mindedness, backbone, spirit, grit, true grit, doughtiness, steadfastness; informal guts. antonym faint-heartedness.

The Graces

Faith – complete trust or confidence in someone or something; strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof: trust, belief, confidence, conviction; optimism, hopefulness, hope. antonym mistrust.
Hope – a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen; grounds for believing that something good may happen; a feeling of trust: *aspiration*, desire, wish, expectation, ambition, aim, goal, plan, design; dream, daydream, pipe dream; *hopefulness*, optimism, expectation, expectancy; confidence, faith, trust, belief, conviction, assurance; promise, possibility. antonym pessimism.
Charity – kindness and tolerance in judging others; love of humankind, typically in a Christian context: *goodwill*, compassion, consideration, concern, kindness, kindheartedness, tenderness, tenderheartedness, sympathy, indulgence, tolerance, leniency, caritas.





Workshop 7

(No Handouts)

Workshop 8

Presentation Style and Format

For Submissions to Writing Competitions

Some competitions have specific instructions in terms of the style and format of works that are submitted. Obviously these requirements are to be followed to the letter, otherwise the following will be a useful guideline in terms of presentation style and format:

1. Typestyle (Font)

Use the most common and most recognizable literature- or fiction-typestyle or font that everyone, who reads has become accustomed to:

Times **or** Times New Roman **in 12 point size**

Rather experiment with your words and the style of your short fiction piece or poem than experiment with the typestyle. The choice of typestyle is one area of creative writing where a writer should conform. It is a common characteristic of most published fiction.

2. Line Spacing

While academic institutions specify line spacing of 1.5

or even 2 point (double) spacing for essay-type submissions, this extreme spacing is required for purposes of clarity

and to provide gaps for marker commentary.

Ideally, from a fiction-writing and submission perspective, the reader becomes the key criteria and line spacing of **1.2 points** appears to be the norm used in most published fiction (and non-fiction) pieces as it is easiest on the reader's eyes.

3. Layout: Page Spacing & Justification

Once again, basing the page spacing on the dimensions from the pages of published fiction, as well as the satisfaction of the constant criteria of the ease and familiarity of reading, on a Microsoft Word page, the dimensions should be based on a header and footer distance from the edge of the page of **1.5 cms**, top and bottom margins of **2.5 cms** and left and right margins set at 3.0 cms.

All text should be justified as is the case with most published books.

4. Paragraph Style

Indented by 0,5 cms, the paragraph should be signified by the indention only, as is the case in most printed works of fiction (and non-fiction). A space between paragraphs usually denotes a relatively extended gap in time in the narrative. This space will have different connotations depending on the length of the work. For example the gap in the physical text may represent a different 'textual space' in a piece of short fiction when compared to a multi-chapter novella or novel.

The section below, entitled ***Make the paragraph the unit of composition***, provides more detailed advice about the effective use of paragraphing.

In literary publications, which print short fiction and poetry, use is also often made of graphic devices as paritions to more physically separate paragraphs denoting extensive time or location changes. Varying multiples of the following types of neutral symbols, usually centred on the page, tend to be used:

⁂ *** ✶✶✶ ✿✿✿ ------ ****

5. Cover Sheets

Poetry Cover Sheet

Even a single poem should have a cover sheet, with the poem appearing on its own in the centre of the following page.

If a number of poems are submitted, the titles of all these poems should be listed on the cover sheet and very single poem should appear separately on its own page. (See example.)

Short Fiction Cover Sheet

The same principle applies to short fiction except that each short story submitted should have its own cover page. (See example.)

The Deon Hofmeyr Creative Writing Competition

Poetry Entry

When You Became a Man*

* by pOw

When You Became a Man *

My boy throws me questions all day long.
What's this, what's that, how, when and why?
I toss back answers. Dad's never wrong.
My gift's the glint of hero in his eye.

But he tests me once in a while
With a complex puzzle. (he's so sly)
Plato would scratch his head then smile.
Now I have questions, but no reply.

Dad, when you became a man, who did you give your toys to?

Were you sad when you said good-bye
To Ted and Bugs with his floppy ears?
Did anybody see you cry?
Anyone see you wipe away your tears?

When did I become a man?
What happened to my toys?
Why can't I remember my toys?

You remember all the fun you had?
Now you never laugh and you don't play.
Do you still miss them? You're always sad.
Is it 'cause you gave your toys away?

Why can't I remember my toys?

Dad, when I become a man, can I keep all my toys?

* by pOw

The Deon Hofmeyr Creative Writing Competition

Short Story Entry

Michael Says ... *

* by pOw

*Michael Says … **

On the day I met Bevan, I had received an urgent call from the Cardiff Magistrates Court. As a Pro Bono psychologist I frequently visited the court's holding cells to interview offenders that the court officials suspected of being mentally unbalanced. Somewhat irritated at having to reschedule the sessions with my not-so-patient patients, I collected the file from the records office and took my usual seat at the coffee-stained table in the dimly lit interrogation room.

When I perused the criminal's charge sheet I was convinced that someone was having me on. The criminal, Bevan Jenkins, was a multiple offender – 154 counts of burglary and car theft. I knew that this was impossible. According to the law, after three convictions Jenkins would have been declared a habitual criminal and incarcerated for a minimum term of 10 years. My eyes were darting frantically through the file to find the solution to the puzzle, when the door opened and Sergeant Edwards appeared, an uncharacteristic smile pushing up the ends of his handle-bar moustache.

"Mornin' Doc. I brung our wee Stirling Moss t' see ya. We hope ya can make some sense of what's goin' on inside his little head. No one's bin able t' figure him out. If he gives ya any trouble be sure t' holler and I'll come t' save ya." Enjoying his little joke, the Sergeant's belly jiggled and his nose snorted as he left the room and closed the door.

Bevan Jenkins, all four-foot six-inches and thirty-five pounds of him, appeared from the shadows of the doorway. He walked shyly round the table, stopped next to my chair and raised a grubby little hand.

"Me name's Bevan Andrew Jenkins an' I is pleased t' meet ya sir." Still in a haze of disbelief at his age and his size, I engulfed his hand with mine.

"Hello Bevan. I am Doctor Anthony Lewis, but call me Tony. The Magistrate asked me to have a chat with you, so please take a seat so we can get started."

The boy walked to the other side of the table and climbed onto the chair. His feet didn't touch the ground and, as he swung his legs back and forth, I noticed a black nylon strap around one ankle.

"Is that an electronic tag on your leg?"

"Yup. They give it t' me 'bout six months ago so's they can keep track of me. I bin at the courts a lot an' I knows everyone here. They even gave me a season ticket 'cos I come so reg'lar. I bin here more 'n a hunred times now. Ya wanna see it?" His eyes glowed as he reached into his torn jacket pocket and placed a crumpled piece of paper on the table in front of me. The words *SEASON TICKET – Cardiff Magistrates Court* were typed across the face of the 'card' with Bevan's name underneath and a signature scrawled across the bottom.

"I kept it 'cos nobody ever gives me much."

His tangled, mouse-brown hair jutted out from under a large red cap, which was worn backwards and his dark brown eyes were magnified by a pair of rickety, oversized glasses

6. Covering Letter

Spankie Bozanki Award for Original Fiction
Ms Yvonna Straps
Executor of the Spankie Creative Trust
10th Floor
Screme House
Payne Valley
Johannesburg
1111

25 May 2004

Dear Ms Straps

Spankie Bozanki Award for Original Fiction – 2005 – Reference D5/1

I am currently a second-year psychology student at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am an enthusiastic writer, but up until now none of my work has been published and I am thankful for, and welcome the opportunity to submit some pieces of my work for consideration for the Spankie Bozanki Award for Original Fiction.

I am submitting 4 of my short stories (3 copies of each):

Short Stories

- *I am Missing Him So*
- *A Secret Never to be Shared*
- *To Love in Vain*
- *Betrayal Deserves Death*

These are my personal details:

Ms Daisy Daffodil
677 Jones Street
Aroma Valley
2111
Johannesburg

(H) 0115544620
(C) 0768903344

I am thankful to the Spankie Bozanki Award for Original Fiction for the opportunity to submit my work.

Yours so Painfully

D. D.

7. Print Quality

Obviously, with all the hours of writing, redrafting, revising and editing that have gone into the final version, the final printed copy should be printed at the highest quality level and the printer should not be set on fast or draft and neither should the submitted copy be a photocopy of a photocopy because the original copy cannot be found and the dog chewed the flash memory stick containing the story and it is going to take too much effort to retype the whole thing, which hasn't got a chance of winning anything anyway, so why bother ...

8. Copyright

While there is a more complicated and costly way of establishing your ownership and copyright of a piece of writing, a very effective and simple alternative is to put a copy of your piece of writing in an envelope and mail it to yourself. Use the title of the story as the name on the envelope, for example,

PEACE AND WAR
666 Tranquilty Avenue
Armagedon Valley
Hell's Heights
3432

Ask your friendly post office 'behind-the-counter-person' to carefully date stamp the envelope making sure not to smudge the date so that it is legible. Once the envelope has been received in the post, DO NOT OPEN, but store in a safe place just in case you discover your story printed in the *New Yorker* under someone else's name and you want to expose the thief and sue.

9. Additional Hints

The following style hints are taking directly from the world renowned text on writing style – *The Elements of Style*, William Strunk Jr., and E.B. White, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000 – a valuable reference work well worth investing in if you are going to continue writing seriously.

1. *Make the paragraph the unit of composition.* (*The Elements of Style*, William Strunk Jr., and E.B. White, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000, pp. 15-17)

   The paragraph is a convenient unit; it serves all forms of literary work. As long as it holds together, a paragraph may be of any length – a single, short sentence or a passage of great duration.

   If the subject on which you are writing is of slight extent, or if you intend to treat it briefly, there may be no need to divide it into topics. Thus, a brief description, a brief book review, a brief account of a single incident, a narrative merely outlining an action, the setting forth of a single idea – any one of these is best written in a single paragraph. After the paragraph has been written, examine it to see whether division will improve it.

   Ordinarily, however, a subject requires division into topics, each of which should be dealt with in a paragraph. The object of treating each topic in a paragraph by itself is, of course, to aid the reader. The beginning of each paragraph is a signal that a new step in the development of the subject has been reached.

   As a rule, single sentences should not be written or printed as paragraphs. An exception may be made of sentences of transition, indicating the relation between the parts of an exposition or argument.

   In dialogue, each speech, even if only a single word, is usually a paragraph by itself, that is, a new paragraph begins with each change of speaker. The application of this rule when dialogue and narrative are combined is best learned from examples in well-edited works of fiction. Sometimes a writer, seeking to create an effect of rapid talk or for some other reason, will elect not to set off each speech in a separate paragraph and instead will run speeches together. The common practice, however, and the one that serves best in most instances, is to give each speech a paragraph of its own.

   As a rule, begin each paragraph either with a sentence that suggests the topic or with a sentence that helps the transition. If a paragraph forms part of a larger composition, its relation to what precedes, or its function as a part of the whole, may need to be expressed. This can sometimes be done by a mere word or phrase (again, therefore, for the same reason) in the first sentence. Sometimes, however, it is expedient to get into the topic slowly, byway of a sentence or two of introduction or transition.

   In narration and description, the paragraph sometimes begins with a concise, comprehensive statement serving to hold together the details that follow.

   The breeze served us admirably.

The campaign opened with a series of reverses.

The next ten or twelve pages were filled with a curious set of entries.

But when this device, or any device, is too often used, it becomes a mannerism. More commonly, the opening sentence simply indicates by its subject the direction the paragraph is to take.

At length I thought I might return toward the stockade.

He picked up the heavy lamp from the table and began to explore.

Another flight of steps, and they emerged on the roof.

In animated narrative, the paragraphs are likely to be short and without any semblance of a topic sentence, the writer rushing headlong, event following event in rapid succession. The break between such paragraphs merely serves the purpose of a rhetorical pause, throwing into prominence some detail of the action.

In general, remember that paragraphing calls for a good eye as well as a logical mind. Enormous blocks of print look formidable to readers, who are often reluctant to tackle them. Therefore, breaking long paragraphs in two, even if it is not necessary to do so for sense, meaning, or logical development, is often a visual help. But remember, too, that firing off many short paragraphs in quick succession can be distracting ... Moderation and a sense of order should be the main considerations in paragraphing.

2. *Quotations*. (pp. 36-7)

Formal quotations cited as documentary evidence are introduced by a colon and enclosed in quotation marks.

The United States Coast Pilot has this to say of the place: “Bracy Cove, 0.5 mile eastward of Bear Island, is exposed to southeast winds, has a rocky, and uneven bottom, and is unfit for anchorage.”

A quotation grammatically in apposition or the direct object of a verb is preceded by a comma and enclosed in quotation marks.

I am reminded of the advice of my neighbor, “Never worry about your heart till it stops beating.”

Mark Twain says, “A classic is something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read.”

When a quotation is followed by an attributive phrase, the comma is enclosed within the quotation marks.

“I can't attend,” she said.

Typographical usage dictates that the comma be inside the marks, though logically it often seems not to belong there.

“The Fish,” “Poetry,” and “The Monkeys” are in Marianne Moore’s Selected Poems.

3. *Form the possessive singular of nouns by adding ’s*. (p. 1)

Follow this rule whatever the final consonant. Thus write,

Charles's friend

Burns's poems

the "witch's malice

Exceptions are the possessives of ancient proper names ending in *-es* and *-is*, the possessive *Jesus'*, and such forms as *for conscience' sake*, *for righteousness' sake*. But such forms as *Moses' Laws*, *Isis' temple* are commonly replaced by

the laws of Moses

the temple of Isis

The pronominal possessives *hers, its, theirs, yours,* and *ours* have no apostrophe. Indefinite pronouns, however, use the apostrophe to show possession.

one's rights
somebody else's umbrella

A common error is to write it's for its, or vice versa. The first is a contraction, meaning "it is." The second is a possessive.

It's a wise dog that scratches its own fleas.

4. *In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the last.* (p. 2)

Thus write,

red, white, and blue

gold, silver, or copper

He opened the letter, read it, and made a note of its contents.

This comma is often referred to as the "serial" comma.

10. Enclose parenthetic expressions between commas. (p. 2)

The best way to see a country, unless you are pressed for time, is to travel on foot.

This rule is difficult to apply; it is frequently hard to decide whether a single word, such as however or a brief phrase is or is not parenthetic. If the interruption to the flow of the sentence is but slight, the commas may be safely omitted. But whether the interruption is slight or considerable, never omit one comma and leave the other. There is no defense for such punctuation as

Marjorie's husband, Colonel Nelson paid us a visit yesterday.

or

My brother you will be pleased to hear, is now in perfect health.

5. *Place a comma before a conjunction introducing an independent clause.* (p. 5)

The early records of the city have disappeared, and the story of its first years can no longer be reconstructed.

The situation is perilous, but there is still one chance of escape.

Two-part sentences of which the second member is introduced by as (in the sense of "because"), for, or nor, or while (in the sense of "and at the same time") likewise require a comma before the conjunction.

6. *Use a dash to set off an abrupt break or interruption and to announce a long appositive or summary. A dash is a mark of separation stronger than a comma, less formal than a colon, and more relaxed than parentheses.* (p. 9)

    His first thought on getting out of bed – if he had any thought at all – was to get back in again.

    The rear axle began to make a noise – a grinding, chattering, teeth-gritting rasp.

    The increasing reluctance of the sun to rise, the extra nip in the breeze, the patter of shed leaves dropping – all the evidences of fall drifting into winter were clearer each day.

    Use a dash only when a more common mark of punctuation seems inadequate.

    Her father's suspicions proved well-founded – it was not Edward she cared for – it was San Francisco.
    (Her father's suspicions proved well-founded. It was not Edward she cared for, it was San Francisco.)

    Violence – the kind you see on television – is not honestly violent – there lies its harm.
    (Violence, the kind you see on television, is not honestly violent. There lies its harm.)

7. *Exclamations.* (p. 34)

    Do not attempt to emphasize simple statements by using a mark of exclamation.

    It was a wonderful show!
    It was a wonderful show.

    The exclamation mark is to be reserved for use after true exclamations or commands.

    What a wonderful show!

    Halt!

8. *Numerals.* (p. 35)

    Do not spell out dates or other serial numbers. Write them in figures or in Roman notation, as appropriate.

    August 9, 1988 Part XII Rule 3 352d Infantry

    Exception: When they occur in dialogue, most dates and numbers are best spelled out.

    "I arrived home on August ninth."

    "In the year 1990, I turned twenty-one."

    "Read Chapter Twelve."

9. *Hyphen.* (p. 34)

    When two or more words are combined to form a compound adjective, a hyphen is usually required.

    "He belonged to the leisure class and enjoyed leisure-class pursuits."

    "She entered her boat in the round-the-island race."

Do not use a hyphen between words that can better be written as one word: *water-fowl*, *waterfowl*. Common sense will aid you in the decision, but a dictionary is more reliable. The steady evolution of the language seems to favor union: two words eventually become one, usually after a period of hyphenation.

bed chamber	bed-chamber	bedchamber
wild life	wild-life	wildlife
bell boy	bell-boy	bellboy

10. *Parentheses.* (p. 36)

A sentence containing an expression in parentheses is punctuated outside the last mark of parenthesis exactly as if the parenthetical expression were absent. The expression within the marks is punctuated as if it stood by itself, except that the final stop is omitted unless it is a question mark or an exclamation point.

I went to her house yesterday (my third attempt to see her), but she had left town.

He declares (and why should we doubt his good faith?) that he is now certain of success.

(When a wholly detached expression or sentence is parenthesized, the final stop comes before the last mark of parenthesis.)

Workshop 9

Content of Plays

Characters

- It doesn't matter if you're writing a depressing tragedy or a side-splitting comedy, take your characters so seriously that part of you goes into each of them. Drop any character you can't do this with. If you can't take your characters seriously, you'll end up making fun of them or creating little more than stick-figures.
- One method of developing characters is to create biographies before you start writing dialogue:
    - How they sound when they speak
    - What they look like
    - Any quirks of speech or dress
    - A mental attitude that's out of the ordinary
- A second method is to rely on your characters to tell you who they are through what they say in the dialogue on the page. You risk having to write most of a draft before understanding the backgrounds, secrets, and mental baggage of your creations. Using this method you may create rich and complex characters, who reveal themselves rather than having been mechanically constructed.
- You have to fall in love with your characters. You may have to live with for a long time. That is why character names matter.
- Your primary character(s) determines the play's point of view. It is through this character(s) that the audience will watch the story unfold.

Conflict

- **Conflict** is what fuels the play, it fuels the dramatic engine.
- Argument is not conflict. **Dramatic conflict** draws from a much deeper vein, rooted in the subtext of your central characters. It's driven by fundamentally opposing desires.
- **Conflict** will not happen if
    - Your characters agree about everything.
    - They keep turning-the-other-cheek.
    - You let them speak all their subtext.

- **Dramatic conflict** only happens when each character has a stake in the outcome.

Settings

- The setting determines the visual content and visual subtext of the play.
- If you think in a highly visual way you can describe the setting in detail, but all you really need is a visual feeling, a visual benchmark for the tone of the play.
- Describe what you feel is absolutely essential for you to begin putting words on paper. Only include descriptions, which tell something that matters about your characters or your theme.

Plots

> I used to think that you could just start to write and see what happened. Now I find that if you do that, it doesn't turn out; you may not get anywhere that's interesting. There are *drives* to plays. Sometimes I think of them as pieces of machinery. With a destination, lots of things come into focus for you as a writer. (Marsha Norman)

- **Plots** come in **pairs**. Playwrights instinctively know that. Audiences sit through four hours of *Hamlet* to find out if the dithering Prince will kill the King before the King kills him. Shakespeare needed an excuse to hold audiences in their seats so he could spend 90% of the play exploring what he really wanted to write about: the emotional consequences of Claudius having killed Hamlet's father.
- The purpose of the **Suspense Plot** – the What-Happens-Next of a play – is to give you an excuse to write about what you're really interested in: the **Emotional Plot**. No matter how great your **Emotional Plot** may be, you can't hold an audience if you don't have that **Suspense Plot** doing the dirty work for you.
- The **Suspense Plot's** purpose in life is to carry the **Emotional Plot** from the **Inciting Incident** of your play to the **Climax**. Once it's done that, you can coast those last few pages to the end of the **Resolution**.
- **Suspense Plots** nearly always hinge on practical, physical, issues:

    - Will Ken sell his family home?
    - Who killed the Sergeant?
    - Will Tess get to go to college in America?
    - Who's going to get the money?
    - Why does Jesse want towels and a gun?

- The **Inciting Incident** introduces the major conflict of the play.
- The **Climax** is the peak of conflict and tension, when the conflict becomes so intense, it has to snap. And at that moment of snapping, one or more of your central characters has their lives altered in some meaningful way. It doesn't matter if you're writing a farce or a serious play, the **Climax** results from the same force and produces the same impact. The best thing to do with a **Climax**, is get out of its way. By this point in the play, all of the forces of conflict and tension you triggered with the **Inciting Incident** have been steadily narrowing your options – and your characters' options – until the **Climax** is the only door left for you or them.
- Since they take up about 90% of a play, the overriding importance of **Emotional Plots** means that most playwrights assemble characters who have a shared – and emotionally complicated – past. And this is usually a past that has been simmering beneath the surface of their relationships for some time. The **Inciting Incident** of the **Suspense Plot** provides the catalyst for this simmering past to finally come to light.
- **Emotional Plots** deal with the **Emotional Consequences** of events – usually the events forming the basis of the **Suspense Plot**. While they take up most of the play, they're simple and uncomplicated to describe:

    - Can Maggie get Brick to love her again?
    - Can the three sisters learn to be supportive friends?
    - Why is there such emotional friction between the Sergeant and his troops?

- The **Resolution** is the final summing up of the consequences of the events that triggered the **Conflict** – and the play. Even though the **Climax** is over, this is no time to relax. The **Resolution** is the last image audiences carry away as they leave the theatre.

Subtext

- Keeping the lid on what your characters tell the audience.

> There's nothing there except lines of dialogue. If they're sketched correctly and *minimally*, they will give the audience the illusion that these are 'real people,' especially if the lines are spoken by real people – he actors are going to fill a lot in. So a large part of the technique of playwriting is to leave a lot out. (David Mamet)

- What you leave a lot out of the dialogue is **Subtext**. Pushing this just beneath the surface of the dialogue is what makes plays exciting and helps keep audiences in their seats. Subtext is the unspoken thoughts and motives of your characters -- what they really think and believe. In well-written dialogue, **Subtext** seldom breaks through the surface of the dialogue except in moments of extreme **Conflict**. If you let your characters tell each other everything they think or feel, actors can't do what they're trained to do best: revealing through gesture, intonation, and expression, the real essence of a character.

Subjects of Plays

- They're about something that *matters*.

> Let me just simplify it. Never an *idea,* never, never, never has an idea led to a play. Every inspiration, every seminal image for a play has been something I've seen on the streets, something I've read in a newspaper, a story that was told to me, always an event external to myself.' (Athol Fugard)

Themes

- Plays nearly always tend to be about something that matters. Plays need this something of consequence.
- Themes come from your personal values – moral, social, political – expressed through a play's Plot and Characters. In a sense, they are your moral or ethical conclusions about the story you're telling.

Titles

- The Title is the first message you send about the worth of your play and your voice as a writer.
- The best titles come as flashes of insight as you're writing the play or even before you put that first stage direction on page 1.
- You've got a choice of either **Descriptive** or **Metaphoric** titles. Most playwrights use **Metaphoric** titles because of the added messages they can send through them to readers and audiences. But a good descriptive title can still pack a lot of interest, so consider both**.**
- **Descriptive** titles can be a real bore, but some great classics of the theatre have used descriptive title – *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* and *Death of a Salesman*.
- **Metaphoric** titles have excitement about them. They suggest through symbolism, double meanings, and general cleverness, what a play might be about and often focus on the play's primary Theme – *Death and the Maiden*, *Crimes of the Heart*, *As Is* and *'Night Mother*.

Voice

- Your special sound as a playwright. What playwrights do is make us hear things we've never quite heard in that way before.
- There's a simple rule for developing your unique voice as a playwright – listen more than you talk.
- The words you write is language as it is spoken, not as it is written. Spoken language is governed by the structure of thoughts, not conventional sentence structure.
- Here's what to listen for

    - How people actually express thoughts in *spoken language*.

- The way words are used.
- Which ones are dropped from spoken language.
- Which are combined as contractions.
- How punctuation is thrown around in speech.
- The odd rhythms of spoken language.

Format

Software Example – Final Cut 5 (Handout during Workshop)

Workshop 10

The Hero's Journey

Backckground

- In 1949 Joseph Campbell published his book *The Hero With a Thousand Faces**, based on on the work of anthropologist Adolph Bastian, who first suggested that myths all seem to be built on the same "elementary ideas." Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung named these elementary ideas "archetypes," which he believed to be the building blocks, not only of the unconscious mind, but of a *collective unconscious*. Jung believed that everyone in the world is born with the same basic subconscious model of what a "hero" is, or a "mentor" or a "quest," and that's why people who don't even speak the same language can enjoy the same stories. Jung developed his idea of archetypes mostly as a way of finding meaning within the dreams and visions of the mentally ill.
- Campbell's took the idea of archetypes and used it to map out the common underlying structure behind religion and myth. *The Hero With a Thousand Faces** provides examples from cultures throughout history and all over the world. Campbell argues that all stories are fundamentally the *same* story, which he named the "Hero's Journey," or the "monomyth."
- He discovered that all story-telling, consciously or not, follows the ancient patterns of myth, and that all stories, from the crudest jokes to the highest flights of literature, can be understood in terms of the "Hero Myth"; the "Monomyth", the principles of which he lays out in the book.

* Joesph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, New York: Pantheon, 1949.

There have been a number of investigations, less celebrated than Campbell's and Jung's, but no less interesting. Notable works include:

- Max Müller, *Comparative Mythology*, Oxford Essays, 1856.
- Sir Edward Burnett Tylor**,** *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom***,** 1871.
- Johann Georg von Hahn, *Sagwissenschaftliche Studien* (Fairytale Sudies), 1876.
- Alfred Nutt, *The Aryan Expulsion-and-Return Formula in the Folk and Hero Tales of the Celts*, 1881 and *The Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare*, 1900.
- Otto Rank, *Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, 1909.
- Sir James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 1911-1915. (Apparently a 'must-read' for anyone interested in writing"mythic" fiction)
- Vladimir Propp, *Morfologiia Skazki* (Morphology of the Folktale), 1928. (Identified 31 steps in the hero's journey).
- Lord Fitzroy Richard Somerset Raglan, *The Hero*,1934. (Identified 22 steps in the hero's journey).
- Jan de Vries, *Forschungsgeschichte der Mythologie*, 1961. Published in English as *Heroic Song and Heroic Legend*, 1963. (Identified 10 common elements in the hero's journey). Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Mythologiques*, 1964-1971.

Potential Value of the Structure

- The ideas in the book are an excellent set of analytical tools.
- With them you can compose a story to meet any situation, a story that will be dramatic, entertaining and psychologically true.

- With them you can always determine what's wrong with a story that's floundering, and you can find a better solution to almost any story problem by examining the pattern laid out in the book.

The **stages of the Hero's Journey** are:

1. The Hero is Introduced in his Ordinary World
2. The Call to Adventure
3. The Hero is Reluctant at First
4. The Hero is Encouraged by the Wise Old Man or Woman
5. The Hero passes the First Threshold
6. The Hero Encounters Tests and Helpers
7. The Hero Reaches the Innermost Cave
8. The Hero Endures the Supreme Ordeal
9. The Hero Seizes the Sword
10. The Road back
11. Resurrection
12. Return with the Elixir

The **Short Form** of the Hero's Journey:

> The hero is introduced in his ordinary world, where he receives the call to adventure. He is reluctant at first, but is encouraged by the wise old man or woman to cross the first threshold, where he encounters tests and helpers. He reaches the innermost cave, where he endures the supreme ordeal. He seizes the sword or the treasure and is pursued on the road back to his world. He is resurrected and transformed by his experience. He returns to his ordinary world with a treasure, boon, or elixir to benefit his world.

Using the Hero's Journey Formula

- As with any formula, there are pitfalls to be avoided. Following the guidelines of myth too rigidly can lead to a stiff, unnatural structure and there is danger of being too obvious.
- The Hero's Journey is a skeleton that should be masked with the details of the individual story. The structure should not call attention to itself. The order of the hero's stages as given here is only one of many variations. The stages can be deleted, added to and drastically reshuffled without losing their power.
- The values of the myth are what's important. The images of the basic version – young heroes seeking magic swords from old wizards, fighting evil dragons in deep caves – are just symbols and can be changed infinitely to suit the story at hand.
- The myth is easily translated to contemporary dramas, comedies, romances, or action-adventures by substituting modern equivalents for the symbolic figures and props of the hero story. The Wise Old Man may be a real shaman or Wizard, but he can also be any kind of mentor or teacher.
- Modern heroes may not be going into caves and labyrinths to fight their mythical beasts, but they do enter an innermost cave by going into space, to the bottom of the sea, into their own minds, or into the depths of a modern city.
- The myth can be used to tell the simplest comic book story or the most sophisticated drama. It grows and matures as new experiments are tried within its basic framework. Changing the sex and ages of the basic characters only makes it more interesting and allows for ever more complex webs of understanding to be spun among them. The basic characters can be combined, or divided into several figures to show different aspects of the same idea. The myth is infinitely flexible, capable of endless variation without sacrificing any of its magic.

Practical Examples of the Hero's Journey Structure

Campbell's book has and continues to have a major impact on writing and story-telling, but above all on movie-making. Aware or not, filmmakers like Steven Spielberg, George Lucas and Francis Coppola owe their successes to the ageless pattern that Joseph Campbell identifies in the book.

The Hero With a Thousand Faces gave Lucas the focus he needed to draw his broad imaginary universe in *Star Wars* into a single story and the Wachowski Brothers' film, *The Matrix*, is carefully built on the same blueprint:*

Campbell	Star Wars	The Matrix
I: Departure		
The call to adventure	Princess Leia's message	"Follow the white rabbit"
Refusal of the call	Must help with the harvest	Neo won't climb out window
Supernatural aid	Obi-wan rescues Luke from sandpeople	Trinity extracts the "bug" from Neo
Crossing the first threshold	Escaping Tatooine	Agents capture Neo
The belly of the whale	Trash compactor	Torture room
II: Initiation		
The road of trials	Lightsabre practice	Sparring with Morpheus
The meeting with the goddess	Princess Leia	Trinity
Temptation away from the true path	Luke is tempted by the Dark Side	Cypher (the failed messiah) is tempted by the world of comfortable illusions
Atonement with the Father	Darth and Luke reconcile	Neo rescues and comes to agree (that he's The One) with his father-figure, Morpheus
Apotheosis (becoming god-like)	Luke becomes a Jedi	Neo becomes The One
The ultimate boon	Death Star destroyed	Humanity's salvation now within reach
III: Return		
Refusal of the return	"Luke, come on!" Luke wants to stay to avenge Obi-Wan	Neo fights agent instead of running
The magic flight	Millennium Falcon	"Jacking in"
Rescue from without	Han saves Luke from Darth	Trinity saves Neo from agents
Crossing the return threshold	Millennium Falcon destroys pursuing TIE fighters	Neo fights agent Smith
Master of the two worlds	Victory ceremony	Neo's declares victory over machines in final phone call
Freedom to live	Rebellion is victorious over Empire	Humans are victorious over machines
Common Mythic Elements		
Two Worlds (mundane and special)	Planetside vs. The Death Star	Reality vs. The Matrix
The Mentor	Obi-Wan Kenobi	Morpheus
The Oracle	Yoda	The Oracle
The Prophecy	Luke will overthrow the Emperor	Morpheus will find (and Trinity will fall for) "The One"

Failed Hero	Biggs	In an early version of the script, Morpheus once believed that Cypher was "The One"
Wearing Enemy's Skin	Luke and Han wear stormtrooper outfits	Neo jumps into agent's skin
Shapeshifter (the Hero isn't sure if he can trust this character)	Han Solo	Cypher
Animal familiar	R2-D2, Chewbacca	N/A
Chasing a lone animal into the enchanted wood (and the animal gets away)	The Millennium Falcon follows a lone TIE fighter into range of the Death Star	Neo "follows the white rabbit" to the nightclub where he meets Trinity

* Christopher Vogler, *The Writer's Journey, Second Edition: Mythic Structure for Writers*, Saline, Michigan: Michael Wiese Productions, 1998.

Recommended Reading

Christopher Vogler, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, Saline, Michigan: Michael Wiese Productions, 1998.
Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, New York: Pantheon, 1949.

Further Reading

Joseph Campbell, *The Mythic Image*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.
Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, New York: Doubleday, 1988.
Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Volume 4, Creative Mythology*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.
Joseph Campbell, *Myths to Live by*, New York: Bantam Books, 1988.
Stuart Voytilla, *Myth and the Movies: Discovering the Myth Structure of 50 Unforgettable Films*.

Writing Children's Stories

Reader/Listener Targeting

- 3 to 5 (listening)
- 5 to 9 (listening to reading)
- 9 to 12 (reading)

Five tips for writing stories for very small children:

1. **One thought per sentence.** Keep your writing simple and uncluttered. If the sentence needs a comma anywhere, with the exception of before or after dialogue, think about breaking it up into two sentences.
2. **Avoid cliched images.** Remember your audience. Your cliche may be new to most children, so familiarity will not be an aid to understanding. Small children do not have a wide range of associations to use in understanding the image.
3. **Be literal.** Writing in children's books must be concrete. Focus on giving information your audience can perceive with their five senses.
4. **Provide captivating dialogue.** You can express much more about your characters through their own words than you can through dry narration. Also, since your book will most likely be read aloud, providing different voices to be acted out often makes your book more enjoyable for the adult to read and the child to hear.
5. **Keep it simple.** The trick in children's books is to use as few words as possible. Avoid adverbs and adjectives where possible and use good active verbs. For example, instead of saying "He ran quickly," say "He sped."

(from Berthe Amoss and Eric Suben, *The Children's Writer's Reference*)

General Guidelines for Writing Children's Stories

Theme

- The theme is the insight,viewpoint or concept that the story conveys. The theme should be significant.
- Don't blurt out your theme, let it emerge from the story and if you must come out and say it, do it in dialogue, not narration.
- Avoid preaching. Children's stories should be explorations of life – not Sunday school lessons.
- Keep your theme positive. If writing about a social problem, offer constructive ways for your readers to deal with it.

Plot

- Plot is normally built around a conflict involving the main character – for instance, with another character, or with circumstances, or within him· or herself. A story *may* succeed without conflict – especially if for preschoolers – but not without another device to hold attention.
- Conflict often takes the form of a problem the main character must resolve. The character should succeed or fail at least in part through his or her own efforts. Most often – especially in realistic fiction – the character learns or grows in the process. *The lesson or growth conveys the theme.*
- The conflict should result in increasing dramatic tension, which peaks or "climaxes" towards the end, then resolves.
- The basic sequence of plot stages is: arrival of conflict, initial success of the main character, reversals, final victory, and outcome. The success·reversal sequence may repeat. A novel may have several conflicts, but a short story or picture book should have only one.
- Move the plot forward with events and action, rather than with internal musings. *Show, don't tell.*

Story Structure

- At the beginning, jump right into the action. At the end, bring the story to a prompt close.
- Keep the structure as simple as possible. In a picture book, keep the action in chronological order without "flashbacks."
- For a picture book story, make sure you have enough "scenes" (locations) to provide variety in the illustrations.
- For your narration, make the best choice for your story between "first person" and "third person." First person is popular with middle·grade and young·adult readers as it creates instant intimacy and can convey lively wit and emotion. But it can confuse younger listeners, so it should seldom be used in early picture books. Third person is fine for any age, and permits the writer more sophisticated language and observations.
- Whether in first or third person, the story should generally be told through the eyes of a single character—usually the main character. This is called "point of view." Sudden shifts in the story's point of view can jolt and disorient the reader. To keep it consistent, narrate only what your chosen character would know and nothing he or she wouldn't—for example, other people's thoughts, or something out of sight.

Characters

- Before you start writing, know your characters thoroughly.
- Your main character should be someone the reader can identify and/or sympathize with. He or she should be near the top age of your intended readers. (One exception is in folktales.)

- Identify your characters with one or more telling details – a physical trait, a mannerism, a favorite phrase. A complete description is not needed.

Setting

- Set your story in a place and time that will be interesting or familiar.

Style and Tone

- Write simply and directly, in short words, short sentences, short paragraphs.
- Use dialogue wherever possible. Use direct quotes instead of indirect. Aim to make dialogue at least one-third of your story.
- Avoid big chunks of narration – especially description. Often you can split it into smaller pieces, or convey information in dialog. (Example: "I like your purple hair.")
- Use language that creates an atmosphere or "tone" suited to your story.
- For younger children, use poetic devices like rhythm, repetition, alliteration ("Peter Piper picked a peck"), and rhyme – though generally not in verse.
- Avoid being cutesy or sweet or sentimental or condescending.

[from Aaron Shepard, *The Business of Writing for Children,* Shepard Publications, 2000.]

Workshop 11

Publishing Processes and Issues

1. Copyright

- "Copyright is the exclusive right in relation to work embodying intellectual content (ie the product of the intellect) to do or to authorise others to do certain acts in relation to that work ... acts [which] represent ... the manners in which that work can be exploited for personal gain or for profit." (Owen Dean, 1989, *Handbook of South African Copyright Law*, Juta & Co Ltd.)
- The right to prevent others from copying, or from using for commercial gain, what belongs to you.
- The Copyright Act 98 of 1978, as amended, governs copyright.
- The kinds of work eligible for copyright protection includes literary (written), musical and artistic works; cinematograph films; sound recordings; broadcasts; programme-carrying signals; published editions and computer programmes.
- In the content, that is the literary work, copyright in the work usually belongs to the author (unless he or she has assigned it to the publisher) and the duration of copyright is the life of the author plus 50 years from the end of the year in which the author dies. When copyright expires, the work falls into the public domain, and may be freely used and exploited by anyone.
- In South Africa one does not register copyright (apart from cinematograph films) – copyright arises as you express your ideas on the page and, theoretically you don't have to do anything to protect your work, as your work is automatically protected, but if someone copied it, and you challenged them, you would have to prove in court that you are the owner of copyright.

2. **Copyright Protection**

- Mailing a copy of the work to yourself ensuring that the date stamp on the envelope or outer packaging is clearly legible. Keep package sealed and file or store in a safe place. (example)
- Register your copyright in the work at the United States Copyright Office at the Library of Congress in Washington. (handouts)
    - US Copyright Office Homepage
    - Send copy of the work + completed form from website + money draft for $30
    - Registered on receipt by Copyright Office

- Work forms part of Copyright Office database
- Certificate of Registration issued and posted to author

3. Markets and Audiences

South Africa
Book Sales (Locally Produced) – 2003 (Industry Survey)

Trade Books	R270.6 million (R100 per book = 2.7 million books)
Educational	R801.3 million
Academic	R75 million
Total	R1.1469 billion

Large publishers focus on Educational Books – 70% of turnover
Small publishers focus on Trade Books – 63% of turnover

USA
Book Sales - 2004

Adult Hardbound	$2.45 billion
Adult Paperbound	$1.47 billion
Juvenile Hardbound	$.70 billion
Juvenile Paperbound	$.456 billion
Total Trade	$5.076 billion ($20 per book = 2.538 billion books)
Total All Books	$23.715 billion

United Kingdom
(Unable to access reliable figures without subscribing to industry bodies)

Publishing Choices

- Pressure to publish locally
- Overseas markets more sophisticated, lucrative
- Popularity versus Art
- Example – Rachel Zadock, won a British 'How to get Published' Competition (46000 entries) with SA based novel – *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* – 46000 copies sold in 2 weeks – unfortunately "second book deals with current issues: HIV, rape, child abuse."
- Rachel Zadock merely took a chance and won with a uniquely South African theme with a British panel of judges – anything is possible and logic plays no role in the process.

4. Publishers and Agents

- Prime reference source, recognised, recommended and accepted by literary world is the *Writers' and Artists' Yearbook*.
- International guide to publisher's, agents, competitions, periodicals, academic publishers, radio, TV, theatre, screen, etc.
- Used in conjunction with publisher/agent websites, provides submission guidelines for proposals and communications.
- Some publishers refuse to work directly with authors and prefer authors to be represented by agents – 10% to 20% commission.
- Benefit of an agent is knowledge and contacts to sell your work.
- Follow submission guidelines to the letter, include international reply coupons if you want your material back and a response.
- Identifying the publishers and or agents, who would be most interested in your work is a painstaking process requiring focus and dedication, as is the development of the proposal in which you *sell* your work and explain how it will benefit the publisher's/agent's business.
- If your research has revealed that there may be a specific individual, who may be interested in your work, "hunt him or her down" and send your work directly, break the rules, you never know what will happen. (handout)

5. Rejection

- Rejection is not negative. See it as a 'conversation' about your work. It is positive in that someone has read and considered your proposal. Your work is not just a 'dream' lying in a drawer somewhere. It is out in the world.
- Different levels and types of rejection – unread, rejected proposal; read rejected proposal; read and rejected work, not suitable; and read, rejected, but positive feedback given.
- Examples

6. Persistence, Writing with Purpose

- Write with the intention of getting as many people as possible to read your work. Submit to competitions, local and overseas, submit to local and international periodicals, submit to publishers and agents internationally.
- Visualise your work being accepted and published as you develop it and write. Keep that vision in your mind all the time and see every rejection as being a step closer to acceptance.

Appendix 13: Phase 1 Workshops 2007
Structure, Content and Teaching Materials

Workshop Structure and Content

Workshop 1

1. Workshop Environment

    - No right or wrong
    - Individuality is celebrated
    - Park your academic mindset (and Literature Students, your favourite author) at the door when you come in
    - Possibilities and not restrictions
    - Freedom
    - Cannot teach talent, teach to write well and best of your ability
    - Journals – vital, the more you write the better you will get
    - Deadlines and discipline the key to successful writing
    - Your Writer's Voice

2. Writing Routine

    - Active writers have some form of writing routine
    - Writing Journal Regularity
    - Words and Sentences are smallest building blocks of writing
    - Write one sentence a day, ideally with souls

3. *The Soul Inside the Sentence*

    - As a writer what will your work be competing against for attention?
    - Writing has to be of a quality, imaginative, original if it is going to attract and retain readers
    - William Gass – essayist and experimental novelist – concept of the *Soul Inside the Sentence* ***(Handout)***

        - Characteristics of Creativity
        - Popularity of Creativity
        - The Joys of Creativity

    - Do Gass's sentences have souls? How?
    - What effect does this type of sentence have on you as a reader?

4. Workshop Exercises

    - "Lies" Poem Icebreaker – 10 minutes write swap, read and guess
    - Write 2 sentences with souls inside

5. Assignment – Short Story Reading and Rating (*Short Story Pack* ***Handout)***

    - Read short stories, rank and record
    - Locate own writing ideally, hero piece
    - Which published and which not
    - Reveal authors and story backgrounds after reading and rating process

Workshop 2

1. Feedback Process and Parameters

    - Critical Feedback – process and parameters – discuss and confirm rules – appoint chair write up and distribute rules ***(Handout)***

2. Reader Imagination and Reader Response *(Handout)*

   - What do you as a reader enjoy most about your favourite authors?
   - When does the text come alive?
   - When you write for a reader, what is your ultimate objective as a writer?
   - What characteristics did the most enjoyable short story have – and least enjoyable?

3. Workshop Exercise

   - Write by Showing and not Telling *(Handout)*

4. Assignment

   - Using the 14 sentences you have written during the last two weeks as a foundation write a 500 word 'story' focusing on the principles of *reader response* and *showing and not telling*
   - Distribute piece to workshop participants 3 days before the next session
   - Read and assess all pieces and prepare short feedback according to principles developed in terms of feedback rules and criteria

Workshop 3

1. Review

   - Soul Inside the Sentence – William Gass's Concept
   - Reader Response
   - Show, Not Tell – Examples of Ian McEwan and Vladimir Nabokov's Writing *(Handout)*

2. Place, Space, Time, Characters, Viewpoint and Theme

   - Draw discussion and examples from short story pack

3. Participant and Spectator Exercise

   - The Writer's Voice
   - Perspectives and Originality
   - Reader's Imagination
   - Examples *(Handout)*

4. Read and Discuss

   - McEwan and Nabokov Excerpts – Showing and Not Telling
   - Participant and Spectator examples

5. Workshop Exercises

   - Write two paragraphs about an everyday event in your life, mundane and boring making it interesting by manipulating the perspective and amount you tell, how much detail
   - Read and provide feedback

6. Feedback Session

   - 500-word Short Story from Sentences with Soul Exercise

7. Assignments

   - Redraft, revise and edit Participant Piece for feedback next session (3 days before)
   - Read and assimilate Short Story Handout for next session *(Handout)*
   - Keep Writing Sentences with Souls
   - Journal entries

Workshop 4

1. Review

- Feedback to 500-word stories – free-for-all, enthusiastic, but must be constructive for benefit of writer – time problems
- Participant Writing attempts

2. The Short Story

   - Student Comments on Short Story Handout
   - Which Short Stories in Pack most closely resemble guidelines

3. Writing Process *(Handouts)*

   - Messiness
   - Work-in-Progress
   - The Dangerous Method
   - Redrafting, Editing
   - Free Writing

4. Workshop Exercise

   - Free Writing – Glass Eye, Crystal Ball, Antique Bellows Camera – all or none – write for 10 minutes without lifting your pen from the page – read your Free Writing 'result' to the group (no feedback)
   - Use free writing for the basis of short story, if you so wish, or free write until you discover your own topic in your own time.

5. Assignments

   - Read the handouts on the short story
   - Become fully conversant with the short story 'parameters' or 'rules'
   - Short Story pack good spectrum of what is being published
   - Written feedback from all participants on all stories to be read and handed to writer at next session
   - Select piece written during workshops or not – originality, creativity, difference – submit draft of short story for feedback 5 days before next workshop
   - Convert free writing exercise into short story <u>rough draft</u> and distribute for feedback at next workshop

6. Feedback Session – Participant/Spectator Writing

<u>Workshop 5</u>

1. Review

   - Congratulations, best writing across the board from all of you, in three years in terms of overall quality, quantity and originality
   - Feedback based on removed view, quality to submit to competition so that, even if not successful judges will say, "well-written piece"
   - Read aloud to yourselves all the time, will help remove mistakes, repetition and cliché

2. Lack of Writing

   - Not a writer if you don't write – writing improves as you write
   - Successful writers, not the most talented, most obsessive, determined
   - Discipline and routine – find and maintain your writing time even if you don't write a thing

3. Sentences with Soul

   - Slowdown in sentences
   - Restart sentence with soul process
   - Selections for next workshop

4. Free Writing

    - Revisit importance
    - Comments/responses – free writing submissions
    - Editing

5. Loop Writing *(Handout Peter Elbow)*

6. Workshop Exercise

    - Read Topics *(Handout Philip Larkin & Bob Dylan)*
    - Free Write a Topic or Topics or anything
    - Loop Write – 3 perspectives – different audience, writer and in different time

7. Feedback Session – Free Writing Exercise and Story

8. Assignment

    - Sentences with Soul
    - 2nd Drafts of Short Stories
    - Read and feedback
    - Loop Writing Exercise pieces – circulate for discussion

Workshop 6

1. Review

    - Feedback – first 5 workshops
    - Readership – reader response, reader imagination and show, not tell
    - Spectator and participant – voice, perspective and reader imagination
    - Put your writing out there and keep it alive – entering competitions
    - Writer's Journal – tracking and nurturing, experiences and progress, source of writing ideas
    - Process and genre – explore and experiment with writing processes and genres
    - The 'messiness' of the writing process
    - Writing – work-in-progress
    - The dangerous method: trying to write it right the first time
    - Redrafting, editing and free writing
    - The short story – the 'rules' and breaking the 'rules'
    - Free writing – revisit importance
    - The short story – the 'rules' and breaking the 'rules'
    - Loop writing – perspective changes

2. Experiencing and Practising Writing Freedom *(Handout Dickens & Dylan)*

3. Short Story Rating Discussion – *Lamb to the Slaughter* highest rated short story

4. Characterisation and Successful Storylines

    - The Seven Deadly Sins
    - The Cardinal Virtues
    - The Heavenly Graces

5. Feedback Session – Short Story Drafts

6. Assignments *(Handout)*

    - **Assignment 1** – Select a card containing one of the deadly Sins, *research* that Sin and write a 'back story' or profile of a character whose primary character trait is the Sin you have drawn giving the historical reasons behind the character's propensity to commit the Sin and how the Sin is currently portrayed in the character's life.
    - **Assignment 2** – Select a card containing one of the Virtues or Graces, *research* that Virtue or Grace and write a 'back story' or profile of a character whose primary character trait is the Virtue or Grace you have drawn giving the historical reasons behind the character's

propensity to embody the Virtue or Grace and how the Virtue or Grace is currently portrayed in the character's life.
- **Assignment 3** – Write a short story pushing these two characters together, using their interaction and their relationship as the hub of the conflict of the storyline.

Workshop 7

Feedback Session only – All the short story drafts and works in progress

Workshop 8

1. Presentation Style and Format *(Handout)*

   - Deon Hofmeyr Competition Requirements
   - Poem, Short Story, Cover Page, Covering Letter
   - Typestyles (Font)
   - Line Spacing
   - Layout: Page Spacing & Justification
   - Paragraph Style
   - Quotation marks
   - Cover Sheets
   - Covering Letter
   - Copyright
   - Additional Aspects –*The Elements of Style*, William Strunk Jr., and E.B. White

2. Read Selected Sentences with Soul *(Handout)*

3. Feedback Session – 2nd draft of Short Stories

   - Sins Virtues and Graces Characterisations

     - Chadwick
     - Kahlan Amnell
     - Antonio
     - Knives

   - Final Short Story Versions

     - Sophie
     - Antonio
     - Knives
     - Kahlan Amnell
     - Lemon
     - Jonny Rage

Workshop 9

1. Reflexive Essay

   - Suggested structure
   - As long or as short as you want it to be
   - You reflect and think back over the year
   - Perceptions before commencement
   - Most useful exercises, least useful
   - Comparison original piece to best latest piece
   - Workshop feedback process
   - Benefits and/or disadvantages of workshop teaching process
   - How, if at all, has your writing, your perception, drive and desire to write and your writing process been affected by the workshop programme?

2. Plot and Storyline

   - The Hero's Journey *(Handout)*

- Sins Virtues Graces Exercise – Complimentary book to Hero's Journey – *The Moral Premise: Harnessing Virtue and Vice for Box Office Success* – a companion piece

3. Discussing and agreeing Objectives and Processes for 2008 Workshops

4. Assignment(s) for February 2008

Workshop 10

1. Plot and Storyline – *The Hero's Journey* – Discuss

2. Reflexive Essay discussions

3. Writing a One-Act Play ***(Handout)***

4. Selected Sentences

Workshop 11

1. Award Selected Sentences Prizes (***Handout)***

2. Objectives, Process and Assignments for 2008 Workshop Programme

   - Reflexive essays
   - Interim workshops
   - Continue Sentences with Soul
   - Additional students and group size
   - Best pieces from 2007 developed for submission to competitions and publications in 2008 – Magazines and Journals
   - Additional genres – novella, children's stories, plays and screenplays
   - Skills and Techniques – openings, beginnings, endings, characterizations
   - Short Story Readings and Ratings
   - Copyright and publishing

3. Writing Children's Stories ***(Handouts)***

4. Rejection notes

Workshop Teaching Materials

Workshop 1

"The Soul Inside the Sentence," *Habitations of the Word: Essays*, William H. Gass, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985, pp. 113-142.

Current Poplarity of Creativity

'Creativity' has become a healthy, even a holy word. Its popularity is recent, its followers alarmingly American. The command has gone out from gurus of every persuasion: be creative! an injunction which is followed by the assurance that it's actually better for you than bowling; and millions have eagerly, anxiously responded. The pursuit and practice of something labeled creativity is now as epidemic as tennis or jogging, and apparently will be as difficult to discourage, now it's here, as trailer parks, poverty, or moviegoing. (p. 118)

Characteristics of Creativity

Alcohol, like illness, may momentarily reduce the writer's level of repression, cigarettes may give the nerves something to do, sex may strengthen a weakened ego, drugs may dull the sense of failure, coffee may produce an illusion of alertness, seasons may supply subjects or encourage moods, energies may ebb and flow through times of the day like sunlight among clouds, little rituals may give comfort, anal ordering some security, sensory cues, like those apples whose odor as they spoiled gave Schiller a lift, may stimulate the flow of that saliva which moistens the pen in poets who work like dogs. Creative rites are rites of magic, and, like magic, cannot explain success. Concentration, of course is necessary. Fears, petty worries must be put aside. And as one's relation to one's work deepens, the level of tension rises, anxiety accompanies accomplishment, skepticism, like a skull, grins at one's approval, and the fear, when things are going well, that this thread will be lost, the onward rush cease, the next word fail to appear, becomes nearly intolerable, as is the thought that it may go on, winding one tight and toward a resolution which will never come; for climaxes in writing are rare, and mostly it is plod, mostly it is routine – the same cold flesh on the same old spouse – mostly it is dull and tense and hard, and rarely does it seem creative. (p. 118)

The Joy of Creativity

Only some things in this life can be unambiguously, unironically, celebrated. The poet wanders among the animals and flowers, in landscapes finds his freedom, amid luminous skies let his soul soar like a kestrel; for what *is* the way I want the world? wholly in my power; and the more powerless I may have found myself as in growing up we all find ourselves, the more completely, as a writer, will I rest within the word, because as difficult as its management is: listen! I speak and these friendly syllables surround me; they have never done me any harm, for even when I ascribe them to my enemies, make up villains in a tale to torment victims I have also fabricated, the words they speak are mine, the sentiments indeed are mine, coming from every corner, the villainies as well … ah, yes, those *especially*. (p. 137)

Workshop 3

Sentences with Soul

Mary worked in and part-owned a feminist bookstore in Venice. I met her there lunchtime on my second day in Los Angeles. That same evening we were lovers, and not so long after that we were friends. The following Friday I chained her by the foot to my bed for the whole weekend. It was, she explained to me,

something she 'had to go into to come out of'. I remember her extracting (later, in a crowded bar) my solemn promise that I would not listen if she demanded to be set free. Anxious to please my new friend, I bought a fine chain and diminutive padlock. With brass screws I secured a steel ring to the wooden base of the bed and all was set. Within hours she was insisting on her freedom, and though a little confused I got out of bed, showered, dressed, put on my carpet slippers and brought her a large frying-pan to urinate in. She tried on a firm, sensible voice.

'Unlock this,' she said. 'I've had enough.' I admit she frightened me. I poured myself a drink and hurried out on to the balcony to watch the sun set. I was not at all excited. I thought to myself, if I unlock the chain she will despise me, but at least I will have kept my promise. The pale orange sun dipped into the haze, and I heard her shout to me through the closed bedroom door. I closed my eyes and concentrated on being blameless.

Ian McEwan, "Psychopolis", in *In Between the Sheets*, London: Vintage 1997, p. 107

Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta.

She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one sock. She was Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita.

... You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style.

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury ... Look at this tangle of thorns.

Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, London: Penguin Books, 2000, p. 9.

And presently I was driving through the drizzle of the dying day, with the windshield wipers in full action but unable to cope with my tears.

Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, London: Penguin Books, 2000, p. 280.

Workshop 8

Selected Sentences

Instead of whining so much, maybe you should try to change your life?

He liked building things, he would build cars, houses, dreams and histories. For her he built happiness and wealth and all her petty desires – and yet, for all of that, she spurned his love. For years he would build her into her own dreams, and then one day, he went to her. And took her eyes, and took her heart. And rebuilt her.

Cubicle four, Psychological Counseling 101: the dilemmas of life and death, love and hate, expounded upon for free, as you rest your little tush on the toilet seat.

"I'm curious about you. I wonder what makes you tick, what's inside of you?" She picked up the knife.

He didn't *really* want to make her soul sing – all he wanted to do was fuck her.

The car indicators dance to the disco tunes of the traffic lights.

"Jimmy, don't play with your supper, put the fingers back on your plate and take some liver ... There's a good boy."

Workshop 11

Paragraphs

Make the paragraph the unit of composition.

(*The Elements of Style*, William Strunk Jr., and E.B. White, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000, pp. 15-17.)

The paragraph is a convenient unit; it serves all forms of literary work. As long as it holds together, a paragraph may be of any length – a single, short sentence or a passage of great duration.

If the subject on which you are writing is of slight extent, or if you intend to treat it briefly, there may be no need to divide it into topics. Thus, a brief description, a brief book review, a brief account of a single incident, a narrative merely outlining an action, the setting forth of a single idea – any one of these is best written in a single paragraph. After the paragraph has been written, examine it to see whether division will improve it.

Ordinarily, however, a subject requires division into topics, each of which should be dealt with in a paragraph. The object of treating each topic in a paragraph by itself is, of course, to aid the reader. The beginning of each paragraph is a signal that a new step in the development of the subject has been reached.

As a rule, single sentences should not be written or printed as paragraphs. An exception may be made of sentences of transition, indicating the relation between the parts of an exposition or argument.

In dialogue, each speech, even if only a single word, is usually a paragraph by itself, that is, a new paragraph begins with each change of speaker. The application of this rule when dialogue and narrative are combined is best learned from examples in well-edited works of fiction. Sometimes a writer, seeking to create an effect of rapid talk or for some other reason, will elect not to set off each speech in a separate paragraph and instead will run speeches together. The common practice, however, and the one that serves best in most instances, is to give each speech a paragraph of its own.

As a rule, begin each paragraph either with a sentence that suggests the topic or with a sentence that helps the transition. If a paragraph forms part of a larger composition, its relation to what precedes, or its function as a part of the whole, may need to be expressed. This can sometimes be done by a mere word or phrase (again, therefore, for the same reason) in the first sentence. Sometimes, however, it is expedient to get into the topic slowly, byway of a sentence or two of introduction or transition.

In narration and description, the paragraph sometimes begins with a concise, comprehensive statement serving to hold together the details that follow.

> The breeze served us admirably.
>
> The campaign opened with a series of reverses.
>
> The next ten or twelve pages were filled with a curious set of entries.

But when this device, or any device, is too often used, it becomes a mannerism. More commonly, the opening sentence simply indicates by its subject the direction the paragraph is to take.

> At length I thought I might return toward the stockade.
>
> He picked up the heavy lamp from the table and began to explore.
>
> Another flight of steps, and they emerged on the roof.

In animated narrative, the paragraphs are likely to be short and without any semblance of a topic sentence, the writer rushing headlong, event following event in rapid succession. The break between such paragraphs merely serves the purpose of a rhetorical pause, throwing into prominence some detail of the action.

In general, remember that paragraphing calls for a good eye as well as a logical mind. Enormous blocks of print look formidable to readers, who are often reluctant to tackle them. Therefore, breaking long paragraphs in two, even if it is not necessary to do so for sense, meaning, or logical development, is often a visual help. But remember, too, that firing off many short paragraphs in quick succession can be distracting ... Moderation and a sense of order should be the main considerations in paragraphing.

Appendix 14: Phase 2 Workshops 2007
Structure, Content and Teaching Materials

Workshop Structure and Content

Workshop 2

1. **Genre Writing Exercise**
   [An exercise, which forms part of the *Writing: Theory and Practice* module given by Dr. Pamela Nichols at the University of the Witwatersrand]

   The **purpose** of this exercise is to assist you in the development of different perspectives when you are writing. It is similar to the loop writing process, but where loop writing focuses on variations in viewpoint, the Genre Writing Exercise focuses on changes in style, mood and tone.

   The exercise process is the following:

   - Write a short story in 4, 5 minute increments changing the genre style at the end of each 5 minute segment
   - The story should flow into and through each genre change ending in the final genre style
   - The genres (to be written in this order) are Science Fiction, Romance, Tarantino and the script for the stories Movie Trailer
   - Once completed spend some time polishing and editing into a finished story to be shared with the workshop members at the next session
   - Attached is an example of an experimental genre piece. The specified genre styles differ from those in the workshop exercise. Can you identify the genres in the attachment?

2. **Collaborative Writing Exercise (Experiment)**

   The workshop participants were split into two groups of 3. Each group was given the name of the primary character in each of the two collaborative stories and both stories would have the same Title, *What a Way to Die*.

   Group 1 was given the name Penelope Beresford-Buttery and each member was allocated a portion of the story to write. The first writer would write for 5 minutes introducing the character and the setting of the story. In 5 minutes the second writer would write the theme, tension and conflict as the main body of the story and the final writer would, in 5 minutes, write the deadly ending to the story.

   Group A was given the character name Jabu Nkosi and asked to write the story like a committee so that each member of the team agreed on the details of the story.

   For the next workshop session, consider what the outcome of this experiment was most likely to be providing detailed reasons for you speculation.

   The two stories will be circulated at the next workshop.

Workshops Teaching Materials

Workshop 2

Genre Writing

Sebastian Schlock: A Genre Exploration

All his heart desired was one more fleeting glimpse of her after 25 years of carrying her in his thoughts, endlessly wondering where she was, what she was doing and whether she was happy. He couldn't even remember what she looked like, but he knew that she was beautiful. His mind told him she was beautiful, as beautiful as the day he last saw her walking down a crowded street towards him. She had a smile of expectation, but he blinked and then she was gone. In the flesh she had been gone for so many years, but his mind clung to the fantasy and beauty of her, making her immortal, making her more inviting, more real than real.

She had the most exquisite, most delectable neck he had ever encountered in his two thousand years of observing and enjoying necks. Necks were his specialty, the reason for his passion and his very existence. He was shaking and knew he had to control himself. He was salivating noticeably and he casually lifted the white lace cloth and dabbed the corners of his mouth. "I must get her out of my mind" he said to himself as his eyes shifted and darted through the crowded dance floor, searching for his next victim. He would have to make do with second best, always second best, for the rest of his endless life. He slid across the writhing dance floor avoiding the frenetic bodies, his long white coat floating behind him. A perky, wide-eyed girl caught his roving eye. She was gyrating, her body shaking in frenzy, her blonde hair flowing and snapping to the monotone beat of the music, revealing tantalising glimpses of her soft white neck.

As recently as the 5th of June 1998, in a letter to his friend, Peter Prowse, Sebastian Schlock made numerous mentions of a mystery woman with whom he had been obsessed for over twenty-five years. His obsession started when he caught a glimpse of the woman on a crowded street in Budapest after one of his many excursions into the Hungarian hinterland. Innumerable historians and biographical scholars have spent the last six years trying to identify, track down and question the woman, who had such a profound effect on Sebastian Schlock. Prowse has confirmed that Schlock regularly followed and watched the woman from a distance, but never introduced himself to her or communicated with her. Schlock dubbed her "Beatrix" and Prowse is on record as describing her as "devastatingly beautiful." Scholars still believe that "Beatrix", Schlock's obsession, his mystery woman, could be the key to unravelling Schlock's behaviour and his role in the violence and carnage during the last days before his disappearance.

One of the most fascinating birds to be found in Eastern Europe is the *Cunius Spectra*. It is particularly plentiful in the wilds of the Hungarian Lowlands on the border with Transylvania. The *Cunius Spectra*'s dominant feature is its long white neck with a streak of crimson down the left-hand side. The white and red neck contrasts with the gleaming black of the rest of its body. It is more commonly known as the Schlock and it is said to be named after the eminent Hungarian Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist, Sebastian Schlock, who was rumoured to be a vampire.

Tired of the same old holidays year after year?
Bored with the beach, the snow, the sea?
Treat yourself to a very special, very different vacation experience.

Experience
the Terror
the Exhilaration
the Excitement
of

10 fear-filled nights in Dracula's Castle

Transylvania – The Fear Capital of the World

Appendix 15: Phase 2 Workshops 2008
Structure, Content and Teaching Materials

Workshop Structure and Content

Workshop 1

1. **Objectives for 2008 Workshops**

   - Reading, Analysis and an Array of Tasks and Exercises to trigger and improve writing
   - Creation, Development and Revision of Short Story(ies) for Submission
   - Selection of Periodical for Story Submission

2. **Short Story Pack – Objectives**

   - To read and select specific published short stories to provide a representative range in the genre
   - To illustrate what has and can be achieved with the short story genre – including varying lengths as a viable alternative and development towards writing a novella – erase idea of absolutes distinctions between fiction genres
   - To identify and distinguish between different personal quality levels

3. **Assignments for 2008 Workshops**

   Assignment A

   - Read all Short Stories – do not research writer identities – authors must remain anonymous or it influences perceptions of and reactions to the stories
   - Rate each story out of 10
   - Write down what, in your view, was the author's objective behind each story
   - Select the story, which is closest to where currently you would like your writing to be
   - There will be discussion and debate surrounding the short stories

   Assignment B

   - Start writing Soul Sentences again – 1 per day no matter how bad or ridiculous
   - Select what you deem to be your best soul sentence written last year and use it as the first sentence in the first paragraph of a potential story to be distributed 3 days before the next workshop
   - The paragraph must obviously be intriguing and attention grabbing causing your reader to want to know more and read further

Workshop 2

1. **Workshop Format for 2008**

   - Half teaching half feedback and assessment
   - Aim is submission to publishers/agents/competitions in September/October
   - Publisher/agent/competition research
   - Criticism more constructive, more productive
   - Continuation Soul Sentence Process
   - Using examples from various books and stories by various authors

     - The beginning
     - The setting
     - Characterisation
     - Plotting
     - Dialogue
     - Style
     - Audience

- Various writing processes
- Exploring Creativity – tasks, exercises and assignments – using imaginations and using research in developing themes, storylines and plots – writing about things we know nothing about, but can research and imagine

2. **Feedback Structure and Process for 2008 Workshops**

   - Evaluation Criteria – at least one sentence on each

     - Beginning
     - Storyline
     - Tension
     - Characterization
     - Emotions
     - Ending
     - Enjoyment

   - Feedback allocation process

     - All participants read all the stories or pieces distributed
     - Changing groups of three
     - Evaluate and provide (always) written feedback based on criteria
     - Title of piece at top of page and feedback below on all pieces

3. **Workshop Exercise – Writing Lyrics**

   - Listen to "As Tears Go By" by Marianne Faithful *(Handout Lyrics)*
   - Write an additional two verses in the approriate style to fit in with song
   - 15 minutes
   - Read various verses and discuss process and outcomes

4. **Assignments**

   Assignment A – Short Story Evaluation

   - Rating out of 10
   - Author's objective – written
   - Closest to own preferred style
   - List of Authors *(Handout)*
   - Discuss concept of short story and a long story and then novella – advantages of length?

   Assignment B – Opening Paragraphs

   - Reading and Feedback – using criteria

     - Is there suspense?
     - Is there immediacy?
     - Is there pace?
     - Were you hooked?
     - Is there a sense of story?

   - Marquez and Roth – Quotations *(Handout)*
   - Read Opening Paragraphs – Assignment *(Handout)*
   - Rate all the paragraphs and select one of the opening paragraphs and write your version of the concluding final paragraph of that story – distribute for general discussion at next workshop

   Assignment C – Writing Lyrics, Opening Paragraph and Storyline

   - *(Handout CDs)* Writers/Composers List – to be returned after exercise
   - Listen to 15 songs of various eras, styles and complexity and substance of lyrics
   - Select one song and write out lyrics (search lyrics sites)

- Write additional 2 verses – fit in with theme, topic, style and message – insert lyrics and distribute to all members 3 days before next workshop – groups to evaluate success of additional verses
- Write an opening paragraph for and a storyline synopsis of the story, which you imagine lies behind or emanates from the song and its lyrics including the characters and emotions portrayed
- Distribute the opening paragraph and storyline synopsis to all participants 3 days before next workshop – groups to evaluate the opening paragraph and storyline synopses in terms of criteria and provide feedback

Workshop 3

1. **Reminders**

   - Sentences with Soul
   - Read and Rate all Short Stories
   - Author Objectives

2. **Read Author Quotations** *(Handout)*
3. **Selected Sentences with Soul** *(Handout)*

4. **Workshop Exercise – Tension**

   - List in 10 minutes all the elements that a writer can use to convey tension to a reader, use the example of three characters together; what elements can a writer use to build tension?
   - Relate and discuss elements in lists
   - Using the selected elements from your list, freewrite for 10 minutes showing the tension in the situation involving the three characters
   - Time can be a writer's worst enemy – there is never enough, and even when there is plenty we waste it – this timer represents time and every tick is there to remind not to waste it
   - Read all free writing pieces with brief comments and discussion

5. **Feedback Session**

   Opening Paragraph Assignment

   - Student Opening Paragraph Ratings
   - Read Student Closing Paragraphs and Give Group Feedback
   - List of Authors actual end paragraphs to each member *(Handout)*

   Lyrics Assignment

   - Read Lyrics, paragraphs and storylines
   - Give Group Feedback
   - Collect CDs

6. **Assignments**

   Publication Research

   - Allocate Literary Magazines for researching per student *(Handout)*
   - Determine Submission Guidelines including

     - Deadlines
     - Restrictions
     - Requirements
     - Methods of submission
     - Any Interesting additional Issues

   - Compile details and distribute to others thereby pooling resources
   - Students to given a pack of one Short Story from some of these publications
   - Copies of magazines to be provided to students as physical examples

Tension Assignment

- Write 1000-word "Tension" piece with three characters

Workshop 4

1. **Read Author Quotations** *(Handout)*

2. **Selected Sentences with Soul** *(Handout)*

3. **Workshop Exercise – Seinfeld TV Episode,** *The Revenge*

   - Show first half of episode
   - *(Handout)* written first half script
   - Write storyline from that point in 15 minutes
   - Read all student storylines
   - Handout second half script
   - Show actual episode storyline

4. **Feedback Session – 1000 word ''Tension'' piece**

5. **Assignments**

   Reading Assignment

   - 13 pieces of short fiction from 8 literary publications *(Handout)*
   - Read and rate according to the ratings applied to the previous two packs
   - General note on the topics, style and quality of these stories from a reader and a writer (who is looking to be published) perspective

   Teleplay Assignment

   - Why Seinfeld? – discipline in 22 minutes – huge audience across all demographics – dealt with controversial issues – made the ordinary extraordinary, something entertaining from nothing
   - Establish collaborative groups
   - Writer's Strike Background – Select one of 4 – obviously episode not seen before – write final 11 minutes
   - Confirm Deadline and requirements – Script framework and format
   - Distribute scripts to everyone – provide written feedback on other scripts by group

Workshop 5

1. **Read Selected Sentences with Soul** *(Handout)*

2. **Read Author Quotations** *(Handout)*

3. **Start Identifying Short Story Theme(s) for Submission**

4. **Literary Magazine Research**

   - Hardcopies of some Publications – take a look
   - Identify outstanding publications information – distribute
   - Finalise and distribute all research by next workshop
   - Consolidation

5. **Short Story Ratings**

   - 13 pieces of short fiction from 8 literary publications
   - Capture ratings of stories
   - Capture Additional Opinions (Most Memorable, Least Memorable, Par or Better, Loved and Hated – Tension related to most factors of interest and memory?

6. **Settings**

   - Had a look at beginnings, now settings and the role they play in a story
   - Read Settings Examples *(Handout)*
   - The power of settings to create and reinforced mood are clear from these examples
   - How the author uses setting also to emphasise and focus on the story, the setting can be a core element of the story and not just a place and time when and where the story unfolds

7. **Workshop Exercises**

   Teleplay Collaboration Feedback

   - Write 10 minutes free writing all about your emotions surrounding collaborative writing experience and hand to me – confidential

   Setting Exercise

   - In 10 minutes describe a setting for a story which generates in the reader one of the following emotions – fear, joy, contentment, anger, astonishment, envy, hatred, confusion, relief, sadness, jubilation
   - Read and discuss responses

8. **Assignment**

   - Select favourite literary character, find the most effective piece describing that character and detail why this character and the description are so appealing to you as a reader. Distribute to all workshop members for a discussion and evaluation of the importance of character at the next workshop.

Workshop 6

1. Read Selected Sentences with Soul

2. Selected Sentences with Soul *(Handout)*

3. Read Author Quotations *(Handout)*

4. Literary magazine Research – complete and distribute

5. **Feedback Session**

   Teleplay Assignment

   - Groups Read Pieces
   - Listen to feedback
   - Handout 2nd halves of episodes on disc

   Characterisation Assignment

   - Each student reads Characterisation piece
   - Analyse style of characterisation
   - Provide additional characterisations – and reveal sources and styles *(Handout)*
   - Particular methods by which a writer can describe a character:

     - Physical description
     - Narrator's statement about character
     - Through revelation of character's thoughts
     - Through speech
     - Through metaphor
     - Through what other characters say or think about them
     - By association – with a place, mood, occupation

   - The common elements in student selection of favourite characters

- Fringe, Original, Subversion, and Descriptions provide plenty of Detail

6. Assignment – Distribute First Draft of Short Story for Submission 7 days before next workshop

Workshop 7

1. **Read Selected Sentences with Soul** *(Handout)*

2. **Read Author Quotations** *(Handout)*

3. **Literary magazine Research**

4. **Reading Assignment** – Progress

5. **Teleplay Assignment** – Progress

6. **The Sound of Words** (euphony – the quality of being pleasing to the ear, especially through a harmonious combination of words)

   - My Tongue Softens on The Other Name *(**Handout**)*
   - A Modern Man *(**Handout**)*
   - *Lolita (**Handout**)*

7. **Workshop Exercises**

   - Exercise 1 – *Fantastic Bombastic*
   - Exercise 2 – Rewrite opening paragraph of your short story in three new ways.

8. **Feedback Session**

   - Second Draft of Short Story
   - Line by line editing of first 2 page(s)
   - Simple explanation of the storyline and plot – with a graph of the tension points and climax line?

Workshop 8

1. **Read Selected Sentences with Soul** *(Handout)*

2. **Literary Magazine Research**

3. **Deadline for short stories for magazine and competitions submission**

4. **Feedback Session**

   - Third Draft of Short Story
   - Line by line editing of first 2 page(s)
   - Simple explanation of the storyline and plot – with a graph of the tension points and climax line?
   - Why should the magazine choose your story for publication over the 1000s of submissions received

Workshop 9

1. **Read Selected Sentences with Soul** *(Handout)*

2. **Workshop Exercise – Reading**

   - "The Baby" – Donald Barthelme ***(Handout)***
   - "The Shawl" – Cynthia Ozick ***(Handout)***
   - Consider and Discuss extremes in treatment and nuance of same focal subject

3. **Feedback Session**

- Final Draft of Short Story
- Line by line editing of first 2 page(s)
- Simple explanation of the storyline and plot – with a graph of the tension points and climax line?
- Why should the magazine choose your story for publication over the 1000s of submissions received.

4. **Assignment – Short Story Reading Pack**

Workshop 10 & 11

- Feedback and short story assessment sessions
- Reflexive essay discussion and submission.

Workshops Teaching Materials

Workshop 2

Lyrics Writing Exercise

As Tears Go By

(Mick Jagger; Keith Richards; Andrew Loog Oldham)

It is the evening of the day
I sit and watch the children play
Smiling faces I can see
But not for me
I sit and watch as tears go by

My riches can't buy everything
I want to hear the children sing
All I hear is the sound
Of rain falling on the ground
I sit and watch as tears go by

It is the evening of the day
I sit and watch the children play
Doing things I used to do
They think are new / Baking for you / Waiting for you
I sit and watch as tears go by

Assignment A – Short Story Evaluation

Selected Short Stories

"The Janitor on Mars" – Martin Amis, *Heavy Water and Other Stories*, London: Vintage, 1999, p.154. (11710 words, 32 pages)

"A Nurse's Story" – Peter Baida, *The Gettysburg Review*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (First Prize O Henry Awards 1999) (8476 words, 27 pages)

"Straight Fiction" – Martin Amis, *Heavy Water and Other Stories*, London: Vintage, 1999, p.194. (7750 words, 22 pages)

"City Life" – Mary Gordon, *Ploughshares*, Spring 1996, Vol. 22, No. 1. (First Prize O Henry Awards 1997) (7291 words, 17 pages)

"Better Be Ready 'Bout Half Past Eight" – Alison Baker, *The Atlantic*, Jan 1993,Vol. 271, No. 1; p. 93. (First Prize O Henry Awards 1994) (7180 words, 20 pages)

"Big Mama's Funeral" – Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *No One Writes to the Colonel and Other Stories*, New

York: Harper and Row, 1968, p. 153. (5736 words, 15 pages)

Rocking-Horse Winner – DH Lawrence (http://www.classicshorts.com/authors/D._H._Lawrence.html) (5430 words, 16 pages)

"The Fifteen-Dollar Eagle" – Sylvia Plath, *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams and Other Prose Writings*, London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1977, p.65. (5268 words, 14 pages)

Man From the South – Roald Dahl (http://www.classicshorts.com/stories/south.html) (4073 words, 7 pages)

The Black Cat – By Edgar Allan Poe (http://www.classicshorts.com/stories/blackcat.html) (3977 words, 9 pages)

Shooting an Elephant – George Orwell (http://www.classicshorts.com/authors/George_Orwell.html) (3283 words, 8 pages)

"The Legacy" – Virginia Woolf, *Virginia Woolf: The Complete Shorter Fiction*, London: Triad Grafton, 1987, p. 379. (3085 words, 8 pages)

The Girls in Their Summer Dresses – Irwin Shaw (http://www.classicshorts.com/stories/dresses.html) (2893 words, 9 pages)

"The Passenger" – Vladimir Nabokov, *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov*, New York: Vintage Books, 1995, p.183. (2348 words, 6 pages)

The Princess and the Puma – O. Henry (http://www.classicshorts.com/stories/tpatp.html) (2337 words, 6 pages)

"The Dragon" – Vladimir Nabokov, *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov*, New York: Vintage Books, 1995, p.125. (2212 words, 6 pages)

"A Russian Beauty" – Vladimir Nabokov, *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov*, New York: Vintage Books, 1995, p.385. (1925 words, 5 pages)

The Storyteller – Saki (H. H. Munro) (http://www.classicshorts.com/stories/Storyteller.html) (1962 words, 5 pages)

The Use of Force – William Carlos Williams (http://www.classicshorts.com/stories/force.html) (1508 words, 4 pages)

The Open Window – Saki (H. H. Munro) (http://www.classicshorts.com/stories/openwin.html) (1214 words, 4 pages)

"Nurse Lugton's Curtain" – Virginia Woolf, *Virginia Woolf: The Complete Shorter Fiction*, London: Triad Grafton, 1987, p. 217. (728 words, 2 pages)

Assignment B – Opening Paragraphs

Marquez and Roth – Quotations on The First Paragraph

GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ: One of the most difficult things is the first paragraph. I have spent many months on a first paragraph, and once I get it, the rest just comes out very easily. In the first paragraph you solve most of the problems with your book. The theme is defined, the style, the tone. At least in my case, the first paragraph is a kind of sample of what the rest of the book is going to be. That's why writing a book of short stories is much more difficult than writing a novel. Every time you write a short story, you have to begin all over again.

(*Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, *Sixth Series*, Plimpton, George, ed., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984, p. 331.)

PHILIP ROTH: Beginning a book is unpleasant. I'm entirely uncertain about the character and the predicament, and a character in his predicament is what I have to begin with. Worse than not knowing your subject is not knowing how to treat it, because that's finally everything. I type out beginnings and they're awful, more of an unconscious parody of my previous book than the breakaway from it that I want. I need something driving down the center of a book, a magnet to draw everything to it – that's what I look for during the first months of writing something new. I often have to write a hundred pages or more

before there's a paragraph that's alive. Okay, I say to myself, that's your beginning, start there; that's the first paragraph of the book. I'll go over the first six months of work and underline in red a paragraph, a sentence, sometimes no more than a phrase, that has some life in it, and then I'll type all these out on one page. Usually it doesn't come to more than one page, but if I'm lucky, that's the start of page one. I look for the liveliness to set the tone. After the awful beginning come the months of freewheeling play, and after the play come the crises, turning against your material and hating the book.

(*Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, *Seventh Series*, Plimpton, George, ed., New York: Penguin Books, 1986, p. 271.)

A

Captain Illiam Quillian Kewley, June 1857

Say a man catches a bullet through his skull in somebody's war, so where is the beginning of that? You might say that's easy. That little moment has its start the day our hero goes marching off to fight with his new soldier friends, all clever and smirking and waving at the girls. But does it, though? Why not the moment he first takes the shilling, his mouth hanging wide open like a harvest frog as he listens to the sergeant's flatterings? Or how about that bright sunny morning when he's just turned six and sees soldiers striding down the village street, fierce and jangling? But then why not go right back, all the way, to that long still night when a little baby is born, staring and new, with tiniest little hands? Hands you'd never think would grow strong enough one day to lift a long heavy gun, and put a bullet through our poor dead friend's brain.

B

In eighteenth-century France there lived a man who was one of the most gifted and abominable personages in an era that knew no lack of gifted and abominable personages. His story will be told here. His name was Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, and if his name – in contrast to the names of other gifted abominations, de Sade's, for instance, or Saint-Just's, Fouche's, Bonaparte's, etc. – has been forgotten today, it is certainly not because Grenouille fell short of those more famous blackguards when it came to arrogance, misanthropy, immorality, or, more succinctly, wickedness, but because his gifts and his sole ambition were restricted to a domain that leaves no traces in history: to the fleeting realm of scent.

C

If you were still alive, Refentse, child of Tiragalong, you would be glad that Bafana Bafana lost to France in the 1998 Soccer World Cup fiasco. Of course you supported the squad. But at least now, you would experience no hardships walking to your flat through the streets of Hillbrow – that locality of just over 1 square kilometre, according to official records; and according to its inhabitants, at least twice as big and teeming with countless people. You would remember the last occasion in 1995, when Bafana Bafana won against Ivory Coast and, in their jubilation, people in Hillbrow hurled bottles of all sorts from their flat balconies. A few bold souls, boasting a range of driving skills, swung and spun their cars in the streets, making U-turns and circles all over the road. You would recall the child, possibly seven years old or so, who got hit by a car. Her mid-air screams still ringing in your memory. When she hit the concrete pavements of Hillbrow, her screams died with her. A young man just behind you shouted: Kill the bastard!

D

Once upon the time and a very good time it was their was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo …. His

father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face. He was baby tuckoo. The moocow came down the road where Betty Byrne lived: she sold lemon platt.

E

The beginning is simple to mark. We were in sunlight under a turkey oak, partly protected from a strong, gusty wind. I was kneeling on the grass with a corkscrew in my hand, and Clarissa was passing me the bottle – a 1987 Daumas Gassac. This was the moment, this was the pinprick on the time map: I was stretching out my hand, and as the cool neck and the black foil touched my palm, we heard a man's shout. We turned to look across the field and saw the danger. Next thing, I was running towards it. The transformation was absolute: I don't recall dropping the corkscrew, or getting to my feet, or making a decision, or hearing the caution Clarissa called after me. What idiocy, to be racing into this story and its labyrinths, sprinting away from our happiness among the fresh spring grasses by the oak. There was the shout again, and a child's cry, enfeebled by the wind that roared in the tall trees along the hedgerows. I ran faster. And there, suddenly, from different points around the field, four other men were converging on the scene, running like me.

I see us from three hundred feet up, through the eyes of the buzzard we had watched earlier, soaring, circling and dipping in the tumult of currents: five men running silently towards the centre of a hundred-acre field. I approached from the south-east, with the wind at my back. About two hundred yards to my left two men ran side by side. They were farm labourers who had been repairing the fence along the field's at southern edge where it skirts the road. The same distance beyond them was the motorist, John Logan, whose car was banked on the grass verge with its door, or doors, wide open. Knowing what I know now, it's odd to evoke the figure of Jed Parry directly ahead of me, emerging from a line of beeches on the far side of the field a quarter of a mile away, running into the wind. To the buzzard Parry and I were tiny forms, our white shirts brilliant against the green, rushing towards each other like lovers, innocent of the grief for this entanglement would bring. The encounter that would unhinge us was minutes away, its enormity disguised from us not only by the barrier of time but by the colossus in the centre of the field that drew us in with the power of a terrible ratio that set fabulous magnitude against the puny human distress at its base.

F

'**Y**es, of course, if it's fine tomorrow,' said Mrs Ramsay. 'But you will have to be up with the lark,' she added. To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch. Since he belonged, even at the age of six, to that great clan which cannot keep this feeling separate from that, but must let future prospects, with their joys and sorrows, cloud what is actually at hand, since to such people even in earliest childhood any turn in the wheel of sensation has the power to crystallize and transfix the moment upon which its gloom or radiance rests, James Ramsay, sitting on the floor cutting out pictures from the illustrated catalogue of the Army and Navy Stores, endowed the picture of a refrigerator as his mother spoke with heavenly bliss. It was fringed with joy. The wheelbarrow, the lawn-mower, the sound of popular trees, leaves whitening before rain, rooks cawing, brooms knocking, dresses rustling – all these were so coloured and distinguished in his mind that he had already his private code, his secret language, though he appeared the image of stark and uncompromising severity, with his high forehead and his fierce blue eyes, impeccably candid and pure, frowning slightly at the sight of human frailty, so that his mother, watching him guide his scissors neatly round the refrigerator, imagined him all red and ermine on the Bench or directing a stern and momentous enterprise in some crisis of public affairs.

G

This is a true story but I can't believe it's really happening.

It's a murder story, too. I can't believe my luck. And a love story. (I think), of all strange things, so late in the century, so late in the goddamned day. This is the story of a murder. It hasn't happened yet. But it will. (It had better.) I know the murderer, I know the murderee. I know the time, I know the place. I know the motive (*her* motive) and I know the means. I know who will be the foil, the fool, the poor foal, also utterly destroyed. And I couldn't stop them, I don't think, even if I wanted to. The girl will die. It's what she always wanted. You can't stop people, once they *start*. You can't stop people, once they *start creating*.

What a gift. This passage is briefly stained by my tears of gratitude. Novelists don't usually have it so good, do they, when something real happens (something unified, dramatic and pretty saleable), and they just write it down?

H

I was born in the city of Bombay … once upon a time. No, that won't do, there is no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more … On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. There were gasps. And, outside the window, fireworks and crowds. A few seconds later, my father broke his big toe; but his accident was a mere trifle when set beside what had befallen me in that benighted moment, because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies in indissolubly chained to those of my country. For the next three decades, there was to be no escape. Soothsayers had prophesied me, newspapers celebrated my arrival, politicos ratified my authenticity. I was left entirely without a say in the matter. I, Saleem Sinai, later variously called Snotnose, Stainface, Baldy, Sniffer, Buddha and even the Piece-of-the-Moon, had become heavily embroiled in Fate – at the best of times a dangerous sort of involvement. And I couldn't even wipe my own nose at the time.

Assignment C – Writing Lyrics, Opening Paragraph and Storyline *(CD Handout)*

Writers/Composers

A Whiter Shade Of Pale	Gary Brooker/K. Reid
Don't Stand So Close To Me	Sting
Cry Me A River	Arthur Hamilton
Like A Rolling Stone	Bob Dylan
Vincent	Don McLean
Happiness Is A Warm Gun	Lennon/McCartney
Forever Young	Bob Dylan
New England	Billy Bragg
Stray Cat Blues	Mick Jagger/Keith Richards
Around The World	Victor Young, Harold Adamson/Vernon Duke
I'm So Tired	Lennon/McCartney
Man of the World	Peter Green
Time In A Bottle	Jim Croce
Just Like A Woman	Bob Dylan
Have I Told You Lately	Van Morrison

Workshop 3

Author Quotations

Katherine Anne Porter

"I have a very firm belief that the life of no man can be explained in terms of his experiences, of what has happened to him, because in spite of all the poetry, all the philosophy to the contrary, we are not really masters of our fate. We don't really direct our lives unaided and unobstructed. Our being is subject to all the chances of life. There are so many things we are capable of, that we could be or do. The potentialities are so great that we never, any of us, are more than one-fourth fulfilled. Except that there may be one powerful motivating force that simply carries you along, and I think that was true of me ... When I was a very little girl I wrote a letter to my sister saying I wanted *glory*. I don't know quite what I meant by that now, but it was something different from fame or success or wealth. I know that I wanted to be a good writer, a good artist."[1]

(Katherine Anne Porter – *Hacienda* (1934), *Noon Wine* (1937), *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939), *The Leaning Tower and Other Stories* (1944), *The Days Before* (essays, 1952), and *Ship of Fools* (1962)

[1] Brooks, Van Wyck, ed., *Writers at Work:* The Paris Review Interviews – Second Series, London: Martin Secker & Warburg Limited, 1963, p. 125.]

EM Forster

"Of course, that wonderful thing, a character running away with you – which happens to everyone – that's happened to me, I'm afraid ... But ends always give me trouble."[2]

"People will not realize how little conscious one is of these things; how one flounders about. They want us to be so much better informed than we are. If critics could only have a course on writers' not thinking things out – a course of lectures ... (He smiled)."[3]

"I am more interested in achievement than in advancement and decline from it. And I am more interested in works than in authors. The paternal wish of critics to show how a writer dropped off or picked up as he went along seems to me misplaced. I am only interested in myself as a producer." [4]

"Other authors find themselves much more an object of study. I am conceited, but not interested in myself in this particular way." [5]

(EM Forster – *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, *The Longest Journey* (1907), *A Room with a View* (1908), *Howards End* (1911) and *A Passage to India* (1924); *Aspects of the Novel* (1927)

[2] Cowley, Malcolm, ed., *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, London: Mercury Books, 1957, p. 27, [3] p. 32, [4] p. 33, [5] p. 32.

Selected Sentences with Soul

Opening Paragraph Authors and Endings

A *English Passengers*, Matthew Kneale, London: Penguin Books, 2000, p. 454.

Just nearby was a little glass case, and in it was a little scran of what looked like skin.

Aboriginal witchcraft charm

There was no mistaking the hairs, which were short, just right for someone's beard, and a fine shade of red.

He'd not been washed away. He'd been picked clean. Of course. Four months would have been long enough for sea creatures to have themselves a fine little feed.

For a moment I quite expected Jonah Childs and the others to come up and haul me away to gaol, but none of them did. They all just carried on with their hellos and politeness and making little jokes, like before.

Nobody seemed very interested.

B *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*, Patrick Suskind, London: Penguin Books, 1987, p. 263.

But the human body is tough and not easily dismembered, even horses have great difficulty accomplishing it. And so the flash of knives soon followed, thrusting and slicing, and then the swish of axes and cleavers aimed at the joints, hacking and crushing the bones. In very short order, the angel was divided into thirty pieces, and every animal in the pack snatched a piece for itself, and then, driven by voluptuous lust, dropped back to devour it. A half-hour later, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille had disappeared utterly from the earth. When the cannibals found their way back together after disposing of their meal, no one said a word. Someone would belch a bit, or spit out a fragment of bone, or softly smack with his tongue, or kick a leftover shred of blue frock coat into the flames. They were all a little embarrassed and afraid to look at one another. They had all, whether man or woman, committed a murder or some other despicable crime at one time or another. But to eat a human being? They would never, so they thought, have been capable of anything that horrible. And they were amazed that it had been so very easy for them and that, embarrassed as they were, they did not feel the tiniest twinge of conscience. On the contrary! Though the meal lay rather heavy on their stomachs, their hearts were definitely light. All of a sudden there were delightful, bright flutterings in their dark souls. And on their faces was a delicate, virginal glow of happiness. Perhaps that was why they were shy about looking up and gazing into one another's eyes.

When they finally did dare it, at first with stolen glances and then candid ones, they had to smile. They were uncommonly proud. For the first time they had done something out of Love.

C *Welcome To Our Hillbrow*, Phaswane Mpe, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, Press, 2001, p. 124.

Heaven is the world of our continuing existence, located in the memory and consciousness of those who live with us and after us. It is the archive that those we left behind keep visiting and revisiting; digging this out, suppressing or burying that. Continually reconfiguring the stories of our lives, as if they alone hold the real and true version. just as you, Refilwe, tried to reconfigure the story of Refentse; just as Tiragalong now is going to do the same with you. Heaven can also be Hell, depend ing on the nature of our continuing existence in the memories and consciousness of the living.

Like Refentse, the first real Bone of your Heart, you too have had your fair taste of the sweet and bitter juices of life, that ooze through the bones of our Tiragalong and Alexandra, Hillbrow and Oxford.

Refilwe, Child of our World and other Worlds ...

Welcome to our Heaven ...

D *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, James Joyce, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976, pp. 252-3.

April 16. Away! Away!

The spell of arms and voices: the white arms of roads, their promise of close embraces and the black arms of tall ships that stand against the moon, their tale of distant nations. They are held out to say. We are alone - come. And the voices say with them: We are your kinsmen. And the air is thick with their company as they call to me, their kinsman, making ready to go, shaking the wings of their exultant and terrible youth.

April 26. Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order. She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my ovm life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels. Amen. So be it. Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.

April 27. Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead.

Dublin, 1904
Trieste, 1914

E *Enduring Love*, Ian McEwan, London: Vintage, 1998.

F *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975, p. 237.

Quickly, as if she were recalled by something over there, she turned to her canvas. There it was – her picture. Yes, with all its green and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something. It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? she asked herself, taking up her brush again. She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision.

G *London Fields*, Martin Amis, London: Vintage, 1999, pp. 466-7.

She outwrote me. Her story worked. And mine didn't. There's really nothing more to say. Always me: from the first moment in the Black Cross she looked my way with eyes of recognition. She knew that she had found him: her murderer. I wonder if she knew there'd be a queue ... 'I've found him. On the Portobello Road, in a place called the Black Cross, I found him.' Imagination failed me. And all else. I should have understood that a cross has four points. Not three.

I've just taken a casual glance at the beginning – who knows, with a little work, it might somehow accommodate a new ending. And what do I see? Chapter I: The Murderer. 'Keith Talent was a bad guy ... You might even say that he was the worst guy.' No. I was the worst guy. I was the worst and last beast. Nicola destroyed my book. She must have felt a vandal's pleasure. Of course, I could have let Guy go ahead and settled for the 'surprise' ending. But she knew I wouldn't. Flatteringly, she knew I wasn't quite unregenerate. She knew I wouldn't find it worth saving, this wicked thing, this wicked book I tried to write, plagiarized from real life.

H *Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie, Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1997, p. 9.

Yes, they will trample me underfoot, the numbers marching one two three, four hundred million five hundred six, reducing me to specks of voiceless dust, just as, all in good time, they will trample my son who is not my son, and his son who will not be his, and his who will not be his, until the thousand and first generation, until a thousand and one midnights have bestowed their terrible gifts and a thousand and one children have died, because it is the privilege and the curse of midnight's children to be both masters

and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes, and to be unable to live or die in peace.

Literary Magazine List (53)

(Have all published 1 or more O'Henry First Prize Winners)

Group 1		**Group 5**	
The New Yorker		*Playboy*	
The Atlantic Monthly		*Tomorrow*	
Harper's Magazine		*The Transatlantic Review*	
The Saturday Evening Post		*Mademoiselle*	
Harper's Bazaar		*The Yale Review*	
Group 2		**Group 6**	
Story		*Epoch*	
Esquire		*Scribner's Magazine*	
The Kenyon Review		*Pictorial Review*	
The Virginia Quarterly Review		*The Paris Review*	
Redbook		*Antaeus*	
Group 3		**Group 7**	
The Sewanee Review		*The American Mercury*	
Ploughshares		*Century Magazine*	
The Hudson Review		*The Gettysburg Review*	
Southwest Review		*The Missouri Review*	
Collier's Magazine		*Boston Review*	
Group 4		**Group 8**	
The Southern Review		*Indiana Review*	
The Antioch Review		*Iowa Review*	
The Massachusetts Review		*Prairie Schooner*	
Partisan Review		*Antioch Review*	
TriQuarterly		*Chicago Review*	
Group 9		**Group 10**	
Cosmopolitan		*Harvard Review*	
Shenandoah		*Michigan Quarterly Review*	
The Georgia Review		*New England Review*	
McCall's		*Absinthe Literary Review*	
The North American Review		*African American Review*	
Group 11			
Exquisite Corpse			
The Ontario Review			
Fiction			

Workshop 4

Author Quotations

Joyce Cary

Well - I write the big scenes first, that is, the scenes that carry the meaning of the book, the emotional experience ... When I have the big scenes sketched I have to devise a plot into which they'll fit. Of course often they don't quite fit. Sometimes I have to throw them out. But they have defined my meaning, given form to the book. Lastly I work over the whole surface.[1]

Williaim Faulkner

FAULKNER: If I had not existed, someone else would have written me, Hemingway, Doestoevski, all of us. Proof of that is that there are about three candidates for the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. But what is important is *Hamlet* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, not who wrote them, but that somebody did. The artist is of no importance. Only what he creates is important, since there is nothing new to be said. Shakespeare, Balzac, Homer have all written about the same things, and if they had lived one thousand or two thousand years longer, the publishers wouldn't have needed anyone since. [2]

FAULKNER: Ninety-nine per cent talent ... 99 per cent discipline ... 99 per cent work. He must never be satisfied with what he does. It never is as good as it can be done. Always dream and shoot higher than you know you can do. Don't bother just to be better than your contemporaries or predecessors. Try to be better than yourself. An artist is a creature driven by demons. He don't know why they choose him and he's usually too busy to wonder why. He is completely amoral in that he will rob, borrow, beg, or steal from anybody and everybody to get the work done.

INTERVIEWER: Do you mean the writer should be completely ruthless?

FAULKNER: The writer's only responsibility is to his art. He will be completely ruthless if he is a good one. He has a dream. It anguishes him so much he must get rid of it. He has no peace until then. Everything goes by the board: honour, pride, decency, security, happiness, all, to get the book written. If a writer has to rob his mother, he will not hesitate; the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is worth any number of old ladies.[3]

My own experience has been that the tools I need for my trade are paper, tobacco, food, and a little whisky.[4]

FAULKNER: No. The writer doesn't need economic freedom. All he needs is a pencil and some paper. I've never known anything good in writing to come from having accepted any free gift of money. The good writer never applies to a foundation. He's too busy writing something. If he isn't first rate he fools himself by saying he hasn't got time or economic freedom. Good art can come out of thieves, bootleggers, or horse swipes. People really are afraid to find out just how much hardship and poverty they can stand. They are afraid to find out how tough they are. Nothing can destroy the good writer. The only thing that can alter the good writer is death. Good ones don't have time to bother with success or getting rich.[5]

FAULKNER: The artist doesn't have time to listen to the critics. The ones who want to be writers read the reviews, the ones who want to write don't have the time to read reviews. The critic too is trying to say "Kilroy was here." His function is not directed towards the artist himself. The artist is a cut above the

critic, for the artist is writing something which will move the critic. The critic is writing something which will move everybody but the artist.

INTERVIEWER: So you never feel the need to discuss your work with anyone?

FAULKNER: No, I am too busy writing it. It has got to please me and if it does I don't need to talk about it. If it doesn't please me, talking about it won't improve it, since the only thing to improve it is to work on it some more. I am not a literary man but only a writer. I don't get any pleasure from talking shop.[6]

[Cowley, Malcolm, ed., *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, London: Mercury Books, 1957. p. 57; [2] p. 111; [3] p. 112; [4] p.113; [5] p. 113; [6] p. 124.]

Excerpt from *Seinfeld* Episode – *The Revenge*

THE OFFICE OF RICK BARR

Rick Barr sitting behind his desk talking on the telephone.

RICK BARR
She was great. You don't want to know. Hey Breckie, remind me to tell you what we did in Lake George. Get this. I've got it all on video. (laughs)

George Castanza enters and stands in front of Rick Barr's desk.

GEORGE
That's it! This is it. I'm done. Through. It's over. I'm gone. Finished. Over. I will never work for you again. Look at you. (laughs) You think you're an important man, is that what you think. You are a laughing stock. You are a joke. These people are laughing at you. You're nothing. You have no brains, no ability, nothing. (pushes over statuette on desk) I quit.

George rushes out and slams door behind him.

JERRY SEINFELD'S APARTMENT

George is sitting cross-legged beside the coffee table and Jerry is sitting diagonally opposite him on the couch.

GEORGE
I like sports. I could do something in sports.

JERRY
Ah ha. Ah ha. In what capacity?

GEORGE
You know like the general manager of a baseball team.

JERRY
Yeah, well that ... that can be tough to get.

GEORGE
Well, it doesn't even have to be the general manager. Maybe I could be like an announcer, like a collar man. You know how I always make those interesting comments during the game?

JERRY
Yeah, yeah, you make good comments ...

GEORGE
So what about that?

JERRY
You know they tend to give those jobs to ex-ballplayers and people that are, you know, in broadcasting.

GEORGE
Well, that's really not fair.

JERRY
I know. Well okay, okay, what else do you like?

GEORGE
Movies. I like to watch movies.

JERRY
Yeah, yeah ...

GEORGE
Do they pay people to watch movies?

JERRY
Projectionists.

GEORGE
That's true.

JERRY
But you gotta know how to work the projector.

GEORGE
Right.

JERRY
And its probably a union thing.

GEORGE
Those unions ... Okay sports ... movies ... What about a talk-show host?

JERRY
A talk-show host. That's good.

GEORGE

I think I'd be good at that. I talk to people all the time. Someone even told me once they thought I'd be a good talk-show host.

JERRY
Really?

GEORGE
Yeah, a couple of people. How do you get that though? Where do you start?

JERRY
Well, that's where it gets tricky.

GEORGE
You can't just walk into a building and say 'I want to be a talk-show host.'

JERRY
I wouldn't think so.

GEORGE
It's all politics.

JERRY
Alright, okay, sports, movies, talk-show host ... What else?

GEORGE
This could have been a huge mistake.

JERRY
It doesn't sound like you completely thought this through.

GEORGE
I guess not. What should I do?

FADE TO BLACK

****

FADE UP FROM BLACK

JERRY SEINFELD'S APARTMENT

George is sitting cross-legged beside the coffee table and Jerry is sitting diagonally opposite him on the couch.

JERRY
Maybe you can just go back.

GEORGE
Go back?

JERRY
Yeah. Pretend like it never happened.

GEORGE
You mean just walk into the staff meeting on Monday morning like it never happened?

JERRY
Sure. You're an emotional person. People don't take you seriously.

GEORGE
Just go back ... (gets up from the floor) pretend the whole thing never happened.

JERRY
It never happened.

GEORGE
I was just blowing off a little steam. So what?

JERRY
So what? You're entitled.

GEORGE
I'm emotional.

JERRY
That's right, you're emotional.

GEORGE
Never happened. (sits on couch)

JERRY
Never happened.

FADE TO BLACK
FADE UP FROM BLACK

RICK BARR'S BOARDROOM

Rick Barr employees seated around boardroom table. George enters cautiously.

GEORGE
How ya doin'? (laughs nervously)

REDHEAD
What are you doing here?

GEORGE

What? I work here.

REDHEAD
I thought you quit.

GEORGE
What, quit? Who quit? (sits down at the table)

DAN
Bill. How was your weekend?

BILL
Ahh, excellent weekend. What about your weekend?

DAN
Fine weekend.

GEORGE
Good weekend.

DAN
Went up to the Cape. Took the kids sailing. Lisa was a little scared at first. That kid's going to be a good sailor some day.

GEORGE
Ah, she's gonna be a fine sailor.

Rick Barr enters and takes his seat at the head of the table.

RICK BARR
Eva, what happened to you Friday afternoon?

EVA
Oh, I got tied up.

RICK BARR

I'll bet you did. (laughter) I want to remind everyone that the tenth anniversary party for Rick Barr Properties is going to be Wednesday afternoon at 4 o'clock in Laski's bar at Madison and 48th. I want all of you to be there. This really means a lot to me.

Rick Barr turns to Bill in disbelief.

RICK BARR
Is that Castanza over there? (turns to face George) What are you doing here?

GEORGE
What?

RICK BARR
Am I crazy or didn't you quit?

GEORGE
When?

RICK BARR
Friday.

GEORGE
Oh what ... what that? Are you kidding I didn't quit. Why, you took that seriously?

RICK BARR
You mean laughing stock, all that stuff ...

GEORGE
Come on. Will you stop it.

RICK BARR
No brains. No ability.

GEORGE
Teasing ... what ...

RICK BARR
Okay, I want you outta here.

GEORGE
I don't know where you're getting this from ... I ... You're serious aren't you? Oh, you see ... you just .. you don't know my sense of humour. I mean ... Dan, don't I joke around all the time?

DAN
I wouldn't say all the time.

RICK BARR
You can't win. You can't beat me. That's why I'm here and you're there. Because I'm a winner. I will always be a winner and you will always be a loser.

George smiles and the scene fades to black.

Workshop 5

Author Quotations

Thornton Wilder

INTERVIEWER: Do you do much rewriting?
WILDER: I forget which of the great sonneteers said: "One line in the fourteen comes from the ceiling; the others have to be adjusted around it." Well, likewise there are passages in every novel whose first writing is pretty much the last. But it's the joint and cement, between those spontaneous passages, that take a great deal of rewriting.[1]

INTERVIEWER: If that young writer has the problem of earning a livelihood, is advertising or journalism or teaching English a suitable vocation?[2]
WILDER: I think all are unfavourable to the writer. If by day you handle the English language either in the conventional forms which are journalism and advertising, or in the analysis which is teaching English in school or college, you will have a double, a quadruple difficulty in finding your English language at night and on Sundays. It is proverbial that every newspaper reporter has a half-finished novel in his bureau drawer. Reporting – which can be admirable in itself – is poles apart from shaping concepts into imagined actions and requires a totally different ordering of mind and language. When I had to earn my living for many years, I taught French. I should have taught mathematics. By teaching maths or biology or physics, you come refreshed to writing.[3]

I believe that the practice of writing consists in more and more relegating all that schematic operation to the subconscious. The critic that is in every fabulist is like the iceberg – nine-tenths of him is under water. Yeats warned against probing into how and why one writes; he called it "muddying the spring." He quoted Browning's lines:

Where the apple reddens do not pry
Lest we lose our Eden, you and I. [4]

Georges Simenon

SIMENON: When I did a commercial novel I didn't think about that novel except in the hours of writing it. But when I am doing a novel now I don't see anybody, I don't speak to anybody, I don't take a phone call – I live just like a monk. All the day I am one of my characters. I feel what he feels.
INTERVIEWER: You are the same character all the way through the writing of that novel?
SIMENON: Always, because most of my novels show what happens around one character. The other characters are always seen by him. So it is in this character's skin I have to be. And it's almost unbearable after five or six days. That is one of the reasons my novels are so short; after eleven days I can't – it's impossible. I have to, it's physical. I am too tired.
INTERVIEWER: I should think so. Especially if you drive the main character to his limit.
SIMENON: Yes. Yes.
INTERVIEWER: And you are playing this role with him, you are – [5]
SIMENON: Yes. and it's awful. That is why, before I start a novel – this may sound foolish here, but it is the truth – generally a few days before the start of a novel I look to see that I don't have any appointments for eleven days. Then I call the doctor. He takes my blood pressure, he checks everything. And he says, "Okay."
INTERVIEWER: Cleared for action.
SIMENON: Exactly. Because I have to be sure that I am good for the eleven days. [6]

Frank O'Connor

O'CONNOR: "Get black on white" used to be Maupassant's advice – that's what I always do. I don't give a hoot what the writing's like, I write any sort of rubbish which will cover the main outlines of the story, then I can begin to see it. When I write, when I draft a story, I never think of writing nice sentences about,[7] "It was a nice August evening when Elizabeth Jane Moriarity was coming down the road." I just write roughly what happened, and then I'm able to see what the construction looks like. It's the design of the story which to me is most important, the thing that tells you there's a bad gap in the narrative here and you really ought to fill that up in some way or another. I'm always looking at the design of a story, not the treatment.[8]

O'CONNOR: To me, the novel is so human, the only thing I'm interested in – I can't imagine anything better in the world than people. A novel is about people, it's written for people, and the moment it starts getting so intellectual that it gets beyond the [9] range of people and reduces them to academic formulae, I'm not interested in it any longer. I really got into this row, big, at the novel conference at Harvard, when I had a couple of people talking about the various types of novel – analysing them – and then we had a novelist get up and speak about the responsibilities of the novelist. I was with Anthony West on the stage and I was gradually getting into hysterics. It's never happened to me before in public; I was giggling, I couldn't stop myself. And, "All right," I said at the end of it, "if there are any of my students here I'd like them to remember that writing is fun." That's the reason you do it, because you enjoy it, and you read it because you enjoy it. You don't read it because of the serious moral responsibility to read, and you don't write it because it's a serious moral responsibility. You do it for exactly the same reason that you paint pictures or play with the kids. It's a creative activity.[10]

So now to get on back to what we were saying about the university novelists versus the natural novelists. The university novelists have been having it their own way for thirty years, and it's about time a natural novelist got back to the job and really told stories about people. Pritchett argued (I wrote this book on the novel – I don't know whether you've seen it – *The Mirror in the Roadway*) that this conception of character has disappeared entirely, the conception of character that I am talking about. You see, I don't believe there's anything else in the world except human beings, they're the best thing you're ever likely to discover, and he says, "Well, this is all finished with." And I know what Pritchett means – the Communists and so on have got rid of it all. There aren't individuals any longer.[11]

Cowley, Malcolm, ed., *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, London: Mercury Books, 1957. [1] p. 96; [2] p. 105; [3] p. 106; [4] p. 107; [5] p. 136; [6] p. 137; [7] p. 150 ; [8] p. 151 ; [9] p. 154; [10] p. 155 ; [11] p. 158.

Settings

A

The caves are readily described. A tunnel eight feet long, five feet high, three feet wide, leads to a circular chamber about twenty feet in diameter. This arrangement occurs again and again throughout the group of hills, and this is all, this is a Marabar clave. Having seen one such cave, having seen two, having seen three, four, fourteen, twenty four, the visitor returns to Chandrapore uncertain whether he has had an interesting experience or a dull one or any experience at all. He finds it difficult to discuss the caves, or to keep them apart in his mind, for the pattern never varies, and no carving, not even a bees' nest or a bat, distinguishes one from another. Nothing, nothing attaches to them, and their reputation – for they have one – does not depend upon human speech. It is as if the surrounding plain or the passing birds have taken upon themselves to exclaim 'Extraordinary!' and the word has taken root in the air, and been inhaled by mankind.

B

The supermarket is full of elderly people who look lost among the dazzling hedgerows. Some people are too small to reach the upper shelves; some people block the aisles with their carts; some are clumsy and slow to react; some are forgetful, some confused; some move about muttering with the wary look of people in institutional corridors.

I pushed my cart along the aisle. Wilder sat inside, on the collapsible shelf, trying to grab items whose shape and radiance excited his system of sensory analysis. There were two new developments in the supermarket, a butcher's corner and a bakery, and the oven aroma of bread and cake combined with the sight of a bloodstained man pounding at strips of living veal was pretty exciting for us all …

The other excitement was the snow. Here the snow predicted, later today or tonight. It brought out the crowds, those who feared the roads would soon be impassable, those to old to walk safely in snow and ice, those who thought the storm would isolate them in their homes for days or weeks. Older people in particular were susceptible to news of impending calamity as it was forecast on TV by grave men standing before digital radar maps or pulsing photographs of the planet. Whipped into a frenzy, they hurried to the supermarket to stock up before the weather mass has moved in. Snow watch, said the forecasters. Snow alert. Snow ploughs. Snow mixed with sleet and freezing rain. It was already snowing in the West. It was already moving to the east. They gripped of this news like a pygmy skull. Snow showers. Snow flurries. Snow warnings. Driving snow. Blowing snow. Deep and drifting snow. Accumulations, devastations. The old people shopped in a panic. When TV didn't fill them with the rage, it scared them half to death. They whispered to each other in the checkout lines. Traveler's advisory, zero visibility. When does it hit? How many inches? How many days? They became secretive, shifty, appeared to withhold the latest and worst news from others, appeared to blend a cunning with their haste, tried to hurry out before someone questioned the extent of their purchases. Hoarders in a war. Greedy, guilty.

C

The brick front ran flush with the street, or rather road. Behind the door hung a cloak with a small cape, a bridle and a black leather cap, and in the corner on the floor stood a pair of leggings with the mud dried on them. To the right was the parlour, that is to say the room where they ate and lived. Canary-yellow wallpaper, relieved at the top by a chain of pale flowers, flapped all over the badly hung canvas. White calico curtains with a red border were arranged crosswise along the windows, and on the narrow mantelpiece, between two silver-plated candlesticks with oval shades, a clock with a head of Hippocrates shone resplendent. On the other side of the passage was Charles's consulting-room, a little place about six yards across, with a table, an office-chair and three ordinary chairs. The half-dozen shelves of the deal bookcase were stocked with practically nothing but the *Dictionary of Medical Science*, its volumes uncut, though the bindings looked somewhat the worse for the successive sales they had been through. The smell of melted butter seeped in through the partition during surgery hours, while conversely anyone in the kitchen could hear the patients coughing and reciting their history. Next, opening straight on to the stable-yard, came a big dilapidated room containing an oven, used now as woodshed, cellar and store-room, full of old junk, empty barrels, worn out gardening implements and a host of dust-covered objects whose function could not be guessed.

The garden, longer than it was broad, ran between two clay-walls with apricots-trees growing along them, down to a thorn hedge which divided it off from the fields. In the centre was the slate sun-dial on a stone pedestal. Four flower-beds, planted with scraggy dog-roses, were laid out symmetrically around the more serviceable square of kitchen-garden. Right at the bottom, under the spruce-trees, stood a plaster priest reading his breviary.

D

He alights from the taxi at the rank in the middle of the squatter camp. He walks among the shacks of cardboard, plastic, pieces of canvas and corrugated iron. He does not know where Noria lives, but he will ask. Squatter people are a close-knit community. They know one another. And by the way, he must remember that they do not like to be called squatters. "How can we be squatters on our own land, in our own country?" They often ask. "Squatters are those who came from across the seas and stole our land."

The fact that he has become some kind of a spectacle does not bother him. It is his venerable costume, he knows, and is rather proud. Dirty children follow him. They dance in their tattered clothes and spontaneously compose a song about him, which they seeing with derisive gusto. Mangy mongrels follow him, run alongside, sniff at him, and lead the way, while the barking all the time. He ignores them all, and walks through a quagmire of dirty water and human ordure that runs through the streets of this informal settlement, as the place is politely called, looking for Noria.

E

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog to being on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all around them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds.

Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongey fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time – as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.

The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest, near that leaden-headed old obstruction, appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed old corporation: Temple Bar. And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.

Never can there come fog too thick, never can there come mud and mire too deep, to assort with the groping and floundering condition which this High Court of Chancery, most pestilent of hoary sinners, holds, this day, in the sight of heaven and earth.

A *A Passage to India*, E.M. Forster, London: Penguin, 1988, p. 138.
B *White Noise*, Don De Lillo, London: Picador, 1999, pp. 167-8.
C *Madame Bovary*, Gustave Flaubert, London: Penguin Classics, 1950, pp. 44-5.
D *Ways of Dying*, Zakes Mda, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1995, p.42.
E *Bleakhouse*, Charles Dickens, London: Penguin, 1996, pp. 13-14.

Workshop 6

Author Quotations

Robert Penn Warren

WARREN: In one way, of course, all writing that is any good is experimental; that is, it's a way of seeing what is possible – what poem, what novel is possible. Experiment – they define it as putting a question to

nature, and that is true of writing undertaken with seriousness. You put the question to human nature – and especially your own nature – and see what comes out. It is unpredictable. If it is predictable – not experimental in that sense – then it will be worthless.[1]

[Warren's novels are: *Night Rider* (1938), awarded the Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship; *At Heaven's Gate* (1943); *All the King's Men* (1946), for which he won a Pulitzer Prize; *World Enough* and *Time* (1950); *Band of Angels* (1955); and *Blackberry Winter*, a novelette he wrote in 1946.]

Alberto Moravia

INTERVIEWERS: Working without notes, without a plan or outline or anything, you must make quite a few revisions.
MORAVIA: Oh, yes, that I do do. Each book is worked over several times. I like to compare my method with that of painters centuries ago, proceeding, as it were, from layer to layer. The first draft is quite crude, far from being perfect, by no means finished; although even then, even at that point, it has its final structure, the form is visible. After that I rewrite it as many times – apply as many "layers" – as I feel to be necessary.[2]

[Moravia's best-known novels are *The Conformist* and *Woman of Rome*.]

Nelson Algren

ALGREN: I do have the feeling that other writers can't help you with writing. I've gone to writers' conferences and writers' sessions and writers' clinics, and the more I see of them, the more I'm sure it's the wrong direction. It isn't the place where you learn to write. I've always felt strongly that a writer shouldn't be engaged with other writers, or with people who make books, or even with people who read them. I think the farther away you get from the literary traffic, the closer you are to sources. I mean, a writer doesn't really live, he observes.[3]

[*The Man with the Golden Arm* received the National Book Award in 1949. Nelson Algren's other books include three novels, *Somebody in Boots* (1935), *Never Come Morning* (1942), and *A Walk on the Wild Side* (1956); a volume of short stories called *The Neon Wilderness* (1948); and his impressions of a city, *Chicago: City on the Make* (1951)]

Angus Wilson

INTERVIEWER: Do you work every day?
WILSON: Goodness, no. I did that when I was a civil servant and I don't propose to do so now. But when I'm writing a book I do work every day.
INTERVIEWER: To a schedule?
WILSON: Not really. No. I usually work from eight to two, but if it's going well I may go on to four. Only if I do I'm extremely exhausted. In fact, when the book is going well the only thing that stops me is sheer exhaustion.
INTERVIEWER: Do you usually work on one book at a time?
WILSON: Oh, yes. I've never worked on more than one book at a time, and I don't think it would be good.
INTERVIEWER: About how many words a day do you write?
WILSON: Oh – between one and two thousand. Sometimes more. But the average would be one or two thousand.
INTERVIEWER: Longhand, typewriter, or dictation?
WILSON: Longhand. I can't type. And I'm sure it wouldn't work for me to dictate, though I did think of it when I was doing the play; it might help with the dialogue. But the trouble is I'm too histrionic a person anyway, and even when I'm writing a novel I act out the scenes.
INTERVIEWER: Aloud?
WILSON: Very often. Especially dialogue.
INTERVIEWER: Do you make notes?
WIILSON: Books of them. The gestatory period before I start to[4] write is very important to me. That's when I'm persuading myself of the truth of what I want to say, and I don't think I could persuade my readers unless Id persuaded myself first.[5]

INTERVIEWER: What is the difference for you between a short story and a novel?

WILSON: Short stories and plays go together in my mind. You take a point in time and develop it from there; there is no room for development backwards. In a novel I also take a point in time, but [5] feel every room for development backwards. All fiction for me is a kind of magic and trickery – a confidence trick, trying to make people believe something is true that isn't. And the novelist, in particular, is trying to convince the reader that he is seeing society as a whole. This is why I use such a lot of minor characters and subplots, of course. It isn't wilful love of subplots for their own sake, wilful Victorianism, but because they enable me to suggest the existence of a wider society, the ripples of a society outside. And more important is this thing about fiction as trickery. The natural habit of any good and critical reader is to disbelieve what you are telling him and try to escape out of the world you are picturing. Some novelists try to make the magic work by taking you deep down inside one person. I try to multiply the worlds I put into the books – so that, like the ripples of the stone thrown into the brook, you feel the repercussions going farther and farther out, and at the same time bringing more in.[6]

WILSON: I'm sorry, but I don't like to talk about my books in advance. It isn't just that any short account of a novel seems ridiculous by the side of the real thing. But, as I've said before, fiction writing is a kind of magic, and I don't care to talk about a novel I'm doing because if I communicate the magic spell, even in an abbreviated form, it loses its force for me. And so many people have talked out to me books they would otherwise have written. Once you have talked, the act of communication has been made.[7]

[Angus Wilson began writing short stories as a therapeutic measure. His first set appeared in a volume called *The Wrong Set*, which attracted immediate attention for its savage characterizations of the contemporary world-marked by Wilson's mockery of hypocrisy and sham. A second collection, *Such Darling Dodos*, followed. His novels include *Hemlock and After* and *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*.]

Cowley, Malcolm, ed., *Writers at Work; The Paris Review Interviews*, London: Mercury Books, 1957. [1] p. 178; [2] p. 196; [3] p. 216; [4] p. 229; [5] p. 230; [6] p. 231; [7] p. 238;

Characterisation

A

Now when I say that Mary ate all day, from her opening her eyes in the morning to her closing them at night, in sleep, I mean that at no moment during this period was Mary's mouth more than half-empty, or, if you prefer, less than half-full, for to the habit generally received of finishing one mouthful before initiating the next Mary had never, notwithstanding her remarkable papers, been able to adapt herself. Now when I say that at no moment of Mary's waking hours was Mary's mouth more than half-empty, or less than half-full, I do not mean that it was always so, for on a close and even on casual inspection it would have been found, nine times out of ten, full to overflowing, which goes far towards explaining Mary's indifference to the pleasures of conversation. Now when speaking of Mary's mouth I make use of the expression full to overflowing, I do not merely mean to say that it was so full, nine-tenths of the time, that it threatened to overflow, but in my thought I go further and I assert, without fear of contradiction, that it was so full, nine-tenths of the time, that it did overflow, all over this ill-fated interior, and traces of this exuberance, in the form of partially masticated morsels of meat, fruit, bread, vegetables, nuts and pastry I have frequently found in places as remote in space, and distinct in purpose, as the coal-hole, the conservatory, the American Bar, the oratory, the cellar, the attic, the dairy and, I say it with shame, the servants' W.C., where a greater part of Mary's time was spent than seemed compatible with a satisfactory, or even tolerable, condition of the digestive apparatus, unless we are to suppose that she retired to that place in search of a little fresh air, rest and quiet, for a woman more attached to rest and quiet I have never, I say it without fear of exaggeration, known or even heard of. But to return to where we left her, I see her still, propped up in a kind of stupor against one of the walls in which this wretched edifice abounds, her long grey greasy hair framing in its cowl of scrofulous mats a face where pallor, languor, hunger, acne, recent dirt, immemorial chagrin and surplus hair seemed to dispute the mastery. Flitters of perforated starch entwined an ear. Under the rusty cotton frock, plentifully embossed with scabs of slobber, two cup-like depressions mark the place of the bosom and the conical protuberance that of the abdomen. Between on the one hand a large pouch or bag, containing the forenoon's supplies, cunningly dissimulated in the tattered skirt, and on the other Mary's mouth, Mary's hands flash to and

fro, with a regularity that I do not hesitate to compare with that of piston-rods. At the moment that the one hand presses, with open palm, between the indefatigable jaws, a cold potato, onion, tart or sandwich, the other darts into the pouch and there, unerringly, fastens on a sandwich, onion, tart or cold potato, as Mary wills. And the former, on its way down to be filled, meets the latter on its way up to be emptied, at a point equidistant from their points of departure, or arrival. And save for the flying arms, and champing mouth, and swallowing throat, not a muscle of Mary stirs.

B

The general action of a man so engaged – pausing to look over a bundle of papers in his hand, dealing them round in various portions, taking up another bundle and examining its contents with knitted brows and pursed-out lips – dealing, and sorting, and pondering by turns – would easily suggest some whimsical resemblance to a player at cards. The face of Mr Carker the Manager was in good keeping with such a fancy. It was the face of a man who studied his play, warily: who made himself master of all the strong and weak points of the game: who registered the cards in his mind as they fell about him, knew exactly what was on them, what they missed, and what they made: who was crafty to find out what the other players held, and who never betrayed his own hand …

And although it is not among the instincts wild or domestic of the cat tribe to play at cards, feline from sole to crown was Mr Carker the Manager, as he basked in the strip of summer-light and warmth that shone upon his table and the ground as if they were a crooked dial-plate, and himself the only figure on it. With hair and whiskers deficient in colour at all times, but feebler than common in the rich sunshine, and more like the coat of a sandy tortoise-shell cat; with long nails, nicely pared and sharpened; with a natural antipathy to any speck of dirt, which made him pause sometimes and watch the falling motes of dust, and rub them off his smooth white hand or glossy linen: Mr Carker the Manager, sly of manner, sharp of tooth, soft of foot, watchful of eye, oily of tongue, cruel of heart, nice of habit, sat with the dainty steadfastness and patience at his work, as if he were waiting at a mouse's hole.

C

Mr Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fouls. He liked thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a stuffed roast heart, liver slices fried with crustcrumbs, fried hencod's roes. Most of all he liked grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine.

Kidneys were in his mind as he moved about the kitchen softly, righting her breakfast things on the humpy tray. Gelid light and air were in the kitchen but out of doors gentle summer morning everywhere. Made him feel a bit peckish.

D

To speak plainly: Sufiya Zinobia Hyder blushed uncontrollably whenever her presence in the world was noticed by others. But she also, I believe, blushed for the world.

Let me voice my suspicion: the brain-fever that made Sufiya Zinobia preternaturally receptive to all sorts of things that float around in the ether enabled her to absorb, like a sponge, a host of unfelt feelings.

Where do you imagine they go? – I mean emotions that should have been felt, but were not – such as regret for a harsh word, guilt for a crime, embarrassment, propriety, shame? – Imagine shame as a liquid, let's say a sweet fizzy tooth-rotting drink, stored in a vending machine. Push the right button and a cup plops down under a pissing stream of the fluid. How to push the button? Nothing to it. Tell a lie, sleep with a white boy, get born the wrong sex. Out flows the bubbling emotion and you drink your fill … but how many human beings refuse to follow these simple instructions! Shameful things are done: lies, loose living, disrespect for one's elders, failure to love one's national flag, incorrect voting at elections, over-eating, extramarital sex, autobiographical novels, cheating at cards, maltreatment of womenfolk, examination failures, smuggling, throwing one's wicket away at the crucial point of a Test Match: and they are done *shamelessly*. Then what happens to all that unfelt shame? What of the unquaffed cups of pop? Think again of the vending machine. The button is pushed; but then in comes the shameless hand

and jerks away the cup! The button-pusher does not drink what was ordered; and the fluid of the shame spills, spreading in a frothy lake across the floor.

But we are discussing an abstract, and entirely ethereal vending machine; so into the ether goes the unfelt shame of the world. Whence, I submit, it is siphoned off by the misfortunate few, janitors of the unseen, their souls the buckets into which squeegees drip what-was-spilled. We keep such buckets in special cupboards. Nor do we think much of them, although they clean up our dirty waters.

E

When Nicola Six was good she was very very good. But when she was bad … About her parents she had no feelings one way or the other: this was her silent, inner secret. They both died, anyway, together, has she had always known they would. So why hate them? So why love them? After she got the call she drove reflexively to the airport. The car itself was like a tunnel of cold wind. An airline official showed her into the VIP Lounge: it contained a bar, and forty or fifty people in varying degrees of distress. She drank the brandy pressed on her by the steward. 'Free,' he confirmed. A television was wheeled in. And then, incredibly (even Nicola was consternated), they showed live film of the scattered wreckage, and the body bags lined up on fields of France. In the VIP Lounge there were scenes of protest and violent rejection. One old man kept distractedly offering money to a uniformed PR officer. Coldly Nicola drank more brandy, wondering how death could take people so unprepared. That night she had acrobatic sex with some unforgivable pilot. She was noneteen by this time, and had long left home. Potently, magically, uncontrollably attractive, Nicola was not yet beautiful. But already she was an ill wind, blowing no good.

Considered more generally – when you looked at the human wreckage she left in her slipstream, the nervous collapses, the shattered careers, the suicide bids, the blighted marriages (and rottener divorces) – Nicola's knack of reading the future left her with the one or two firm assurances: that no one would ever love her enough, and those that did were not worth being loved enough by. The typical Nicola romance would end, near the doorway of her attic flat, with the man of the moment sprinting down the passage, his trousers round his knees, a ripped jacket thrown over his ripped shirt, and hotly followed by Nicola herself (now in a nightdress, now in underwear, now naked beneath a half-furled towel), either to speed him on his way with a blood libel and a skilfully hurled ashtray, or else to win back his love, by apologies, by caresses, or by main force. In any event of the man of the moment invariably kept going. Often she would fly right out into the street. On several occasions she had taken a brick to the waiting car. On several more she had lain down in front of it. All of this changed nothing, of course. The car would always leave at the highest speed of which it was mechanically capable, though sometimes, admittedly, in reverse. Nicola's men, and their escape velocities … Back in the flat, staunching her wrists, perhaps, or pressing an ice-cube to her lip (or a lump of meat to her eye), Nicola would look at herself in the mirror, would look at what remained and think how strange – how strange, that she had been right all along. She knew it would end like this. And so it proved. The diary she kept was therefore just the chronicle of the death foretold …

A *Watt*, Samuel Beckett, London: John Calder, 1998, pp. 52-3.
B *Dombey and Son*, Charles Dickens, London: Penguin, 1985, pp. 372-3.
C *Ulysses*, James Joyce, London: Penguin, 2000, p. 65.
D *Shame*, Salman Rushdie, London: Vintage, 1995, p. 122.
E *London Fields*, Martin Amis, London: Vintage, 1999, pp. 16-17.

Workshop 7

Author Quotations

[excerpts from *George Carlin in Conversation with Judy Gold*, recorded on April 30 2001 before a live audience at New York's 92nd Street Y. Carlin, who died earlier this month, was a stand up comedian and a rebellious writer of

alternate, satirical social and political comedy. He was famous for his routine, "The seven words you can never say on television," for which he was arrested in Milwaukee 1972.]

But what I try and do in that sector with the language and to**p**ics is that I try to sense and know **where the line is** ... where the line we are drawing is these days, then I deliberately cross it and I try to bring them with me a**c**ross the line and enjoy the experience and I do it in service, I hope, and it's usually true, of ideas. It's not just for its own sake, to bother, to annoy or to shock. I have ideas and though the logic sometimes is nicely twisted, there is a good structure underneath it. So I use the language of the topics to paint this personality of mine, which is really **out of step** and doesn't buy all this stu**ff**.

Entertainer is the word I work under. I'm an entertainer, I'm a stand-up comic, but there is an artist at work in here and **an artist has a kind of song to sing**, something to get off his or her chest. It's something that you've kind of got to keep telling the world and you keep looking deeper in yourself and at yourself vis a vis the world, because it changes and a**s** you mature and get a richer nature ... the thing is with age you have a ri**c**her background of information with which to compare new information so when I see something at 63 it is a much more textured mixture of my reaction than when I was 23 or 33. So you just be**c**ome more and more of a craftsman and an artist as well and **that person is always on a journey**, I think. They don't know necessarily where they're going, but they do know that it's out there, down this road and I'll just keep challenging and looking under a little more. So that's where it comes from. It comes from the need to be saying "I a**m** in the universe."

I love to look way, way, way **past the obvious part of things** ... **Variations on the familiar** is a wonderful thing because **t**he audience's frame of reference is in place and you don't need to set up ... you don't need any exposition except **your own departure from the norm**.

I try and get some balance and **euphony** in the way I use words ... [the quality of being pleasing to the ear, especially through a harmonious combination of words]

The Sound of Words

My Tongue Softens on The Other Name
by Gabeba Baderoon

In my mother's back yard washing snaps
above chillies and wild rosemary.
Kapokbos, cottonwool bush, my tongue softens
on the rosemary's other name.
Brinjal, red peppers and paw-paw grow
in the narrow channel between
the kitchen and the wall that divides
our house from the Severos. At the edge
**of the grass by the bedrooms, a *witolyf* reaches
ecstatically for the power lines.

In a corner in the lee of the house,
nothing grows.
Sound falls here.
Early in the day shadows wash
over old tiles stacked
against the cement wall.
In the cold and silence

my brother is making a garden.

He clears gravel from the soil
and lays it against the back wall.
Bright spokes of pincushion proteas puncture a rockery.
For hours he scrapes into a large stone a hollow to catch
water from a tap that has dripped all my life.
Around it, *botterblom* slowly reddens the grey sand.
A fence made of reed filters
the wind between the wall and the house.
Ice-daisies dip their tufted heads
toward its shadows.

At night, on an upturned paint tin, he sits
in the presence of growing things.
Light wells over the rim of the stone basin
and collects itself into the moon.
Everything is finding its place.

Plant Glossary

Most of the plants in the poem are indigenous to the Western Cape in South Africa. The languages of the plant names include Afrikaans, a Creole language developed by slaves in Dutch households in the Cape and drawn from indigenous Khoi Khoi and San languages, Malay, Arabic, English, Dutch and Portuguese.

Asteraceae, Wild Rosemary, Kapokbos [cottonwoolbush] A medicinal plant.
Halleria lucida, Tree fuschia, Witolyf [white olive] A shrub that can grow to 12 metres. It occurs in forests among rocks on the mountain slopes, and has orange flowers.
Gazania krebsiana, Botterblom [butter flower] A perennial groundcover, it occurs on the flats or lower mountain slopes. Flowers range in colour from yellow to orange and red.
******Dorotheanthus bellidiformis*, Ysplant [ice flower] Bokbaaivygie [deer bay daisy] A tufted plant with flat, succulent leaves, it occurs on sandy plains. Flowers are feathery white, pink or purple.
******Leucospermum cordifolium*, Speldkussing [pincushion] A shrub that grows to 1.5 metres, it occurs on the lower to middle mountain slopes. Flowers are orange-red and resemble a cushion punctured with bright pins.

By Gabeba Baderoon
http://www.gabeba.com/main/poems.htm
[Writer-in-Residence in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand]

A Modern Man

I'm a modern man,
a man for the millennium,
digital and smoke free.
A diversified multicultural, postmodern, deconstructionist,
politically, anatomically and ecologically incorrect.
I've been uplinked and downloaded,
I've been inputted and outsourced,
I know the upside of downsizing, I know the downside of upgrading,
I'm a hitech lowlife, a cutting edge,
state of the art, bi-coastal multitasker
and I can give you a gigabyte in a nanosecond.
I'm new wave, but I'm old school,
and my inner child is outward bound.
I'm a hot-wired, heat-seeking, warm-hearted, cool customer,
voice-activated and biodegradable.
I interface on my database, my database is in cyber space
so I'm interactive, I'm hyperactive
and, from time to time, I'm radio active.
Behind the eight ball, ahead of the curve,
riding a wave, dodging a bullet, pushing the envelope.
I'm on point, on text, on message and off drugs.
I've got no need for coke and speed,
I've got no urge to binge and purge.
I'm in the moment, on the edge, over the top,
but under the radar.
A high concept, low-profile,
medium range ballistic missionary.
A street-wise, smart-bomb,
a top-gun bottom-feeder.
I wear power-ties, I tell power-lies,
I take power naps, I run victory laps.
I am a totally, ongoing, bigfoot, slamdunk,
rainmaker with a pro-active outreach.
A raging workaholic, a working rageaholic,
out of rehab and in denial.
I've got a personal trainer, a personal shopper,
a personal assistant and a personal agenda.
You can't shut me up,
you can't dumb me down
because I'm tireless and I'm wireless.
I'm an alpha male on beta blockers.
I'm a non-believer and an over-achiever,
laid-back but fashion forward.
Up front, down-home, low-rent, high-maintenance,
super-sized, long-lasting, high-definition,
fast-acting, oven-ready and built to last.
I am a hands on, foot-lose, knee-jerk,
headcase prematurely post-traumatic

and I have a love child who sends me hate mail.
But I'm feeling, I'm caring,
I'm healing, I'm sharing.
A supportive, bonding,
nurturing, primary caregiver.
My output is down, but my income is up.
I take a short position on the long bond
and my revenue stream has its own cash flow.
I read junk mail, I eat junk food,
I buy junk bonds, I watch trash sports.
I'm gender specific, capital intensive,
user friendly, and lactose intolerant.
I like rough sex, I like tough love.
I use the f-word in my e-mail
and the software on my hard drive is hard core, no soft-porn.
I bought a microwave at a mini-mall.
I bought mini-van at a megastore.
I eat fast food in the slow lane.
I'm toll-free, bite-sized,
ready-to-wear and I come in all sizes.
A fully equipped, factory authorised,
hospital tested, clinically proven,
scientifically formulated, medical miracle.
I've been prewashed, precooked,
preheated, prescreened, preapproved,
prepackaged, postdated, freeze-dried,
double wrapped, vacuum packed
and I have an unlimited broadband capacity.
I'm a rude dude, but I'm the real deal,
lean and mean, cocked, locked and ready to rock,
rough, tough and hard to bluff.
I take it slow, I go with the flow,
I ride with the tide,
I've got glide in my stride,
driving and moving, sailing and spinning,
jiving and grooving, wailing and winning.
I don't snooze, so I don't lose.
I keep the pedal to the metal
and the rubber on the road.
I party hardy
and lunch time is crunch time.
I'm hanging in, there,
ain't no doubt,
and I'm hanging tough.
Over and out.

by George Carlin

[From *Life is Worth Losing* by George Carlin. His 18th album, recorded simultaneously with the live broadcast of his 13th HBO special.]

Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta.

She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one sock. She was Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita.

... You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style.

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury ... Look at this tangle of thorns.

Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, London: Penguin Books, 2000, p. 9.

Workshop 8

Selected Sentences with Soul

Workshop 9

Selected Sentences with Soul

The Baby

By Donald Barthelme

The first thing the baby did wrong was to tear pages out of her books. So we made a rule that each time she tore a page out of a book she had to stay alone in her room for four hours, behind the closed door. She was tearing out about a page a day, in the beginning, and the rule worked fairly well, although the crying and screaming from behind the closed door were unnerving. We reasoned that that was the price you had to pay, or part of the price you had to pay. But then as her grip improved she got to tearing out two pages at a time, which meant eight hours alone in her room, behind the closed door, which just doubled the annoyance for everybody. But she wouldn't quit doing it. And then as time went on we began getting days when she tore out three or four pages, which put her alone in her room for as much as sixteen hours at a stretch, interfering with normal feeding and worrying my wife. But I felt that if you made a rule you had to stick to it, had to be consistent, otherwise they get the wrong idea. She was about fourteen months old or fifteen months old at that point. Often, of course, she'd go to sleep, after an hour or so of yelling, that was a mercy. Her room was very nice, with a nice wooden rocking horse and practically a hundred dolls and stuffed animals. Lots of things to do in that room if you used your time wisely, puzzles and things. Unfortunately sometimes when we opened the door we'd find that she'd torn more pages out of more books while she was inside, and these pages had to be added to the total, in fairness.

The baby's name was Born Dancin'. We gave the baby some of our wine, red, white, and blue, and spoke seriously to her. But it didn't do any good.

I must say she got real clever. You'd come up to her where she was playing on the floor, in those rare times when she was out of her room, and there'd be a book there, open beside her, and you'd inspect it and it would look perfectly all right. And then you'd look closely and you'd find a page that had one little corner torn, could easily pass for ordinary wear-and-tear, but I knew what she'd done, she'd torn off this little corner and swallowed it. So that had to count and it did. They will go to any lengths to thwart you. My wife said that maybe we were being too rigid and that the baby was losing weight. But I pointed out to her that the baby had a long life to live and had to live in the world with others, had to live in a world where there were many, many rules, and if you couldn't learn to play by the rules you were going to be left out in the cold with no character, shunned and ostracized by everyone. The longest we ever kept her in her room consecutively was eighty-eight hours, and that ended when my wife took the door off its hinges with a crowbar even though the baby still owed us twelve hours because she was working off twenty-five pages. I put the door back on its hinges and added a big lock, one that opened only if you put a magnetic card in a slot, and I kept the card.

But things didn't improve. The baby would come out of her room like a bat out of hell and rush to the nearest book, *Goodnight Moon* or whatever, and begin tearing pages out of it hand over fist. I mean there'd be thirty-four pages of *Goodnight Moon* on the floor in ten seconds. Plus the covers. I began to get a little worried. When I added up her indebtedness, in terms of hours, I could see that she wasn't going to get out of her room until 1992, if then. Also, she was looking pretty wan. She hadn't been to the park in weeks. We had more or less of an ethical crisis on our hands.

I solved it by declaring that it was *all right* to tear pages out of books, and moreover, that it was all right to have torn pages out of books in the past. That is one of the satisfying things about being a parent-you've got a lot of moves, each one good as gold. The baby and I sit happily on the floor, side by side, tearing pages out of books, and sometimes, just for fun, we go out on the street and smash a windshield together.

"The Baby," Donald Barthelme, *Forty Stories*, London: Futura Publications, 1989, pp. 244-246.

The Shawl

By Cynthia Ozick

Stella, cold, cold, the coldness of hell. How they walked on the roads together, Rosa with Magda curled up between sore breasts, Magda wound up in the shawl. Sometimes Stella carried Magda. But she was jealous of Magda. A thin girl of fourteen, too small, with thin breasts of her own, Stella wanted to be wrapped in a shawl, hidden away, asleep, rocked by the march, a baby, a round infant in arms. Magda took Rosa's nipple, and Rosa never stopped walking, a walking cradle. There was not enough milk; sometimes Magda sucked air; then she screamed. Stella was ravenous. Her knees were tumors on sticks, her elbows chicken bones.

Rosa did not feel hunger; she felt light, not like someone walking but like someone in a faint, in trance, arrested in a fit, someone who is already a floating angel, alert and seeing everything, but in the air, not there, not touching the road. As if teetering on the tips of her fingernails. She looked into Magda's face through a gap in the shawl: a squirrel in a nest, safe, no one could reach her inside the little house of the shawl's windings. The face, very round, a pocket mirror of a face: but it was not Rosa's bleak complexion, dark like cholera, it was another kind of face altogether, eyes blue as air, smooth feathers of hair nearly as yellow as the Star sewn into Rosa's coat. You could think she was one of their babies.

Rosa, floating, dreamed of giving Magda away in one of the villages. She could leave the line for a minute and push Magda into the hands of any woman on the side of the road. But if she moved out of line they might shoot. And even if she fled the line for half a second and pushed the shawl-bundle at a stranger, would the woman take it? She might be surprised, or afraid; she might drop the shawl, and Magda would fall out and strike her head and die. The little round head. Such a good child, she gave up screaming, and sucked now only for the taste of the drying nipple itself. The neat grip of the tiny gums. One mite of a tooth tip sticking up in the bottom gum, how shining, an elfin tombstone of white marble, gleaming there. Without complaining, Magda relinquished Rosa's teats, first the left, then the right; both were cracked, not a sniff of milk. The duct crevice extinct, a dead volcano, blind eye, chill hole, so Magda took the corner of the shawl and milked it instead. She sucked and sucked, flooding the threads with wetness. The shawl's good flavor, milk of linen.

It was a magic shawl, it could nourish an infant for three days and three nights. Magda did not die, she stayed alive, although very quiet. A peculiar smell, of cinnamon and almonds, lifted out of her mouth. She held her eyes open every moment, forgetting how to blink or nap, and Rosa and sometimes Stella studied their blueness. On the road they raised one burden of a leg after another and studied Magda's face. "Aryan," Stella said, in a voice grown as thin as a string; and Rosa thought how Stella gazed at Magda like a young cannibal. And the time that Stelia said "Aryan," it sounded to Rosa as if Stella had really said, "Let us devour her."

But Magda lived to walk. She lived that long, but she did not walk very well, partly because she was only fifteen months old, and partly because the spindles of her legs could not hold up her fat belly. It was fat with air, full and round. Rosa gave almost all her food to Magda, Stella gave nothing; Stella was ravenous, a growing child herself, but not growing much. Stella did not menstruate. Rosa did not menstruate. Rosa was ravenous, but also not; she learned from Magda how to drink the taste of a finger in one's mouth. They were in a place without pity, all pity was annihilated in Rosa, she looked at Stella's bones without pity. She was sure that Stella was waiting for Magda to die so she could put her teeth into the little thighs.

Rosa knew Magda was going to die very soon; she should have been dead already, but she had been buried away deep inside the magic shawl, mistaken there for the shivering mound of Rosa's breasts; Rosa clung to the shawl as if it covered only herself. No one took it away from her. Magda was mute. She never cried. Rosa hid her in the barracks, under the shawl, but she knew that one day someone would inform; or one day someone, not even Stella, would steal Magda to eat her. When Magda began to walk

Rosa knew that Magda was going to die very soon, something would happen. She was afraid to fall asleep; she slept with the weight of her thigh on Magda's body; she was afraid she would smother Magda under her thigh. The weight of Rosa was becoming less and less, Rosa and Stella were slowly turning into air.

Magda was quiet, but her eyes were horribly alive, like blue tigers. She watched. Sometimes she laughed-it seemed a laugh, but how could it be? Magda had never seen anyone laugh. Still, Magda laughed at her shawl when the wind blew its corners, the bad wind with pieces of black in it, that made Stella's and Rosa's eyes tear. Magda's eyes were always clear and tearless. She watched like a tiger. She guarded her shawl. No one could touch it; only Rosa could touch it. Stella was not allowed. The shawl was Magda's own baby, her pet, her little sister. She tangled herself up in it and sucked on one of the corners when she wanted to be very still.

Then Stella took the shawl away and made Magda die.

Afterward Stella said: "I was cold."

And afterward she was always cold, always. The cold went into her heart: Rosa saw that Stella's heart was cold. Magda flopped onward with her little pencil legs scribbling this way and that, in search of the shawl; the pencils faltered at the barracks opening, where the light began. Rosa saw and pursued. But already Magda was in the square outside the barracks, in the jolly light. It was the roll-call arena. Every morning Rosa had to conceal Magda under the shawl against a wall of the barracks and go out and stand in the arena with Stella and hundreds of others, sometimes for hours, and Magda, deserted, was quiet under the shawl, sucking on her corner. Every day Magda was silent, and so she did not die. Rosa saw that today Magda was going to die, and at the same time a fearful joy ran in Rosa's two palms, her fingers were on fire, she was astonished, febrile: Magda, in the sunlight, swaying on her pencil legs, was howling. Ever since the drying up of Rosa's nipples, ever since Magda's last scream on the road, Magda had been devoid of any syllable; Magda was a mute. Rosa believed that something had gone wrong with her vocal cords, with her windpipe, with the cave of her larynx; Magda was defective, without a voice; perhaps she was deaf; there might be something amiss with her intelligence; Magda was dumb. Even the laugh that came when the ash-stippled wind made a clown out of Magda's shawl was only the air-blown showing of her teeth. Even when the lice, head lice and body lice, crazed her so that she became as wild as one of the big rats that plundered the barracks at daybreak looking for carrion, she rubbed and scratched and kicked and bit and rolled without a whimper. But now Magda's mouth was spilling a long viscous rope of clamor.

"Maaaa – "

It was the first noise Magda had ever sent out from her throat since the drying up of Rosa's nipples.

"Maaaa ... aaa!"

Again! Magda was wavering in the perilous sunlight of the arena, scribbling on such pitiful little bent shins. Rosa saw. She saw that Magda was grieving the loss of her shawl, she saw that Magda was going to die. A tide of commands hammered in Rosa's nipples: Fetch, get, bring! But she did not know which to go after first, Magda or the shawl. if she jumped out into the arena to snatch Magda up, the howling would not stop, because Magda would still not have the shawl; but if she ran back into the barracks to find the shawl, and if she found it, and if she came after Magda holding it and shaking it, then she would get Magda back, Magda would put the shawl in her mouth and turn dumb again.

Rosa entered the dark. It was easy to discover the shawl. Stella was heaped under it, asleep in her thin bones. Rosa tore the shawl free and flew-she could fly, she was only air-into the arena. The sunheat murmured of another life, of butterflies in summer. The light was placid, mellow. On the other side of the steel fence, far away, there were green meadows speckled with dandelions and deep-colored violets; beyond them, even farther, innocent tiger lilies, tall, lifting their orange bonnets. In the barracks they spoke of "flowers," of "rain": excrement, thick turd-braids, and the slow stinking maroon waterfall that slunk down from the upper bunks, the stink mixed with a bitter fatty floating smoke that greased Rosa's skin. She stood for an instant at the margin of the arena. Sometimes the electricity inside the fence would seem to hum; even Stella said it was only an imagining, but Rosa heard real sounds in the wire: grainy

sad voices. The farther she was from the fence, the more clearly the voices crowded at her. The lamenting voices strummed so convincingly, so passionately, it was impossible to suspect them of being phantoms. The voices told her to hold up the shawl, high; the voices told her to shake it, to whip with it, to unfurl it like a flag. Rosa lifted, shook, whipped, unfurled. Far off, very far, Magda leaned across her air-fed belly, reaching out with the rods of her arms. She was high up, elevated, riding someone's shoulder. But the shoulder that carried Magda was not coming toward Rosa and the shawl, it was drifting away, the speck of Magda was moving more and more into the smoky distance. Above the shoulder a helmet glinted. A light tapped the helmet and sparkled it into a goblet. Below the helmet a black body like a domino and a pair of black boots hurled themselves in the direction of the electrified fence. The electric voices began to chatter wildly. "Maamaa, maaamaaa," they all hummed together. How far Magda was from Rosa now, across the whole square, past a dozen barracks, all the way on the other side! She was no bigger than a moth.

All at once Magda was swimming through the air. The whole of Magda traveled through loftiness. She looked like a butterfly touching a silver vine. And the moment Magda's feathered round head and her pencil legs and balloonish belly and zigzag arms splashed against the fence, the steel voices went mad in their growling, urging Rosa to run and run to the spot where Magda had fallen from her flight against the electrified fence; but of course Rosa did not obey them. She only stood, because if she ran they would shoot, and if she tried to pick up the sticks of Magda's body they would shoot, and if she let the wolf's screech ascending now through the ladder of her skeleton break out, they would shoot; so she took Magda's shawl and filled her own mouth with it, stuffed it in and stuffed it in, until she was swallowing up the wolf's screech and tasting the cinnamon and almond depth of Magda's saliva; and Rosa drank Magda's shawl until it dried.

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Appendix 16: Short Story Research Readings

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Appendix 17: Writer Experiences

Topics and Authors

The Writer in Society

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Appendix 18: Examples of Student Writing Responses

Original, Pre-Workshop Writing

Sylvia

River

In all the rage and rain of crowds, I think I'm drawn to saddened souls;
Your pain in pain of mine dissolves and washes clean the stain in me.
I want to make of you a thread, fed through the eye of all I see,
Sewing closed the salty seams of stormy nights and waking dreams.
And when the sky becomes a river, making islands of its days
And shores are walked by cast-aways caught in a soulless, spineless stream,
It's on this river we'll be floating,
In this river we will drown;
Sinking down to deafened depths where no-one else but we can breathe.
Far underneath the flooding waters, you and me will only smile,
Moving down this jaded mile to where the stream becomes the sea.

A Conversation with Two Writers CD

a. South Vietnamese Soldiers Dialogue

Olivia

Two soldiers (Han and Li) sit around a small fire that grows smaller still in the faint drizzle that surrounds the scene. Suddenly, from the darkness beyond the fire's dim glow, another soldier trudges towards the damp pair. The new-comer (Yun) is short with a thin frame and delicate hands. He reaches the pair and sits down.

Han: I hear the General finally got him.
Li: Finally got who?
Yun: The rebel Sheng; he was executed this morning.
Li: Finally! We've been after him for months, he's the one that killed Sun's family last year; you remember, Han?
Han: Yes, I found Sun's body, it was a massacre, blood and bodies everywhere, they killed everyone; the young men, the women, even the children.
Li: Well, he's finally paid for their deaths.
Yun: Yes, but who will pay for his?

(Li and Han look at each other incredulously then back at Yun)

Li: What is wrong with you, Yun? What has possessed you to say something like that? Are you not happy that one of our greatest enemies is now dead and defeated?
Yun: Our greatest enemy is the evil that never dies but is transferred from one side to another without relenting, the blood that stains all our hands.
Han: What evil? Sheng had the blood of thousands of our allies on his hands, Yun! He murdered all of them in cold blood!
Yun: And we murdered him. So when does it all end? When will we have bathed in enough blood to quench our murderous thirsts? When will we have tired

of the rotting corpses lining our once peaceful streets? When will we have had our fill of filth and flesh? When will this hell be over?

Li: You speak of our cause as though it is an evil one, you forget that we are on the good side. We are fighting for the right side, Yun!

Yun: Are we? I used to think so; I believed it so blindly; now I'm not so sure. History is written by the victorious, so when all this is over, after we win (and we will win) and it comes time to tell the story of this nightmare, all that will be said is that we, "fought for the right side," no one will ever know that we sold our souls to evil to survive.

Han: Yun, you talk of nothing. You talk of a nightmare only seen by weary eyes. Why not get some rest and some food? You must be tired after that long hike from the inner city.

Yun: No amount of food or sleep can ever make me blind again, old friend, I have gazed into the eyes of Satan, he spoke to me, his voice was the deafening sound of a single bullet piercing a man's skull, he spoke to me as though he had been waiting, he spoke to me as though he knew me, with arms outstretched, he said, "welcome, my son, I have been expecting you."

b. Eddie Adams Internal Dialogue

Spacemother

Man, this is the greatest job in the world – this buzz – despite the smoke and the stench, shouting, the bodies. Still feeling a bit disoriented from the plane ride so early this morning. Maybe I should have gone to the radio station rather than the Presidential Palace, but I guess it would have been the same: Vietcong holed up like rats, `Nam army and police taking pot shots, lobbing grenades. Still, got some reasonable pics, nothing earth shattering - I'll re-load in the lull; something's about to happen, I can feel it in my bones. Imagine trading this for an 8 to 5 selling insurance, like poor Billy, stuck in Chicago with the plumbing needing fixing and the lawnmower giving him a guilt trip each time he walks in the garage ... This motor wind'll need seeing to this evening ... It would be nice to see more of Carol and the kids, but we probably have better times together because we know they're short. After all, there's no end to coups in Africa, Beatles tours or even this here war, whatever General Westmoreland says. The guys at Khe Sanh are having a full-scale battle against the bastards, I hear; suppose I should go there ... There, that's done, all set to roll ... nah, there won't be an opportunity to catch any action there: too much red tape in recognised war zones and all that. I stand a better chance here. I know something's about to happen, something really significant, life-changing; I can smell it in the cordite, hear it in the screams, feel it in the fever in the air.

***

That shouting, commotion, on the other side of the square ... They're dragging some poor bastard up the road, with his hands tied behind his back. Must be Vietcong; dressed in mufti. Looks like he's had a beating. General Nguyen Loan's going out to meet him! I'd better get over there fast. Damn Rollei, weighs a fortune, not as young as I used to be, Christ I really will have to give up smoking. They've pushed him into the middle of the road … yes, this is a great view, got him nicely in focus, don't even have to use telephoto. I can see the puffiness over his lips, the blood dribble from the corner of his mouth. What's he saying about the embassy and the Americans? Terrible language, can't understand enough of it, not in situations like this. Jesus, the General's pulled out his service revolver! Sun's flashing off it into the lens ... poor Cong guy looks absolutely terrified ... Goddamn bloody motorwind, don't fucking pack up now! ... Oh my God! He's shot him in the head! He's lying there with his skull blasted apart, brains spilled over the road. Christ – have mercy.

Journal Response to the Dialogue Exercise

Bryony

Now, the whole point of writing a dialogue is to create tension. So how can I create tension? The man being shot is Viet Cong rather than Viet Minh, and that means that he is probably actually from South Vietnam. So, what if one of the people in the barracks knew him – what if they were shocked and horrified that he could have killed people, and was then killed? And there are other dynamics at work as well. One of the many reasons that the war started, was that there existed a Buddhist majority, but there was a Catholic minority in power. The situation was complex, but perhaps one of the 3 soldiers could be Christian, and the other two Buddhist. Maybe that would introduce another level of tension (especially if the man being shot was Buddhist or even aethesit and the Christian soldier for some reason believes that he will go to hell, while the other two merely think that he will be reincarnated.)

Finally, I think that one has to consider the main character in the dialogue's face. He is anonymous, with most of his face covered in shadow, but his teeth are barred in a fierce way, and he looks like he is starting forwards (perhaps reaching for a gun?). One might even interpret this as the action of a man trying to stop the execution. However, I do not think it is. I think I will write the soldier as shocked, but angry. Perhaps he is actually moving towards the camera man? Perhaps something beyond the execution has caught his eye? Maybe one of the other two characters in the dialogue?

The biggest problem that I have had in writing this dialogue is that I feel that it's a bit contrived. I mean, I don't know how South Vietnamese soldiers spoke, I don't know what words they used to refer to Americans, to Viet Cong, to swear with. I've written it, but it needs quite a bit more work before I'm happy, or maybe it only needs a little bit of work in the right places, I'll see…

c. Coffee Shop Dialogue Story

Kathryn

Seven people sit cramped around one tiny table. The light throws a spotlight on the gathering, but is dim and belies the time of day. It is only around 4 o'clock, but seems later. A girl's voice assaults the assembled group. She is plump and short, but there is something commanding in her presence.

"Friends are weird, hey," she explains, ignoring everyone except one guy seated opposite her. "I've got lots of friends, but there is one, only one, person who knows everything about me. Otherwise, I tell one person one problem and another another one. You know?"

Everyone nods immediately at her astounding psychological observation. Their expressions are blank, as mute as their nods. Only the object of her gaze looks interested.

"I know what you mean," he says.

"Ja," his friend contributes. The two boys seem attached at the arm, because space at the table is so limited they sit almost on top of one another. The silence that ensues threatens to break up the gathering. People's eyes begin to zigzag as they examine the stain on their jeans, the spot of water on the table.

"Uh, I've got this friend," she resumes. "She's really weird." She begins to regale the gathering with the complete tales of her 'weird' friends. But she is really just trying to fill the silence. The blank expressions continue to stare at her.

Another table, close enough to be enveloped by the golden voice, whisper over their clasped hands. Their coffee steams. They seem disturbed, but are too polite to interrupt. They are just hoping she will go away.

Next, she's on to the Oscars. She seems on first name basis with some impressive celebrities. "Jock, he's so funny. Yooo, he's funny," as she collapses into grunting giggles, flapping her hands before her face. "And Jada Pinket Smith," gushes the fountain of giggles. "She is pretty, but that's a bitch."

"Ja," say the Siamese twins.

Their raucousness is spreading like an infectious disease, as the entire table becomes more animated. Sentences are drowned in eruptions of laughter. The couple with the steaming coffee are visibly gritting their teeth and clinging to each other for support. The laughter increases steadily in volume

until the dark wood table begins to shake rhythmically. Cracks creep stealthily up the wall and the light flickers ominously.

Suddenly, the floor drops away, leaving a deep hole where the table had sat laughing. The shaking stops abruptly and silence descends. The couple look alarmed, but pleased. A few other customers get up to look cautiously into the hole. Seeing nothing in the dark depths, they soon return to their seats. The couple once again sit engrossed in each other's reflections. Except now the coffee is cold.

Spacemother

"Lulu! Here I am!"

"Angie. Lovely to see you, sorry I'm late, builders and 'flu and all that, not that 'flu is a patch on your encephalitis, how ARE you, you poor thing? You look great actually."

"Thanks Lules. It's only been a minute or two and I'm loving sitting out here on the deck - the sun's quite warm by ten. Well you know, of course: I enjoyed seeing you drive in in your zooty little car with the roof down. But really, after six weeks at home, I'm so enjoying being among other people ... I was honestly beginning to climb the walls."

"Well, it was a brilliant idea of yours to come here, then, Ange, just the right place. You don't even have to look at the menu to see that ... have a discreet squizz at the other girls here: in the seventies, we'd have called them the flat sandal brigade, don't you think? You know, ankle-length skirts in drab brown African prints and big toes poking out from leather thongs, being very earnest about all those ISSUES: black, white, green, that stuff. See, that table by the door has Erin Brokovitch talking about the social environment to the Goodman Gallery curator, who's wearing cat's eye glasses and crystal beads round her neck. In fact, nowadays I feel like I'm living in the seventies again, just updated."

"Yes, it's nice having a second chance, Lules."

"Well, don't chance anything with carrot juice in it – seriously much too hard work; one doesn't have to be that healthy. Actually, good grief, they have coffee here! The neighbourhood must have petitioned them. You're doing camomile tea? I suppose I should have the apple, pear and ginger 'flu buster'. And what about sharing a date scone, with enticing cheese and condiments, in deference to our menopausal waistlines?"

"Not for me, but you go for it, Lules. It's low in gluten apparently ... Now, Lulu,seeing we've specially met to discuss all the ups and downs in our maturing lives, how are the hot flushes? Have you made up your mind whether to take HRT or not?"

"Well, no, Angie – I haven't got a mind left to make up. I seem to be living in a state of suspended hormonal animation; can't concentrate; can't remember anything – like whether I've locked the car door or where I've put my readers; and I take a hundred hours to do things that should take a minute. Definitely the Death of Superwoman."

"Don't say dreadful things like that, Lulu!"

"Well at least the flushes have stopped. And yours, Ange?"

"No, they haven't really stopped, but it's early days; I've only just started the Tamoxifen."

"Tamoxifen? Angela, that's an anti-cancer drug! What on earth are you saying?"

"Well, Lules, I didn't really have encephalitis, you know. I found a lump in my breast two months ago, but I couldn't face telling anyone at the time. It's over now, though: the surgery and the radiotherapy – I had my last session this morning. Now I'm just taking this anti-oestrogen medication to be on the safe side. Really, everything's fine; please don't look so horrified. It's great having a second chance, you know. And by the way - how do you like my new full-length brown gypsy skirt?"

The Personal Lies or Untruths Poem

Myle

Beware I'm your worst enemy
I'm the chic that steals your man.
I know how to shake my thang,
And make your man take notice

You try to impress people
With your fake hair and nails,
While I keep it real,
Because I'm bald and sassy.

I wear as little clothes as possible
Don't hate me, because God gave me
Hips, thighs and ass.
Remember I'm your worst enemy
I can make your clique, my friends
And make them turn on you.
I'm like a pit bull in a miniskirt,
So watch your back!

Vicky

Life is so great
specially the life of the rich and idle
Everyday I wake up and do what?
nothing, absolutely nothing.
Everyone waits on me on hand and foot
I just have to click my fingers
and whatever I want, I get.

I'm rich, I have everything I could possibly want
except for that one thing
which is so elusive to me
yet not so elusive to the rest of the world,
but I don't know what that is.

I'm so sad everyday, always looking for something,
but never knowing what
I look down at my servants and see them
doing something with their lives and what do I do?
Nothing, absolutely nothing.

but what do I care, I have everything
a girl could possibly want
beautiful clothes, jewelry, fancy cars and holidays in all the hot
spots
of the world and so much more.
Yet why am I always so sad, what am I looking for?
That thing which is so elusive to me.

Nom de Plume

Mr. A. Blank

I am but a simple man,
I find it diverting to work on my tan.
It is a sweet and simple life for me, I fear...
So boring in fact I resort to washing it down with a beer.
I think I'd like a young lady with whom I could share my life
But unless she falls pregnant I won't make her my wife.
She should be rich, fun, and pretty
It matters not, to me, if she's witty!
I am a man and these are my wants-
Which possibly stem from childhood taunts.
And to you, dear reader, it should come as no surprise
The reason for the mocking was my very small size.

Responses to The Personal Lies or Untruths Poem Exercise

Bryony

When I first heard the brief, I was quite disappointed, because I don't really like poetry at all – at least, never my own. More than that, to try and

decide what to tell about myself seemed an awfully large task.

The second condition was wonderful, because I felt more in control of what I was going to share. It also meant that I knew that what I used could be fun. A lie can be anything that isn't the truth after all and in a way being allowed to lie about yourself – when people know you're lying – sets you free to share more of your mood with them without feeling over exposed.

Vicky

When I first heard that I had to write a poem about myself, the first thought that popped into my head was 'this is some kind of a joke,' what is so great about my life? When he said everything should be a lie, I thought, oh well, that is okay, no one needs to know my life story, it is so boring. I can make up anything that I want and I thought oh! What a relief. I don't like talking about myself personally.

Writing the poem was a very enjoyable experience as it made me think out of the box. It made me realise that there are lots of different ways to look at things and express them. The fun part was guessing who wrote which poem.

The Participant and Spectator Writing Exercise

Chadwick

As you walk down the endless passage, you're taking in the elegant architecture of the walls surrounding you. You feel eerily calm. You run your hand over the cold paper-smooth wall, your fingers wobbling as they bounce off the slick curves and protrusions of the barriers on your left and right. As your footsteps fire off wet echoes down the corridor, the pungent smell of cigarettes invades your nostrils. You take in a deep breath, as if to test how much you're able to take, and choke out a scraping cough that grates the inside of your throat red raw. You spit out a thick wad of phlegm and try to push further. Panicking now.

You're beginning to sweat. Like really sweat. Dark stained patches of stink fester under each of your armpits. You're gagging now, your stomach convulsing and forcing you to bring up last night's supper. The stifling odor makes you repeat the process, only this time it's breakfast. Your vision is getting blurrier and blurrier and blurrier. Thick tendrils of poisonous gray surrounds you, the tears of sweat on your forehead are marching down towards your eyes, making you itch, making you uncomfortable. Really panicking now.

You're watching your favourite works of art crinkle and morph into black snowflakes, every photograph of anyone you ever cared about is swirling around you, taunting you, mocking your helplessness.

And then the floor gives way and you fall into the orange abyss. And as your soggy body passes through the eye of the flame, everything slows down – slow ... down ... slows ...

And your body isn't soggy anymore. In fact, you feel eerily calm. You're taking in the elegant architecture of the walls dancing around you – red bursts of orange burst into red burst into black burst into you. You feel nothing but comfort as you watch your pink skin peel back onto itself. You can't help but think of crispy bacon. If only the smell was as pleasant. And as you fall apart you land and find you understand everything. And your mouth curves up into a smile. And you're carried away, away with the wind.

Lemon

Gliding swiftly down the ribbon of white and red light snaking through the city, I began to feel panic hug me.

As I stepped out into the thick darkness, the fear caressed me like a master strokes his pet.

Walking through the pale green linoleum halls, I felt choked by the panic. It seemed to be everywhere, screaming at me not to take a step further. Its nauseating minty odour clung to my ragged hair and hastily pulled-on clothes. It was embedded in the rainbow colours of the splotchy prints adorning the walls. It was spelled out clearly in the grimy red letters pasted onto the steel doors we finally reached.

But I needn't have worried. All I ever saw was a pale blue curtain. It seemed such a comfort, so soft and unassuming, after this avalanche of dread.

The colour of skies, and robin's eggs, and journeys completed, I mused. I refused to stop staring at it: the blue would keep me safe. Faintly I felt hands gripping my arm; a heavy-set angel was leading me to a chair and urging me to drink sickly sweet water. Why do they always give you sugar water? Does sugar water cure illnesses or hush grief? But as images began to dance menacingly on my retinas, I took a stinging gulp. The images grew dimmer, and the blue washed over them gently.

After a few minutes, their voices began to seep into my liquid consciousness. "I'm so sorry," they whispered, almost uncannily in chorus. "He passed about an hour ago." But they would have to say it a few times before the girl in front of them stopped gazing dreamily at the endless blue curtain.

The Showing, not Telling Exercise

She could barely contain her anger at this comment.

Jessica's brows lowered. Her lip curled in a sneer and her nails dug into her palms. Her mind laboured to draw itself away from the heat that rose within her at his comment.

She flinched as the claws inside tore at her chest, clamouring for release to strike back at his foolish words.

She is beautiful

Her features were too sharp, her nose too pointed, her eyes too deep, her neck too smooth and her shoulders too slender.]

The Free Writing Task

Chadwick

I am running. Jesus is here, the Sun is trying to catch me. I'm feeling just a little bit paranoid. Maybe it's the eye I'm holding in my hand — maybe it's staring at me, don't ask me how. I'm pretty scared right now. Pretty scared — yup, my heart races even higher than it was seven seconds ago, and it's not because I just heard the old geezer whose eye I stole yelling at someone to stop me. I cackle to myself and turn the corner and slam straight into a godforsaken wall that just should not be there. My nose is probably broken. At least I still have the eye. I grip it in my sweaty hand and push myself to keep moving.

I climbed through the large stash of garbage, hoping to get over the wall. I'm hoping — hoping until that damned old bastard enters the alley, miraculously wielding dual butcher knives. And you know, seeing a one-eyed old guy with knives and a crooked grin, it freaks you out. So I start screaming. But I'm still holding the eye. And then he starts screaming. And now we are both screaming, only he's the one holding two butcher knives and calling me like a dog. I'm really frikkin paranoid.

A try to maintain composure. Not working. I try the deep breathing thing. He's walking towards me. Thank God I still have that eye. And then my legs choose to take over and I'm moving again. And I am over the wall, I'm panting, and still screaming. And as I turn back, checking if I was followed, I see only rolling cans and crumpled paper.

And then like Spiderman on crack, this one-eyed old jackass leaps over and slams into the back of me, and he is all: "I'll take your eye boy!" And I'm panicking so what do I do? Ask me again. Okay, really now, one more time, I do the only thing I am able to — I spit - and I spit — right into that black coin-shaped hole in the left side of his so-wrinkled-it's-like-looking-at-a-roadmap-face. And recoils, and there's my moment to attack! And I dig my fingers into the hole — and they go in and in and deeper and deeper until I'm up to my elbow in old person.

And he's stopped yelling. And my own ...

The Loop Writing Exercise

Emily Lyre

'Heard the sound of a clown who cried in an alley.' Bob Dylan

Frree writing

Listening to Bob Dylan for inspiration as I write this. So what could a clown crying in an alley mean? Different themes come to mind. Or topics. Well, firstly someone who seems really happy or meant to be cheering people up actually being deeply unhappy. This constant need to try and please people and be happy or at least seem happy when in reality everyone is wearing layers of masks and facepaint hiding who they truly are. Seeing each person as a satellite, or an atom, floating around among millions of other specks or dots or isolated satellites, constantly colliding and affecting the entire network of all these interrelated satellites but never really connecting. Putting on the masks of joy, success, satisfaction, self-satisfaction, happiness, contentment with place, lack of jealousy, happiness at other peoples success, when in reality maybe these masks are hiding and protecting all the anger, resentment, jealousy and sadness that these constant collisions with others result in. Maybe we are all sad clowns, crying in the secret alleys of our hearts, hiding all the pain we experience as we grow older, grow up, tread the inexorable path that begins as soon as we stop growing and begin decaying. As we begin our lives these beautiful little balls of potential smothered in motherlove (mostly) who could grow up to be brilliant beautiful happy kind, and as we grow we get scars on our bodies and scars on our minds. We get stretch marks and acne scars, grazed knees, ingrown hairs. Sexually transmitted diseases and dry hair, oily skin and bunions on our feet. We reach a peak, where we've grown to our fullest and then the downhill roll towards our own mortality. As our boobs sag and our spines atrophy. Our eyesight starts to deteriorate, our hearing goes, our ears begin to fill with hairs and wax. Incontinence and diarrhoea, impotence and loss of desire. Loss of appetite, loss of teeth concurrently. So what is with all this bleak hypothesising on the human condition as ultimately bleak, a long painful ride towards death that leaves us scarred and saddened, hiding behind our painted smiles, curly wig and red nose. My mother was always told contemptuously by one of her friends that she had no sense of humour because she doesn't find clowns funny. But with the right kind of eyes, a combination of cynicism and realism, all that any intelligent person can see behind the smile of a clown, their slapstick humour and practical jokes is a face contorted into a grimace, the tears running shamelessly and uncontrollably. Who can't hear, beneath the tooting of the little car horn, the cheery circus music, the ringmasters cracking whip and the animal's roars, who can't hear the painful sobbing as sad as a breeze blowing through a deserted field struck down by drought.

* * * * *

"Babe, are you home? Mike? Coo-eee."
"Ja, I'm here. In the kitchen."
"Oh hello doll. How was your day?"
"Fine."
"Been home long?"
"No. Fifteen minutes maybe."
"Oh. I was just out with the gals. We met for coffee. It went on a bit later than expected. Everyone had *such* news. It was so nice. You won't believe who's having an affair."
"Hmm"
"You know that kindergarten teacher? Miss Caroline? She's sleeping with one of the fathers. It's true. One of the mother's told Karen. She swears its true."
"Mm-hmm."
"Yes. Oh and I went shopping first. I got you this lovely new shirt. Do you like it?"
"Hmm? What?"
"Could you look away from the TV for a second, hon? I bought you this shirt. It's pink. So fashionable. Jo said that she bought one for Colin, and he loves it. And maybe you could throw away that old brown one?"
"I don't wear pink. What do you think I am?"

"So Shannon had botox. I know. But she's looking great. She has her own personal trainer. I'm so happy for her, that she's getting over her divorce. I mean, it was hard. But she's looking great. Don't you think?"
"Hmm. I suppose."
"Do you think I need a boob job?"
"How much would that cost, Babs?"
'Oh doll, that's not the important thing. You should see how great Karen looks. And Dave didn't mind paying. You should have seen the waiter staring at her. And we're not getting any younger, you know? Sometimes I feel like you don't find me attractive anymore."
"You look just fine Babs. I'm actually watching this show."
"You didn't even look at me. Mikey?"
"I know what you look like."
"You feel like something to eat?"
"No, I'm not hungry."
"Ok doll. Listen, I'm going upstairs. I bought something else today. Other than your shirt. Well. Do you want to know what it is? Doll?"
"Sure."
"Um. Hee hee. Naughty underwear. Shan recommended this shop."
"That's nice Babs.'
"So you going to come upstairs soon?"
"Sure. After this programme."
"Ok. I'll be upstairs. Mike?"
"What?"
"Nothing."

Kahlan Amnell

They fuck you up, your mom and dad ... Philip Larkin

"Don't slam the ...!"
She slammed the door. The sound reverberated through every limb and he shook his head in uncomprehending frustration. He just could not understand his daughter. *I make one little comment, and she reacts as if I'd taken the spoon from the table and scooped her heart out of her chest*.
"How could you have said that, Andrew?" His wife gave him one of those you-must-be-the-stupidest-person-on-the-planet looks.
"I simply asked her if she had ever considered going to the gym. You have to admit, Liz, she is getting pretty chubby, and I don't want her to be rejected the way I was when I was a kid."
Liz clenched her teeth and pronounced each word with such deliberate precision he was afraid one of them would pierce his skull. "You basically told her she was fat! Do you really think a girl of sixteen needs to hear that from her father. You're teaching her that appearances are all that matter and that even her won father can't see past that ..."
In his mind's eye he could see himself: a fat fourteen year old boy walking through the grounds of Voortrekker Hoer Skool, his own brother too ashamed to admit that they were related to each other.
"You know what the next step is, of course," his wife continued, "she'll either become bolemic or anorexic and see a psychiatrist for the rest of her life blaming her parents for her perpetual misery and loss of self-worth." She glanced at him with a hint of amusement, but he felt too guilty to return the humour.
"All right, all right, I get the message: don't continue the vicious parent-damages-child-because-of-own-insecurities cycle. I'll take her a bowl of ice cream to cheer her up."
And with that he made his way towards the fridge.

Lemon

They fuck you up, your mom and dad ... Philip Larkin

Everybody wants what they can't have, to some extent. Your girlfriend is a vamp; you want a good girl. Your husband coddles you and caters to your every whim; you want to be slapped around a little. I always envied other people's parents (following this principle): I longed to belong to the health-nut hippies, the soft-spoken academics, or even the rough-and-tumble, white-water-rafting outdoor jocks. Who knows how I would've survived with them, but man,

did they look exciting compared to my parents. The funny thing is, kids from those families never expressed any interest in family-swapping with me. There was never any, "I hate going bungee jumping and camping every weekend. Your parents are so much cooler, Jules."

That's because my parents are freaks.

Not in an obvious way — they're not the people wearing signs proclaiming the end to be nigh, or the guys who sit alone in the back of the cinema in trench coats. Nonetheless, I grew up in a household with two people on the verge of being unable to exist in society. What chance did I have, really? I couldn't learn social skills — my parents didn't have friendships for me to model my behaviour on. I didn't know what pop music was until age twelve, because all I was exposed to was classical this and baroque that. TV was banned in favour of reading: when my friends were excited about the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers, I was caught up in Robinson Crusoe.

It's unfair, I suppose, to put the blame for our screw-ups so firmly on our families. Are they really the root of all evil? Do they dictate who we are, down to the last miniscule kink in our sexual appetites? I was assured "uncool" status as a kid, but didn't I transcend that, avoiding terrible peer pressure by not caring what anyone thought and developing my own identity that much sooner? Not only am I my own person, I was in a strange sense taught that by my emulation of and rebellion from my parents.

Perhaps the faults our parents so generously bestow upon us are our greatest blessing and our greatest curse. They fill us with a determination to be better than our parents were, and even though this often turns out backfiring (children of atheists might become evangelists; people punished as children become the overindulgent sugar-parents of a flock of brats), at least generational evolution is assured.

On the downside, of course, parents can pass on the genes for schizophrenia and psychopathy. I don't really have an argument for that.

* * * * *

Mom —

I want to thank you for a childhood like no other. I know you and Dad raised me in the best way you know: with integrity, always thinking of what was best for me. I appreciate that. You had to instil your values in me, I suppose it was inevitable, but I could think of worse values to have. And the fact that I've never had a broken bone is probably mainly due to your careful natures. Often, as a child, I wondered what life would have been like had I been born to other parents (excluding the fact that I would've been a very different person by definition). Always, after a healthy session of complaining (which I think every child is apt to do), I came to the conclusion that I couldn't have possibly belonged to any other family, because with you I was understood; safe; home. With any other family I may not have become the writer I am today. Rather importantly, I might not have been the kind of person to draw that conclusion. So, for making me who I am today — her greatest achievement, of course — let's raise a glass to my mother.

* * * * *

They were the family everyone talked about. Everyone in the small town had heard the stories. Young children were allowed to ride their bikes anywhere in the neighbourhood, except to the very end of Gaskell Lane.

The house seemed unremarkable, from a distance. Ivy crept along harsh face-brick facades; and the lawn, though unkempt, did not seem to be of the child-swallowing kind. But, drawing closer, you sensed a sort of air about it. Your heart fluttered, and you folded your arms instinctively, as to keep something bad at bay.

And there was something bad in the house at the end of Gaskell Lane. Something none of the gossiping neighbours had even imagined. The family that lived there seemed, like the house, to be normal enough from the outside. But the Evanses had a secret. And it was tearing their daughter apart.

* * * * *

There was no great tragedy to shadow Julia Evans's childhood; nor was there anything to particularly recommend it. Being of a rather socially isolated family, the last of the gentry of Hampshire, she was not brought up around the *right* people, which was almost a tragedy; but she was also educated beyond

most girls her age, which became something of a blessing. It gave her a certain dignity and maturity which most of her peers, their conversation ranging from embroidery to music, could not match. But in the late 1800s, being an educated girl with few social connections was – if not fatal – lonely and unfulfilling. The balls and soirees the other girls (she sometimes glanced at their silk gowns and fashionable hats with irrepressible envy, despite her knowledge that she was above such things) attended were quite out of her reach. To add to this, Julia's parents were somewhat unconventional. The reason for their isolation, she began to suspect as she grew older, was not simply her mother and father's shyness, but a subtle force in the other direction as well: other families shunned the Evanses. It was not until many years later that Julia would discover exactly why.

Sophie

Two riders were approaching and
The wind began to howl. Bob Dylan

Raimundo: Did you hear that Eduardo, the wind has just begun to howl.
Eduardo: Yes Raimundo, that is because we are approaching the castle, steadily, getting closer every hour.
Raimundo: The end is in sight, brother.
Eduardo: My horse is strong.
Raimundo: He is one of the best in the land.
Eduardo: His coat shines, even through the layers of dust gathered from the journey.
Raimundo: He showed great skill, even as a foal, my sister reared him as her own.
Eduardo: I assume the princess will be on the lookout for us?
Raimundo: Yes, my sister was convinced of our coming from the outset.
Eduardo: The blind beggar has promised me an entrance. I trust she will not disappoint us. Her price was high, but unavoidable.
Raimundo: Blind beggars are generally untrustworthy characters, they tend to stick to the end of your robe. I have found oppressed servants to be more reliable.
Eduardo: I have often pondered this; do we bring death and destruction, or hope and light? Where does our purpose lie?
Raimundo: We are mere agents, bred to be as such from a young age. Those questions belong to the grave.

* * * * *

So I stopped one day, on the side of the road, and got out of my car to take a piss. I went behind a bush that I thought would conceal me from the road, when I suddenly heard, out of nowhere, this great clattering of hooves, which I though rather strange considering horses were not allowed, by law, on long-distance highways, and that one was, therefore, not likely to hear the sound of horses' hooves striking tar, on one's way to a farm town. I stuck my head around the edge of the bush to peek at the road, and nearly jumped out of my skin when I saw these two, huge-looking, robed figures, sitting on two horses that were black like pitch, racing past me without a glance to the side, heading in the same direction that I had been travelling. They were going so fast, that they stirred up the elements, and I had just enough time to zip up, before this wind came rushing into my face, chasing me to the car, making sure that I rolled up the windows, and closed the doors tightly. Outside, a wolf on a distant hilltop called his companions to his side.

Lilly

Two riders were approaching and
The wind began to howl. Bob Dylan

Daan turned to Johannes and said "Yeah, hey, like, have you noticed how, like, when we're riding really bliksem fast that the wind sort of begins to howl, hey? Like a wolf you know."

"Yeah," said Johannes, "or like my old lady when I have forgotten our anniversary, hey, and all I brought home from the shops is a sixpack and some

wors."

"Yeah, bru, it's times like those that a man really loves his 'fiets' more than his wife, y' know?"

"Yeah man, it's quite a lot of the time that I love my 'fiets' more than my vrou, y' know?

They both snorted with gurgling laughter and slid the last of their beer down their throats.

* * * * *

Marnu raised his head slightly as he heard the growl of motorbikes in the gravel parking lot. Two riders were approaching and the wind, unusual in these parts, began to howl.

Then two, dusty, sunburnt men came squeezing through the pub door, shining brightly with the high school-boy joy of each other's company.

Marnu smiled lethargically to himself as he observed how they seemed to fill their skin nicely, stretching at the seams of their khaki shirt-short-socks.

His head bobbled slightly and he stared red-eyed at the two friends smacking their boerewors lips in appreciation of the cold bite of their beers. They both commenced a-laughing, the gurgling chuckles coming to life in their round rotund chests, like tractor engines rattling to a start.

Sliding his empty, foamy glass clumsily away, he heaved himself out of his chair. He followed his dancing feet to the door, lunged out into the dusty Karoo wind and stumbled away from the roaring laughter in the bar.

* * * * *

Hansie sat on the speckled-egg brown carpet, his knobbly knees grazed and mud-smeared jutting out at odd angles. His little cherry cheeks shone merrily, and his upturned face was illuminated with absolute fascination and focus. He hung, merrily swinging from word to colourful word, of the story related by his Oupa Johannes. The miniature motorbikes, previously his source of entertainment, recently animated with "vroom-vrooms," now lay forgotten on their sides, handlebar eyes staring forlornly into distant dreams of real-bikehood.

"There's no greater friend than a 'fiets,' Hansie, there's no greater ally. A bike can take you places, show you things that no other person can. I still remember the small things from those adventures, fresh and new, like the morning air when you stop on the side of the road for tea from flasks."

"Once oom Daan and your old Oupa were trapped in a bar by a magical wind. It howled and moaned like Ouma does, and don't you tell her I told you this, like Ouma does when I let you ride on the back of the bakkie. Now in the Karoo there aren't often-times unhappy winds like that one. Oom Daan and I knew, we knew in our hearts, in our bones, in our very teeth that this wind was the spirit of a very angry old woman. We also knew that if we left the bar she would grab our beards and pull them from our cheeks. And of course as proud and strong men we were fondly attached to our beards. We waited and waited the whole groaning night until we could escape in the morning!"

"Hansie, Hansie," the sharp calls of his Ouma Henriette broke through the fragile images dangling around the boy's head. "Please go wash your hands, we want to eat soon," she sang, ushering him out of the room.

"En jy? I hope you're not telling him stories about the night you and Daaniel got so drunk you couldn't make it out of the bar."

"Ag vrou, you don't understand the magic of the motorbike."

Characterisation and Storyline – Sins, Graces and Virtues Exercise

Kathryn

Ira wasn't always like this. It's the disease, they say. Can't blame him, it's the disease.

He was ok as a kid. Slightly hyperactive. Always pulling my hair. A bit fussy. But ok. He was 16 when it started. First, it was the migraines. The doctors couldn't find anything wrong with him, so they just gave him some pills. When one came on, he would spend the whole day in bed, bitching at my mother. "You didn't do my toast right," he would whine, or, more likely, "You didn't cut my toast into parallel lines. I want symmetrical soldiers, dammit." Anal-retentive asshole.

Then his marks began to drop. And he didn't particularly care. Where before he was never satisfied with less than A+++, my parents were now worried about him passing. He would go out all night, come back in the morning, and sleep all day. God knows what he was doing. It sounds like normal teenage crap. That's what we thought, too.

That morning, he came back reeking of booze and God knows what else. He fell asleep as usual. But when he woke up he was fidgety and nervous. He was pacing around the house, as if looking for something out of place. Maria was putting clothes in the washing machine. As he walked into the laundry room, she happened to be checking the pockets of one of his jeans. He flipped. Accused her of stealing 'it'. I could hear him screaming and smashing himself into things from the lounge. She apparently tried to back away, frightened, but tripped over the washing basket. Then he was there, snarling into her face and screaming incoherently. I ran into the kitchen to see what was happening. Through the door I could see him holding her down by the shoulders and demanding 'it'. Maria was crying hysterically, which seemed only to piss him off more.

I was scared. I didn't know what to do. I should have helped her, but I was scared. Just then Dad got home. He came up behind me and saw. He rushed in like the hero he is and pulled Ira off of Maria. But Ira was stronger than him. He pushed back into the wall and rammed his elbow into my Dad's stomach. He then ran into the kitchen, pushing past me. Dad sank to the ground. Maria was lying on the ground, silently now, just staring at the door to the kitchen. I ran to Dad, but he managed to tell me, through gasping breaths, that he was ok. So I went to Maria.

We never heard him come back in. I was trying to convince Maria to sit up when her entire body jerked in fear. Ira was kneeling next to Dad with something in his hand. There was a sudden squelching sound as the knife sank into my father's stomach. Then Ira just stood up and left.

I called an ambulance but it took half an hour to arrive. I was scared to move him. He bled to death before they reached the hospital. Ira was arrested later, driving my father's car. He still had blood on his hands, they told us later. It was only then that his behaviour acquired its lovely little nickname: 'Bipolar Disorder'. So, instead of spending his life in a cold grey jail cell, he got to go to a 'mental health facility'. A nuthouse. Oh, he cried and cried at first. "I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry," and all that bullshit. But then he realised he had it made. Being waited on by little white people, taking drugs by order, never having to do another responsible thing for the rest of his entire fucking life.

Taryn

After my father gave the army four years and one leg, the army gave my father a trip back to the Cape, 4 Pounds and a wire-rim bicycle.

Finding that he could neither ride the bicycle nor wheel it along with crutches in both hands, he arrived at the boarding-house where we roomed carrying the bicycle on his back, strapped to a large, dusty backpack that bent his huge frame.

We had stared from our little window, my sisters and I, at the ghost swaying and staggering towards the door until our mother came to shoo us downstairs.

"Go ... Go say hello – he's missed you very much." And she wiped her red hands on the damp apron that hung at her waist.

We waited behind the door; all four of us ready to jump on him. We waited for thirty seconds and then five minutes and 20 minutes, until my ears were sore from the silence and the smell of perfume faded into the curtains. And then my mother came forward and wiped her hands on her apron and let her hand twist the stained brass doorknob.

"Kenneth?" she whispered, and I heard her smile wane. "Go upstairs," she commanded us, but as I turned to go I saw him, or the side of him, sitting on our single patio chair with his leg upon our peeling railing and a small silver flask in his hand. Our eyes met and I fled into my sister's back.

He stayed in that chair for six years. I could hear his distinctive walk, at sunrise and again late at night, on the stairs and on the landing. I imagined with each step that he was coming closer to the bedroom I shared with my sisters, that he knew I was awake and had come to read me a story or brush my sister's hair. Twice a day, the dull *thump* of his dirty crutches and the swing of his empty pant-leg on the floor went through the boarding house like a mortar shell. During the day he was in his chair, with his bottle to his lips while my mother washed and ironed and cooked and cleaned and her red hands shook the smooth white hands of a hundred Disability Grant government men.

I trembled at the thought of walking out onto the road with my father watching from his chair, so like the leader of a hunting pack my eldest sister would turn the doorknob an inch at a time and lower her eyes and lead us away from my father and his quiet menace and towards the safety of the schoolyard.

When the days grew longer and my sisters stayed in their classrooms until dusk, I holed myself up in the warmth of the municipal library, waiting for the librarian to seek me out in my corner before I left for home. Once, I remember — I must have been about nine or ten — she turned off the lights and shut one of the doors, and I burrowed deeper into my chair and prayed to the Lord that I might spend the night with my best friends in that wonderful chair that swallowed me up and let my knees dangle above the carpet. The wind was biting when I walked home that night: cold and quick and noisy.

Lemon

Miriam Underhill is just the kind of mother you want. Mostly. Talent-contest judges curse her, because she is utterly convinced that her children are the best performers in the school — make that on earth. Even her children curse her sometimes, wishing she would just accept their flaws.

"I'm terrible at Maths," her son Rhys admits. "I know I am. But Mom just can't see it. She's utterly convinced that if I just try a little harder, I'll suddenly become a Maths genius. She's a bit cracked."

"Yeah," chimes in her oldest daughter. "And when it was so clear that Dad was having an affair and he was ready to leave, Mom still believed until the last moment that their marriage would work." Then she looks guilty. "I feel bad for her. She's a great mother, seriously. She loves us to bits. But she does have this way of believing things with no reason behind it, and sticking with them, no matter what the evidence tells her."

When asked why she maintains these often irrational beliefs, Miriam smiles serenely. "I usually get this feeling, and I just *know*. I'd say it's God telling me. And of course, I stick by the ones I love. I don't need evidence to know that they're wonderful."

*****

Zachariah Reeves has shortened his name to Z in order to avoid the Herculean struggle of writing and pronouncing that long, four-syllable name every time he needs to introduce himself. You might have seen him around, but I doubt it; Z doesn't get out much. After he dropped out of university (he'd just scraped through school — the idea of having to repeat a year was abhorrent to him), friends and family tried to find a job that would inspire passion in him, but their efforts bore no fruit.

When being a waiter proved too stressful for him ("Way too much time on my feet, man. And those customers. They get so scratchy when I forget their orders"), he tried working at a McDonald's drive-thru. His manager remembers those three days well.

"He must have taken about two orders on the first day," he remarks with something less than fondness. "Rest of the time, he was slacking off, talking to the other staff, even picking at customers' food. The only reason it took me three days to fire him is because he kept hiding from me. He's very good at that. Sneaky bastard."

It's not that Z is malicious. He doesn't even have much rebellion or contempt for authority in him — as he says, "That would take up so much energy, man. What's the point?" Unfortunately, this doesn't make Z a good person. In fact, he's probably never stood up for anything in his life, unless it got him a free ride.

"Zachariah is a good person," his mother insists. "He just hasn't found something he wants to commit to yet. Even if he just found a girl he could commit to, I'd be happy."

As you might have guessed, there is little chance of this: most girls want their partner to have some disposable income, and Z's sits at a stable zero. And if the hippies and Marxists out there do manage to tolerate this, they get frustrated after a few days with his utter refusal to do a stitch of work at the relationship.

"Z's got a serious problem," a high-school girlfriend of his says."He doesn't care about anything or anyone — not deep down. We're all a little lazy at times, but Z can't even make the effort to be a decent human being."

Chadwick

Anger is an obese security guard with an inferiority complex. The fact that his stomach is so large and his penis is so small has resulted in Anger not being able to see himself pee for going on four years now. This, coupled with the fact that at 38 years old, he has never been in a long-term relationship with anybody has led to a great deal of frustration for him.

This in turn has turned Anger into a very sour, resentful person. He views the world in black and red. His only solace comes from the fact that he can afford to buy himself sexual gratification every two months and that he lives on comfort food. Unfortunately, after he indulges in the fattening things in life he feels guilty, which makes him depressed which leads to more frustration, which leads to anger which leads to more eating (it calms him down – that and masturbation). It's a vicious cycle.

Recently, Anger has begun indulging in more and more sordid acts of sexual gratification. In order to overcome his own feelings of self-loathing he has begun partaking in illegal acts of sexual degradation.

Jonny Rage

Michael, you say? You want know about Michael? Hmmm, well, nice guy, pleasant enough. Let's see now, haven't seen him for years, but I'll tell you what I know ...

Michael, a nice double-syllable name, easily remembered. A generic name, fitting for a generic life, a generic man ... you know, run-of-the-mill sorta' person. Not that that's a bad thing, I daresay, but he never really excelled at sport when we were at school together, got good marks, just nothing outstanding. We split ways after school, still kept in touch afterwards. He went off to a decent college, changed degrees 3 times before settling on a general commerce degree, found a job at a general multi-goods company as general manager ... I guess he managed all things in general, and from what I heard, he generally managed.

What he looks like, hmmm, last time I saw he had brown hair, though that could be greying now. Brown eyes, not hazel, not honey not chocolate, just brown. Yes, you could say moderately good-looking, also got a moderate build. And moderately good in bed – I'm not talking from personal experience, good God no. But what I'm trying to say, is Michael's a good man, top class ... just ... not great. Average. But deep within, there is something remarkable, waiting for its chance to shine.

You see, for years, Michael has always had this feeling that his big break is just over the next rise, just one more step and he'll make it big, coast this wave and things will be ok, even awesome. For years.

So as you can imagine, our Michael is no stranger to disappointment. Bitter bitter disappointment, but I won't go into details now, shame, that's not my story to tell. But he's stuck through it all, all of it. Abusive parents, 3 marriages (one wife died in a freak hospital accident, the other died in a car crash. Well, she drowned, after being knocked of a bridge by an 18-wheeler) a son dead of an overdose, a grandson to a teenage daughter, house caught on fire, bad insurance, mixed up credit history ... lots. You name it, pick something sad, tragic and depressing; 10 bucks guarantees Michael's been through it ... and had the t-shirt stolen from him. But for all of that, he's here, just picks himself up every time, rolls up his sleeves and gets right back to work.

He can't fight the feeling that there's something out there waiting for him, like a big destiny or something equally cheesy and dramatic, waiting on the horizon, waiting for him. And so he struggles on, perseveres. Lots of determination that one. At least, that's the last I heard ...

How is the old chap? You know him?

Kahlan Amnell

"So that's it?" he whispered desperately, leaning against the doorway leading towards the kitchen, watching her long legs draped across the arm of the sofa as her loosely fitted gown barely covered her slim, fragile body. The deep darkness of her eyes regarded him coolly, and he had to remind himself of his pain to avoid being drawn in by them as he had been the first day he had met her.

"What do you want me to say, Ian? You've obviously made up your mind to leave, so I'm sure there's nothing I can say to stop you." Even her low, contained voice did not express a hint of emotion.

"It would be nice if you could at least *pretend* to care. And since when was the choice to leave ever made available to me - you've already made the choice on my behalf. I wish I could connect with what is inside of you, with what I know is there, but it has become quite obvious that you don't care to share it with me and ... I can't do this anymore."

There was nothing more to be said and he did not have the strength to remain, to take in her blazing hair and haughty mouth without wanting to recline beside her and bury his face in her neck. He strode through the kitchen towards the door, uttering her name to himself one last time.

*****

Sharrow rested her delicate hands on the windowsill as she looked down on him through the glass; he was walking away. The loneliness did not effect her too deeply. She had the ability to isolate it in some inner part of herself and would simply note its presence every now and then, feel its sting in the dark. She would not plead, would not beg him to stay.

Her father had always made her beg. Made her plead to stop hurting her and her brother once good old Jack had taken hold. She only wished that the only thing he had done was beat her, yet she refused to relive the feel of his calloused hand on her thigh, and instead turned from the window, her eyes shining.

The Sounds of Words – The Lyrics Exercise

Olivia

I'm so tired, I'm feeling so upset
Although I am so tired, I'll have another cigarette
And curse Sir Walter Raleigh
He was such a stupid git

I'm so tired, the hours tick away
I'm so tired, I'm waiting for the day
I wonder if I've ever been in quite such a bad way
no no no

I am so tired, my life is passing by
I'm so tired, thinking of ways to die
I wonder should I throw myself off of something high

Fuck. I managed to do it again. I managed to push her away – where the fuck is my lighter? I had it a second ago ... Last night worked out for no one, least of all me. I'll never forget the look on Lola's face when I told her to fuck off for the *third* time. I don't even know why I did it – what the hell did I do with the goddamn lighter? I remember throwing it across the room just now. I'll call her and tell her that I'll stop drinking ... again – I wonder if she'll buy it – she has to buy it, if she doesn't I'll kill myself, can't do it without her. I'll call her, I have to call her, I *will* call her ... as soon as I find my fucking lighter.

The Tension Exercise

Sophie

Piece with 3 characters and TENSION.

Driving home from work one Wednesday afternoon, George decided to stop at the café on the corner for some chewing gum, and maybe a little conversation. He parked his car just before the traffic lights, a little away from the shop's entrance, and unfolded his long torso by degrees, as he got out through the front door. He watched the sky turning red behind an ugly brick building, and threw his head back to breathe in the fresh fumes of a new dusk.

At the top of the steps leading to the door of the shop, stood the shopkeeper, beckoning him excitedly. He was a short man, with a prominent paunch that made his lower shirt buttons hold on for dear life. He was obviously balding, but he tried to hide it by twirling the remaining strands of hair around on his head, so that the hairstyle as a whole looked like an

elegant Chelsea bun. George's face lit up; he had chosen a good day to drop by. The shopkeeper disappeared inside as he approached. George looked at the ground and put on his serious face, climbing the steps with a wildly beating heart.

The musty smell of the store hit him like an old friend. He looked around eagerly and spotted her by the fridges. He bent down a little and eyed her fresh calves, peeking out from under the hem of her sky blue school dress. Behind the counter, the shopkeeper opened the till, scribbled something on a pad of paper, and threw George a meaningful look. At the dairy fridge, the girl stooped to pick up a two-litre milk bottle, and then straightened again, looking around for some other item of convenience. The canned spaghetti, nearing its expiry date, stared back at her hopefully. The sweet corn and baked beans were beyond caring, having been separated eons ago from the stem that watered them. But no, she walked past them to the cooking oil and picked up a bottle, checking the price that had been written on the label with a black marker. George observed all this discreetly, all the while pretending to take his time in deciding between salt and vinegar or fruit chutney Simba chips. When she picked up the cooking oil, he left the chips and opened the drinks fridge to take out a bottle of flavoured water, which he then opened with a fizz and flung into his mouth. After wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, he closed the fridge door with a thud that was muffled by its rubber lining, and saw her looking up at him, watching curiously. She had dark hair and wide eyes, and was quite plump, her face rounded off with puppy fat. He stepped towards her, and she shrunk back. He leaned forward and gently took the milk out her hand, so that her one hand was free to pick up the cleaning detergent. She silently accepted this assistance, and then turned to head towards the till. He followed her triumphantly, his index finger crooked around the thin handle of the milk bottle.

The girl added up the prices of the items she wanted to buy in her head in a flash, as she considered the cleaning detergent. She always got the highest marks for arithmetic in the class. The money she had with her was just enough, although she hoped she would have a little bit left over for a chappie. Then she noticed the tall man watching her. She thought that he must be interested in her face, because her teacher had said it was beautiful, and she figured that people liked to look at beautiful things. He was kind though, in helping her carry her things; men didn't usually do that. But as she turned to go to the till, she glanced at him and saw such a sneer beneath his moustache and such a glint in his eye, that her heart froze. She kept calm though, and started the walk down the aisle, with him following closely. She was aware, also, of being followed by heart-stopping silence; chocolate bars passed her on the right, a glimpse of Bakers' Marie biscuits on the left, and then at last, the bleary-eyed shopkeeper surrounded by cards of razor blades and cigarette lighters. The shopkeeper rang up the items one by one, then licked his thumb, separated a black plastic bag from the pile, and slowly packed the goods inside. George stepped forward the moment she took the bag, and asked if he could carry it for her.

"No." she replied.

"Where you going now?" he asked

"Home."

"Where's home?"

"Over the bridge."

"Over the bridge huh?"

She backed away. He followed.

"I'm heading that way myself," He said with a wide smile.

She was soon going to bump up against the wall, she knew, but she couldn't do anything else, not even change direction. All she could do was stare at him, wide-eyed. But wait. A whiff of cool air. She turned her head and saw the door and leaped towards it, racing down the steps and down the street. George stood at the top of the steps, watching her jump over a dog at the corner of the block, and then run into the road, dodging hooting cars.

"Well," he thought, "It was fun while it lasted."

Chadwick

The Cabin

There was one bullet left in the chamber. The handle was still warm from when Trevor was holding it. Now he was lying on the floor, his head floating

in his own brain. Hanklin looked up, his mouth a capitol 'O'. The girl across from him, Tessa, was wiping her eyes. Her face was pink from stress.

Hanklin spoke: "That was pretty intense."

Jackson, the slinky man on Hanklin's left was still wiping his mouth from when he threw up. That was right after Trevor had willingly taken his own life. Now his breath tasted of hot sick. The room was running on adrenaline. You could smell it.

"Who's next?" The voice came from the shadows.

The redwood cabin housing the three figures around the table belonged to the man asking the question. He was tall. Unusually tall. He had a ponytail. It went down to behind his knees. He was missing his two front teeth. His name was Guffin. And he had an erection.

"I didn't want it to be like this." Tessa's voice was quiet, unassuming. She had a frame about her that never allowed her to step into the spotlight. In her spare time, Tessa liked reading about the Lebonese Walrus's mating rituals.

Guffin's eyes were tiny — on first glance, one could mistake them for freckles on his forehead. That was why he wore glasses. Not because he needed them, no, he wore them so people could look him in the eye. He didn't like it when people explored his face during a conversation. That's why Hanklin was in a wheelchair.

Jackson had never felt so lost. He kept thinking about the games of chess he used to play with his mother. He never could beat her. He never would.

Guffin could cross a room in two steps, usually one, that's how tall he was. He enjoyed the intimidation factor that came with height. It's usually how he got what he wanted.

Jackson could feel the presence behind him. He could feel Guffin prodding him in the back. Well, that was until both of Guffin's hands were clasped around his neck. And Jackson could still feel being prodded. Closing your eyes doesn't make it go away.

'How you feeling, Jack? You up for it?' That was Guffin.

'This is wrong ... haven't you had enough?' That squeak came from Tessa. Little Tessa, the broccoli of the human race — nothing wrong with it, but why bother when there's just so much better out there?

When Guffin smiled, no-one smiled back. 'Aren't you feeling good, Tessa?'

Tessa could never hold eye contact. She didn't even try. She always wanted to go back to Greece. Tell Nicholas how much he really meant to her. Ask to start things over. She never would.

When Jackson slid the gun across the table towards Tess, that was when Guffin started to masturbate. Closing your eyes doesn't make it go away. 'Come now, darling. Of everyone here, you've had the best run. You've lasted the longest, haven't you? You can't complain now.'

Tessa didn't argue. She never could. Her brother would always tell her to shut the FUCK — so she would. But deep down she knew Guffin was right. She knew that for two years she had lived off the unfair riches of Guffin Tickshaw without so much as a thought to the consequences. She didn't even flinch when she declined to read the fine print in the contract. She didn't even consider Guffin's laugh when she told him so. Thought it was creepy, but that was it. Poor Tessa.

'Ah-ah. You haven't spun the barrel.' Guffin's voice was an electric guitar — the lower E string. It was the result of years of drowning the demons in his life. He didn't speak, he growled. 'Y, y, you're shaking, Tess ... mmm, tr, try not to shake ... you wouldn't want to ... miss now, w ... would you?'

The vicious thrusts of Guffin's right arm made it hard for him to articulate. Like the *whirr* of a bicycle wheel, the chamber of the Ruger SP-101 spun round and round and round. The single .38 calibre bullet passed the barrel of the firearm twenty seven times after Tessa spun it with the enthusiasm of a child about to say a speech to her class.

If only it had spun twenty eight times. The gun didn't *click.* The gun didn't jam. The gun went BANG. And Tessa saw her parents again.

Hanklin added the commentary: 'That was fucked up, man. Mr. Tickshaw, come on man ...'

Jackson was squeezing his head.

'You can't complain! This was all your choice. You had your fun, now it's down to this.'

Hanklin hated admitting he was wrong. It irked him when someone else got onto higher ground. He never could understand why. So he just blamed his parents.

'Do you want to load it?'

Jackson was crying. Hanklin nodded and asked for a bullet. It fell into his hands, cold as ice. It even stung a little. Experienced in handling a firearm, Hanklin loaded the gun like a SWAT team officer. No one was around to notice. It all happened so slowly. Encumbered by his paralysis, Hanklin angled himself slowly to face Guffin. Hampered by his obesity, Hanklin struggled to raise the weapon higher than his head. It took a while.

Hanklin's life went into time-lapse. Three frames a second. His arm was raised. Guffin's face was deranged. Jackson was a baby in the corner. Restricted by his own large hands, Hanklin's finger struggled to exert pressure on the trigger. Closing your eyes doesn't make it go away. But it does make it easier.

Guffin was on the floor. So was Jackson, but for different reasons. Guffin still had a hard-on. Hanklin found that quite amusing. He drew in a deep breath and wheeled himself to the bathroom. Guffin was surprised. He didn't expect to be betrayed. He'd paid them enough (he thought) to live a life of luxury before heading up to the cabin for the weekend. He had spent his life getting to that moment. Sexual repression is never fun, Guffin knew. It wasn't anger so much as disappointment — Guffin had always wanted to go wrestling a shark. Oh well.

Appendix 19: Selected Student Sentences with Soul

Taryn

Four pages into *Of Grammatology*, Jeffrey Blackbeard decided to name his penis Derrida.

On the occasion of their first date, Mr and Mrs Thomas Gee had watched an 8 o'clock179 screening of Schindler's List. She glared at the sniffing women who populated the front row; he complained that popcorn boxes just weren't big enough these days.

Realizing (after a search through the grimy contents of both trouser pockets) that he didn't have enough money for a bus ticket, God laced up his All Stars and trudged down the street.

My CD4 count is 199, which is not, along the broad spectrum of 'terribility,' particularly terrible. Now there is the matter of what else you need me to confess. Am I black? Am I gay? Am I a *he*, or a *she*, or a *they*? The difference caused by a single digit, the admin of disclosure — that, maybe, brings us closer to terrible.

Summer started early that year, and so did the executions.

They don't design sub-compacts to fit whole corpses in, though a bit of a twist here and a tug there and you're on the road in no time. Still, I told myself, shoving a thigh into the glove compartment, it was time I started scanning the *Auto Trader* for something more suitable.

Whenever we met in the cafeteria, Malcolm smiled at me as though someone had held a gun to his head and said, "Smile, Malcolm."

Olivia

"Suicide hotline ... please hold."

"But Mo-ooom ... Strangers have the best candy."

She had a sudden vision of her future; crouched in the corner of a white padded cell wearing a straight jacket, swaying ever so slightly and gently humming "Pop Goes the Weasel."

"Is this really me? Am I the tortured soul or am I just another teenage drama queen?"

She hated public speaking; she is the kind of person that would rather be in the coffin than saying the eulogy.

He gave the impression of one who buys bottle after bottle of cologne to wash off that seeping, slimy, all-encompassing smell of white trash.

A love of ages, a love cast in stone, a love so unwavering it would stand before the fires of hell uninhibited, unchanging and unafraid.

His name was Matteo and he tasted like a chilled Mojito.

"Lines?" she said.
"Lines, doll, lines, as in …" she gave a loud and long sniff.

"Tequila!" she shrieked, "it burns my throat ... and I love it!"

Emily Lyre

Once, I stood in the middle of the road with tears in my eyes and clenched fists screaming at the top of my lungs at the over-the-road dogs. The louder I

screamed ‘Shut up shut up shutupshutupshutup shut the fuck up fuuuuuck’, the louder they barked, four or five enormous dogs, black, white, yellow, barking hysterically at the lunatic in the road..

This terrible sadness is the absolute opposite of the joy and love that came naturally when the baby was first wrenched from her uterus, this is not the blood and gore of new and precious life, the tears of joy at the first sight of a new life created by love, but the terrible blood of death and torture, dripping off bayonets used to skewer babies, seeping out of bullet holes, the gore of children attacked by dogs, torn in half, swung by the ankles against walls, pavements, train carriages, the tears of a mother as she stands helpless, unable to save her precious jewel of a child, unable to stop the pain and suffering of this innocent life she had the audacity to violently bring into this world under the assumption she could protect it from any harm.

Her sadness manifests in strange ways; watching movies on her own in the middle of the day, uncontrollable eating, arms too heavy to wash her hair, snapping at people close to her, restless sleep at night, long unproductive afternoon naps, general disillusionment and apathy.

Knives

The children stood mesmerised as he bellowed with laughter, his belly shaking and rolling with each spasm of joy, ripples of mirth repeating themselves across the stretched shirt, merriment playing havoc with the shape of his body.

They say I have a bright future ... either I’ll work too hard and burn out or I’ll forever live with the regret of not doing enough.

The day he came back from the War, I looked into his eyes and it was the first time I ever saw a man who was dead, blink.

They were going to sing my praises for decades to come, songs of my courage and heroic deeds, long speeches of how I combated evil, and it was all ruined by a few bodies in the basement.

The crackling of knuckles was painfully satisfying, so was the snapping and crumpling of that bastard’s nose.

“Push beyond. Beyond the facades of a perfect life. Duck past annoying joy-bunnies and their plastic smiles. Punch through those arrogant self-help, motivational pricks. Press on harder when the sentimental rot becomes a plague. Avoid chick flicks.

“If you wanna make it kid, suffer. It’s only when you suffer, when you cry yourself to sleep in the pile of your own stinkin’ failure that you really find out who the fuck you are.”

Sophie

Col. Vermeulen, reports a statement made to him, on the sandy banks of the Crocodile River, by a Khoisan hunter who had recently returned from an annual trip to Europe: “When I first read Macbeth, I felt like going out and shaking my spear.”

With the distant sound of the strumming of a guitar drifting in through the open window, she taps me on the shoulder and leads me out to the night time world of solitary spirits.

She stepped aside, out of the way of a long procession of horses and carts, of varying sizes and shapes, containing weather-beaten people with weary eyes and dirty hair.

He suddenly saw his hometown as an industrial hothouse, along with images of sweating men and smelting iron.

She was a quiet and solitary figure amongst the chattering crowd seated around the table. I reached over and touched her arm, and she smiled so widely at me, that I felt I'd saved the whole of humankind from fading to black.

Antonio

He didn't *really* want to make her soul sing – all he wanted to do was fuck her.

Stuck in early morning traffic, he sits cramped up in his tiny white bakkie and wonders at the magnificent fuck up his life has become.

Instead of whining so much, maybe you should try to change your life?

The only sunshine he experienced each day was on the bathroom toilet seat, away from his wife's daily breakdowns, his obese son's tears and his promiscuous daughter's rebellious antics.

"So," she declared, munching crudely on her Cajun chicken salad, "apparently his large nostrils are supposed to be a sign of his virility," she told her friends as her voice floated above the hum of the Louisiana-style bistro.

"Little children should not walk alone by themselves," he whispered to himself in glee as he cradled the butcher knife buried in his chino pants.

Empty footprints cast a shadow upon the puddles of water on the tarred road as the stench of reheated food wafts from the open windows of the matchbox apartments.

Memories are created by empty wine bottles, laughter lingers on the rims of glasses and truths are uttered with each sip.

Jonny Rage

"I'm curious about you, I wonder what makes you tick, what's inside of you?" She picked up the knife.

"Jimmy, don't play with your supper, put the fingers back on your plate and take some liver ... There's a good boy."

I'd fall out of heaven for you.

It itched between his shoulder blades, where his wings used to be.

There's a voice, in my head. It tells me to do things. But mostly, it tells me how good I look.

It's not like you can just ask your demons to leave you alone. Well, you can try saying please ... that used to work with mom.

"Oh yes, I love little children, especially with some olive oil and a glass of wine to wash it all down."

It is not an easy thing to change the world. Watch, my young apprentice, and learn.

And with that simple sentence, mom ruined the entire party.

Every now and then a window opens inside my mind, and someone looks in. Sometimes other ... stuff ... comes in too.

David

The voice of the wind whispered past the blade of my sword on its flight towards Ochewa's neck.

He designs small children for foreign advertising agencies.

Shall I compare thee to a Winter's night?

The moment we locked eyes I knew she would warm my bed tonight.

A friend of the same gender, with a hidden agenda.

"Are threesomes inherently tautological?" she whispered, her lips brushing my ear.

"That's exactly what Said said," said Norma.

Jacques Derrida: (Mis)(Mis-)understood Genius or Practical Joker of Academia?

Nom de Plume

I resolved to blondely go where none have gone before.

Admittedly, it's an odd kind of necrophilia, in love with a man's words, which seethe with love, sex and vigour, whilst his body has long since decayed.

It seemed harsh and unnatural to brand the artistry as a discipline.

Society prescribes sanity and hence I've become addicted to my idiosyncratic craziness.

The attempt at being graceful was poetic tragedy.

It is the whole in the doughnut, the simple nothing, that you only know is there because it isn't.

The souls, which filled my sentences, seemed to leave people hollow by comparison.

There is a kind of poetry to life that lies in its distilled incomprehensibility.

Simple hopes can become distorted and dark expectations.

Bunny

I hastily swallowed back my words (gobbled actually) as the realisation hit that I sounded like my mother; a particularly scary thought considering my mother.

You know why we have mirrors: to get a second opinion.

Everyone is weird, abnormal even, I'm just particularly bad at hiding it.

So ... how does that make you feel?

I felt so ensconced by the crowd; my sense of alienation soon evaporated and I was once again able to breathe, truly breathe.

God will get you.

If the centre of the universe is where I am, then here will always be by me.

Life has become so tedious that I've taken to having conversations with my deaf dog – she really seems to understand me.

Kathryn

It is a little disconcerting to see a grown man, incapacitated on the floor, giggling.

Children rustle ominously in the dark.

“Metaphors are pretty, but pretty useless,” he mumbled into the face of the blonde model standing before him.

So she continues to live in the fairytales that her imagination constructs as barriers around her tissue-paper-thin skin. And every so often the fantasy bleeds into real life.

The static is the terrible noise of living.

“I am a god,” the jerk to the left of the bar scoffs, his hair slicked back with axel grease and his Polo shirt stretched obscenely across his chest.

It is the contradictions in our hearts that kill us.

Clarity continues down our arbitrary path. Imagination sticks her tongue out at him.

I despair. Don’t worry, I enjoy it.

Lemon

Her smile was a holiday.

“Generalisations are all so clichéd!” Professor Hawkins boomed, “Never try to start a novel with a generalisation.” Sarah’s heart sank slowly, imperceptibly: pithy platitudes had always been at the heart of her writing.

“Don’t you find,” Carla said lightly, “that mornings are always vastly improved by tossing a cat out of a fourth-floor window?”

There is little to recommend Paris in the springtime.

Like an errant lover crawling back to his mistress, he returned into the sweet, acrid embrace of vodka that evening.

Not to invoke a cliché, but it really was a dark and stormy night. The wind was executing a violent, psychotic dance with the pine trees outside.

Strange how the things we love always seem to tear us apart; take my pet shark, for example.

As she lay there, she was perfectly beautiful, except for the axe tearing into her ribs.

Like a deflated balloon, Howard slunk along, tying to remember what had happened to his hair.

This day — its sparkling clarity, its comforting sun, its resolute calm — reminded Claire of nothing so much as a new morning in Hell.

Bryony

I am a travel writer — follow me home.

I was always the March Hare to his White Rabbit — I put jam in his watch.

The vast, crimson bird of my dreams settled on the table and fanned its green tale out behind it.

Bugger! I find myself in a familiar pose, shagging sheep. It’s a ridiculous hobby! Goats are far more eloquent.

To write a sentence, one must find one’s centre in the silence that is the underlying purpose of us all.

She rested her forehead against the cool hilt of the sword, and the desire to hear the screams came upon her once again.

The fat green rat lay lazily upon a sea of purple rocks.

“Constantinople?” said Mark, “Why the hell would I want to travel there? I’d need a time machine!”

He wrote a book; a novel; an ecclesiastical piece; a great, grey tome: “How God invented Karma.” God invented Karma?

Pray, why do birds sing at night?

Who cares about putting soul in the sentence? You have to find the soul in yourself first.

Chadwick

Hard as a rock, I stroked my knee-scab.

The bastard had a fist like a comet.

Don’t ask me why I cried – ask me why I didn’t.

I saw someone die today. It was very honest. Their body dropped to the floor with the grace of a sheet of paper. Crumpled on the ground, the twisted mass stared back at me with hollow eyes. I stared back and smiled a smile of assurance, my eyes going all crinkly at the corners. I dropped the blade and it hit the floor with a clang much louder than I had anticipated – I jumped.

He was contagious to the delicious.

In a ghost town where the past was always present, he was my future.

Do not deny me this – please ...

Don’t hurt the flower people – they bite.

Junkyards have never been a good place to eat salads.

I used to enjoy crying – until it ran out of style.

This frustrates me – like watching old people.

She moved with a slow motion grace.

I was an open hole, ready for anything.

Is it wrong to think about chewing plastic dolls?

Kahlan Amnell

He dragged the knife across her fattened flesh and trembled as he felt the warm fluid drench his hands. Her scream gave him the courage to continue with his pleasure – his mother had never had a high pain threshold.

Death was a dripping thing, pounding on the panes of your house.

Katrina did not know what to do now that she had lost her shadow.

Daddy was never a strong man.

Her beauty became a viper.

God’s breath toys with their hair as they walk backwards into the future while discussing mortal dreams.

All he came to be to her was broken promises and forgotten happiness.

I was jogging along some forgotten path, and hidden from this season’s frosty swirls I discovered the scent of blossoms as they seemed to creep.

Jonathan

She put her chainsaw to his neck. Now he knew NEVER to cheat on her again.

It’s just a kiss – it's not as breathtaking as people make it out to be. It’s nothing special.

I could get paid for doing something I love but the only way I’ll ever make money is doing something I hate.

The wait was long and intoxicating, almost like a permanent sentence of loneliness.

People stretch you in all directions – it’s impossible to know which is the right one.

A cup of coffee can change your life.

Work is something you need to build enthusiasm for.

The novel ended abruptly.

It’s fun to navigate your tongue past empty spaces.

Time is of the essence – you've got to use every second.

He loved her, that was not enough.

Raymond

I’ve been pursuing the perfect punctuation marks, but ironically they move in and out of sentences I wish I had designed.

Maybe gravity is telling us there is no escape.

The universe broke up into millions of theories.

She was incapable of breathing. He was completely lifeless.

His love was motionless.

Trust is not easy for anyone; so all the excuses you made for breaking her heart are completely selfish.

No amount of perfectly constructed words could accurately describe the way the sun rises or the forms the moon takes.

We just assumed it was a falling star, had we known it was a plane there would have been less awe.

Noor

When Karakas screams, see the crows fly and the lambs scatter. Then see the eagle watch from up ahead, preparing for the slaughter.

Her movements were like a cobra’s, I saw her sway those hips. I was entranced – I swear – but I pretended not to care.

In uncertainty – there lives fear.

War is but a day at the office.

There is no right in a name – or is there?

Vicky

Life can be so draining and at the same time so deliscious in the sense that you never know what is going to happen next.

A woman can never be too rich or too beautiful.

Life can be so dull at times.Seasons come and seasons go but does it have to rain so?

I am so bored and cannot think about what to write.

People can be so idiotic.

Life is such an uphill battle.

Cornelius

When I throw the dart at the dartboard, the bristles stick out like an old pig-hair paintbrush used too much.

The economy is growing stale and stinks as more people are sweating for their money.

Appendix 20: Selected Student Short Stories

Selected Student Short Stories

"Crowded House" by Sophie

It's amazing, I thought, squeezed up small against a wall, the amount of people that were able to fit into this two-bed roomed, matchbox house. Of course, not everyone was inside, many were standing around outside, in the small area of paved ground that surrounded the house on all sides. I had arrived a few hours earlier on a day that was dry and chilly, with a winter sun that shed a clinical, white light on the brown and feathery grasses in the gardens and fields.

The gathering was a sending-off of a few-times-removed cousin on my mother's side, who was recently married, and about to leave with her new husband for a distant European city, where they hoped to land comfortable jobs, with salaries that were unheard of in this country, and where their professional skills might finally be worthily utilised and properly appreciated. Apart from their careers, they also wanted to make a go of life in the mainstream of fashionable living, in a place where things were clean and calculated (being themselves Young, Beautiful and Restless), and where pleasure resided in a place no further than their fingertips.

Back at the house though, the 'outside' gang were made up mainly of men. Some of the younger boys leant against the walls smoking and exchanging witty comments, while the older men stood in languid, hunched- up positions, involved in deep conversations about issues and recently discovered wisdom that generally interest settled, middle-aged men with family commitments and business interests.

The women, who churned out food and chatter, dominated the interior of the house, especially the kitchen.

Once inside the front door, I sucked in my breath and made my way through the throngs of large-bottomed, colourfully-clad wives, stopping here and there to greet and kiss, facing bright lipstick and floral aromas, scents which I would swear under oath had lived in nearly full perfume bottles on dressing tables from the time I was of a too-small-to-reach-up-and-grab-it age. Having no other duty but to wander aimlessly, I asked an aunt in charge if 'I could help with something?' and was lucky to be just in time for dish-washing, which was a relief, since it gave me something to do. However, other wandering people soon pushed me out of my job as chief washer, and alone again in the bustle, I looked around desperately for a partner, a friend, who would settle down with me in a quiet place.

My cousin, who I had come to greet, was away buying bottles of Coca Cola, and had been away for a long time apparently, causing much anxiety and increased activity amongst the community of mothers. Suddenly, out of a slight parting in the mass of production, she came towards me and pulled me towards a pair of plastic chairs in the corner of the sunlit room. It was a while since I'd last seen her. As children, we would play hide-and-seek, and 'catches' in the street, and have children's fights about who had cheated, and who was 'it'. After puberty, though, we met only at important family functions, with me being largely intimidated by her flowering beauty, and all-round 'coolness'. Nonetheless, I had always enjoyed her company, and was pleased to finally see her.

We spoke about the state of our affairs, our pre-occupations; I was still studying at university, while she had graduated two years earlier as an optician, and had since been working in a private clinic. She spoke also of the arrangements she had made for her trip, and said she intended to settle permanently overseas. She said that life was getting her down, that the responsibility of the working life and the struggle of trying to be taken seriously were overwhelming her. She was not accustomed to having to assert herself to be accepted, as everything had always come easy, her education, looks and friends. I was uneasy, and I told her that I doubted she would find what she was looking for, so far from home. She sighed and looked out the window, where some boys were kicking a soccer ball around. We were then interrupted by an old, deaf, great-grandmother, who came calling us to the supper table.

My cousin flew off that day, and came back for a first visit when her first child was born, six years later. Her visit has since been infinitely extended, and much to the relief of the elderly folk, it has been generally accepted that she is home to stay, especially with the fact that another baby is currently in the making.

"The Artist" by Lemon

His tanned, muscular chest glowed in the firelight as he moved closer to her. With every move of his lips, she imagined kissing them. "Crystal," he breathed huskily. "Don't fight this."

"I have to, Rick," she whispered, hypnotised by his piercing blue eyes. "My husband could walk in any minute!"

"Into a barn?" he replied, taking a step closer to her. He reached out a hand and gently brushed her cheek. Crystal felt electric sparks sizzle over her skin. This was wrong, but she realised that she didn't care…

She caught his hand in hers, pulled him to her and let him plunder her waiting mouth. Every inch of her burned for him, and she could feel by his racing heart that he, too, was powerless.

He pulled away for a second, and looking passionately into her eyes

Passionately? Could people even look passionately? Edna bit her lip and stared at the screen for a moment, trying to picture the scene in detail. A blonde Adonis was kissing a raven-haired Angelina Jolie type. They pulled apart; she stared into his eyes adoringly, yet with some fear – she was, after all, a dutiful wife – and he looked back at her…what? Not quite lovingly, but…tenderly. Yes. Edna deleted the last few words.

...and looking tenderly into her eyes, he whispered

"Whispered" had already been used. Edna hated repetition.

...and looking tenderly into her eyes, he said

What did he say? Should she even insert dialogue here? This was the first love scene, and she'd been building up to it with quite a torrent of tortured glances, heaving bosoms and "accidental" meetings. Perhaps readers would just skip over anything except the sex.

These were the instances when Edna Farrell – nom de plume, Rachel Remington – found her job rather trying. She didn't like to think of herself as selling sex; prostitutes and pornography did that. She sold romance, fantasy, hope even (as she convinced herself on her grey days). She liked to imagine females of all ages, colours and races alike being swirled into her misty medieval worlds, awash with pink hues and drenched in the scent of womanly rose and manly sweat. They would thrill to the intrigue, sigh at the romance, and smile at the thought of such glittering, word-perfect affairs being translated into their own lives.

But perhaps, a less supportive voice would interrupt sometimes, perhaps they only smiled at the ridiculousness of it all, the ability of her stories to bring cliché to a new level. Yes, another rather snippy voice would chime in. Or maybe their smiles were truly filled with awe and faith that they would one day find their strapping gardener or chiselled prince. But of course they never will. You are the builder of impossible dreams. And of tragically formulaic soft-porn, the other would taunt.

Edna could keep these two threads of insecurity in check. She would calmly and consistently assert to herself that readers and publishers loved her work – she'd been doing this for almost ten years, hadn't she? Of course women who bought romance novels didn't find them absurd, or they wouldn't buy them. Secondly, anyone with half a brain knows that fiction is fiction, she would continue. People watched movies and read books all the time, without any expectation of the storylines coming true.

Yes, these criticisms were unpleasant, but manageable. The only thought that really frightened her had been tossed out casually at a cocktail party years ago by a statuesque brunette with a vintage coat and a languid drawl. Edna hadn't even been part of the conversation. She'd simply been on her way to get more drinks, and had passed a knot of pseudo-intellectuals: it was obvious from the slightly shabby clothing and measured Oxford accents. They were all tittering at a small plump blonde, who had just admitted to reading a "Mills and Boone-style romance novel". "That's all very good as a dirty little secret, dear," Edna distinctly remembered her unknowing tormentor saying to the blonde. "But please, whatever you do, don't start mistaking it for actual literature!"

The intellectuals roared with laughter.

Edna felt a flush devour her cheeks even now, remembering the sting of the implication. She was not a *real* writer. What she wrote was not *literature*. What was her job, then? Was she an entertainer?

"Edna?"

She hadn't heard the door open. She twisted her neck to see her boyfriend enter the sunlit apartment. "Oh, James. You startled me." She shot him an apologetic smile. "Just trying to write this love scene."

James brushed a few locks of his black mop out of his face, and nodded. "Make myself some tea then, shall I?" Without waiting for her assent, he disappeared into the kitchen.

He was a little distracted today, Edna observed. Instinctively she checked her reflection in the window. She'd never been a great beauty, but she wasn't ashamed of her pert nose, wide eyes magnified by black-rimmed glasses, and sunny smile. She combed her fingers through her brown curls a few times. She didn't look terrible today, albeit a little tousled. Why hadn't he asked whether she wanted tea?

No matter. She'd had earlier, anyway. Perhaps he was simply trying to stem her caffeine addiction. Sweet James. Always thinking of her. She resumed the scene with his gentle eyes staring out of Rick's manly visage.

Trembling, she let him undress her. He began slowly, unbuttoning each pearl button of her blouse to reveal her blushing alabaster skin. When her bosom was exposed, however, he couldn't contain himself; he ripped the rest of her shirt open, sending buttons flying, and tossed it to the floor, kissing her hungrily all the while.

Edna loved this part: she was getting caught up in her own deliciously erotic web. Her fingertips were moist against the laptop's rubbery keys. Perhaps, someday, someone would desire her that much.

Someone does desire you that much, silly, she chastised herself. *James is crazy about you*. Of course, James wasn't the lover he had once been. When they'd first met, he'd worshipped her with such adoration that even *she* had suspected she might be a goddess. That fire in his eyes when he looked at her had dimmed gradually, to an occasional flicker. But that happened with all couples. Passion was replaced by comfortable, safe affection. Still, it was pleasing to give her heroes James's abashed smile or slender hands when she pictured them. She listened for a moment to discern sounds of water boiling or a spoon stirring, but heard nothing.

To finally be pressed against his warm body, feeling his kisses cover her skin, was everything she had dreamed…

"Edna, I hate to do this now, but we need to talk." James's British accent had never sounded so clipped. Edna's intestines seemed to vanish, and all she could feel was a gaping vacuum where they had been. She turned her head apprehensively, thinking numbly what a cliché it was: "We need to talk". Who said that anymore? Then again, she was making a career out of twisting and churning clichés. Perhaps he was learning from her.

"Talk?" She kept her tone light. "What about?" But as soon as she was out of her chair and looking at him, she knew. He was holding a scuffed box, once used for a Sharp microwave, now piled with items. Every remnant of him, every smell and feel and memory her flat had ever contained was neatly stacked there: a few ratty jerseys, his York University T-shirt, a coffee mug featuring a faded Garfield munching a doughnut. Edna drew her eyes from the box and forced them onto James's cool, hard face. "What is this? We were doing fine. I thought we …We were working through things, we – "

"We were living a half-life, Edna," he cut her off quietly. "Things haven't been good for a while. I'm sorry if you haven't felt it, but I certainly have."

Thoughts, memories, arguments flickered through her head incoherently. She tried to place instances in which he had seemed distant, and rewrote them in a darker pen. Where had she gone wrong? Could she have prevented this? Fictional James, romantic-hero James smiled pathetically at her from his hay-bale in the barn. She was stupid, so stupid. Still making him her hero when he'd been bored, resentful, uncaring. Through a flush of self-disgust, she worked on constructing a sentence. "So we're not talking about this at all, I see? You're just running away, like you always do." As soon as the acid-tinged words were out she wished she could swallow them. Why wasn't this a novel? Why couldn't she just delete this scene?

Edna's wide, crystalline green eyes filled with glistening tears. "James," she murmured. "You don't really want to do this. Think of the life we have together. The love we've shared. We were *happy, my darling." She approached him slowly, holding his eyes with hers. She could feel him melting.*

"You're so beautiful," he choked out, his voice shaking. "This is so hard, Edna, I don't want to lose the best thing that's ever happened to me…"

"Then don't," she advised, putting a finger to his lips. He grasped her hand and kissed it softly. "I'm so sorry," he whispered. "I was wrong."

Focus, Edna! She wasn't even listening to what he was saying. As she snapped back to consciousness she distinguished words like "tired", "unappreciated" and "Nicole". Nicole?

"Your assistant, Nicole?"

"Yes. I've been out for dinner – coffee, really – with her a few times." For the first time, James's controlled façade broke into an uncomfortable lumpiness. He avoided her eyes. "Nothing's happened."

As he grudgingly let some power slip away from him, she seized it furiously. "I don't care that nothing's happened! You took her out! That's underhanded and cruel, James. I didn't think you were capable of such heartlessness." Now she corralled up all the bitterness contained within her and spat it out with vitriolic fervour. "You're simply unable to be satisfied with just one, hmm? Is your attention span too short?"

James looked as if he'd been hit with friendly fire.

She drew a breath of horror. "How could you betray me like this? I loved you!" her voice rang out, strong and clear, daring him to contradict her.

James was broken, and he fell to his knees, sobbing openly. "I'm a terrible person! I was so wrong! You have to forgive me," he wailed, staring up at her pleadingly.

"Stand up," Edna commanded coldly. He obeyed. In one swift, almost graceful movement, she slapped him violently across the face.

"No. You're beneath my forgiveness."

"I think it's time for me to go," James said, almost in a whisper. Still half tempted to truly slap him, Edna watched, paralysed, as he let himself out and tossed the key onto the hardwood floor before noiselessly shutting the door.

Vaguely unsure whether she still inhabited her body, Edna sat back down at the computer. Her sweaty candlelit dalliance was paused, expectantly, on the screen. Slowly, she brought her trembling fingers up to the keyboard.

Suddenly, fiercely, Crystal pulled away from Rick. "No!" she cried. "This is all wrong!" Rick gazed at her in confusion. "This is everything you want," he parroted. "I love you, Crystal. We can be together."

"It's not that simple," she replied, struggling free of his grasp. "I'm married. My husband and I have a life together. That means something, you know."

The stableman seemed stunned. "I…care about you," he mumbled. "I mean, I'm sorry. I thought you wanted this."

"I did. But for all the wrong reasons." Crystal felt her head clear for the first time in days. "I was bored. I built you up to be a romantic hero, when in fact all you really are, is – well, a stableman. I aspire somewhat higher than that."

Rick looked down, abashed. "We are from different worlds. I'm sorry if I presumed to forget my place."

There was an uncomfortable silence.

"M'lady, if I may ask: what will you do now?

"Now?" Crystal glanced at him, and a small smile crept over her lips. "Well, for a start, I'm going to try my hand at writing some real *literature."*

"Denial"

by Lemon

Death. It's a funny word, isn't it? It's so arrestingly soft and so unobtrusive, considering what it describes. Simply the last stroke of a brush through a girl's hair, or the whisper of an angel's wing fluttering past. For all the finality and pain that seem to be implied, the word "death" is a rather pitiful summary. "Death" doesn't describe death. I sometimes imagine that in a parallel universe, the name for death would be something equally arbitrary, like "pot plant" ("pot" meaning, in their language, "after", and plant, of course, being the root form of "life"). People would ominously threaten one another with pot plants. Life's two inevitabilities would be pot plants and taxes. And people from this universe would think us ridiculous for naming an entity so frightening with so limp a word as…"death".

I prefer "dead". So final and hollow.

"Within six months, I will be…dead."

I try it out, letting my tongue press the word out sharply on my palate. It's only a whisper, but the woman next to me in the waiting room shoots me an odd look. I'm not fazed; this bald head has earned me odd looks aplenty.

We are both patiently waiting to pay the doctor who has failed to save my life. Why am I even paying? I wonder suddenly. What can he do? Dig me up? With a small smile that confuses my fellow patient even more, I hitch my handbag a little higher on my shoulder and walk out of the rooms of Drs Kramer, Labuschagne & van Vuuren, never to return.

When I inform my son, Derek, of my little experiment in living, his eyes widen in horror. Kids these days.

"Mom, that's illegal! You'll have to pay first thing tomorrow." I've always been like that, too: terrified of the long arm of the law, nodding and smiling, bowing and scraping to the powers-that-be. Now, suddenly, those powers seem achingly pitiful.

"I will do no such thing," I chirp, savouring the sticky swirls of fudge sauce in the ice cream I have just bought myself. "The doctor didn't do his job." *Within six months, I will be dead.*

"It's not the doctor's fault, Mom. Look, I know this is a big shock. I'm –" his voice trembles ever so slightly " – I'm in shock, too. But you're not yourself right now. I'm booking you for an appointment with my counsellor. He's very good. I'll tell him you're not really crazy, if you'd like."

I return his grin. "I'll go. But don't expect me to pay."

The counsellor is not at all what I expected. He's younger than I am, with a Beatles T-shirt on, and a delightfully mischievous buzz about him. I'm inwardly thankful I wore my good wig today – the bright, choppy red locks bring out the green in my eyes.

When I tell him casually of my imminent demise, I see the drama of the statement hit him. It's almost imperceptible, but there's definitely a small shock wave running through him; his hand shakes as he writes something on his notepad. I imagine it's something like, "Goner" or "6-8 sessions max." "Not to invoke a cliché, but how does that make you feel, Genevieve?" he asks with a gentle smile. I like this guy.

"According to my son, I'm deeply in denial. I know it's going to happen, but I can't help being sort of flippant about the whole thing. Everything starts to seem rather … meaningless. I'm dying. I'm not going to be a part of any of it very soon."

"Dying" – now there's a good word. It has a wailing, screaming quality, but the wailing is inherently futile. If a person dies in their flat and no one witnesses it, no one hears their screams, do they still die? Do they still matter?

"Doesn't that upset you?"

"Hmm? Sorry?"

"I said, doesn't it upset you to know that you won't be a part of anyone's life anymore?"

Ah, just the question I've been trying to avoid. "Well, it'll make things a lot easier, that's for sure," I reply lightly. "No more stress …"

"But what about the people you love? Are you completely detached from them already?" He can sense that my defences are cracking. Dammit. The people I love…for the first time, their images flicker to life in my mind. Derek, my pride and joy; my friends; lovers, parents, pets. Losing them will kill me. Ah, the irony. I can use all the dark humour I want, but the thought of missing out on their lives claws at me like a cat playing with its prey every time I give it a moment.

"I'm not detached from them," I say slowly, ensuring that I control every lilt, every syllable. "I…my son – he's everything to me. I love him so much." Oh God. Here we go. I can feel that dull ache at the back of my throat, which I know would turn into a piercing, desperate wail if I let it blossom. But I don't. I pause. I swallow. "It just doesn't make sense for me to think about these things," I explain in a whisper, staring at my lap. "I can't control them, so what's the point? I always said if I had six months left to live I'd travel the world, bungee jump, eat lots of chocolate mousse."

"Is that what you're going to do?"

I remain motionless. "I don't know."

I go home after our session, wilted and dried out by the memories I will never make.

The next session is exponentially better. I have decided that Dr. Beatle's diagnosis of "denial" is very accurate, and I commit myself to maintaining this stage of grief for as long as possible. I wouldn't want him to have to change his diagnosis, after all.

Of course, that's exactly what he's trying to do. "It's very strange that you can talk about death is such abstract terms," he probes. "You got the news two weeks ago. For most patients, reality starts to sink in by this time. Death frightens us all, you know."

"It's not a nice thought," I agree. "That's why I try not to think about it. What's the point, really? Why should I be depressed for the last months of my life? Why not rather spend that time loving life, living every moment?" Without thinking, I plop myself on the couch next to him and smile brightly.

He smiles back slowly, reluctantly, but he's obviously intrigued. I'm a mystery, and I'm well aware of it. Back on my relentless wave of joie de vivre, I cock my head very close to his and whisper, "What would you do if you knew your actions would have no consequences?"

His face is so close to mine, I can hear the soft click of his eyelids blinking. I'm staring challengingly into his eyes, drinking in every molecule of his delicious, grassy smell…

Drawing up my quickly diminishing reserves of self control, I rise from the couch and exit the room, not daring to look back. I could swear that a troop of monkeys are excitedly invading my stomach chamber. I haven't felt this exhilarated in years. Denial is my new deity.

I don't go back to Dr. Beatle. For all my bravado, I do begin to have a few nudges of worry about what he'll say or how awkward things will be. It's a little inconvenient, but I must be ruthless: it simply doesn't fit in with my no-consequences mantra. Besides, the thrill that pulsed through me from simply being so close to him was more than enough to compensate. I push the uncomfortable nudgings resolutely toward an ever-growing pile in my brain's storage cabinet. In the same cabinet lies everything from pictures of Derek as a baby to love letters from Ralph, the erstwhile love of my life … our first home …

I shut the cabinet door.

Death comes swiftly and silently, much like its name, it turns out. There are no wails in the middle of the night; no one sobs over my prostrate body as the last sparks of life sputter out of me. I die the way everyone hopes to – in my sleep. The sleep is morphine-induced (the pain becomes rather crippling in the last few days), and for that it is all the more pleasant and surreal. At first I am not sure I am dead. Drugs have made me hallucinate about floating out of my body before. But this time, I never float back in. I am abstract; my body is solid. Never again shall we meet. Am I still in denial?

Six months after my death, things start to return to normal in my (former) life. What surprises me most is how often everyone cries. Even Ralph, who has been married to an upgraded version of me for ten years now, has a quiet cry in the bathroom almost daily. That's probably what forces me into reality. My funeral is wrenchingly melancholy, albeit quiet and dignified, but rather too surreal for me. The intensely private, poetically pitiful sight of a grown man I used to know, crying over me jolts me – or what's left of me – into the jarring, bruising loss I've been storing away for months. And it feels good. It feels real. I'm not facing away from myself anymore.

Still, I'd recommend denial to anyone who's just received a death sentence. Why mourn your life when you still have some left to live?

The Simplicity of Colour

by Kahlan Amnell

I hear the movement of the water through its rough gliding across my scalp. The utter nothingness of sound is only disrupted by the patient crawling of water between my strands of hair as my head lies submerged in fiery bathwater, arms heavily suspended along my sides. It was the cracks. The winding, rupturing cracks trailing pathways through the ceiling's flesh that had me mesmerized and yearning. Yellowed paint peeling, dirt and damp and death absorbed. That ceiling became life, with the empty sound and unceasing movement of water.

Pasts receding and approaching with the swaying. Always the sound.

Drip, drip, drip. Darkness.

The sudden pain of light as my eyelids slowly open and the crippling effort of lifting my head and dragging myself from the weightless water. The walls are thin. The putrid smells negotiate the cracks and sneak into my tiny room. Oil, smoke, sweat, coal, cheap perfumes, snivelling coughs and whimpers, watery chests, yes, the signs of the living, from many other tiny rooms in this block of exiles. They search for my senses.

Drip, drip, drip.

Nakedly padding across creaking floorboards I gather long, gangly limbs onto the faded blue covering of my bed. The coldness of this place is different. It does not hang in the air like some natural consequence of nature, but bangs against one at every turn making itself felt all the time, never stopping, tickling my flesh prickly with hills and valleys. Fine threads of mohair claw at my milky white skin as I drag a comb (picked up at some forgotten little pharmacy for the bargain price of less than R2) through my short, black, jaggedly cut hair. White and black. Black and white.

I'm not an addict no matter what the people in my life may think, which would not include many thoughts. My social life seems to be bordering on extinction, consisting of neighbours/mutual haters who surreptitiously glance at me with shiny eyes, now and then, as we pass each other in the corridor of this pathetic, crumbling stone block; the little girl who plays with her miniature car made from throw-away, shimmering wire as she sits beside the cavernous entrance to the building, patiently numb in her little corner of earth as she awaits her mother's return from that white house; the odd policeman who knows there is something strange about me (what is a white woman doing here?) and stares momentarily in excited suspicion. Perhaps I should join some rehabilitation group just to repopulate my social circle.

They mostly stare at my skin, not my eyes. It is the incessant wakefulness that gives me that drugged-up look. Fuck, can't get rid of those damn circles under my eyes. The crappy haircut does not improve matters, making me look grotesquely bold yet oddly feminine as brutal streaks seem to accentuate my slight, stream-lined features.

Other sounds abruptly enter from the corridor, the comb still smoothly scooping lines, and my eyes trace the pattern of noise as if to pin it down and make it obey. Contain it. The subdued light beneath the door flickers, passes shadows back and forth as if the brightness is playing a ball-game with dark slivers. Noise and voices. No, just the noise of some other language that has been rejected in the country of its origin. Xhosa. Sotho. How am I supposed to know? It's just the noise, minus its meaning, while still evincing its intent. A man. I know that much. The pounding, unceasing lashing of a male voice meant to beat, beat, beat. And then I hear the word. 'Dompas'. And again. 'Baas'.

Don't you just hate mementoes from the past that dog your heals (heels) regardless of which godforsaken hole you might retreat to? Just a word, and I am back there.

My parents' house. Facing the man (another man), facing the milky white father. His words on my ears, and his mouth is moving, spit gathering in the corners. I don't hear what he is saying but seem to feel that moisture gathering in the corners of my own mouth, and I wipe at it, but of course there's nothing there, nothing I can do about it. But why, why doesn't he wipe the corners of his own stupid

mouth? His lips are cracked.

'What do you think people will say when they see you and that girl of yours walking around, God forbid, holding hands or doing whatever it is you people do? You think they won't notice, won't see. Like we don't have enough problems in this fuckin' country without that sort of thing going on! My own daughter! What did I do wrong, eh? What did I ever do that was so terrible for you to punish me like this? Is it because I wouldn't let you go out with that ridiculous Afrikaans boy with nothing between his ears, is that it? Why don't you say something, just say something, why don't you! Just talk, talk you ungrateful little slut! You know, that's what's wrong with this country. No morals, no values. Well, girlie, not under my roof, I can tell you now. *Never* under this roof!'

"Yes 'Baas.'" I left his fucking roof and his bleached values.

My breasts respond to the lilting draft from the gapped window and I look at them. They are beautiful. That girl of mine had always said so, said that I had beautiful breasts. Not too big, not too small, just pretty enough to get attention and not sag as I get older. Her cocky, calming voice slips into the 'now' from a certain 'then' such that I can clearly see the freckles on her nose, and I almost forgive her for letting go of my hand, just to be able to once again brush those spots with a finger ... but that has passed now.

The tread of frustrated feet hurrying away (in the corridor again) followed by the whispered patter of clinging pursuit, and always the noise, the chattering reverberations of pleading, hushing, whining and, of course, the inevitable choked off yelp of some injured thing. A baby's mewling desperation pins the silence.

I swear I can feel each minute hair in my ears as they strain to capture every nuance of unfolding occurrences just beyond that thin plaster wall, that slight bit of reality separating us. A hesitant door whistles lightly open and again those same pattering feet. Soft whimpering, and my heart gives a slight lurch at that broken exhalation. Quickly draping a rosy pink (no, a faded red) cotton robe around my skinny form, my nostrils flare at the sweaty residue stuck to the fabric. Damn, that washing thing is quite cumbersome. My naked feet skim nimbly across the dust-covered corridor floorboards, and my imagination anticipates reality, such that my response seems to have occurred before it actually does. For a moment I feel like I've taken the excitement out of life, but I'm wrong (which happens quite often) so it's not such a massive assault on my confidence.

And there she is. There it is.

Have you ever thought about feeling an emotion? We easily talk about 'feeling' – sadness, rage, compassion, disgust, desire. But what does that *feeling* consist in? How does it possess the body, ripple outward from the centre? Something happens to the consciousness I think. The eye is aroused by some image and in a blind second the connotations of a receding past all compound and cause an instinctive, irrational feeling which runs its course throughout the limbs in subtle, involuntary ways. Hands sweating, nostrils expanding, heart accelerating, your breathing alters its rhythm, but that consciousness also becomes a living thing and seems to burn with intensity. I thought I had purged my consciousness of its intensity, thought that such over-exposure to all those wonderfully crap feelings had brought with it the numbing desert and, God have mercy…release. There she is. There it is. Would this stupid response of mine change anything, touch that world, *do* anything? But I am powerless, as are we all.

Hand clasped protectively over mouth and cheek, back braced against the door, *she* is captured by such feeling and I might as well be a fragment at her dark feet. The sickly, minty-green maid's frock, neatly snug around her undernourished little body, is surprisingly crisp, with only the frayed white frill along the hem revealing any sign of having travelled through many subservient days. Her face is supported by her knees as she rests her cheek, as if sucking comfort from the rest of herself, bravely prepared to do so if no other comfort is to be found. Limbs contorted in a huddled shape, she waits for the tears to stop. It is the eyes that are distinctly noticeable, almost protruding from a slender earth-coloured face. So brown as to be nearly black, they seem to draw in the dim light and reflect it outward such that silky shapes glide, fold within. It seems magical. Eyebrows journey upwards as she registers the intrusion

upon her grief, but otherwise she simply stares, her bottom, fully curvaceous lip quivering slightly as her emotion seems to be shoved aside by my skin.

Pressing bony knees to the coldly sticky floor, the easily manipulated fabric of my gown gently parts from my form to uncover long legs, feet poised on their toes. I'm close to her, but she does not meet my eyes. Her dazed expression fixes behind me, through me, as if she is convinced that I am some mirage that will evaporate if she were to try and cradle its reality.

'Sshhhhhh.'

It escapes as a breath of sound, filling me and her and perhaps any other creature drawn in by its embrace. Just a sound. But it is enough. She looks at me then, almost shyly, almost forcefully, with a barely perceptible spark of intensity born of immense rage which she can only direct at me (instead of that man); her lusciously perfect eyelashes and large eyes are brutally highlighted by such fire. She is that lovely immaterial shape that makes one smile in the moment before one realises that it was all a dream, more an overwhelming feeling of pleasure than any tangible individual. But maybe this is all just in my head. So what, though? All I know is that she does not bite and tear at me, banishing me with judgement, but tilts her head to one side like a creature whose curiosity defeats its caution. There is no fear, just acceptance of a heart offered without anticipation of payment. I am close.

Her head is tightly wrapped in white cloth, and as my eyes scurry across her features, assessing and committing facial details to memory, I realise that her eyes are equally frantic in taking in my alien countenance. That is all there is. The evenly paced lullaby of air slipping in and out of mouths on hesitant wings, and treading eyes walking paths over the features of the other.

I wonder what she sees when she peruses my appearance, but then, what does it matter? She does not pull away from my close proximity, so what matters has been said; I only realize that I've cupped her cheek with my wintry hand when I see the blueness of my nails against her divine darkness. My knees ache and groan beneath my weight while my feet seem frozen in permanent paralysis but I cannot move, cannot recede, can only dive down deeper and deeper still, until my lips slide along hers and my eyes shut out even her lovely face so that there is only the feeling, and the intensity of that feeling, and the careless touch of her senses. It lasts but the span of a stolen second, and feels the same, but that is all there really is, isn't there? The moment yanked from its stream of moments, not to be held, but to be felt unyieldingly, unforgivingly with everything that one is able to be. The swelling warmth; the teasing torment of that slight musky flavour on moist lips and …

A piercing squeal of savage renouncement, and life commences once again. That baby. We have both retreated from it (that second), and without the barest of sounds my feet sweep me from her face and guide me to my pounding, palpitating enclosure of shallow walls. What now?

Thought is not meant to impose itself on one during such times, but to be postponed and left to wring its hands in some corner to await daylight - which will surely organise deeds done in darkness - and who am I to rebel against nature? I slip my gown off my shoulders and snuggle nakedly beneath the poking mohair blanket, sucking in the frigid air as if drinking a glass of milk, wanting the night, wanting to shut out those lashes and at the same time dreaming of their elegance. The hypnotic humming of slow jazz shebeen tunes from room number 24 lulls me to sleep.

And after. What happens when one seems to have tip-toed heavily to some unexpected, inconceivable height, and wasn't ready for it, while in the aftermath time accelerates and comes swooping upon you? She comes to me again, of course. Or rather we come to each other. It is a peculiar alliance, more of a subterfuge really, in which a forbidden notion (of colour as irrelevant) has asserted itself, and all that is valued is an exchange of a different sort that becomes necessary to both of us.

Acting out my role as addict, I lean one buttock on the chipped windowsill as I kiss a cigarette, the window jammed upwards far enough to allow the heavy fumes to escape. I also leave the door open, telling myself it is because I do not want the smoke to cling to the furniture. Rhythmically lifting and lowering my little bit of cancer, I rest my hand on my bare leg, gently caressing and pressing the recently shaved skin, and wait. From my vantage point I see the buzzing street below and finally see her enter the

building in her neat little uniform, not knowing what it is that I feel, but guide my eyes from her movement and focus on the wall ahead of me. A solitary ant is making its slow, pointless journey, and I admire it for having the courage to make it alone.

The shuffle of burdened feet enters the room, the nicotine clouding her scent, and still I watch the ant until I am sure that she has really crossed that line from the outside, and can feel her eyes on me. Only then do I swivel my head towards her and am once again struck by what I had seen in her the last time, the first time. Crushing the butt on the window sill, I let it drop to the floor and walk slowly towards her, past her, closing the door and keeping her here. I detect no outward emotion from her, but she stares at me with something close to warmth, but also wariness, and I think that this is a good start for two people who have only spoken by means of a 'sshhhh'. She seats herself on the bed, allowing her handbag to slip to her small feet, lashes lowered as the shadow of a smile touches her mouth … and so it begins.

When my warm face is pressed determinedly to the level plane of her soft stomach and my breath darts between the fine little hairs of her skin as I exhale, satisfied, I wonder about the shifting, curving morality of the world… and I hate it. Hate them. I try not to, but I am human and can only be run over by those loving people so many times before my humanity exhausts itself on their words. And she smells so good. Musky, human sweetness and hands buried, lost in the blackness of my hair.

I come to impatiently anticipate the moments of our seclusion in ourselves, come to make my heart beat for nothing else in this deserted plain of the unwanted. Come to want only her. I am not sure if it is her consciousness that envelops me. How could it be? Our words pour past each other and touch is all we have in terms of understanding. I imagine what she would say if she could and how I would respond in the darkness. But time dances forward, and though we know it is only a matter of time (people talk no matter how secretive one's actions) it happens not the way I would have thought at all.

It is the cause. It is the cause, of course, that becomes our beginning and his end.

I am sloshing watery soap on the bathroom floor, soaking up years of trampled dirt as I make one of my few efforts at hygiene in this forgotten building, thinking that I must be gaining weight again as these cut-off blue denims fit a bit too snugly, my oversized shirt tickling my knees as I lean forward, committed to my task. The vibration of crashing footsteps is enough to penetrate the boards of my room and the sound hits me with its anger, my head suddenly pounding, my body still in anticipation. Sharp syllables, short pauses and a staccato of emotions flung back and forth. Him again. His cutting voice in close pursuit of her, his pet. I know what this must mean and unexpectedly claim the first bit of courage I think I have ever possessed, suddenly scrambling towards them both, not thinking, just being. Being what I have never been before. Approaching the dilapidated door I notice purple spray-paint spelling a word. FUCK. 'No, fuck you.' My hand clasps the doorknob, quickly thrusting it inward, desperate to see her. He is looming over his little bit of earth, massive arms swinging. His face is sweaty, his eyes yellowed by too many nights of liquid poison and his thick blunt lips are still moving, dribbling. A birthmark paler than his brown skin blankets one cheek, like a piece of gob, and quite unexpectedly a bubble of laughter almost bursts forth, but dissipates as a sort of anti-climactic sigh. My eyes find her, expecting the same cringing girl, but she stands, calmly poised, with a look of astonished bewilderment flying across her features, and my pulse decelerates. I am beside her cradling her hand.

But life is never that simple, is it?

Still pushing us with noise, he moves like a rhinoceros, unstoppable, and before I can even inhale sharply, he's caught her by her throat thrusting her against the plaster walls, never ceasing his flood of words, crushing and spitting. I am silly. I do not think of a man-made weapon to use to kill (for death is all I can think of) but instead instinctively contract my hands and pounce on him like a crazed monkey, growling with passion, striking with need. As I said, I am silly. On a rickety table a few inches from where he has her pinned, lies the carving knife that she was using on the carrots, waiting to be useful in some capacity, as the blade shines with droplets of juice. She, on the other hand, is a survivor. Frantically reaching for the weapon, while I relentlessly pursue my antics, she desperately reaches and clutches, finally bringing it arcing upwards, and pierces him remorselessly in his fat gut. For a moment I pause in

my useless attack as I feel the shiver of something coursing through his hulk of a body, but it is really the sudden silence which frightens me. His body sags forward momentarily, until he is unceremoniously dumped on the floor, my darling looking at me in horror, in triumph, in release.

It was done and we ran away together to some relinquished corner of the countryside, lived in a 'rondawel'. I would tend the herd of goats while she made us stew in a lovely black pot that was left to simmer on the coals in the open air, beneath the untarnished light of millions of stars. The only sound was the soft bleat of the animals, the peaceful notes of her gentle voice, and the breath of my lungs as it passes through the field with drifts of air.

But life is never that simple, is it?

No. She would not leave with me, would not discard this place which had been her home (regardless of the circumstances) would not leave her deed, or the rich blood pooling around the creature that had once lived. We could not discuss it. I could not use reason, manipulation, convince her, but had to let us go, as I could not watch what was to happen, could not stay in this box without what she came to be for me. As I said, courage had never been one of my strong points, and I guess that that one moment of confrontation was all that I had in me. I was gone, away from her, away from myself. Where I went is of no moment. I was searching for a home, knowing it did not exist, but thought that the searching still somehow meant something, could mean something to someone, someday.

"Untitled" by Taryn

As a child, Sylvia Mathabane had often delighted in details: the sharp whistle of the wind through riverbank reeds, the rich smell of the summer's early rains, even the howl of a chicken as the blade was raised above its head. Then, as a nervous bride, she had stood outside the family compound listening for the faraway singing of her prospective husband's family, heralding their arrival and her own marriage.

In her new role as urban wife, she found that a new kind of detail would not relent. It began, she later reflected, so obviously that he must have been warning her off. Slowly, almost methodically, details began to build up like mud on a road: single dyed hairs in his car, a fold of expensive perfume in the corridor between the two rooms of their home, a stray earring in the folds of their couch. (*My couch!* she had thought angrily, before dimming her eyes to prepare her husband's evening meal). In the green household dustbin she discovered a crumpled red strapless dress, much smaller than any she could ever own.

Slowly, too, she noticed the way her husband grew thin and tired, and more tired still, and how, arriving home each night, he would lean to kiss her on the right side of her face so that she would see less of the lesions covering patches of his skin. Their curious neighbours began to mumble among themselves of the goings-on in the little house, of lights staying on at indecent hours and the shouting and coughing of a husky male voice.

And then, as though observation was a disease of its own, she began to feel her own clothes growing too large for her body and the lead heaviness of the laundry basket she had been able to carry only weeks before, so that when her husband's death came she had neither shock nor anguish left in her body, but only the strengthened conviction that her own life was worth much more.

A day after his death, she opened her front door to welcome in Mr van Reenen, the undertaker, funeral planner, organizer and caterer that had swept into the lives of her community. The neighbours gathered around her flimsy chicken-wire fence in a steely vigil over his BMW sports car.

"You see, sir," she began after the neighbours had been shooed away, "I have arranged no funerals before."

Van Reenen nodded his sympathy as he peered through a grubby curtain at his car. Sylvia took a pot of water from the stove and poured it into a chipped mug. From beside the sink, she picked up a half-used teabag and dropped it into the boiling water. She hoped he didn't take sugar in his tea, but looking up at the sight of him against her window, she decided against asking. Holding the mug in both hands, she moved towards the adjacent table and waited for Van Reenen to join her.

"I would like something taste-fool," she said, "taste-fool and small and appropriate. No slaughter or wake afterwards, none of this time-wasting thing that the neighbours are all doing for the brothers and cousins."

Van Reenen frowned and leaned back on the chair, both hands locked behind his head.

"You see, Mrs Mathabane, we must always ensure – it is our *duty* to ensure, actually – that the deceased leaves this world with all the dignity in which he lived. Look at your beautiful home and everything John has given you! Wouldn't you sleep better at night knowing that all your friends and neighbours knew John just the way that you knew him?"

Van Reenen released his hands from one another and sat forward in his seat.

"What would John think if he knew that you didn't want the world to celebrate the life he has lived, if you hid his death away like some shameful thing?" His hands met one another around the untouched mug of tea.

"You are right, sir," she said, and accepted the portfolios that he pushed at her across the table. She read their title pages and nodded at each: *Multicultural Products and Services, Coffins Manufactured to SABS Standard, 180 Agencies in South Africa, Use of Chairs at Grave, Whether the family would like to*

view the deceased prior to the service, Flowers for the coffin and/or church, Hymns and special music, Pall bearers.

"You are right," she said again, and they nodded at one another.

"You won't regret it, Mrs Mathabane. You'll look back twenty years from now and thank God that your John got the burial he deserved."

She signed the sheets of paper that had moved swiftly between his briefcase and his hand and pushed them back towards him. They shook hands and agreed that Sylvia would ensure that the body met with her approval prior to the church service. She shut the front door and heard Van Reenen's car and her neighbours disappear in a gravelly dust.

When she arrived at the funeral parlour later that week, a different Van Reenen showed her to the small, well-lit room where John's SABS-approved coffin lay open on a low table. She stood at the door and squinted at her husband's remains.

"Please, sir," she said, lowering her eyes to the floor and shifting her large straw handbag on her shoulder.

"May I have a moment?"

Her eyes darted from the polished wood of the coffin to the equally-polished lace-ups of Van Reenen.

He pursed his lips and strode past her and out of the cold room, stopping outside the door.

"Let me know if you –."

But she had already taken a dozen small steps towards the coffin, one hand already resting on its lid. Van Reenen, feeling like an intruder in his own shop, clicked the door shut.

Quickly she set to work. Onto a side-table she shook out her handbag and watched its contents emerge: first, a small plastic sandwich bag containing fragments of hair and then, in quick succession, an earring, a small green cushion – perfect except for a tiny smear of lipstick in one corner -, and a strapless knee-length dress, washed and carefully ironed.

At the church service she thanked the priest and Van Reneens and, refusing help, pushed the coffin lid open to allow the Sunday-dressed neighbours a chance to see John a final time. Sylvia looked at her husband and gripped the varnished wood, whispering something to him that no neighbour bending their ears towards her mouth could hear. The congregation waited for her to complete her determined walk to the church's rearmost pew before forming a queue and shuffling forward, Bibles in hand.

As the first neighbour bent over John's body, he let out a confused murmur that sent the crowd rushing forward.

"An earring!" he said, glaring at a nearby Van Reenen. "When did John ever walk through our streets like a pirate?"

Sylvia remained seated, her eyes betraying a quiet smile.

"She's gone mad! His death is too much for her, she has gone mad!"

The neighbours mumbled and jostled one another at the casket even as the priest pushed between them. The voices grew in strength and discord until, minutes later, a small red dress lay like a devil on the floor, parting the mourners.

Rising from her pew, Sylvia Mathabane turned her back on the giddy congregation and stepped out into the winter's warm morning sun.

"Pick One" by Jonny Rage

I swim lazily through my sluggish unconsciousness, drifting and performing acrobatic summersaults in the deep blue of sleep, swimming and swimming on in the swirl of a brutal hangover. And then hunger grabs me as I slowly float to the surface of awareness, reaching up from the murky depths to touch the waking world. A bright flare of light momentarily blinds me as I open my eyes. I try again. And groan as I roll over, telling no one in particular to go away. But the hunger pokes me again, like a bothersome child. So I resolve to get up, the bad taste of yesterday's personality fading with the last tendrils of sleep, leaving behind the sour tang of the hangover. Bloody irritating, it wasn't even me who drank, I mutter as I swing my legs out of bed, having the grace to catch my toe in the sheets and fall face-down on the floor.

A groan is completely appropriate for these situations, it occurred to me as I enjoyed the subtle fragrances of the carpet; however, moaning like a woman would not do, completely unacceptable. So I pick myself up and stumbled over to the mirror, squinting as I attempted to read the scattering of notes left for me there. Eventually I determine there was nothing new; or at least, nothing I need to bother about. Not bothering is a good thing, especially when I am the object of the above-mentioned not bothering. I check the calendar underneath the notes. 23rd. Five days since the last time I was awake. Not too bad. It's my turn to do the grocery shopping, or at least, it is today's turn, and my bad luck to wakeup today. Fun times. Other than that I have a meeting today; once I clear my head I'll check in a bit to see if everything is ready, to see what has been left for me to do.

I stretch as I yawn noisily, gasping at the pain of stiff muscles. Clearly, one of us had gone to gym in the last day or so. I have no problem with that, in truth I am fully supportive of other people doing work for me, so I begin examining the results in the mirror, feeling my body in my half drunk, half hung-over stupor. Best time to be feeling one's self, I chuckle. It was then that I see the reflection of the bed sheets moving, a woman rolling out of the sheets to face me, green eye blinking away sleep behind a tangle of raven black hair, lips slowly forming a pout. I blink. Once. Twice, and then a third time before turning from the mirror to face her, realization forcing its way through my wooly thoughts: no wonder I moaned like a woman. I mean, I must have disturbed this charming lady as I fell, and thus, caused the womanly moan to escape from none other than the succulent lips of a woman. In my bed. How inconsiderate.

Up until now, I had no idea she had been lying next to me. Whoever was yesterday had good taste though, I thought with a smile and a 'good morning' for her.

I wonder where he went last night. Looking for clues, I check my wrist and find the smudged ink of an entrance stamp. I asked how she found the club, did she like it? The sunlight plays in her hair as she yawns most seductively, stretching the sheets tightly over her body, showing every curve to advantage, her small nipples hard against the soft fabric. I desperately try remember what a cold shower feels like. Too late: with a naughty smile, she murmurs it was good, that she had fun.

I grin. I love mornings like this, they're … convenient. Waking up with a woman next to one means all the tedious work has already been done by someone else. She's here, she's in bed, and she's naked. She returns my grin.

An hour later, I am fully dressed and almost but not quite fully sober. She has already left, told me she'd call, I had made affirmative sounds, trying to be as non-committal as possible, trying not to be too encouraging. Phone calls are always awkward; often I never know who is talking to me, or what they are talking about. No doubt I cause troubles for the others. But sometimes, it's interesting to hear things about myself … well, about another me. Same name, same body, same life. Just a different person.

All the documents for today's meeting are in order, I replace them in our briefcase and wonder what her name was. She was pretty … and good, I reflect with a grin. So I scan the book, where we all write down what we think the others should know: names, information, advice, suggestions, what to say if someone calls. One of us even writes notes on his theories of us and how we came to be like this. I wish he wouldn't.

There was no name for yesterday's date, so I replace the book, my hand resting a moment on its cracked blue leather before I head out. The other must have met her at the club and been too drunk to write when he came back, ergo the hangover. No matter, it was still fun. I lock the front door and turn, tossing and catching the keys as I walk to my car.

*****

The fresh air fills my lungs as the pleasant sounds of the park and the crash of the waves wash over me. I have decided to take a break from the office today as there was nothing to take care of, and the only new notes spoke of a girl and a number, not relevant to me. Also, a note on the meeting we had been preparing for, apparently it went well, which was good to hear, but I'm not really interested right now, as I savor the crisp morning air. I have my camera with me, after all, one never knows what photos may rise up and demand to be taken out here, while I savour the beauty of the day. I find the tang of the salt in the air cleansing and it helps me think. This is where I've puzzled out most of the things that affect us, keeping a journal of my ideas. But this is also where I come to brood and reflect on the things that trouble me.

I dreamt last night.

I never dream.

Neither have any of the others.

I know, because we have learnt, by trial and error, to write everything in the book.

I am not very troubled, but still, I pat my pockets for my cigarettes, they're not there, of course; I had promised to stop. The others had taken care to inform me that they would not tolerate my habits, leaving complaints around the house, and getting rid of all the packs I had left out.

But regardless, I feel I need a smoke. I make my way to a nearby news-stand as I reflect. Lately there have been some strange happenings in my mind, or our mind. Except no one else has said anything. That's probably because I'm the only who really cares about what we are so maybe I'm just more in touch with what happens to us, I think bitterly. I've sensed a shifting; something is moving around inside, making very little noise; bringing to mind the image of a burglar tip-toeing through a house, not wanting to be heard. Creeping, prowling around.

Maybe it's a new consciousness forming, giving birth to itself. In which case won't be difficult to handle, one of us would just make sure there is adequate information at hand.

The shrill demands of my mobile interrupt my thoughts, a number I don't recognize flashing on the screen. Painfully familiar with all the possibilities that follow something as simple as a phone call; I pull out the book from my coat pocket, prepared.

"Hello" I answer

"Hi James?" a soft feminine voice, I begin paging, rapidly, scanning the recent entries.

"Yes" the affirmative hiding my uncertainty

"Its Andy, how you been?"

"Oh hey, how you Ands, all good here, took the day off. And you, what you been up to?" I plant a smile on my face, to give my voice the lie, my pretend enthusiasm flowing freely. We're all old hands at this.

"Nice one, same here, all's good. I loved Thursday … and Friday" she says, a sincere, playful smile audible in her voice.

Bingo. Andy. Sex.

"Me too, it was fun" not that I'd really know.

"But I'd like to see you again, just to see you, and you can tell me more of the stuff you write"

"Oh yeah, sorry, I tend to be quite proud of what I do, my apologies if I went on too much." I throw in a fake laugh, *I* don't tend to do anything, but I do wonder what it is "I" write.

She giggles. "Wow, you're funny," and she giggles again, soft chimes ringing for a heartbeat, "but it was interesting and I enjoyed your stories, but tell me, when are you free?"

I flip to the calendar at the back and find a date where none of us have anything planned. The rest of the conversation went on aimlessly, with my winging most of it; there wasn't much to go by in the book. Hanging up with a resolute click, the thought comes to me that it would be fun to see how things went with this girl. We've all been too afraid in the past, and so I set about laying the ground work, writing my plans in the book, I'll also put up some notes round the house, ask the others if they're interested. Obviously my cynicism doesn't help much anyways, but maybe Mr. Thursday Night will help us tip the scales, and there's always Mr. Friday for backup.

At the news stand I buy a new pack, unwrap it, and conscientiously throw away the plastic. Lighting up and taking my first breath of nicotine, I feel my tensions ease as I make my way back to the park, sitting in the cool shade of a tree as I watch some children play under the watchful gaze of their nanny, their mischievous laughter amusing to witness as they play away their day, brightening up the grey of my jaded mind. Turning my thoughts from Andy, back to my dream, I remember it was a strange one – not that I have any measure of such things. But I remember a shining white city, sparkling as lights danced around its spires, flashing with so many colours, some without a name. But I was looking at this city from a distance, as if I was outside, leaving it. And with all of that, I remember feeling a deep sense of regret, and bitter, all-consuming loneliness, edged with disappointment.

The rest of the day passed like that, in deep reflection, my heartbeat slow as I watch the blue smoke curl away from me against a hazy, dusky sunset, watch it drift and dissipate, becoming nothing. I snap a few more photos, taking full advantage of the magical quality of the light at this time, the slow march from day to night, from light to darkness. The children have all gone, the evening noises beginning to start, the distant bustle of traffic plays in the background while nearby bars open for their evening custom. The gulls had stopped their scavenging and with a last few dives and cries, return to their nests. I should best follow their example. And so I get up, pulling up the collar of my coat before crumpling up two boxes of cigarettes, and pocketing a third, half empty.

*****

Catching James as he left the photocopy room, Dave rushed into his office to congratulate him. He had heard that James presentation had impressed the Big Wigs, and they were lending him their full support, which also meant good things for David, as his department was also involved so he would have ample opportunity to shine.

He felt the familiar mix of envy and admiration as he entered James office, just as James himself sat down and rolled his chair with a muffled squeaking towards his desk. The office was always neat, and was adorned with a range of James' achievements, some medals for marathons, a few professional photographs that James had taken himself. There were even some weird pencil sketches hanging all over the place, which David could only assume were James' own work. There were other photos of James shaking hands with important people, posing with foreign businessmen, and curiously enough, a photo of James as a boy, on his desk. The photo within the frame looked to be well thumbed and bent in several places.

David took all this in within seconds and immediately set about his congratulations.

"Hey man, heard your presentation went well, congrats buddy."

"Sure, thanks David."

"So you're all ready for the project now? Were going to head up the processing, we've got all our data, obviously, thanks to you my man, so we're now perfectly able to move forward. Where do you stand?"

James paused a moment, head tipped to one side as he gathered his thoughts, "We need more resources at our disposal, as well as the integration of some sections of the IT department. I have the preliminary draft … somewhere." He first paged through a blue book that had been lying in a clearing on the unusually messy desk, put it down, and then leaned over to one of his drawers extracting a brown folder and paging through it and paused once more. "Here it is" handing the whole folder to David, with a

very professional "if you have any questions, feel free to ask," yet there was the subtlety of a "don't bother me," hidden in his expression.

Yet David enjoyed working with James, and besides, in the lobby he had picked up an envelope of what was obviously a packet of newly developed photographs addressed to James, so he pressed on. "These came for you."

"Great. Thanks" and he nodded firmly, putting the photos away.

Dave was a bit disappointed, often he would open his photos right then and there, and they were usually pretty good. He didn't understand how he managed to do so much.

"Anything interesting planned this week?" he asked, maybe to cheer him up, as he was obviously feeling out of sorts today, everyone had days like that, though James seemed to have them often, a very interesting man to be around.

Glancing at the book before answering, he replied "got a date tomorrow night, seeing a … friend."

"Nice one, lucky you, where d'ya meet her?" Dave's curiosity getting the better of him.

"At a club."

"I didn't know you were the partying type. Is she pretty?"

"Yep"

"Well, you don't sound so convinced," he chuckled. "It's alright bud, no judging."

James looked up, and the room chilled by a few degrees, his empty eyes unblinking.

"That, is none of your concern, so why don't you just fuck off and be irritating somewhere else."

David was shocked and offended, yet all the same, he could not quite help but quicken his step as he left for his own office space.

*****

He's late, she thought, her insecurity rising as she looked around the dimly lit interior of the restaurant, the clink of knives and forks and the soft hubbub of conversation secretly mocking the absence of dialogue at her table.

It had been a week since their random encounter and this was the first time she found herself interested in a man in a long time, so she looking forward to seeing James again. That night at the club he had been so interesting to talk to, quickly arresting her attention, and her body. And then the next morning playing hard to get; that drove her crazy, made her want to see him more, be around him more, to touch him. And he was so strong, so fierce, yet with such a gentle touch. Of course, she would never do that, leave the club with a man she had only just met, leaving her girlfriends behind to follow the call of her rising passion. She had lost control; her walls had slipped instantly, pulled away by this man's sheer strength of character even though he had seemed shy, suggested nervously that they leave together. And she had just abandoned all reason, like a girl straight out of high school, she never thought she would do such a thing, and yet, and yet … she was glad she did not turn him down.

A man like this was hard to find, and she wasn't about to let this one go. Bitterly, she thought her tastes made it difficult to find any decent men, *but I can afford to be picky* she thought smugly as she looked in the mirror to settle her hair, examining her own neckline and adjusting her top so just enough of her tanned skin was on display, enough to entice and to suggest, but not enough to encourage, conservative enough to maintain the atmosphere and sustain the moment, she wanted to see how things went. Of course, he wouldn't get it, wouldn't understand the subtleties of a woman's decision, he was a man after all. So it was for herself mainly.

It was then that she saw him in the mirror. She hadn't seen him in a week but it was impossible to forget such a man, he carried such a powerful air about him, and his ruffled straw-blond hair and grey-blue eyes were enough to drive a girl crazy. Indeed, a few of the other women patrons did turn to look at him as he entered, his eyes sweeping through the restaurant. She smiled at him, but his gaze swept right through her, *dammit, I'm wearing this red blouse for a reason you fool*. But she relaxed quickly as she

really was eager to see him and it took only a moment for him to speak to the maître d' who then brought him over, leaving two menus.

"Hello there," he said, a confident smile playing across his lips as he took the chair across from her, all nervousness apparently left at the door, he was all sureness as he took one of the menus, but before he opened it he looked at her, looked into her eyes and asked her how she was, as if she and she alone commanded his total attention, yet stealing the breath from her she looked into those eyes, darker than she remembered. "Fine" she all but whispered, only at the last moment remembering to ask how he was. Coming down to earth, she took hold of herself and silently berated herself for acting like a girl. After all, she always wore the pants, she called the shots, and when she said sit, the men around her sat, and when she said beg, how they begged. But James was different; he melted her frosty exterior so completely that she was a total new person around him, even though she had only just met him.

Thankfully, as the evening danced onwards she was more her self, with her childish fluttering vanishing and her physical yearnings calmed down, she found he was excellent company, as she well new, but he didn't speak of any of his ideas, of his personal projects, instead talking of other things, while still fascinating conversation she tried to nudge him onto those other subjects that had captivated her so, but he didn't seem to take the bait. A more tame choice of conversation, she asked him what he had been up to this week, discomfort rearranged his expression for a moment as he patted his coat pockets, and withdrew a box of cigarettes, surprise on his face as he sat looking at it.

"I thought you said you don't smoke," she said, slightly disappointed that he would lie.

"I don't," he replied and turned around to place it on a nearby waiter's tray, and waved him off. Searching his pockets again, he took out a well-worn blue book and flipped through it. "I took some photographs, got them back yesterday …"

He's a photographer, how interesting she thought as he recounted his week. She shrugged the cigarettes off.

The evening turned to night and from the lovely Italian restaurant they headed to an ice cream bar, he laughed at her amused delight as he told her that this particular ice-cream was actually good for the waistline, quoting some obscure doctors from even more obscure universities, but she hadn't had ice-cream in ages, and decided to indulge herself. They walked together along the beachfront as they made their way to her car. She was enjoying the moment, and felt she was gaining some new insights into a different side of James, hinting at so much more. This man was definitely a keeper.

Shortly, they parted ways with one last gentle kiss, and as she got into her car she watched him walk away in the rear-view mirror, and saw him take out something from his pocket and what looked like a pen, clearly writing as he walked back to his own car.

She was smiling as she started the engine.

*****

Shutting the door behind me with my foot, I spin round and head inside, crashing down on the sofa, the cushions sighing under my weight. My hands were shaking as I take out the packet from within my coat; with as much care as I could manage at this moment I opened the tiny plastic wrapped treasure, suppressing a tremor of part excitement, part fear, part anticipation. But mostly addiction.

Every day that I re-awake, it speaks to me, this want, this need for an escape. Our unique condition has been hard on me. I don't know why, but I feel as if I am the youngest of all of us. Even though technically we are the same person. Even though none of us have any real sense of identity, I get the feeling that they are pretty sure of who they are, as in, individually, or whatever, fuck it, I don't know. I just don't think I have the same confidence, I don't know what or who I want to be. I can't handle this weird life. I want out, but there is no option, no cure, only the temporary bliss of this.

I spill the contents of the packet onto the smooth glass of the table top, caressing the little mound of fine white powder with a card, slowly sculpting away a single trail, guiding it lovingly.

The rolled up note bites into my nostril as I lean forward, the couch creaking underneath me. I snort the whole line, embracing the gentle explosion of pleasure that races across the open void of my mind, reaching throughout my perception and I sit back in a dreamy haze of heightened senses, relishing the glow as a new rush of chemical stimulation flows through my veins and I imagine I can see the little crimson pathways through my body. I can follow the little particles of my freedom as they race ever onwards, spiralling and dancing their merry dance towards the centre of my being. My heartbeat is faster, my breath quickens … and I am free.

Colours dance at the corners of my visions, reminding me of the city I see in my hallucinations. The shifting colours drift and swirl in front of me as I again see the complete greyness surrounding me. Once more I began to walk along those endless miles of blankness, an all consuming monotonous grey that stretches on forever. It was an alien landscape, but still, it felt peaceful there.

I know the others would hate if they find out I'm a user, but I don't think they can tell. I guess it's because they don't feel it when they re-awake, just as if they were new people. Different people. A good thing my dealers now know only to speak to me when I speak to them. It took the death of my first dealer to teach them that. I found something in the blue book that could have meant 'I' was approached while not being 'me'. I hate this.

But anyways, who cares, fuck it. Another line. Now. I cut and slash with an increasing urgency, possessed by a need far greater than anything I've experienced before. A want so strongly it become a fiery hunger, all consuming. I am my want.

A second line, a second rush, more of the city, the greyness stretched on. More lights. Brighter. Wings. Blue fire …. memories.

But behind it all, the joy and the engulfing pleasure, there is something else, something rising, a slow explosion, a violent unfolding of a part of my mind, pushing against the boundaries of my consciousness. Forcing itself around my head. It presses against the walls of my substance.

Something gives way, a door, a little black box, opens in the dark void behind my thoughts, a burning white blinds my vision, but it comes from behind my eyes and reaches forward, grips my whole entity, shakes and squeezes. And crushes. And then the pain began. a crawling all over my skin, I thrash around as stabbing sensations pierce my body, peeling my skin away, but as I twist around in my frenzy, I glance at the mirror, and my body is untouched, unmarked, there is only the tortured expression on my face as I knock the mirror down from the wall, and it shatters. The crash of it echoing through my head as it slowly empties. By now, I am tearing through the room; the pain is so great I am pushed to a whirling mess; splitting paintings, cracking their frames, smashing ornaments and splintering furniture, the crashes and other horrible sounds only increase my frenzy, my terror.

The floor rises up to catch me, the table crushing to splinters as I fall over it and through it, long shards of glass raking through my skin.

Every little thing of who I am is eaten away as if by acid, and in the last fading moments of consciousness, I hear the screams of the others, their cries pitiful against the rising tide of a darkness so absolute, a roaring so deafening that I am torn apart, my whole existence tearing at the seams, shredding … and it all fades to nothing.

*****

He groaned, moved his arms across the floor, the tinkle of pieces of glass jostling each other slowly entered his mind. It hurt as life spilled back into his body, he gasped as his lungs filled with air, and he coughed up blood, opening his gritty eyes to watch it meet the blood already on the floor, he watched it pool together as he lifted his chest off the carpet. It ached all over his body, *my body* he thought, an

entirely new sensation … for all that he was broken; he hadn't felt this alive for several millennia. The rush of life and awareness rushing through momentarily paralyzed him. But he held himself there, enjoying the gentle ecstasy of just simply being.

He picked himself up off the floor, bare feet crunching broken glass. All about him lay destruction, shards of ceramic, splintered wood, a broken window … and a shattered mirror. He made his way over to where the mirror leaned against the wall, bloody footprints tracking his way across the room, his face reflected back at him a thousand times from the spider-webbed cracks on the glass. He looked into the grey eyes that looked back at him, accusing. But also, a sadness that was his alone, his unique sorrow, touched those eyes, and his whole face as he paused to reflect on the sacrifice this mortal had been forced to make, a sacrifice unwilling and unwanted. The pain he had put this being through affected him deeply, but he had no choice. It had to be that way.

He had spent millennia testing the bonds of his entrapment, raging against the cages of bleached light that had kept him as nothing more than shriveled whisper of a being, shielding him from reaching out to his powers, to the control he once had over this universe. Until this day. He was free. In all his wretched wanderings he had found not even a glimmer of hope, until he stumbled across this one unique being. The tiny fractures along this mortals mind, across his existence had provided him with a foothold to anchor his drifting spirit. Tiny, but large enough for him to reach through and embed himself within this creatures mind, and slowly, piece by piece, he had widened the cracks, manipulating the fabric of this soul's existence, all the while manifesting himself between the spaces of this fractured mind, slowly taking over. Until today, when he had finally torn apart this child's mind and broken loose, free.

He slowly paced round the house, picking up bits and pieces that he had seen through the eyes of his host, recognizing photographs, souvenirs and other possessions, reminding him of his weapon. He missed the soft warm glow from the blue flame of his sword, its loving comfort, and the sure confidence and faith he possessed while wielding it. It had been shattered in a time before time, broken in half, in a grey place that longer existed, a place that had transformed as the world was born. He remembered that day well, the day he had been captured. His enemies' devious trickery burned sharply in his mind, he remembered well their laughter as they tore his wings off, mocked him with the shards of his sword still glowing in their hands as they danced around him. He could do nothing, chained as he was to the ground, beaten and broken, the stubs of his wings twitching uselessly, trembling as the ragged wounds spilt ruby blood to stain the soft marble of his skin, with his tears trailing clean tracks across his grimy face. He was the first to cry. Even now, thousands of years past that terrible moment, he could still see it all as if it were yesterday, could picture their scowling faces as they danced their savage below the Gates of Heaven, his Brethren, his betrayers.

He did not want revenge, he did not want the Throne of Heaven, he wanted Justice, and he wanted the Truth. There was a long journey ahead, and at the end of that, a difficult battle. But all was not lost, there is hope yet, and he knew where he could find another Sword. As he was the First, he knew a way into the Garden, the converted armory during the War of Creation. But he would also need an army. Most of his Angels had been slain in the days preceding the end of the War, some might be in hiding – even amongst these Children of Man – but it would be very difficult to find them. A great many had been hunted down. However, there was more to be thankful for; from what he had read, he knew there were enough warriors of light amongst these people, those who could see through the Great Lie, who knew the true power of their mortality, could recognize the blinds placed before them for what they were. He gave an involuntary shudder as he pictured the beauty that this world could ascend to once these godlings understood their full potential. Certainly, these people would be willing to join him in his quest. All he ever wanted was a just and fair universe. And to bring back the Light. For that was his function. Lucifer, Angel of Light.

He stepped over the doorstep and stood on the lawn outside, with his eyes closed. He raised his chin, and from his back, from the space between his shoulder blades, thin twisting tendrils of blue-white light snaked out from his flesh, writhing and pulsing in the air. They grew longer and thicker, their tiny infantile twitching became more firm and precise in their movements, reaching over his shoulders to come together at a point in space before him, twisting and contracting as if they had gripped on to

something. They flexed, and with a soft susurrus, pulled away from each other, an opening forming in the space between them as they moved apart. In front of him rested a doorway with shining edges, a hole through the world, to another place.

What he saw before him nearly brought him to his knees, all his strength vanishing for an instant as he crumpled, hands on his knees, and retched, the dry sound echoing in the empty air. Through the gap in the world, he could see bleached ground, dirty and stained, burnt trees, their skeleton branches clutching at the dead sky, not a whisper of life anywhere. He let out a quiet whimper as he looked up again, for he remembered the beauty of this place, the most magnificent thing of all creation, the most sacred place in all existence. As he stood there, sounds floated back from a long distant past, the rustle of golden leaves, a nearby stream's chimes as it played along the river bed, the animals as they walked proudly, the vivid colours, the sheer life of it all, the joy and splendor, all flooded back to him. All gone now, vanished in a cruel wave of destruction. With tears in his eyes and grim resolve, he stepped through the doorway, setting foot in what was once the Garden of Eden.

"Clair De Lune"
by Knives

Let the music take heart. (Amadeus Paderewski)

The dried white paint crackled under young Evan Provinovsky's shoes as he shifted uncomfortably on the front doorstep. The splutter of his mom's exhaust was already halfway up the street. Taking a breath, he reached up and lifted the knocker. Three short taps, just like his mother had told him. Then, he waited. He was a big boy now, she had said, and didn't need mommy by his side for everything.

The door was pulled open briskly and Evan stared wide-eyed upwards.

"Where is your mother?" came a clear but stiff voice from above.

"I … she … um …" Evan stammered.

The untidy white eyebrows, that hung over bright azure eyes, did not soften from their frown.

"She dropped me off," the young boy finally ground out.

There was only a grunt for reply before the old man stepped back and gestured for him to go inside.

"Come, we have only one half of an hour."

The boy skittered inside the gloomy hallway. He was directed all the way down the passage, which ran from the front door, to the last room. On the way he didn't dare glance around. From behind he could hear solid footsteps on the floorboards. Evan stepped through the last doorway on the left into a warm glow. Afternoon sunlight swam through the lace curtains and floated lazily around the room, warming it. In the centre of the sunlit room stood, resplendent with reflections of light, an ebony-glossed grand piano. Despite himself, the young boy gasped.

"Yes, yes." The old man's voice had lost some of its previous edge. He made a gesture for the boy to take a seat on the stool in front of the piano. Evan looked once more at the grand and hesitated. Its beauty intimidated him, but he could feel the impatience of those blue eyes on his back. Promptly he took his seat before the ivory keys. Immediately he received a sharp tap on his back that made him sit bolt upright.

"That is better. Posture is very important."

It had been over a month since Evan's first lesson with Amadeus and still he felt nervous under the gaze of those icy eyes. Despite his unfriendly exterior, the old man was a great teacher and Evan had been making good progress. Every afternoon, without any nagging from his mother, he would sit at the Provinovsky's upright piano and practice. At first it had been a little awkward. He had never touched the piano before his lessons had started. It had belonged to his father who had died before he could remember. All he knew was that the upright had been his dad's and that his mother guarded it fiercely. On top of it, placed right in the middle was the only picture they had of the blond, proud looking man. It was funny that the reason the piano had been off limits to him before he had begun the lessons was the same as why he had started going to them.

"You're father was a very talented pianist Evan," his mother would say when he asked her about the piano. Her eyes would sparkle from the reflection of some other time and place.

"He would play with the best orchestras even though he was still a young man... yes, a young man." Her voice would always fade away sadly whenever she said this and the sparkling in her eyes would then be the result of the held back tears. The only time Evan's mother seemed to be focused was when she spoke about her husband, the pianist. Whenever she stopped talking about him she would once again take on the distracted air that she habitually wore.

One afternoon, when Evan's shoes crackled the crumbling paint of the doorstep once more, his knock was met with a reply from inside that the door was unlocked. Surprised, the boy shifted the door open and

slipped in, gently shutting it behind him. Usually knocking would have promptly summoned Amadeus, but not is time. Now he stood alone in the hallway. Normally he would walked straight down the passage his head bowed staring at the floor ahead of him but for once he did not have those unnerving eyes following him. He decided to take the opportunity to look at the passage he marched through every Tuesday afternoon. On the left, a bit of the way in, there hung several ornate, gold-plated frames. From what Evan could work out, these were certificates. He recognised Amadeus's name on all of them. On the opposite wall there was a cuckoo clock. Evan remembered the ticking each time he had walked past but under his piano teacher's glare he had not dared to look up at its source. Now he stared at it openly. Its dark wood had been carved into an ivy leaf pattern that wrapped itself all around the box. In the centre was a little door from which the tiny bird would spring as the clock struck. Hanging from the bottom were the weights that powered it, both of them resembled pinecones. The arrowhead hands pointed out that it was just after half-past four. Evan decided that he'd try to come earlier the next week so that he might be able to see the cuckoo.

Further down the passage there was a large glass cabinet. The top of the wooden frame stood well above the boy. Behind the glass three shelves could be seen, on the top one there stood many silver trophies. All of them gleaming and polished to perfection. It first appeared that they were ordered in increasing size, but Evan noticed that some of the bigger ones were earlier in the line. After a closer look he discovered that they were in date order. The second shelf was the one that held the most interest. It was a line of old black and white photographs. There was a young man in most of them and Evan realised with a shock that it must be Amadeus. It was hard to imagine his ancient piano teacher as ever being young but the features did match up. Tall, thin and with bushier than normal eyebrows, despite the man in the picture having dark hair and far fewer wrinkles the resemblance was clear. One of the photographs showed Amadeus standing in some kind of uniform with a beret on his head. Next to him stood a pretty young woman wearing a white floral print dress. It was hard to tell the colour of her hair from the photo but Evan guessed it could have been red.

The sound of footsteps on the wooden floor stopped Evan's musings of who the woman might have been. Pulling himself away from the cabinet and its many fascinating treasures he carried on down the passage. Amadeus popped his head out of the room at the back and peered seriously at the boy through his large black-rimmed glasses.

"Your mother does not pay for you to waste time dawdling," the old man said sharply.

Evan shuffled quickly into the room and sat down on the piano stool, murmuring an apology. Amadeus looked at him for what felt like long minutes before speaking again.

"Let us be beginning with your arpeggios. Start with 'C Major'."

The lesson continued as it normally did except for the fact that the old man watched Evan closely the whole time, a thin crease accentuating his wrinkled forehead.

It was his ninth birthday and Evan didn't think it could be any worse. He had woken up to find no one in the house. His mother had left a note saying that she had an urgent call from one of her jobs, that there was lunch in the fridge and that he must catch a lift with their neighbour to school. No mention about having a happy birthday or anything. He had gotten a lift with the neighbour only to arrive at school to find that his two best friends were absent. His class had sung happy birthday but he hadn't brought any cake, since his mother hadn't made any, so his classmates weren't to enthusiastic about it. He'd caught a lift back home to find it still empty. At four o'clock Evan realised that he had a piano lesson.

So it could get worse, he muttered dejectedly. He was still scared of Amadeus who after two months still hadn't warmed up. Resigning himself to the fact that his birthday wasn't going to get any better he started walking to his lesson. It wasn't too far and he got there a few minutes before four-thirty. He knocked on the door and Amadeus promptly opened it.

"Come in," he said gruffly.

Evan walked straight down the passage passing the certificates on the left and the cuckoo on the right. As he passed them he heard whirring noises come from the clock. All cares forgotten he turned and

watched as the tiny white bird sprang out from its ivy-covered box and cheerfully cuckooed once. That brought a smile to his face. It was a small thing, finally seeing the cuckoo bird, but for Evan on a day like today it was something special. Amadeus had walked past as the clock chimed and so he hurried off into the piano room after him. His teacher placed a page of music in front of him.

"You have a new piece today." Despite his straightforward tone, Evan thought he detected something different in the old man's voice. He didn't have much time to dwell on it though as Amadeus was impatiently gesturing for him to sit down and play. The music was a bit trickier than what he was used to but it was only for the right hand and so he should be able to cope. Slowly he played one note and then tried to work out the next. His sight reading was still early in its development. Eventually he worked out all the notes and played them. The melody sounded familiar but not quite right.

"Be mindful of the timing," Amadeus reminded him.

Evan played the notes again checking for crotchets and quavers. Suddenly he recognised the song. A glee launched itself across his face and he started to burst with joy. He played the piece again and again, each time improving. Soon he was singing along to the melody, "Happy Birthday to Me! Happy Birthday to Me! Happy Birthday Dear Evan, Happy Birthday to Me!" He shouted out the last line and burst into laughter.

Amadeus chuckled, a rare turning up of his lips increasing the wrinkles around his eyes.

Since his birthday, the piano lessons had changed, or rather, Evan's perception of them had changed. Amadeus was no longer some stony old man. That under the strict exterior lay what any child could wish for in a grandfather, even if he would never admit it. After about a year the lessons were extended to one hour, something that Evan would have once dreaded. Now he viewed it with delight. He could take on more songs to practice and hone his sight reading skills. With the extra time came more intricate pieces and whereas Amadeus had become kinder the music had gotten crueller. He no longer soared through the pieces, flapping past the pages of each new song; and the afternoons were becoming increasingly tiring. During this time Evan would look up at his father's face watching over his gruelling practice sessions and wonder if he had ever struggled with a piece. Probably not he thought bitterly, not if the way mom goes on about him is correct. He no longer looked at that photo afraid that he might see a tint of smugness on his father's proud smile. What seemed to be relief loitering annoyingly in the near future turned out not to be, and it got worse.

Evan gritted his teeth in frustration as he left Amadeus's house. The lesson had gone terribly. The song that he'd been practising for two weeks was still not coming together. Any hope of the mistakes being remedied had fizzled out by the multitude of new mistakes that had crept in while trying to correct them.

Fine, he told himself. I'll just have to practice more.

Already he was practicing for roughly two hours a day, far more than any other child his age learning to play. Evan's mother often worried that his obsession of practicing would affect his schoolwork but it never did. He always found time to get everything else done, homework, chores and all the rest, and still be able to fit in two hours of practicing. He occasionally caught his mother smiling at him while he played, her eyes would always have a far away look as if they were gazing off into the past. In those moments her focus would switch between Evan and the photograph that still stood on top of the piano.

The extra hour of practicing made Evan's mother frown at first, but as always, there were no adverse affects on the other responsibilities so she let it go. However she did take note of her son's shortened temper due to his increasing frustration. She silently hoped that he would have a breakthrough with the song. For the first time his behaviour reminded her of one of the negative quirks that her late husband had possessed.

Evan let himself in. Confidently he marched down the passage all the way to the back room. A broad smile lit his face as he firmly placed the sheet of music in front him and sat down on the piano stool. He

flicked his wrists forward, imitating one of the eccentricities of concert pianists, and proceeded to play. The notes flowed smoothly, legato, and the melody rang true. The grin never left his face as he worked his way through the piece without making a mistake. With a flourish he played the final chords, sprang out of his seat and snapped a bow at his teacher. In the bowing position he waited for the applause. None came. He looked up quizzically at Amadeus.

"Well? I finally got it all right," he blurted out, "even the tricky part with all the triplets!"

The old man picked up his glasses and placed them on his brow, he then proceeded to look through some of the music next to him. Finding the sheet he wanted, he handed it to Evan. His cold, clear eyes held no mirth.

"Your next piece," he said calmly. "Now go home and practice it."

Evan was too shocked to object. They hadn't even gone ten minutes into the lesson and already he was being sent home. Amadeus noted his confusion.

"A great pianist lets the music do the performing. He plays the piece as best he can without showing off. I hope you learn that before you come back here next week." He gestured for Evan to leave. "Good day."

Not even a trace of the grin remained on the boy's face. With the music clasped in his hand he trudged out the room. He stared at the floorboards as he made his way to the front door. Just as he reached the handle and pulled, he heard music coming from the back of the house. It was his song, the one he had just played. Standing still he listened carefully and noticed that, although it did sound better when Amadeus was playing it, the difference was only slight. Evan stepped outside and shut the door, the grin back on his face.

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The brick-faced, balding man looked over the piece of paper at the seventeen-year-old boy sitting opposite him at the grand piano. The white nose hairs protruding from his nostrils rustled as he snorted condescendingly. He handed the examination sheet to the teenager and secretly smiled at the way the boy's face collapsed.

"I'm sorry Mr. Provinovsky but I cannot give you a mark more and sixty four just isn't enough. Good day." The last two words carried a rather acidic quality that he was quite proud of.

Evan left the room doing his best to keep his composure. As soon as the door shut behind him he unleashed a silent scream of disappointment. Imagining the examiner's throat he clenched his hands and only stopped when the pain of his nails digging into his palms grew too much. His rage only lasted a minute and then the empty feeling of failure took over.

His mother was waiting for him in the car. She knew by the expression on his face not to ask, not to speak. The drive back home was quiet. Finally Evan spoke up.

"I guess I should phone Amadeus," he said resignedly.

"Why don't you go see him rather?" his mother suggested. "Then you can talk about it and see where it went wrong."

A spiteful retort formed in Evan's mouth, he could taste its bitterness. He was about to let it out when a thought struck his mind.

"Okay, can you drop me off?"

A few minutes later Evan found himself standing on the cracked white paint of the doorstep. He remembered the first time he stood here, a scared little boy, it felt like a long time ago. Things had been simpler then.

He hesitated to knock on the door, it seemed like he was still afraid, though this time for different reasons. He no longer feared the beginning but the end. Eventually he let the knocker fall and waited. The door sprang open sooner than he expected. Amadeus stood there, his snowy eyebrows knotted in anxiety. Evan's face told him all he needed to know.

"Come through," he said.

They went down the passage to the back room. Evan warily eyed the grand piano as he entered.

"Amadeus…" his voice faltered. He took a deep breath. "I don't think I want to do it anymore. I'm clearly not good enough. I was a fool to think that I could be a concert pianist. I give up…"

Those icy eyes stared at him, they seemed to go right through him. The old man sighed and to Evan's surprise his expression softened.

"Why do you play?" he asked.

The teenager was taken aback.

"What kind of question is that?" he asked.

"Why do you play?" Amadeus repeated the question.

As he sought for a reply the old man sat down in front of the piano. His teacher rarely played so Evan merely sat down in one of the chairs by the wall, ready to listen.

"I could tell you why I play," Amadeus emphasised the 'I', "but I believe the music can answer that question better than I ever could. Listen."

The old man started to play. Despite his age his posture was perfect, his back upright, his arms the correct length from the keys with his hands perfectly arched. At first the notes sounded hesitant, as if he was fishing them out from a deep pool of memory. Yet, as the song progressed Evan realised that there was no hesitance at all. Amadeus's fingers danced surely over the keys, there was no doubt that each note was played perfectly. What he had mistaken for hesitance was tenderness. The old fingers with their worn nails knew exactly where to go. It was a nice song but for Evan, in the mood that he was in, it was just another song. He was tired of it all, the rigorous practicing and correcting, and all for what?

As much as he told himself these things, he found himself hanging on to each note, waiting for the next. It was if every chord held a sort of fragility and threatened to come shattering down like a glass tower should it be interrupted. He dared not bring the invisible composition crashing down and so he sat there listening with a longing for the next note to be played. With a calm realisation he admitted that the song was in fact, very beautiful.

There was a pause after some trills and Evan caught himself holding his breath, he could sense a change in the song. Amadeus's fingers shifted down into the lower registers and played long majestic strings of notes flowing all the way up the scale. The music began to transport him off to another place, the melody opened up a region of indescribable beauty. Tuneful blossoms bloomed here, green shoots of melody spread their fan-shaped leaves while musical saplings reached towards the heavens. It was a paradise, flowering within the song as the notes crescendoed and crecendoed in wonder. A delight beyond all ecstasy caught Evan and lifted him off the floor. He had to find some release for the joy welling up inside his soul before it burst. The music soothed and became part of a peaceful observance of the world it had created. Yes, it was perfect. The moment seemed to last for eternity but was over in a matter of seconds. The trills faded once more and Amadeus started to play the sparser chords, though high up and ringing true, as a memory of the graceful melody runs faded in between. Evan was back in the room with Amadeus once again seated at the piano, just as upright as before. Streamers of sunlight shone through the lace curtains of the bay window, rich afternoon gold bars. They returned from the musical paradise as the notes began to fade. Evan felt a slight pang at the fading memory of that place but still felt better for knowing that he'd been there and that the music remained to take him there once again. With blurred vision he noticed the moisture in his teacher's clear azure eyes, a warm tear of joy slipped down the side of his face. The last few notes whispered away, returning to that place of immeasurable grace.

"I ... I never knew," whispered Evan as Amadeus got up from the piano stool.

"Clair De Lune by Debussy. She always loved that piece," the old man said mostly to himself.

"The girl in the photograph?" He had not forgotten about it.

"Yes, her name was Claree," the old smiled. "She used to call it Claree De Lune when I played it for her. I still hear her weeping when I play that song.

"The last time I played this piece was for her the day I left to go fight in the war. I never saw her again, my wife, our home in Warsaw was destroyed by the German bombers."

A silence stretched between them. Evan did not know what to say. Finally Amadeus spoke again.

"When I play this song I see her again, that is where the music takes me. You must let the music take heart.

"Now, will you carry on playing?" Those blue eyes shone brighter than Evan had ever seen them.

"Yes, I will play."

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Amadeus never saw the day Evan Provinovsky got his concert pianist qualification. The old man had taken ill in his old age and had passed away two weeks before. Evan received his qualification with distinction and the examiner commented that he hadn't seen such a talented pianist in years. Yet for the young man it all came down to one concert. It was to be his first time playing with an orchestra, his first time playing in a proper concert. The first part had gone well, he had played with precision and grace that rivalled many great pianists who possessed far greater experience.

Now, he was to do a solo piece to begin the second half of the show. The choice of the piece had been up to him and he had decided to do a composition by Debussy. He sat there at the concert grand, his back rigidly upright in his black tuxedo. A spot light focused on him and he could feel every face in the venue looking at him, their expectation tangible. He began to play the first notes tenderly, one could almost mistake it for hesitance. In the front row sat his mother, her wet eyes focused on the figure that wavered between her son and her husband. As the notes played her eyes closed and she wept, her tears originating from another world, a place of immeasurable beauty. Evan could hardly see the keys as he fought back tears of his own, though it did not matter. He had practiced the song day after day, more so than his usual rigorous practicing demanded. Every note was perfect. And there, deep within the melody, which streamed invisible bridges in the air, stood Amadeus smiling back at him.

"Father out in Heaven"

by Jonathan

" I expected to see you in your little nun's attire," exclaimed Rebecca Collins as she took a puff on her third cigarette of the afternoon.

"Us servants of G-d do not always need to wear our regalia in order to demonstrate our commitment to the Lord. It all lies in our expressions and our words," replied Catherine with a stiffened upper lip.

If it were not for her cigarette providing, the voice of reason and calm, Rebecca would have, gladly, taken a piece out of the cutlery set and gouged her sister's eyes out to the extent that even the beloved Lord she praised so dearly would not be able to heal the damage. But no, she would wait. It would not be long now until the central compass, which bound them together in the first place, would become nothing more than obsolete. She stroked the messy plait she had made in her tangled brown hair. It had needed a wash for sometime now and, judging by its present state, a major cutting job as well. But not tonight … tonight was a "sombre" occasion. She would have to be present at the Collins's very last family dinner.

Right at this moment, Daddy was taking his heart medication. How cunning Rebecca had been in her manoeuvre of sneaking up to the medicine cabinet and replacing the prescribed tablets with her own concoction. And what a concoction it was. A mixture of mercury was all she had needed, and such an element was not, particularly, difficult to get hold of considering the connections that Daddy's position as a pastor had afforded her in this town. Yes, Eugene and Catherine Collins were people of G-d, the saviours of their quaint town of Shepardsfield and, if anyone were to, conveniently, forget this, they would find themselves subjected to an abrupt reminder in the form of an exorcism, just as Rebecca had been (experienced). She had always been the black sheep. She was the one who had merrily torn away at Daddy's Bible when she was at the precise age to know exactly what she was doing. She was the one that made spitting at the Virgin Mary a routine procedure at the Church services. And it was for this reason that at ages ten, twelve and fifteen, Eugene had attempted to save her through his exorcisms. It had all become so commonplace for her: the throwing of the "holy" water, the uncharacteristically loud scripture readings and her, mouthing off the language of the Devil as if it were second nature. Of course, this contribution could only be attributed to her diligent work as a Latin scholar, a knowledge that was so impressive, it far surpassed that of her family members and allowed her to string together any number of unfamiliar phrases with such conviction and malice that there was no question as to whether her words were, indeed, ascribed to the language of Tongues. The complete failure in dispelling this demon had brought Eugene to the realisation that, perhaps, the only manner in which to reunite Rebecca with the Eternal Light was through a continued hope that one day, after much exhausted repetition, the power of the Word would hit her between the eyes and Satan's glare would no longer beckon.

Oh, how silly Daddy Eugene was being, she remarked to herself with a Cheshire-cat grin. Here he was making constant efforts to shield her from Satan's glare when, in fact, it was he, not her, who would forever be ensnared by this gaze. She remembered how she had been a first-hand witness to the Devil's manifestation. So too had Catherine, though she had conveniently been able to block it out in the years to come. But one could not completely discard the event, particularly since the individual elements involved in its formation were so unusual. For instance, the expected weather conditions for such a crime would normally be characterised by a blinding fog or a furious and stormy downpour of rain that enclosed those concerned from all corners. On the night of Father Eugene's foible, however, there was a distinct heat wave that made the appearance of sweat triggered by an overpowering guilt, all the more aggressive and uncomfortable. It was not the type of weather where one would choose to aggravate the heat any further as Eugene was doing through his act of rubbing the bodily organ, which inspired involuntary movement. But as he so desperately tried to explain to his friend and superior Father Gaminara, with his young daughters hiding behind the altar, he could not help himself.

“ I love my girls so much Rodrigo. Thinking about them, thinking about being with them is the only thing that keeps me living,” he tried to articulate, dragging at Gaminara’s heels like an infantile puppy.

“You can’t take your mind to these places, Eugene,” counselled Gaminara, “It’s not right for them. It’s not right for you.”

“ If G-d didn’t want me thinking these thoughts, they wouldn’t be here inside me Rodrigo. Besides I’m not going to act on them.”

It was a back-and-forth duel where neither side was the wiser. Both Father Collins and Father Gaminara had valid reasoning in their arguments, yet both had equally large loopholes and, thus, insufficient material to disguise such slippages. As is typical of the hierarchical structuring of society, however, it was the dominant figurehead who would be left with the final say. It was he who needed to be swayed. But, of course, Father Gaminara derived far too much joy from his unchristian abuse of power to ever succumb to anything as putrid as compromise.

“Recant, “ he demanded, “find a way to withhold your thoughts, summon your willpower because, if you cannot, you do not belong amongst us men of the cloth.”

Most men would have been moved to a plea of mercy at the icy repetition of these words. Not Father Collins. For him the baptismal basin that lay on the chapel’s altar was, indeed, the affirmer of birth but for some such an affirmation was undeserved, in fact the rules for entering this world were far too lenient. His thoughts were natural and human but the insults, which Father Gaminara was throwing at him in these moments, were nothing short of callous. It grated on him that such a man could get away with such vulgarity, merely because he claimed to define himself by the Word of G-d. Such a man did not deserve a place on this earth, never mind a position in the Church. For once, Father Collins did not concentrate on the dark images that usually flashed forward with such abruptness in his mind. Rather, they were concentrated on a peaceful illusion of Gaminara’s face smothered in the basin, losing the life that he was completely unworthy of. In this illusion he had gripped his hands to the man’s neck so tightly that not a sound came from his mouth. All there was was a body struggling for its life but, finally, accepting its inevitable fate. Its eyes were closed as if a putrid vision of Hell had come forth and graced it with an incurable blindness that it was trying to shield itself from. It lay on the floor with the same uniformity it had in life, only it no longer moved with the deceptive grace it employed in its sermons. It was in these moments that Eugene realised this was no longer an illusion; he was now firmly placed back in the realm of reality. And he had done it. The body was lying exactly how he had imagined it. In fact, every aspect was in complete alignment with his fantasy. The only thing not in place was the presence of the two heads, which revealed their presence behind the altar. They were in tears, clutching at one another, traumatised by their daddy’s inability to hear their cries of “ Please stop it. Don’t do it.” He had no idea what to do. He loved them but, at the same time, he needed them to shut up. They needed to understand him, to sympathize with his plight.

This was all Rebecca remembered. The rest of the events of that night laid in the darkness of her subconscious. The only two threads that helped piece this particular story together were her vague memories of the zipping sound of a body bag and the further sound of a spade making its deep and permanent markings into the earth. Unbeknownst to her, though, Catherine had, indeed, not forgotten. In fact, she had the very same memory of these events. The difference was that it hadn’t changed anything.

The night after the incident she had woken up, almost unshaken. She brushed her straightened and neat, Rapunzel-like blonde hair that Daddy had always told her looked like a heap of gold in the sunlight. She put on her make-up and dressed herself in her mother’s summer dress, which, by all accounts, was far too refined for the twelve year-old girl she was then. She, by mistake, stubbed her toe against the dressing table, which, instantly, woke Daddy up from, what was already, an uncomfortable sleep. This was the problem with sharing a bed with another person … there were certain moments where you had to be discreet. But Daddy didn’t mind. He never minded …

"Spray some of that lavender on yourself and come back to bed, baby," he said as he resisted a tiresome yawn.

Lavender had always been his favourite so Catherine acted accordingly. She then climbed back into bed and allowed him to gently nuzzle her.

"I love you Olivia, I love you so much," he whispered.

Olivia was her mother's name. They had lost her when Catherine was six and Rebecca, just two. At this age, of course, Rebecca was barely verbal and registered little emotion aside from her consistent whining. Catherine, however, was old enough to feel a pain almost as great as her father's. They both felt the emptiness in their home, a feeling of complete disorder that occupied the present moment. All they could do was cry together, hold onto one another. But none of this lessened their disillusionment, their empowered anger towards G-d and his world. There was only one cure: they needed to recreate her presence, to pretend that nothing had changed. It was for this reason that Daddy Eugene placed his lips against Catherine's. At first it felt awkward. After all, she was being caressed using the very same method that he had used with her mother. But, after a while, she eased into it, almost giggled as he worked his way down her body. It was agreed between them that, in this state, he would nickname Catherine, 'Olivia' in honour of her mother and his wife.

For as long as Rebecca could remember, she heard the squeals and coos of the night coming from Daddy Eugene's room. At first, she made nothing of it. Not knowing the ways of the world (or any better) she looked at Catherine and Daddy's behaviour as perfectly natural. As she grew older, however, she began to take notice of the various married couples that attended the morning Church service. While many of the women who gazed lovingly into their husbands' eyes were, indeed, youthful, none was as fresh-faced as Catherine. Nor did they, in any way, exhibit the features of her barely pubescent sister. It was with this realization, that the noises from the bedroom became unbearable. Every night Rebecca had was a sleepless one. When she was summoned to the table to dine with her father and "mother" she would, often, feign illness. It got worse on the night of the murder. She remembered she had been more restless than usual, an expected occurrence after, as Daddy explained it, seeing a man of the Church float up to meet G-d and his angels. It was almost daylight when he came in to make sure she was alright. He knew Catherine would somehow find a way to understand, but not Becky. They just didn't have the bond he and Cathy shared. He would need to fix that. Daddy Eugene proceeded by seating himself next to Rebecca, on the edge of her bed. He knew she was unfamiliar with his approach to love so he tried to wipe away her tears and brush his hand, tenderly, against her cheek. However, the calming effect of this manoeuvre was not recognised by Rebecca. All she could do was shake with an involuntary lack of control while her eyes widened with frozen fear. Maybe, he thought, a kiss would be more successful, more soothing. Daddy had planned to start on the forehead and work his way down to her lips. Yet, as he positioned his lips in their respective position and moved in for the subtle kill, Rebecca drew back and, promptly, slapped him squarely across his face. It is commonly perceived that a man of Daddy Eugene's alleged character would react to such an insult with an animalistic madness. Such a man would discipline his daughter by holding her down and (although with a distinguishable difficulty) pushing himself inside her, immune to her cries. But Daddy Eugene was different. He pulled back, now almost as shaken as her. His eyes were filled with genuine suffering and hurt as if he himself was a wounded child. There was no contempt or anger embedded in his look towards her. Hesitantly, he scurried out the room, unmistakably ashamed of himself. Daddy never attempted such a feat with her ever again.

There was that trace of goodness in Daddy, thought the now grown-up Rebecca as she, carelessly, chucked her cigarette out the kitchen window. She decided to go to go to the sitting room, her last chance to squeal as she watched her father and sister embrace. Rebecca had considered having the common "decency" to allow her beloved sister to suffer the same fate as her lover, a death so grand and romantic that it could rival anything Shakespeare ever concocted. Yet, in this case, she was unable to find release from the ambivalent feelings stirring inside her. Yes, Catherine was the reason Rebecca was subjected to

a life with Daddy Eugene where rebellion was her only form of survival, her only means of escape. She was also a hypocrite and a liar who claimed to be devoted to the Word of G-d and his disciples when, in fact, she appeared to show no qualms about hiding her sexual history to secure her place in the Convent. But then she was so young when her relationship with Daddy Eugene began that she, probably, had no idea what sex really was. Rebecca had to consider that Catherine was being manipulated, that she had not become her adversary willingly but because her world was completely distorted. Subsequently, it was only Daddy Eugene she would observe as the excruciating pain of his medication began to take effect, preparing him his final prayer at dinnertime.

When she walked into the living room, however, Rebecca was greeted with a sight that was far removed from the embrace she expected to witness. Both Catherine and Eugene were present but there was a strange tension between them. A tension that was almost palpable. Catherine was tentatively touching the petals of red roses that lay in a finely decorated vase on the mantelpiece. Her eyes never once looked up to acknowledge Daddy's presence as he fidgeted with his fingers behind her. There was guilt and remorse in his eyes and he seemed to be overly eager to get Catherine's forgiveness.

"Who was she?" Catherine muttered softly.

"One of the women at Church", he replied. "I was counselling her and her husband"

"Her husband?… she's m-married?"

"She was but when her husband found out about us…well you can connect the dots"

"How could you do this to me!" she snapped as tears welled up in her eyes.

From Rebecca's perspective, she could see Catherine scrunching the rose petals in the sweat-drenched palm of her hand. She appeared to want to pick up the vase and throw it in Daddy's direction. But she was too weak, unable to catch her breathe after what she had just learnt. In fact, she was incapable of any kind of dramatics at this period of time. She moved out the room with imbalanced and hesitant movements, oblivious to the desperate calls of her father. All that lay before her was a void, a blankness which caused her to fail to notice as she bumped Rebecca aside.

Who was this woman whose influence could be so strong that it could cause Daddy Eugene to betray his beloved Catherine? , Rebecca wondered. Was it Abigail whose involvement in organising the Church's functions and charity drives meant she was working in close proximity to Daddy on an (almost) daily basis? Or, was it Virginia the, recently, born again Christian who constantly approached him, seeking out ways in which to adapt to her newfound faith? Whoever it was, Rebecca knew that there was little chance that Catherine would contemplate forgiving him. Their relationship had become so deep and so delicate that such an act would destruct and strip their union of all its carefully developed meaning. For the first time she felt sorry for Catherine. Not only had she just discovered her father/ lover was cheating on her, but he would be taken from her forever after tonight. Before Daddy could spot her, she moved away and went upstairs in the direction of her sister's room, planning to offer her some very rare consolation. As she reached there, however, Catherine was leaving in haste, her bag held tightly against her chest.

"Where are you going?" Rebecca asked, trying to stop her.

"To see Sergeant Rivers" Catherine replied coldly.

"About Daddy?" Rebecca asked in an unusually mousy tone.

As hard as she tried, Catherine could not restrain her tears. She sank to the floor.

"He told me he loved me!" she wept. "He said that's what fathers were for".

Rebecca crouched down to meet her sister's gaze. Though it was unjust to admit it, a certain joy was stirring inside her. It was as if her and Catherine were closer than they had ever been before. Gently, she stroked her sister's face, wiping away the tears.

"You don't have to do anything", she whispered. "I've taken care of everything."

Catherine gripped onto Rebecca tightly. She was so disorientated, so confused. Enquiring as to what Rebecca was planning was the last thing on her mind. All she had known her whole life was Daddy. Daddy's kiss, Daddy's smell, Daddy's tickles. And now they were all gone from her. They were smothered over some other bitch's body. But, despite her distress, she could not help but note the smell of her sister Becky's skin as she rested against her. It was, of course, different to Daddy's. It was sweeter, much sweeter. She pressed her lips against the skin. How nice it was, this tender taste of apricot. She had never taken much notice of her little sister. In fact, all Rebecca had been to her was the vermin, which had dreamed about squealing on Daddy. But, maybe, she was wrong. Maybe she needed to look at her sister through her own eyes.

"I want to know you", she whispered hesitantly.

Her lips were quivering as Rebecca outlined them softly with her finger. How calm Catherine suddenly felt. She wondered if this was the same pleasure she felt when she sucked milk from her mother's breast for the first time. And then she remembered, this was exactly the way she felt when she and Daddy had been together. Gently, she pressed her lips against her sister's, savouring their moistness. The tips of their noses touched as Catherine delicately brushed her hand on the side of Becky's neck. She could tell the younger girl was, at first, intimidated, as if the moment was beyond her. But then she seemed to settle into it like a mother who, only now, began to recognise the significance of the infant she was carrying in her arms. Despite the oddness of this moment, both girls felt there was naturalness to it, a comfort that these girls had been searching for all their lives.

It was in that moment, though, that they were disrupted. They heard footsteps running off into the distance. Neither one could shake off the impression that an intruder had been watching them.

"That was Daddy!" Catherine yelped breathlessly, "He saw us!"

"So what if he did?" replied Rebecca scornfully, "You're with me now."

"Don't you see, he betrayed me but what we've just done is even worse. "

"What are you saying?"

"We're sisters Rebecca! If we weren't disrupted G-d knows what could have happened!"

Rebecca looked at her uneasily. "YOU were the one who kissed me!" she gasped in disgust. "This is your doing!" Catherine picked herself off the ground and ran into her bedroom with Rebecca in hot pursuit.

The first thing Catherine headed for, on entering her room, was her closet. She grabbed some of her old childhood dresses and shoved them in Rebecca's face. A heightened fear made itself evident in her voice.

"He said if I ever stopped being this! Being his little girl…he would come after the person that took me away from him. He's going to KILL you! And when he finds out that I instigated this and that I wanted to go tell on him to Sergeant Rivers…He's going to kill me too."

Forcefully, Rebecca gripped onto Catherine's shoulders.

"He won't get the chance!" she coldly exclaimed. "He'll die before he can."

She sat Catherine down on the bed and described, in great detail, the plan she had, so proudly, put together to "help" their father take his last breath.

At first reacted to the details of this scheme with an immediate disgust. Abruptly, she slapped her sister squarely across the face before proceeding to pace around the room and, pathetically, bowing down to a glass Virgin Mary ornament in a desperate plea for repentance.

But, then, she heard something, a sound that was devastating to her naïve ears. It came from a bedroom. The bedroom she had shared with Daddy to be precise. It was cooing and giggling. The same sounds that came from her and Daddy when they were alone. Then it became something even more familiar. It was lips locking and accelerated breathing. Catherine's heart began to race. Someone else was in that bedroom. Someone else was being treated like Daddy's little girl.

Catherine's first instinct was go downstairs to the kitchen, grab a sharpened knife from the cutlery draw and return to her stolen love nest. Impulsively, she would run in and stab the bitch. Daddy would not even be able to attempt to stop her. Her rage would overpower him. All that would remain of this woman was her blood on the satin sheet. But then she heard the name. It was the name that bared such significance to her and Daddy.

"Olivia!" he cried in ecstasy. "Olivia!"

Damn him! Not only had he given this woman Catherine's side of the bed, he probably also dressed her in Catherine's clothes and sprayed her with Catherine's lavender perfume. It was an usual feeling- this overwhelming and passionate hatred which was, monstrously, transforming every aspect of her being. No longer did she feel weak, nor the slightest bit emotional or remorseful. Her eyes brightened with thoughts of revenge as she turned to her sister.

"Let's do it", she uttered, "Let's kill him"

Rebecca smiled slightly. It was good to see her this. So driven. So certain.

Catherine returned to her seat on the bed and, gently, ushered Rebecca to join her. Then a tear fell down Becky's cheek.

"All these I have loved you" she quivered. "But Daddy kept you from me. I've been alone…so alone."

"You're not alone now", Catherine stated in a softened tone. How good it felt for her to be the comforter, the one who was in control.

She kissed Becky again, this time revelling in her newfound dominance. Carefully, she began to unbutton her blouse. She placed her hand on Rebecca's breast and proceeded to massage it delicately. Oddly, Becky felt at ease. It was almost as if none of this was new to her. The sisters lay down next to one another. There was nothing but them in their own isolated little corner of the world. And once Daddy was gone, this corner would be theirs for the keeping.

"We're in this together", Catherine whispered. "We'll never be apart again."

She leaned in to kiss Rebecca's shoulder. G-d her sister was beautiful. How could she have not noticed it before?

Three hours later it was dinnertime. Daddy's whore had left a little earlier. The stink of her cheap lavender polluted the hallway. From what the sisters could make out as they listened to this whore departing Daddy's bedroom, there was an unmistakable aggravation in her voice. They joked that, maybe, her stallion had lost his stamina. The first cracks were showing, the cracks which would lead to his demise.

Sufficed to say, the importance of this last supper required Catherine and Rebecca to be more attentive to their individual appearances than usual. This was their moment of transition, their moment of freedom descending upon them. And Daddy needed to see it and to feel it as he gasped for his last breathe of air. There was a certain fulfilment the girls found in braiding one another's hair and applying the same shade of lipstick to one another's lips. It was like they had become one, a single mind and a single conscience. In fact, as they entered the dining room, Daddy battled to tell them apart. It was frightening how they were both spitting images of their mother on the night she died. Yet, Daddy maintained his composure, refusing to let any cringe or bead of sweat give his fear away. Something was not right here. He appeared focused and in good strength. He sat upright and showed no signs of experiencing any form of a migraine or headache. This was, certainly, not the dishevelled waste of human life, which Rebecca and Catherine had expected to find at the table.

The food itself was, strangely, low-key and out of place in the context of the home's usual dinner menu. On any other day, a three-course meal would be placed on the hostess. The servants put much effort into creating an original cuisine for each night of the week and the starter salads were always

exceptionally presented. Tonight, however, there were no meals on the hostess. All that lay on the table was three bowls of watery pea soup.

"Francis's mother is deathly ill. I had to give her and Penny the night off", Daddy, exclaimed. "So we'll just have to make do with what we have."

Sceptically, the girls looked at their bowls and then back at their father. This was not what they had planned. Why was Daddy not struggling and dwindling by now? And why did their stomachs churn as they looked down at the pea soup?

Daddy took each daughter's hand and clenched it tightly. "Let us say grace", he declared.

"Should I say it Daddy?" asked Catherine in an effort to ease the tension she had been feeling in this moment.

"No Catherine", he replied sharply. "I think we should say it together. We should say it as a family."

A visible drop of sweat ran down Rebecca's face. Catherine turned white. It was as if her face was about to combust. Thinking up an excuse to leave the table and undergoing an escape plan, would be a fruitless effort. Daddy had a distinct ability to fix his eyes on both of them at once. His gaze was so strong that Rebecca could not help but privately assume that he had been watching them all along. That he had followed every footstep and heard their whispers with an omnipotent clarity. Not since the night of Father Gaminara's death did the sisters feel the presence of evil so strongly

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name," began Daddy as the tension welled up in his voice.

The girls cringed. This was not grace. These were not the words they had prepared themselves to say. But this was not an embarrassing error on Daddy's part. There was a meaning, a metaphor that, in its articulation, would dictate the girls fates.

"What are you waiting for? Say it with me!" Daddy snapped as he looked at his daughters frozen expressions.

It was as if the ability to speak was leaving Rebecca and Catherine as they slowly and miserably slur the prayer in a unified chorus. Only Daddy's command saved this chorus from complete brokenness. The final sound was reminiscent of three witches pronouncing their dreaded spell as they took in the intense heat that arose from the brewing cauldron they surrounded. With a jarring creakiness, it continued:

"Thy Kingdom come…Thy will be done, on earth…as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us…our trespasses…as we forgive those…who trespass against us. And lead us not…into temptation, but deliver us…from Evil"

In Daddy's interpretation there was an unmistakable infliction and emphasis when it came to the words TRESPASS, EVIL and TEMPTATION. But, then again, the word FORGIVE was itself delivered in a suggestive tone. What was it he was trying to say? It was all so convoluted, so unclear.

"Let's eat", he declared as he shifted to a softer, mellower tone.

Rebecca and Catherine looked down at their soup bowls. Once again, their mindsets became one as they hastily pondered whether it was best to exercise caution when eating this meal. Rebecca tried to put her nose closer to the soup in an effort to sniff out any suspicious ingredients. Yet, as Catherine contemplated doing the same, her mind, suddenly, flashed to a distant image. It was the image of her sitting on Daddy's lap right after they had shared his bed for the first time. She remembered how she blushed as he tickled her cheeks and how they laughed when he smothered her with kisses. She remembered how he held her close to his chest and the sparkle in his eyes as he looked at her. In those moments she felt so loved and so protected. She was certain that he was the type of man that would never raise a hand to her or, more specifically, wish ill on her. Perhaps, she should trust those feelings now, she thought. No matter how much his betrayal had bruised her and how quickly her love transformed into

irrational hate; there still remained a connection between them. She could still see the sparkle in his eyes though it was well hidden by the blackness. Her REAL father, the man she had believed him to be, was still there at the table with them. The hidden sparkle was proof that his love for her was mightier than the ambiguousness she felt towards him. If he were to kill Catherine, that feeling would die with her. What would he do then? They had been together for so long and his love had grown to be so intoxicating that it would be impossible for him to find a way to live without it. He could not lose it. The feeling was indispensable to him.

"Eat", Daddy repeated in a firmer tone.

The girls picked up their spoons steadily, neither one aware of how she should proceed.

"Eat!" he now exclaimed in a scolding tone.

Catherine trusted her instincts. She dipped her spoon in the soup and began to slurp it up just as she would do with any other dinner. She did feel immense guilt towards her sister. She knew that Rebecca's strained relationship with Daddy and the fact that she had been the executor of their scheme meant she was the one under the greatest threat tonight. But, even with the light she saw in his eyes, Catherine could not risk an attempt to appeal to Daddy's better nature, especially since his behaviour right now was so unpredictable. Rebecca, though, seemed to be aware of the very same concern as she, discreetly, took only little, concentrated sips from her bowl. When both girls looked back at Daddy, however, they realised something else: he had not picked up his spoon. He was not eating at all. His face seemed pained, yet contemplative. It was as if two opposing poles of his inner self were waging war against one another and he was struggling to find the common ground between them.

"I have done…unspeakable things," he uttered in an oddly sentimental tone." I have killed a fellow priest. I have had impure thoughts and acted on them. And it was all because of you", he uttered as he gave Rebecca the evil eye. "And your mother…" he continued in a sorrowful tone as he shifted his gaze to Catherine. The girls were shaken and, now, utterly confused. They stared at their reflections in the soup bowls. It was their only means of slight distraction from the awkwardness of this situation. Catherine, in particular, felt a chill. Why had Daddy looked at her so intently when he made reference to her and Rebecca's mother? And why had she been considered to be a cause of his sin? Instantaneously, it occurred to both girls that neither had ever questioned the circumstances or nature of mother's death.

"Oh my dear Olivia," he reminisced, "How I loved her". "But she dangled that apple before my eyes and, like a fool, I could not resist biting it."

He was completely distant now. Almost as if he believed no one else was in the room with him.

"But it was my choice…my sin. "He paused. The silence was deafening. Now not even the sound of the girls spoons, scraping the soup bowls, could be heard.

"However, I have a duty to my community. What good would I be to them if I lived my life in sin? I needed to be that pillar of strength again. And the only way to do that…was to eliminate the temptation."

By now Rebecca understood precisely how this speech would proceed. Her eyes darted around the room in desperate search of an exit. But her mind had now failed her. All that remained was a crippling fear and it was dominating her more than any other emotion had before. Somewhere inside her, though, she was able to envision a plan. It was stupid and utterly spontaneous but it was all she could salvage at this very moment. She positioned her hands around the edges of the bowl.

"I thought it would die with her", Daddy continued. "But it never did stop. It just got worse."

He glared at Rebecca. His eyes were now cold and dead.

" I thought it was because I was raising one of the Devil's children. I presumed it was she who was influencing my thoughts and actions. I should have taken care of her as soon as these suspicions arose. But she was my child and I believed, so strongly, that I could find the goodness within her. I tried to chase away her demons. I tried to save her. But they would never leave. They stayed to haunt me! To laugh at me!"

Rebecca's hands were ready. Though the quivering of her hands caused her to resume her task with great difficulty, she managed to lift up her bowl slightly.

Ominously, Daddy shifted his chair next to hers. Subtly, he proceeded to run his fingers through her hair. He leaned forward so that he was as close as possible to her left ear. Menacingly, he whispered:

"It was then that I realised the only way to bring peace to us both was to return her to the Lord. There is no longer a place for the possession of evil in this home…"

Suddenly, out of nowhere, Rebecca gained strength and flung her soup bowl in Daddy's direction. The watery soup landed on his face and the bowl itself shattered into pieces, leaving him with painful skin-deep cuts.

As he cried in agony, Rebecca yelled her sister, signalling that this was their window of opportunity. Their moment to escape. Catherine, however, had now gone a pale white. She was immune to any sound or movement as she fidgeted with her crucifix necklace as if it were a children's toy. Rebecca could not wait for her. She was about to make a break for it when Daddy's forceful hand grabbed her by the arm and held her back. She tried to struggle and break free from this grasp but, as she did so, both his hands, rapidly, moved to her neck and tightened around it. She could feel his nails digging into her skin. As he tightened the grip of one hand to keep Rebecca in her place, Daddy used the other to remove a sharpened steak knife from his pocket. His anger had never been more explosive.

"I considered sparing you Rebecca! But your inexcusable actions towards me have sealed your fate! I know now what I have to do." He uttered with clenched teeth.

Again Rebecca struggled. But then she felt it. The blade had pierced her stomach and large stains of blood appeared her dress. Desperately, she tried to breathe. Yet, that too had escaped her. She felt another strike of the blade as she fell to the floor. The things she had, previously, seen with the greatest of clarity were now fading into little more than black dots. Every voice and creak seemed to move further and further away. All she could do was close her eyes and, for the first time in her life, pray to G-d. And then she fell asleep.

All Catherine could feel now was the room spinning uncontrollably. Her pupils were dilating as tears of agony ran down her face. She began to choke. It was the soup. There had, certainly, been some vile substance mixed into it and, only now, was she beginning to taste it. She tried to get up but as soon as she took a step, the numbness of her legs caused her to collapse. She could not lift her head either. It was just too painful, too heavy. Yet, though her vision was becoming increasingly blurred, she could still make out Daddy standing above her. Never before had he looked so tall.

His back was bent like a hunchback's and his face was turned away from hers. She could hear him sobbing as he gripped onto his bloodied knife. A drop of this blood, Rebecca's blood, fell on Catherine's sleeve. Any minute now she too would bleed. She too would feel the blades of the knife slicing through her, cutting her up into nothing more than a lump of damaged skin. How foolish had she been to believe that Daddy would treat her any differently. She wondered if it had all been a lie, if the love she thought they shared was shaped by her imagination and feeble innocence. Perhaps, she had just called it love because there was no other familiar or acceptable term to define it. But maybe it was that seeing her and Rebecca together had been too much for him to handle. Could it be that as lost, as he would be without the feeling of loving her, the thought of seeing and smelling Rebecca every time he looked at Catherine presented an even greater terror? Only death would eliminate the fear of such a reflection. As her capacity to think and speculate further started to fade, she watched as Daddy turned to her, his posture unchanged from its previous position.

"Olivia, I did not want to do this. Not to you…Never to you!" he cried as he swiped the blood on the knife against his neck.

" I brought you back. We were supposed to start over. We were meant to live a life free of sin. But then I let you consume me. My love for you, as strong as it ever was, transformed me into the man I

despised all over again. Yet, I chose to ignore this evil unleashed inside of me…I chose to pretend it was never there. I just could not lose you Olivia…not again. But then you left me…and I was alone once more…"

Catherine shut her eyes. She remembered, all too clearly, the fight her and Daddy had when she announced her plans to leave home and move into the convent. He had begged her to stay with him. He told her that they needed each other that they would not know how to survive without their dependence on one another. Admittedly, she agreed. But then she argued that their mutual love of Christ would keep them together no matter what the distance between them may have been. Now she could hear the echo of him, breathlessly, referring to his mistress by the name of Olivia during their earlier intercourse. Obviously, the love of Christ had not been enough.

"And because of my loneliness I committed the greatest sin of all", he exclaimed dramatically. "I slept with another woman…A woman I NEVER should have touched."

In this moment, Catherine was still able to open her eyes. But she was afraid to. Though she still feared Daddy, her greatest fear was of herself. It occurred to her, as he spoke, that she may not, in fact, be Catherine, the daughter of Father Eugene Collins. Was it possible that she was the reincarnated Olivia, a spirit that had lived and haunted this house for all these years? And was she now being exorcised? Was she now being made to return to her grave?

"I have betrayed you! And everyone knows what I have done!" he cried hysterically. "Every time I look out at my congregation during the morning sermon, I see the coldness and disappointment in their eyes. They just do not understand. I needed you so badly…I had no other choice. She was the closest I could get. She had your eyes…your hair…your lips. All she needed was a few alterations. She WAS you in every sense of the word."

It was here that he paused. He dropped his knife and kneeled down beside Catherine's almost lifeless body. He drew her closer. He placed her head on his lap. He outlined her lips with his finger. How perfectly red they were.

" I fell for her Olivia. It never should have happened but it did. And then you returned to me. But it was too late. I really have destroyed you."

At this point he turned her face away from him slightly. For some reason he was being cautious and weary.

"It was me who led you into the arms of the Devil's child, the germinating seed that initiated the continuation of this plague of Evil in the first place. I watched the two of you consummate your anger and your hatred…I watched you turn lovemaking into a disease. And I caused it…all of it. Oh Olivia, I cannot allow this vicious cycle of sin to continue. Hell has already taken up permanent residence here and it is my duty to dispel it."

Catherine was, by now, nearing her last breath. Nothing but anxiety was alive in her. So desperate was she to hang on and listen to the last words she would hear on this earth. Daddy now directed her back to his chest. He slipped his Crucifix out from under his shirt and positioned her lips against it.

"I wish there was another way" he trembled. "It is me who should be punished. But I have an obligation…an obligation I need to fulfil on earth. I have been entrusted with the duty to spread his Word, to make people understand it. It is me who has to be their guide and lead them on the path to divinity. And there is only way I can do that: I need to start anew with a life free of sin."

Gently, he moved Catherine's body away from himself and placed her on the floor. He took her arms and spread them. It was as if he were imitating the posturing of Christ on the Crucifix. Her gave her one final kiss.

" Christ died for us, for his people. And like him you need to be my saviour Olivia. I have realised now that bringing you back into our cruel world was a terrible mistake. I never wanted to do this again… I am so sorry… It is you who must die for my sins…"

These were the last words Catherine heard. They kept repeating themselves in an endless cycle as she approached the darkness. She was too weak to close her eyes now but it did not matter as every spot of colour faded rapidly. All that was left now her final prayer before leaving this life. As she proceeded to say the words of this prayer, she swore she could hear Daddy saying them right along with her…

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come.Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from Evil"

It was all done now. Every trace of Evil had left Daddy Eugene's home. But there was one more thing, one more regrettable action. And as much as he dreaded it, it was imperative to complete the final picture. He had ensured that Catherine no longer had a pulse before he did it. It would weigh heavier on his conscience if she were to experience pain. With his eyes shut, he held the knife up and stabbed it into her centre. Now she really did look as if she were pinned to a cross. Slowly, he removed it as her blood started to seep to the surface. He heard crackles as he, promptly, threw this knife into the nearby fireplace. Now all he would need to do. With furious force, he proceeded to turn over furniture, throw book off their shelves and broke the lock off the back door in order to accurately set the scene for the tale he would be required to tell. Tomorrow he would awaken believing that on this night he had fallen sick and, thus, had fallen into a deep sleep after taking a few sleeping pills to relieve his deliriousness. He would be oblivious to the fact that his daughters were having a quiet dinner downstairs with pea soup as their only course. He would be shocked that he could not hear their screams as they fell victim to an unknown assailant (or was that assailants?). He would utter all those relevant exclamations of horror and disgust. Who could have done this? What was their motive? Could mankind honestly be so savage, so brutal?

Yes, tomorrow everything would be different. Soon every memory of the past would disappear and he would be reborn. And no longer would he turn to the Virgin Mary, expecting to be met by bloodied eyes …

Appendix 21: Student Writer and Writing Categorisation

Balanced

Antonio
"Seven O'clock" – 23 April 2007 (1311 words)
"Billiard Holdings" – 10 September 2007 (7823 words)
"The (Mis)Fortune of Marriage" – 26 November 2007 (2873 words)

Jonny Rage
"Sushi and World War" – 23 April 2007 (402 words)
"The Journey" – 4 June 2007 (1646 words)
"Pick One" – 6 September 2007 (5681 words)
"The Tigers of Destiny" – 25 November 2007 (3689 words)

Knives
"My Quest" – 5 May 2007 (632 words)
"The Bus to Nowhere" – 5 May 2007 (494 words)
"Clair De Lune" – 24 July 2007 (4129 words)
"White Waters Port" – 23 November 2007 (2402 words)
"The Tale of Emargo" – 10 September 2008 (2010 words)

Kahlan Amnell
"Pack of Smokes" – 7 May 2007 (1272 words)
"Absence" – 4 September 2007 (1583 words)
"The Other Woman" – 26 November 2007 (1255 words)
"The Forgotten" – 23 January 2008 (3825 words)
"The Simplicity of Colour" – 11 September 2008 (3573 words)

Lemon
"Cursed" – 5 May 2007 (580 words)
"The Truth About Fluffy" – 7 April 2007 (725 words)
"The Artist" – 17 September 2007 (2045 words)
"Denial" – 17 September 2007 (1593 words)
"Untitled" – 27 November 2007 (1498 words)

Sophie
"Crowded House" – 7 May 2007 (773 words)
"Untitled" – 27 November 2007 (1072 words)
"Despair" – 5 December 2007 (2540 words)

Perfectionist

Benjamin
"Circles" – 11 September 2005 (1400 words)
"Under the Eye" – 26 September 2007 (992 words)
"Life in the Lounge" – 26 September 2007 (2902 words)

Kathryn
"Bless Me, Father" – 29 July 2005 (853 words)
"Legends Must Die to be Born" – 11 September 2005 (1164 words)
"Redness" (One-Act Play) – 18 September 2005 (2218 words)
"Candyland" – 2 August 2006 (1965 words)
"The Baker" – 30 August 2006 (2012 words)
"Three" – 29 July 2007 (879 words)
"An Aside" – 13 August 2007 (404 words)
"Do Not Presume to Pity" – 13 August 2007 (1106 words)
"Miss Lecter" – 13 August 2007 (1398 words)
"Dreamers Often Lie" – 26 September 2007 (1412 words)

Taryn
"The Space Between" – 8 September 2005 (920 words)
"Untitled" – 8 September 2005 (1239 words)
"Children's Story" – 19 July 2006 756 words
"Untitled" (One-Act Play) – 12 September 2006 1264 words

Sylvia
"Stella" – 8 September 2005 (1929 words)

Bryony
"The Courtyard Door" – 13 July 2006 (4376 words)
"The Water" – 26 September 2007 (1340 words)
"An Artist in Winter" – 31 July 2008 (3576 words)

Emily Lyre
"Scent of Terror" – 19 April 2008 (2125 words)
"Regions of Sorrow" – 11 September 2008 (2878 words)

Jonathan
"Death by Briani" – 2 May 2006 (1073 words)
"Lost in Soweto" – 28 August 2006 (800 words)
"Untitled" – 29 July 2007 (2307 words)
"Untitled" – 26 August 2008 (631 words)
"Father Out in Heaven" – 26 August 2008 (7934 words)

Playful

Olivia
"Flocc" (Novel) – 14 April 2007 (4607 words)
"The System" – 14 August 2007 (898 words)
"Kagiso and the Mare" – 15 August 2007 (778 words)
"Cordoni" – 27 November 20071 (660 words)
"Hartford Estate" – 13 March 2008 (604 words)

Lilly
"The Park" – 7 May 2007 (674 words)
"Remember Me Always" – 19 August 2007 (725 words)
"The Bobble Heads" – 27 November 2007 (1032 words)

Chadwick
"A Spoonful of Nightmare" – 5 May 2007 (730 words)
"The Squibbles Incident" – 3 September 2007 (3004 words)

Nom de Plume
"Meet You Outside" – 22 May 2007 (578 words)
"Change" – 21 August 2007 (518 words)

David
"Back in 'Nam …" – 30 July 2005 (1496 words)
"Johnny and the Magic Hearing Aid" – 5 April 2006 (789 words)
"Act Of War" (One-Act Play) – 5 April 2006 (1449 words)
"An Exercise in Probability Shifting" – 30 August 2006 (3328 words)
"Savage Intertextuality" – 5 March 2008 (1921 words)

Dabbling

Noor
"Good Business" – 11 September 2006 (1100 words)

Vicky

"The Banana Thieves" – 27 November 2007 (1917 words)

Charles
"Untitled" – 1 August 2006 (1006 words)

Crazy
"Home, Sweet Home" – 4 September 2006 (994 words)
"What is Mine is Yours" – 4 September 2006 (741 words)

Bunny
"Auntie" – 9 April 2007 (516 words)

Myle
"Decadence" – 29 August 2006 (785 words)

Raymond
"Nyctophobia" – 6 May 2007 (482 words)
"The Priorities of Norman Grey" – 6 August 2007 (581 words)

Cornelius
"A Day at the Mall " – April 2007 (681 words)

Appendix 22: Student Text Feedback Examples

Sophie

"The Cabin" – Chadwick

I think you built up the tension and suspense well in the beginning in particular, and it kept up throughout the piece. The atmosphere created was so intense that I could feel my stomach turning. The part I found very hooking is the sense of ruthlessness in phrases like, "Her face was pink from *stress*," or "Who's next?" It gives the reader a strange type of revulsion, which makes them unable to resist finding out what happens while knowing it will probably be ugly.

Your descriptions of the characters, though unconventional, such as Guffin's issues about his eyes, succeed in building a solid picture of the character in my mind. I think its because you give room for the reader to create their own pictures, and draw on stereotyped ones, such as of the Pulp Fiction hillbilly type. It also gives a sense of the character's personality. In Jackson, for instance, and his thinking about his mother, we see he is the character most likely to cry. Also, I think you put together things in such a way as to create the most vulgar and repulsive combinations in the world (to put it strongly). For instance, the handicapped obese guy trying to handle a gun, or the freaky guy and masturbation, or the vulnerable unquestioning girl looking for love, all bunched together in a space which smells like vomit, and whose floor is littered with pieces of brain. I mean it in a good light though; I think it is a mark of good creativity. However, I did find the characters' weaving in and out confusing, and it took a while to figure out who was who. That made the storyline slightly confusing too, and I'm not entirely sure what happens at the end. Although, I can see that that understanding is not really necessary since the intention of the piece is creating tension and the motivations of the characters or resolution of events is not as important as the telling of the events themselves. This story has the quality of manipulating the reader, and sending them on a roller-coaster ride, which is an admirable skill.

[If you feel these comments are too bare, or if you want comments on anything in particular, please let me know ok.]

Facilitator

Piece with 3 characters and TENSION - Sophie

Beginning – This piece starts very intriguingly, very subtly and in a very understated way grasps the reader's attention with unusual phrasings such as *"for some chewing gum, and maybe a little conversation"* and *"unfolded his long torso by degrees."* The first paragraph very successfully 'shows' the reader little details of the character, his physical attributes, his personality and habits and his environment as the setting for the action of the story. It is this carefully constructed detail which forms the basis for the reader's imagination to colour in the imagery. The only word that is out of place is "ugly," a 'telling' word, which should perhaps be replaced with a strong visual adjective.

Storyline – The story optimises tension as required by the assignment brief. An adult man and an innocent school-girl in an empty shop quite naturally creates an atmosphere of danger and, therefore, tension. George's intentions are never blatant and all the action and tension takes place in the humdrum setting of a shop, with the ongoing descriptions of the shelves and merchandise providing a strangely mundane backdrop for the tension between the two characters. The piece also contains excellent examples of how the senses can be used to generate mood and atmosphere in a story - *breathe in the fresh fumes*; *watched the sky turning red*; and *the musty smell of the store hit him like an old friend*.

Tension – This story very successfully generates the tension required in the assignment brief, but it does so in a very subtle and understated way by

enticing the reader to use her imagination to fill in the spaces left open in the narrative. Nothing is overstated or over-dramatised and the piece is a very well written first draft.

Characterization – The characters are all very briefly, but beautifully described and wonderfully rounded with seemingly little effort from the writer. The setting also plays a major role in describing the characters in an indirect way. What the girl buys and desires (*a little bit left over for a chappie*) and what George buys and how he opens and drinks from the bottle shows the reader what these characters are like. It is interesting how much can be conveyed to the reader with relatively few, but well selected words and phrases. And everything is 'shown' to the reader and appears credible and real and life-like with interesting changes in perspective. For example instead of just telling the reader that the girl ran frantically down the street, we are given a more detailed, more life-like and dramatic view – *"George stood at the top of the steps, watching her jump over a dog at the corner of the block, and then run into the road, dodging hooting cars."*

Emotions – The piece effectively generates emotions surrounding all the characters. There is concern for the safety of the girl; there is a loathing for George even although his intentions are not explicitly described, in that situation we tend to lean towards negative emotions; and the excited role of the shopkeeper is very vague, but mysterious and seedy perhaps.

Ending – The story ends cleanly with the girl 'escaping' and George, the 'monster' confirming that he enjoyed their meeting.

Enjoyment – Because the reader has space to apply her own imagination and the piece is written so wonderfully lightly with just the right amount of exquisite detail, this story or snippet not only achieves the objectives set for the writing exercise, it also does so in a style and with a tone, which is most enjoyable.

Facilitator

Feedback on Feedback

Before providing you with feedback on *The Tale of Emargo*, I want to compliment you on the quality and usefulness of the feedback that you provided to the other workshop members. Your comments will certainly add value to their revision processes and has provided them with the insights and views of a thorough and thoughtful reader. Well done.

The Tale of Emargo – Knives

Beginning – The beginning of your piece is intriguing in that you reveal the complexity of the structure of your story and its multi-level form. The intermittent use of the second person form in the narrator's interaction with the storyteller is interesting and different and the storyteller is the most intriguing of the characters throughout the piece, thus far in its development. The opening certainly creates some tension and draws the reader in, but, as a non-fantasy reader with little experience in the reading and interpretation of the fantasy genre and its traditional conventions and formats, I struggle to imagine and visualise what the place and characters look like because I feel that I have been "told" a lot, but have not been "shown" much, with the result that I am indifferent to the characters and the events of the story. My imagination cannot make the jump to visualisation based on what I have been told.

Storyline – The storyline is most certainly intriguing and the multi-level style is teasingly different, but it appears to me that the Fantasy genre is more appropriate for longer forms of the fiction genre and does not lend itself to the concentration and brevity required by the short story form. My reason for saying this is that because the fantasy is almost totally the product of the writer's imagination, the reader can only become acquainted and can only fully associate themselves with the author's fantasy world once it has been shown to her. If the setting of the story took place in more familiar, more common surroundings, with more everyday characters, the piece would be more impactful in a shorter space of time.

Tension – Intrigue more than tension would be the best word to describe the story's effect on the reader. While the multi-layered format of the text is structurally interesting, it could have the effect of distancing the reader from the 'active' characters, who are three levels removed from the reader – with a narrator relating the story of Emargo as it was told to him by the story teller. You need somehow to make sure that the reader is pulled into the life of Emargo and his exploits, experiences and emotions.

Characterization – Just from the first draft of the story, the characters are all intriguing, but not mesmerising, not rounded and not fully proportioned. It is almost as if what has been written so far is a first glimpse of the characters and that as the text continues each character will receive more emphasis and focus providing the reader with more depth and insight. Again, perhaps, in order to provide this level of substance, *The Tale of Emargo*, would be more effective if it were to be written as a 'long,' short story (like *The Janitor on Mars*) or even as a novella.

Emotions – As a reader, I became more emotionally involved after the third reading of the text, but I am far from emotionally interested. During each re-reading my imagination builds the characters, the setting and the action automatically, but in this world of a multi-media morass, the writer cannot assume that a reader's generosity is going to include the time for multiple readings of his work.

Ending – It appears to me that *The Tale of Emargo* has just commenced and that the majority of the story is still to come.

Enjoyment – I enjoyed what I have read. The style of the piece is interesting and lofty, but I also get the feeling that it is very much a first draft. It is an excellent foundation for focused, line-by-line revision and it will only reach its full potential and impact once the redrafting and revision process has been completed.

Additional Comment – Once again, I am commenting as a reader, who has little, if any, experience of the fantasy genre, while most of the workshop members appear to have grown up with and seem to be enthralled by this form of story telling. If you want to creatively pursue your writing activities in this genre, may I suggest that, instead of conforming and being formulaic in your creations, you alter the style or personalise the style to reflect your own writer's voice and your own idiosyncrasies. It is a popular genre that has been around for a while and the time may be ripe for some subversion, some change, some difference within the traditional fantasy genre framework.

I don't want my comments to come across as negative, but I have tried to give you as objective a view as I possibly can. It is only because of the high quality of your work and because of your determination to be a dedicated writer that I can be as direct as I have been. So please view my directness as a positive indicator of your work and the potential that you have as a writer with the ultimate aim of improving and developing your writing as smoothly and with as little time-wasting as possible.

Knives

Father Out in Heaven – Jonathan

Enjoyment: I have to admit, I really did not enjoy reading this story. I can appreciate the fact that you are trying to tackle controversial material but I think the way in which you do it does not work at all. It soon became quite offensive but without the redeeming charm needed to balance this offensiveness. With a lot of editing though you could have a gripping story that may offend but still play into our human curiosity and voyeurism.
Beginning: The story starts off quite well. You immediately get a sense of the tension in the household. Your characters and setting are interesting to begin with.
Story: The plot seems like all it's meant to do is shock and offend the reader and so the story gets lost in all of this. I found it quite melodramatic at times with the situations becoming quite unreal. I do think you could have

quite a twisted thriller if you toned down some of the offensive content and made it a more of a clever plotline.
Tension: For such a risqué story it actually isn't that tense. The action feels over the top and I found myself not really getting into it.
Characterisation: One thing you do really well is set up the characters in this story. The father is truly a monster and you bring that quality out very well. He continues to project a menacing presence right through the story. The daughters are devious and manipulative while at the same time are the suffering victims – this is an interesting paradox in the characters.
Emotion: The story has the potential for being quite emotionally charged but because it goes over the top I feel that the emotional connection is lost.
Ending: I found it entirely unbelievable and thus not as climatic as it could be.