

Creative Writing

Natalee Olsen

Introduction

In this creative writing portfolio you will find an array of poems, narratives, and reflection essays on various topics. These pieces represent a significant milestone in my life of finding my own voice as I make the daunting transition from college into adulthood. Writing has always been a passion of mine, but it wasn't until practicing the act of creative writing through the components of this portfolio that I truly reflected on my personal ideals, beliefs, and strengths as a writer.

As I approach the end of my college years, this portfolio's contents allowed me to reflect on my past experiences and the person I am becoming. Writing the poems in particular became a way for me to process my thoughts and emotions, and I found myself drawn to exploring themes of love, heartbreak, dreams, and naivety. Actively writing the contents in this portfolio guided me through the process of making sense of recent events in my past as well as experiences I was currently having as I was writing.

During my time in the class, I found myself intrigued by the existing connections between consciousness and writing. I've learned quite a lot about consciousness through the psychological lens, but I have never considered how someone's stream of consciousness can be conveyed through their writing. I feel that my stream of consciousness is most evident in my O'Hara imitation poem *Having a Summer With You* as well as my Brainard imitation. I quite enjoyed imitating the O'Hara love poem because its pre-existing structure acted as a perfect guide to unlocking my own stream of consciousness. The same applies to the Brainard imitation, as this is one of my favorite pieces because there were not too many constraints. I feel as though I achieved fluidity in the sequence of how I perceived my memories in accordance to who I am now. Throughout my creation of the poems and narratives, I learned that my memories and feelings are always in flux. Many of the pieces in this portfolio have helped me in redefining who I am and how the experiences in my life have gotten me here.

In William James' *Stream of Consciousness*, I resonated with the quote, "Within each personal consciousness states are always changing." Creative writing unleashes the stream of consciousness to create what feels like a flow of thoughts and ideas. When we ignore our own streams of consciousness, our thoughts and ideas may be misguidedly broken down into basic experiences that are too static or simple, therefore they lose their meaning. The written pieces within this portfolio allowed me to find true meaning in feelings and experiences I've had that once felt useless to me, and that is something I greatly appreciate.

Throughout the creation of these pieces, I noticed that I relied on dream elements and characteristics of dreamlike narratives to inspire my storytelling, which is especially evident in my short story *This Is What Dreams Are Made Of*. I chose to center my short story around dreams to create a sense of surrealism and magical realism around the friendship of Tessa and Tony. In this story, the line between reality and dreams was blurred, therefore my aim was to make the narrative more unpredictable than that of your average short story. In addition to cultivating a sense of surrealism, dreams can also be mysterious, symbolic, and full of emotion, making them an excellent foundation for storytelling - as stated in my Dream Narrative Analysis essay. A dream narrative is a dream presented in story form, which is what my short story is

minus the additional background I provided. Because *This Is What Dreams Are Made Of* is a dream narrative, it did not have to unfold in a coherent, logical way as most “waking” narratives do. I am fascinated by dreams because they can contain real themes, problems, people, and objects that align closely with real life. However, because dreams are remembered in such a fragmented way, narratives that unfold in dreams are weaved together in bizarre, seemingly impossible, yet life-like timeframes and casualties. Dream narratives reject conventional storytelling and any psychological coherence in the same manner as *This Is What Dreams Are Made Of* does.

My most favorite works within this portfolio are my O’Hara imitation poem *Having a Summer With You* and the Brainard imitation. Overall, I hope that this portfolio will give you a glimpse into my world. Thank you for taking the time to read my work!

Poems

O'Hara Imitation
Having a Summer With You

is even more fun than going out to a bar in the nicest part of town
or being sick to my stomach after eating too many burgers that you grilled on your bbq
partly because in your cowboy hat you look like the only one i can depend on
partly because of my love for you, partly because of your love for playing hacky sack
partly because of that endless walk we took around the boat docks during sunset where you told
me your secrets and i told you mine
leaving our most important ones concealed
on the tips of our tongues
partly because of the way you look out for others more than you look out for yourself
it is hard to believe when I'm with you that there can be anything as pure
as warm as joyful as a hot summer day spent with you
after sharing this season together
i've come to realize that you are my hot summer day
but in the cold ocean water we are drifting back and forth
between each other like our time is running out because
summer is almost over

and now the sky seems to have no sunlight in it at all, just clouds
you suddenly wonder why in the world would anyone need to wear sunscreen

but you wear it anyways and I would rather look at you than all the sunsets in the world
except possibly for the sunrise occasionally and i see those more often than I see you
which thank heavens there is a sunrise every day so we can see one together when the time is
right
and the fact that you sleep so beautifully but never for a full night leaving you drowsy
just as at home I never think that I'm tired until the moment i lie down without you
at a house party in LA a single tune reminds me of you and i'm back in the summertime
and what good does all the silence between us do in the fall and the spring
I finally got the right person to stand near when the sun sets, but at the wrong time
and for that matter you got the right person too you just don't let yourself enjoy
summer
as a season year-round

it seems we were cheated of many summers together
which is not going to go wasted on me which is why I am telling you about it

Erasure Poem

worship of appearances so intense that even Osmond himself had got bored with it. You may therefore imagine what it was – when he couldn't patch it on conveniently to *any* of those he goes in for! But the whole past was between them.

'Yes,' Isabel mechanically echoed, 'the whole past is between them.'

'Ah, this later past is nothing. But for six or seven years, as I say, they had kept it up.'

She was silent a little. 'Why then did she want him to marry me?'

'Ah my dear, that's her superiority! Because you had money; and because she believed you would be good to Pansy.'

'Poor woman – and Pansy who doesn't like her!' cried Isabel.

'That's the reason she wanted some one whom Pansy would like. She knows it; she knows everything.'

'Will she know that you've told me this?'

'That will depend upon whether she will *know*. She's prepared for it, and do you know what she counts upon for her defence? On your believing that I lie. Perhaps you do. You make yourself uncomfortable to hide it. Only *because* she *thinks* I don't. I've told plenty of little idiotic fibs, but they've never hurt any one but myself.'

Isabel sat staring at her companion's story as at a bale of fantastic wares some meddling gypsy might have unpacked on the carpet at her feet. 'Why did Osmond never marry her,' she finally asked.

'Because she had no money. The Countess had an answer for everything, and if she lied she lied well. No one knows, no one has ever known, what she lives on, or how she has got all those beautiful things. I don't believe Osmond himself knows. Besides, she wouldn't have married him.'

'How can she have loved him then?'

'She doesn't love him in the way. She did at first, and then, I suppose, she would have married him; but at that time her husband was living. By the time Mr. More had rejoined – I won't say his ancestors, because he never had any – her relations with Osmond had changed, and she had grown more ambitious. Besides, she has never had about her. The Countess went on leaving Isabel to wince for (so tragically afterwards) – 'she had never had, what you might call any illusions of intelligence.' She hoped she might

Narratives

Folktale Rewrite

Hansel and Gretel → Harry and Greta

Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, there lived Harry and Greta, a brother and sister in their mid twenties who had overstayed their welcome at their parents' home in Boston, Massachusetts.

"They eat all of our food without replacing our groceries, they leave dirty messes around the house while neglecting any form of chores, and our electricity bill is at an all-time high!" exclaimed the mother. "We must do something to get them out of the house and to work so they can become the productive adults that we raised them to be."

The father agreed without a second thought. Why else would the parents have paid such expensive college tuition for their children to stay at home and drain them of their resources?

So the father and mother got to planning.

"Here's what we'll do," proposed the mother. "We'll ask Harry and Greta to go out tomorrow afternoon and complete a list of errands for us - groceries and what-not. On their way out, we will ask them to leave their house keys at home because we are getting a new lock installed on our door, and we will tell them that we are leaving their new keys in the mailbox for them when they get back. While they are gone, we will pack them each a suitcase and leave them outside, so they know that there's no way they will be welcome back in our home," said the mother, utterly pleased with her sneaky plan.

The father agreed and they both went to sleep for the night. Little did they know that Harry and Greta heard the entire plan since they stayed up all night succumbing to severe TikTok addictions.

"Don't worry Greta. I got this all figured out," Hansel reassured, while devouring his favorite meal consisting of a bean and cheese burrito with LOADS and LOADS of cheese.

The next afternoon, since Harry and Greta slept until 1 P.M. from staying up all night, the mother stormed in to wake them up. She told them to get ready to run some errands, all obviously according to plan. However, before Harry and Greta left, Harry left the window to his room open so they could climb through later considering they would no longer have house keys.

"Gretel! I left my bedroom window open, so all we gotta do is climb through!" Harry exclaimed, in awe of his seemingly brilliant and well-thought out plan.

After a few hours of waiting around town (not running errands or being productive in any way, of course) Harry and Greta began their trek home. Upon arrival, they found their suitcases on the front porch as their mother had previously schemed. Harry and Greta then walked to the backyard only to discover that Harry's bedroom window had been closed and locked shut. In a panic, Greta ran back to the porch and proceeded to bang on the front door, pleading for her parents to let them in.

“Mom! Dad! Why are you doing this to us?! Can’t we just talk this out? You can’t just leave us out here to fend for ourselves! Let us back in!” Greta begged. But there was no answer, not even a sound. Greta gave up in utter defeat. With a long sigh, she stared at the sky and said “God, this is so messed up.”

Just like that, they had been banished from the sanctuary in which they once called home.

Harry and Greta gathered their suitcases full of their belongings and began to walk, brainstorming and searching for any possible form of shelter.

“What are we supposed to do now, Harry?” asked Greta in utter despair.

“Hold on, lemme think,” Harry said. “I mean, there has to be somewhere we can go for at least a little while... Do you know anyone we can call?”

Greta was silent. She couldn’t think of anyone they could rely on other than their mom and dad, who obviously were no longer an option.

So alas, their efforts were futile since all of their old friends now lived out of town making lives for themselves, unlike Harry and Greta. After a long fifteen minutes of walking through town hopelessly, the brother and sister found a public bench and sat upon it in a state of dismay. As they were about to drift off to sleep, a white kitten walked up to their bench meowing, and sat and stared at the both of them in silence.

“Awww, wittle kitten!” exclaimed Greta. She walked over to the cat and saw that it had a pink collar on. She proceeded to find the tag and saw that it had an address imprinted on it, with a street that was only a few blocks away. “Let’s take it home Harry!” said Greta.

Harry groaned. “Do we have to?”

“What else do we have to do?! That’s right, nothing! ‘Cuz we’re homeless! Now come on!” Greta responded urgently.

Harry and Greta stood up and followed their phones to the address indicated on the kitten’s collar, which led to a huge yet seemingly deserted mansion. Assuming the mansion was vacant, Harry and Greta walked up to the front door and walked in. Facing them was a large, heavily botoxed, posh woman who glared at them with narrow eyes.

“What are you doing in – OH THERE’S MY SNOWFLAKE! You found my cat!! Gimme gimme!” The woman scuttled over and grabbed the kitten out of Greta’s arms. “Where did you find my cat?” she asked them.

“My brother and I were sitting on a bench and she just found us. As soon as we saw her we immediately brought her to this address on her collar, because that’s the right thing to do,” Greta said smugly with a smirk on her face. “I’m Greta, and this is my brother Harry.”

“Well, Harry and Greta, thank you very much for returning Snowflake to me... Wait a minute, are those suitcases you have? Are you two looking for somewhere to stay?” said the woman.

“Actually, yes,” Harry said. Our parents kicked us out of the house unexpectedly today, and we don’t have anywhere else to go.”

“Alright, you two may stay for the time being, granted you fulfill my one request,” said the woman. “I am a widowed lady and my housemaid recently passed away. I have a heap of household duties that need to be done everyday, and I am in no shape to do them. If you two agree to complete my daily chores and tend to my every need, then you may stay.”

With no other option, Harry and Greta acquiesced and were then led to two separate rooms in which they were going to inhabit. Upon seeing the voluptuous king-sized beds, the brother and sister immediately went to bed to decompress from the stressful day they had.

In the middle of the night, Greta was sound asleep until she woke up to sounds of loud banging and shuffling coming from Harry’s room. She stayed put until the sound of Harry pleading “Don’t touch me!” compelled her to investigate the trouble.

Greta opened Harry’s door to find the woman holding Harry in a chokehold. Harry’s face was bright red as if he were about to pass out in mere seconds. Greta shouted “What are you doing?!” and ran to Harry’s aid. She then tried unwrapping the woman’s arms from Harry’s neck, but the woman was surprisingly strong and did not budge.

“Why are you doing this?! Let him go!” screamed Greta.

“No!” replied the woman. “Men must get what they deserve! They do nothing but harm the world, and take, take, TAKE!”

“So that’s what this is,” Greta thought to herself. “She’s just a vicious man-hater.”

Upon realizing that Greta will not be able to match the woman’s strength, she pulled her phone out of her pocket and dialed the police. “HURRY!” she shouted over the phone to the dispatcher, “My brother is being strangled to death! Just track my phone location, and please - come QUICK!”

But there was no way the police would arrive in-time before Harry completely suffocated. His face was as red as a tomato, and his eyes were nearly popping out of the sockets. Greta had to think fast. She grabbed a glass vase off a shelf, ran to the woman, and bashed her head with the vase - smashing it into several pieces from the impact of the woman’s head. The woman immediately fell to the ground unconscious, freeing Harry in the process.

Harry remained on the ground, fighting to catch his breath. Greta leaned over Harry to comfort him, while pulling her phone out of the pocket and dialing her mother’s phone number. Of course, it went straight to voicemail.

“Mom, it's Greta. Please help us. Harry has been hurt and we have nowhere to go. Please, it's an emergency. Just let us come home.”

Right after hanging up, two cops come running through the door. The two cops immediately assessed the situation and looked at each other while letting out deep sighs.

“We did it,” one cop said to the other. “We finally got her.”

“What? She was already wanted? What did she do?” asked Greta.

“She murdered her husband in cold blood. All because she claims to hate men,” said the other cop. “She moved across the country after the murder, and we haven’t been able to track her since. If it wasn’t for you two, we wouldn’t have found her and this may have happened again... Anyways, let’s get you two out of here.” One cop helped Greta up, and the other carried Harry bridal style. They were then escorted out of the mansion.

Alas, Harry and Greta have been saved.

The brother and sister were taken home, where their parents awaited them on the front porch. As soon as the siblings climbed out of the car, the parents ran to them and swooped them both in loving embraces.

“We are so sorry, Harry and Greta,” the mother sobbed. “This is all my fault.”

“It’s okay Mom, just please let us stay for a little while longer and I promise you we will be out of your hair in no time,” responded Harry.

“Okay, you both have two months,” said the dad. “Two months to get jobs.”

And for those two months, Harry and Greta lived happily ever after with their parents until they both landed corporate jobs in the lovely city of Los Angeles, California.

Brainard Imitation

I remember sitting in my mother's 1996 Toyota Camry Wagon where the back seats face the back window.

I remember drinking Nesquik's chocolate milk out of a plastic sippy cup and spilling it all over my toy piano.

I remember painting my nails but messing up so many times that I used one full container of nail polish in one sitting.

I remember when my favorite activity was watching my older brother play Backyard Baseball and Sonic the Hedgehog on his GameCube.

I remember pooping my pants on a volcano in Maui when I was 8 years old. I was wearing a sundress.

I remember crying to the song "Stay High" by Tove Lo when I was thirteen even though I didn't know what being high felt like.

I remember running around my backyard screaming with joy after finally convincing my dad to buy me a trampoline.

I remember the emptiness I felt after I finished the show "The Office" for the first time.

I remember feeling as though I was legitimately on my deathbed after I got my wisdom teeth removed and after throwing up, I looked my mother in the eyes and said "This is it. I'm dying," and she said "Don't ever say that to me, Natalee!"

I remember the tension I felt between me and my sixth grade crush while playing Capture the Flag at recess.

I remember dropping my first ever flip-phone in the bathtub and thank God it still worked after.

I remember doing handstands on the beach in Cayucos, California and propping my hot pink iPod Nano on a rock to record myself because it was an amazing performance.

I remember when my dad would pick me up from school every Wednesday with an Arby's roast beef sandwich waiting for me on the front seat.

I remember the absolute dread I felt when my mother told me it was time to start doing my own laundry.

I remember the pungent smell of my first dog, Stryder.

I remember hearing the sound of my mother pounding my phone in with a hammer after she discovered I was texting a boy who was one year older than me.

I remember when sitting in a random parking lot with my friends for hours was my version of Heaven on Earth.

I remember when my one and only chore was to wander through the field in my backyard and capture aphids to put on the rose bushes in the front yard.

I remember when I drank alcohol for the first time (only two beers), and ended up throwing up in a random parking lot right next to a homeless man.

I remember peeing my bed as a senior in high school and feeling like a worthless human being the next day.

I remember when I found my dad's box of cigars and his lighter and I threw them over the fence into my neighbor's yard because I thought they were going to kill him.

I remember crying so hard after finishing the book "The Fault in Our Stars" that I buried my face in my pillow because it was the middle of the night and my sobs were loud enough to wake up my parents.

I remember whenever my dad would make himself his daily cup of chocolate milk and I would get jealous because he made chocolate milk better than I ever could even though it only involved putting spoonfuls of chocolate powder in milk and mixing it.

I remember smoking a cigarette on a hotel balcony in Paris and thinking it was my peak.

I remember eating a double-double from In-N-Out every week and still being hungry after.

I remember dancing in a club on New Years Eve with a boy I really liked and knowing that the beauty of the moment would not be worth the aftermath of emptiness.

One-Sentence Stories

1. Heartbroken, she sat alone in the parking lot, clutching the wilted flowers he had given her, wondering how he changed his mind so quickly.
2. Tragically, the coffee shop erupted into flames before he was able to get his caramel macchiato with cinnamon on top.
3. As the surfer felt a sharp tug on his leg, he realized far too late that the darting shadows in the water were not just harmless waves, but a school of ferocious baby sharks.

Holmes Pitch A Dead Head

It was a rainy evening in London when a young woman knocked on the door of 221B Baker Street. Sherlock Holmes, who was sitting by the fireplace with his colleague and friend Dr. John Watson, rose to answer it. As he opened the door, a gust of cold wind swept into the room, and a figure stepped in, shivering.

"Good evening, Mr. Holmes," the young woman said, pulling off her hat and coat to reveal a red dress and auburn hair. "My name is Dusty Pankins, and I've come to you in dire need of your help."

"Please, take a seat," Holmes said, gesturing to a chair by the fire. "And tell me, Miss Pankins, what brings you here on such a dismal night?"

"It's my father," she said, anxiously fidgeting with her hands. "He's disappeared, and I'm afraid he's in terrible danger." She paused.

"I see," Holmes said, confused by her lack of elaboration. "Please, tell me more."

"He's a retired businessman, and he's been acting very strangely lately," Dusty said, her voice trembling. "He's been going out at odd hours, meeting with shady characters, and making some impulsive and strange purchases. His demeanor has totally changed, not to mention this stench that follows him around - as if he hasn't showered in weeks! Anyways, to get back to the point, I followed him one night and saw him go into a rundown building in Whitechapel. I'm afraid he's involving himself in something... bad."

"And where do I fit in the midst of all of this? Have you contacted any city officials?" Holmes asked, his sharp eyes fixed on her.

"I haven't. You see, I'm afraid my father is... mentally unwell. He just isn't in his right mind, and it isn't a problem that I see the police solving. I want you to find him, Mr. Holmes, so I can put an end to this situation before it gets the best of him," Elizabeth said, leaning forward. "I don't know who else to turn to. I know that my father is a grown man who can take care of himself, but I also know that he's in deep trouble - and I want to save him. Please, can you help me?"

Holmes leaned back in his chair and looked at her thoughtfully. "Miss Pankins, I'm afraid that at this moment, I can't promise you anything. But if you openly and honestly tell me everything you know about your father's disappearance, leaving no detail behind, I'll do my best to assist you. The little things are the most important in matters like these."

Dusty nodded eagerly and launched into a detailed account of her father's recent behavior. First, she told him about the strange purchases he had made. "A few nights ago, my father came home with a briefcase I have never seen before. When he excused himself for bed, he left it in the

living room, almost as if he wanted me to look through it. So I did, and inside it was a lot of cash. Like, more money than I've ever seen in one place before.”

Holmes listened intently, nodding his head as she spoke. "That is definitely strange," he said. "Perhaps your father is involving himself with the wrong groups of people.”

Dusty went on to explain the patterns in which her father left the house and the odd behavior he exhibited around Dusty. “He’s been on some amusing antics lately. For one, he has become so slow and clumsy, and acts as though the world around him is too complex and overwhelming for him to comprehend. I just don’t understand how he could have changed so fast. A few weeks ago, I caught him giggling at soap bubbles in the kitchen sink. And, his eyes... they have become so glassy and unfocused, like he’s lost in a hazy dream world of his own making. I feel like someone or *something* has been causing him immense pain.”

Dusty then went quiet. After taking a deep breath, she offered Holmes a photograph of her father, which he took immediately.

Holmes carefully examined the photograph of Dusty's father, scrutinizing every detail of his appearance. He had droopy eyes, lack-luster of anything relating to sheen or sparkle. His clothing was rumpled and disheveled, giving the impression of a man who had little concern for his personal appearance. Just from seeing his face in the photograph, Holmes could tell that this man was cocooned in a cloud of indifference.

After a few moments of silence, he turned to Dusty and asked if her father had any known vices or fixations. Dusty hesitated before answering, but eventually admitted that her father had always been a fan of the band “The Grateful Dead”.

Upon hearing Dusty's response, Holmes couldn't help but let out a small chuckle. "Ah, The Grateful Dead," he mused. "An interesting choice of music for a man of his age."

Dusty looked at him quizzically. "What does that have to do with anything?" she asked.

"Well, my dear, ‘The Grateful Dead’ are known for their association with drug culture," Holmes explained. "It's possible that your father's love of the band could be a clue to an involvement in the drug trade."

Dusty's eyes widened in shock. "No, that can't be true," she protested. "My father would never do something like that."

Holmes nodded slowly. "It's possible, of course. But I would advise you to be cautious. How would you explain all the money he acquired in the briefcase? It's clear that there is more to your father's behavior than meets the eye."

Dusty remained silent, staring at Holmes in wide-eyed shock.

"Miss Pankins, I believe I can help you. But I must warn you, the case may prove to end in disappointment and could have some lasting impacts on you and your father's relationship. Are you willing to take that risk?"

"Yes, Mr. Holmes," Dusty said, her eyes shining with determination. "I'll do whatever it takes to find my father and save him from trouble."

"Very well," Holmes said, rising to his feet. "Dr. Watson and I will accompany you to Whitechapel tomorrow night, where we can investigate the building you watched him go into. We'll see if we can find any clues there about your father's whereabouts."

"Thank you, Mr. Holmes," Dusty said, clasping her hands together. "You don't know how much this means to me."

"Think nothing of it," Holmes said, his voice kinder than usual. "It's what I do."

Short Story

This is What Dreams Are Made Of

Tessa was born with the ability to visit people she's met in their dreams. Along with this ability came an inability to have her own dreams, therefore Tessa could either breach someone's privacy and invade their dream or lie in pitch black darkness the entire night, aware of every hour that passes by. Unable to decide if it was a blessing or a curse, every night Tessa would struggle with the decision of whose dream to invade next. Usually, she alternated between her sister Lily, her dentist, and her attractive history teacher's dreams; but there was one person whom she had never visited - the dreams of her best friend Tony.

"Who did you visit last night?" Tony asked Tessa while walking to school together one day.

"Oh, just my sister Lily," Tessa responded. "She dreamed about a wedding. It was absolutely beautiful." She purposefully chose not to specify whose wedding she witnessed, specifically because her sister dreamed up a wedding specifically for Tessa and Tony.

"You still haven't visited one of my dreams, right?" asked Tony.

"No, Tony. I haven't. I promised you that I never would, so you don't have to ask that," she answered sternly.

"Alright, alright," Tony responded. "It's just a major breach of boundaries and sometimes I feel as though I need to remind you that."

"Well, you *don't*. I would never even want to visit one of your dreams anyways." Tessa said.

Tony was the only person who knew about Tessa's special ability because he was the only person who she trusted. Tony was also born with an unusual ability, which is why Tessa felt safe exposing her own power to him. For Tony, upon making physical contact with someone, he could show them specific memories of his.

When Tony and Tessa were only eight years old, Tessa made an oath to Tony to never intrude on his dreams. Tony was always a little uneasy about Tessa invading his dreams, because to him, his dreams were his safe place. Tessa respected Tony's wishes and never ventured into his dreamworld, even though she was curious what it would be like. Tony had been Tessa's best friend since they were toddlers, and Tessa carried the belief that she and Tony would end up together in the future.

On Tessa's 18th birthday, her curiosity of Tony's secret dreamworld came to a head. Tessa always had a crush on Tony just because they spent so much time together, and she was looking for a sign that Tony felt the same way about her. After all these years, how could he not? Even though Tessa knew it was a breach of their childhood oath, she couldn't resist the urge any longer.

That night, Tessa entered a lucid dream and channeled her efforts to travel to Tony's subconscious. She found herself in a beautiful garden, surrounded by colorful flowers and towering trees. She looked around in wonder, taking in the beauty of Tony's dream world.

As she explored the garden, Tessa suddenly heard a rustling in the bushes. She turned around and saw Tony, looking angry and disappointed. "I thought we agreed you would never come here," he said sternly.

Tessa was immediately taken aback by Tony's anger. She did not understand how he could feel so strongly about a promise that was made when they were wee children, and Tony's hostility suddenly made Tessa wonder what he had been hiding from her all this time.

All of a sudden, Tony's anger transformed and he became nervous and fidgety. Tessa couldn't help but notice that he was staring at her with a strange intensity. Suddenly, he blurted out, "There's something you need to know Tessa. I-"

In the middle of his sentence, Tessa's older sister, Lily, abruptly stepped out from behind a tree next to Tony.

Completely stunned, Tessa said "Lily?! What are you doing here?"

"Let me explain," Tony said before Lily could answer. "Tess, listen. You know that Lily and I have gotten along since we were young. A few years ago, I kind of developed a crush on her and found out that she felt the same way."

Tessa felt a sharp pang of jealousy and hurt. She had always thought that Tony liked her, not her sister. But as she looked into Tony's eyes, she saw how tormented he was by his feelings for Lily. Even in dreams, Tessa can sense when people's feelings are authentic. Tony was telling the truth.

"Oh," she said solemnly. "I had no idea. And I know I had no place in coming here. I'm just gonna leave - and Tony, don't feel pressured to be my friend anymore. I understand the real reason behind it all now," she said as a tear fell down her cheek.

“Tessa, wait -” Tony jumped forward and reached out to grab Tessa’s hand before she disappeared. As the tip of his fingers made contact with hers, Tessa was enveloped in a rush of memories from one of Tony’s dreams. Tony was using his power on her in his own dream.

First in the memory was Tony standing at the base of a tall water tower. It was rusty and old, but it stood tall against the sky. Lily was standing next to him, smiling from ear to ear and beckoning him to follow her.

Tony followed Lily as she began to climb up the water tower, the rusty metal rungs creaking beneath their feet. Tony could feel his heart racing with excitement and fear, but Lily seemed unfazed by the height. As they climbed higher, the view from the top became more and more breathtaking. The sky was a bright blue, sun rays beamed from all across the sky, and birds chirped happily in the fresh air. This dream was heaven, and Tessa felt the most pain she had ever felt while being inside of it.

When they finally reached the top, Tony and Lily sat down and gazed out at the view below. The city and its freeways of cars twinkled in the distance. Tessa felt a strange feeling of calm wash over Tony. In this dream, he realized that he was falling in love with Lily.

Suddenly, it all made sense to Tessa why Lily dreamed of Tessa and Tony getting married. Lily had always been friendly with Tony, but Tessa never knew that Lily felt a twinge of jealousy whenever she saw Tessa and Tony together. The dream that Tessa saw from Lily was actually symbolic of Lily’s own fear and insecurity that Tessa and Tony would end up together in the end.

Suddenly, Tessa jolted out of the dream and woke in a panic. Even though she was back in the conscious world, it was no longer a place she wanted to stay. Visiting other people’s dreams used to be her getaway, but her reason for coming back to the real world was always Tony. Now, she had none. There was no way she could even look at Tony the same after seeing what she saw in his dreams. She immediately regretted breaking their oath, even though it uncovered the truth. In all honesty, the truth was something she wished she never found out. Tessa had been living in ignorance for years in her relationship with Tony, but to her; it was real-life bliss.

As a young girl, Tessa always believed that dreams were sacred to the soul. She felt guilty invading the inner psyches of others, but she had no other choice. Dreams are glimpses into the deepest parts of people’s minds, a window into their innermost thoughts and desires. But traveling to Tony’s dream that night showed Tessa that dreams are also the homes of people’s most personal secrets.

Just as Tony carefully guarded his deepest, darkest secrets, he also held his most cherished dreams close to his heart. After seeing this dream with Lily, Tessa lost sight of what defined Tony as an individual, and knew that she could no longer be his one and only.

Still laying in bed trying to console her heavy heart, Tessa told herself, “Dreams are messages from the universe. They give us glimpses into what we are meant to do and who we are meant to be. And secrets are often the things that we keep hidden from the world because we don’t know how people will react to them. Tony and Lily were just waiting for the right time to reveal theirs.”

This did not help Tessa whatsoever. She began to resent herself for her dream walking ability, and for the way it drastically affected her real-world too. As the days passed, Tessa found herself becoming increasingly depressed and anxious. She couldn't shake the feeling that she had lost her best friend, and she felt the weight of Tony and Lily’s lie pressing down on her, threatening to crush her spirit.

Eventually, Tessa was forced to confront the reality of her situation. She realized that her ability to enter into other people's dreams was not a gift at all. It was a curse, one that had thrust her into a world of pain and suffering that she was too ill-equipped to handle. She knew that she needed to let go of her ability, to find a way to move on and live her life without being burdened by the secrets of others that she was never meant to find out.

As time went on, Tessa chose to lay in pitch-black darkness the entire entire night rather than dream walk. Ever since she stopped dream walking, the nights were excruciatingly long, dark, lonesome and quiet. But anything was better than reliving the heartbreak of seeing Tony and her older sister Lily in love.

Eventually, Tessa lost her ability to dream walk after not practicing for such a long period of time. She had long, restful nights of sleep, but still felt the heartache every passing day.

Tessa and Tony never talked again after the dream.

Essays

Character Analysis

Representative character: “Witch”

Individual character: Daniel from “The Appropriation of Cultures”

Representative Characters

Representative characters remain fairly consistent across various stories and forms of literature. A representative character has certain qualities and traits that remain constant in different stories, therefore these characters represent a particular kind of person that most readers have already developed a schema for. Representative characters function in a way that readers can easily translate them into real life and real culture. Often these characters reach the extremes of good or bad human behavior, and their personalities can also represent an entire subcultural group (i.e., a witch may represent both a victim and a heroine, triumph, and oppression). Other representative characters may symbolize certain values and ideals; thus making the moral of a story come more into fruition as readers further analyze what said representative character stands for via their thoughts and/or actions. Representative characters also accomplish specific tasks and roles that help strengthen the given narrative of the story. Without strong representation, core ideologies that a story may be aiming to demonstrate become unclear. In “Hungry Horse”, the witch character initially represents an outsider because of the magical deceit she displays through the horse that works tirelessly without the need for food. It is insinuated to readers that opposing characters in “Hungry Horse” should not trust the witch, which further translates to other forms of literature in which witches are often the traitors of a story. However, at the end of the story, the witch’s performing duty and value is revealed to be that of Karma. She makes sure that the main character of the story gets what he deserves. Since the main character stole unjustly, she turned him into the hungry horse that he once took advantage of. Thus, the witch character in “Hungry Horse” represented justice and the transcendence of socially oppressive systems. Though most representative characters will act in a more predictable way than individual characters, the way the witch in “Hungry Horse” surprisingly turned the man into a horse further demonstrated the specific type of character that the witch was fulfilling (magically cunning, yet just). She was not an evil witch that other representative witch characters turn out to be. Interestingly, representative characters that are the same archetype can symbolize different values or groups depending on the direction of the narrative. Hence, there can be many different “types” of the same kind of character which makes the world of literature completely limitless. “Hungry Horse” was a story in which the representative character became less idealized and more realistic as the story went on (she surprised readers by punishing another for an unfair deed). To me, representative characters are less open to interpretation because they are fulfilling a concrete type of person or standing for a particular value. Representative characters also tend to be more static as a story unfolds.

Individual Characters

On the other hand, individual characters tend to have more depth to them, thus making them more relatable than representative characters. Individual characters are more layered which makes them less predictable in their thoughts and actions. Often, individual characters are seen as three dimensional and more compelling.

In “Cultural Appropriation” Daniel is different from a representative character because he has a personal motivation that sets him apart from others, which is to reframe the meaning behind /

take ownership of the Confederate flag on behalf of African American people in the U.S. This task and desire is unique in itself, which automatically distinguishes him from the rest of the characters of the story. The unpredictability of this personal motivation also completely sets the tone of the narrative to come. Because this desire of Daniel's is intriguing and seemingly hard to accomplish, this makes him as an individual character more relatable and "humanized". In the real world, people want unrealistic things all the time. Humans are irrational, just how Daniel bought the truck with the Confederate flag sticker on the back. This would make you question Daniel and his thought process, therefore proving that he is a layered character that readers will become more invested in. Individual characters are much more open to interpretation because of their layers. They don't coincide with one idea or value, but can instead symbolize *multiple*. This opens the doors to many different routes that an individual character may take, which takes readers' interpretations in various directions depending on what they resonate with. What makes individual characters more relatable than representative characters is their ability to evolve throughout a story.

Dream Narrative / Narrative Analysis

A dream narrative is a dream presented in story form. However, it does not have to unfold in a coherent, logical way as most narratives (especially “waking” narratives) do. Dream narratives came about from actual dreams’ ability to make stories out of nothing. Most dreams contain real themes, problems, people, and objects that align closely with real life. But because dreams are remembered in such a fragmented way, narratives that unfold in dreams are weaved together in bizarre, seemingly impossible, yet life-like timeframes and casualties. Dream narratives reject conventional storytelling and any psychological coherence. Anadalou posits that dream narratives revolve around free association and the impromptu. The real-life films that are made to demonstrate dream narratives follow this formula of free association, which is how these filmmakers master the art of creating such dreamlike content. Another remarkable thing about dream narratives is that most of the bizarre occurrences within dreams are real, well-known phenomena found in literature and narrative genres (like film, comics, novels, etc). Dreams and dream narratives can be unsettling to people because they eliminate all logical associations. In fact, according to Anadalou, dream narratives deliberately and programmatically give priority to striking images and symbolism.

I believe dreams do not harness as strong of a story form as waking life does, because waking life transpires in a more coherent, logical way that makes sense to us. Dreams can often be random and bounce around various timelines. Some dreams may mean something to someone, while others mean absolutely nothing. However, this disagreement can be reconciled once an individual knows that if a specific dream means something to them, then that means something in itself. It is then up to the individual to proactively connect their dream to the current contexts of their “waking” life. Most narratives that we see in movies and stories, as well as anyone’s version of a “waking” narrative, involve a steady progression of meaning using a coherent arc of exposition, a climax of some sort, and a de-escalation. Dream narratives revolve around allusive and rather anecdotal symbols that reveal abstract themes or hidden meanings that are relevant to a person’s life. Real or “waking” narratives consist mainly of perceptions and stimulations that come from the physical, external world. On the other hand, the most authentic feelings of pleasure, anger, sadness, or distaste can only arise from within the mental apparatus (according to Freud). This is what makes dream narratives more revealing and to the inner psyche than real-world narratives. According to Anadalou, unlike conventional narrative structures where space and time are subordinated to the logic of causality; “dream narratives have associative structures that are dominated by poetic rhetoric and the logic of the imagination.”

In my opinion, we experience dreams because it is when we sleep that our unconscious is able to begin free-flowing, unhindered by what’s happening in waking life. The purpose of dreams, to me, is to demonstrate to us our desired (and maybe somewhat elusive) goals. More simply put, the physical body is able to get the rest it needs, but our mind and inner psyche can live out simulations without putting the body in danger. Freud is well-known for his belief that dreams represent someone’s desires for wish fulfillment. Hence, what is in a dream is what someone wishes for. I believe that there is some truth to this, because dreams often reveal the countless hidden motives behind a thought or feeling. Dreams never come down to one singular desire, but can reveal *all* of someone’s desires meshed together in an imaginative, illogical way. Hence, dreams adhere to the overdetermination rule that was posed by Freud. In waking life, the action of recollecting and describing thoughts or feelings often involves the participant leaving it

all down to one singular motive. This is not as accurate. Dream narratives allow someone to understand their inner dialogue in a way that doesn't involve as much shame or logistics. As Freud says, there is no "self-reproach" when it comes to an individual's dream narrative. This also applies to the dream narratives we see in film.

My recalled dream:

I had this dream the night of February 13th. It was set in the current day, in the same house which I live now (in Orange). It also involves my same roommates, except there was a new roommate who is a girl I've met a long time ago from Santa Barbara. Her name is Zoey. I've only met her once and it was in September of last year. The only reason I think she was in my dream was because the day before I had this dream, my friend posted a picture of her. From my first impression in waking life, Zoey is a decent person. The dream starts by me opening the door to my front porch. A strange woman is standing there, as if she owns the place. Without a word, she tries to walk into my house through the front door. I obviously blocked her (because stranger danger), but she was very persistent in wanting to get into my house. In this dream, for whatever reason, I am exceptionally strong. So, I picked her up and carried her off my porch and out to the street. I almost dropped her onto the street as if she was a doll. The woman still did not say anything. The dream suddenly flashed forward to hours later - it was now dark outside. I came home to my bedroom that had been ransacked. Zoey (the new roommate) admits that she purposely opened my bedroom window and helped the strange woman climb through the window to steal what she wanted out of my bedroom. When admitting this, she was laughing as if it was funny, and that she was glad she did it. I was appalled, angry, and yelling unashamedly at Zoey. The strange woman took random things of mine - like lotion, shoes, a hat, and some of my makeup. Oddly enough, she left all of my valuables in-place (my passport, headphones, iPad). Even though the things stolen from me were easily replaceable, I felt so betrayed by Zoey. Sometimes when I feel strong feelings in a dream, they are passionate that the feelings are still there when I wake up. I woke up the morning I had this dream quite angry and essentially pissed off. I feel ashamed about this, but the dream ended when I started to beat Zoey up for what she did, like really violently. That is all I remember. To me, this dream is a testament to the trust issues that I have in people. I often think that people are out to get me, even when they truly aren't.

Reflecting on the Human Condition Through the Act of Writing

Sarah Manguso's *The Guardians* is a memoir or elegy of sorts that explores her experience of sharing a friendship with someone who suffered from a rare neurological disorder, and then going through the process of grieving his death by suicide. The book takes readers on a journey through Manguso's life as she grapples with the difficulties of losing someone important to her and trying to maintain her own sense of self. While presenting readers with a series of fragmented vignettes of her life, Manguso explores the perplexing nature of time, memory, and the experience of being there for a friend who developed a life-hindering disorder much later in his life. As I read the book, I discovered that the story is not about rage, but is about the process of accepting the loss of the loved one, and allowing oneself to experience the most complex form of grief that there is. Manguso's writing is characterized by a graceful, almost poetic style, which allows her to capture the emotional complexity of her experience in a few carefully chosen words. As the book progresses, *The Guardians* evolves into a haunting, yet deeply moving and powerful meditation on the complex nature of love, loss, and the human condition.

Throughout the book, Manguso reflects on the nature of memory, time, and the act of writing itself. This can be seen when she writes "The unifying theme of all my work, fiction and nonfiction, was the nature of time and memory, the way they press on us, the way they simultaneously collapse and expand, the way they make us feel at once human and superhuman and merely human" (34). One specific theme that Manguso raises in the book that speaks to her beliefs about the act of writing is the challenge of accurately and coherently representing the experiences of other people. As the book goes on, it becomes obvious that Manguso struggles to capture and demonstrate the complex feelings and experiences of her friend Harris. She writes, "How do you write about a life that's not your own? How do you represent a person you love?" (13). This is the question that is at the heart of the book. It becomes increasingly obvious that Manguso wrestles with the difficulty of doing justice to Harris's experiences, yet she outwardly acknowledges the limits of her own perspective in-comparison to the truth of what happened when Harris died.

In the beginning of the book, one of the key insights that Manguso offers on the theme of accurately representing the experiences of others in her own writing is the importance of practicing humility. She does this by blatantly recognizing that any attempt to represent another person's experience will end up being incomplete and imperfect in some. This can be seen when she writes, "I can only hope to approximate his experience, to record what I see and hear and sense of him, to write it all down and try to give it meaning" (14). Manguso's emphasis on the importance of approximating, rather than capturing, Harris's experience highlights the honesty and humility that is required of any writer who is aiming to represent the experiences of others.

Another important aspect of Manguso's approach to this theme is her willingness to acknowledge the limitations of her own perspective on the situation. Readers see Manguso clearly recognize that her experience of caring for Harris is shaped by her own biases, assumptions, and preconceptions of him developed during their long relationship. She writes, "What I see in Harris is what I can see, what I can bear to see, what I choose to see" (16). This recognition of her own limitations is a powerful reminder of the importance of practicing self-reflection and self-awareness during the act of writing.

To further address the act of writing throughout the story, Manguso also expresses the importance of writing as a means of processing and making sense of life's difficult experiences. She does this by describing how actually writing about her experience of losing Harris allows her to "take control of the story" (61), and to create a sense of coherence out of the chaos and uncertainty of the situation. Manguso demonstrates this when she says, "Writing was my way of understanding my life, my way of finding the order in the disorder" (14). The way the story changes and morphs as the book progresses is a prime example of how Manguso processes the experience of Harris' death as the story unfolds. Initially, *The Guardians*' focus is on the practicalities of having a relationship with someone like Harris. This can be seen when Manguso describes the challenges of navigating Harris' unpredictable mood swings and questionable decisions, especially when living so far away from him during times when he was at his worst. However, as the book unfolds, the focus shifts to the emotional and psychological toll of losing Harris after his death. One can begin to see how Manguso grapples with feelings of frustration, guilt, and grief while also remembering the best times that she shared with Harris. Manguso writes "I was the guardian of Harris's brain, the custodian of his life, and I had failed him" (47).

Manguso's writing also exemplifies her own personal processing of Harris' death when she mentions that he still exists through the memories she has with him. She writes, "He was the person I loved, the person who loved me, the person who once was, and the person who still is, somehow" (143). Later in the story, Manguso vividly describes Harris's physical decline, and the toll it takes on him and the people around him; but she also emphasizes the enduring impact he had on her life and the memories that continue to shape her understanding of him even after he's gone. Manguso further elaborates on the act of writing itself when she suggests that Harris still exists through the words she puts on paper about him. Manguso states that by writing about Harris, she is creating a memorial to him that keeps him present in some shape or form. This can be seen when she says "The work of the writer is to make sure the dead are never forgotten" (151). However, Manguso's approach to the question of Harris's existence is characterized by a sense of uncertainty and ambiguity. She acknowledges that there is no clear answer to the question of what happens to a person's soul or consciousness after they die, but eventually she learns to accept the mystery and complexity of this question rather than trying to provide a definitive answer. Readers can see this through the quote, "I don't know what happens after we die. No one does" (142).

Overall, Sarah Manguso's *The Guardians* offers a thoughtful and nuanced exploration of the challenges of representing the experiences of others in writing. By emphasizing the importance of humility and self-reflection, Manguso offers valuable insights for anyone who seeks to write about the lives, experiences, or the complex truths of others. She also normalizes the experience of intense grief when she writes "Grief is the story that tells itself. You can't outrun it" (111). This quote exemplifies that through her act of writing an elegy about Harris, Manguso comes to terms with and accepts her own process of grieving. Overall, the story *The Guardians* offers a glimpse into the emotional intensity and philosophical depth of experiencing a deep, complex relationship with someone and then losing them unexpectedly. Through the act of writing, Manguso explores themes of time, memory, love, loss and grief, and the human condition in accordance with the concepts of illness and mortality.

Mid-Semester Reflection

When reading “The Stream of Consciousness”, I found myself intrigued by the existing connections between consciousness and writing. I’ve learned quite a lot about consciousness through the psychological lens, but I have never considered how someone’s stream of consciousness can be conveyed through their writing. The practice of constantly writing without pausing, or thinking before writing down an idea allows someone to achieve what’s called a “flow.” When I find my personal flow in writing, I tend to be more creative - and that’s when I usually come up with my best ideas. Writing in a more free-flowing, dynamic way helps me to not overthink too hard, and it keeps my train of thought consistent. Initially, I thought the idea of using my stream of consciousness to write may be cathartic and useful at the moment, but dysfunctional and hard to read once I have a finished product. However, upon further reflection, I do think that writing with my stream of consciousness is especially beneficial in the pre-writing process because it gets my ideas out. I also think that writing in this way cultivates more perplexing ideas since thoughts can flow from the brain straight to the paper without any inhibitors. Later on, a writer can go back and edit so that my piece of writing seems more polished for the readers.

In James’ “Stream of Consciousness, I resonated with this quote the most: “Within each personal consciousness states are always changing.” This makes sense, considering writing using the stream of consciousness creates what feels like a flow of thoughts and ideas. This makes me infer that when we ignore our own streams of consciousness, our thoughts and ideas may be misguidedly broken down into basic experiences that are too static or simple, they lose their meaning.

Creating an erasure poem from the book pages given to us was much more limiting than I thought it would be. Since the poem’s content depended mostly on the pre-established words on the page, I found myself having a harder time connecting one idea to the next in a coherent way. Once I was able to formulate a general direction to take my poem given the words on the page, it was easier to find a flow because I took a more “uncovering ideas” approach, rather than formulating ideas. Picking words and phrases that stuck with me became easier when I framed it as a process of illumination. Upon further reflection, I do like the concept that a poem could be hidden inside any type of text. After finishing my first erasure poem, I would like to experiment making more erasure poems with different types of source texts. It would be interesting to make a love poem out of words from a newspaper or magazine article. With erasure, texts that are considered “unpoetic” can become poetic with just a little bit of reworking.

Imitating the O’Hara love poem was a lot easier than I originally thought it would be. Before beginning to write, I assumed that following the poem structure would feel quite limiting to me. I thought I would really have to scrounge for ideas that fit O’Hara’s exact template. Surprisingly, the poem structure acted as a perfect guide to unlocking a free flow, and I think my personal stream of consciousness (referring back to James’ essay,) came out in this poem more than I thought it would. This is because the beginning words of each line in O’Hara’s poem would lead me from one thought to the next in a fluid way. I was following the pre-established lines and allowing them to take me from one thought to the next without being distracted by my personal qualms of my writing style. I found it easier to say intimate, personal things while

imitating O'Hara's structure. Writing in the present like O'Hara also created a stronger sense of immediacy, which encouraged me to record my thoughts and ideas as they were passing through my head. Hence, writing in the present certainly accentuates a flow-like state, or "stream of consciousness" as James calls it. For the future, I am going to remember that writing in the present improves creativity and authenticity in my writing. Writing a love poem in the present gives the words added power and value, because the emotions conveyed are more immediate and intense.

The Brainard Imitation was my favorite piece to write because there were not many constraints. Because you could write in pieces, bounce timelines, and truly just write a memory that passes through your head; I feel as though I achieved fluidity in the sequence of how I perceive my memories in accordance to who I am now. Also, being able to write "I remember" in separate pieces added more complexity and depth to the overall story, because with the end product you can see how some memories carry more weight than others. Overall, I noticed how this specific exercise allowed for more nuanced story development. Even though memories may bounce from one time to another with no coherent pattern, I think that writing in pieces can produce something beautiful because in the end, there is a coherent story. When writing this piece, it was very deeply reflective and I realized I have not sat and reflected upon my memories in a long time. It was certainly a very grounding writing experience. Upon re-evaluating my memories and the sequence of events in my life, I also learned that my memories, and feelings are always in flux. After reading the compiled memories that make up my Brainard Imitation, I felt as though I had just redefined who I am and how the experiences in my life have gotten me here. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing other people's "I remember" anonymously, and found it interesting how my classmates interpreted this assignment in very different ways.