

Complete and Finished Thoughts
By Sierra Prochniak

Tentative Tara

The library closes at 5 so I walked down the street to a cafe. I've been here before but when I look up at the logo lit up in bright white lights, I think of the picture of my friends walking under the tall doorway holding a little blue box with a dessert that must be good but I'm thinking about how I wasn't there on homecoming night and I felt left out but I don't any more. But I did back then and why did that change? I could say that I've built my tolerance for fear of missing out but I can barely tolerate how I miss going out and I've been too busy, that's what I tell my family on Mother's day, and I wonder when they say what a shame that is if they've ever been busy the way I am busy. The mind-numbingly dehumanizing way I have been busy, like Tara¹ with open arms because Lucy called me that at summer camp, which I could say the little girl in me misses but I honestly think it's the big girl that needs it more. Lucy makes me think of floating in the Yuba river and letting the sun cast its glow over me that I've recently come to crave daily but I am not floating in the Yuba with open arms or watching my friends buy a pastry from the pastry store from the long end of my telescope in the sky.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

I've always enjoyed reading plays but something about Shakespeare in particular peaks my interest I've heard the rumor that he isn't real—just a makeup of playwrights—like the man who Banksy might have created as a commentary on art and consumerism² but maybe he is completely real and just a grossly unsettling individual. Shakespeare must have also been grossly unsettling because I wonder if they respected women in Elizabethan England and the answer is probably not so I don't think I would sit down to have a conversation with him but I do admire his art. "Separate the art from the artist" but that only ever applies to male artists usually because how could someone possibly separate a woman from her looks? I've always enjoyed reading plays but Shakespeare draws me in like a moth to the light but the light is iambic pentameter³ and big words I dare to try and understand—by thinking about the Latin root, naturally. Unfortunately fortunate, like when I take tests and I can't focus but I do know that annexation means when something is separate because the annex was a separate building at my old school, before I knew that X marks the spot where the cuckoo birds sing.⁴ I don't often explain why it's so difficult for me to take tests because it almost doesn't sound like a real problem, certainly not worth solving past a pair of orange plastic earbuds. Incredibly unfair yet doubt upon doubt

¹ A powerful Bhuddist Deity, considered the female counterpart to Bodhisattva. She extends her open arms as a gesture of granting boons.

² The protagonist in Banksy's Documentary film "*Exit Through the Gift Shop*."

³ Shakespeare's Globe. "Writing Plays." *Discover: Shakespeare's World*. The Shakespeare Globe Trust.

⁴ A bird with a loud expressive call, used metaphorically to represent those whom I find frustrating at school "X"

infiltrates my mind because is it really a real problem? “I can’t take tests.” What is the true meaning of that? I can’t take tests but I can consider the meaning of annexation and erase and rewrite and erase and rewrite and erase and rewrite my name until *Sierra* is written in the neatest letters you ever did see. If not for neatness, for the way I think I look and feel that day and of course my name has to match the way I look and feel. In that world I am all alone because nobody else has repeatedly rewritten their name not for perfection but because it needs to match and nobody else has ever experienced that. My favorite Shakespeare play is a *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and I’m not really sure why, I think I just decided it was at some point. I can’t take tests but I could tell you about a *Midsummer Night’s Dream* if you asked.

On Writing

How unparalleled am I to myself only three years ago sitting in the back of the classroom turned library because I went to a small school and my graduating class was only 9 people, did you know? Only three years ago I was sitting in the back of that library cozied up in the corner with a laptop open in front of me and a mind filled with characters ready to spill out onto the page. I remember that day the best because I sat there alone but not alone in the sort of way where you feel lonely, I sat there content in my aloneness because I was writing which was the best part of the day. The love I had for writing was inherently indescribable there is no analogy or metaphor that could begin to depict the love I had for writing there is no way to describe the feeling of following your stream of consciousness⁵ but it doesn’t feel like a bumbling mess your stream of consciousness is dialogue because you’re a gifted writer but you know you’re good but you don’t think you’re gifted. “Gifted” is a window shopping word for you because you’re a visual learner and Max drew 16 peaches on the whiteboard for you because you told him you’re a visual learner so therefore you are not “gifted” like the other kids even though Paula Prober⁶ is telling you that you are just like the woman sitting across from you did when you memorized 9 numbers and repeated them back in backwards order a metaphorical precursor to high school which is backwards for you because you’re “gifted” and what does that mean besides screaming *I’M BETTER THAN YOU* in capital letters because I know it doesn’t mean that but the sea sure thinks so.

The Old Man and the Sea⁷

An old man is sitting next to me with two pastries and a coffee and I initially began writing to admire the beauty of something like that—I suspected he was waiting for a date to sit down across from him. But he is sitting here by himself, I would like to say he’s seemingly content but I don’t really know. It made me wonder what’s so wrong with sitting by yourself at a table for two with two pastries but only one of you. I heard on a podcast that it’s okay to sit and eat by yourself because we don’t have to conform to the idea that you have to go out to eat with

⁵ How meta of me

⁶ Psychotherapist and author of “*The Rainforest Mind*.” I truly cannot decide if I love or hate this woman.

⁷ The title of the dullest book I’ve ever read (no offense Hemingway), in this context, “sea” refers to a sea or group of people

another person. But it made me wonder that if I am thinking about this man in the context of a podcast then am I addicted to my phone like everyone decides I so undoubtedly am? Maybe it's taboo to question that because I could easily say it hasn't and move on. I could pretend it doesn't matter when I know it does because it's social media that has taken over 'our' lives but it makes my hands ball up and my face wince just to think about being truthful just to say "social media has taken over our lives" is such a confident statement from a person who professes it without confidence god that is such a childish yet adult way to profess that. I sit in the gaping hole left for me by the previous teenager who's eyes were glued to a screen and their hand cupping the a phone like a hot drink on the coldest day of the year, and I wonder if I am the same. I wonder if they are the same or if they are happen to be looking at their phone and I am putting them in a box. The old man has asics like my Grandpa and I think that if I were sitting alone I would want someone to start a conversation with me and I think of this but I don't do it and then I feel guilty that I didn't talk to him because I'm contributing to the epidemic of chosen isolation in society and I don't want him to think I am just another teenager addicted to my phone because I want to try and talk to him, I really do.

On Writing II

I remember writing a story that took place in ancient Greece and I used thick description⁸ only because I had read the Percy Jackson series but hey it sure worked because last time I looked back at that story it was not half bad. Actually it was pretty good and I don't want to admit that I used to be better than I think I now because I know I am a good writer but I don't want to say that because don't brag and keep it to yourself but it is important to know your abilities. In all honesty it doesn't matter the extent to which I'm a good writer because it was fun and made me happy which is really truly all that matters doesn't it. I was so incredibly creative and a big part of me fears that I've lost that even though I am only 17 and is the truth really that I haven't had time to write or have I just lost my magic? During science class my best friend at the time and I wrote letters to each other from the perspective of children who lived in a magical fantasy world we had created a love triangle and everything like the Folklore⁹ love triangle but within letters which is so beautiful to me creativity at it's finest and I wonder if any of my friends now would want to do something like that again because she has already committed to college and that doesn't mean she's not a kid anymore but it does subliminally mean something like that doesn't it? A letter is a bridge from my soul to your soul¹⁰ and when I look at our letters I know she was creative the exact same way I was which I truly needed and maybe I need it again.

⁸ Lepore, Jill. "Historical Writing and the Revival of Narrative." *Nieman Reports*, 18 May 2021

⁹ The persistent relevancy of Taylor Swift

¹⁰ Wells, Amos Russel. "Letters." *Poetry Explorer- Classic Contemporary Poetry*

Bibliography

Lepore, Jill. "Historical Writing and the Revival of Narrative." *Nieman Reports*, 18 May 2021, Accessed 26 May 2023.

niemanreports.org/articles/historical-writing-and-the-revival-of-narrative

In this article, Lepore explores narrative writing and explains how narrative techniques have been used efficiently in academic and journalistic settings throughout history. She defines how narrative writing and storytelling can authenticate a claim in other genres of writing, without turning the work into a narrative itself.

When discussing the uncharted territory where narrative writing and academic writing intertwine—historical narratives—Lepore introduces the technique of “thick description,” allowing authors to detail a distant culture or time period by describing particular practices.

I was inspired by the way Lepore outlines the interconnection between writing styles to write about my own relationship with writing. I used to love narrative style writing and considered it to be easy and fun, especially historical narratives, in which I used “thick description” without knowing what it was. Now, I find I have less time to sit down and write stories but I do see practiced narrative techniques show up in my academic writing.

Wells, Amos Russel. "Letters." *Poetry Explorer- Classic Contemporary Poetry*, Accessed 30 May 2023.

www.poetryexplorer.net/poem.php?id=10139264

Letters is a short contemporary poem by 19th century author Amos Russel Wells. He uses vivid and expressive language to reflect on the romantic nature of letter writing and how it can

bridge two individuals together through communication. Furthermore, he explores the idea that writing can never truly disappear because anything written on paper has been brought into existence, an action which can never be undone. Even if we burn letters, “They are preserved in the mansions above!”

A fitting literary work for its context—a perfect description of why I consider writing those letters in my seventh grade science class to be meaningful. I was lucky to find someone creative in the same way I was, and our collective imagination forged a connection between us.

Shakespeare’s Globe. “Writing Plays.” *Discover: Shakespeare’s World*. The Shakespeare Globe Trust. Accessed 30 May 2023.

<https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/shakespeares-world/writing-plays/>

Shakespeare’s Globe is a resource for tourists staying in London to see what plays are showing in their vicinity. However, they have an educational page where they break down London’s most famous playwrights—highlighting Shakespeare.

This source mostly exists to inform individuals about Shakespeare’s playwrighting process and the basic categories his plays were classified as, however, it encouraged me to delve deeper into who the complexities of who he was instead of just stating that I enjoyed his work. I have never considered questioning why I enjoy Shakespeare’s plays so much, which ultimately led me to consider what I would want to say if I were to have a conversation with him.