
Editors' Introduction

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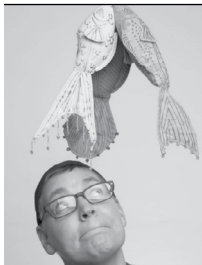
Lawrence KS

The words of a reviewer for this, the third issue of *Writers: Craft & Context*, perfectly capture the spirit of the writing gathered here; this collection “advances our understanding of how personal, embodied reality always bears down on our ‘work.’” While most of us know this, of course, the pieces in this issue “remin[d] us that writing is a tool for making sense and coping, not just for keeping our jobs.” We, too, are so grateful for this message, “especially now during this cultural moment shaped by so much loss and grief.” As editors working with the writers and reviewers involved in this issue, we marveled at the power of writing to comfort, inspire, connect, heal, and transform. As many of the contributors attest, traditional academic spaces do not always invite or even allow writing that works in these ways. We can almost hear in the submissions a big sigh of relief for the opportunity to write something more authentic or creative or cathartic than a traditional research article. Indeed, the work published in these pages seems to be a friendly near neighbor to the kinds of writing many academics or professional writers are required to do. That this type of writing is not required for our institutionally ascribed benchmarks does not make it any less essential. In fact, we might argue this writing—the mash-up, the genre-bending review, the memorialization, the epistolary, the queer autoethnography and, yet again, the ever present personal narrative and critical self-reflection—is what we need to get us through these trying times. In a world where so much has changed, from professional and social interactions to grocery shopping, writing remains a constant. Writing is happening. The manuscripts in this issue represent an anchoring message for our readership that *WCC* continues to hold space for that writing, the writing that matters most. Below we share our thoughts on the contents of this current issue.

In her essay about moving forward and memorializing, author Rita Malenczyk expresses, “It’s hard for me to talk in any kind of brief, definitive way about what this essay is. If pressed (which I sort of am now) I’d say that it’s a reflection on coming to terms with what is possibly the most terrible thing that can happen to a parent, and doing so while one is a teacher, scholar, and writer.” The piece is a testament to the power of writing to move us along in the face of the inconceivable. The message is particularly poignant as we writers, teachers, and scholars begin yet another semester shaped by overlapping pandemics. As a reviewer remarked, “We need stories like



Our Open Journal System (OJS) platform is maintained at the University of Oklahoma. We’d like to acknowledge that site as supportive, but also troubling. Oklahoma is home to 39 tribal nations, each of which has a distinctive culture, history, and government. We acknowledge that the history of the university and the state represents settler colonialism and remains in tension with what we now understand about the lands proclaimed “unassigned” and opened for white settlement in 1889.



Cover Photo Credit

Cedar Marie is an Assistant Professor of Art and a Faculty Fellow at the Center for Writing Excellence at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. Her experience of writing is as much a sculptural process as it is an intellectual one. There is a physicality with writing—she physically cuts up sentences and paragraphs and assembles them on the floor or curates a storyboard. In the cover photograph, text and images of a manuscript are arranged on a wall in her studio as she develops her book-length study of the women who fish in Sitka, Alaska.

this as we go about the ordinariness of academic life: deadlines, teaching assignments, committee meetings, publishing goals and deferments. We need to better account for how all of this stuff gets tangled up with grief, becomes background to grief, saves us from our thoughts when grief is too much.”

Lisa Lebduška contributes a lovely and disruptive reconsideration of the kinds of writing advice many of us have received from our professors in her essay “Refusing to Kill My Darlings.” We think her caution is important to hear: the clichéd expressions we pass along to writers must be examined for the ways they reproduce epistemic injustice. We must take care, as teachers and editors, when calling for revision that erases rather than reveals identities; revision can be the power tool of elite English rather than a way for writers to learn more about why they want to say what they want to say. One reviewer remarked, “[This essay] helped me make connections we don’t often make between ‘creative writing’ (however we define that), academic writing, craft, and whiteness.”

Paula Schumacher’s “On Becoming a Research Geek” reveals the infrastructure necessary to develop a novel that includes historically reliable material and characters. Anyone who thinks a fantasy or science-fiction novel is made up of whatever cleverness a writer simply pulls from their imagination may be surprised at the level of intentionality and detail needed in constructing such tales. This piece is not just a reflection on an individual writing process but is also a helpful example that budding fiction writers might appreciate as they go about world building. One reviewer told us, “I really enjoyed reading about an actual writer’s actual research process,” and we hope you will too.

In “Exploring the Diversity of Everyday Experiences through the Humans of the University of Wisconsin-Stout Facebook Assignment,” Genesee M. Carter reflects on an assignment she developed to teach predominantly white students about “the diversity of everyday experiences.” Written in the form of a “mash-up genre” that blends the personal essay and research writing, Carter critically considers how her transformation from an evangelical Christian Republican to a non-Christian liberal progressive shaped assignment design and pedagogy. Carter’s piece is an invigorating call to double down on our efforts as educators at all levels to attend to the role of “difference” in teaching and learning. Carter’s willingness to be vulnerable and transparent about her personal journey compels ongoing individual and collective consideration of how political and religious beliefs shape curriculum and to what effect.

Through critical personal narrative, Sarah Keeton explores how identity is negotiated at the site of their Black, queer body. They use autoethnography as a method to record their lived experiences in the context of the social, cultural, and political world, as this writing explores their experiences with the education system and how their identities and experiences have influenced how they interact with the world, their perception of self, and their relationship

with writing. Through critical self-reflection, Keeton describes how embodying an ethic of love and experiencing supportive role models within the education system allows students to resist racist indoctrination and find their way to embodying healing and Black self-love. We, as editors, believe this essay is a gift.

Continuing in the spirit of Pauline Baird’s genre-bending book review published in *WCCJ* V2 n1, Shenita Denson takes a creative approach to her review of Louis M. Maraj’s (2020) *Black or Right: Anti/Racist Campus Rhetorics*, crafting her reflections on the book in relation to her experiences as a Black doctoral student, college lecturer, and former student affairs professional in predominantly white spaces. In the words of one reviewer, Denson’s “voice is present and powerful,” but not as a pompous critic, which is often the case in book reviews. Instead, Denson falls in step with Maraj as a fellow runner (to continue a metaphor from the review), passing the baton, forwarding the progress of a swelling movement, demonstrating and amplifying the insights and intentions at the heart of a collective transformative effort.

As we begin a new academic year, the uncertainty associated with the delta variant of COVID prompts us to assess our personal and individual commitments to community.

How might trauma and grief be processed differently if we truly worked in community and cared about the collective? How does an individual decision to not be vaccinated (in cases where someone could be) change the spaces where we meet—both in person and online? How can our writing bring a renewed sense of acting for the greater good?

Perhaps getting involved with us, with this journal, is one way to work in community to support the kinds of healing and meaning making writing can foster. Let us know if you’d like to be a writing mentor, reviewer, or author—or all three. We welcome more heads, hearts, and hands around the project of publishing work about writers and their writing.

**Thank you -
Reviewers V2.2**

Cedric Burrows
Tamika Carey
Caroline Dadas
Maria Chaves Daza
Laura Gibbs
Mara Lee Grayson
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