

The Writer's Journey Essay

by Sara Kumar

I once heard a philosophy professor say that Jane Austen wrote on the fringes of poetry. Is Nonfiction Writing poetic or is it lyrical and what is a fringe? We'll come back to this in a moment, so first let us talk about some important elements of writing, and why I write.

~Writing is about transcendence.

~Writing is useful.

~Writing is about tempo.

~Writing is lyrical sometimes.

Writing is about transcendence. We could say we move beyond ourselves in a way that brings peace, and so it is a useful thing to write actually. I am writing now a Nonfiction Essay about the Art of Writing, and I am happy to sit and write here. I see images in my mind sometimes. I see the form of a chair, for example.

I now go to a film directed by Mel Gibson and see the character of Jesus sitting without a chair, and I know he is thinking about a chair. My heart is touched by grace, and I think I can reach something beyond myself. I am thinking about sitting with Martha and Mary and opening a jar now.

The form of a chair is an idea beyond me that helps me. This idea exists within me, and so I don't have to pull myself to find that idea, because I am given this idea, and I can sit with it, and Jesus smiles in my imagination.

Writing is useful and helps me find my dreams. Jane Austen wrote about women who wanted to be married and who needed money in life. Her stories bring joy and help me think about romance.

Jane Austen's "Sense and Sensibility" was adapted by Emma Thompson in the year 1995, and this was a movie about prudence and passion. People sat down and talked to each other about matters of household management, about poetry, and about forgiveness. They also sat down and waited for something to do. These are images that stay with me, and they were written by a screenwriter who was writing down movement. Writing helps move a person in time, space, or both. This movement can occur in a person's mind also, as it does when there is a blackout on screen for a moment or an empty place with music perhaps. Although Emma Thompson's work is not Poetry, this Fictional Screenwriting is lyrical because the chair points to something, and it becomes a symbol.

I think about this symbol of the chair now, and I think of a film directed by Jason Reitman about motherhood. The woman who is the protagonist of the film speaks about finding a chair and a husband, and we see that motherhood can be difficult. Through the movement of the writing, we see how characters deal with matters of love and difficulty. Writing is about the tempo of life.

My Non Fiction writing is journalistic writing. I look at telegrams, letters, and newspaper clippings, and I write a story about what was happening to people in American political history. Their writing is lyrical to me, because it sings about what they want to achieve in their imaginations. What also inspires me about this is what I call Non Fictional Movement. This is about finding a tempo for the story that does not excite for the sake of excitement, but that helps a reader find peace.

I think about Dramatic Literature in my writing also. In the opening of Tony Kushner's "Homebody Kabul," a character gives a long monologue about travel. We believe she is reading a book, and we cry because she is moved by what she is reading. The movement of the writing does not move like a film that moves quickly, because we stop to see the sites in the journal that she is reading. So too in my writing about Civil War history and Reconstruction, I would like people to listen to the stories of American and Confederate soldiers, former slaves, and political leaders and think about their lives.

I would like my Secondary Genre to be Poetry. I think of the image of the chair with my Poetry also. When people read my poetry, I want them to be open to the Holy Spirit moving them to places to sit.

I think I need to apply to this program in the art and craft of writing at Albertus Magnus College, because I need a community to help me reflect on what I'm writing about. I also want to learn more about how to craft stories technically, if that is possible, because I think there are techniques that I would benefit from by studying with peers and teachers. I also need time to write and read writing.

There is a house in New York City where Langston Hughes lived with his aunt, and there were no chairs there when I went with my mom some years ago. I think we need to sit down and listen to one another read what we have written. And if there is a celebration at the end of this program, I would like to take my true friend to this house and bring some chairs and more friends and listen to the traffic outside in the Harlem neighborhood and think about a firebird singing.

"I want to sew fringes on dresses and sew them well," sings the firebird, "and I want to live within beautiful walls made of stones of pink rock and concrete."