

I. “The Last Music:” Equating music with memory, change, setting, and place

Boogie

(after Terrance Hayes)

As soon as this all is over, I can't wait to have dance parties again. Just like this. My mom said, and my dad pulled her in close. It was 10:32 on a Sunday night and the blue light bulb he screwed in tight was leaking liquid mercury on our white-tile dining room floor. Not actually. Let me begin again. Sergio Mendez and Ciara. Michael Jackson and Roy Ayers. Don Omar and Daddy Yankee. Sean Paul and a DJ called Spiller. Chanteuses and crooners crowding that track that never got credit for voices that haunt these Chicago house-built houses. I unscrew myself and let my elbows fly. I think, you could track a lifetime in songs stuck on repeat. Hermanita next to me, all bones and limbs and lithe aliveness, says, this is why I love this family. Ma and Pa forget the fight they'll probably have later, let love bubble up without catching in their throat, let their bodies catch light from the other's smile, and I see the couple who kicked off the floor, so they always say, at every club, every party, and I see where I get my abandon. At 11:11 I wish for a lifetime of impromptu dance parties. Let me begin again. At 11:11 I wish for a world of dance parties. Let me begin again. At 11:11 I wish for a dance party so good it deconstructs self-interest. For a groove to catch, a beat to drop, and it all to shake down okay. With this verse, my mama praises the patients she'll wake up and take to tomorrow. With this chorus, my dad pushes back the attacking signs that he might have colon cancer (?). With this bridge, hermanita says, I miss this when we go too long without. I spin her like we learned in dance. My dad says, you could be twins. He says, Luna, you could lead those cha-cha lessons on cruise ships. My hips, boyish but heartbreaking, laugh. Tracks later, Pa trickles off y hermanita también, and Ma and I are belting about twenty-something sadnesses she hasn't grappled with in some time but I'm wading my way through presently. Between taking her hair down and kicking off her shoes she says, baby, you deserve the world, and I almost miss it. If I get this world, I will bring it back to her.

By Luna Dragon Mac-Williams
Published on *SWWIM Every Day*

Bio: Luna Dragon Mac-Williams is a playwright, poet, actor, dancer, jeweler, editor, educator, and undergraduate student at Wesleyan University. She is a proud Chicagoan, born and raised.

Her one-act play, “Good Strong Coffee,” premiered at Chicago Dramatists through Pegasus Theater in winter 2018. She has recently been published in *Ariel’s Dream*. She believes in sweet coffee, wishing at 11:11, and helping youth honor and share their personal narratives.

“The Last Music” Prompt: Answer these questions. Be as specific as possible in your answers. Then use some or all of the answers in a lyric or narrative poem.

1. What was the last piece of music you heard? (Title and artist)
2. What was the music played on or how was it played? (FM, satellite radio, DJ, cloud service, live, through Zoom, etc.)
3. What kinds of instruments were used in the music?
4. What did you do physically when you heard the music?
5. What was your mood before you heard the music?
6. How did you feel during the music?
7. What was your mood after the music? Did anything change? If so, how and why?
8. Who played you the last piece of music you heard? Describe them. If you played the music, describe yourself.
9. Besides the person who played you the music, was anyone else with you? If so, who? Describe them.
10. Where were you when you heard the music?
11. What style of music was it?
12. What’s important about that style of music? Where does that kind of music come from? Where did it originate? What is its history?
13. Do you like or dislike that style of music? Why or why not?
14. Did you want to hear that piece of music? Were your ears willing or unwilling to receive the music?
15. Did the music have lyrics? If so, what are they about? (You don’t need to quote them but can choose to paraphrase or use pieces of lines to avoid copyright issues.) What does the music sound like onomatopoeically? (See: “A Poem for Ella Fitzgerald” by Sonia Sanchez)

*See more examples of “The Last Music” poems below: “A Poem in Which I Try to Express My Glee at the Music My Friend Has Given Me” by Ross Gay; “Elegy” by Anne Stevenson; “The Everyday Enchantment of Music” by Mark Strand; and “A Poem for Ella Fitzgerald” by Sonia Sanchez

II. “Singing in the Voice of a Hurricane:” Equating music with language, mood, character, and climate

Hurricanes with the Names of My Friends

I hover somewhere back behind
the map inside the skull that guides me
through these small streets
to dinner. Everybody in elegant clothes.
Resting in the air condition. It is inevitable
that we will each die in named storms,
that we will be blown against the walls
behind our faces. Sounds made from
the boxes in my friends’
throats. Be more like the doorway
to the restaurant, to hold and frame
these people. The beer Dan holds,
that weeps in Dan’s left palm.
Jane’s earrings shaped to look like birds.
The soft music, the fixtures.
Cities beneath serious rain. They have
brought out for us complimentary
orange drinks. Jeremy laughs until the joke
is well over, and the music is so low
it is done. We are disappearing into
the map’s folds. Small birds. Smaller ones.

By Jonathan Aprea
Published in *Guernica*

Listen to it: <https://www.guernicamag.com/hurricanes-with-the-names-of-my-friends/>

Bio: Jonathan Aprea is a writer living in New York City. His chapbook *Dyson Poems* was published by Monster House Press in 2018. His poems have appeared in the *Atlas Review*, *Prelude Magazine*, *Newest York*, and elsewhere. You can find him on the web at jonathanaprea.com.

“Singing in the Voice of a Hurricane” Prompt: Every hurricane has a name and, it can be argued, a different character. Research the names of hurricanes and choose one to write a lyric or narrative poem about in first, second, or third person. (You can also write a prose poem or a chant; see more examples.) What did it do? Where did it go? When it made landfall, what happened? The hurricane is the main character, and you’re talking to it, you’re speaking its language, and you’re telling its stories. Don’t forget to use musical diction, imagery, and rhetorical devices.

**See more examples of “Singing in the Voice of a Hurricane” poems below: “Dialect of Hurricanes” by Frankétienne, translated by André Naffis-Sahely; “Chant for a Hurricane” by John Barr; “The Guitar” by Federico García Lorca; “Latin & Soul” by Victor Hernández Cruz; “Storm Ending” by Jean Toomer; “There came a Wind like a bugle” by Emily Dickinson

III. “Praise the Darkness:” Equating music with illness, immigration, and recovery

Leaving Early

My Love,
tonight Fionnuala is your nurse.
You’ll hear her voice sing-song around the ward
lifting a wing at the shore of your darkness.
I heard that, in another life, she too journeyed
through a storm, a kind of curse, with the ocean
rising darkly around her, fierce with cold,
and no resting place, only the frozen
rocks that tore her feet, the light on her shoulders.

And no cure there but to wait it out.
If, while I’m gone, your fever comes down—
if the small, salt-laden shapes of her song
appear as a first glimmer of earth-light,
follow the sweet, hopeful voice of that landing.
She will keep you safe beneath her wing.

By Leanne O’Sullivan
From PoetryFoundation.org

Bio: Leanne O’Sullivan has published three collections from Bloodaxe Books, *The Mining Road* (2013), *Cailleach: The Hag of Beara* (2009), and *Waiting for My Clothes* (2004).

“Praise the Darkness” Prompt: In contemporary poetry, a praise poem or an ode often celebrates an ordinary object as opposed to an exalted one. This exercise calls for writing a poem of praise, love, or appreciation to COVID, coronavirus, doctors or nurses, hospitals, quarantine or lockdown – anything to do with the pandemic. It may sound odd to want to praise illness, surgery, or an accident. But the juxtaposition of unlikely things often reveals great insight, and becomes moments of true teaching. Don’t forget to use musical diction, imagery, and rhetorical devices.

***See more examples of “Praise the Darkness” poems below: “In the Coma” by Robert Pinsky; “Mother’s Day” by Dorianne Laux; “Learning to Mourn” by Robert Winner; and “In Your Sleep” by [Leanne O’Sullivan](#)

Sample/Example Poems:

***A Poem in Which I Try to Express My Glee at the Music My Friend Has Given Me**

—for Patrick Rosal

Because I must not
get up to throw down in a café in the Midwest,
I hold something like a clownfaced herd
of bareback and winged elephants
stomping in my chest,
I hold a thousand
kites in a field loosed from their tethers
at once, I feel
my skeleton losing track
somewhat of the science I’ve made of tamp,
feel it rising up shriek and groove,
rising up a river guzzling a monsoon,
not to mention the butterflies
of the loins, the hummingbirds
of the loins, the thousand
dromedaries of the loins, oh body
of sunburst, body
of larkspur and honeysuckle and honeysuccor
bloom, body of treetop holler,
oh lightspeed body
of gasp and systole, the mandible’s ramble,
the clavicle swoon, the spine’s
trillion teeth oh, drift
of hip oh, trill of ribs,
oh synaptic clamor and juggernaut
swell oh gutracket

blastoff and sugartongue
syntax oh throb and pulse and rivulet
swing and glottal thing
and kick-start heart and heel-toe heart
ooh ooh ooh a bullfight
where the bull might
take flight and win!

By Ross Gay

***Elegy**

Whenever my father was left with nothing to do —
waiting for someone to ‘get ready’,
or facing the gap between graduate seminars
and dull after-suppers in his study
grading papers or writing a review —
he played the piano.

I think of him packing his lifespan
carefully, like a good leather briefcase,
each irritating chore wrapped in floating passages
for the left hand and right hand
by Chopin or difficult Schumann;
nothing inside it ever rattled loose.

Not rationalism, though you could cut your tongue
on the blade of his reasonable logic.
Only at the piano did he become
the bowed, reverent, wholly absorbed Romantic.
The theme of his heroic, unfinished piano sonata
could have been Brahms.

Boredom, or what he disapproved of as
‘sitting around with your mouth open’
oddly pursued him. He had small stamina.
Whenever he succumbed to bouts of winter bronchitis,
the house sank a little into its snowed-up garden,
missing its musical swim-bladder.

None of this suggests how natural he was.
For years I thought fathers played the piano
just as dogs barked and babies grew.

We children ran in and out of the house,
taking for granted that the 'Trout' or E flat Major Impromptu
would be rippling around us.

For him, I think, playing was solo flying, a bliss
of removal, of being alone.
Not happily always; never an escape,
for he was affectionate, and the household hum
he pretended to find trivial or ridiculous
daily sustained him.

When he talked about music, it was never
of the *lachrimae rerum*
that trembled from his drawn-out phrasing
as raindrops phrase themselves along a wire;
no, he deflected movable doh or explained the amazing
physics of the octave.

We'd come in from school and find him
cross-legged on the jungle of the floor,
guts from one of his Steinways strewn about him.
He always got the pieces back in place.
I remember the yellow covers of Schirmer's Editions
and the bound Peters Editions in the bookcase.

When he defected to the cello in later years
Grandmother, *in excrucio*, mildly exclaimed,
'Wasn't it lovely when Steve liked to play the piano.'
Now I'm the grandmother listening to Steve at the piano.
Lightly, in strains from Brahms-Haydn variations,
his audible image returns to my humming ears.

By Anne Stevenson

***The Everyday Enchantment of Music**

A rough sound was polished until it became a smoother sound, which was polished until it became music. Then the music was polished until it became the memory of a night in Venice when tears of the sea fell from the Bridge of Sighs, which in turn was polished until it ceased to be and in its place stood the empty home of a heart in trouble. Then suddenly there was sun and the music came back and traffic was moving and off in the distance, at the edge of the city, a long line of clouds appeared, and there was thunder, which, however menacing, would become music, and the memory of what happened after Venice would begin, and what happened after the home of the troubled heart broke in two would also begin.

By Mark Strand

***A Poem for Ella Fitzgerald**

when she came on the stage, this Ella
there were rumors of hurricanes and
over the rooftops of concert stages
the moon turned red in the sky,
it was Ella, Ella.
queen Ella had come
and words spilled out
leaving a trail of witnesses smiling
amen—amen—a woman—a woman.

she began
this three aged woman
nightingales in her throat
and squads of horns came out
to greet her.

streams of violins and pianos
splashed their welcome
and our stained glass silences
our braided spaces
unraveled
opened up
said who's that coming?
who's that knocking at the door?
whose voice lingers on
that stage gone mad with
perdido. perdido. perdido.
i lost my heart in toledoooooooo.

whose voice is climbing
up this morning chimney
smoking with life
carrying her basket of words
a tisket a tasket
my little yellow
basket—i wrote a
letter to my mom and
on the way i dropped it—
was it red...no no no no
was it green...no no no no
was it blue...no no no no

just a little yellow

voice rescuing razor thin lyrics
from hopscotching dreams.

we first watched her navigating
an apollo stage amid high-stepping
yellow legs
we watched her watching us
shiny and pure woman
sugar and spice woman
her voice a nun's whisper
her voice pouring out
guitar thickened blues,
her voice a faraway horn
questioning the wind,
and she became Ella,
first lady of tongues
Ella cruising our veins
voice walking on water
crossed in prayer,
she became holy
a thousand sermons
concealed in her bones
as she raised them in a
symphonic shudder
carrying our sighs into
her bloodstream.

this voice, chasing the
morning waves,
this Ella-tonian voice soft
like four layers of lace.
*when i die Ella
tell the whole joint
please, please don't talk
about me when i'm gone...*

i remember waiting one nite for her appearance
audience impatient at the lateness
of musicians,
i remember it was april
and the flowers ran yellow
the sun downpoured yellow butterflies
and the day was yellow and silent
all of spring held us

in a single drop of blood.

when she appeared on stage
she became Nut arching over us
feet and hands placed on the stage
music flowing from her breasts
she swallowed the sun
sang confessions from the evening stars
made earth divulge her secrets
gave birth to skies in her song
remade the insistent air
and we became anointed found
inside her bop
bop bop dowa
bop bop doowaaa
bop bop doooooowaaaa

Lady. Lady. Lady.
be good. be good
to me.
to you. to us all
cuz we just some lonesome babes
in the woods
hey lady. sweetellalady
Lady. Lady. Lady. be goooooood
ELLA ELLA ELLALADY
be good
goooooood
goooooood...

By Sonia Sanchez

****Chant for a Hurricane**

Birds have left without a song.
Morning light looks yellow and wrong.
Airports close, so does the town.
Winds pick up, trees blow down.
Radios go on and on.
Churches fill, church bells bong.
The people are listening, listening.

Born in a land Saharas away
Crossing an ocean to have its say
Crashing through town like a runaway train
Oh Breaker of Nations rain us your rain
Wind us your winds—of course we'll complain.
But leave us alive with reason to sing
When you are done chastening, chastening.

By John Barr

Listen to it: <https://www.johnbarrpoetry.com/natural-wonders/chant-for-a-hurricane/>

****Dialect of Hurricanes**

Every day I use the dialect of lunatic hurricanes.
I speak the madness of clashing winds.

Every evening I use the patois of furious rains.
I speak the fury of waters in flood.

Every night I talk to the Caribbean islands in the tongue of hysterical storms. I speak the hysteria of the rutting sea.

Dialect of hurricanes. Patois of rains. Language of tempests. Unravelling of the spiraling life.

Fundamentally, life is tension. Towards something. Towards someone. Towards oneself. Towards the point of maturity where the old and the new, death and birth untangle. And every being is realized in part in the search for its double, a search which may, in a sense, merge with the intensity of a need, a desire, and an infinite quest.

Dogs pass by - I've always been obsessed with strays - they yap at the shadow of the woman I'm pursuing. At the image of the man I'm looking for. At my double. At the hubbub of fleeing voices. For so many years. Feels like thirty centuries.

The woman's gone, without a fanfare. Along with my discordant heart. The man never even offered me his hand. My double is always at my heels. And the unhinged throats of night dogs howl with the cacophony of a busted accordion.

It's then I become a storm of words bursting the hypocrisy of clouds and the falseness of silence. Rivers. Storms. Lightning. Mountains. Trees. Lights. Rains. Savage oceans. Take me to the frenzied core of your articulation. Take me! Just a hint of clarity would give me a living chance. Would let me accept life. Tension. The inexorable law of growth. Osmosis and symbiosis. Take me! The sound of a step, a glance, a touching voice would be enough for me to live happy in the hope that awakening is still possible among humans. Take me! It wouldn't take much for me to speak the sap that flows through the core of the cosmos in motion.

Dialect of hurricanes. Patois of rains. Languages of storms. I speak the unravelling of the spiraling life.

By Frankétienne, translated by André Naffis-Sahely

Published on <https://www.poetrytranslation.org/poems/dialect-of-hurricanes/original>

****The Guitar**

The weeping of the guitar
begins.
The goblets of dawn
are smashed.
The weeping of the guitar
begins.
Useless
to silence it.
Impossible
to silence it.
It weeps monotonously
as water weeps
as the wind weeps
over snowfields.
Impossible
to silence it.
It weeps for distant
things.
Hot southern sands
yearning for white camellias.
Weeps arrow without target
evening without morning
and the first dead bird
on the branch.
Oh, guitar!
Heart mortally wounded
by five swords.

By Federico García Lorca

****Latin & Soul**

1

some waves
a wave of now
a trombone speaking to you
a piano is trying to break a molecule
is trying to lift the stage into orbit
around the red spotlights

a shadow
the shadows of dancers
dancers they are dancing falling
out that space made for dancing

they should dance
on the tables they should
dance inside of their drinks
they should dance on the
ceiling they should dance/dance

thru universes
leaning-moving
we are traveling

where are we going
if we only knew

with this rhythm with
this banging with fire
with this all this O
my god i wonder where are
we going
sink into a room full of laughter
full of happiness full of life
those dancers
the dancers
are clapping their hands
stomping their feet

hold back them tears
all those sentimental stories
cooked uptown if you can hold it for after

we are going
away-away-away
beyond these wooden tables
beyond these red lights
beyond these rugs & paper
walls beyond way past
i mean way past them clouds
over the buildings over the
rivers over towns over cities
like on rails but faster like
a train but smoother

away past stars
bursting with drums.

2

a sudden misunderstanding
a cloud
full of grayness
a body thru a store window
a hand reaching
into the back
pocket
a scream
a piano is talking to you
thru all this
why don't you answer it.

By Victor Hernández Cruz

****Storm Ending**

Thunder blossoms gorgeously above our heads,
Great, hollow, bell-like flowers,
Rumbling in the wind,
Stretching clappers to strike our ears . . .
Full-lipped flowers
Bitten by the sun
Bleeding rain
Dripping rain like golden honey—
And the sweet earth flying from the thunder.

By Jean Toomer

****There came a Wind like a bugle**

There came a Wind like a bugle—
It quivered through the Grass,
And a Green Chill upon the heat
So ominous did pass
We barred the Windows and the Doors

As from an Emerald Ghost—
The Doom's Electric Moccasin
That very instant passed—
On a strange Mob of panting trees,
And Fences fled away,
And Rivers where the Houses ran
Those looked that lived—that day—
The Bell within the steeple wild
The flying tidings told—
How much can come
And much can go,
And yet abide the World!

By Emily Dickinson

***In the Coma

My friend was in a coma, so I dove
Deep into his brain to word him back. I tried

*To sing Hallelujah, I Just Love Her So in
Ray Charles's voice. Of course the silence grew.*

I couldn't sing the alphabet song. My voice
Couldn't say words I knew: *Because I Could
Not Stop for Death, He Kindly Stopped for Me.*

I couldn't remember the Dodgers and the Giants.

I tried to tell the stories that he and I
Studied when we were young. It was confused,
The Invisible Man was laughing at how a man
Felt History jump out of his thick fair head
And beat him half to death, as being the nightmare
Out of which Isaac Babel tried to awake.

The quiet. *Next time won't you sing with me.*
Those great diminished chords: *A girl I know.*

The cold of the coma, lightless. The ocean floor.

I struggled to tell things back from decades gone.
The mournful American soldier testifying
About My Lai: *I shot the older lady.*

Viola Liuzzo, Spiro Agnew, Jim Jones.

*And by the time I count from one to four
I hear her knocking. Quiet of the deep,
Our mouths are open but we cannot sing.*

By Robert Pinsky

*****Mother's Day**

I passed through the narrow hills
of my mother's hips one cold morning
and never looked back, until now, clipping
her tough toenails, sitting on the bed's edge
combing out the tuft of hair at the crown
where it ratted up while she slept, her thumbs
locked into her fists, a gesture as old
as she is, her blanched knees fallen together
beneath a blue nightgown. The stroke

took whole pages of words, random years
torn from the calendar, the names of roses
leaning over her driveway: Cadenza,
Great Western, American Beauty. She can't
think, can't drink her morning tea, do her
crossword puzzle in ink. She's afraid
of everything, the sound of the front door
opening, light falling through the blinds—
pulls her legs up so the bright bars
won't touch her feet. I help her
with the buttons on her sweater. She looks
hard at me and says the word sleeve.
Exactly, I tell her and her face relaxes
for the first time in days. I lie down

next to her on the flowered sheets and tell her
a story about the day she was born, head
first into a hard world: the Great Depression,
shanties, Hoovervilles, railroads and unions.
I tell her about Amelia Earhart and she asks

Air? and points to the ceiling. Asks Heart?
and points to her chest. Yes, I say. I sing

Cole Porter songs. *Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?* When I recite lines from *Gone with the Wind* she sits up and says Potatoes! and I say, Right again. I read her Sandburg, some Frost, and she closes her eyes. I say yes, yes, and tuck her in. It's summer. She's tired. No one knows where she's been.

By Dorianne Laux
From PoetryFoundation.org

***Learning to Mourn (CW: Curse word)

I'm an inexperienced mourner
I don't even know how to begin
to cry out like that old man
wailing in the next hospital room—
oi vay, oi vay—his two sounds
beating against the wall.

He makes me squirm
but I get his message better than my own.
How can I free myself like him?
How can I know my place as he does,
know how little I am?
How can I mourn, the cheep of a trapped bird
crying out violent sorrow?

Old man, teach me.
Help me reach the bowels of my cry
and bring it up, coarse, rasping.
Teach me to be disgusting.
Help me to exile myself from all
the populations of eyes and ears.
Teach me to live in that country
where no one else is, where I can
bash to pieces my good breeding,
my priests and pillars
—no illusions, the self wiped out,
unable to see or hear or understand.

Old man—lying in your shit—
you've let the angel of death from your mouth.
One minute of your unforgiving protest

is like true song: reckless, fatal singing,
song that is not victorious, not even consoling,
merely a sound you have to make.

By Robert Winner
From PoetryFoundation.org

*****In Your Sleep**

After "The Lark Ascending" by Ralph Vaughan Williams

The moment the lark finally vanishes
into the spread green sky of the forest
is the moment you suddenly lift

your bruised arm up, over your body,
as though to show me the wing's eclipse,
or the wing, or the season of your dream.

And even as your hand lapses silent
onto your chest, and your breath goes
sluggish, I am already watching your feet

prepare their slow first step under the sheet
as the last notes of sunlight fall quiet,
and you do not move again. My love,

are you a bird reviving in a summer field?
Was it the lark ascending that you heard,
a ghost among its shy-hearted tunes?

Yes. I heard the lark escaping, too.

By Leanne O'Sullivan
From PoetryFoundation.org

Poetry Terminology

Many of these definitions are edited from <https://poetryarchive.org/glossary>

Chant: The chant poem is about as old as poetry itself. In fact, it may be the first form poetry took. Chant poems simply incorporate rhymes or repetitive lines. Each line can repeat, or every other line. It's easy to find many poetic forms that incorporate chanting with the use of a refrain. Chant poems are fine for people of all ages to write. Within the form's flexible constraints, any degree of sophistication or simplicity can operate. A good approach is to write the words *repeating* and *changing* on the board and let students know that these are the keys. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/70244/learning-the-chant-poem>

Diction: Diction is a poet's distinctive vocabulary choices and style of expression.

Enjambment: Enjambment is the continuation of a sentence or clause over a line-break without punctuation.

End-stop: End-stop lines end in punctuation.

Note: If a poet allows all the sentences of a poem to end in punctuation, a kind of deadening can happen in the ear, the eye, and in the brain too. Enjambment is one way of creating visual as well as audible interest, as it keeps the eye moving.

Line: A line is a subdivision of a poem, specifically a group of words arranged into a row that ends for a reason other than the right-hand margin. This reason could be that the lines are arranged to have a certain number of syllables, a certain number of stresses, or of metrical feet; it could be that they are arranged so that they rhyme, whether they be of equal length or not. In free verse, many poets like to think of a line as a specific unit of thought, or the amount of words in a breath. But it is important to remember that the poet has chosen to make the line a certain length, or to make the line-break at a certain point.

Line-break: Where a reader has to turn back to the start of the next line. This was known in Latin as the *versus*, which translates as "turn", and it is where the modern English term "verse" comes from. It is one of the strongest points of a line, which means that words that fall at the end of a line seem more important to a reader (an effect that rhyme can intensify); other strong points are the start of a line, and either side of a caesura (a pause). **Note:** There are two kinds of line-breaks—enjambment and end-stop.

Lyric poem: A lyric poem does not tell a story. It allows the speaker or narrator of the poem to either express their feelings, philosophical concerns, and emotions, frequently in first person.

Narrative poem: Narrative poetry is a form of poetry that tells a story, often making the voices of a narrator and characters as well; The poems that make up this genre may be short or long; they may rhyme or not rhyme; and the story it relates to may be simple or complex.

Praise poem: Praise poetry can be found in many cultures, but the most familiar is from the West African tradition of oral poetry. These poems began typically as oral poems that were either sung or chanted. A praise poem is a tribute; it not only defines but names an individual.

Prose poem: A prose poem is a poem that does not use line breaks. This still allows the poet to use alliteration, metaphor, ambiguity, personification, and many other poetic techniques, but it can still be strange to see a poem that goes all the way to the right-hand margin. One thing that may differentiate a prose poem from a very short story is that the latter will have a stronger preference for narrative than the former, but this is very much debatable.

Ode: An ode is a lyric poem, usually addressing or praising a particular person or thing. It originated in Ancient Greece, and the Pindaric ode (so-called because it was written by the Theban poet Pindar, 518 ? 442 BC) was based on a pattern of three stanzas called the strophe, antistrophe and epode. It was performed by a chorus, which walked along one side of the orchestra chanting the strophe and down the other side chanting the antistrophe, then came to a standstill before the audience and chanted the epode. This performance was repeated with each set of three stanzas. The Horatian ode (invented by the Latin poet Horace in about 65 BC) was adopted in the early 19th century by John Keats for one of his most famous poems, 'Ode to a Nightingale'. Many modern odes, however, are irregular in form, and do not have a fixed meter or rhyme scheme.

Stanza: A stanza is a group of lines within a poem; the blank line between stanzas is known as a stanza break. Like lines, there is no set length to a stanza or an insistence that all stanzas within a poem need be the same length. However, there are names for stanzas of certain lengths: two-line stanzas are couplets; three-lines, tercets; four-lines, quatrains. Whether regular or not, the visual effect and, sometimes, the aural effect is one of uniting the sense of the stanza into one group, so poets can either let their sentences fit neatly within these groups, or create flow and tension by enjambling across the stanza breaks.

Syntax: Syntax refers to word order, and the way in which it works with grammatical structures. As we are used to hearing things in certain orders, the effect of breaking with normal syntax is to draw attention to what is being said and the way it is said. Some poets will also deliberately fracture syntax beyond what is considered grammatically correct, which demands a lot of attention, but aims to repay this attention by revealing things that cannot be said within the habits of thought that grammatical language maintains.

Writing Your Disability or Chronic Illness

October 29, 2019 Kate Horowitz

Link to the article: <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2019/10/29/writing-your-disability-or-chronic-illness/>

Excerpts:

“To write about a body is to expose it. This is, of course, part of the reason we do it: to lay bare the experience, to enlist witnesses, to find connection. But this exposure is not without risks. The question of whether a writer should publish work about their own disability or chronic illness is as complex as it is personal.”

“No one can predict how a work of literature will land on its readers. But disabled and chronically ill people who choose to write about themselves should be prepared for a range of reactions. And because the subject of the material is the body, these reactions will feel especially personal. Suddenly, a lot of people will have opinions about a writer’s body, the way they relate to it, and the way they care for it.”

“Loved ones will also have their own opinions. Many writers considering a first-person disability or illness story grapple with an immense question: “What if my family hates it?”

The answer may be, “Be thoughtful, but write it anyway.”

“The risks—legal, financial, professional, personal—of vulnerable, body-centered writing are significant. But for those who choose to take up this important work, the rewards ripple onward and onward, inward and outward... Writers may find that sharing their disability experience initiates them into communities they might never have discovered otherwise.”

Questions, Vocabulary, Editing Advice from the Article:

Questions to Ask Yourself

Why do I want to—or need to—write this story?

How might publishing this information affect me financially or professionally?

How might this story’s publication affect my personal relationships? Are there conversations I need to have with loved ones or family before publishing this work?

Is there anyone who I would not want reading this? (Assume that, if you publish, this person will read it.) Are there steps I can take while writing or during pre-publication to reduce the harm or conflict that could result? If not, am I willing to accept this risk?

Do I have tools to manage the emotional labor that may accompany this experience? Do I feel supported by my loved ones, my editor, and my community?

Am I ready to share this part of myself with the world? Do I need to publish this, or is writing it the most important thing?

Knowing Your Worth

Some of the risks of writing about your disability or chronic illness can be mitigated through thoughtful, self-protective action and communication. Here are a few more pointers from Brown and Smith:

Say “no.” “Don’t do anything that makes you uncomfortable,” Smith says. One of the most frequent questions they get from other writers is, “My editor wants me to do something I don’t want to do. What do I do?” “Don’t do it,” Smith says. “It’s like buying a car: Always be prepared to walk away.”

Push back. Editing should be a collaboration, Brown says. “It’s scary to push back on edits. But it gets easier after the first couple of times you do it. If you’re not satisfied with something, it’s better to tell them than to let it go out into the world.”

Negotiate. It can feel strange to try to negotiate a fee for deeply personal work—but it is still work. “Given that there is no ethical anything under capitalism and you need to pay rent somehow,” Smith says, “ask for more money.”

Recognize your own value. “You’re not disposable commodities,” Smith says. “You’re human beings. Even if you have never written an essay before in your life, you still have value and you are bringing something to that editor that the editor wants.”

Branch out. “Don’t think that you have to tell stories you’re not comfortable telling or ready to tell just for a byline,” Brown says. “Don’t think you need to exploit yourself or relive your traumas. Remember that you have stories to tell, and whether that’s about disability, or music, or pop culture, those stories are valid.” Smith concurs: “Sometimes you just want to write about waffles, and that’s okay.”

Editing Disabled Writers

Soliciting pitches from disabled writers is a good start, but it is not sufficient to create or maintain an inclusive newsroom. I asked my sources what they need from editors in order to succeed. Here's what they said:

Recognize that disability is not a monolith. No disabled person is the expert on every disability—or disabled person's experience. Encourage writers to stay in their lanes. If the disabled writer you had in mind isn't the right person for the job, find another one. There are a lot of us, and most of us need work.

Check your assumptions. Be open-minded when a writer requests accommodations or amendments to protocol, as many standard journalistic practices can present barriers to disabled writers' success. On-site events; public buildings; telephone interviews; typing; transcribing; websites; and audio, video, and image files can all be, and often are, inaccessible.

Be humble and willing to learn. Trust that each writer is an expert on their own identity. Don't change a writer's identity-first language ("disabled person") to person-first ("person with a disability"), even if that's what you were taught to do. "Editors have been most supportive by allowing me to write about my own experience by using my own language," Wang writes.

Don't expect writers to be your teachers. "Do your own research," Brown says. Don't ask writers to perform additional labor by answering disability-related questions you could Google. Like many marginalized people, disabled writers are often expected to educate those around them. Don't contribute to this burden.

Watch your own language. Read up on the basics of ableist language. Practice replacing problematic, overused words with interesting synonyms. Double-check your emails and comments. Pay special attention to pleasantries; seemingly innocuous conversational filler ("Sorry, this week's been cr*zy!") can actually be quite harmful. Don't be like the person who began an email about my incapacitating, incurable illness with, "Hope you're well!"

Respect boundaries. Disabled people are subject to frequent violation of their bodies, personal space, and agency. Don't push a writer to disclose more than they're comfortable disclosing, and don't ask, as smith puts it, for "more pain on the page."

Back your writers up. Marginalized people experience a disproportionate amount of harassment on- and offline, even when *not* recounting vulnerable, intimate stories. Ensure that writers know you will support them even after their stories are published.

Tune in. Follow disabled writers on social media. Read their work, but also their tweets; informal platforms like Twitter can provide both a sophisticated free education and important insights into disabled people's daily lived experience. #DisabledWriters and #CripLit are good starting points.

There is so much happening all around us right now. We miss our loved ones, our friends, and our “normal” way of life. And hopefully, we’ll return... sooner than later. With these things in mind, we wanted to take this moment to simply **check-in** with you all & allow you space to process how you’re doing... but in a fun, creative writing exercise.

(Thanks to Najee Omar for allowing us to adapt this activity)

Here’s how it will go:

Step 1

Read my check-in statuses below. These are the pieces we shared in the video and are here to give you an example of what you will do a bit further down. Take your time and enjoy the space to check-in with yourself.

How’s that for a check-in?

I was sick with COVID 19

I am thankful to feel strong again.

I am thinking about my daughter who is 8 years old. I have not seen her for over 3 weeks.

I am going to see her tonight and that makes me so happy.

I am going to read to her tonight and I can’t wait.

I have taken

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Breaths

every day
every day
every day

every day
every day
every day
every day

I am thankful for that. I am thankful to feel my chest **expand** and to exhale and feel a little calmer

Someone told me to call a friend every day to talk for at least 30 minutes. That has felt really good.

I am looking forward to giving my daughter the biggest hug tonight!

My mother's homecare worker is from Guyana, she is so sweet and loving. She is also a great cook and she is making Chana Saag for me. That's one of my favorite dishes, it's a dish from India with wonderful spices.

I have been enjoying dancing with Grace to DJ's on Instagram!

Grace and I did a performance from my home studio and it was broadcast by a theater and it felt so good to perform even if we can't leave our home.

I have been reading X-men house of X, playing spiderman on my PS 4, I love adventuring through a virtual NYC and seeing it full of people, I have also been reading one of my favorite childhood books, The Great Brain on facetime to my daughter.

I am rejecting stress, I am remembering to breathe, to be patient, to listen, and to be grateful for my family and community who have been helping.

I am embracing staying connected even when we can't connect in person. Zoom meetings, phone calls, emails, facetime, carrier pigeons, we are going to stay in touch!

This is a global challenge, it is hard, it is scary but it also a reminder that we are all connected and that we can all help keep each other

"How's that for a check-in?"



Step 2: Your Turn!

1. After reading, use the guidelines below to create your very own check-in status.
2. Remember: **You'll need to write in full and complete sentences.** When you're done, it should read like a full Facebook status from left to write.
3. Also, remember: these are just guides. The check-in is yours... and should sound like **YOUR VOICE.**
4. Have fun with this exercise! This writing prompt is meant to be fun and give you space to share where you are in this current moment. Enjoy!

Step 3: Guidelines:

1. First, share **how you're feeling** and what's **immediately on your heart and mind.** Leave no detailed spared.

For example, I am feeling sad, frustrated, happy, and confused right now. I am thinking about my family, my friends, and how much I miss them.

2. Then, share **one thing that has happened every day** since you've been home, describe it in detail.

For example, I have played video games every day and that makes me feel like I can travel to other worlds when I can't leave home

or I talk to my best friend every day and they make me laugh.

3. Share **some advice** someone has given you during these strange times we're living in. The advice could be helpful or not.

For example, someone told me to call a friend every day to talk for at least 30 minutes. That has felt really good.

4. Share one thing you're **looking forward to** tonight.

For example, I am looking forward to seeing my favorite movie tonight or I am looking forward to sleeping and having an adventure in my dream.

List **a delicious meal** you cooked or ate or are looking forward to eating.

For example, I can't wait to eat the arroz con pollo that my mom is making tonight. It makes me think of my family

5. Explain **an activity you enjoy** and have been enjoying with someone close to you. What is this activity? How is it done? & what makes it so special?

For example, I have been cards with my family, we laugh cause my grandfather is always trying to cheat

6. Say **something surprising** that will totally catch us off guard!

For example, I have been brushing my teeth four times a day or I have a new high score on Roblox.

7. List three books/movies/albums/or TV shows you're **currently watching or listening to**:

You got this one, no example needed :)

8. Share one thing you're **completely rejecting**.

For example, I am rejecting stress about school right now. I am doing my best, but I won't get stressed.

9. Share one thing you're **embracing and supporting**.

For example, I am embracing my mom who makes me feel safe.

10. Share a **word of encouragement** you would like to offer to whoever is reading this.

For example, whoever reads this, I hope you and your family are ok and stay strong!

11. End your check-in with the line: ***"How's that for a check-in?"***