



A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN
DEVELOPING THE
FEMALE AUTHORIAL
VOICE

INSTRUCTOR: NAOMI JACKSON
INTERNATIONAL WRITING PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

WELCOME!

CHECK-IN

- How are you this evening?
- How did it go with writing your assignments? What were some of the challenges/rewards of approaching a short story for the first time?
- You guys did a great job stepping up your commenting. Thank you!

PROPOSED WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

WEEK 5 – 3/30 (DUE 3/23)

Kawthar Al-Arab, Fatima Al Attar, Aisha al Shorooqi, Mariam Al Qubaiti

WEEK 6 – 4/6 (DUE 3/30)

Mehr Ul Ain Mushtaq, Zainab Al Shehabi, Tamara Orabi, Ashwaq Shukralla

WEEK 7 – 4/13 (DUE 4/6)

Maryam Malik, Hayat Saheb, Sarah Salman, Noor Nass, **Fatima Al Mughlaq**

WEEK 8 – 4/20 (DUE 4/13)

Jenan Ahmed, Marushka Almeida, Zeinab Tareef, Haifa Mustafa abu Khdair

EDWIDGE DANTICAT

- BORN 1969 IN PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI
- SHE PUBLISHED HER FIRST BOOK, *BREATH, EYES, MEMORY* IN 1994, WHEN SHE WAS ONLY 25 YEARS OLD
- *CHILDREN OF THE SEA* IS TAKEN FROM HER SHORT STORY COLLECTION, *KRIK? KRAK!* (1996)
- DANTICAT HAS SINCE PUBLISHED NOVELS, SHORT STORY COLLECTIONS, AND ESSAYS, MOST RECENTLY *CLAIRE OF THE SEA LIGHT*.
- SHE HAS RECEIVED MANY AWARDS & HONORARY DEGREES FOR HER WRITING, INCLUDING THE MACARTHUR GENIUS GRANT.
- SHE LIVES IN MIAMI WITH HER HUSBAND AND TWO CHILDREN.

CHILDREN OF THE SEA

They say behind the mountains are more mountains. Now I know it's true. I also know there are timeless waters, endless seas, and lots of people in this world whose names don't matter to anyone but themselves. I look up at the sky and I see you there. I see you crying like a crushed snail, the way you cried when I helped pull out your first loose tooth. Yes, I did love you then. Somehow when I looked at you, I thought of fiery red ants. I wanted to dig your fingernails into my skin and drain out all my blood.

...Maybe the sea is endless, like my love for you.

my hair shivers. from here, I cannot even see the sea. behind these mountains are more mountains and more black butterflies still, and a sea which is endless like my love for you.

CHILDREN OF THE SEA-

DISCUSSION

- What storytelling rituals are in your culture, like in Haiti, where a story opens with a question, Krik? Krak!?
- What did you think about the girl's father's unwillingness to sacrifice his family's safety to save Madan Roger? What did it make you think about the father and his daughter's relationship to him?
- What did you think about the image of the black butterfly, and the way it recurs throughout the story?
- What questions did you have after reading the story?

SIMILES & METAPHORS

A **simile** is a comparison of two things using “like” or “as”).

A **metaphor** is a literary figure of speech that describes a subject by asserting that it is, on some point of comparison, the same as another otherwise unrelated object.

Examples from “Children of the Sea”

“there are only two rooms and a tin roof that makes music when it rains, especially when there is hail, which falls like angry tears from heaven.”

“And just as the baby’s head sank, so did hers. They went together like two bottles beneath a waterfall...The sea in that spot is like the sharks that live there. It has no mercy.”

IMAGINATION STATION

“Seeing things simply, you could fill a museum with the sights you have here.” (“Children of the Sea”)

Exercise: describe one memorable image from this weekend in three different ways.

Simply describe what you saw. (This weekend while I was riding my bike, I saw a bunch of sunflowers.)

Describe what you saw using a simile (The dried-out sunflowers hung their heads like freshly scolded children)

Describe what you saw using a metaphor. (The sunflowers were an army of angry children waiting for their turn on the playground swings.)

QUESTIONS FOR WORKSHOP

- What is this piece about?
- What's working? What are the most unique/engaging parts of this piece?
- Where does the writer use clichés, or overuse one element of their style?
- What would you want less or more of from this writer?
- If they were going to expand this piece, how might they go about doing so?

WORKSHOP OF BHANU KHAPIL 12 QUESTION ASSIGNMENTS

- Ashwaq Shukralla
- Maryam Malik

ASHWAQ SHUKRALLA

‘WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THE EARTH?’

I walked the earth barefooted after the rains have stopped and the surface soil was cracked like a complicated mosaic. The air was fresh and the wind was picking up that afternoon.

Mama earth is not the same everywhere and not the same to everyone every time. Salt marshes may shimmer like a diamond encrusted carpet in the light and give a loud crunch like breaking pottery under your feet in the heat, but keep coming back, through the tides and seasons, and it will stain the cuffs on your jeans and waterlog the grass. It is muck, but keep coming back some more please. Suddenly, your boots aren't sinking in the mud in the same place anymore; it has patiently collected enough sediment for you to stand now. Its stability makes it a perfect shelter for a bird's nest, forcing its previous tenant, the frog, to move. Strange, but the flamingos that I remembered seeing every winter do not come around to this part of the coast anymore.

I looked back for a moment on the broken soil plates I stepped on, but I could not make out my trail. I kept walking ahead. That's when I took notice of a stray dog at some distance, sometimes loping a few steps ahead, sometimes stopping to inspect something and ending up behind.

ASHWAQ, continued

Mama earth is of course fearsomely old. Older than we are able to comprehend or care to respect. When I was fourteen and thirsty I came upon a groundwater spring. I bent down, my knees on the grass, and reached out to cup the cool water into my hands and I drank. I understood then what they meant by sweetwater. I drank again, and some more after that. I was drinking in life. It made me so giddy I laughed. I drank and laughed until an older woman from the village yelled at me for not coming in and asking for the pail, because how were they to know that these foreigners hands had not dirtied their only supply of drinking water with their parasites and viruses. I was ignorant at the time and very ashamed. I do not know if that same spring exists, but I know that none of our natural springs on this island survived and so I decided to attend a lecture on the subject. We are now pumping from deep in the belly of the earth for water that is thousands of years old. Like how we now pump for oil out in the sea, sucking it dry inside out.

It is of no serious concern for the earth though, for it doesn't scare of change. It adapts. It cradles diversity so well, and we have front stage box seats in its orchestra and the annual pass to its theme park, but it does not have to be lush or hospitable. It does not submit to our beauty standards; the scenery can change. Mama earth can cull, as it did over a matter of decades with the Cartaret islands of Papua New Guinea, or four hours with Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, or no more than minutes with Haiti, cradling bodies like a grave, sending refugees on their way, like that frog. For, although we have bridges,

MARYAM MALIK

A JOURNEY OF THROUGH & THROUGH

I remember flashlights and loud thunderstorms, burying my head between pillows and hugging my knees to my chest

I remember bullets flying past my head, grazing the side of my nose and causing my heart to arrest

I remember streaming cars like rushing beetles for honey, gently roaring into the misty first light

I remember wet sand and laughing shrieks, the melody of clapping seas and friendly breeze

There were drenched walls and pooling ground and I lost myself between silver strands

I remember the sun, so bright and innocent, one second hiding behind a building and the other blinding your skin

I remember the soft blueness of the sky, pretty to the eyes and welcoming to the soul

I remember scraped knees and burning toothpaste on my skin, the frown that caked my face when my mother wouldn't cave in

MARYAM, CONT'D

I remember the rounded playground with competitive glances, each child daring the other to race, faster and stronger, to the limited sets of swings

I remember the rapidity of consequences when doing something wrong and the whip of my mother as she approached like a thorn

I remember having wrists of steel, collecting shells mistaken for gold, somewhere sometime before God was born

I remember building forts of pillows in May air, indoors, with a view of blocks yet daydreaming about some town in Greece

I remember raised fingers to quiet me down, the Earth stood still, as my tears hit the pavement and my eyes resembled clouds

Many things were to happen as the universe swerved and watched, wickedly gazing waiting for her children to count the days

Am I tired? Am I done? We'll ask ourselves every time we fight and the enemy has won

Is there a way out of the mind? Is there a way to reach the seventh sky? To float besides the heated stars and feel their flames fuel me like rye?

WORKSHOP OF “GIRL” PIECES

- Jenan Ahmed
- Noor Nass
- Zenab Tareef
- Haifa Mustafa abu Khdair
- Marushka Almeida

JENAN AHMED

A soft sound. To the way that she wears her hair down, covering up her face. And oh what a let down, Falling all over the place.

But you're losing your words, we're speaking in bodies, Avoiding him and talking about you. But you're losing your turn, and I guess I'll never learn.

I will bite your face to spite your nose, seventeen and a half years old. Worrying about your parents finding out ,oh but what's the fun in doing what you're told?

I said, "No!"

"dammit, give it a rest, I could persuade you"

"I'm not your typical, stoned 18 year old"

"Give me a night I'll make you"

"I know you're looking for salvation in a secular age, but girl I'm not your savior."

Wrestled to the ground. God help me now because, shes just a girl, breaking hearts

NOOR NASS

PROSE POEM / A BEDOUIN TALK

Do you remember young lady; ten summers ago; how you made me feel so wicked; You made that phone call to the college registrars and admission office; you booked a session; looked at the courses; compared the courses; forecasted your potential career; asked the registrar, all the right questions; gave another call; and got your acceptance letter; “One sunny quarter down” you announced; spring, summer, autumn and another winter comes by; you insured your budget; got busy and took off; after a year; second summer comes back; you came back with a tear; you forgot all about College; and you said that you missed him; you remained silent, after that; you decided to plan it right; finally, one grey winter night, you concluded: “ I will begin my voyage towards the future, again”; morning came that winter; you got the keys; started the engine; and drove every day for 2880 hours x 2 in order to get that ‘A’ plus, with some honey; Three Summers has ended; You called the land your own ; Some were written; other ‘A’ pluses were directed, elsewhere; the fun was over; you decided that a book is worth a thousand tear than a Man; McGraw Hill Publications, took over; every misery, theoretical affair, fact, case, and explanation came from it; it made you smile; and it made you hunt for more; and it made your day; every day; on and on and on, you announced; Spring came by and it reminded you of the books that contained 15 to 30 chapter per Business/Finance book publication; you read every chapter; 30 pages per heading; answered all the questions; it took 5 hours everyday to complete the tasks; used and abused your high school green uniform color style for a calculator; Spring ends and you move to a different subject; a paper you called a thesis; you started the first move with a plan, an Introduction, a Body and a Conclusion; than you chose a topic; you filled the topic with a question, the question needed more questions and the questions required some order and the order required grammar; the grammar wanted a definition, some details and a description; You added the reason for an analysis, the analysis gave you the primary data and secondary data, not to mention your 3ed plural person approach; at the end of your thesis and work; you typed everything down; time for execution you said; you presented and received your applause; The Season for another semester begins; class starts; “another year with a new sun and an old moon” you say...

ZENAB TAREEF

GIRL

You see?

She told me that we're too good to be true; when we keep our hair in a ponytail it's like a stairway to heaven. That's what she used to say when she does my hair. When she runs that sharp comb through my tangled hair and it hurts so much. She would say all kinds of things about who we are and what should we look to them and boy, I guess beauty really was pain! I barely heard what she said.

Looking in the mirror I'd look for zits, pimples... imperfections, but nobody ever cared. Putting on her lipstick when she's gone reminds me of how silly I was and still am. Back in the days I used to want to be a woman, thinking that a woman is something else than a little girl, and boy was I mad! I should have known that being a woman is being a taller girl with gorgeous hair.

We walk the walk and talk the talk for all they cared. We became ladies to them but strangers to ourselves. Good enough? Never we were to be honest. They wanted our hair and the clothes we wear. However, I wasn't the girly girl they said; my legs were too wide apart it was like I was playing hockey. And most unfortunate thing is that I was lame; when chatting, when whispering, they all heard what I said. The only thing they loved me for is the way I sang. I sang beautifully back in those memorable days.

HAIFA MUSTAFA ABU KHDAIR

I am a girl and I am wearing hearing aids. I live in a city by the sea. There is sand everywhere, but life is easy. There is a lot of food; a lot of money. In my school I meet students from different cultures. I have lenient parents. Mom and dad rarely ask me about my studies. They do not impose their opinions; they do not intervene in my life choices. I am luckier than hundreds of thousands women and girls in the world. Papa grants me my wishes. Mama do household chores without complaining or grumbling. She does cooking, washing clothes, vacuuming, and scrubbing the floor. She does not ask for help unless I offer it. I spend my time in reading, a lot of reading, and watching movies. In school, we learn maths, physics, art, racism, hatred, and fear. How?. I will explain. In school, I learn that I am inferior though I was born in the same land and speak the same language. I learn that talking with boys is sin. Smiling is crime. I learn that making fun of others is not shame. I learn that girl should hide and smash her dreams. I learn fear of others especially men. I learn that men are horrific creatures. The most important lesson is: how to hate yourself?. Being a girl with moderate hearing impairment in Middle Eastern society is a challenge. I am ashamed of myself. Dad and mom do everything except teaching self-confidence. They do not even care; they always say "it is ok honey; you will manage; you are smart and beautiful." In my culture, no one teach self-confidence. This affect my life so badly. The space in this paper is not enough to say everything, but all I can say is I enjoy freedom and stable life, however, I hate my situation. I hate the truth that I am going to nowhere. It is such a wasteland.

MARUSHKA ALMEIDA

GIRLHOOD

To be a girl, is to be a paradox. To be a girl is to be told to be yourself within the confines of your own home but then being told what to wear because it might attract the attentions of some wanton male. To be a girl is to be acknowledged as an equal to a male sibling in the eyes of your parents but with society as a whole, just an over glorified house maid meant to stay at home. To be a girl is to be told to love that you wish but don't express it because what might the others think? To be a girl is to be brave, but who could within the stereotypical confines? To be a girl is to be free, but however to be home before eight because god only knows what creatures could be lurking after dark? To be a girl is to be comfortable with your body? But is comfort necessary when all they want is these size zero bimbos? To be a girl is to walk as light, but why be a beacon when a shadow will suffice? To be a girl is to be wary, to always be on the alert for something sinister and scary. To be a girl is to be a free thinker, but encouraged not to have an opinion apart from the kitchen. To be a girl is to be empowered through the force of sheer will. To be a girl is to remember those before us who fought and waged for the freedom of women and their right to vote, so let's take an oath.

'That was to be a girl; hopefully in the future our girls won't be quite so. We are a tough bunch you see, ready to plunder and to run wild and free. To all those who would seek to think and make us to do otherwise you should probably BEWARE BOYS BARK, GIRLS BITE'.

HOMework

FOR NEXT CLASS SESSION (3/30)

- Read and respond to workshop submissions on class website - **Kawthar Al-Arab, Fatima Al Attar, Aisha al Shorooqi, Mariam Al Qubaiti.**
- Read Shirley Jackson's short story, "Louisa, Please Come Home."
- Begin a new story (2000-3000 words) of your own choosing. I will send along a few writing prompts if you have trouble getting started. Email your writing assignment to Naomi & Susannah by **Saturday, 28 March at noon.**

YOUR QUESTIONS?