THE FIELD OF ME
and other poems

SARABANDE WRITING LABS, VOL. 2
SARABANDE WRITING LABS
An Arts Education Program from Sarabande Books

Sarabande Writing Labs is an arts education program serving under-resourced communities in Kentucky through creative writing workshops.

OUR MISSION

• **REACH** communities in Kentucky with traditionally fewer arts education opportunities.
• **TEACH** creative writing workshops characterized by enthusiasm and excellence.
• **CREATE** opportunities for positive, experiential learning in a supportive and respectful environment.
• **PROMOTE** diverse voices through free community readings.

Visit our website for photos, updates, and upcoming events:
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THE FIELD OF ME
FOREWORD

I am fortunate that I am sometimes able to travel around the country and read from a book to a room full of people. Sometimes there are more people than other times. Sometimes I meet more famous people than others. Sometimes they take me to better restaurants than other times. Some audiences like me more than other audiences. But never have I been more affected by an event than when I read at Hotel Louisville with the beautiful women participating in the Sarabande Books project, Sarabande Writing Labs. Every poem struck me down. Every woman splashed a smile across the podium to the audience, an audience full of peers, comrades, and compatriots in a common struggle, humanity. Through elision of texts, erasure poems, and through their own words, these women took an idea from my poem and created a field of their own. After the reading, I spent over an hour speaking with these remarkable women, their stories mirroring my own in many ways, and was left embedded with their words and stories, but mostly their encouragement for life. The ablutions of mujeres firme, badass ladies, femmes courageux, are in these words. Let it cleanse you.

—David Tomas Martinez,
author of Hustle
Then heard agile and clear

voices

a language that

could be gentle one moment and

knotty another, yet

seemed briefly

a single voice

a poem

—Schnita McElroy
THE FIELD OF ME

My field is a quiet and most soothing place, with a big oak tree full of colorful leaves. The birds love to come by and sing me a quaint little tune, “O how beautiful.” From time to time a wonderfully soothing breeze comes about, the children from up yonder on the hill also from time to time come through with their baseballs, frisbees and kites in flight, to simply run and scurry about in my field. O, my field is such a soothing and quiet place.

—Tia Winston
create
my
dance
Imagine
butterflies

—LeeAnn Mudd
LIVING IN THE MADNESS

It was like driving down a winding road with all your personal belongings, and at every curve in the road, you lose an item.

No. It wasn’t.

It was like being on a merry-go-round, spinning faster and faster, holding on as tight as you can. Yet the more you pick up speed, the more you begin to lose your grip, the harder it is to hold on to your bearings.

No. It wasn’t.

It was like putting together a detailed puzzle. You find you are missing the last piece, so you forever search and search to try and find what you need to complete it.

—Brittany Fields
THE FIELD OF ME

There is a storm growing
in the field of me
strong wind it must be
powerful within me
God calm the storm
pick up the pieces
and I will see
there a storm in the
field of me

—Felicia Bently
—Helen Dandridge
LIVING IN A FOSTER HOME

It was like being in a real family
being loved
not having it all but being there
with certain ones of my brothers
and sisters to love me

No it wasn’t

It was like being alone
something missing
after Daddy died

Everything gone
when Daddy was gone

The flowers died
birds stopped singing
world stopped revolving
the day Daddy died
and I knew he would never
come back.

—Tina Bell
GROWING UP ALONE

It was like
being in a desert
no one else around
wind blowing sand

No it wasn’t

It was like
drifting alone on a canoe
far away
into the sunset

No it wasn’t

It was
having family
feelings
hugs touches
people who cared

but I was still alone

—Melinda Bayorek
THE FIELD OF ME

What’s growing in the field of me?
Resentment that I have to be in this place
I don’t want to be. Let me go
so I can grow
thorns and thistles in this field of me.

—Flossie Johnson
ALONE

It’s like sand through an hourglass, this life I live without my mother.

No it isn’t. The sand is gone. The glass is clear and I would like to see her on the other side.

I would like to have my mother back. I just can’t let her go.

—Paula Hailey
... people roving Moving. modernist master-planned They staged walks, built a village of driftwood and dropped paper from trees.

(This interview has been edited and condensed.)

—Lara Bowman
GROWING UP

It was a nightmare at first being taken advantage of, unable to take up for herself. But the day came when she could. One day she did it alone.

No one listened to her, like she made it all up. But she didn’t.

She took matters in her own hands when she got strong enough and saw the light from that day forth.

—Rochelle Phillips
A coat like that is a beacon of swagger. I loved it. more now than ever. ponder who you might yet become with just one or two sartorial tweaks.

—Tonnette King
GOING HUNGRY

It was oodles of noodles and hot dogs.

No it wasn’t.

It was bread no butter
Kool aid no sugar
peanut butter no jelly.

It was cob no corn
salad no dressing
strings no beans.

—Carol Branch
THE FIELD OF ME

growing out of me
greens, beans, onion
and tomatoes, corn
kids, happy people
my granny, my
happiness, not grown
out of me but
one day it will soon

it may be that
my family and me
we’ll be happy
again in my
clean time soon
to be

—Tenika Thomas
ONE MISSING PIECE

It was like coming to a four way stop
with no traffic
but stopping anyway.

No. It wasn’t.

It was like getting into the car, buckling up,
adjusting the seat, and starting the car.
But there were no tires.

No. It wasn’t.

It was like running a race,
putting on your jogging suit
tennis shoes and number
no one else running or watching.

No.

It was like going out in the snow
putting on our hat, coat and gloves.
No boots just sandals.

—Patricia A. Cowherd
In the century-old photo, children gaze looking hopeful.

—Lisa Dillingham
BODIES

Bodies are things we find in the dirt.

Some are put there by families and others are put there to hide.

Whether by natural causes or not we all end up there anyway.

Hopefully we all get to see the heavens one day.

—Kamica Fowler
THE FIELD OF ME

I’m a field of sunflowers blowing in the wind, with the shining down on me. And the grass growing between my feet making my sunflower field lovely and beautiful.

—Tina Wood
FALLING IN LOVE

Falling in love, such beautiful words sound like a song sung by the birds—chirp, chirp, chirp, tweet, tweet, tweet.

Love can be wonderful but it can also make you weak. If you fall in love you should stand strong with the belief you will carry on.

Falling in love can make you stand proud and shout to the world, shout it out loud.

I’m in love oh yes I am, please understand it doesn’t have to always be with a man!

—Janet Hicks
THE FIELD OF ME

The field is sweet
and tall, the smells
so inviting and strong.

When the wind blows
so do my long legs.
Skinny and strong
that’s what it’s all about,
jumping and playing
moving all about.

—Robin Rudd
CIRCUSES

Yes, families are supposed to be circuses
We need a ringmaster to follow

We swing from the trapeze wire
and need to be caught—

life on display for all to see
but in the end we take a bow together

—Cindy Brown
THE FIELD OF ME

The field of me
it feels so free.

My recovery
is my field!

The field I
need is just
to be me!

The field is my
son knowing that
I can be the mother
he wants and needs
me to be

and we will be
our field!

—Marla Coleman