Writing Wilderness: The Prose, Poetry, and Plays of Kent Island
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The language of the Bowdoin Scientific Station on Kent Island, a blend of scientific, artistic, technical, and everyday words, is entirely unique to the field station. Full of historical references, strange abbreviations, and inside jokes, it takes time to learn, but captures life on Kent Island perfectly. Understanding how we talk about our temporary home provides insight into how we relate our environment. As a creative writing artist-in-residence, I enjoyed the challenge of characterizing encounters with the natural world of the field station and incorporating our distinctive Kent Island language into my work.

After taking creative writing classes that focused on poetry, prose, and playwriting separately, I was eager to explore the advantages and drawbacks of each form. As a result, I spent my time on Kent Island experimenting with how form can be used to reinforce meaning. One must know a place to write about it, so I spent my early days on the island listening, exploring, and shadowing researchers, quickly accumulating pages of observations and stories. When I sat down to write, I attempted each piece in all three forms, considering which best captured the ideas I wanted to express. For example, I discovered that the economic language of unmetered poetry allowed me to connect our adaptive behavior as we settled into island life to the behavior of gulls, while the completeness of prose captured the strange way time works on the island. Although there were no dramatic human conflicts on the island this summer, a fictional radio play provided the perfect medium for exploring predation and our fondness for pranks. After choosing a form, I left a draft of each piece out for community feedback. I benefited from the collective wisdom of the island as artists and scientists alike took time to read my work and thoughtfully respond, a collaboration that fueled my editing process.

My final portfolio, a collection that includes work in all three forms, explores various interactions between the island environment and its human inhabitants. I look forward to displaying selections alongside the work of other Kent Island artists at an art show in St. John, New Brunswick, and sharing my work with the Bowdoin community in the fall at a public reading.

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