

That One Woman Play No One Wants to See: Disgust, Vanity, Nourishment, and the Dramatizing of Stream of Consciousness

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This summer, I worked with Professor Abigail Killeen to write a one-woman play tentatively titled *mint frappe*. I am planning on designing, rehearsing, and producing my play in the coming academic year, utilizing the fall semester to complete an independent study devoted to design and using the spring semester to complete and independent study focused on rehearsal and production that culminates in the performance of the piece.

While now, at the end of the summer, I have a concrete script that I am looking forward to producing and rehearsing, *mint frappe* started as a collection of autobiographical essays on the themes of disgust, vanity, and nourishment. To begin the summer, I spent the first few weeks generating text. In a large amorphous document, titled “manuscript,” I endeavored to write a little bit every day, even if it was clunky text, to catalyze the artistic process and acclimate myself to the writer’s lifestyle. The first essays were often quite short, little pieces unto themselves, small mediations on my themes of interest. For instance, in a piece dedicated to nourishment, I wrote about slow mornings made up of warm sun on wooden floors and decadent sunny side up eggs, while for vanity, I wrote about my habits of journaling and self-obsession.

After creating a critical mass of these little essays, I pivoted from focusing on output to input and began to read extensively on authors I had previously identified (and some new ones) who wrote on my themes of interest. I read a variety of fiction, plays, and literary theory (see references). Next, I began editing my previous essays and generating new pieces which incorporated ideas from the numerous authors I had just consulted.

The completion of these second drafts of essays marked a pivotal moment in my creative process. It was at this point that I started the process of dramatization and began to transform my collection of prose into a script. I began by ordering my essays to create a *very* rough flow for the script and worked section by section to reimagine my essays as monologues, as text meant to be performed and heard. It was not a uniform process. Some essays I had written lent themselves very naturally to performance and so needed little to no edits, while upon others I performed almost complete rewrites.

Towards the end of July, I realized my play – then solely constructed out of vignettes and essays turned monologues – needed a container, some light form of plot to give it a measure of cohesiveness. I really struggle to write plot, so this part of the process proved immensely challenging. After consulting Professor Killeen and after a few days of writer’s block, I did find a structure to try: the play would follow the main character preparing for date, going on the date, and debriefing the date.

With a trial container written and the deadline for the script’s rough draft in early August, I made a final push to have something which seemed like a play ready for me and Professor Killeen to study. This part of the process was incredibly exciting and – in a literary sense – brutal. I heavily redrafted or completely rewrote all but two pieces in the play. (This is a fun fact: these two pieces I wrote in the very first phase of the process. In a wonderful way, they sprang into being and were never belabored with editing.)

Having described my process for creating *mint frappe*, I want to end this reflection by communicating some of my major takeaways. First, without Professor Killeen, this script would not exist. During each of our meetings, we would read all my writing out loud. Hearing my text in someone else’s voice and getting to see her live reactions to it were encouraging and *vital* components of this artistic experience. Second, I feel that coming out of this summer, I’ve developed a writing process which works very well for me. I am beyond excited to continue working to bring my play to life, but I am also so grateful to have learned *how* I write and to have had such an excellent collaborator and advisor in Professor Killeen.

**Faculty Mentor: Professor Abigail Killeen
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