

Esalen Writer's Camp 2019 Notes from Sessions

Pam's Monday Session

Fussing with shades on windows behind her - too bright. Pam Houston published six books. Went to University of Utah. Fiction and nonfiction is the blurry space she lives in. She gets more requests for non-fiction than fiction. She loves teaching. Teaches at Davis. American Institute of the Arts in Sante Fe. 75% native students and faculty. "There There" by Tommy Orange - her student. Created WritingXWriters. Does a bootcamp - 300 page manuscripts. Likes the quote, "I hate writing - I like having written." Lives in Colorado. 9000 ft. Ranch.

1. Her bread and butter mantra. Everything she has written has been written this way. Main reason she writes about are things she witnesses in the physical world. Her first job as a writer is to pay strict attention. "Paying strict attention is prayer." While she is paying attention she waits for something that vibrates out there. Something that vibrates for attention. Anything can be a glimmer. She writes them down with some regularity. (Every time she is on an airplane.) She believes that her glimmers are her raw materials to make stories about anything. They are the organic vegetables for her soup. The outside glimmers help her to express what is inside her. She doesn't have to know how because It is like the organic garlic that makes her soup better; it just does. When she writes she opens her glimmers and finds the ones that want to stick together to make more than the sum of their parts. She does not focus on plot, character, story, etc. Less about plot, than anything. Plot is a journey that starts somewhere and ends somewhere. While important, she doesn't allow herself to think about it for many drafts. Don't worry about solving the *problem* right away. Let things get dirty and messy, Go into the forest of not knowing. (It sucks, but it is necessary.) Great work comes from surviving the forest of not knowing.

Why try this? (I.E. focusing on observing the physical) 1. Readers love to have their senses activated. The more you activate your reader's senses, the more they will engage with your writing, bodily and with their full brain lighting up. 2. You must invite your subconscious to the party of making art. Your conscious is about protecting you and the reader. The subconscious is about what is real. So, *notice* your way to a first draft, don't think your way to it. Let what activates your subconscious guide you to writing. Don't worry about plot and story. Intuit the associations of the glimmers. You'll get so much more, We overvalue logic. She is suspicious of chronology. (Her childhood was not that way.) She believes in shattered narrative. Many drafts later you can make a windshield out of the broken glass. Glimmers does an end around the analytical brain. 3. It makes writing seem possible. (No small thing.) It's hard to sit down and begin something like a novel. Writing the glimmers is easier. It gets you into the chair. Once she is in the chair screwing around with stuff, she is having a certain kind of fun. "I'm not going to write today, I'm just going to move the glimmers around." (Easier)

Example of how this works. She is writing and has some glimmers. Story of ice on small airplane and pilot who decided to tell her they were in danger and what his decision was. Then she went back to the glimmers to fill in the time between when he was a robot and when he decided to be human. The glimmer she chose was a frozen bottle of vodka and roses at a Valentine's Day party - represented her mother. She didn't know that, but she trusts the process of the glimmers working together. Good ingredients means the "soup" will emerge strong. The strength of your story will make use of the glimmers to tell itself. Also, the glimmers have the strength to take your story to someplace you didn't know it was going. She wants to be surprised. At some point she knows what the story is she is writing (although she tries not to) but even then there is always an understory - the deeper, truer, story. Glimmers take you there.

This method works great for non-fiction and also for fiction (that is also non-fictional and autobiographical - because it has to be). Glimmers work for both.

Using this technique - it is not about making writing easy - it is about making it possible. She believes in the power of noticing, the power of the glimmers. (She does have the inner voices that say she sucks.) But we're trying to feel okay about ourselves. Like anything painful - you just have to be there and endure the pain. You eventually emerge. Glimmers are metaphors. Trust your feelings of resonance. Trust your reader because they know more than you. The storyteller is the one who creates the atmosphere in which the reader can experience the story. Don't force the metaphor. Let the metaphors do what they do without impeding them. She holds the space for her metaphors to make something. One thing she learned in graduate school: Four stories: A story as it exists in the world. A story the writer writes. A story the readers reads. The story the reader reconstructs in his mind.

The more absolutely specific you can be in your details the more universal your writing becomes. Don't generalize. You cannot be too specific.

She admits that this is mostly a poetic method. Activating the senses. Fiction writers think of writing as a flatbed truck in which you deliver your story. She doesn't want to be a flatbed truck. The concrete, the physical, is her focus.

Don't kick the life out of a glimmer when you first write it down. Don't set it up, or think about its meaning, etc. Just get it down.

Audience question: "What if I only have glimmers?" Answer: Challenge yourself to put it together. Play a game with yourself. Say, I will use seven of them and write a twenty-page story. Most writers have the opposite problem - too much throat clearing and then finally getting to something meaningful. The whole point is that unrelated things come together to create meaning. Organization is not the way to art (for her).

We're going to be killed and we're going to be ignored, so you might as well go out singing.

No matter what happens to you publishing-wise, not one single thing will feel better than getting up from the computer and saying to yourself that you fucking nailed that. That's the best it ever gets. It doesn't matter who ignores you or kills you.

Assignment: Glimmer from Esalen. Ten years ago. And one from anywhere, anything.

Throne bathroom hacked out of a poison oak patch. The roof of our house clacking in the wind keeping us awake. Loving my mother's chest rubs and then her stopping giving them.

The metal steps to the outdoor bathroom are narrow and grippy and lead to a door that swings oddly in order not to push you backward and off the narrow platform at the top of the steps. The concept is of an outhouse that has been gripped by a giant's hand and raised out of the ground. It's easier to empty a metal tank above ground than one buried, I suppose. Waiting my turn to mount the throne and be swallowed by the door, I notice that vines of poison oak are reaching toward the structure trying to reclaim that very same spot that was stolen from it for the rocket-like facility.

We lie in our hastily assembled bed with only the few blankets and sleeping bags we could locate without committing ourselves to opening too many boxes for that limited reserves of energy that remained after just getting into the house with keys that now belong to us alone. The trade winds are steady and loose cedar shingles chatter above us. The sound is comforting until the gusts raise the decibel level to the realization of another unanticipated project ahead of us.

That feeling that everything will be alright. That feeling that the fragrant lotion and the hands of my mother are perfect on my chest, and later the sound of an argument she had with my father and the end of back rubs and chest rubs for the remainder of my childhood.

Pam Houston: Practicing on present glimmers gives you the confidence to trust the physical content of past glimmers. She would never get in the way of a glimmer becoming a story. Glimmers can be small or they can be complicated and story-like. The point is that the physical image gets you writing. She tends to not overwrite the glimmer the first time. She tries to give the glimmer time to simmer - to reveal its meaning rather than force it. Don't put pressure on the glimmer too fast. Sometimes the glimmer knows more than she gives it credit for.

Exercise for Wednesday: (She has a lot to say on Wednesday about writing your own story. Barry Lopez said in a village in Indonesia about the categories of fiction and non-fiction. The elder said "those categories wouldn't work for us. The only distinction we would make is between an authentic story and an inauthentic story. An authentic one is about all the people, and inauthentic one is one just about the writer." (Connection to the collective unconscious.) Wednesday she'll talk about how to do stories that are about you *and* about everyone. Lidia will also talk about this too.

How to set your subconscious free on the page. For her, it helps her to think about a physical container that she is putting her glimmers into. She holds a specific shape in mind while she is combining glimmers as a way to forestall knowing where it is going, what does it mean, etc. She asks herself what shape is the container she is putting the glimmers into. She is looking for something geometric or in the physical world to think about while she thinks about her story. She thinks about artwork made out of text. She thinks about geometric shapes, various types. Also natural world shapes and structure: icebergs, braided rivers, streams, etc. "Woven" by Lidia is a braided essay. Other shapes: Tree roots. Grape vines. Childhood toys. Slinkies. Spirographs. Return. Story building itself into a flower. Twelve-sided Rubics Cube. "Contents May Have Shifted" is a twelve-sided Rubics Cube. It's a way for her not to know the big answers, but to think about the form. Form is a stay against infinity. It is the limit that makes the writing possible. She knows the shape of the boxes she has to fill. That's better than knowing the "aboutness" of what she is writing. By doing this she is then more likely to tell the truth. Stops the convention of the free text pyramid structure for stories. She finds this structure ludicrous. Thesis, antithesis, resolution, assimilation - Ashcanabre is an alternative to this structure. Assures it is about the people, not the artist.

Assignment: Remember "form focusing" lets your brain focus on other things.

So, write 26 lines. A is first line. B second, etc. Poetry or prose. Can go backwards. Can start with any letter. One sentence is one word line. One sentence is 50 words long.

You can substitute a different letter for x or z but not both .
Abecedarian.

My idea - each line is one more word than the line before.

Toni Morrison's Jazz is the best novel ever written.

The reader *feels* the form whether they *know* (are aware of) the form or not - this is her belief. Readers feel form-all integrity. Every good novel has this form consciousness.

Lotion.

My mother's hands

Never pausing on my chest

Opening my heart to her lasting love

Protecting my skin from the darkness in our house

Quibbling with nothing verbal, nothing that opens a trap of words

Readying me for a future of peace untempered by anxiety or compensatory bullshit

Stopping abruptly after my father calls her away from the soft bedroom leaving me cold

Trapping me in an ice cave the chills of which outlasted even the perpetual rocks in his nightly martini.

Until I learned a request for touching was innately undeserved, a ticket punched to destinations too expensive, too exotic, too remote

Valuable only in imagination transformed to look at me, look at what I can do, how special I really am, don't you see?

Where goals can never be good enough, where achievements lose their promised glow, where each walk in the woods becomes a compelling dare

And the fall to the water in the quarry is nothing, and the roar of water rushing past my body erasing the rifle shot of entry superfluous

Yesterday's memories are filled with blatant trespassings, risks taken to balance the fraught pursuit of perfection, the hugging of loneliness firmly to my chest, wounds not appearing

Zyzyxx has nothing on me for being an obscure stop on the highway to Vegas, the road wandering far among mesas of shifting heated sand, obscure lizards with rough skin

Always wondering, leaving behind sign posts of degrees and marriages and jobs and awards and businesses and creative ideas sure to make me rich and famous, Magpot anyone? Humhat?

But then old age and awareness creeps in, accumulative hours of meditation adding up to multiple months, therapy, and books, and lots of art and writing, turning the proverbial lemons into

Candy and other sweets, so you get a little overweight, no problem, old habits reemerge in healthy ways - yoga, supplements, and running like movement itself is meditation, intimate healing, passing feet across paths of earth

Demanding so much less than old longings, a sense of control, a sense of animals holding the earth in their padded paws, of raptures gulping the air they slice, the trout rising for mayflies they savor

Every last thing noticed and beloved, every boulder speaking with the romance of aliveness, every cliff catching the sun on the banks of the Green River, every puffball mushroom gathered in the mountains of Deer Creek Canyon and sautéed in French butter

Forever will I feel the hands of nature on every part of me, on every muscle worked and stretched on the yoga mat, on every organ twisted and inverted, on every running shoe reluctantly retired and no new ones of that model available anymore - you know, the ones that fit

Gone are so many bits of the longing, the hunger satiated with a slow drip of the most delicious nectar floating from the earth to mouth teaching that you get more when you don't purse your lips and suck too hard, just let it breath into your throat with reverence

Hearing the voices too, yes, even the arguments, somehow transformed into songs that accompany the feast, the infinite love of fulfillment, which is the recognition of its impermanence and the weird programming of our psychology which is somehow part of the beauty too although

inscrutably so, dammit, because the understanding of it would so satisfy the frontal cortex of my mind and help me build a memory I can cast in bronze and set up on the lawn of my being, a monument to the logical deserving of love, the rational irrefutable proof of worthiness to live in a world that is already more perfect than one could ever become.

Just grant me this one moment, world. One moment of understanding the fullness of love without fears without anxieties without the pain without the relentless driving toward understanding, with only mercy and faith and mouth wide enough to swallow it all and turn that all into the me that I was already. (50)

Knowing this is possible has got to be enough to finish my years, and the discussions about letting my body decay at the base of some fruit tree are not, somehow, absurd - what better hand to massage a bit of lotion onto a chest than a peach tree?

Steve's Monday Session:

Friendship and Conflict (often go together)

His new book is about how we get ourselves into conflict.

Marriage is about changing three day fights into three hours. (A triumph if you can!) Marriage partners must agree to express our frustrations immediately. In general, part of each of us wants to hold onto our disappointment in our spouse. The novel, Stoner. His new book is about it. It's about feuds and conflicts. He was constantly embroiled in them. We are always the perfect martyrs in conflicts.

Mostly we don't seek out contentment. We seek what we are used to - i.e conflict.

Also, the book is talking about friendship. We take other kinds of relationships than friendship (the most common) as the substrate for our writing. We tend to write romance, family discord, etc. In fact, though, we move through lives thinking about friendships a lot. What is literature's relationship to friendship? is what interests him at the moment.

Tim Creeder (sp.?) We Learn Nothing at All

The same thing that makes marriage so valuable is its tenuousness. Truth and Beauty by Patchett. (Sad and gorgeous). These books are about friendship.

When friendship is too close it can become fraught.

Male friendships too: Wuthering Heights. A Prayer for Owen Meany Humboldt's Gift Charlotte's Web all these books are about friendship.

Margaret Atwood's Cats Eye is one of her best - it is about a painter in Toronto, hometown, memories and feelings about early friendships with three "mean girls." Projective rage comes out for kids (due to self-loathing). She eventually gets rid of them when the bullies get weak. Then the protagonist becomes the bully and has that to carry that too. We usually return the stuff that hurts us. Knowing too much about other people weakens you. You become vulnerable to them because they are then not easy to forgive,

Assignment: Write about a friendship that takes on dual aspect of deeply loving and exposing. Shark and life boat. Please try to characterize this person. What are the rules of the friendship. How and why did the friendship begin and

how did it evolve. Shifting power dynamic. How did it save you and how did it bring you down. How did the friendship end. Non-fiction. How did you look at it then, and now?

Every bad decision you make as a writer comes from insecurity. Ego-drama diverts your attention.

A variation on this assignment is to write about a nemesis.

The assignment is to write about a friendship in childhood or adolescence that was deeply loving and exposing, and I must say that I had no such friendships with human beings as such. It has taken sixty three years of intense living and studying for me to understand, at least in part, why this was so for me from birth through my mid thirties. There were acquaintances, and games played, posturing games boys and young men play with each other based on partying, academic competition, daring things done in cars and in wilderness, but close friendships? The kind where your soul is bared and vulnerability becomes not just a possibility but a necessity for a relationship to continue? Never happened.

But I did have a deep and abiding friendship with aloneness. Safe, loyal, undemanding, yet mysterious, aloneness was my deepest friend as I look back on my developing years, and, frankly, the pattern of that friendship evolving into something competitive, mildly toxic, and ultimately something to reject, holds as true for me and aloneness as it holds for those lucky enough to have deep and abiding friendships with other humans.

Aloneness, like a super comfortable friend, allowed me to not to share the pain of my home life as I worked out my compensatory behaviors and achievements at school. The arguments between my parents. The money worries. My father's alcoholism and failing car wash business adventures, my mother's decline into paralysis due to multiple sclerosis. My older half-brother's mental illness and sadistic cruelty.

It was perfectly natural to protect this friendship because who could in their right mind at a young age have the words to share the truths of a turbulent life to potential friends in a way that would nurture an attractive relationship? No, much easier to wrap a bubble around yourself and only reveal a small part of yourself (although I did not know it as small at the time) in safe "winnable" situations, like getting good grades, painting interesting paintings, acting in school plays, not as a mere cast member, but preferably as the lead, the only way to isolate yourself friendship-wise in a team of actors because so much depends upon you.

And so much depended upon me for so long. It was all on me and my friend loneliness, until family inevitably started happening for me later on, whether I wanted it to or not. People who needed to be friends with me. Lovers, my students, my colleagues.

My old friend loneliness still has his arms around me at times, although I know enough not to return his embrace as I once did. I can just call myself an introvert now, so people understand when I need a little time to myself. What's left in me is the hunger for deep friendship born from a feeling of having missed out on it, the feeling that no matter what I do, no matter how successful I am, as a teacher, an artist, and now as a writer, that I may never be good enough to deserve friendship as others seem to enjoy naturally.

He is not a fan of writers who feel they have to grab people by the throat - it is a sign of insecurity.

"Who am I this time" is a great short story by Vonnegut.

Cheyenne's Story - about middle schooler tough friend. She's a great narrator. Readers need a narrator. The narrator is trying to locate us in the school, in the story.

Memory his not a recording device. We remember the feelings, the tones of things.

Tenisha (sp?) read story about narcissistic brother, . My reaction was that more about how she thrived is needed. What did she do differently than the brother? More mature charm? Luck? Hard work?

The Jody/Jodi story - about unreported abuse her friend covered up for the husband. My thought: the friend accepted her despite educational differences, yet the friend accepting her husband's abuse was not okay. Interesting, sad.

"Precision is everything." - Steve

"We are shitty judges of our own work."

When we use poetic language in prose make sure the reader is oriented narration-wise.

Productive and unproductive bewilderment is worth thinking about - go for productive. Productive is what is it like to be so in love with somebody - memory foam.

Poetic Associative Velocity has the danger of leaving people behind, but it's worthwhile (he thinks)..

Imitative Fallacy - we confuse the reader because the character is confused - don't fall into that trap.

"The Dead" a story about a dinner party.

When you fall out of the dream the reader ends up focusing on the inadequacies of the writing, the language.

Show don't tell is overblown. Tell them enough so they can feel the scenes that are dramatized. Where are we in time and space? - Readers need ballast. That's what narration does.

The Lyric Register - kind of writing that has lyrical and psychic compression. It is not through effort that beautiful writing is made. Beauty is the residue of the pursuit of truth. Reaching for supercharged fancy language to jazz up a story is a mistake. Go with your intention. Have faith in the story. Avoid performative writing.

Sam's Monday Afternoon Session - Voice

How to construct narrative out of the glimmers?

The answer is voice. It is the currency, the essence of you as an artist. How do you get a voice?

(Uses fuck and shit a lot.) Raised in Northern New Mexico - Enchanted Hills Trailer Park. She used to write - newspapers first. Judith Crane. Wrote for a *weekly* called Daily Optic. Journalism major. She hated David Almond. Went to France. Then LA - followed a musician there. (Mistake) Heard NPR on highway. Kate Braverman talked about rock and roll. Inspired her to be a "real" writer. Had a private workshop with her. Janet Fitch. Mary Reiko (sp?) were in this workshop of Kate's. Dressed all in black. Had a world view - poet, short story writer. Broke narrative apart. Her voice was mean, impoverished, etc. That's what she thought her voice had to be. She desperately wanted to sound like them - ie in a vicious way. The ethic was to kill each other with vicious critique. She heard a short story about France. She wrote the line, "This is how it is." Got caught up in the passion of writing and felt spent when she finished it. The next week she had to have pages. (Her turn, then, to be eviscerated by the workshop.) She read her piece. Moment of silence happened. Either its terrible or great writing. It was the latter. People were crying. That was the moment when she found her true voice. It was powerful. Of course, there is work to be done after, but that's okay

How to get a voice:

Finding your voice on the page means that your attitude comes through.

Your voice is the resonance that can't be found by diagramming sentences.

Do #1 Own what you are writing. Good writing makes claims about the world implicitly or otherwise. Own your passions own your obsessions. Be who you are, not what other people are like.

Your voice strengthens when you get even *more specific* about your obsessions.

#2 Know where you are in relation with your reader. There is a space in your head between you and other people. She notices the Marriot Voice - distant from people, i.e. you know things others don't. This distance happens early in your career. Better - your voice starts to develop when you get close to somebody. Brought a participant onto stage with her - made her too self-conscious., Brought up a New Mexican friend - got very close to her (personal space). Be *intimate* with your readers, or at least decide where you are going to be, what distance you will have, with your reader. She says voice requires an intimacy with your reader that you have in your head. It helps you hone the specificity of your voice. It helps you to stop protecting yourself from them (like at the Marriot). Imagine your reader and decide who can you be the most authentic with? It doesn't matter how intimate you choose, but the choice itself about this is important.

Voice is deeply rooted in circumstance. (My question: Can your intimate audience be yourself?)

Assignment: Write about "Let me tell you what you've done wrong:"

You don't slow down enough to feel, you idiot. You know better. And then when you do happen to get to that important space you fuck it up by trying to hold onto that feeling too long, intellectualizing it, memorizing it. So, most of the time you are either missing the feelings of life or you're warping them into something unsustainable while trying to make them last. Stop it! Stop making little gift boxes for yourself with pretty ribbons and funny wrapping paper, wrapping paper that you choose on purpose because it's harder to tear into something so cleverly written and well scotch-taped to get at the goodies. Stop putting these precious gift boxes on your bookshelf. You either finally get around to opening them and discovering the feeling has turned to shit, or the stench gradually becomes so bad that you just have to toss the whole bookshelf into the garbage as you head to the store to buy another better shelf and additional even more clever wrapping paper. Breathe, let it go, pay attention, let it go, pay attention, figure it out. It's not that hard, just impossible.

Great stories were read by the audience here. Really amazing.

Step #3 Find your voice in the voices of others and use Imitation, Assimilation, and Integration. Examine how they do what they do - the writers you like and resonate toward.

The Voice Show: She seeded the room with readers and had judges on the stage. Judges stand when they hear something they like. Mentions articles: Alexander Chee "How to write an autobiographical novel" One like Bernard Cooper's "Truth Syrum."

She watched a lot of this game. (Too much)

Imitation, assimilation, integration (what we do when we read authors we like) Metaphor: Steps for salsa starts mechanically. Then you own it and dance yourself.

When you hone your voice it helps to be held by masters. She uses sentences from masters as prompts.

Ginette Winterson

Choice of subject, like choice of lover, is an intimate decision. She plays with this sentence.

Casey Leyman "Heavy" I did not want to write to you I wanted to write a lie."

"You ask me who I am. I am more than enough.' A person she knew who died of AIDs.

A kettle hisses. A bottom deflates. Your shoulders fell like two ripe pears, muscles slack at last. While you are thinking about what your bottom is going to look like deflated like that forever, and whether something in that steaming kettle is doing strange permanent things to you, another muscle group lets loose and your fingertips roll out of your joints like grapes. Good thing the golden retriever curled in the corner doesn't like fruit. You notice it yawning at you as the rest of your arms roll away like naval oranges, or maybe they are clementines, you are not sure. At least you can still see them. Or at least you can until your head and neck hang like ripe bananas over the watermelons of your legs, and pain becomes a distant memory.

Step #4 Write every day. "Show up every day so your muse knows where to find you." Train your subconscious mind to show up for you and do work.

Step #5 Ignore steps 1 through 4 Don't spend your time in writing workshops! Think about your life instead. Make up new words. You are the protagonist. Live! Dance. Break hearts, etc.

Vivian Gorneck memorist "The Situation in the Story' "The way you see things is the thing being seen."

Voice comes from how you view the world. It is a resonance.

Lidia's Session Tuesday Afternoon -

Expressed gratitude for being there and feels shy. Asked participants to give our names and one word about what we were feeling.

Talked about how writers and artists have agitation. It's good in that it makes us see, but also has bad aspects. It helps her "have a body."

Advocates telling stories *in pieces*. Use intuition, juxtaposition, and fragments. Less thinking!

When she wrote Chronology of Water a linear approach made it seem flat. No feelings in it. Too much plot. She worked hard at it. Then she decided to write about rocks, and it all came together for her, magically. It helped her get the feeling of losing a daughter. So, tell stories in pieces. Don't write directly at the thing that happened. Write about what's around the direct thing. Go for a series of emotional intensities. This will yield more. Dive into the image or the emotion (rather than the plot, the thing that happened).

Books that mesmerize her:

We the Animals Justin Torres A perfect book made into a film of 90 minutes. Queer, biracial coming of age story. Fragments because the linear way she was trained to tell her story buried her identity.

Bluets by Maggie Nelson - all about the color blue. Pieces next to each other. You think the book will be about nothing complex, then WOW!

Citizen by Claudia Rankine. Fragmented. Point of view changes often. Multiple narratives. Broken into pieces. Breaking a story down allows it to be talked about. The most generous book she has ever read because it gave the reader space to go in.

Even sex isn't just about sex.

Braided Essays: "Women" is one she wrote with nine characters shifts. She "pulled apart" each chapter to get at the dramatic emotion.

She's big on the word, distill. Distillation - when you make yourself tell less. Small pieces make you learn what you care about.

Trauma fractures storyline because the trauma itself fractured the story as it was lived.

What she is basically talking about here is poetry.

Fragments, interestingly, can be many pages long, or intensely condensed, (either or both or anything in between).

Breaking things apart gives you distance so that you can write about it, distill it, juxtapose things to make meaning, (Gives it *your* order over the trauma?)

So, break a story apart, then you put it together in a better way. Proximity matters. Randomness is your friend in terms of getting more material out. Don't be afraid of randomness because story *will* happen. This is because your subconscious is always driving the car.

Lidia wants the linear storytelling "monster" form to die because it has erased the stories of other identities. She encourages us to flood the culture with non-linear narratives,

Assignment:

Choose six words randomly, then hone them to three.

Climate change

Food

Touch

Mango

Fish

Dirt

Mango

Climate

Dirt

Three words are three sections - attach a memory to it (or fiction) Three different ages of you - each one. Each panel is a different memory, age, and word. Ten sentences each. Don't worry about connecting them.

They say that kids who play in the dirt are less likely to develop allergies later in life. Not true in my case. I was a veritable dirt eater, a digger for worms, a thief of ripening strawberries and young asparagus tips in the garden of our suburban home perched on the edge of a ravine in southern Wisconsin. Bees used to sting my bare feet in the grass, and trips to the bathroom cupboard to wash out wounds and apply Band-aids were a regular part of my afternoon or

weekend's six-year-old wanderings about our voluminous property that was in reality only about a half an acre, not counting the ravine that I started to explore - against my parents' wishes - by the time I was eight or nine. Every March thereafter I develop hay fever that lasts about a month or two and set a clock for my life that was more or less accurate until only a few months ago when my new Lithuanian doctor cured my allergies permanently with the correct prescription of billions and billions of daily probiotics. Who knew? I guess we need those micro-organisms in the dirt just as much as adults as we do as kids.

I am riding my Sears three-speed bicycle one hundred and thirty miles in one day to get my ass away from home and to the stables where I will pretend to be a cowboy for two and half months. The wind is blowing hard into my face, and the backpack stuffed with blue jeans and crisp white shirts from the thrift store feels heavy on my shoulders, but I don't care. I'm going to make it all the way in the sixteen hours before darkness falls, pedaling the bike absurdly in my cowboy boots, even if the thunderclouds dancing above me decide to make the start of my summer more adventurous than I planned for. I made it, sore, and ready to get even more sores as the eight to ten hours of leading trail rides bareback on horses with jittery feet and bony withers begins. It turned out to be a summer of many changes of climate. I saw a tornado start to form and reach its elephantine one toward me above the barn in July only to gratefully watch it retract again. I endured incredible humidity and heat riding in jeans so soaked with horse sweat I had no idea if I was adding any of my own perspirations to the mix. I pedaled my bike back home to start school again in the fall resentful of the days ahead that would require sitting in desks under fluorescent lights and then the same at night to keep up with the homework I piled onto myself to have a good excuse to stay hidden.

There is no end to the anger I feel about BP and cars and carbon dioxide and my personal role in the coming debacle. My home is in Hawaii now. I am fifty-seven years old and ready to dig in the dirt again. I plant a mango tree. It will someday bear fruit, and until then it will sequester a small bit of the carbon I am responsible for. When that tree actually grew, I followed it with peaches, avocados, oranges, grapefruits, and figs. I nurse the small patch of garden protected from the trade winds by the house. I dump compost, wood chips, onto it.

Randomness produces order. You might have to wait to see the pattern, but it will. She attributes it to physics. Consciousness can affect physical patterns. Patterns of water molecules. Divine Geometry. Even destruction has order.

It's better to start with a bigger list (than just six).

She asks one question now about what we wrote. Answer in one sentence: "If I make you believe that all three parts are related to each other, what is this story trying to tell you it's about?"

This is a story about the relationship with nature reflects personal insecurity.

Two more exercises:

1. Distill each of the triptychs
2. Repeat the order two more times with new triptychs. Nine threads minimum (Braid)
3. Narrative helix (DNA) pick two instead of three and toggle back and forth in short segments (6 sentences at most each). Go in later with craft and change it. Go until the content reveals itself to you. (Do six sections minimum)

The idea is to keep your thinking brain something to do instead of making meaning,

1. There is a diptych. (It's okay if you ditch one of them) (You can play with using binaries such as love and hate - then open it up and by the time people are done reading it they are not opposites anymore.

In the helix form one can wait for the story to come back at you. (We should look up helix)

It's good to play with writing in this way for a good long time during the process.

Pam's Morning Session on Wednesday

Loved the session last night. How everyone took chances She's taking a chance today, not reading a funny donket story.

Pintu (sp?) elder said the difference between an authentic and inauthentic story. Authentic story is about all of us. This seems deeply true to Pam. This is in contrast with those who say "Speak up - tell your truth." Also, the more specific you are the more general the writing actually becomes). Pam says it is worth thinking about how you are speaking for the larger group, what care is needed in your writing because of the particular audience who might share your trauma, etc. Everyone has a trauma group that you are connected to. How to stay connected to your story and carry on your shoulders others who share that, is an important and difficult question. Just be conscious of that.

Pam was raped repeatedly by her father, so she is speaking alongside a lot of people who aren't necessarily ready to speak. Her only comment is her insistence on the physical and concrete - lodge her recovery inside physical metaphor and the further (and more) it reaches other people. Sink the emotions into the concrete, the glimmers. The reason is that when we start to put pain into concrete language) i.e. pain, pain, pain say say say - those words are light and float away - they are too abstract and the reader can't relate to them. Earn your right to use these concrete words through mostly using concrete physical details. 39 concrete details per 1 abstraction it has been said is a good ration. The more particular and more physical makes readers' brains light up.

How to decide between fiction and non-fiction? A little distance is a good thing. How to decide non-fiction and fiction. For her. She learned a ton from non-fiction. Deep Creek she thought would be easy. Instead it took a lot of time, but it took a long time because she had to learn to respect memoir as a genre. It had to kick her ass first. She used to think that any story that can be told can be told better as fiction (because you can massage it to make it better in service to the story). In the last fifteen years she now understands that for many people the power of being able to say "This happened to me" is very important (politically, spiritually). She used to write non-fiction like she wrote fiction (devices, etc). Now she is interested in what happens when you don't let yourself make stuff up. (Since, philosophically, one can't use words to represent reality, she used to think that it is basically still art. She still believes that language can't can't represent reality - because context is always changing, also desires, also faulty memories, also the way we are storytellers about memory - BUT this doesn't mean we can throw the baby out with the bath water. Referred to Trump - we need to speak the truth. What then is her relationship to the world - the threshold is "her best try" to get what happened down on the page. There are always lies on every page - even if it is her best try. The telling changes the story, and she knows she can't 100% get back to the real story.

Referred to "Waltzing the Cat," Lucy is her. Written 20 years ago. She got the dates wrong of her mother's death. She replaced the lack of garden with a garden she planted the beans in the garden. She, however, did her best. Her best try to represent reality even though she knew she was failing. She didn't embellish on purpose, even though she was tempted. What she learned in that process was amazing. Stick to what happens and WAIT and shit (ie good stuff) will reveal itself. The metaphor knows more than you do. Infinite patience is required. (It sucks to wait. Negative self talk arises "You suck." etc. They show up when you have nothing else to do...until the value, the revelation burps up out of the morass of you waiting for what *really* happened. It *does* burp up - it took her eight years.

The action of fiction is vertical. You can make things happen whenever you want. It pops and dives, pops and dives, (she blows things up - makes a handsome Italian men show up). In memoir it is horizontal - water floating across a field, saturation, a sponge, have to wait for it (awful to wait - you hate yourself as an artist and a person) but what eventually burps out it is something. This requires patience, waiting for the water to soak in. She believes in the collective unconscious.

She has learned the value of not making stuff up to make the story better. Waiting means she spends a lot of time in her writing cabin hating herself. Little mini-editing sessions happen as she waits (to pass the time, to pretend she is doing something significant). She also experienced writing a lot of bad pages - often in the past she was afraid she would scare herself from writing because of writing bad pages. She was so lost for so long. She even didn't know when she had done something right. No outline. (Not advice! - go for outlines if you want.) She uses geometric shapes. Calendar spine was an almanac she added and figured out later how to use it as a shape. This solution was a long time coming, a lot of faith and waiting, of letting go of her geometric shape as she first imagined it. (It came back later.)

She was Jim Fry's only teacher - the guy who embellished his story of abuse and sold it as a memoir. No one ever told him *not* to embellish. Oprah picked it, and then people attacked him basically because of capitalism (jealousy).

The story as it really happened probably is powerful.

Fiction - she is writing it now. Thank God the opposite rule doesn't exist: that if it happened you can't write fiction out of it!

A story can start in reality and then bloom into something else. It's fun, a blast.

She is on the same path as we are. How to live right now - in a country that wants us dead. How do we live with climate change? How do we not let it consume us? How are our stories of trauma relevant in the face of that? We need a human response to the world if we want justice, the possibility of justice even, and joy. Key to memoir and fiction is self-implication. The single most important thing in memoir is self-implication. It might be the key to healing what is happening to us.

Story of drunk house sitters. Slaughtered her sheep and had a "back to the land ritual." Dude severed an artery. Butchering pet lamb, Phoebe. Drunk guy was bleeding out in the corner of the restaurant. She was writing the story of being wronged, and while she was writing the essay, wolfhounds killed two chickens - she had to kill one of the chickens. She had a ram that was out of control and started to break everything. She then had to invite a friend's son out to shoot the ram. So, she had to kill a ram after being mad at the drunks for killing Phoebe. You're not as free of blame as you think you are. In other words, Self-implication. (Basically, she is talking about karma.) Relates to politics right now, too.

Write a scene 20 minutes in which someone has done you wrong. (Step two is self-implication)

Pam talked a lot about waiting for burps in long soaking fields. The same applies to the sometimes difficult task of naming a car. Not that I am the type of person that just has to name every vehicle I own, but I do like when a name burps up from the universe for a vehicle because sometimes it is just easier to say I'll take Matilda, or George instead of I'll take the Toyota or the truck. Insecurity revealed her name to us after literally everything that could possibly go wrong with her in the two years we owned her went wrong with her, and usually at the most inconvenient times. Need to get to work? Insecurity clogged her dual carburetors. Need to buy beer for friends you invited over for dinner, flat tire. You get the idea, except she also had the uncanny ability to need expensive repairs just when your checking account gets almost back to the level it was before the previous breakdown.

There are lots of stories about insecurity, like the time her accelerator cable broke in the plateaus above Telluride Colorado, and your stoned and boisterous buddy worked the gas from the back engine compartment while you worked the clutch in the drivers seat negotiating hairpin turns on mining roads with six hundred foot cliffs to soar off of if you made a mistake. But anyway, suffice it to say that just before a long anticipated vacation, Insecurity stopped running. It was an engine problem this time. I took it to Dean Hightower's Mountain VW Repair Shop where he charged me \$800 - a fortune at that time to replace the valves, bore out the cylinders, and any number of other delicate and necessary surgeries to get the car back to the point where we could reasonably sell it to somebody else because at that point if we really didn't just have to get some money out of the piece of shit I would have driven it off a cliff 007 style just to watch it crash and burn.

Dean was sympathetic but firm. The engine was blown and he needed \$800 up front to fix Insecurity. We sold some things and scrapped together the cash. Two weeks later we walk to the shop to pick up the car. It starts. Miracle. It runs. Miracle. And then we notice that it is getting nearly sixty miles to the gallon. Amazing! Payback! Insecurity is rewarded us at last. We decided to keep her. Might as well. What else could go wrong? It has new brakes, a new engine, new carburetors, new tires, new clutch, new transmission, new wiper motor, and now an amazing MPG rating.

After a thousand miles the engine blew up again. It turns out it is very bad for a car to run that lean. It put stress on the pistons, The engine was ruined, and Dean said it was my fault for not adjusting the gas ratio. No refund, No sympathy. We were stuck, broke, and hating Insecurity with renewed and even more vigorously.

If there is any silver lining it was to realize the car companies could have made cars that get great mileage if they wanted to. All they needed to do is beef up the metal in the pistons and cylinders. That is where we all have been ripped off.

Climate Change. She's mad at the government, yet she flies a hundred thousand miles a year. "What is my part in this situation?" she asks.

Her mother always said she "gave up everything for her." With her therapist, she made a list. Her mother never gave up any of those things (tennis, etc). Her mother gave up the condition of childlessness - something Pam never gave up .

Cognitive dissonance is being asked of us in regard to climate change. We need consciousness.

I still get to tell the story, even if I am implicated in the story too. Own your whole being. It helps to humanize your villains.

Good bad man or bad good man depends upon what you hold dear. Forgiveness feels like religion to her. She cares about understanding.

Climate change - (point I wanted to make) - That art is less consumptive and community building. We need that to pull together to save the earth and transition away from consumption-oriented living,

Assignment: (8 minutes) and write into the scene from the point of view of person who did you wrong.

Another person who has no business owning a VW. These cars are like toddlers - rewarding and a privilege to have in your life, but you have to watch them at every moment, take care of them. Not drive them into the ground like they are invulnerable. Had he changed the oil more regularly instead of just topping it off every month or so to save money, the engine wouldn't have blown in the first place. It only has 60,000 miles on it. And now he is haggling me about price. It's not easy running this business. You know what it is like to run this place by myself - I'm the only

mechanic = and forty customers breathing down my neck for service. "I need my car fixed now, yesterday, in fact. me, me, me, now, now, now, give me a bargain, I don't have much money, can you fix it perfectly with used parts? It's not even worth fixing anything perfectly because they are just going to fuck 'em up again soon anyway. I suppose I should be happy because it is more business for me, but I'm not like that. I just do the best I can.

Next assignment: You know what your go to point of view is. Write same scene in different person. 1st, 2nd, etc. Pam does this all the time. She likes second person - it tricks the mind that makes her able to write things. The cadence of the second person frees up memories.

She says white male professors everywhere are saying not to use second person. Tolstoy, Faulkner used it before it was trendy.

They bought a car that broke down all the time at inconvenient times. It motivated them to name the car Insecurity even though naming cars wasn't generally in their family culture. The tendency of the '66 VW Hatchback to break down did provide for some lasting memories. Like the time the accelerator cable that ran from the pedal to the engine compartment at the back broke on a narrow mining road high in the cliffs above Telluride Colorado and a drunk and stoned friend had to work the gas manually from the rear while the driver worked the clutch and navigated the narrow road back.

The car broke down and the VW repair guy charged a fortune to rebuild the engine. It got eighty miles to the gallon after that for a whole month before it blew up again. They learned that car companies are full of shit about not being able to make high mileage cars. They also had to rebuild the engine again because the pistons weren't beefy enough.

Third person made more details come easier.

2nd person present tense are good companions. They really change the mood.

We (1st person plural) can be super powerful.

People shared experiences of different doors opening because of person shift.

Takeaway - when stuck change person or change tense

Then ended with abecedarian read.

Sam Second Session Thursday

(Music playing to set the mood.) The Fish Mash Lecture then a discussion about publishing.

Facebook - Scott is mayor of the page. Ask to join.

Registration for next year. The system has changed. More severe consequences for reserving then cancelling.

Writingxwriters.org has the link to pre-register for next year. June 28 - July 3 next year. (Conveniently possible to stay the weekend after." Look for writing prompts every Friday on Twitter.

Cancellation policy is strict. Preregister to find out when registration opens.

About writing:

Talking about structure. In every story something must die, she believes. It is a metaphorical or figurative death because there is no other way to get out of a dilemma. In stories we think in terms of problems. Narrators have problems they bump up against. Protagonist/narrator We are the narrator but the narrator is not us (we render our personalities, the catastrophes of our personalities). Inciting incident starts off the story. A burnt toast moment - Man and woman have a baby boy, 2 yrs old hasn't said anything yet. Take him to the pediatrician. Then a specialist, then another, then Mayo Clinic. Idiopathic condition, nothing to be done. They go back home. Boy is fifteen. Mom brings him breakfast in bed. "Mom, wait, the toast is burnt." Oh, my God! You are speaking! Why didn't you speak before?! "Well, everything was alright before." Something is needed by narrators, and then they come up against antagonists (people, things, parts of themselves that have opposing wants). Antagonists are not necessarily villains. Rain just wants to rain but it causes a big problem. Conflict is the engine of stories. Conflict causes change. If the protagonist gets everything they want it is called a closed ending. Most of the time we have an open ending, One or two of the wants are achieved, or none at all. It is satisfying because the real revelation of story is emotional, ie a revelation from unconscious to conscious. That is the emotional need. This is not plot. The story is the revelation or change (Not necessarily redemption). All we really are after is *insight*.

So, what has to die? Often we think in terms of problems. Problems have solutions. Really what we are digging for is the dilemma. (Something with no easy solution.) We find this often when we are really close in on understanding our characters. The resolution is a transformation into a new way of being. The resolution is a sense of acceptance, but something had to die - usually the idea that it had to be this one way (the original protagonist's need).

Objective Correlative - poets talk about it (T.S. Eliot's phrase) Essay about Hamlet. Bard's worst play because Hamlet tells, doesn't show. The objects in a piece carries the emotional meaning in the story - def. of objective correlative. Aquarium spilling example. (The flopping fish represents the dying marriage.) Trust the metaphor! Don't tell.

So what we are looking for is the dilemma in the story, not the problem. The problem sets up the dilemma. The death of the expectations leads to compromise and acceptance.

The Assignment: What died? —What did you kill without meaning to? —What did you kill?

The microbiology professor wants to save life on the planet by releasing a CRISP-ered engineered virus to kill off humanity. His arguments are sound, backed up with logic from his university's AI supercomputer. The planet's problems, the loss of biodiversity, micro-climates, famine for humans and animals as predicted by Paul Ehrlich's "The Population Bomb" will never be solved unless he acts. The protagonist, working as the professor's lab assistant, loves nature, has explored intimate connections with animals, has even introduced quantumly-altered, super-intelligent top-end predators to restore balance to damaged systems in two parts of the globe. She knows he is right, but she is compelled to stop him before he releases the virus. Or does she? Her fiddle with the loving soul of her grandfather, always a firm guide for her in the past when she experienced its mystical transportation of her consciousness into deeper, truer realities, the instrument that helped her find true love despite growing up in a culture of superficial Tinder-like hook ups, calls to her. Will she seek its guidance? What tune would it play for her as she hesitates outside the professor's lab and watches him prepare the virus bombs he plans to release? Does she act without its guidance, or does she pause to put the fiddle to her chin and listen? What will die? Her faith in cosmic love and the ongoingness of life in the face of terrible challenges and disaster, and her love of people, her family, her boyfriend, and the civilization that brought her her fiddle, her art, in the first place? Or her love for unspoiled nature that still has a chance to recover to a reasonable facsimile of itself?

A bunch of people read compelling stories of painful experiences.

Shift to publishing talk:

Sam starts with asking us to ask the question of whether a story needs to be a book necessarily. Essays, shorts stories, etc. are fine.

1. Three kinds of book publishing: commercial publishing (major houses and independent publishers) 2. Hybrid publishers. 3. Self-publishing.

Commercial - Four and a half houses exist. Usually you need an agent (gatekeepers) Independent publishers you usually need an agent there too. Less money. \$1500 to \$5,000

Hybrid Publishing - You go into business with a publisher. You pay them \$1500 and they invest \$5,000 in it. She Writes Press (memoir) Rare Bird (Fiction and Non-fiction) and GreenLeaf (Business and self-help) Distributes in Ingram

Self-Publishing: She has a bias against it. Writers gave up and went with it and then sink into a morasse. It's tough.

Julie Barton's Dog Medicine. She finished it and sent it to ten agents (queries). She gave up agent query process. She had an image of one person needs my book. That kept her going. By chance she ran into a person starting an imprint about mental illness. He pursued her. \$4000 advance offer. Hooked up with Pat Conroy's agent. NY Times Best Seller's list.

Some agents say you need a platform. It's a real thing, but if it's fake, you won't authentically connect. Person to person is still the most effective way.

Leaving the Hall Light On is a memoir by another participant. She has a blog. Two Facebook pages.

One can sell non-fiction on a proposal. The query letter is combo of marketing plan and persuasive essay: How is it like every successful book and how is it not like anything else before?

Also there are University Presses. University of Nebraska Press. Good editors and peer reviews.

UpWork - like Fiver. \$40 a week.

Roxane - Got published by coming to writers camp - says you can engage on social media. Be nice to people is the key.

SpiritualAF - Roxane's Facebook

Michael Endungen - The English Patient author.

Essays are easier to publish!

Duotrope for writer's market

"Maybe the purpose of your life is to serve as a warning to other people," - Sam's mother.

Lynelle's Thursday Afternoon Session

She is trying to do 1000 words a day

The importance of finding and employing descriptions of people and place and putting it into non-fiction.

Place is as important as anything in journalism. Use your details as a layer of your narrative. Pick and choose carefully what you want to put in. So and so ordered a salad - doesn't cut it. Don't waste space on stuff that doesn't convey information, that moves a story forward. She'll show us examples of voice and imagery.

Quotes by visual artists: Good photography is about seeing. The rest is academic; Stare, cry, listen, eavesdrop, die knowing something. We are not here long; An artist doesn't see as normal people see. He sees geometry. Shapes - cylinders, spheres, cones.

Her background is in journalism. LA was not accurately depicted. Upset that it is not just Baywatch, Hollywood. Each neighborhood has a different feeling. She focuses on using all of her senses. Touch. Smell. Textures. These evoke place in a specific way. Pick and choose carefully. They call it color. Don't do it last minute. Have it in your arsenal so if the editor asks for more vividness, you have it ready. You want people to think your memory is their own - by using vivid imagery.

The lead - who, what, where, when, how is for regular journalism. Feature stories are more of a seduction.

In Cold Blood - Capote. So good. House not close to street. If it had been, no murder. Place mattered!

She reads a description in the book. He interviewed the criminals - down to the mundane things in their suitcases. Capote took notes about the environment and what was said.

Lead can be a scene, an anecdote, question, statistics, thought. - But they all must be evocative, compelling.

Quick write: Show, don't tell. 15 minutes

Hi Guys!

So here I am in Esalen, where rustic meets a surprisingly high level of practical sensibility. Speed bumps in the otherwise already perilous driveways to slow down the rare vehicle that dares to violate the walk-everywhere ethic of the place. Funky yurt-like structure sheltering the occasional black widow spider hiding out in the backjack chairs and big yoga cushions everyone (yours truly excepted) uses to sit cross-legged on the floor to listen experience the instructors who, like everyone, is glowing from the smell of the eucalyptus trees everywhere, the jasmine bushes, and, of course, the salty breezes from the Pacific Ocean. Knowing me and our familial small bladders, you undoubtedly read plentifully available bathrooms into my description of the practical sensibility of the place. Although images of camping come to mind because of the canyon with a rushing creek and extensive forests with broad leaves readily available, there is no need to take a shovel into the woods to bury your poop. They've got you covered here with a wide variety of throne-like commodes, courthouses with real flushing toilets in them, as well as heated wood paneled conventional bathrooms - with patchouli scented soap - in the more formal area of the dining room. Also along our family priorities, there are hot springs tubs to lounge around in naked and fill your lungs with sulphur, as well as convenient yoga studios - one named after our favorite author, Aldous Huxley, when your not so full on organic kale and produce from the extensive gardens that you can manage to stretch.

She wanted me to change funky and new-age to more specifically descriptive language.

Camera, camera

Many people read their great descriptions of Esalen. (Owl represents ancestors.)

Setting moods - important. Backdrops are really important. Imagery and details often end being the stories themselves. Images become the story. In journalism there is a term called Enterprise Stories. (Your own enterprise gives them life. (Reporters have "beats" - not a lot of creativity in it, though.) Things bubbling off on the side of your beat contains stories too (happily). Arts and culture she was doing - she was covering a change in the name of an art center. Doll heads in her garden - art in response to stuff - people did this type of art in the neighborhood as part of the culture. Another discovery - sculptures of bottles, etc. She investigates, His name is Shrine. He builds the structures at Burning Man. People bring him stuff to make art. A story! (Because she was curious and observant about side *things*.)

Wrong turns can be fruitful.

When you are blocked in your writing, take a walk in a new place. It helps. Her book came out of a grid-lock moment. (Stuck in traffic) Sunday mornings she picked a new neighborhood to be in and walk. Then she took photos. A woman mad at the name of Bike Shop "Jesus's Bikeshop." It used to be a church. People are losing things that matter to them because of change. Stories are everywhere when you stop. People *do* want to talk to you. Reporters listen to you in a different way that is attractive to many people.

Guy Trevai Trave? - NY Times He writes fashion. City columns "Urban Underdevelopment"

Break

Now - putting people in that backdrop, how to do this?

Shared a story. Bobby Brown (female) the makeup artist. Lead (a come hither and look). Then the So What. (See above for how to open a lead.)

She tells story about interviewing a musician. Harp in old house he used to live. She could have complained about the location of the interview (not the original one) but she went with it and the location was even better because the piano was historical to the interviewee. The point is to trust the process.

She interviewed Willy Brown in SF. Always called The Mayor. His fame is exhausting. Color, color, color. So important. She records everything, including what she is looking at, the physical things. She gets to places early and looks around.

Publicists more and more control people's brand. They can only ask certain questions, take photos only at certain times. Newspapers are refusing to go along with these publicists protections these days.

Another anecdote - a piece in LA Times, about being a father - a fashion king. Color, color, color. She moves him through time and space. She wore a dress he designed incorrectly, and he didn't correct her. Tom Ford

Kicker - the end of a story.

Take out place holder words from first writing. She writes third person omniscient and doesn't put herself in it.

Assignment Part One: Make a list - deep into your past - pick a place - important place -

The sights you might see in this place, sounds you might hear, tastes you might experience or enjoy, smells, touch (tactile or emotional touch)

*Fetid smell of horse manure and urine mixed with fresh and rotting hay
Horses neighing and running in the pasture. Cars pulling up in front of the barn
The taste of a file that lands in your mouth while you are sweeping out the stall
The nail pounding the board with the painting permanently into an obscure beam over the horse stalls, a testament to
a priority coming in a future life.*

With the list you can make a list poem or prose paragraph. Rearrange the order. Things will come out of this.

Play, Play, Play, use your details and play. Keep looking and playing.

“After Image Los Angeles, Outside the Frame”

Lynelle.george@gmail.com

Create a microcosm around yourself.
Create your own personal counter culture

Esalen Writer's Camp on Facebook
Ask to join!

Friday Morning's Last session: Three Things I Know

(Spiders are spirit animals indicating inspiration.)

A tribute to the writers camp was read by a participant.

Nametags recycled

Writingxwriters website has the preregistration for Esalen. June 28 - July 3
Also, donations accepted for scholarship students.

Esalen feedback form will come via email.

All writingxwriters email go to Karen (the

writersdunn@gmail is Sam Dunn's email.

Parting words of advice. (Mic feedback problem)

The three things you know for sure:

1. Lidia - She doesn't know jack shit, 1. Heart: nobody is going to give you a writerly life. Waiting for the world to recognize you is not going to happen. It took her a long time to realize she has to invent it for yourself. You can only be a writer by inventing that shit from the inside out. You have to keep reinventing it all your life. Your entire skin must shed. Snakes have to shed skin in order not to die. Your writing has to change several times in your life. 2. Heart: You have to find some peoples. They help you not give up on yourself. If you are with people who starve you and think you are doing something weird, find different people. You need people who nourish your passion. She understands pain as good hard work. Pain doesn't mean she is doing good work. 3. About the page: Mantra for her: Sometimes the solution is in form, not content. Play with

form when you hit a wall. Put it into pieces Try repetition. Go to the image out the metaphor. Risk repeating things to see what comes out the third time. We are content obsessed - drop that in favor of form.

1. Lynelle - 1. Page: She writes in lots of forms. Just know there is no one template. Every story is going to be different. They empty you out in a different way. Some come easy, some hard. You are always learning, Plug into that. She can slip from genre to genre easily for that reason. 2. Page: Trust the dark corners. Sometimes a disaster is exactly what should happen. Stops you from forcing a piece one way. Trust the dark tough part - that's the part where you are really learning. Frankenstein babies - give the pieces a rest - and come back to it later. Don't think you are totally washed up. 3. Heart There are people who will second guess you. Negative people. Don't listen to them. You have your own truths that are important. Don't let them stop you. Someone out there needs to hear your story. There is someone there who heard you and you saved them.

1. Pam - Started with sincere thank you. Comments and feedback appreciated. Eselan opportunity to use trauma. As a motor. 1. The US of America was built upon a mountain of slavery and genocide. She feels her work gets noticed because she sits on top of that privilege. 2. Love is stronger than fear: form, art structure, is transforming trauma. 3. If we could bottle what happened on Tuesday night, Wednesday when Lidia said we put children in the water and when Roberto came out of the kitchen to play. Bottle it and spray it on Mitch McConnell and make him melt like the Wicked Witch . 4. Pam added another sentence here after Steve. We have to bottle our stuff. If we work together the power is infinite.

1. Steve Almond: 1. Use of the word love and what it really means. It comes down to *attention*. Giving something your attention. Our job is to pay attention to our lives. (Self-love important) 2. All poetry and beauty in writing arises from precision. Not from fact or feeling. More like the pursuit of precision according to your life experiences. Are you reliable? That's the gold standard. How precise is the expression (not feeling or fact) but reliability. We proceed from doubt to further doubt. Precision of expression. 3. Anguish is completely understandable. We *should* be that way. Action, though, is required. Voting is important. Next year will be 2020. Don't look to external solutions, or the millennials to solve it. McConnel has a cash register, not a moral compass. Ask, "what am *I* doing?" What are people around me are doing? He likes what happened in 2018. Writers who turn to their inner life - watch out - they will try to turn us against us. Writing is a profoundly moral act. Sanity, decency, and mercy.

1. Sam Dunn: Nothing to add. 1. You don't know who needs your story. It may be millions or it may be one. It will make a difference. 2. She despaired previously that the stories were not being heard when they are needed. BUT there has always been war, so artists must believe in the possibility of something else. Being in community with other writers really does make a difference.

- Question: Chandra - asked what kind of reading they do. Sam: "The Manual for Cleaning Women" good book. Lucia Berlin Lidia: she reads all the time. Swimming with a pool with water in It is for her is like reading. She reads to keep herself alive. Writing gets hard and old. Beautiful books make her want to stay alive. She wants to come near the good writing she does. Her perfect book We The Animals by Justin

Torres Lynelle: She reads to review. She reads all the time. Mother was an English teacher. She reads to get in the mood to write. Sometimes poetry helps her. Sam "Deaf Republic" great book. Sam reads a lot of student work. She listens to a lot of books. Books helping her the most - James Baldwin The Fire Next Time. The debate on Youtube between him and William F. Buckley is amazing. Leslie Marman Silco Ceremony There, There by Tommy somebody. Driving in Cars with Homeless Men Kate Wisel. No Name in the Street - Lynelle likes that one. Citizen is a great book. Steve. Loves Baldwin. No one is smarter, more precise. He does a lot of rereading. He reads a lot of kids books. Curious George I'll Love You Forever is a great book. How to write about an inner life. Children's lit is a hidden receptacle of human perversity. The man stands at the head of the stairs for a long time. We've all stood at the top of the stairs. Everybody has had the experience of being paralyzed by deep inner life stuff. All reading is like an active prayer.

A person asked what is the meaning of life. Sam - Her answer is so sappy, The people that she loves. It is about the community. That we are in it together. Sam suicide thoughts - sharp right on Hwy 1. A friend said, "I know that feeling very well. You know, we stay alive for other people." Somewhere in the giving to others is the meaning of life. Lynelle - She is always trying to find where true connections can happen. Steve - said it is a question like how do you die gracefully? Steve says showing up and paying attention in life is the key. Self-knowledge is a grace that is hard to find. Pam: Meaning of life? Love is paying attention and to try to sing about the beauty of this planet here in its time of catastrophe - Half. The other half of the answer is making and holding a space for other people to be creative. It's about paying attention to them and them making a song about them and helping others to find their singing voice. Lidia: "Peer Pressure" My life work is to try to hold that question open (as a verb) rather than have an answer. What can I go with? She resists the answer.

The Misfits Manifesto

Lidia - says to watch out for people who have ideas for you to write. You end up with to do lists to do - not real writing.

Sam's mother said, "Maybe the purpose of your life is to serve as a warning to others." Sam's trailer trash book was suggested by her agent, and it failed because she wasn't writing for herself. Pam Houston rescued her, helped her write what was real for her.