



## SILENCE IS ACCEPTANCE

I was reviewing notes I had made during residency, reflecting on the learning, things discovered and the underlying thought I kept returning to is, *Silence is acceptance*.

We are in a program that demands us to speak, write, express ourselves, albeit mostly through our writing, but express just the same. We are doing important work, whether we know it or not. Today, more than ever, the urgency exists to speak our truth, no matter how messy. We can *rewrite* the world one word at a time, regardless of the genre.

Geronimo's class drove that point home, loud and clear. Raquel insisted on it, and Chris taught that there are countless ways to reach that goal. And if I had been in Beth's or Ellen's class, I'm sure I would have heard something similar. We were inspired to generate writing, feel our writing, question it, rediscover our voices, and ultimately to be unafraid to write.

During the One Read at Roundabout Books in Bend, Beth Piatote spoke about being resolute in telling our story, and staying true to what the story wants to be, when Chris Boucher asked, "*When do you know how far to go?*"

Beth answered, "*Sometimes the caution is the fire you need, to jump after it. If an idea gives itself to me, I'm responsible for it.*"

Indeed! During the evening at the High Desert Museum, Jennifer Reimer and Beth Piatote were in conversation regarding living in areas unfamiliar to each of them. Jennifer recounted their conversation from earlier that day, "*Beth asked me how I was adjusting to central Oregon, having grown up on the coast, as we crossed the Deschutes River, and I said, 'Yeah, it's nice, but it's not the ocean.' And Beth countered, (living in the Bay area), 'Well, that's how I feel about the ocean, it's really nice but it's not a river!'*"

That exchange, in my view, epitomizes things we learned during residency. We all have different voices, different preferences, perspectives, ideas, and desires, and it is important to share them because even in our differences we can find common ground!

-Imke Wernicke is a contributing writer

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*"If you're an artist in any way,  
you're working under a lot of hope." - T.G.Johnson*

There are usually only a few classes in our program that allow all the students to learn together. This past residency allowed for that in our Critical Studies class with T. Geronimo Johnson where on four separate days, we read our original work to discover 'writing difference,' ultimately how voice and our exploration of it is a necessary tool for writing/rewriting (and, I dare say, living!)

The class was I think I can speak for everyone stating that it allowed for deep learning, and understanding that whenever we write, we are writing 'difference' because each of us comes to the pen from a different place and experience. Ultimately, Geronimo wanted us to understand that **"almost every decision we make every day is informed by inherited behaviors, and very few of our ideas are our own. It makes us better artists when we are aware of the dynamic and the fluid entity that consciousness and personality are."**

The class was big and beautiful, and the subject matter impossible to contain, but Geronimo worked with us in a way that made it possible to graze and digest the bulk of it. On the last day, he spent some time answering questions concerning writing and discovering voice. Here is an excerpt from that day:

When a writer writes something offensive, and you meet them at an event, how do you address it? How do you handle it?

*I'd say it would depend on the severity of the offense. That's a hard one to answer and not really a question that I feel I am in a position to answer, because almost everything that's written offends me in some way - so if I were to approach everyone, I would probably, - and I'm not talking about white writers writing black writers, I'm just talking about everything, I would probably not, actually, I just wouldn't be able to go to literary events!*

Do you have stylistic points you have when revising? *When revising, this is what I was talking about a little earlier, when I was trying to say that if you were looking at difference, you're looking at dialogue and looking at sensory detail, it is good to do all of these things, distinctly, to do several passes.*

What are some ways we can make sure we are writing different voices and perspectives in a fair and authentic way?

*I think this is a process that is probably one of the biggest things to remember that you can write difference without focusing on difference. This is probably the best way to start. When you think you have to focus on the difference, you're already doing yourself a disservice, and that would be the same way I would answer how do you explore difference in writing without glossing? The thing is, you don't start by highlighting the difference. If you're able to get a character down, then in that second or third pass you can then really start to think about how gender difference, race difference, ability, might play out in the story.*

If allegiance is to the story, not our lives or ideas, do we navigate decision-making by feel, intent, or craft choices, or all of this, especially if you want an eloquent, heartfelt, clever result?

*That's one of those questions that's not really a question. The answer is yes, you do all of that. Nothing really has priority. It just depends on what your style is. The best thing to do is probably to start with your strength or your weakness but nowhere in between. Start with what you're weak at if you feel like that makes it easier for you to revise because you can come back with your strengths. If you feel you need to overcome an obstacle to get started, then you should always start with your strengths and then catch your weakness on the next go through.*

*What I tell myself is that writing is easy. Rewriting is hard. But when I'm rewriting, I tell myself that rewriting is easy, and writing is hard, and I've already done that! Right. So you just, kind of like, change your mind to think about what you're doing.*

Conversational tone? How do I? I have a tendency to write with research and technical tones?

*Here, just simply imagine a different audience. So, imagine someone that you're talking to doesn't know this language but are very interested and you want them to understand and get them excited about it. That gets you away from the jargon.*

What's a good barometer for taking risks, like being ostracized by the world when you have controversial views?

*The thing is, you're not ostracized until you're published and things can be tamped down in editing. So, the thing to do is to just be as honest and humane as possible, then when you get into the editing process, your editor will help you tamp down things that need it. When you're speaking truth to power or trying to present an alternative opinion, then probably this idea that you might offend someone should be a secondary consideration. You shouldn't be writing towards offense, you should just be trying to write into honesty.*

The ideas we're exploring in this class seem too big to resolve within it. **Yes, they are.** With that in mind I guess I'm just looking to hear different thoughts on the subject.

*I said this a couple of days ago. Write towards your fear. You should write whatever you want to write. The thing is, you are pursuing this because you have an interest and a gift, and to have a gift is to have an obligation. That obligation requires you to move with courage, and courage is not the absence of fear. It is simply the willingness to proceed in spite of it. Very, very simple. Don't overthink it. Just keep doing it.*

When writing topics that have a lot of historical content, how do you balance crafting a narrative-based story while not reducing or simplifying perspective or agenda?

*The key here is to make the history matter to the storyline, like Upton Sinclair in *The Jungle*. Instead of giving a lot of facts about slaughterhouses, he made the story mostly about the people in slaughterhouses. Then when the book came out, they changed the laws about slaughterhouses. This idea that you're trying to incorporate everything. If it's history that's not relevant to the moment, then what you do is make it relevant emotionally--so it's something that people discover--that might change things for them.*

*I figured I'd answer those questions, not that you really needed me to answer them for you because the answers are within you. The only job that I really have here is to create a space where, hopefully, you can find opportunities. The fact is that everything that you need you already have. Throughout the pro-*

*gram, what you're trying to do is master craft, develop a routine, maybe develop some confidence. But the only tool that really matters is your heart and mind, and the extent to which you can coordinate those two in this process. And that is really a lot of what it's going to come down to. You're always going to be writing difference. The most important thing is that you care; no one can teach you to care. That's why this class isn't called "Learning How to Give a Damn," because no one can actually teach you to care. That is why even though it's about writing difference, we have to keep coming down to craft, and different ways of thinking about achieving difference. But if I can give you any advice in the last two minutes, I would say that: You should set the challenge to write exactly what you want to write, no matter how hard it seems, because you'll be surprised at what you can achieve if you set that writing goal, and you feel your way through it. That's about all I have to say. What do you all have to say? Thank you! Thank you, thank you.*

*I hope you feel encouraged and try to have fun with it. It's very, very difficult, very, very difficult, you know, there's always a lot that's going on in the world that's completely dispiriting, but you have a chance to rewrite the world every day. Every day you have a chance to rewrite the world. Every day you have a chance to bring hope, right? And the thing is, no matter how dour or pessimistic you might think you are, the fact is that being a writer, means that you're actually a hopeful person. If you're an artist, in any way, you're working under a lot of hope, and so hold on to that. And we're done.*

There is much more learning to share from this class and many others. I encourage students to share any lesson or insight from any class during or outside residency. Speaking about what we learn cements the lesson and works in our bodies to make us more confident writers and learners. We are starting a new section in this newsletter that has been developing for a few months now. It is the Writer's pond, a place for us to *ponder* what we've learned. The bigger vision is that people respond to the writing, thereby creating more learning and insight. See page five for more.

T. Geronimo Johnson is faculty at OSU and an author.

Imke W Berger is a contributing writer.

## A Sort of Tribute to the team that made this possible.

Here are a few quotes that have inspired, informed, and transformed our time in Bend. Thanks to all my fellow students who helped in the collection." - Keisha Thierry

*A writer can fix anything but a blank page.*

-T. Geronimo Johnson

*Writing is terrible.*

-Raquel Gutiérrez during work shop on Power and Place

*The wrong way gets the biggest book deal.*

-T. Geronimo Johnson

*Revise the here and now.*

- Chris Boucher

*"Collaboration built on our relational dynamics" and "allowing me such intimate proximities to their varying artistic projects" ... these mirror a central theme of our program for me.*

-Raquel Gutiérrez

*You should set yourself the challenge of writing exactly what you want to write, no matter how hard it seems.* -T. Geronimo Johnson

*Please judge my book by its cover.* -Beth Piatote

*When you go to the doctor, you don't want him to say all the good things about your body and then cut off your arm.* - T. Geronimo Johnson

*Start [your story] in the action, then bring in the backstory.* -Beth Alvarado

*I had the feeling I was running behind a train, and every time I caught up, it turned into a cactus.* - Chris Boucher

*A workshop is just a committee, for better or worse, they're just a committee, and they can be right or wrong.* - Chris Boucher

*And from their hearts, they defend her hand.*

- Beth Piatote

*Don't ever ask for permission, just apologize, or if you can avoid apologizing, just say: Thank you for your patience!* -Raquel Gutiérrez

*Disrupt the reader's expectations.*

- T. Geronimo Johnson

*I made contact with my privilege, but I did not make peace with it.* - Raquel Gutiérrez

*Every character thinks he is the main character.*

- T. Geronimo Johnson

*We don't have a blackboard, we have power dropping from the sky.*

- Chris Boucher

*The topics you are most afraid to write about are the ones that will probably produce your best work.* - T. Geronimo Johnson

*How many of us did not have the experience of migration but felt the ghosts in the room where our families raised us?* - Raquel Gutiérrez

*Every day you have a chance to rewrite the world. You have a chance to bring hope to the world"*

- T. Geronimo Johnson

# WRITERS' POND(ER) - MORE LEARNING

***This space is intended for students, writers, and readers to share their insight into their own writing journey. Anything that is discovered while pursuing an MFA, being in workshop, or even uncovered about the self, or our writing, and then shared, can only strengthen craft and serve others.  
Go on then, we're waiting for you.***

## How to Notice Craft in the World Around Us

By K. Thierry

It is interesting, during residency I was watching television (who had time for this?). I was obviously so immersed in craft that during the show I started noticing things I would notice while reading as a writer: What the tone of each character was, what was going on in the setting, the difference between scenario and scene. How the writer made one character appear one way and say the opposite. What made one character stronger than another, and why the choices of character in certain scenes. I also noticed the subtle topics covered, which included substance use and what someone in recovery may go through, and how this character was afraid to openly discuss her decision to attend law school to those who loved and supported her. I also noticed that being a good writer meant “thinking outside the box” to draw an audience in. Okay, I was watching the Lincoln Lawyer on Netflix. This reminded me that in the world we live in we can see the craft of creative writing all around us. Please write about your experiences of noticing craft in the world around us in the next newsletter! Happy writing and reading to all!

## Creative Patterns

By Imke Wernicke

During Beth Piatote’s seminar we explored methods in generating writing. I was amazed how a few words on some index cards could inspire so much creativity. While I am usually not at a loss for subject matter, I found it exciting how the exercise could bring out a

new point of view or mood in writing or re-writing the familiar.

In my last mentorship one of my goals was to identify 3-5 habits that limit the breadth of my writing, curtail creativity/imagery, or anything that caused my writing to become stagnant. When Beth began with the simple exercise of describing something that we do every day, a recipe or instruction of some kind, and then rewriting it using a feeling, it demonstrated to me some of the habits that I had identified. Understanding how we put pen to paper and the process we follow is important. It’s fascinating to me how we can learn again and again how writing can be reshaped and reshapes our thinking depending on the angle from where we approach it. I think Chris Boucher summed it up quite eloquently at the end when he said, “I think there’s something reflective about knowing for ourselves what we’re inclined to do with a challenge, because maybe that’s a pattern, that’s a creative pattern.”

In my view, this was confirmed and reconfirmed throughout the week, whether through revision or writing difference, we can change how we view the world from one moment to the next...and hopefully get that down on paper.

*Please feel free to email me, Imke at: wernicki@oregonstate.edu if you have some writing insight to share. I hope that this newsletter is viewed as a place to share our learning and bring us closer as a writing community.*

# RESIDENCY | AN EXERCISE IN STORYTELLING

Adam had been relentless in explaining a collaborative storytelling exercise. He was hoping to recruit a few students to join him. Inspired by the art+words festival from the day before, Raquel stepped in and encouraged us to participate. Adam's proposal: take three to five minutes and begin a story on paper. After 5 or six rounds it came time to read some of them. The exercise was brilliant and another reminder of the things we learned in writing difference and revision.

The collaborative process was fun and exciting and a welcome reminder how differently all our minds conjure things, never mind how varied our handwriting is, which also contributed to interesting interpretations of the subject matter of the stories.

Here's a sample from our collaborative writing:

When constructing your very own outdoor bathroom there are a few things you need to consider. First, what and who are surrounding your outdoor space? Are you in the suburbs? Country? Mountain top? Or Beach? All of these things can change the layout of your home away from home. Second, how bold do you want to be?

The fine line between being berave and bold should be chest-bumped everyday. The unblinking mirror showing the lines of failure when being brave and bold went just too far. The summer trip dow the hill on the stubby skateboard. The missed eyebrow torn trying to stick the trowel inside the doug fir. Deep breath old man, what will we do today to be the grey goat (read as gout and grout by others participating.)

You decide granite shall be your countertop. It's a risky notion. You have to make it yourself. As for potential neighbors seeing your naked form, perhaps they'll be enlightened... nah that's too risky. Ther is a limti to your madness as your Great-Grandma used to say. Frosted glass shall do. The lanning goes as planned. Slicing granite is fun with the new Ultra lazer.

I think that's all bullshit. If you give a shit about contertops go for longevity, durability and sheer ease of cleaning - concrete counters all the way. But seriously

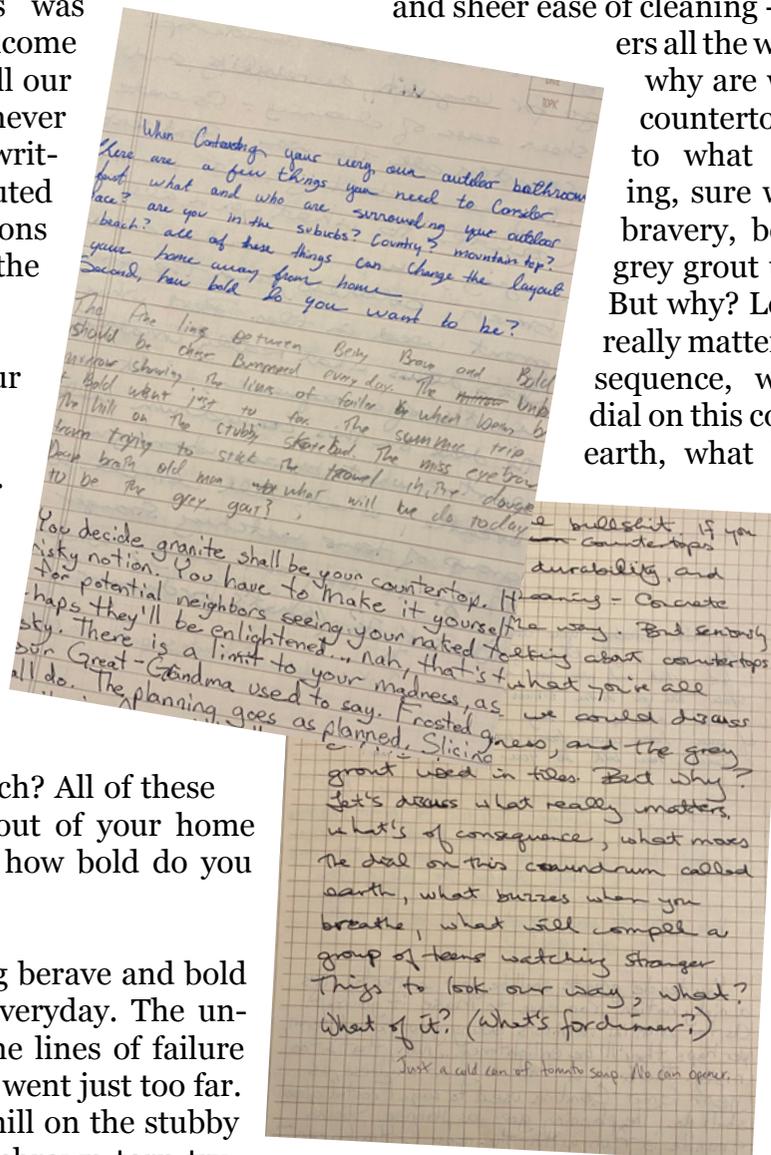
why are we talking about countertops. Counter to what you're all saying, sure we could discuss bravery, boldness and the grey grout used in the tiles. But why? Let's discuss what really matters, what's of consequence, what moves the dial on this conundrum called earth, what buzzes, why ou

breathe, what will compell a group of teens watching Stranger Things to look our way, what? What of it? (What's for dinner?)

Just a cold can of tomato soup. No can opener.

Participating writers: Amelia Salzman, Bobby

Steffens, Laec Christensen, Imke Wernicke, and Elizabeth Higgins.



This month I'm happy to feature Chris Boucher, whom I finally had the pleasure of meeting and learning from. Until the revision class I attended during residency, I had only heard fellow students speak of him and his savvy teaching. I'm happy to report he did not disappoint!

1. Share something about yourself you want us to know.

***I'd like everyone to know how fortunate I feel to teach creative writing — I consider it a true privilege!***

2. Is there an event or specific reason that moved you to pursue the writing life? Please explain.

***I was always involved in creative pursuits as a kid — I drew and painted, I played guitar, and I was very involved in theater. Then, in high school, I began devoting a great deal of time to technical theater; my first year of college was at a theater conservatory, which meant that I'd committed myself to a career as a theater set designer. While studying contemporary plays, though, I felt compelled to write — and to write fiction specifically. Since I couldn't do so in the program I'd enrolled in, I transferred schools after my freshman year so I could devote more time to writing.***

3. If you could spend a day with another popular author, whom would you choose?

***I've had the privilege of meeting a number of my contemporary literary heroes. I was once walking across a busy street, though, when I realized that the man crossing from the other direction was Kurt Vonnegut. He passed by me, and I chose not to say anything to him. In an alternate reality, though, I would have liked to have had a cup of coffee with him.***

4. Is there a book you like to gift people? Why? Is this your favorite book? Or do you have another one? Please explain your choice.

***I just gave someone close to me a copy of Valeria Luiselli's *The Story of My Teeth*, because I think it's***

***a real tour-de-force, and because it seems to be that rare book that appeals to readers with a taste for the experimental and those who prefer more mainstream fare.***

5. Do you have a favorite children's book? Why is it your favorite? Was there a lesson it taught you?

***This isn't a children's book, but I have a very vivid memory of reading Wilson Rawls' *Where the Red Fern Grows* as a kid, and learning something from that book about what language and imagery can do.***

6. Share the most important thing for a grad student to do or remember when completing their MFA.

***Without a doubt, I think that graduating writers should take every step they can to protect their craft. While it's important to advance your career and try to get your work published, I think a writer's top priority should be to cultivate a sustained writing practice.***

7. Do you have a regular writing practice? If so, please describe what it is.

***I write every day, in the morning, but often not for very long each day. Sometimes I don't write for more than an hour, and sometimes I write for three or four; it's rare that I write for more than five hours at a time, though.***

8. Do you listen to music while you write — and, if so, what's your favorite?

***I wish I could listen to music while I write, but I'm usually not able to — I find it too distracting.***

9. What do you enjoy most about teaching? I find teaching incredibly rewarding;

***I feel very privileged to work with writers to advance their creative projects. It's quite gratifying, too, to see our students make such significant progress during their time in the program!***

# FESTIVAL | STORY TELLING WORKSHOPS

**art+words** took place in Bend on Friday, June 10th. The festival was both refreshing and a much-needed respite from the rigor of the residency. The keynote speakers shared some profound thoughts on how art influences writing and how collaboration in art can push artists. The workshops opened our writing, and creativity and pulled our stories onto paper. Most attendees had a fulfilling experience, culminating in a lovely evening of storytelling by the Ellipse Theater Company actors.

The narratives had been written in Craig Brauner's workshop that morning with the



intent that they be performed that evening. I loved this idea and wanted to participate. Still, June Park's seminar on writing, rooted in the self, also seemed intriguing. In the afternoon, Irene Cooper's "More than the Sum - Contemporary Collaborations in the Arts" workshop drew me in. In Cooper's workshop, participants did some writing exercises to sound resulting in some visceral realizations around writing. Then participants read some well-known poems aloud before cutting them up. Next, the dissected poems were glued onto found images, the result a poetic collage.

While I've cut up poetry in the past as a form of revision, I thoroughly enjoyed this process of creating new ways of seeing sentences and how words removed or reframed create new meanings. It was also freeing to rework these poems and find that they contained beauty. Perhaps the images of the results will illustrate the process a little more clearly. The poems that were created, using lines from previously published poems, were quite profound. The

process made me realize that pulling out the creative spirit in each of us can be quite simple. Considering our work in our writing difference class, I wonder whether it was simple for everyone. I feel certain that Irene's methods did encourage everyone to create something.

Some examples of the poetry collages are shown here, with the center poem below:

*About God & Things  
In this short life  
that only  
lasts an hour  
fill the void  
of your absence with*



*tered it.  
A not admitting of the wound  
A closing of the simple lid that opened the sun  
Perpetual nail it down, of the wound.*

*-Poem by a participant of Cooper's workshop*



*love between me and ours.  
in this short Life that only  
lasts an hour.  
How much - how little - is  
within our power.  
I want a crazy, classic life  
I want a crazy, classic life  
Just let me live my life.  
A not admitting of the  
wound  
Until it grew so wide  
That all my Life had en-*

Imke W Berger is a contributing writer.

# THE TIGER'S WIFE

By Théa Obrecht

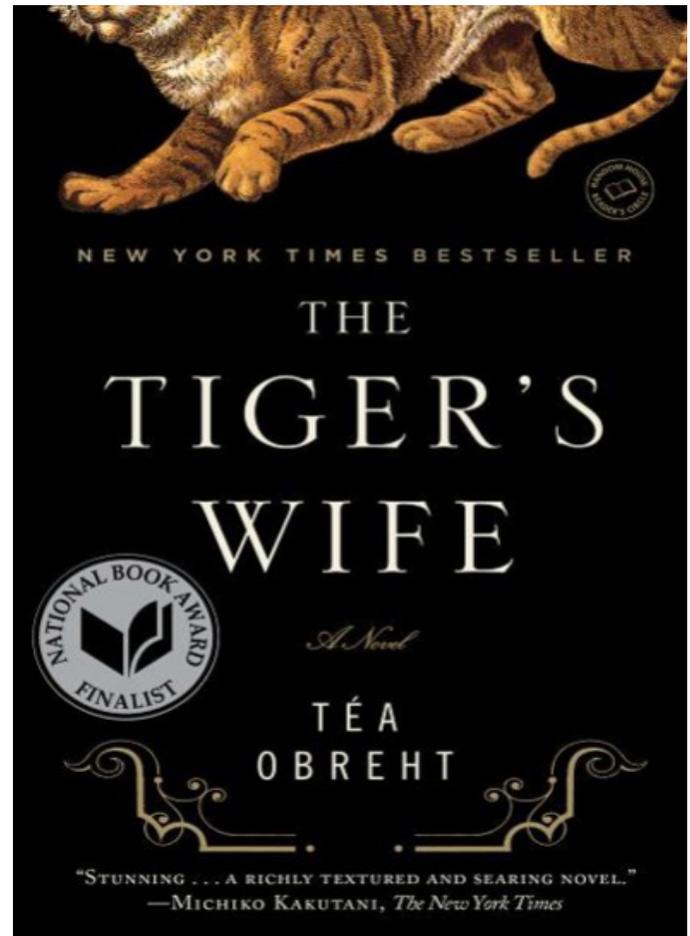
In between terms of the MFA program, I've taken to re-reading novels I remember fondly, to see what my evolving eyes make of them now. Over spring break in 2021, it was Richard Powers' *The Overstory*, at the end of that year's summer mentorship term it was *Sometimes a Great Notion* by Ken Kesey, and this past spring break, it was *The Tiger's Wife* by Tea Obrecht.

Published in 2011, Obrecht's debut novel stayed in my mind for the way it weaved together multiple timelines and folklore. The main character, Natalia, narrates her present timeline after her grandfather's death, memories from her childhood and adolescence in an unnamed Balkan country during the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990's, and some of the stories from her grandfather's life, while her grandfather directly narrates other parts of his stories, and another is relayed from a tiger's perspective.

"Everything necessary to understand my grandfather lies between two stories: the story of the tiger's wife, and the story of the deathless man. These stories run like secret rivers through all the other stories of his life—of my grandfather's days in the army; his great love for my grandmother; the years he spent as a surgeon and a tyrant of the University. One, which I learned after his death, is the story of how my grandfather became a man; the other, which he told to me, is of how he became a child again," begins chapter two.

The chapters act as strands of a braid, not unrelated to the braided narratives found in essay writing. The individual strands could stand alone, but together build upon each other, increasing the stakes of the present timeline as the book reaches its' conclusion.

The elements of magical realism employed in this book don't seem out of place at all for the remote and underserved villages traveled to, war-torn nations as a whole, and individual grief-stricken characters' lives. It is hard to imagine the work having the same emotional impact without them, in part, because Natalia and her grandfather would otherwise stick solely to the analytical language of Western medicine that they both use professionally. And perhaps it works in



the opposite direction too: Natalia and her grandfather are cast as reliable narrators, and so readers are keen to suspend disbelief when unreal elements are layered in.

My second read of *The Tiger's Wife* with a more craft-focused lens did not disappoint. And—though situated in a different geography with its' own unique cultures and histories—carried a sense of greater urgency following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February. Natalia's grandfather relates he is from "all sides and no sides", giving a nuanced perspective to the geopolitical turmoil his family experiences, and enhancing the feeling of precariousness of life or death.

*Send me your book review, and I'll include it in a future newsletter. Not only do we appreciate your participation, but it looks great on your CV. Email Imke at: wernicki@oregonstate.edu*

# FORWARD - SHARE, OFFER, PRESENT

## Hayden's Ferry Review

just opened for general submissions from June 15th until July 15th, 2022.

We are looking for poetry, translations, art, fiction, nonfiction, and hybrid work.

We're especially looking for more nonfiction submissions.

Simultaneous submissions welcome.

Submission fees are \$3 but are waived for Black and Indigenous authors.

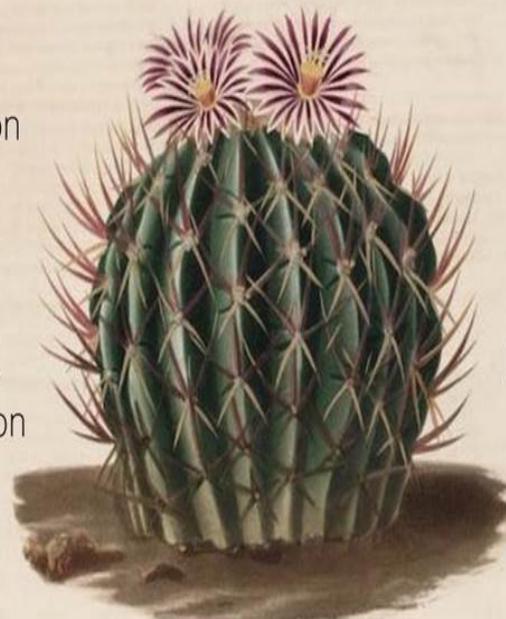
For further submission guidelines and to submit your work, please see our [Submittable page](#).

## HAYDEN'S FERRY REVIEW OPEN FOR SUBMISSIONS

JUNE 15 - JULY 15

Nonfiction  
Fiction  
Poetry  
Art  
Hybrid  
Translation

Fees  
Waived  
For  
Black and  
Indigenous  
Writers



[WWW.HFR.SUBMITTABLE.COM/SUBMIT](http://WWW.HFR.SUBMITTABLE.COM/SUBMIT)

ECHINOCACTUS COPTOSOGONUS

## calling all writers

This newsletter is for you, the grad student, alumni, and faculty of the writing program. We're changing things up! No more themes, just open call! Please send something to be published in the newsletter. You'll be glad you did.

**GUIDELINES:** Student, faculty, and alumni original works are welcome.  
Please share your thoughts, work, unfinished or not.  
Prose: 500 words max (excerpts from larger works welcome)  
Poetry: No more than two poems.

PLEASE Share your offering by **July 20, 2022**, by emailing it to: [wernicki@oregonstate.edu](mailto:wernicki@oregonstate.edu)

