

The Hybrid Text: “To Sleep”

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Abstract

*The following is about my final project, “To Sleep,” written for my Spring 2020 Creative Writing class. For this project, I was meant to confront creating a hybrid text, which is a single text that intertwines multiple different genres. A good example would be the published book *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, which aided my understanding of and inspiration for the hybrid text. I combined the genres of prose, poetry, and drawing to tell one entire original story of a girl and her woes—all through the perspectives of her dreams.*

This creative project was assigned to me in a creative writing class, and was meant to follow the rules of postmodern writing: obscuring the lines between poetry and prose. After being introduced for the first time to the hybrid text through Michael Ondaatje’s *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, I was both shocked of the genre’s extremely experimental nature, along with excited to begin the creation of my own hybrid text. I chose to utilize the genres poetry, prose, and drawing, and interconnected them within my story by having them individually add new content to the story, or add in-depth insight to what was already conveyed about the story through earlier genres. Therefore, unlike a collection of several different genres, the story cannot be completely understood unless all three genres are viewed in the order they are provided—as a chronological story. In doing this, I explored the innovative hybrid

text while exploring an untraditional storytelling route.

Creative Commentary

The entire piece had a multitude of inspirations. I was inspired by Charles Olsen’s projective verse, and his ideas that great works are made by those who see full relevance of the human voice, and that voice should come from the breath out. This led me to write each page with the goal of bringing the reader closer to clarity—but simultaneously, each page I wrote also brought *me* more and more clarity about what the story was meant to be. I began writing the first page with no completed story in my mind, but somehow came to a conclusion without quite realizing it. My ideas never had time to become fully-realized, or have sense and reason molded into them, before I was already putting them on the page. I was

writing as easily as breathing—I was writing to the beat of my own breath.

I was also inspired by BEAT style—while my text was slow, I strongly equipped stream-of-consciousness (inspired specifically by John Ashbury) and a sense of being beaten-down. Occasionally, I picked up the jazzy, fast-paced style of BEAT poetics.

Modernism, one of the styles that motivated the New York School of Poetry members, also inspired me as I recalled Freud's notion that dreams are an analysis of the unconscious, and modernism's philosophical belief that the truth is "within us."

I also added a hint of the innovative writing style, appropriation, or reference, into my piece. I called my piece "To Sleep," and kept the title in quotes because I am referencing Shakespeare's speech "To be, or not to be" from *Hamlet*. However, this was not a planned addition of appropriation. After I had finished this project, I could not immediately think of a title for it. I then exclaimed to my father that I would call it "To Sleep," and he responded by quoting the famous Shakespearian speech, mistaking my title for a reference of the speech. I felt overwhelmingly shocked, and almost even

upset, at his misunderstanding, mainly because the well-known words seemed to convey meaning so similar to the story I had written. I had thought, for a moment, that my story was pure and original. I wondered if I had not had the background knowledge, though it was momentarily unconscious, of the Shakespearian speech, if I would have even been able to write this piece. This made me question the concept of originality, which also often comes up in conceptualism, (another topic I had learned from the class this project was assigned in) and further inspired my creative project's current title.

I never thought I would write something like this, but I am glad I did. I truly became aware of this when I began confronting my digital portfolio for my current Digital Portfolio class. In choosing artifacts, or samples, from my past professional and academic works that could potentially aid me as supplements to my portfolio, I realized I have worked with a lot of different genres. This piece is helpful as it encompasses three genres I have worked with, and therefore condenses my overall collection of samples of different genres to be used in my digital portfolio. Overall, this piece was not only exciting to create, but will continue aiding me as an artifact in my digital portfolio.

References

- Ondaatje, M. (2008). *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*. Vintage Books.
- Shakespeare, W. (1992). *The Tragedy of Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark* (New Folger's ed.). Washington Square Press.

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