

Personal Statement

Student #2

When I came across The Bellingham Review with its excellent writing, I was impressed. When I noticed that the poetry editors of this publication were the same writers that I had come to recognize as experts on Creative Nonfiction, I experienced what I call a “nerd rush.” A nerd rush occurs when a nerd such as myself finds a correlation between one seemingly obscure fact they are passionate about and another. In my case, it was the link between creative nonfiction and poetry.

When we planned our independent study of Creative Nonfiction essays my professor, Brent Chesley, recommended Tell It Slant by Brenda Miller and Suzanne Paola. We found the book helpful with its explanations, examples and exercises to approaching the genre. While the study was designed around creative nonfiction we eventually implemented poetry into the study as well. We just had to.

So when I read that the poetry editors of The Bellingham Review were two of the names I associated with Creative Nonfiction I had to do a little dance.

I have enjoyed the other nerds in the Creative Nonfiction community almost as much as I have the genre itself. Attending the 7th Annual Creative Nonfiction Conference at Goucher College, I learned from “The Godfather” Gutkind, Mary Jo Cartledge Hayes, Dinty Moore, who I have recently interviewed, and others. I have also been fortunate to find a mentor in Brent Chesley who allowed me to teach his Creative Writing class while also allotting several hours every week for two independent studies, “Readings in Creative Nonfiction” and “Essays in Creative Nonfiction.”

While I am obviously an advocate of Creative Nonfiction, I also have an interest in poetry. I presented my poem, "My Guardian Angel," prior to a reading by Diane Wakowski at Aquinas College. The poem was also published in the campus publication, The Sampler. Others are in circulation.

While I've not come across any of her poetry, I idolize Sarah Vowell for the way she crafts Creative Nonfiction. She constantly places herself in scenarios through which she critiques American politics and culture. And while this subject makes her relevant, her cranky style and sarcastic humor make her enjoyable. This, in essence, is the kind of writer I would like to be. My admission essay is a story about El Salvador as seen through an American perspective. I am interested in the ways Americans perceive foreign cultures, especially third world cultures. Many people respond to this by saying, "Oh, a travel writer." But this is not quite accurate. My interest does not lie in restaurants, local attractions or a nice tan. It lies in the cultural critique that can be made of Americans through the juxtaposition of other cultures and perspectives.

I have learned very much from my encounters with these perspectives, though they have not always been pleasant. Other experiences that have

what each sentence in a twelve-page essay meant word by word. Four hours later, we parted, each slightly frustrated and extremely tired. And I couldn't wait to do it again.

After two independent studies on Creative Nonfiction, a workshop, and a conference, Brent Chesley allowed me to teach a session of his Creative Writing class. Despite my nightmares that my teaching would somehow result in mass anarchy, the