

problems as writers might be resolved. When Coltrane

and we are transported as we attach meaning to the music

by the artist's musical message. From the depths of his subconscious and through the vehicle of music, Coltrane expressed pain and suffering, beauty and joy, whether we fold it into fiction, memoirs, horror, romance, mystery, or poetry. But what we write can sometimes feel like we're releasing pages from our journal where so much of our personal selves or those we love will be laid bare on the page. So, we stop short and are then disappointed when our work is rejected because it lacked depth, character, or any other descriptive that we didn't include. Writing in a way as Shakespeare intoned in *Hamlet* as just "Words, words, words!" (29;2.2.). Creating noise, not words with any depth or meaning.

So, when writing about painful or emotional experiences or reactions to events that have touched us on a deeper level, why not liberate ourselves and release those feelings into the holy ether instead of holding onto them like close friends? Pain, suffering, sadness, and anger ought to be explored and released into the collective consciousness, such as when we take to the streets to cry out against racial and social injustices. We raise our voices, sing, chant, and yell until we reach a crescendo—because we want to be heard. Just as Coltrane reaches a crescendo at the end

of “Alabama” a mournful tune recorded in 1963 after the bombing of a Baptist church in

either Kerouac or Whitman, both who continued to write, the latter putting out an additional five editions of *Leaves of Grass*.

Every writer has their reasons for what they fear. Horror writers may despair they'll never match up to such genre giants as Stephen King, an author whose wife thankfully rescued his manuscript *Carrie* from the trash where he had tossed it. Writers of vampire lore may worry they'll never create a character as intriguing as the Vampire Lestat, whose creator Anne Rice went against the grain of what was popular to write abo

she had previously “discussed the assault cursorily” and always “wrote around it,” and that it took three decades before she was “ready to share the details” (7). In writing about painful personal experiences, Gay ignites us when she emphasizes, “There is no pleasure to be had in

uncles was this man's son. I now know why Grandma looked so forlorn in her photos, even though I had seen her sometimes laugh or smile. I now understand why my father never relayed any part of this story to us, as it was probably too painful for him to talk about or maybe he feared something I haven't yet quite figured out. I can only in time put my fingers on the keyboard and write through it to thread the strands back together.

But this is what I mean—our stories, when told honestly, help us make sense of our lives, and if we instead hand over control to our fears, they will sit and fester like open wounds. I can see now how that silence worked its way into my writing and why I don't always speak my own truth in my work. Instead of creating a finely improvised solo that somehow magically hits all the notes, my writing sometimes reads as if there's a missing piece, an emotion not emphasized, like a song without a bridge. I have ghosted myself because of my own fears.

Writing is an act of redemption and a way of reclaiming some sense of ourselves we may have lost along the way. Writing is freeing, and “is deeper than therapy. You write *through* your pain, and even your suffering must be written out, and let go of” (Goldberg 190). Rather than burying it in endless revisions and drafts, of which I am guilty, creating what is more like a fat journal locked in a drawer to eventually be discovered by someone, leaving more questions than answers. Writing is a long and arduous journey, and the first step is taking our foot off the brake and at least starting by getting out of the driveway.

When John Coltrane hits the first note of any tune, we know we are in for a ride, and if you're willing to go there with him, it can take you places that will surprise you. As readers we are fortunate to have writers like Jack Kerouac, who fused the rhythms of jazz into his prose, detailing his journey across the United States and into Mexico in the seminal Beat Generation

can at least write down what I think and feel; otherwise, I would suffocate completely.” And maybe that’s all it takes, one breath at a time, one word at a time, one paragraph at a time, one page at a time, following our muse until we hit send, publish, or post once all the notes fall into place.

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