

# we are handtalkers(-)

SOME MUSINGS

OH MY GOD I'M A WRITER.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

PLEASE DON'T LOOK AT ME AS  
I'M WRITING.

ALL THESE POEMS.  
POEMS. POEMS.

I NEED *THIS* MORE THAN  
I'D LIKE.

MORE THAN I KNEW.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE  
BETWEEN A  
WRITER AND A POET?

IF YOU ARE NOT SPEAKING  
OUT FROM THAT WHICH SETS  
YOUR SOUL ON FIRE THEN  
WHAT IS REALLY THE POINT?

// How can I make things beautiful when they are not?

I can feel it. I'm shedding my skin again. It's rising to the surface. *This feeling*. The restlessness is returning. I am beginning to realize I can push *it* back all I want, but I can't push *it* away. I mean, I could, but to do so would be to erase a part of myself. I know I cannot do *that*.

Someone recently suggested that perhaps writing is a part of my thrill seeking nature. I think maybe they were right. I had never thought of my writing in those terms before. For eighteen years of my life I never even thought about writing at all. It was just something I did. No pretense. For most of my life writing was the only thing I ever did for myself. It is different now. I have become selfish. I am aware of my dull, aching need to write. I need *this* more than I'd like. More than I knew.

These days I write to acknowledge the beauty in the nothingness. I am learning anything can become beautiful if I shed light on it long enough. Even the darkest parts of myself. Of life. Poetry is where I pose my questions, and essay writing is where I try to reckon with the answers. Only for myself, though. I am selfish. So selfish.

// Can inner chaos be both dynamic and paralyzing?

The role of the poet is to express more lucidly what is concealed beneath the skin. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche introduces this initial act of unearthing depth by writing, "constantly, we have to give birth to our thoughts out of pain... constantly transforming all that we are into light and flame" (GS, Pref. §3). The poet recognizes that disorder is both dynamic and paralyzing. Writing is a means of learning to dance with disorder. Playing with language becomes a means of engaging in fiction and art. This means providing a "counterforce against our honesty" (GS, §107). In doing so the poet begins this process of peeling away the skin to make sense of her interior chaos. She is cautious that life has something beneath it, so she uncovers depth with a careful hand. Through a process of igniting thought, and burning away the pain the poet reveals the depth that emerges from suffering through a smoky haze.

**HOW CAN I MAKE THINGS BEAUTIFUL WHEN THEY ARE NOT? / CAN INNER CHAOS BE BOTH DYNAMIC AND PARALYZING? / WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ALL THESE WORDS FALLING OUT LIKE WATER? / WHAT DO I GIVE MY TIME TO AND WHY? / AS A WRITER DO I WRITE WITH MY HAND OR MY BRAIN? IF I AM NOT SPEAKING WITH MY MOUTH, THEN WHAT? / HOW CAN I MAKE THINGS BEAUTIFUL WHEN THEY ARE NOT? / CAN INNER CHAOS BE BOTH DYNAMIC AND PARALYZING? / WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ALL THESE WORDS FALLING OUT LIKE WATER?**

WHAT IS SAID IS HARDLY  
EVER WHAT IS MEANT.

Perhaps then, the role of the poet is to divulge the human being under the skin by exploring the darkest depths of her own mental thresholds. Writing is a process of crushing and pressing thoughts in such a way that the sweetest wine may flow forth as ink passes from the pen to the page. The poet is not merely charmed by the appearance of depth, but knows she contains an abyss within herself. Through entering the abyss and pouring her thoughts on paper she is able to resurface in a new light. Her brittle bones cannot bear the weight of her thoughts, so by purging them as poetry she is able to exhale the dust from her hollow body and become bright again, shrouded in clean light.

// What is the meaning of all these words falling out like water?

In grade school, I remember my teacher once told me I had written a beautiful poem, but the ending was jarring and abrupt compared to the rest. I responded with, "Yes, but isn't that how life is?" She never answered my question and told me I needed to edit the poem. I didn't. *How could I?*

I NEED THE THRILL. OF LIFE.  
AND THE WRITING OF IT.

In his poem "Passage to India" Walt Whitman writes, "Wandering, yearning, curious, with restless explorations / With questionings, baffled, formless, feverish, with never-happy hearts / With that sad incessant refrain, *Wherefore unsatisfied soul?* and *Whither O mocking life?*" (lines 90-92). I cannot help but be reminded myself by these words. They become a sort of mise-en-abyme where I am confronted with a reflection of myself that is not, of course, my self. Whitman is taking a scalpel to both my motivations as a writer and adrenaline junkie. Which, really, are the same. He is holding me up to the light and I am see through. Exploration begins as a curiosity that moves toward restlessness and becomes feverish. When my thirst is not quenched I become oh, so unsatisfied. I need the thrill. Of life. And the writing of it.

// What do I give my time to and why?

A Buddhist monk once told me to only have eight possessions in my life. A mat to sleep on. A prayer book. A mosquito net. An umbrella. A bowl for food. A pair of shoes. A robe for the winter. A robe for the summer.

What does this mean? Nothing in excess. As a writer I am striving to have more and more of less and less. When I am free from distraction and noise pollution I realize,

*Everything seems silent, yet it isn't.*

*Someone, somewhere is going through their day.  
I am hit by how the world simultaneously seems so small,  
yet is also so far away.*

The value of my writing begins with noticing life in motion. In color.

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// As a writer do I write with my hand or my brain? If I am not speaking with my mouth, then what?

HANDTALKING = WRITING

HANDTALKER = WRITER

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO YOURSELF IF NO ONE ELSE WAS LISTENING?

WRITE THAT.

This is a question that has been filling up my headspace since I was in China a year ago. I still don't really have an answer. However, I do believe that artists and writers speak with something far more intentional and less loose than their mouths. Writing is a sort of hand talking where what is being "said" is not being heard, but interpreted from the silent symbols on a page. The reader determines the meaning for herself. The creator becomes a twisted type of mime engaging in a one sided conversation, on mute. That is, the writer makes statements then turns her work over to the reader who engage in their own conversations... Conversations that the writer is excluded from.

Sometimes it seems like the author is writing from extremes of the head and the heart. Perhaps only her hand talking can provide this sort of dynamism. The best writers seem to write in such a way that the reader is able to create their own conversation within the text. Their writing has a gentle way of drawing the reader out of their everyday self into feeling more robustly. Even if only for a moment.

Then, could it be the case that writers speak from their soul rather than anything else? Is this what gives their work such depth and vulnerability?

Still learning,  
-EMILY HUNT



**Emily Hunt** is in her final year of undergraduate study at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. She is studying philosophy and English. Her primary interests are in the intersections between the verbal and the visual. She is fascinated by what words and images can communicate when placed together that they cannot alone. Hunt explores these interests both in her own personal writing and through research. She is currently focusing on the interplay of poetry and contemporary art.