

Irene Koronas

Freedom to write my life as i want

My friend gave me a subscription to poets & writers magazine. I normally don't read it, because, for me, it is the same boring articles about how to make it as a writer, how to submit your writing, how to take rejection. This month's issue has a few interesting writers.. Under the title, Literary Life, Jesse Browner talks about choices writers may or may not have. I was inspired by his reactions, after he read, an essay, by Scott Sherman's overview on the life and writing of Geoff Dyer.

Browner disagrees with Dyer's stubborn need to write what he pleases. freedom to ridicule academia, freedom to travel the world. Geoff Dyer states, "as I grew older I came increasingly to feel that my working life should be virtually synonymous with living my life as I wanted." (Who wouldn't want to live their life as they wanted.) Browner says he admires Dyer, a novelist. But finds it difficult to agree with his life style, living like a bohemian. We both have difficulty with "living my life as I wanted." Browner expounds on, how he thinks there are alternative ways, to live the writing life, other than giving up everything to write and shirking one's responsibilities for a life style that may not produce the desired outcome.

Because writing is what I do, I sacrifice almost nothing to art. Instead, I feel I have offered many years to being and living as a creative person, which includes writing. In order to have what I have, the freedom to write, within the space and time I make for it, after working a job, hanging the laundry on the top porch, (sounds better than throwing the wet clothes into the dryer), washing dishes, (my only zen practice), cooking (not very good at that one) and all the other needs which need to be done in order to find space to write profound poetry and small trifle essays (puns intended). Freedom can become fun when I break the writing rules (as if I know them). I do enjoy using too many ellipses. Simple cursive curves.

Freedom to do as a writer wants is an absurd notion for those who work at various jobs including taking care of a family. To be able to live the 'creative life' some of us take our responsibilities seriously and do what needs to be done to financially assist our families. That being said, it does not mean I don't pursue my writing or painting activities. All the other, stuff of life, fits into everything I write or paint. It's not like I do the dishes and then sit at my desk, (a piece of wood on two end tables) and write profound sentences and forget my hands are wrinkled or my day is full of stressful moments. no. I sit and put my day into the dryer, wring out my thoughts and let them drip onto pink sheets of paper. I use the computer, scribble across large sheets of watercolor paper. It's all there. My creative life fits into all the goings on. In a sense I agree with wanting writing to be synonymous with the way I want to live. The difference, for me is, I need to discipline myself to do what I want to do, to be free, for mark making on paper.

Freedom is in the actions I take to be creative or at least to fit that pen into my hand and write the paragraphs. I'm not going to talk about all the people I encounter who tell me they just don't have the time. He says,

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I'm too tired at the end of my work day. All I can do is sit in front of the television set (or whatever electronic gadget). She says, at night I have to put the kids to bed. I have to clean the house after work. I have nothing to say. Yet, when we meet for coffee she can run her mouth complaining about work or whatever. If she put it on paper it might be more interesting. But, I won't write about the negative refusal some people feed me about not finding the time or the freedom to write. Even worse, try to discourage my creative life by saying, its not worth the time. Instead, there is servitude. I serve my artistic bend. For me to get to the action, writing or painting, I have to talk myself into the doing. I have to tell myself to climb those steps to the third floor and the flat door I use to write on, where all my creative crap has been moved to the sides so I can find a space to put my paper. But I do it, because freedom is in the arty action, the marks on paper, scribbling sentences, the cursive scrawl; I crawl to my small space and act like I can write.

And monetary gain. Early on when my husband left me for another, taller, more intelligent woman without children. We had 3 babies when he decided to walk out the door. Those first eight years were tough and I relied on family and the state to help us get by. Thank God for food stamps. (I think its plastic cards now). I feel lucky when anyone reads what I write and I'm grateful for any feedback I get when I read at an open mic. For me this creative freedom is about being able to sustain my writing life. Do I want more recognition? Hell yes. Do I want monetary compensation for all the years and all the spare change I've put into paper, art supplies, book publishing, a glass of wine now and then and those saturday lunches with my girlfriends. Heck ya. Monetary gain is non-existent in my situation. Praying to hit the lottery doesn't help. Praying for money is not my style but I'm open to contributions from people who think, I'm where its at. (Just daydreaming) I'm getting carpal tunnel from sending out manuscripts and poems to on-line venues or presses and getting back rejection notices. Slipping my thumb under the envelope flap, I know is not a check, ripping it open anyway. Rejection after rejection, year after year is enough to send a bigger person than me to the nearest barroom or psych hospital. I tear open the envelope, read the brief apology and reasons, like, so many submissions and only a few can be worthy of publication, or your work doesn't fit into our idea of what poetry is. I rip the note up until the tiny pieces look like confetti. I go the river and in a tiny paper boat full of that confetti, i put a fire to the boat and push forward.

Freedom is a toothbrush without an electric cord. Freedom is being given a blank notebook. Freedom is finding linen clothing at used clothing stores. Freedom comes wrapped in cellophane with a sign, 'sale items'. I am free to say what I want when I want, on paper. Freedom is not relieving myself on another person, by denigrating their attempt to be creative. Support comes from being there when someone needs to be heard or read or given a dollar to buy (what can you buy for a dollar? I tried finding a pen for a dollar and that was hopeless), its five dollars that'll get you chocolate coffee.

I have no advice for the lovelorn. I can't tell a writer how to write, how to find a publisher. I can try to give the reader my story, my life lived with family and friends who love me. I can say it is not easy to write after years in near obscurity, but my freedom is in this wonderful writing life

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and no, no, its not a movie. I chose the way my life and all that comes with it, unfolds. The writing life is like doing laundry. The reader knows what i'm talking about. I don't have to explain how to wash clothes or when to wash clothes or what detergent to use. That's up to the writer how they want to write. And if no one sees my creative work, so be it. I've been doing it too long to stop.