

As I sit down and reflect on my time in this module, I think back to a very specific moment in this module, one of our first feedback sessions. It was both equal parts sobering but also deeply insightful. I will forget the feeling I had walking into that first session and presenting what I thought at the time was the best piece of writing I had ever committed to typing. Needless to say, it was arguably the worst. But like all good students, it taught me something—less guns and white men arguing more punctuation, and proofreading. I think this is one of the few modules that I will always hold to my heart dearly, from the content we have covered to the resources we have been tasked with. It has really been a ride.

Usually, at the end of a year module, I can only say that I learned a few new things that I could have easily Googled or even got someone to explain for free. Yet with WSOA3031A, I honestly feel like what we have been exposed to here could never be emulated in any other environment but in the industry. I mean it only truly dawned on me with this new piece for my exam, just how valuable the feedback sessions were. I realized that not having a group of fellow writers with different strengths and experience levels critique your work really does affect how well it could potentially come out. One of the key lessons I learned from the feedback sessions was how vital it was to hear different opinions on mine and my group's writing.

More importantly, though I think it was so helpful to see my group's writing because it helped me realize that my peers have very writing styles from my own, and even like reading and writing about different things to me. One such example of this was when I was put in the same feedback group as Geneva and Amber, both wrote about subject matter I could never have thought of writing, and even if I tried it would not come out as effectively as theirs. By this I mean, Geneva wrote about a wedding being interrupted by the bride's estranged ex-lover, what ensued was that the groom and ex-lover fought for the fiancé. I thought a lot about that and I even thought about how I would have written it, the conclusion I came to was that I would have probably had 1. a lot more guns, 2. Someone dying 3. More cliffhangers.

As you can already tell that's pretty much what I base most of my writing around, and so it also presented a point of introspection, how best could I write pieces that weren't so removed from my style it became something else, while also writing pieces that could be understood and well-received among my peers. This a question that prior to this year I rarely even pondered, partially because I hardly had any proper opportunity for this level of engagement in my work outside of a purely academic setting, and also because I almost always had this idea that my writing was bulletproof.

This leads me to my regrets, the biggest one being that I wish I was more present and engaged in the feedback sessions. Looking back on all the sessions I missed, I realize how many opportunities for growth I actually just neglected. I am a firm believer that part of reflection is how well you fare in terms of actually acknowledging where you went wrong, and the next step is how you rectify that wrong. Without getting too sanctimonious or sentimental about this, I wish I could have taken more pride in my work and taken the module more seriously when there was still time.

I guess part of why I avoided submitting my work was rooted in shame, in all honesty, it sucked having my ego damaged with each task I submitted. I had the wrong outlook on it and by and large, I thought it was easier to avoid the course than rise up to its demands and actually work on my insecurities as a writer. It isn't an easy experience to have to sit through a group of people telling you that something that means a lot to you isn't half as good as you thought it was.

It was only really when we stopped going to campus that it hit me, and I thought, “hearing a group of people tears down my work sure is better than me sitting here typing something and hoping it will be good.” I should have also added that “hearing a group of people critique my work sure is better.” I think for as much as it did bruise my ego I think it was necessary because it showed me a lot about things I did subconsciously, biases that I put into my work without even realizing it, negative projections I painted onto characters, and even stereotypes that I had normalized and perpetuated as a result.

I look back and reflect upon one of the first pieces I submitted in this module, it was riddled with misogynistic inclinations and passive-aggressive banter.

I thought to myself, is this me? When I write, is it a mirror into my soul and who I am as a person, or is it a window into the life experience of someone else?

It was something I had to really interrogate. It became very apparent in my story bible in fact, and it is a point I have spoken about before. The point was why are my stories all hyper-masculine and by extension can only really be experienced by a certain type of individual. The most obvious reason was the fact that I am a man, and all the experiences in my life are informed by a masculine perspective, but then it became a question of do all my stories have to be male-centric and masculine in perspective?

It is a question that is and probably will continue to eat away at my sanity but one thing I do know for sure is that I have been writing female characters wrong. As a result, I have been depicting them in an almost binary way, either they are the sex object or they are a damsel in distress, nowhere in between. If only people were as basic and 2-dimensional as binaries, they are either ‘this’ or ‘that’. Then writing would be easy, but that’s a fantasy, people (fictional or real ) are far more complex, and more often than not they are ‘this’, ‘that’ the ‘other’, and everything in-between.

Overall though I do believe there is much work to be done in writing stories that reject harmful stereotypes and instead make use of any biases to raise awareness instead of perpetuating them.