

The Art of Storytelling

By Chris Munroe
Johnston Center for Integrative Studies
Graduation Narrative
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3/24/15

Date

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my advisor, Leslie Brody, for all the amazing advice she's given me over the years. I'd also like to thank Pat Geary for stepping in and becoming my advisor for my last semester. I'd like to thank the members of my committee, both faculty and friends, for agreeing to agree to graduate me.

I could not have made it through all four years at Redlands without the support of my friends and family both local and abroad, as well as the wonderful faculty at the University of Redlands.

I'd also like to thank Teresa Area for dealing with me for four years. It couldn't have been easy.

Prologue

When I first entered Johnston, I had no idea what was going on.

It's taken me four years, three months in Scotland, and more classes than I can remember at any given time to realize that I still have no idea what's going on.

Chapter One Once Upon a Time

Despite all that, I have learned many things from my time at Redlands. When I started out, I was entranced by the idea of what the Grimm brothers would have called the "sea of story," the idea that there is something out there that we all draw stories from, no matter the distance or time. Over and over cultures will tell the same stories, be they myths, legends, or fairy tales. I have spent my years at Redlands trying to understand the sea of story, both to expand my own story telling capacity and also because I find these sorts of tales endlessly fascinating.

The main body of my emphasis was made up of creative writing and English literature classes. Literature classes were supposed to be a way to submerge myself in the "sea of story," which (as I learned my junior year) Jung would call the "collective unconscious." And they did do that, but they also did so much more. When I wrote out my sophomore contract I had included history as one of the major points of my emphasis. What I learned in my literature classes, however, was that I did not necessarily want to learn about history, per se, but about history as it pertained to culture and the stories that were written. So for instance, taking a course in Jane Austen was great because I not only got to experience her works, but I also learned a lot about the culture in which she wrote them. I didn't need to then go and take a class about the Napoleonic Wars or Regency era philosophies of women; I'd taken Jane Austen.

Other classes contributed to the main pillar of my emphasis, myths and fairy tales. Classes in art history mostly focused me on the cultural and artistic world that surrounded the myths that I love. A class in philosophy forced me to think about early humanity and *why* we make the art and tell the stories that we do. Another class, in Jungian psychology, helped me to delve deeper into the world of fairy tales. Each class expanded my knowledge base.

For my own writing, I took creative writing classes to help me develop my voice as a writer. And while that did happen, I think a lot of what I learned had more to do with learning from the writers around me than about myself. I learned how to listen to critique, how to give a helpful critique in turn, and how to apply those critiques to all of my writing. I also loved being

able to read the diverse narratives and styles that came from my classmates. I've always been a big fan of reading different types of books, of course, but I definitely began to pay more attention to what I could learn from them in the classroom.

This was the space in which I began to meld the two parts of my emphasis together, taking existing stories and making them my own. In the end, that is what my four years spent at Redlands comes down to, adapting existing narratives and creating new ones.

Even classes that I thought would be no help to this goal, classes that I only took because, to be frank, I was told I would have to, ended up adding to my experience. Language classes such as Latin and ASL helped to open my mind to the processes of how language works. This in turn strengthened my writing. A history class concerning film and the old West taught me more about adapting a true narrative and how it can be twisted. An independent study focusing on planetary geology was a fun experiment in comparison between the physical realities of planets and the myths attributed to their namesakes. A computer programming class taught me how to think things through step by step, a helpful tool when plotting a story.

Every class added to my knowledge of story; how to construct or deconstruct it, how to adapt or edit it, how to research, how to utilize existing elements to create a stronger narrative. Every step I took helped me better understand the world of story.

Chapter Two
Lentils and Ashes

Of course, being part of Johnston is not just about the academics. The Johnston community is wide spread and so supportive, I don't know how I would have gotten through my four years at Redlands without it. I am not an outgoing person, however, as so many people at Johnston seem to be. I was not the person who attended every community meeting or porch party or GYST week, and my influence was much more suited to my introverted personality.

Living on first floor during my sophomore and junior years was definitely where I felt most at home on complex. The relationships I created there, while quiet, are ones that I still cherish. It was with my fellow introverts that I reached out the community in small ways, hosting Twin Day with Helen or Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog Sing-Along Party with Kamo.

Outside of the community proper, I worked on the school newspaper and started a Classical Greek appreciation club, known as the Classics Club. I made many friends through these activities and was always glad to see a familiar face around complex. It is my hope that the

Classics Club will continue long after I graduate and offer more people the opportunity to gather together and geek out about mythology.

All of this and more (my work with the Creative Writing department, for instance, or winning the annual Creative Writing department fiction contest two years in a row) was how I connected with the community of Johnston and Redlands at large, and I am so grateful that I was able to.

Study abroad is also a large part of the Johnston experience, and my own semester was interesting, to say the least.

I was accepted to study at the University of Edinburgh, in Edinburgh, Scotland fall semester junior year. I'd actually been to Scotland before; when I was eight, I lived there for three months one summer. I was so excited to go back and rediscover a city I barely remembered but loved all the same.

At the time, I still expected history to be a part of my emphasis and so I focused, in my own way, on Scottish history. Of course, even then, "my own way" was what it was, and I ended up taking a medieval Scottish history course, an ancient Celtic literature course, and a Scottish Gaelic course. I was still absorbing history through culture and language, I just hadn't realized it at that point.

Though the classes were wonderful and my experience there was amazing, I sadly was not able to finish it out. In November, I was forced to return home and take the rest of the semester off to deal with personal issues.

Chapter Three
Happily Ever After

When I started college, I knew that I wanted to be a writer, but I also knew that one does not simply become a bestselling author, and that I would need another job. I struggled, over time, to decide what I really wanted to do. At first I thought that I might want to be an editor, but fiction workshop convinced me that, though I do enjoy working with people's writing, that wasn't the job for me. However, I was still fixated on the idea of the publishing world and thought that perhaps if I just took the time to complete and MFA that an answer to what I should do there would reveal itself.

While it's not the worst thing in the world to complete an MFA program if you want to become an author, a conversation with my advisor convinced me that I needed more time to decide which program would be right for me. And one simple suggestion changed my life.

What about library science?

Suddenly, everything slid into place. I've loved reading since I was a child. All through middle and high school my local librarians knew me by name and asked for book recommendations to add to the shelves. I've often said that I could happily live the rest of my life in a library, so why shouldn't I?

During my senior year, I completed an academic paper concerning the history of fairy tales and the possibilities for adapting them in the future as well as a fiction portfolio that is itself an adaptation of a fairy tale. Literature and creative writing, the pillars of my emphasis. It is my hope that I can continue to engage my passion in the future by sharing it with others as a librarian. I would like to focus on children's and young adult programming in order to share my love of reading with a new generation.

Coming to Johnston was the best decision I could have made, because I know that everything has led to this. Not only will I be able to bring my passion with me into my future career, but also everything I learned about contracting and creating community. My time at Johnston has ended, but it was invaluable to me.

Actual Course List

<u>Fall 2011</u>	<u>Credits</u>
ARTH-264 01: Greek Art & human Consciousness	4.00
FS-100 39: Next Stop: the Twilight Zone	4.00
JNST-000C 01: Shakespeare Performance & Text	4.00
JNST-000P 01: Latin Tutorials	4.00
<u>Spring 2012</u>	<u>Credits</u>
CRWR-107 01: Fiction Workshop I	4.00
JNST-000K 01: Latin Tutorials	4.00
JNST-000V 01: Consciousness: What it good for?	4.00
JNST-000W 01: Daoists, Dragons & Din Sum: Th	4.00
PEAC-0FY2 01: Yoga-Intermediate	1.00
<u>May 2012</u>	<u>Credits</u>
ENGL-362 01: Chaucer's Canterbury Tales	3.00
<u>Fall 2012</u>	<u>Credits</u>
CDIS-156 03: American Sign Language I	4.00
CRWR-104 01: Non-Fiction Workshop I	4.00
ENGL-362 01: Jane Austen	4.00
JNST-000D 01: Greek Stories in Plays & Vase	4.00
JNST-076 23 IS: Tarot	2.00
MUSI-121 06: Class Piano	1.00
<u>Spring 2013</u>	<u>Credits</u>
CDIS-256 02: American Sign Language II	4.00
CRWR-105 01: Poetry Workshop I	4.00
ENGL-242 01: What's In a Name?	4.00
HIST-260 01: Images of American West in Film	4.00
MUSI-121 06: Class Piano	0.00
PEAC-0FX 01: Flexibility	1.00
<u>May 2013</u>	<u>Credits</u>
JNST-000F 01: Travel: Search of Helen of Troy	3.00
<u>Fall 2013</u>	<u>Credits</u>
SPRO-300 01: Study Abroad Program	0.00
<u>Spring 2014</u>	<u>Credits</u>
CRWR-107 02: Fiction Workshop I	6.00
JNST-000I 01: Science in Popular Culture	4.00
JNST-000Q 01: Archetypes in Stories	6.00

JNST-080 19 IS: Planetary Geology & Mythology	2.00
<u>May 2014</u>	<u>Credits</u>
ENGL-215 01: Children's Literature	3.00
<u>Fall 2014</u>	<u>Credits</u>
CRWR-307 01: Fiction Workshop III	4.00
CRWR-310 01: Travel Writing	4.00
CS-110 01: Intro to Programming	4.00
JNST-000A 01: Senior Workshop	1.00
JNST-082 19 IS: Senior Project: Adapting	4.00
<u>Spring 2015</u>	<u>Credits</u>
CRWR-312 01: The Redlands Review	4.00
CRWR-441 02: Senior Portfolio	4.00
JNST-083 46 IS: My novel, cont.	3.00
THA-210 01: Playwriting	4.00
<u>May 2015</u>	<u>Credits</u>
JNST-000E 01: Ovid Metamorphoses	3.00

Course List by Discipline

English

ENGL-362: Chaucer's Canterbury Tales
ENGL-362: Sem: Jane Austen
ENGL-242: What's in a Name?
ENGL-215: Children's Literature

Creative Writing

CRWR-107 01: Fiction Workshop I
CRWR-104 01: Non-Fiction Workshop I
CRWR-105 01: Poetry Workshop I
CRWR-107 02: Fiction Workshop I
CRWR-307 01: Fiction Workshop III
CRWR-310 01: Travel Writing
CRWR-312 01: The Redlands Review
CRWR-441 02: Senior Portfolio
THA-210 01: Playwriting

Johnston, Related to Emphasis

JNST-000C 01: Shakespeare Performance & Text
JNST-000W: Daoists, Dragons & Din Sum
JNST-000D: Greek Stories in Plays & Vase
JNST-000F 01: Travel: Search of Helen of Troy
JNST-000Q 01: Archetypes in Stories
JNST-082 19 IS: Senior Project: Adapting
JNST-083 46 IS: My novel, cont.
JNST-000E 01: Ovid Metamorphoses

Johnston, Outside of Emphasis

FS-100 39: Next Stop: the Twilight Zone
JNST-000V 01: Consciousness: What it good for?
JNST-076 23 IS: Tarot
JNST-000I 01: Science in Popular Culture
JNST-000A 01: Senior Workshop

(Art) History

ARTH-264 01: Greek Art & human Consciousness
HIST-260 01: Images of American West in Film

Language

JNST-000P 01: Latin Tutorials
JNST-000K 01: Latin Tutorials
CDIS-156 03: American Sign Language I
CDIS-256 02: American Sign Language II

Quantitative Reasoning

CS-110 01: Intro to Programming

Physical Science

JNST-080 19 IS: Planetary Geology & Mythology

Study Abroad

SPRO-300 01: Study Abroad Program

Music and Fitness

PEAC-0FY2 01: Yoga-Intermediate

MUSI-121 06: Class Piano

MUSI-121 06: Class Piano

PEAC-0FX 01: Flexibility