

Rebecca Connors

Senior Non-Profit Communications Professional
writer & editor | digital strategist | visual designer

Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
(781) 558-8459
rebecca.andrews@gmail.com
linkedin.com/in/becca-connors
aprilist.com

Excerpt from Critical Thesis, December 2019

Introduction: Claim Your Space

When we enter the classroom, our roles change from son to student and from wife to teacher. While our roles change, problems from our daily lives do not disappear, and we carry these into the classroom. We could be tired, angry at a spouse, or fretting about a test later in the school day. This is our underlife, “those behaviors which undercut the roles expected of participants expected in a situation” (Brooke 721). Even when students take on the role of learner, their underlife can allow emotions and vulnerabilities to surface. In a creative writing workshop, we bring not only our writer-selves, but those other aspects of our lives that affect our writing.

In Tiana Clark’s poem, “Rime of Nina Simone,” the speaker is on her way to her MFA workshop when she runs into the ghost of Nina Simone, who admonishes her for enduring a class full of microaggressions. The speaker responds:

... I. Am. Here. You cannot write
around me. The periphery is also mine. I’m not
afraid to take up the space I need to survive.

I’m not afraid to write what I need to survive. (270-273)

While her classmates make her uncomfortable, even hurt her, she is “not afraid to take up the space” to write her poems. A workshop should be a safe and inclusive space that allows students

to pursue their best work, work that is often vulnerable and painful for the writer to share.

Because creative work is tied to selfhood, students should be able to trust their peers and teacher.

This desire to create an atmosphere of trust between students and their teacher led me initially to conduct research on an aspect of teaching that seemed insurmountable to me: classroom management, the practice of managing student behaviors. How would I learn to manage a space so that students would feel welcome and empowered. Considering this interest, I began my research focused on classroom management. I found strategies to manage a classroom to its full potential, while at the same time discovering a real possibility these strategies would not be successful if the teacher cannot connect to her students. As someone who feels strongly about community, I wanted to learn what could provide that connection and more research directed me to “authentic teaching.” I hypothesized that if I used the strategies based on the tenets of authentic teaching, I would be able to create a classroom environment that fostered trust, enabling students to share their more vulnerable work. What follows is background about authentic teaching, a review of philosophies that drive this practice, and reflections on the implementation of the strategies I derived and implemented.

Excerpt of [review published in Tinderbox Poetry Journal](#):

I first came across Julia Story’s work when I read her poem “Her Time in Purgatory” on Twitter: “Would you rather stay here / or return to your body? // Return to my body. // Even if the body is wrong...Even if you have to live / away from the world. // Yes. Even then. Away from the world...” I was immediately taken by the voice of the speaker. I went to Six Finch Books and bought her chapbook, *Julie the Astonishing* (2019). I was happy to discover her full-length

collection called *Spinster for Hire*, recently published this spring. This book is her fourth, with the previously published *Post Moxie* (Sarabande, 2010), which was selected by Dan Chiasson as winner of the 2009 Kathryn A. Morton Prize in Poetry, and the chapbook, *The Trapdoor* (Dancing Girl Press, 2014).

Spinster for Hire deals with pain, isolation, and feelings of confinement. There is a notion of mourning, but also a journey from unknowing to knowing – throughout the collection, the speaker wants to find her place in the world. And in searching for her place, the speaker in these poems has stories to tell about trees, bicycles, for-rent signs, and fireworks.

The book opens with the poem “The Pain Scale.” The first three lines read “You ask me every time I come / to give you the definition of this thing // I carry with me.” The poem set in couplets brings the reader to the speaker in a very intimate way: “You ask me every time...” The poem ends in a single line stanza, “and we stand here together like clouds,” intimating that even though we are together, relationships can be tenuous and fleeting.



Dear {First Name},

This year, Performathon will look a little different. Instead of a day-long event at the Music Center with a bake sale, Performathon will be a week-long event of hour-long online performances released [each night on our website](#) and [YouTube page](#) beginning Monday November 16 at 7 PM.

More than 150 students have signed up to perform and recorded their own videos from home. The outpouring of student interest brings home to me how important music is in times like these.

Every student who fundraises and receives at least one donation **will win a USB microphone to help them with their online lessons**. As you can imagine, it is difficult for some of our students to fundraise in this online-only situation.

[That's where you step in. We're asking our community of donors to contribute to our students' campaigns. Let them know they have your support.](#)

While we encourage you to donate to any and all of our students, we wanted to highlight some campaigns that need your support.



PERFORMATHON

NOV 16 through NOV 19
7 PM to 8 PM nightly



Fabricio, a BEAM student, will play A *Russian Folk Song* on his bassoon. [You can support his campaign here.](#)



Jessica will perform *Alla Turca* on violin. She says CMCB has helped her learn so much. [Support her here.](#)



Ava will be performing *Fight Song*. [Support her here.](#)

At this time, perhaps more than ever, we are focused on providing platforms and opportunities for our students to inspire hope in our community with their music, passion, and dedication. [By making a contribution to their campaigns, you will bring them hope and joy.](#)

Please share this email with anyone you think may be interested in chipping in to help our students reach their goals. And [be sure to tune in nightly next week](#) to cheer our students on!

Sincerely,
Sarah, Chief Advancement Officer

Our Student Fundraisers

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