

# WRITERS BLOC

GLENVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE  
v17 n3 / 1 OCTOBER 2025

## HAPPY OCTOBER!

Welcome to our latest issue of *Writers Bloc*! Meet our Little Kanawha Reading Series Chapbook winner and mark your calendars for her upcoming campus reading. Also in this issue, students candidly discuss their reading and writing challenges, and imaginations run wild in our Weird Question of the Week. We invite you to share your thoughts about *Writers Bloc* on our Facebook page!



### SEND WRITERS BLOC SUBMISSIONS TO

melissa.gish@glenville.edu

Views expressed in the *Writers Bloc* are not necessarily the views of GSU.

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www.glenville.edu/departments/language-literature

## LKRS CHAPBOOK WINNER

The Little Kanawha Reading Series launched its first chapbook contest in the fall of 2024. Writers from around the region submitted collections of prose and poetry that captured the spirit of Appalachia. From dozens of entries, the winning collection was selected by the LKRS guest judge, poet Sara Henning. That collection is *We Are Bad and Good*, poems by Heather Loudermilk.

Heather's chapbook, published by the Little Kanawha Reading Series, will be available at a special event to be held at **4:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 9, in the RFK Library**. Heather will be on campus to read from her winning collection. We hope everyone will join us in supporting Heather and the LKRS by picking up a copy of her book and asking her to sign it!



Heather Loudermilk is originally from Bassett, Virginia, and now lives in Knoxville, Tennessee, with her spouse and their two cats. She is currently enrolled in the low residency MFA program at West Virginia Wesleyan College. Her work has appeared in such publications as *Artemis Journal*, *Salvation South*, and *Still: The Journal*. We had a chance to talk with Heather about her writing. Here's what she had to say.

**Writers Bloc:** *Your chapbook masterfully balances tragedy with moments of beauty. How do you navigate that delicate line between honoring pain and finding light within it?*

**Heather Loudermilk:** Poetry has been an integral part in my understanding of the tough things that have happened in my life. Writing poetry is meaning making. It's a part of the process. I feel like I try to "find the light within" in any moment. Not in an "everything happens for a reason" way...but in the way that I lived through something, and that means it matters.

**WC:** *The voice in your poems feels both deeply personal and universally resonant. How do you decide what private experiences are ready to be shared with the world?*

**HL:** I feel like the writing decides for me. I might sit with the intention to write about a certain event, but I find if it's not meant to be the poem doesn't come. I usually have to give something time before writing about it, though it's never the same amount of time. I also give a lot of thought into who else is involved in the situation. Someone else being involved doesn't mean I won't write about it, but it may affect my decision on when I write. For most things, if it happened to me, it's fair game, though a good poem about it might take longer than it should.

**WC:** *Irony threads through many of your pieces without ever feeling cynical. What role does humor play in your processing of difficult experiences?*

**HL:** I think humor is the most important tool we have when surviving through hard times. If we can't look back and laugh, what's the point? And I think finding that "point" in hard times may not be easy but it's important. My family has always chosen to laugh, so that need to poke fun is strong in me.

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## HEATHER LOUDERMILK, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

**Writers Bloc:** *Appalachia is often misrepresented in popular culture. How important is it to you that your work serves as a counternarrative to those stereotypes?*

**Heather Loudermilk:** I think it's important that my work shows a counternarrative but not a complete spin. Some of the things people think about us may be true—but I still think those things are important. I like to take stereotypes and see what lies behind them. I want people to read my work and see how human we are. I want readers to see all the dirt, love, humor, sadness that's involved in our lives.

**WC:** *Your poems seem to capture both a love for and a complicated relationship with home. How has your perspective on your Appalachian roots evolved as you've grown as a writer?*

**HL:** Growing up in a place with complicated history can make you feel ashamed of your pride, and simultaneously make you wonder what is there to feel prideful about. I'm thankful for my years since graduating high school and leaving my town for allowing me to see more clearly what I want to transform and what I want to hold on to. I went to college in the same state but about an hour north, then moved to Ohio after graduating, and now live in Tennessee. Each location has made me homesick in its own way. I think one of the best things you can do is leave home and come back. It makes you more appreciative, and it makes you understand what happens in other places. It's not always better, but it can be.

**WC:** *What aspects of Appalachian culture—language, traditions, values—do you most want to preserve in your poetry?*

**HL:** Language and storytelling is the most important thing to me. My favorite writing shows people speaking as it is—maybe not with dialect, but with word choice and grammar choices. The way we speak is so magical. I can only write the way I speak but I think it's worth preserving. Our stories and how we tell them are special.

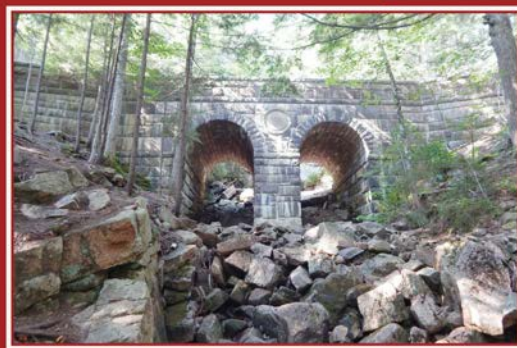
**WC:** *What does your daily writing practice look like, and how do you create space for poetry in your life?*

**HL:** I am a type B person so I need “looseness.” I am not strict on daily tasks. I like to think more about an overall vision. I like having multiple projects or kinds of tasks, so whenever I don't feel like writing I'm still working towards something. I am in an MFA program right now, so I can either work on my poems, or touch revisions, or work on an essay, or read a book, or do some admin tasks like keep up my bibliography. I often do write everyday but I'm not strict about it. I also work a full time job so I write after work in necessity (I am never getting up early to write. It's not happening for me). I try to touch something every weekday, but my workday might influence how much I have to give when I get home. I do the majority of my writing and work on the weekend. I always do a handwritten version first before I start typing, and have a notebook for when I'm not at my desk, but most of the action happens in my office. I'm privileged to have a room of my own.

**WC:** *Who are the poets or writers who have most influenced your voice and approach to the page?*

**HL:** Voice-wise I'm most influenced by Diane Gilliam, George Ella Lyon, and Bettie Sellers. Their poems really dig into the voice of women and survival, in high stakes moments and mundane. Poet Annie Woodford is also a big influence—she's from the same hometown as me, so it's interesting to see her pieces about a place I know too. It's a fuller view of a place I've always known.

# We are Bad and Good



Heather  
Loudermilk

**WC:** *How do you handle the vulnerability that comes with sharing such personal work publicly?*

**HL:** I freak out a lot and then get it together. I'm not sure if I could do this without being insane everyday if I wasn't medicated and in therapy. It might not be that way for everyone but I think it's important to tell people that's how I do it! I truly believe what I have to say is important but when that anxiety creeps in I use my coping skills. I think the biggest thing you can tell yourself is “this is important.” When you can say that and believe it, nothing else matters.

**WC:** *What does winning this contest mean to you at this stage of your career, and how do you hope it might impact your writing life?*

**HL:** I think winning any kind of contest and having something tangible to hold after it really boosts morale. The biggest thing this can do for my writing life is push me to keep submitting and applying. One yes makes all those years of no's worth something! I also hope other folks in and out of my current communities take a look and enjoy/have thoughts about what I have to say.

**WC:** *Are there themes or subjects you're eager to explore in your next collection that differ from this chapbook?*

**HL:** Many of the pieces I'm currently working on focus on work and labor: the ways labor affects our lives, sexual harassment in the workplace, and class issues that happen when you're underemployed. I also have been working with persona! I find persona freeing and exploring all the stories I want to tell not 100% within my own experiences has been fulfilling.

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## COMING TO THE GSU STAGE HALLOWEEN 2025

# DRACULA: THE CASE OF THE SILVER SCREAM

From a concept by David Grapes  
Adapted for the stage by Robert Neblett and David Grapes

Get involved in the production! Non-speaking parts or help with staging, costumes, sets, and other behind-the-scenes jobs.  
Contact Jennifer Wenner at [jennifer.wenner@glennville.edu](mailto:jennifer.wenner@glennville.edu)

**PERFORMANCES OCT 31, NOV 1, 7, 8  
IN THE FINE ARTS AUDITORIUM**

## WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

*Contributed by Journie Curtis, BA-Undeclared*

I have dyslexia and have struggled with learning because of it. I found an article on dyslexia to share so people can understand what dyslexia is and how it affects people who have dyslexia. Some people know that dyslexia is a learning disorder but they don't know how it works.

Dyslexia affects reading, writing, and spelling. It can slow down the way I read papers or books, but also dyslexia is about processing information. Due to dyslexia actually being about processing information, it affects my processing and remembering information that I see and hear; because of this, it affects the way I learn and the acquisition of literacy skills.

Some people don't find out they have dyslexia until they are an adult. Dyslexia is also a result of individual differences in areas of the brain like processing language. A Mayo Clinic article explains it like this:

Dyslexia signs in teens and adults are a lot like those in children. Some common dyslexia symptoms in teens in adults include:

- Difficulty reading, including reading aloud
- Slow and labor-intensive reading and writing
- Problem spelling
- Avoiding activities that involve reading
- Mispronouncing names or words, or problem retrieving words
- Spending an unusually long time completing tasks that involve reading and writing
- Difficulty summarizing a story
- Trouble learning a foreign language
- Difficulty doing math word problems

All the symptoms for dyslexia are not all the same as a child. Signs of dyslexia are difficult to recognize if you don't know about dyslexia symptoms, and you could have all these struggles all the way to adulthood. Dyslexia is not fully understood but can be seen as a neurobiological difference of the brain. You can also get tested for dyslexia by a doctor or psychologist or someone who knows how to diagnose dyslexia.

Here is a link to an article about dyslexia if you do what to read more about it: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dyslexia/symptoms-causes/syc-20353552>

## HEATHER LOUDERMILK, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

**Writers Bloc:** *What advice would you give to other young writers from rural or underrepresented communities who are working to find their voice?*

**Heather Loudermilk:** Being true to yourself is one of the hardest things you can do, but do it. There is something in how you see the world that only you can make come over in poetry. It doesn't matter who's "doing it better." It doesn't matter who's getting published. What matters is what you see and how you see it. And how you tell us about it.

**WC:** *Looking back at the poet you were when you started writing these poems versus who you are now, what would you tell that earlier version of yourself?*

**HL:** These poems started in tumultuous times for me. I'd like her to know it does get better (and will also be worse again! Things are cyclical). I don't know if I'd tell her to change anything except for taking more chances— sending work out, applying for opportunities, etc. In her honor, I try to do that now.



## READ, THINK, WRITE

*Contributed by Ashlyn Frame, Business Major*

I've always struggled with putting my thoughts into words, even more so now that I'm grown. No matter how passionate I am on the subject, I feel as if I just can never get my words to sound "right" when I express myself on paper. That's why reading "If You Are Not Writing, You Are Not Thinking" by author Abhishek Chakraborty was extremely helpful and reassuring that I'm not the only one with this issue. I can relate with so many of the things the author says in the article, especially when he writes, "I wasn't writing because I wasn't thinking. I wasn't thinking because I wasn't reading, I wasn't observing, I wasn't questioning, I wasn't learning."

As a young child and teenager, I was an avid reader. I read any and everything from children's books to novels, even the newspaper. After graduating high school almost 10 years ago and becoming a mom, life got busier, and I found myself in a place where I only picked up books that I planned to read to my boys. While I love my kids more than anything, it really impaired my thinking process to deprive myself of the knowledge and critical thinking that comes from reading. Recently, I started trying to read again in my free time, and I must agree completely with the author; it has already started to improve my ability to write and openly express my thoughts onto paper.

Since starting college, I've had to write so much, and it's been my biggest problem with the transition. I feel like it takes me forever to express my thoughts and feelings in a comprehensible, professional way without sounding like too much of an "encyclopedia." It seems like sometimes the words will just flow onto paper or off my fingertips on a keyboard. Other times, my mind turns completely blank. I'm definitely planning to use some of the tips and tricks the author suggests for trying to continue to improve my writing capabilities.

**Read Chakraborty's article here:** <https://coffeeandjunk.com/writing-thinking>

## WEIRD QUESTION *of the* WEEK

Since October is the scary season, we thought we'd ask folks about a nightmare experience: "What fictional character would make the worst roommate? Why?"

**Alyssa Hall** - Field Forensics (CRJU) Major  
"Drama Llama cause he won't stop yapping."

**Jonathan Minton** - Professor of English  
"I'm going to say the narrator/speaker from William Carlos Williams' poem 'This is Just to Say.' He steals your food from the fridge. He's passive aggressive. And he is NOT sorry."

**Anna Deeds** - BA-Undeclared  
"The first character that comes to mind is the main character from the show *You*. I never got around to watching the show in full, but given Joe's tendency towards stalking, I think he'd be very uncomfortable to live with to say the least, even if you never personally had to interact with him."



**Mikayla Strimel** - Elementary Education and General Math-Algebra Major  
"For me personally, Charlotte the spider from *Charlotte's Web* because I hate spiders."

**Amanda Chapman** - Associate Professor of English  
"At the beginning of *Catcher in the Rye*, before Holden Caulfield gets kicked out of his boarding school, his suitemate is a guy called Ackley who barges into his room constantly, cuts his fingernails and leaves them all over the floor, and touches all of Holden's stuff even though Holden hates that and Ackley knows it. But Holden, being Holden, says of Ackley, 'I felt sorry for him, in a way.'"

**Scott O'Neil** - Assistant Professor of English



"Pretty much any of the Garbage Pail Kids. Google image search them if you've never heard of this particularly gross 80s/90s phenomenon, haha. If you have a strong stomach, watch the awful movie they made of them."

**Robin Crigler** - Assistant Professor of History  
"Hands down Ignatius J. Reilly from *A Confederacy of Dunces*. One of the great slobes of American literature, and mean as well!"

**Lora Stump** - Student Loan Officer  
"As much as I love Newt Scamander, he'd be the worst roommate. Peace and quiet go out the window when magical creatures are wandering your apartment. Even my stuffed Niffler gets into trouble—imagine a real one hiding your keys!"



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### This is Just To Say

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold.

— William Carlos Williams

**Pioneer Debate Meets Wednesdays**  
**at 4:15 pm in AB 305**

**Catherine Kong** - Assistant Professor of English

"The fictional character that I think would be the worst roommate for me is probably Bartleby from Herman Melville's 'Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street.' Just imagine this—whenever I ask him to do anything, he will always give me the same answer, 'I would prefer not to,' over and over again."

**Schuyler Chapman** - Associate Professor of English

"Rooming with Roger Chillingworth REALLY ended badly for Reverend Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*. (Queequeg is clearly the best roommate you could hope for, fwiw.)"

**Michael Vozniak** - Assistant Professor of English

"The Miller from *The Canterbury Tales*. Imagine a cross between Larry the Cable Guy and a frat boy who says he works hard for his 2.0 GPA."

**Marjorie Stewart** - Professor of English (retired)

"I'm going with Holden Caulfield."

**Bob Hutton** - Associate Professor of History & Appalachian Studies

"Jonathan Livingston Seagull. First off because I'd get annoyed with all his self-help tripe bromides about achievement and self-fulfillment, and secondly because he's a filthy, trash-eating seagull."