

English 180, First Place; Professor, Dr. Timothy Helwig

**How Pen Met Paper and Fell in Love**

criticized and picked apart was not a situation that I wanted to put myself in; however, because I am seemingly incapable of allowing myself to have a moment of leisure, and wholly incapable of not torturing myself, I decided to apply for a spot despite my reservations.

Every two weeks I along with the other girls would attend a Goodman production. Every Friday I would send a review for the last play I watched. The review would in turn be critiqued by an assigned mentor and it was up to me to fix the review. For the first few weeks I thought I had made a terrible mistake. I tried not to take the feedback too personally, but unfortunately my anxiety was alive and hungry, ready to turn any criticism into a personal attack. In response I also tried to write how I thought the mentors wanted me to write. I did not even realize that style was not a part of the problem, that criticism is a natural and necessary part of the writing process for any and every work. It got to a point that I hated Saturday mornings, hated the feeling that I was going to a program to be something that I was not. Writing is something so important to me so as dramatic as it seems, this process really had an emotional impact on me.

Then something magical happened I saw

of my own home I could touch pen to paper and learned to just not care. I wrote so much think pieces, movie reviews, critiques of and arguments for modern day movements and somehow found the courage to actually put my work, and by extension myself, out into the world. I was exposing myself to a new world in which I finally allowed myself to be vulnerable and confident, and there is no way I could have enjoyed my awakening more.

When it comes to school work, academic papers and even short answer essays for DBQs, I still find myself holding back, always backtracking and over editing. I still get worried and constantly ask myself

*and in that specific sentence? Is this even a D worthy paper?* I am not entirely okay with feeling this way, and I am still learning, but I am 100% okay with knowing that writing is no longer the suffocating burden that it had started to become.

In a way I am just as grateful for my negative ex