

Target practice

by Deborah Oster Pannell

When I was younger, writing was like throwing spaghetti at the wall and seeing what sticks: sterling image, stunning action, quick turnaround, clever phrasing, filler, filler, filler, filler, undercurrent of emotion, genuine wisdom, understatement, pivot, loss of direction, lack of clarity, frustration, reboot, retrieved bit of technique, past life regression, universal extrapolation and then some straight talk. Clumsy, earnest, a little self-involved... OK, a lot self-involved... but honest nonetheless, and done so impetuously that it didn't take much to just toss it aside and muster up some fresh bravado for the next one.

Of course there was always the belief that the work was positively earth shattering... and then, struck down on the rocks of disappointment, the inevitable disillusionment, and drama, always with the drama. And then, the silence - silent silence.

I never understood how lonely I would be. I never realized that I would give up so much.

It wasn't until years later, that I came to know the price I paid for tipping the scales so far out of balance, in directions that many shunned as too marginal, on the edge, not neatly inside the lines with the other crayons. Ooooooh, scary ghosts...

I'm a bit over that pathology. It's become rather boring to me. Repetitive, wearing down my shine, you know? The bright-colors-to-school-on-a-rainy-Monday-morning kind of shine, that either makes you a magnet or a target, I'm never quite sure which... Does it matter? Are they really that different?

Did I go past the polite ending place yet? I'm not sure why people keep telling me to stop, or, maybe I've just been saying it inside my head. When did it begin to really matter? Because it does, you know. One makes for order, the other makes for suicide. And punctuation, well, it's just another convention keeping the sentences in a

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different neighborhood from the questions, even though they have so much in common.

