

# DAY 5: TEXTILE DRAFT

Today we write the textile draft. A day to weave, to compose with intention, and to step aside from the last four day's mode of being the happy receiver at the fountain of impulse and image. Today is the day to bring in our judgment and our care. As you write, be sure to remember that judgment—one of your most precious resources as a writer—is a form of care, and not a form of censorship or an expression of fear or acquiescence to an authority external to your own.

Before you begin today's process—which is quite involved—take a few minutes to ground yourself in a sense of where your imperatives meet the play's imperatives. What is important to you to bring into being in this form? What has the play demanded of you? What has it asked you to be honest about? Where do you need to dig in order to fulfill something it's brought forward?

## Procedure

Today's procedure follows three steps.

### Step 1: Thread Bank

Imagine pulling apart the two existing drafts so that where you had fabric now you have a pile of thread—the bank from which you will weave your third and final draft.

Our process for dismantling will be to collapse the material of both drafts into lists. These lists become an inventory of the play's images, its events, its information, its places, its songs, its keywords, its objects—all decoupled from the scenes or passages they first appeared in, which will allow us to once again find a freedom (as we did in the architectonic drafts) with respect to how the play unfolds in time.

The simplest version of this process is to gather a pile of paper strips, give each one a heading for a type of material, and trawl each play in turn, recording items under each heading. There are pages at the back of this book *[at the end of the downloadable PDF]* with list templates you can use, although there's no reason to be constrained by my lists. You know your play better than I do; you know what its relevant categories are.

Possible categories: events, vivid images, lines or phrases you love, characters, moments of energetic shift, patterns, figures or themes, poetic modes, counterpoints or polarities, questions raised, special props or objects, places rendered or places referenced, moments of conjuring, periods of rest...

Additionally, for each character, make a character sheet on which to record the skeleton key to their way of being. Don't be seduced by the idea that every character should possess total consistency, but do think about each character in terms of their habits and ways of responding to pressures, internal or external.

Your lists are a new way to see what the stuff is you've made your play from.

## **Step 2: New Outline with Thread Notes**

Assert a new outline. If you have time, it can help to make a very simple outline of both the musical and architectonic drafts first.

I like to do this on many scraps of paper or index cards, so I can play with order as I do.

Give one piece of paper to each scene or section. On the scene paper, note what needs to be woven into the scene: objects, information, images, events—anything from the thread bank lists. As you make these notes, try to detach yourself from any obligation to replicate the way you unfolded the story in the two previous drafts (though of course, you may choose to preserve and transfer forward whatever you like). These outline scene pages should have only high-level ingredients. As you populate each page, consider the following angles:

Think about how the play patterns and primes itself.

Think about when grounding, contextualizing information is given and how much is needed.

Think about the possibility of collapsing disparate scenes into one.

Think about the possibility of giving lines spoken by one character to another.

Think about the ordering of images.

## **Step 3: Slow Writing**

The textile draft is an opportunity to significantly change tempos, and to benefit from the fresh perspective on care and composition that a slower tempo brings. In the musical draft, we were improvising start to finish. In the architectonic draft, we allowed ourselves some foresight and planning, but still wrote in sketches and with a prospective freedom. In the textile draft, we approach the process of keying in each line as if it is a beautiful, delicate performance.

Arrange your writing space so that you have, in a semi-circle around you or pinned to the wall: your thread bank lists, your outline pages, printed copies of your last two drafts.

For this draft, give yourself a little mental script: read (the outline, the thread bank), write (a sentence or two), read (the outline, the thread bank), write (another sentence or two). Eyes, hands, eyes, hands.

## **Deliberateness**

Let this writing session be one in which you consider every line, every word. You may end up transferring whole swaths of material forward from your musical or architectonic drafts—just copying it down to the line. But be intentional about every word you preserve from your prior drafts. I strongly recommend re-typing every line in your play rather than copying and pasting.

Read the line, hear it in your mind's ear, type it out. Tune the line now; adjust it if it doesn't sound right. This is the time for fine-tuning. This is the time for your editor to appear—not the mean one, but the honest one, the one who takes pleasure in your writing and says try again when needed. Remember, between every few lines of the new draft—this is the slow part—glance over your array of thread bank lists and scene pages to see if anything can want to be incorporated; you might find that something you'd associated with one scene or character wants to reinvent itself in the scene you are writing.

In the textile draft, the space from line to line is the point of possibility and incursion. The instrument is your ear. The resource is your thread bank.

Care for your play.

Maybe the only fundamental thing about a play is that it happens in time. How do you play the timeline?

## **Share and Respond**

Repeat the process from the last two drafts, with one added element: writers can ask questions of their readers, if desired. If you are working solo, take a breather from your draft, and then ask yourself some questions—of you as your own reader, but also questions you can reopen next time you sit down to write.

## Appendix: Thread Bank Character Template

### Character/Figure/Voice Sheet

Make one sheet for each character. Record the character's groundwork (where they're from, what sources of knowledge they have, how they fit into the order of your story in terms of identity, power, relations).

- What are their moods and tempos?
- How do they show themselves?
- How do they affect other elements/characters?
- What contradictions do they embody?
- How do they habitually meet the world?

Distill your character to a one-sheet so you can remember either ways to let them show up or notice what you're not giving airtime to that you might want to bring forward.

## Appendix: Thread Bank Lists Template

### Images

described, invoked, actualized

### Emergent patterns

think especially about your own patterns of introducing and concluding, and about anything that recurs or returns with variation

**Questions**

raised by your piece both explicitly and implicitly

**Shiny things**

little bits of language or action that you love

## **Discards**

anything you want to reconsider from cut material or generative material in notebooks that made it into any of your drafts but that you still like

## **Events in the story**

key things in the story that have to happen at some point

**Events in the telling**

stage or page events or swerves in  
the way you address your reader

**Information**

anything that needs to be understood  
for you to be understood



## **Self-Interview**

What is important to you about this project? What does it do that feels most alive or exciting to you? What does it do that was most surprising to you as you wrote it? What kind of experience for the reader/viewer/listener do you hope to create? How does this follow a blueprint for an experience? Record reminders for yourself from this interview.

## **Dialogic energies**

Taken broadly, think of dialogism as energies that are in conversation with each other, including: 1) in the literary criticism sense, texts (a specific book, a tradition, a story type, an information source, a myth) outside of your text that you could imagine your work in conversation with, that you could derive energy from; 2) countering energies or moods that co-exist in your play or that could be brought into co-existence.

## **Polarities**

if you had to reduce your play to a set of dimmer switches or panning knobs (that is, the knob that moves the sound in the speaker from right to left), what would they be? Bright/dark; overworld/underworld; rigid/loose; familiar/impersonal... record the polarities you're playing with so you can think about how to set their balance in any given scene or passage.

## **Guides**

Favorite numbers, tutelary geniuses, spirit animals, crypto keys to hide