



To: Analytic Candidates, Year 3  
From: Carol Coutu, PhD & Jonathan Kolb, MD  
Date: March 9, 2021  
Re: Writing Seminar

Welcome to your class on analytic writing. We are looking forward to meeting you, and joining you in this experience.

The goal of the class is for you to become comfortable with writing about analysis. Writing about analytic process may feel foreign and difficult, at first, but is an important skill to acquire during your training.

One way refining your writing skills might help your development as analysts is to bring you comfortably into the process of progression, which involves writing about your cases. Of course, you have written about cases before, but probably mostly in the context of clinical work in an agency, where the emphasis is on presenting the patient, possibly so someone else could take over the case, or look over your shoulder. Here we write to inform the reader(s) of your work, your way of doing your work, and how you think about that work. This different focus presents certain challenges.

A second reason to work on your writing is to better know what you, yourself, think. Supervision and clinical classes give you some experience of developing your own thoughts, but they are not solo affairs. Writing really asks you to choose what to say, how to say it, and to make it coherent, when you are in a room by yourself.

Yet another reason to focus on writing about psychoanalysis is that the field thinks together, and advances through writing. You are already aware that there is a voluminous literature, with no dearth of ideas and disagreements and principles and objections to those. You may want to enter into this discussion, at some point. A field like psychoanalysis is very engrossing. It can feel overwhelming to try to offer your own thoughts into that great and sprawling stream of ideas that have already been put forth. But we have to start somewhere, and this course is meant to get you started in that writing, with company.

We have provided a syllabus, with some readings for class, and some supplementary readings. Reading and critiquing others' writing – what you find inspiring or just well said and what you find objectionable or unimportant – can assist in the development of your writing skills. We will look at some published clinical accounts and welcome your

suggestions for writing pieces to read and critique. But the most important readings and writings are the ones you need to provide. These will form the basis of our work.

We will have a beginning and an ending session, with orientation and readings in the beginning, and a chance, in the last class, to reflect on what we learned and how it has gone. For the middle six sessions, we rely on your written pieces of case material to provide the basis for our discussion and thought. Each of you should therefore have 2 chances to bring us your piece of writing, and all of us will think together about the writing. During our first session, we will ask each of you to volunteer to present a piece of writing for the second, third or fourth session, one person for each week.

We need you to write something, and send it (in a protected format) to all the other members of the group. In the Candidates' Manual there is an instruction on how to provide these documents to the whole class (including, of course, the instructors). Then we will get together, someone will read the report (so we can hear it as well as see it). Then we will discuss. Presenting a piece of written material is a gift, not a cry for help or a request for a critique. In the discussion, we will try to have a collaborative discussion that gets at what is conveyed, how the piece works, what is alluded to but not said, where the feelings are, etc. These discussions are the heart of this course.

We look forward to getting started. For the first session, we should all read a very short story: **Girl**, by Jamaica Kincaid. This is a literary piece that conveys so much in so few words – something to aim for in writing. You should also read Stephen Bernstein's account of how to write up a case for progression and graduation. Bernstein's paper can serve as a guide to help you get oriented to the writing task rather than a set of instructions you must follow. Once we get together, we can tweak what else to read, in what order, to supplement our main work.

With eager anticipation for our class,

Jonathan and Carol

## Bibliography

To begin: a short story

- Kincaid, J. "Girl". From Charters, Ann, Ed. *The Story and its Writer: An Introduction to Short Fiction*. 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. 2003. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsl.org](mailto:library@bpsl.org)].

The three papers listed below provide some background for your efforts in writing about clinical process. Bernstein presents a method for writing up analytic cases for progression and graduation. Ogden offers some more general thoughts about psychoanalytic writing. Furman shares a personal account of her experience in learning to write about psychoanalytic process, and how writing consolidated her identity as an analyst.

- Bernstein, S. B. (2008). Writing about the Psychoanalytic Process. *Psychoanal. Inq.*, 28(4):433-449. [PEP Web Link](#)

- Furman, S. G. (2006). The Write of Passage from Candidate to Analyst: The Experience of Writing Analytic Process. *Psychoanal. Inq.*, 26(5):682-697. [PEP Web Link](#)
- Ogden, T. H. (2005). On Psychoanalytic Writing. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 86(1):15-29. [PEP Web Link](#)

Listed below are pieces from The Analyst at Work section of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. Each analyst presents his or her work in a unique and distinct fashion. Depending on time and the interests of class members, we may look at one or more of the accounts and the accompanying commentaries and consider the particular format and style of writing that analyst utilizes.

- Abbasi, A. (2012). A Very Dangerous Conversation: The Patient's Internal Conflicts Elaborated Through the Use of Ethnic and Religious Differences between Analyst and Patient. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 93(3):515-534. [PEP Web Link](#)
- De Posadas, L. V. (2012). A Commentary on 'A Very Dangerous Conversation' by Aisha A. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 93(3):535-544. [PEP Web Link](#)
- Chabert, C. (2012). A Review of 'A Very Dangerous Conversation' by Aisha Abbasi. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 93(3):545-559. [PEP Web Link](#)
- Heenen-Wolff, S. (2008). 'A Man Who Was Tied up'. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 89(3):481-489. [PEP Web Link](#)
- Chetrit-Valine, V. (2008). Some Thoughts Related to the Ethical Seduction of the Analytic Encounter: A Commentary on 'A Man Who Was Tied up.' *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 89(3):491-496. [PEP Web Link](#)
- Reed, G. S. (2008). Turning Heads: A Commentary on 'A Man Who Was Tied up.' *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 89(3):497-501. [PEP Web Link](#)
- Yardino, S. M. (2008). 'Break Point': A Significant Moment in the Transference. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 89(2):241-247. [PEP Web Link](#)
- Apfelbaum, L. (2008). Some Comments on 'Break Point' by Stella M. Yardino. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 89(2):249-252. [PEP Web Link](#)
- Fogel, G. I. (2008). The Origins of Acts of Love: A Discussion of 'Break point' by Stella M. Yardino. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 89(2):253-257. [PEP Web Link](#)

Of Interest:

- Aster, P. (1995, December 25). Why Write? *The New Yorker*. [Linked Here](#).