

### *Eleven Drafts Later...*

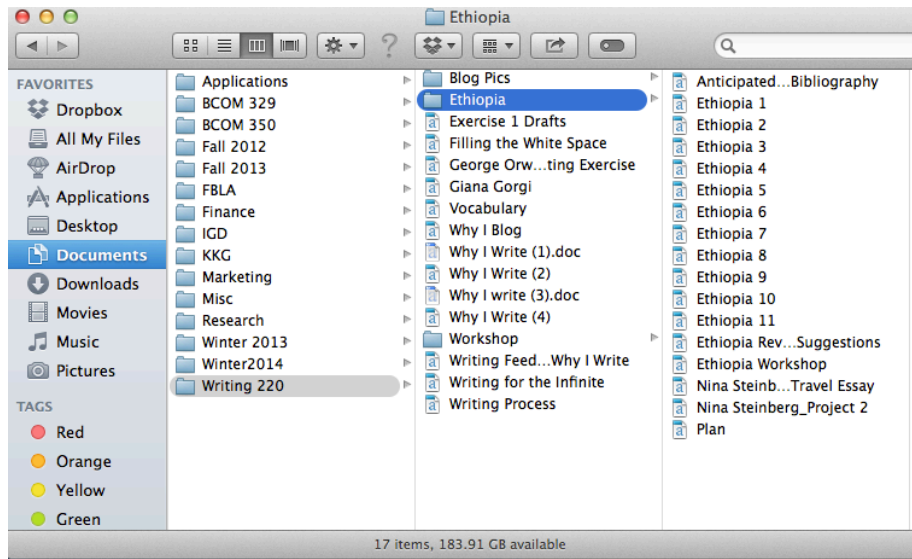
My idea for Project II was one I thought of well before the project was introduced to the class and even well before the first day of the Gateway course. When debating whether or not I wanted to dedicate every single one of my non-Ross requirements to writing requirements, throughout the next three semesters, the prospect of being able to write about my experiences in Ethiopia, is what convinced me to accept my invitation to the Fall 2014 Writing Cohort.

When Project II was finally introduced, the debate then became about what original piece of writing I wanted to repurpose: was it *Humans of Ethiopia* or was it the journals I kept during my trip? After going back and forth, expressing the pros and cons for each original piece to the class, my friends, my family, and essentially anyone who was willing to listen to me ramble, I finally decided on repurposing the photo blog.

In general, when I write, I work well under pressure. When I have a deadline, I finish my work in time for that deadline. If I have an essay due the next morning, I will sit down for as many hours as it takes, and pound on the keyboard until my essay is done. For Project II, however, I employed an entirely different approach.

I sat down and wrote over twenty eight times, in over seventeen different places, creating eleven separate drafts. I wrote cuddled up in bed with a mug of coffee, in the comfy chair on the second floor of the Ugli that overlooks the diag, on the plane to New York for my weekend getaway, in finance class with the professor droning on about bonds in the background, I wrote anywhere and everywhere. This gave my paper over twenty eight fresh states-of-mind, over seventeen different vantage points, and eleven sources of information to refer back to and work with. As a result, I ended up with a piece that I am proud of, that reflects who I am and what I care about, and something I plan to continue to work on in over twenty eight more states-of-mind, in over seventeen more locations, and with over eleven more drafts. My paper may almost be complete for the purpose of this assignment, but that does not mean it is done for me.

When I first started to write about Ethiopia, I became frustrated with the idea of writing a short travel essay piece, and decided I would instead write the beginning of a book, like the EPortfolio we took a look at in class. So in draft "Ethiopia 1" you will find that I began to explain further as to how I actually wound up in Ethiopia, and used up a lot more space with the background of my story. Once I started doing that, I realized it was important that I stick with the travel essay plan, and work on being able to deliver something powerful that was also concise. Something that forced me to carefully select what I elaborated on, and what to leave the reader wondering about and craving more of in the future. There were many times that I went back to elaborate on topics that I had merely skimmed over. When I would catch myself doing this, I would save the draft where it was, and start a new draft without the elaboration. This way I kept myself in check, without deleting writing that I might find helpful in the future. This left me with an Ethiopia folder in my computer that was overflowing with drafts of my paper.



While I wrote, I had an iPhoto folder where I would drag in photos that would compliment the writing well. I edited the photos, changing the lighting, and cropping the edges to have them fit best in my paper. In draft “Ethiopia 4” I first started adding the photos to the piece. And it was not until the very last draft that all the photos were in their place, formatted correctly, with helpful captions.

Throughout the writing process, I would call my mom and run ideas or phrases by her. My mom is my sounding board for all the writing I do, the one person who has the patience to listen to me endlessly debate an idea back and forth, and help me develop my thoughts while I write. I was excited to participate in the class workshop, so I could get feedback from the entire class, and incorporate their suggestions into my work.

I loved reviewing my paper with the class. I loved hearing people express the effect that some of the stories had on them, and I loved being able to share something so precious to me. I remember hating getting feedback on papers in middle school. I never cared about the topic I was writing about to begin with, so feedback was just a way of prolonging the time I had to work on a paper that meant little to me. For my Ethiopia piece, however, I loved having an excuse to go back and work on my paper, to not be done with the only homework assignment I was thoroughly enjoying at the time. I sat on my couch, reading through all the feedback, jotting down all the suggestions I found to be helpful that I wanted to incorporate. I also learned a lot about my classmates while reading through what they had to say about my paper – many of them shared parts of themselves in their letters.

In the end, I struggled with the little decisions. I had worked on the paper for so long, that deciding whether or not to use the word “sweet” or “endearing” began to wear me down. The conflicting feedback began to whirl around in my head, leaving me unsure of what to do. So on the due date, I had to take a step back, and just do what felt right. I made some easy cuts, some painful cuts, and some gratifying additions. I started my final draft in the extensive Ethiopia file, went with my gut, and did my best to let the story speak for itself.

Included:

1. Anticipated Bibliography
2. Draft "Ethiopia 1"
3. Ethiopia Paper Revision Suggestions

Links to look at:

1. <http://velamag.com>
2. This travel essay inspired me: <http://velamag.com/the-limits-of-compassion/>
3. Original Piece: <https://www.facebook.com/HumansOfEthiopia>

### *Anticipated Annotated Bibliography*

1. "Articles." *Literary Traveler*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Oct. 2014.  
<<http://www.literarytraveler.com/articles/>>.
2. "The Best Travel Stories on the Internet." *World Hum*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Oct. 2014.  
<<http://www.worldhum.com/>>.

These first two sources are both travel websites that feature writer's travel essays. They both work on a submission basis with various requirements for the writers. They each have their own style based on length of essays, amount of media, and formatting. I plan to read through both of these websites extensively, getting exposure to a wide variety of travel essays. This will help me to write my own essay as well as help me determine which website would be most fitting for my piece.

3. Miller, David S. "How To Be A Travel Writer In 2013." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 02 Apr. 2013. Web. 08 Oct. 2014.  
<[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/matador/how-to-be-a-travel-writer\\_b\\_2823444.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/matador/how-to-be-a-travel-writer_b_2823444.html)>.

This article is a "How to" article for travel writers. The article starts off with tips that are helpful for travel writers throughout time and then focuses in on what it takes to be a successful travel writer in today's times. During my research, I came across multiple "How to" travel writer articles that I imagine will be very helpful when I start to write my piece. This article, and the other ones like it, will help me to get in the mindset of the genre conventions of travel writing, before writing about my own experiences. I believe it will help give me structure when trying to bring together so many of my memories and perhaps even allow me to submit my writing to one of the travel essay websites.

4. "Ethiopia Travel Guide." *Virtual Tourist*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Oct. 2014.  
<<http://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/Africa/Ethiopia/TravelGuide-Ethiopia.html>>.

This website is a travel guide to Ethiopia. It includes the main attractions, events, activities, restaurants, hotels, and more. I am hoping to use this site, as well as other sites like it, as a source for all the names of locations and events that I may have forgotten. This will help me fill in the missing pieces in my memory so that my stories can be detailed and complete.

5. Conversations with Dejene Hodes and Michal Jacobson

Dejene Hodes is the Ethiopian boy who I spent my entire trip with. Michal Jacobson is the American who came along with me. Whenever Google cannot answer one of my questions for me, or fill in the missing pieces of my memory, I will reach out to

these two sources to help me recall certain experiences and bring the stories to life. I think they will also be very helpful in adding alternate perspectives to what I remember, to make the stories as authentic and well rounded as possible.

Draft "Ethiopia 1"

When I walked into my room, I noticed a book in the center of my desk, a book that I had not placed there, nor seen before. The cover featured a white doctor peering into the eyes of a little African boy, foreheads resting on one another, the little boy using the doctor's stethoscope to listen to his own heartbeat. I immediately knew it was my mom who must have placed the book on my desk. She was always leaving me little newspaper clippings and articles that she would insist I read. And I was always neglecting them, letting them get lost in the piles of papers on my desk, and giving noncommittal head nods when she would inquire as to whether or not I ever planned on reading them. I snickered: if she couldn't get me to read a measly article, what made her think I was going to read an entire novel?

But sure enough, that Saturday, with nothing to do, I picked up the book, gazed over the front and the back, weighing it in my hands, weighing if it was worth my time. I sat down on my bed, skeptical, but with a shrug I opened the book and started to read.

I started to read and did not stop until I had finished, until I had wept my way through the now-soggy pages. The book, *This Is A Soul*, by Marilyn Berger, tells the story of an American doctor, Rick Hodes, who has dedicated his life to thousands of sick and impoverished people in Ethiopia. In the book, Dr. Hodes adopts an adorable boy named Dejene so that under his medical insurance, Dejene could get life-saving surgery. He continues to take in other patients in desperate need of his help, creating an ever-expanding family out of the lives he has saved.

Years later, as the flights attendants announced that we are making our descent into Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, I thought of how the book was almost lost to the chaos of my desk, and thought of the life-altering inspiration that consumed me after reading it. My stomach dropped, not from the turbulence, but from the anticipation of getting off of the plane and running into the arms of Dejene – once just a character in a book – now the boy who I was flying to Ethiopia to meet.

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Don't get me wrong, it took a hell of a lot of yelling and screaming, rationalizing and scheming, and begging and pleading to get my parents on board with me flying to the other end of the map to spend the summer with the characters of a book. My mom was easier to sway, as she fell in love with Rick Hodes' story as well. But my father went on many violent rants that always started with, "over my dead body, will my sweet little girl, go to a third world country, by herself, to live with a bunch of people she has never met, and to get kidnapped and raped and buried alive..." so on and so forth.

I couldn't blame him. He wasn't wrong. It was absolutely insane. But sometimes the most insane things are the best things you can do for yourself. So I set my heart on doing this insane thing. And I did not stop trying until finally flights were booked and vaccines ran through my blood. I was going to Ethiopia. That's not to say I didn't have nightmares. The days leading up to the trip, I barely slept. Most 20 year olds only go to Africa on safaris with their family or under the

supervision of an organized trip. I did fear going alone, but it was precisely the loneliness of it that drew me to this trip, that made me set on going. I wanted to experience Ethiopia in the most authentic way possible. And to do this, I had to let go of every comfort, and every safety net, just trust, let go, and go off on my own.

## *Ethiopia Paper Revision Suggestions*

Tighten up first paragraph...and add more to last intro paragraph  
Add in pronunciation of Dejene  
What is Dejene's age?  
How did I actually end up in Ethiopia?  
Didn't mention how nervous I was to get sick in the presence of diseased children  
(mentioned it as a good thing but yes I was terrified)  
Write more stories  
Make the last transition paragraph clearer!!!  
"So Dejene, Henok, and I set off..." change transition  
Process of taking the picture?  
Ask Sara what she meant by bracketing off [some who became my closest friends...]  
Talk about the diseases – maybe talk about Dejene specifically  
More about life in Ethiopia?  
"Maybe another time." – how do I feel about this?  
More snapshots? A better snapshot to lead into the conclusion  
Everyone's feedback – write a novel  
How old was I/ what part of my life did this story take place  
How did the trip change me  
Why do people come from all over for Dr. Hodes? – he treats specific diseases  
How did your view of life change  
Describe the prostitutes  
Describe the city  
Note asking the guard for his picture  
Caption picture of Dejene and picture of Rick Hodes