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## Observe, Write, Draw, Repeat

### DID

In 2020, as a consequence of the pandemic and multiple lockdowns, we were compelled to acquire and adapt to new routines in our daily lives. In the scholarly community, we found ourselves mostly communicating through video calls, and attending conferences, workshops, and seminars from our kitchen tables, sofas, or, if we were lucky, our own study desks. In an online course I gave during that time, I introduced Lynda Barry's "Basic Quick Diary Format" (2014, 61–65) right at the start, aiming to provide participants with an alternative, structured routine that would not only help them to process memories, emotions, and thoughts, but also allow them to record and reflect on their progress throughout the course.

The basic concept is quite straightforward: to keep a Quick Diary à la Barry, all you need is a notebook, a pen, and a timer. It's best to prepare the page struc-

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ture in advance so you can focus on filling in the grid during the exercise.

1. For each entry, divide a notebook page into four panels (the top two should be slightly longer than the bottom two and numbered from one to seven).
2. In the first two-and-a-half minutes, write seven things you did that day in the top left panel.
3. In the next two-and-a-half minutes, write seven things you saw that day in the top right panel.
4. In the following 30 seconds, jot down something someone said in the bottom left panel.
5. In the final 30 seconds, draw something you saw in the bottom right panel.

Similar to free-writing techniques, the strict time constraints prevent text tweaking and self-censorship. I also found

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it helpful to emphasize that the Quick Diaries were not graded and that there was no specific objective to them. The only purpose was to "teach [us] to hear, see + remember the world all around [us]" (Barry 2014, 61) – which ironically became one of the most significant take-aways from an online class that lacked



many of the sensory challenges and interactions of the outside world. Done daily, "[p]atterns start[ed] to emerge," and "[un]expected juxtapositions" were found, which helped us to "understand what [...] 'the back of the mind' [was] up to" (62) and how it could be used to form stories and narratives.

See: Barry, Lynda. *Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2014.

