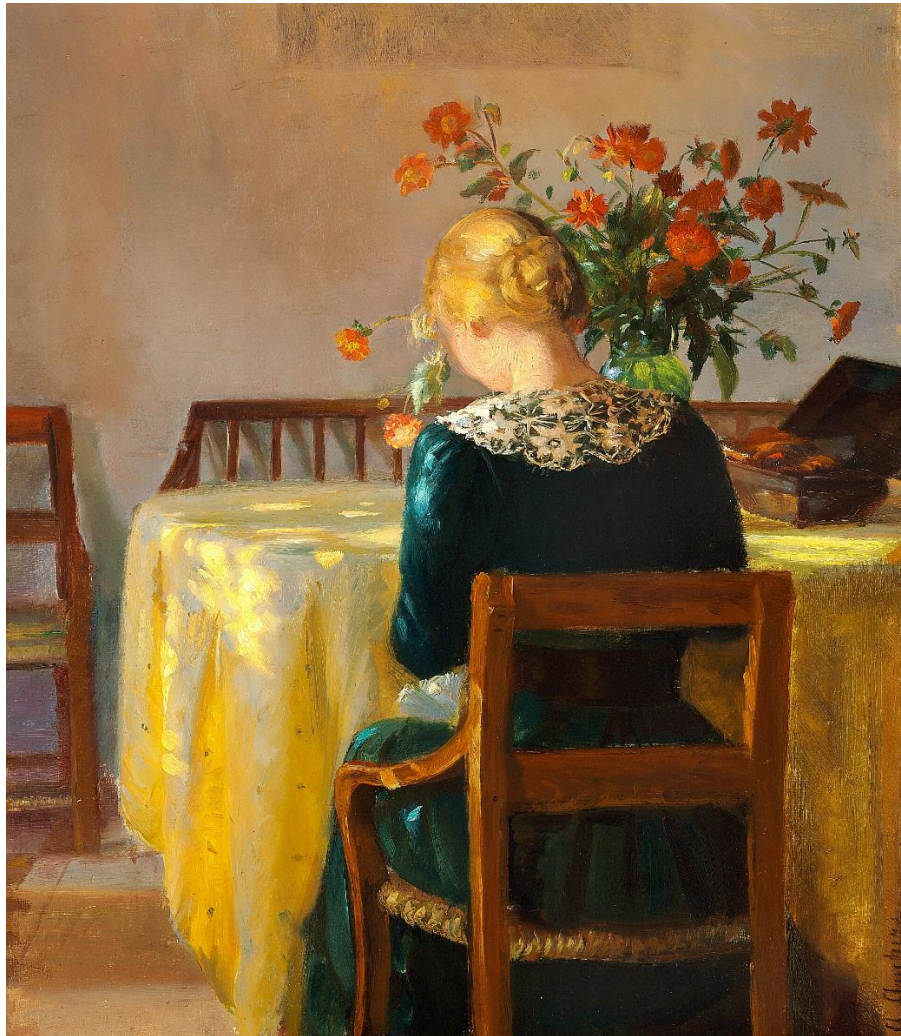


Anima Candida

By Farouk Ramzan



Ancher, Anna. *Interiør med datteren Helga ved sytøjet*. 1905.

[SCAFFOLD: A SHOWCASE OF VANDERBILT FIRST-YEAR WRITING](#) | Vol. 5 | Spring 2023

Scaffold is a digital collection of first-year writing curated by the [Vanderbilt Writing Studio](#). To highlight the developing writing processes and learning experiences central to the growth of new college writers, the collection pairs each piece with a recorded reflection from its author. Visit [Scaffold's website](#) to listen to the authors reflect, learn more, and tap into this resource for college students and instructors alike.

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I am a sick man. My tongue is stained white. My eyes water. My belly is on fire. My skin erupts with heat. I have a bitter gall. I taste bitterness.

I start the morning by brushing the spots in my mouth. I stand there and stare. I have sullen eyes.

Things aren't that bad. I have many chances to write and read. The models of the invisible hand and trade and prices.

Frederick brings water and nuts on a plate. I drink and eat from it. More food will make my belly burn. I spend the day in the chair in the library. I read through the English corn purchases, the cotton industry in America, the French loaves.

I wake up. I look at my figure. Frederick tells me I am thinning. I am turning very white. The eyes drill into the sockets. The lips are cracking.

I wake up. I put food in my mouth. My tongue cannot taste. My nose cannot smell. The belly impedes when I walk. Frederick reminds me of food. I cannot eat. The body is violent.

I wake up. I recall when the body was strong. I droop on the table and struggle to stay awake. I cannot combat it. I have tried every meal and every exercise. The body is trying to kill me.

I wake up. I read Ricardo all day. I sit on the porch and lick my lips that have glass in them. I smoke the pipe. I stare at my father's orchards. It is all dissolving away. I resented handy work. I enjoyed reading more.

I wake up and return to bed.

Frederick tells me about a ballet performance. I go in the carriage, the first time in many months. I sit with the knees bent. The arms are wrapped around the body. The jaw chatters. All around is black and white. The people have pipes. The

ceiling stretches upwards and wide. Detailed black and gold everywhere. The curtains rise and all of the figures stand. There is silence. I stare quietly.

The figures move back and forth and up and down. They keep doing this for some time. I feel very cold. And this continues.

One of them lands differently. It is strange. It is alien. It wavers and twitches. I watch again. It happens again. I look closer and see a bundle of gold.

I leave the theater. All my bones are cold. The heat comes and they feel ready to crack. I return home to lie on the floor. I grab the papers from the table. I write on the floor. At least I am not in the hall again.

Frederick tells me to go again. I am not happy. It is a burden to do anything else but look at models of supply & demand. I can't resist him. I don't feel the body. I feel this thing. It somehow writes. I move to the carriage. The carriage carries me to the hall. I stare at the ceiling. The curtains rise.

The figures on the floor move. One of them lands strangely and twitches and springs up. I watch it again. I see it again. I return home. I sit down to write. My back hurts from the ballooning belly. I go to the floor.

Frederick escorts me out of the room. Frederick does everything for me now. I watch the wavering figure each week. It happens every time. I go home and fall asleep.

I ask Frederick if I can sit closer but away from the people. He says that it is possible. I sit by the footlights. The curtains rise. The figures look different. There is white. There are different shades of brown. Chunks of food are moving up the throat. I see the wavering one. The music is struck up. All of

them move. Jumping, crossing, exiting, swaying, toing, and flying. I see the wavering one. The twitches, the throbs, then the smooth movements; then the twitches, the throbs, and the smooth. The rest string their eyes up, this one shifts them. Left, right, a twitching lip, left, right. The figure jumps there and back and up and the sweat on the back is nothing. The figure then makes a circle and another circle and another circle. Off it goes and sways here and there and a different heat comes into my arms. The movement: left, right, left, right. On the toes and off. Lengthens arms and snaps the wrists.

I get up as Frederick comes into the room. His eyes widen. He takes me by the arm. I crouch into my seat. Again they go. The wavering one is there. The figure leaps high and comes down and tries again and again. It glances quickly and flaps the eyelids quickly. The yellow strands shine. The figure throbs and smooths out and throbs and smooths out. Bile is in my mouth. Acid is crawling up my throat. The belly is inflated. Nerves are burning. The figure moves and moves and jumps and dances and swings and glides and throws and grabs and seizes and releases and constricts and stretches. There is fire. Jumps, grabs, seizes, and releases. There is acid. Glides, attaches, and detaches. There is bile. Grabs, slides, falls, twirls, and moves on.

I rub the white off the tongue. I watch the white substance drain into the sink. I rub out the white inside the cheeks. I watch it go down.

Frederick is happy with me today. He asks to take me to the inn. I shake the head and try to read a few more pages. He insists.

We arrive at the wooden inn. Frederick remains in the carriage. I go inside the inn. I sit. Coffee and crackers. I remain here. There are many people here. The skull is being pounded. I wait for Frederick. I wait to return home.

A figure's yellow hair shines. It is the unwavering one. The figure glances left and right and shifts back and forth. It looks at me and flaps the lids quickly and walks over. All things within me are suspending. It nods at me. I nod back. It sits. It tilts the head up. I—

Black blots with green rims, both shifting in all directions.

"I-I see you very much."

I nod and keep looking. The figure's hands collide and rub each other. The threads atop remain bunched in a sphere.

"I-I see you very much."

I look again and nod again. The heat threatens the limbs. The figure's eyeballs keep shaking. Its feet rub the ground. Then the neck twitches.

"I-I thank you."

I cannot feel anything. The limbs are numb. The heat is manageable.

I crouch into my seat. The curtains rise. The figure is wavering again. It is different. More smooth. Then more rigid. Left, right, left, right, up, then down. The legs try to thrust me up and the hands perspire.

The performance ends. I walk towards the door and the figure comes running down.

"Come wi-with me."

The body yields to it. I walk with the figure out. Frederick sees and remains. I go to the figure's home. A shabby hut. Outside the hut, the figure bends down and glides a finger in the air.

"To-tomatoes, carrots, ra-sperries, squash."

I crouch and nod.

"Try the carrot." The figure hands it to me. I taste nothing. The figure looks up. The eyeballs shine.

"Th-the fig tree is the best."

The figure takes me to the side of the hut. A fig snaps and falls to the floor. The figure grabs it quickly. It hands it to me. I see the eyeballs shine. I eat the fig. The white in the cheeks wash away. The figure gets up and stretches its lips into a curve. Its hands try to leap twice and return back to its side. I keep staring at it.

I wake up and rub the white off the tongue. I sit in the chair and open my eyes. I cannot read. The figure is there. I keep seeing it. I read one line again.

I wake up and spit the acid stuck in the throat. I look outside and see the damaged orchard.

I wake up and rub the white off the tongue. Frederick sees jutting bones in my figure. I feel pain in the leg-bones.

I wake up and Frederick takes me to the hall. I crouch into the seat and the curtains rise. The left, right, down, up, down, grab, and release ends. The wavering figure walks to me.

"Will you c-come...in the evening?"

The figure's lids collapse many times. Its chest inflates then deflates.

* * *

Frederick brings me to the hut. The figure's white blows in the wind. We sit in the fields and the figure disappears and returns with porcelain. The figure bends down and places the tray. The sun is orange. The wheat are muted. The crickets are making noises. Two or three birds are making noises. The figure sips the tea and looks at me. I sip the tea.

"How is-is it?"

The figure tilts its head. I nod and stare. The figure's lips turn into a crest. It looks out.

The sky is becoming dark blue. White dots shine. The figure looks at the floor and the green rims look up.

"My My mother is inside."

We walk inside the shack. An old woman lies on the floor. The figure disappears. It comes back with a cup.

The figure bends down. The mother takes the cup. The lips are shaking. The eyelids are squinting. The figure pats the hair of the mother and winces and taps and smooths and turns to me and turns to the mother and the moonlight reflects off the white and the wheat sways left-right and is heard inside and the green rims of the figure become thinner and the black larger and the taps and taps and the wheat goes left and right and I stare and the moonlight reflects white and the mother goes limp.

I walk to the room and see the books resting everywhere. I grab them. I toss them into the furnace. Frederick jumps and rushes. I throw more and strike a match. It drops. The flame goes through the books. Frederick is disappointed.

I wake up and brush the white off the tongue. I walk to the porch and look at the damaged orchard. Frederick does not

take me to the hall. I tell him that I will walk. He takes me to the hall.

I crouch into my seat and watch the figures go left, right, left, right. I stand by the entrance and the figure comes running up.

“I mu-must change.”

The figure comes back in green velvet atop it. It guides me past the trees. We are by a river. The river runs quickly.

“M-My mother loved the water he-here.”

The figure dips its toes.

“Try.”

I dip the toes. The figure looks at me with enlarged eyes. Its mouth opens and a sharp noise comes out. The eyes dash everywhere. Its chest goes up and down and up and down and the figure sways back and forth. I grab the figure before it falls into the water. I lay it on the floor. I stare at it.

Its eyelids finally flutter. It gets up and tries to say words. I nod my head.

I wake up. I walk to the porch and see the damaged orchard. I try putting on boots. Frederick sees me sitting on the floor. He helps me. He has sharp eyes.

I go outside and Frederick comes rushing. I point home. He says he will keep walking. I point home. He says he will come with me. I scream. He leaves.

I walk to the trails. The legs hurt. I walk uphill. The birds make noises. The belly burns. I keep walking. I find a deer staring at me.

* * *

I wake up and rub the white out of the cheeks. Frederick does not speak to me. I sit in the carriage and wait. Frederick comes. I crouch in my seat and the curtains rise. Left, right, left, right, and over. The figure comes rushing to me, opening its lips and closing them.

“S-s-see the sta-stars?”

Frederick takes me to the shack. The figure comes rushing in the green velvet atop it. Frederick looks at it with sharp eyes.

We walk far. There is wheat everywhere. It is black in the sky. There are white dots in the sky. A bug makes one noise. Another bug makes another noise. One more bug makes one more noise. The figure lies flat. The golden threads are in the spherical shape. Its eyes are wide. Time is passing. I stare at the figure. I touch it. It does not move. Time passes.

It gets up. The lips twitch into a curve.

“D-do you l-ove the stars?”

I nod.

I wake up and rub the white out of the cheeks. Frederick says something about troubling behavior. He brings a spoon of oil. I reject it and walk out and sit on the porch. Frederick tosses the spoon in the sink.

I crouch into my seat and the curtains rise. The figure is there. I wait by the curtains and it comes rushing to me.

“Ple-ple-please come to dinner.”

Frederick takes me to the shack. The figure comes rushing, a blue color atop it. Frederick is silent.

We sit on the floor. The figure takes the spoon to the mother’s mouth. The mother sips and closes the eyes. The figure points at the squash soup.

“From the garden.”

The mother twists the lips upwards. The figure places its head on the mother. Its eyes are closed. Its lips are tight.

I wake up and rub the white off the tongue. The carriage arrives. I crouch into my seat. The curtains rise. The figure is there. It moves quicker and lighter than last time. It twitches, jumps, catches, and releases.

It comes rushing to me.

“C-c-c-can I see yo-yo—”

I nod and I nod.

We arrive. The sun is orange.

The figure comes out and walks and stops. Its eyes are wide and hands limp. It walks and stares at the yellow shrubs. It walks to each shrub. It stands quietly.

I walk by it and Frederick shuts the door.

It is dark and it sits on the floor. I stare at it.

“A fff-fig tree!”

The figure points at decaying leaves and roots. Its lids close and open rapidly.

“Yo-you mu-mu-mu—”

I nod. The figure then throws its arms towards me and brings them back to its side. It rocks back and forth and brings the corners of the lips far up. The eyes dance. The golden threads shine. Its cheeks swell.

I wake up and rub the white out. I walk past Frederick and go to a trail. I remember the figure. I remember the mother.

* * *

I wake up and rub the white out. I crouch into my seat and the curtains rise. The figures are still. The wavering figure is not there. The coldness comes over the bones and muscles. The performance is over.

I stand by the curtains. All the figures go rushing here and there. It does not come out. I walk out and Frederick takes me to the carriage.

A fish sits in front of me. Frederick sits across from me. I cannot eat the fish. It will burn the stomach.

I lie in bed. The body is empty.

I wake up and rub the white out of the cheeks. I rush to the carriage. I crouch into my seat and stare at the curtains. They are red. The people around me are talking. The air is cold. The curtains begin rising. I see the beige of their toes. The curtains are rising. I see the white. The curtains are still rising. I see the black ribbons around their necks. The curtains are still rising. Their faces are there. The curtains are still. The wavering figure is not there. The performance is long. I wait. The performance is over.

I wait by the curtains. I see the figures moving across. It does not come out. I walk to the carriage. I sit in the carriage, collapsed to the side. We arrive.

Frederick comes out and waits. I come out. He tells me that the figure is no longer here. I look up and see his tilted head. We are staring at each other. He says that it is at an asylum in Copenhagen.

I throw the remaining books in the furnace. Frederick grabs the matches. I look at him. I walk to the kitchen and slide all the dishes off to the side. They fall. They shatter. I stare at the pieces. Frederick stares at me. His mouth is open.

I walk out. Frederick pleads. I keep walking.

I walk past the trees. I walk past the river. I walk past the rocks. The birds make noises. The sun is hot. The sky is blue. The dirt gives a scent. I walk past the trees. I walk past the rocks. The grass sways left and right and left and right. The wind blows. The air goes into the nose.

I walk past the trees. I walk past the river. I walk past the rocks. The sun is orange. The bones of my leg are hurting. I sit on a rock. I look up. The trees surround me.

The sky has white dots. I am walking. There are shadows. I fall.

I wake up and spit white. I am walking. I walk past the trees. The legs are soft.

The sun is orange. I sit down.

The sky is black. I am walking. The trees are tall. The bugs make sounds everywhere. Everywhere, the body aches. The belly is caved in.

I wake up and spit the white out. I rush and rush and rush. The trees are there and the sun is there and birds are there and the water is there and rocks are there.

I arrive. I look and look. I walk. I walk. I am in front of a castle. I walk in front of it. There are two men with identical faces. I walk to the right. I walk to the front. I walk to the left. The windows poke out. I walk. I walk. I stop.

The walls are white. There is one table. There is one chair. A figure is sitting in the chair. It is draped in green. There is a white webbing around its neck. It gets up and comes to the window. Its eyes widen. Its nostrils open. Its fingers spread.

"I-I-mi-mi-mi—"

I nod.

"I-I-I cannnnot...leave."

I stare at it. It raises its hands and brings it back to its side.
It raises its hand and brings it back to its side.

“I-I-I-I feed a parrot he-here.”

Its eyes shine. The eyebrows rise. The eyelids close and
open and close and open and close and open.

I nod.

“My My mu-mother.” The eyes have water in them. The
figure’s hands are together in front of its body.

“My mother.” There is a knock on the door.

“Pl-pl-pllease stay?”

I nod. The figure disappears.

I sit on the floor and stare at the window. The wind is
cold now. The sky is dark. The sun is almost not there. The
figure returns. It rushes to the window. It kneels by it. The
golden threads are a sphere.

“I ate an-and I fffed the b-bird.”

The figure’s fingers are spread on the window. Its chest
heaves. The lower lip jumps up and down.

“Wi-wi-wi-will you wa-wa-wait for me?”

I see the green rims and the black ink in the middle. They
reflect everything.

I nod.

I arrive. I collapse on the ground.

I wake up. I walk to the shack. The wheat is swaying left
and right. The sky is purple and
pink and orange.

The mother is lying with the eyes closed. I rush to the
kitchen. I look for a knife. I take the knife out. I rush outside. I
see green shrubs. I pull one. A carrot is in the hands. I walk to

the kitchen. I cut the carrot. I grab a pot. I pour the water. I warm the pot. I rub the hands. I feel air coming out of the chest.

I run outside and grab the figs. I rush inside and grab the pot. I kneel by the mother. I bring the fig to her lips. She opens the eyes wide. She eats it. She sips the soup. I collapse by her side.

I wake up. I spit the white out. I walk to the kitchen. I cut the bread. I put the jam. I bring it to the mother.

I walk outside. I water the garden. I eat the figs.

It is dark. I look at the painting of a flower. The mother says the figure did it.

I sit on a chair. I look out at the fields moving left and right and left and right. The bugs are making sounds everywhere. The air is blowing through the window. There is a crest of light beneath the dark blue. There is a sound far away of a foreign bird.

I stare. I wait.