

STUDENT READING **LINE**

# VOICES



MONDAY DECEMBER 5, 2022 • 7PM

# LAF-27 APRIL 24 THRU 27

## 2023 LITERARY ARTS FESTIVAL

### MONDAY: APRIL 24

#### WHY LITERATURE MATTERS student and faculty panel

A panel of Grossmont College students, faculty, and administrators testify to how literature has played a role in their personal lives, and discuss its potential to inspire change and cultivate humanity.

#### SONIA GUTIÉRREZ fiction writer and author

Sonia Gutiérrez is the author of the poetry collection, *Spider Woman / La Mujer Araña* (Olmecca Press, 2013) and the novel, *Dreaming with Mariposas* (Flowersong Press, 2020), winner of the 2021 Tomás Rivera Book Award. A professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at California State University San Marcos, Gutiérrez is also co-editor for *The Writer's Response* (Cengage Learning, 2016). Her bilingual poetry collection, *Paper Birds: Feather by Feather* / *Pájaros de papel: Pluma por pluma*, is forthcoming.



#### MONI BARRETTE graphic literature panel

Vice President and Co-Founder of Creators Assemble and President-Elect of the American Library Association's Graphic Novel & Comics Round Table, Moni Barrette, leads the Literary Arts Festival's first official panel on graphic literature and its evolving importance to the literary canon. Additional panel members to be announced during the Spring 2023 semester.



#### TARA STILLIONS WHITEHEAD writer and filmmaker

Tara Stillions Whitehead is a filmmaker and writer teaching in Central Pennsylvania. Her essay, "The Mother Must Die and Other Lies Fairy Tales Told Me," published in *Fairy Tale Review*, was designated as a notable essay in the Best American Essays 2022 anthology. She is the author of two full-length story collections, *The Year of the Monster* (Unsolicited Press 2022) and *They More Than Burned*, forthcoming from ELJ Editions in 2023.



### TUESDAY: APRIL 25

#### ZINE MAKING WORKSHOP w/ GRRRL ZINES A-GO'S MARGARAT NEE

The popular DIY zine workshop returns, lead by Margarat Nee. Nee is an artist, independent scholar, curator of the San Diego Punk Archive, and founding member of activist art group Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go, a female consortium/collective established in 2002 to empower young women in independent media and education, radicalism, zines, and Do-It-Yourself ethics.



#### NEW VOICES student reading

This popular biannual event will feature exceptional student writers from the spring 2023 semester's creative writing courses performing their new and original works of short and flash fiction, novel excerpts, literary nonfiction, poetry, drama, and hybrid works.

### WEDNESDAY: APRIL 26

#### ADAM DEUTSCH poet

Grossmont College's own Adam Deutsch, English professor and co-coordinator of the Creative Writing Program, gives a reading to celebrate the launch of his new poetry collection, *Every Transmission* (forthcoming from Fernwood Press in 2023). Adam is also the author of a chapbook, *Carry On: Elegies*, and publisher of Cooper Dillon Books. His poems have appeared in *Poetry International*, *Thrush*, *Juked*, *AMP Magazine*, and elsewhere.



### THURSDAY: APRIL 27

#### SHILPI SOMAYA GOWDA fiction writer

Born and raised in Toronto, Shilpi Somaya Gowda is the award-winning, *New York Times* and internationally bestselling Canadian author of *Secret Daughter* (2010), and *The Golden Son* (2015), winner of the French literary prize, Prix des Lyceens Folio. Her latest book, *The Shape of Family* (2019), remained on the Canadian national bestseller list for several months, then debuted at #2 on the *LA Times* bestseller list.



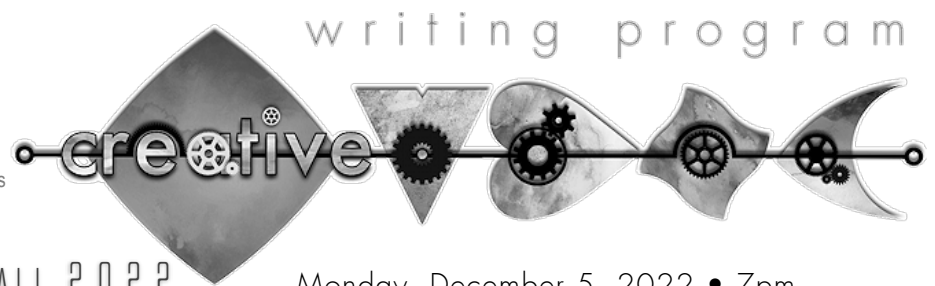
#### RAYMOND LUCZAK Deaf poet, playwright, and author

Raised in Ironwood, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Deaf and queer writer Raymond Luczak has authored and edited over twenty-five titles, including *Flannelwood* (Red Hen Press, 2019), *Compassion, Michigan* (Modern History Press, 2020), and his latest book, *once upon a twin: poems* (Gallaudet University Press 2022). His work has also appeared in dozens of journals and anthologies, including *Beauty Is a Verb*, *Poetry*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Ploughshares*, and many others. An inaugural Zoeglossia Fellow and the editor of the queer and disability-positive literary journal, *Mollyhouse*, Luczak is a finalist nominee for two Lambda Literary Awards, including Best Lesbian and Gay Anthology, and Best Small Press Book. He has also been a featured honoree on The Deaf Poet Society for his advocacy to expand accessibility to the disability community by transcription and ASL translations.



The official website of the 27th Annual Literary Arts Festival will be available in January 2023 @ [www.grossmont.edu/laf](http://www.grossmont.edu/laf).

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FALL 2022

Monday, December 5, 2022 • 7pm

# NEW VOICES STUDENT READING

This semesterly reading is sponsored by the Creative Writing Program with support from the English Department, the English and Social-Behavioral Sciences Division, and the Grossmont College Foundation. Each semester, our creative writing Instructors hand-pick their stand-out students to participate, with works representing diverse skill levels and genres.\* As a result, New Voices showcases our Creative Writing Program students and the devoted instructors who cultivate literary excellence among them. Special thanks go to the following for their assistance and support in the production of this program and event: Dean of English, Social, and Behavioral Sciences, Agustin Albarran; MaryAnn Landry, Administrative Assistant; Dr. Cindi Harris and Sarah Martin, English Dept. Co-Chairs; Fall 2022 Creative Writing instructors, Julie Cardenas, Enrique Cervantes, Ingrid Jayne, and Adam Deutsch; and the dedicated staff of the entire Printing Dept., including Regan Tu, Crystal Hong, Ricardo Macias, Maria Soriano, and Supervisor, Holly Phan; and Technology Services specialists David Steinmetz and Jacob Angelo.

GENRE	PAGE		WRITER	COURSE	INSTRUCTOR
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CREATIVE NONFICTION:					
	6	Spectacle	GENEVE NGUYEN	ENGLISH 126	INGRID JAYNE
	8	An Ephemeral Arc of Light	AARON ATADERO	ENGLISH 126	JULIE CARDENAS
POETRY:					
	9	Praying Room	AARON ATADERO	ENGLISH 126	JULIE CARDENAS
	10	Two Poems: Wiser • A Time	TARIQ JOHNSON	ENGLISH 126	INGRID JAYNE
	12	Shower	MADELINE HAINES	ENGLISH 140	ADAM DEUTSCH
	13	Two Poems: Dance Fever • a blackout poem [untitled]	ASHLEY GRINS	ENGLISH 140	ADAM DEUTSCH
SHORT FICTION:					
	15	On the Origins of Covid	JAY VU	ENGLISH 130	ENRIQUE CERVANTES
CREATIVE NONFICTION:					
	18	6th Grade Camp	VALERIO PONS	ENGLISH 126	INGRID JAYNE
	21	Tiny Dancers	RYLEY JONAS	ENGLISH 126	JULIE CARDENAS
POETRY:					
	22	Two Poems: Reflection • It's Not That Simple ▲	LUCIAN SCRYA	ENGLISH 140	ADAM DEUTSCH
	24	Two Poems: Dirty • A Man Named Nobody	CORY BROOKS (READ BY WILL HARRIS)	ENGLISH 141	ADAM DEUTSCH
	26	Three Poems: Ode to the Crows • Masking • Overboard	ERIN EDKINS	ENGLISH 142	ADAM DEUTSCH
CREATIVE NONFICTION:					
	29	The Road	MICHAEL ROCA	ENGLISH 126	INGRID JAYNE
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	2023 CREATIVE WRITING COURSES AND WORKSHOPS				

▲ AS A COURTESY TO OUR GUESTS, WORKS POTENTIALLY CONTAINING TRIGGERS, MATURE THEMES, AND/OR COARSE LANGUAGE HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED IN THE TABLE OF CONTENTS AND FURTHER NOTED IN THE PROGRAM, ITSELF.

**PLEASE BE ADVISED**, THE CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM RESPECTS THE LITERARY INTEGRITY OF ITS STUDENTS AT ALL TIMES. OTHER THAN TO ASSIST WITH EDITING, OFFER INPUT FOR REVISION, OR RECOMMEND TRIGGER WARNINGS FOR POTENTIALLY TRAUMATIZING OR INFLAMMATORY CONTENT, OUR TEACHING STAFF NEITHER ALTERS NOR CENSORS STUDENT WRITING CONTAINING OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE, MATURE THEMES, SENSITIVE MATERIAL, OR CONTROVERSIAL CONTENT UNLESS DEEMED IN DIRECT CONFLICT WITH INSTITUTIONAL CODES OF ETHICS AS SET FORTH BY THE GROSSMONT-CUYAMACA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT.

JOANNE KNUDSON  
ENGLISH 130: SHORT FICTION WRITING I  
ENRIQUE CERVANTES

SLOW DANCE

"Not again!" Marianne flinched awake. Her head flamed in pain. God. It hadn't come on this strong since last month—was it too much to ask for a reprieve coming up to her anniversary, even if George wasn't here to celebrate it? Gingerly she inched out of bed and scrunched her feet into her scuffs, stumbled into the bathroom.

She stared at her face in the mirrored medicine cabinet. "I won't give in. I won't," she told the pain. It was familiar; it taunted her. She didn't care. She knew its wiles and would not be beaten. Though she couldn't remember the last time she slept more than two hours at a stretch, it didn't matter. She had made her decision.

The clock glowed 6:32 in the morning. All right. She'd brew her coffee, limp down the walk outside to fetch her paper, read of the same corruption and crime that has always sold papers, then do her crossword.

Marianne looked down at the cheerful bunny faces on her slippers. They had been a gift from her son Cody, five years before, when he had moved two towns over to start his life with his sharp new bride. She remembered the live rabbits they had raised when he was a child, knew he'd given her these silly slippers to amuse her, to stir up the memory of laughter between them, before George had gone. Before those doctors had shattered what was left. She pulled the tie of her robe more securely around her and headed into the hallway.

Those past days were so precious to her, tucked safely away in her memory album: the time she unwrapped those slippers, the smile on her son's face as she laughed. And earlier, the rabbit hutch in the large yard of her and George's first house—so trim and perfect for the start of their life together. Her joy at learning they would add a child to the two of them, after hoping for so long. And even before that, George's loving eyes when he asked her to marry him, his charm when he first convinced her to go on a date. That's right, they had been caught in the rain after a ride in the park. She remembered it well.

Marianne came to awareness in front of her hall closet. What was it she was looking for? Her raincoat? No... something else...

"Here it is!" Marianne pulled the black and tan houndstooth hacking jacket out of its bag in the cedar-lined closet. "I thought I'd lost this." She grew wistful and held the soft wool twill up to her cheek.

Her memory blossomed. "Why, I was wearing this when I was out for a ride on that nice chestnut jumper. It started to rain, and I was lucky enough to find that gazebo, and I thought to wait it out alone, when that charming man arrived and sat next to me and started chatting me up. Not that I'd let him know I found him charming. Young men today, too impertinent! Best not to encourage them."

She allowed herself a secret smile. She did like a bit of impertinence. Spiced things up. Well, better she put this back in the cedar closet; it wouldn't do to let the moths at it.

Marianne blinked, looked at the coats hanging up, then turned from the open closet door. Now, what had she been looking for? Her umbrella? No, her jacket. But it wasn't raining, was it?

Her pain brought her back fully into herself and she sighed, rubbed at her temple. The doctors had said this would happen, but she hadn't believed.

She shuffled into the kitchen, noting the dingy linoleum, the dust on the baseboards. Lately the thought of cleaning anything exhausted her. Maybe she could ask Cody to help. She really shouldn't let these things go. George wouldn't like it.

Then she smiled, spying her shiny stainless steel coffee maker on her countertop. The new-fangled all-in-one espresso machine, another gift from Cody, so incongruous in her mid-century kitchen, pleased her enormously. She had only to turn on the boiler, choose the bean grind, set a cappuccino bowl on the warmer, and a few minutes later, rich coffee streamed out with a touch of a button. She fiddled with the steamer nozzle, produced a decent froth, then lifted the



thick white cup of heaven to her nose, breathing deeply of the roasted aroma, and for a second or two was back in Rome, with George, when they were new and beautiful. She set down the cup, stirred in a spoonful of sugar, and sipped. A respite.

She wrapped her gnarled hands around the ceramic bowl and gazed out of her kitchen window, toward the garden of flowers she'd tended ever since she and George had moved in all those years ago. She sighed over the nodding heads of daffodils, irises, aromatic roses spilling over the trellises, cheerful pansies underplanted next to swaying tulips. This garden was one of the reasons she and George had chosen this house. She loved her flowers. They came back year after year. They never deserted her.

They were profuse and gorgeous and constant. Just like all those bouquets that had been sent to her hotel room that night, from her noble admirer. Granted, she had known he was married, so she couldn't admit to loving their scent, or their abundance, or the fact that it was he who sent them. She had told the maid to send them back, of course, after she had closed her eyes and imprinted their scent. And wasn't it just like her favorite movie, the one with Fred and Ginger, where she was a dress model who was tired of life's banalities, and he was starring in a new musical, but pretending to be someone else, and married—wait, no. It hadn't been like that; he was the hero....

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For the past week, Marianne had dreamed. Not normal dreams, where a person does normal things in an un-normal way, or says things they don't mean to say, or hears things they aren't meant to hear, but dreams like plays, like movies, like perfect memories.

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*She relaxes on a round bed covered with a quilted satin comforter. This is where the perfectly glamorous heroine stays in a swanky hotel on the tab of some poor besotted third son of a second-rate Bohemian count whom no one has heard of, but won't admit to it, because his acquaintance is so useful for Society gossip. She stretches, arms lithe and white, skin slipping on the cool silk of the sheets. She smells Shalimar, the powdery, musky perfume teasing her with amorous possibilities. She sits up, feels the sweep of her soft hair along her nape. It's new, this length. She hasn't had hair to reach her*

*nape in months. But here, oh, here, she is young and taut and beautiful.*

*She arises, negligee falling around her legs, pulls on the matching sumptuous silk robe, steps into marabou slides. She thinks of ringing for coffee, but just then a maid in a black bombazine dress, with a starched white voile apron and matching cap, opens her boudoir door.*

*"Madame is ready for her coffee and fruit?" The maid smiles and sets a gleaming silver tray on the low cocktail table pulled out from sofa at the foot of the bed. She pours coffee, rich and steaming, into a delicate china cup.*

*"Oh, thank you, yes. That smells divine." She sits, flicks the feathered cuff of her sleeve aside, lifts the cup. "Can you tell me, please, who has taken the rooms above mine?"*

*"Upstairs, madame?"*

*"Yes. The gentleman in room 346 did me a kindness yesterday afternoon in seeing me home after that rainstorm, and I want to thank him." Marianne reaches for an orange slice.*

*"Oh, but, pardon, madame, there is no guest in room 346," says the maid, nervous and scared for her tip.*

*"How strange. He told me the room number most specifically. Well, don't trouble about it, I will ask at the desk on my way out today."*

*"Very good, madame." The maid bobs her head and goes back into the hall, returns with a stack of fresh white towels. "It is all right that I draw your bath now?"*

*"Yes, please do. And plenty of salts this morning." Marianne sips her coffee and thinks back to yesterday afternoon. A pleasant ride on a friendly horse, the rain, the gazebo, and then Fred. He was so importunate, so charming. And he gave her the most exhilarating dance she could remember. How free and fast, how exciting to be limber and quick! She could have sworn he told her his room was 346.*

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Marianne put her hand to her forehead. One of her headaches knocked to get in. Not again. She had been so hopeful they finally were going away.

She sipped more hot brew and looked out at her flowers. Yes, here was peace. Here was beauty. She opened the kitchen door and stepped out, the dew fresh against her ankles, birdsong soaring in the air. She bent to a perfect bloom and took a deep breath...

... of garbage and diesel fumes. What?! Marianne stumbled in confusion. Her garden was turned into a back alleyway, weeds and cigarette butts dotting the cracked asphalt. The trash truck rumbled past and she stared in confused fascination. Where was her garden? Where was the fresh, green beauty of the morning? Where were her daffodils, her roses? Her headache lanced through her, driving her back inside. She had to call Cody, tell him to come and get her, tell him they'd taken her flowers.

The phone rang just as she stepped inside.

"Yes? Hello? Hello? Please, can you help me?"

"Mom? Is that you? What happened?" Cody always did know when something had happened. She loved that about him, how he cared for her even when she thought she didn't need it.

"Oh Cody! The garden, it's gone! I went out just now, you know the flowers are so lovely in the morning, I wanted to enjoy them, but they were gone! There was an alley, and trash, and noise! Nothing is left, nothing good, Cody, tell George to come home at once!"

"Mom, okay, calm down, please. I'll come. We'll figure it out."

"Please bring George, he always knows what to do. Hurry; I need him." Marianne hung up, gazed around her kitchen, which now looked so oddly strange, like a picture she had once been part of but had no room for her anymore. Her glance fell on the half-full bowl of her cappuccino on the counter. Coffee. That's right. Coffee, and Rome.

Cody arrived with the brightening sky, parked his car in the driveway where his mother's Cadillac used to sit. She wouldn't be taking it out of the garage again. He thought about the home care arrangements he needed to make, the tedious insurance paperwork. He took a moment, then unlatched his seat belt, opened his door to the warming air. He looked at the facade of the house with the blinds drawn tight. He absorbed the truth of it.

As he climbed the porch stairs, he heard a low groan, a crash of crockery. He jammed his key into the lock and wrenched open the door, catching his thumb painfully in the latch.

"Mom! What happened?! Where are you?!" Panicked, he rushed into the kitchen, saw Marianne prone on the floor next to a broken bowl and a puddle of milky coffee. His sneakers squeaked as he crouched near her white head.

"Oh God!" He pressed his fingers to her neck. He sagged. Alive.

"Mmmm, what? Honey? George? Oh, George, thank heaven you're here; everything has gone strange!" Marianne lifted her head, opened bleary eyes.

"It's Cody, Mom. I'm here. Are you okay? Can you sit up?" He stroked her shoulders, started to lift her.

"Oh. Oh, Cody." She blinked, grabbed on to him. Her eyes drifted, tried to focus. "I thought you were George. Or was it Fred? Charming, a charming man." She frowned. "I thought you'd come to dance with me again under the gazebo, in the rain." She smiled up at him, willing him to understand what she could not.

Cody drew her to her feet. "It's okay, Mom, it's okay now. Do you need your pills? Shall I call the hospital?"

She stared. Absolutely not—the hospital was where this horrible life she's living now started. She couldn't quite make the words come out, but he seemed to know.

"Mom, please. I have to help you. Let me get you back to bed, and I'll call the doctor."

She considered. "All right. Yes. The doctor." Another jabbing pain stabbed her; she drew a deep breath. Perhaps this was best. "Please though, not bed. The couch. I'd like the couch, and my movie."

"All right. I'll get you settled, get your pills, and then the doctor. Okay? I'll take care of everything."

Marianne leaned against Cody as he gently led her to the living room. Yes, she thought as she sat into the welcoming sofa cushions, he'll take care of it, everything will be all right. It always is, the hero loves the heroine, he stays with her, they are young and bright and happy forever...

Cody powered up the TV and DVD player. He knew the movie would be cued up. She watched it all the time. He pressed play.

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*Thank you, Marie, this hotel always has the best service. I'm so sorry you couldn't tell me the name of the gentleman in 346, he was so charming, so charming...*

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"Here's your movie, mom. I'll go get your pills and a glass of water. Just rest now." He kissed her forehead.

Marianne leaned back, relaxed into the pillows. Cody watched her focus on the movie, her eyes bright, her expression soft. He never had understood why she loved this old movie so much, but whatever would help her now was great in his book. He went down the hall for the pills.

Marianne watched the silver scenes play out, mouthed the dialog—"In dealing with a girl or horse, one just lets nature take its course." She felt her body sway and leap and twirl as she danced with Fred, so free, so young. She breathed deeply, once. Then again, and out.

"Mom? This bottle's empty. Do you have any more pills? Where's your refill?" Cody's voice drifted to her from far down the hall.

"Fred? Is that you? No, I don't need pills. Just another dance." She smiled. Her voice drifted too. Another dance, and maybe a picnic! Wouldn't that be grand? With a huge bouquet of flowers.

Cody strode into the room. "Mom? Did you hear me? Where are your pills?"

He looked at his mother's face. It fell slack, her eyes half closed. A shiver of panic ran up his spine.

"Mom, come on. Your movie's on. The one you love, with Fred Astaire. Remember?" He shook her arm gently. "Mom?"

Marianne heard a rumbling voice, focused her eyes. "Fred, there you are. Did you bring my flowers? Just let me have a rest and then we'll dance. We'll dance, round and round and round...." She smiled. She closed her eyes.

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*"Isn't this a lovely day, to get caught in the rain? You were going on your way, now you've got to remain...."*

*Hello, Fred! I've missed you. I saw you every day, I tried to find your room, but they didn't know your name. So I had to watch you, follow you. But I'm here now. I'm here to dance with you.*

GENEVE NGUYEN  
ENGLISH 126: INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING  
INSTRUCTOR: INGRID JAYNE

SPECTACLE

CREATIVE NONFICTION

When I was just thirteen years old and barely four feet tall, my obsessive gaze into the mirror became my most familiar friend. Like something of a cruel inquiry, I studied myself intently—wondering what it was that made me so unattractive and unlovable. I looked at my features and pondered a life where I would've looked more American, or at the very least treated as such. At school I was one of the few minorities and the furthest thing from Eurocentric. When people would contemptuously peer at me, I would shrink into myself to avoid taking up the space that I didn't feel like I deserved to occupy. For a long time I was convinced that what I looked like was wrong. Being born into a world that wasn't necessarily designed for me, how are you supposed to live with that? It was something of a lonely and confusing place for a thirteen year old to be.

In my eighth grade Science class, I sat on the left side of the third row. Behind me, there was this white boy I knew from elementary school. His name was Ben, and he resembled a poster boy for the American ideal. He was incredibly pale and regularly wore the same baseball cap and simple clothes, almost as if he were a cartoon character with a signature design. I had this belief that we were friends, until, one day in class, he started pulling his eyes back to slant them and speak in a mocking Asian accent. I would go home to my family and listen to their accents and look at the shape of our eyes and wonder, what about it was supposed to be humorous. Every time an Asian person would appear in class, I would feel anxiety surge through my body as I waited to hear him or anyone else to eventually joke about us being related just because we were Asian. He would throw eraser pieces and little pieces of paper at the back of my head. As each day progressed, I would sink further and further into my seat, as anxiety chipped away at me. Was I someone who was deserving of this? I remember being filled to the brim with angst and questions. If there was nothing wrong with me, why did it feel like my existence was something of a strange spectacle, in itself?

After school, I would go home, meet with my mirror, and fall apart. It became my routine. I would look at myself through the lens of Eurocentrism and wish that somebody, anybody, would find me beautiful—or, at the very least, beyond just my race. It was so cruel and lonely as a child, realizing that I wasn't what most would consider beautiful or worthy of love. I thought that, if I ever wanted to be loved, I had to change myself to be perceived as more "beautiful" than what I was. I mixed lemon juice and baking powder and put it in my hair as I soaked up the sun, in hopes that it would turn my black hair into a blonde. I looked up numerous video tutorials on how to make your nose smaller. It became a continuous habit to squeeze my nostrils together to try to make my nose slimmer. I watched *Bob's Burgers* on my little laptop and worked out in my room, battling my genetically thin frame. I wholeheartedly hated myself. With access to the Internet, I'd spend copious amounts of time scrolling through my peers' Instagrams and envy them for never having to think about the things that I did. At a young age, I acquainted myself with masochism, herself, as I surveyed myself through the lens of something that I was never meant to fit.

In my sophomore year of high school, I suffered an accidental drug overdose, and my parents decided that what would be best for me would be to put me in a white, religious charter school. With matching school uniforms that I absolutely despised, I reluctantly attended my first day of school. In my Spanish class, this tall curly-haired boy called me "hot" and I watched several girls' heads turn to look at me in demeaning curiosity. I felt myself freeze and crawl inside of myself, and the girls' passive aggression continued to sprinkle throughout my day. As I became a regular at this school I sunk deeper into myself and tried my hardest to blend into the crowds. There were many moments that people would call me ugly behind my back, remarking just loudly and near enough so that I would have to hear it. Once, I posted a picture of myself on my social media, and some people took the liberty of pulling it up and exclaiming

how ugly I was and how hilarious it was that I thought that I was beautiful enough to share such a thing. I watched to see who they would consider beautiful, and it was always other white people. Was *that* what was considered incorrect of my existence? That I wasn't white?

Eventually, my appetite became a foreign practice, and I would hole myself away in my room. I would purposely starve myself until I was sick with nausea so that I would have an excuse not to go to school. My anxiety chipped away at me as I anxiously anticipated having to eventually face everyone again. Frail and too malnourished to leave my room, I would rot away in my bed and cling to my computer screen every night, losing myself in the endless amounts of Netflix shows and browser games. I clung to the quiet nights and the way that their silence comforted me. I wanted nothing more than for the silence to envelope me. I prayed deeply for the night to last, dreading its inevitable end. I so badly just wanted to be comforted.

For eight grueling months without sympathy or concern from my parents, I ran away and gave them an ultimatum: take me out of the school and I'd promise my safe return. They transferred me to an independent study, and I was relieved in my successful escape, but anxiety still lingered in my body. At this new school I was able to make some friends, and one afternoon I confided in them about how insecure I felt about my appearance. I vividly remembered their dramatic expressions as they looked at me in shock. We sat in silence as they gawked at me and then they told me how it was silly of me

to even entertain that thought. Eventually, I began to realize that people's negative attention towards me was something sort of ironic. I looked to see that, years later, the same people who were calling me ugly were now complimenting me under my selfies, and some attempted to mimic my aesthetics.

Looking back, I now see that devoting that much time trying to convince me that I was ugly meant that I was truly the one in power for taking up so much of their energy and space simply for existing. As I slowly returned to myself, I noticed that leaving the Eurocentric world resulted in people complimenting me and treating me with much more kindness. In my journey of reclaiming my definition of self-love, I realized that outside of the rigid conformities of Eurocentrism, there was so much more beauty in the world. It was as if my world had been flipped upside down, or like I swapped bodies. But I was the same person this whole time. I began to realize that how they treated me was truly just projections, and that my differences were actually what made me beautiful, and made me *me*. I started to look at myself with awe, and I warmly studied the features that my ancestors blessed me with. As I assimilated with diversity and learned more about the way that Eurocentrism impacts our society, I realized that thirteen year old me was never ugly or undeserving of love or respect. I'm twenty years old now and no longer ashamed of myself. I'd like to think that the little girl that I once was would find comfort in knowing that we would end up here—knowing that we are, and have always been, more than enough.



AARON ATADERO  
ENGLISH 126: INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING  
INSTRUCTOR: JULIE CARDENAS

AN EPHEMERAL ARC OF LIGHT  
FLASH CREATIVE NONFICTION

I don't know why I remember the pixelated ocean, rising and pushing against the dying of the day. Every version of gold, orange and blue whipping out with each passing wave like the snap of a throw rug on cleaning day. The two of us, sitting high on the shoreline ridge, the occasional silence interrupted by innocent "ohs," amazed "wows," and the realization that our thighs were close enough to gather tiny detritus dropped by the passing wind.

I don't know why I can't remember her name or why we decided to eat the small squares of paper on that Saturday afternoon. Tiny tickets, each with an identical smiling emoji, to a ride that would illuminate the day with laughter, with hope. A day that followed a night of unquestionable joy and a morning where I showed off my espresso machine. I remember pancakes. I remember asking if she still wanted to hang out. I remember I wanted to know her better. I remember it ending as quickly as it began. Sunday came as the grays of reality rose on the horizon.

## THE PRAYING ROOM

"It's time to get up," she yells from the living room.  
The program is beginning, a broadcast from heaven  
delivered through  
a powder blue suit, a constipated face,  
a tubed television with trinkets of angels atop.  
Damnation, salvation, God's mercy by renumeration  
for all of us sinners.  
Another Sunday morning where  
a man scolds me, chastises me, a constant frown.  
I frown back, just a boy, barely listening.

The pajama mom, the Lazy-boy mom, the covered in  
toast crumbs and cracker dust mom,  
staring blankly, listening, I guess,  
to the angry man in powder blue.  
Her parenting is almost completed while in decline,  
feet up floating above the floor  
quietly,  
like Jesus might,  
except for the occasional interruption from  
the crunch of a Honey Graham.

My salvation is just beyond the door  
outside from the praying room.  
"Let today be a new beginning!"  
My sling shot awaits,  
uncooked beans in the pockets of my jeans,  
I will deliver onto thee,  
my revenge.  
Last weeks blow, a sin upon my ego  
the welt below my eye still noticeable.

I finger the sling's pocket and stare just beyond the screen,  
the powder blue voice continues.  
"Evolution is not a scientific fact," he says.  
"Only atheists could accept this satanic theory," he says.  
I have no idea what he is talking about,  
concepts just beyond my grasp, my interest.  
I only know that when he stops talking,  
The pajama mom, the Lazy-boy mom,  
the toast crumbs and cracker dust mom,  
will release me out into the wild where  
I will seek retribution on the sinners of the neighborhood.

MADELINE HAINES  
ENGLISH 140: POETRY WRITING I  
INSTRUCTOR: ADAM DEUTSCH

SHOWER

I went to bed without a shower  
I had bathed mere hours before  
Web MD says I may die  
no cause for concern

I had bathed mere hours before  
and I'll change my sheets come morn  
no cause for concern but still  
I'll spiral

if the sheets aren't clean because  
I'm not clean  
I'll spiral  
cracks break backs and if sheets aren't clean

I'm not clean  
I went to bed without a shower  
cracks break backs and if sheets aren't clean  
Web MD says I may die.

TARIQ JOHNSON  
ENGLISH 126: INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING  
INSTRUCTOR: INGRID JAYNE

THE WISER

the world's sweetest joy, one  
above revenge. holder of  
all the cards. controller of fate  
power to give life, or  
take it away.  
making the world go round,  
maker and breaker of men.

man's greatest vice  
an unconquerable addiction

enough to  
start a war,  
crumble an empire  
get somebody's brother killed. remember  
paris and hector?

enough prisoners to line up from attica to alcatraz

you the heavyweight champion  
Undefeated

## A TIME

let me have a moment, please. i remember  
junie b. jones, and  
fruity pebbles and caillou and clifford. i remember  
crash bandicoot and mario kart. i remember the  
smell of the hot comb on the stove. back in the day  
when mcdonald's used to taste good.  
when we went outside to play  
i was proud of my scraped knees and elbow scabs.  
my grandma used to write checks at the grocery store and  
We had watermelon with blackseeds in them, before  
i ever knew what a vegan was.  
i remember blowing on cassette tapes and spitting on cds. i remember  
when people knew how to take a joke, when  
a stack of playboys was worth more than solid gold,  
the ignorance of never having lost a loved one

back then, the sun smiled a little bit harder  
and the sugar in the air sang a little bit louder  
our backs were monkey free.



ASHLEY GRINS  
ENGLISH 140: POETRY WRITING  
INSTRUCTOR: ADAM DEUTSCH

DANCE FEVER

I would prefer to die ahead of you,  
For you to dance on my grave just to be free.  
Do you wish to tread on the dread you drag me through?  
For maybe I am dancing in the debris.

Among the debris, I am free, to love myself into the sea.  
No talk of body, soul, or appearance to encumber me.  
A gasp of the free, though you may disagree,  
I am the embodiment of creation this I do decree.

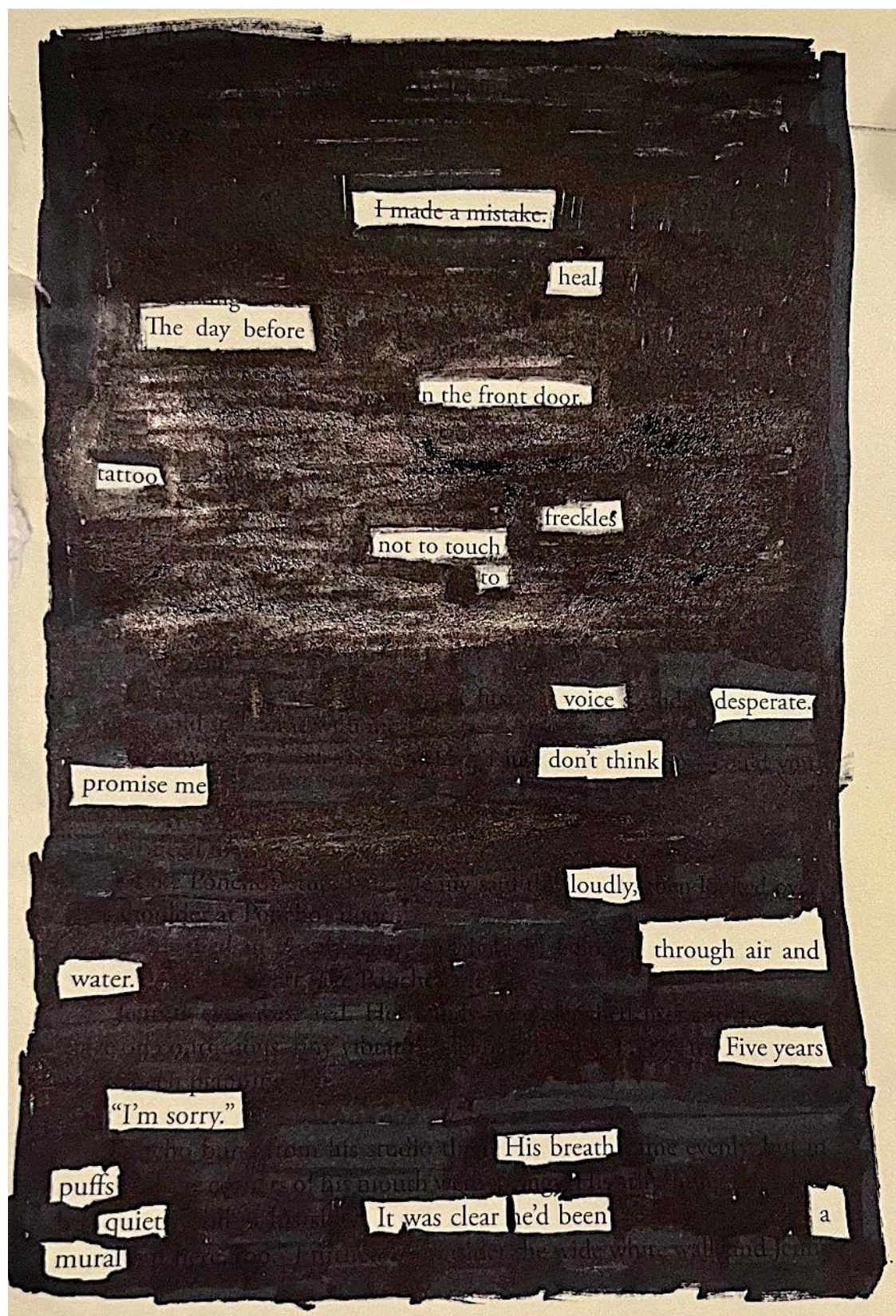
Under you, I'll just keep dancing myself to death,  
Spinning, spinning, spinning into choreomanina.  
In front of you, I'll stay entrancing, holding my breath,  
Wishing, singing, hiding my dysmorphia.

Thus I incur, my little magpie.  
I would prefer that you be the first to die.

## A BLACKOUT POEM

*blackout poetry:*

*The blackout poem is a form of found poetry in which words are redacted—or blacked out—from a written text, whereby the remaining words and phrases coalesce into an original poem.*



JAY VU  
ENGLISH 130: SHORT FICTION WRITING I  
INSTRUCTOR: ENRIQUE CERVANTES

## ON THE ORIGINS OF COVID

*October 31st, 2019*

Before the Great Influenza pandemic of 1918 and the Black Death in the 14th century, there was the pandemic planning committee. In fact, even before man's early ancestors acquired the ability to walk on two legs seven million years ago, there was a need for coordinated population control. As Darwin stepped out of his Uber, into the parking lot in front of an establishment human's call Deja Vu, he reflected on what the very first meeting would have looked like, in that primordial soup brought to a slow boil. When single celled organisms sprung to life, followed by the gradual evolutionary march to multicellular organisms and beings. As a connoisseur of history, oh how he would love to have been there. Not in the role of commissioner as was his appointment, but just to be the proverbial fly on the wall, when life became more complex, triggering the classic struggle for resources. Of course, he wasn't there for that and the idea of any such meeting occurring on the outskirts of Las Vegas at a strip club no less, seems preposterous but amused him enough to bring a smile to his weary face.

As he approached the entrance to the strip club, with its black painted walls, neon signs and darkened windows, he found it distasteful but necessary for this year's meeting. He straightened his pinstriped suit, tipped his bowler hat to the muscular bodyguard standing by the door and slipped a folded hundred-dollar bill into his hand. His ears were greeted by the blast of "Welcome to the jungle." A coalescence of strobe lights and smoke filled the room. His eyes burned to the point of tears. He ignored the undulating body of Jasmine and her never ending seduction of the dance pole and headed straight for the champagne room, where another sentry stood guard and let him in without objection.

The room was small and dimly lit, but big enough to fit a plush daybed where Zika lay lazily rubbing her protuberant belly. In the center of the room stood an oval table with a large pitcher of water in the middle. Influenza, Yersinia, Cholera, and Syphilis huddled around the table, entranced by the charismatic and spectacled HIV who stood on a chair as though on the bully pulpit with his congregation utterly rapt. His authoritarian

presence was aided by a garish clerical robe adorned with dazzling red rubies and green emeralds. Atop his head was a papal hat which he wore with such authority and passion as he recited a bible verse which Darwin heard many times before. He acknowledged Darwin with a wink and continued his oration.

*"So, I will send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I, the LORD, have spoken."*

He finished and jumped off the chair with a flourish and bow, to the applause of everyone in the room.

"Nice touch, HIV" Darwin said, "Did the outfit come with your victim?"

"Oh, he had it coming. All those boys he molested and got away with it. Decides to dip his beak into a grown man and voila." HIV continued, "I wanted to torture him with a long, painful death but the poor bastard became depressed and shot himself in the head." He lifted his papal hat and turned his head to the side to reveal a gunshot wound to the temple with a stream of dried, caked blood running down the side of his neck.

"No wonder they voted you president of A.O.K.," said Influenza.

"What's A.O.K.?"

"Agents of Karma. We're still accepting applications if any of you want to join," said HIV.

"Why is he here?" said Yersinia, pointing a rotten finger at Syphilis who was counting a mound of cash and sorting them into neat piles. "What pandemic has he caused?"

"None, but he owns this joint. Made it a lot easier to coordinate this meeting," said Darwin.

"The Tuskegee experiment was a significant scientific milestone. Don't whitewash my history like that," Syphilis said as he resumed his accounting.

Darwin set his black briefcase down, looked around the room and took full measure of its members. Yersinia looked every bit the part of a soldier, wiry and strong, sporting a crew cut and army fatigues. Her arms rested on the table, showcasing necrotic, black fingers befitting her



reputation as the Black Death. Zika lifted her heavy belly from the daybed and waddled to the table to join the others. Cholera, in a Mexican matador outfit, tapped his foot nervously on the ground. And Influenza, who commandeered the body of a grandmother, wore a nightgown and mass of gray, white hair.

"So, what's the meaning of all this Darwin. Your last text message sounded rather urgent. I canceled a Royal Caribbean cruise to Cancun for this. You know how I love cruises," said Cholera.

"It's like shooting fish in a barrel," Influenza grinned.

Darwin started, "well I believe that now's the perfect time to orchestrate another pandemic. The three elements are aligned to make this endeavor worthwhile."

"What are the three elements again?" Yersinia asked. Darwin felt a tinge of pity for Yersinia, whose age and dementia were showing. But, how could he not invite her after a career that spanned several millennia, wreaking havoc and doing more to further evolution than any other pathogen?

Darwin explained, "number one, some pockets of the planet are overpopulated. Have you stepped on a bus in New Delhi or been to a fish market in China? Number two, we've been experimenting with some mutations and our team has engineered a very promising candidate. And number three, geopolitics have never been more ripe for disruption."

"Geopolitics?"

"Globalization. Travel and migration is at an all-time high. And the collective IQ of all the world leaders have dipped to an all-time low."

"You can thank that blondie in the U.K. and president pumpkin face in the U.S. for that," said Zika.

"He's just trying to make America great again," responded Cholera.

"Said the Mexican who had to climb over a wall to get here," smirked Zika. Even Darwin had to chuckle at that.

"Tell us more about this promising candidate?" Influenza asked.

"Well, you all know that the most effective way to spread disease is via humans through respiratory aerosols. Humans are a social species, they are perfect vectors, especially in light of the upcoming holiday season. Their gatherings will cause it to spread like fungus on a bed of stale bread," explained Darwin.

"May I remind all of you that rats and fleas make for great vectors as well," said Yersinia.

Everyone in the room laughed, including Zika to the point that she had to rub her belly more vigorously to stop the contractions. In a rare fit of rage, Yersinia broke off her black index finger and threw it like a dart. It sank into Influenza's glaucoma laden eye and stayed there.

"I don't know why you're laughing, Zika. Mosquitoes aren't much better," said Yersinia.

"Yersinia, I know that you've killed more humans in the history of mankind than any of us in the room. But the world is much cleaner now, we can't rely on rats and fleas to spread disease anymore," said Darwin.

Influenza stood up and leaned into the table, "how soon we forget the Great Influenza of 1918. Fifty million dead."

"That was an impressive feat, but the numbers were cooked. Can't trust the media," responded Darwin.

"Nonetheless, it's been a century since I've been as relevant. We all know I'm overdue for another."

"Be patient Influenza, we're working on a project to beef you up. It's still a few decades away but once we launch it, there will be a Great reshuffling of all species."

Satisfied, Influenza sat back down.

Darwin picked up his phone and brought it to his face, "Bring them in."

The door opened and the bodyguard pushed a pair of twins into the room. The brothers stumbled but managed to collect themselves without falling. They stood in the middle of the room, coughing and feverish with sweat, reeking of tequila. They looked every bit the part of two frat brothers who had just inherited a trust fund and left unattended in a strip club. They had arms around one another, holding each other up.

"The Coronavirus brothers? You must be joking, Darwin." Everyone in the room looked indignant.

"Thith wasn't our idea," the twins managed to slur.

"Listen Darwin, there's a certain fear factor that we need to consider here. No one is going to be afraid of the common cold," said Zika.

"At least they're not killing unborn babies and shrinking their heads Zika. That's just cruel," said Influenza. A grin flashed across Zika's face, and she resumed her belly rubbing.

Darwin explained, "we've engineered a mutation in Corona with a kill rate of 1-2%. If we're lucky and the world's leaders are as ignorant as I think they are, it can go up to as high as 5%."

"Five percent? That's laughable," said Yersinia.

Darwin was frustrated and raised his voice, "Do I need to remind you all what happened when we dialed up the kill rate above that? SARS, MERS, and Ebola killed too many people to be a global threat. The humans quarantined everyone and shut it down before it went transcontinental. Plus, there's a balance between killing enough to weed out the weak and over doing it. We need humans for our own survival."

"You're right Darwin," pondered Influenza. "We should expect them to develop a vaccine."

"We have teams working on a social media campaign to deal with that. There's already a significant contingent of anti-Vaxxers. We have some important influencers to spread misinformation."

"This social media thing is man's best invention I think," said Yersinia.

"It definitely holds promise. I'm shocked we got Trump elected using Facebook, of all things," said Darwin. Everyone nodded in agreement.

"Alright, esteemed pathogens, it's time we end this meeting. Text your teams now. Project Dumbo, touchdown in New Delhi at 0700." As they all pulled out their phones and followed his orders, Darwin reflected on the agonizing decision on where to launch coronavirus. He had contemplated China, but their strict government regime might throw a damper on his plans. Besides, people there are still wearing masks from SARS 20 years ago. He settled on India because of its overpopulation and poor living conditions. The woefully inadequate health care system wouldn't know what hit them. It was as close to certainty as his calculations would allow. Darwin secretly hoped that the world would blame Russia or China. Sowing the seeds of war would serve them well for the next pandemic. He recalled how the first world war fanned the flames of the Great Influenza outbreak beyond even his wildest dreams.

Darwin opened the Uber app on his phone. He then placed his briefcase onto the table and opened it. He took out a deck of cards and spread it on the table and sprinkled poker chips all around. He then picked up the black pistol and inserted a magazine into the chamber. He took out the silencer and balanced it in the palm of his hand, relishing its weight. He screwed the silencer into the end of the barrel. When everyone had finished texting, they dropped their phones into the large pitcher of water.

"Corona, enjoy the rest of your evening. You have a lot of work to do in the coming weeks," instructed Darwin.

The twin brothers stumbled out of the room; a wad of cash spilled out of their back pockets leaving a trail of dead Benjamins in their wake. The door closed behind them.

Darwin aimed the pistol at HIV, who held out his hands in a grand display of papal authority, "Not the face Darwin, not the f..." The bullet landed in the middle of his forehead and HIV crumpled to the floor, buried in a heap of garments. When the bullet hit Zika in the head, her hand dropped from her belly and dangled lifelessly to the side. When Yersinia hit the floor, his necrotic black thumb broke off and rolled to a stop near Darwin's foot. Syphilis paid no attention and only stopped counting his money when the bullet pierced his skull, traversed his brain, and came out the other side, landing harmlessly on the plush daybed. Grandma influenza seemed to check out even before the bullet hit her head. She lay dead on the floor, the blackened finger still embedded in her eye. Darwin hadn't expected Cholera's reaction. When the bullet entered his brain, a puddle of foul-smelling stool formed beneath him, rendering the room inhospitable. The last bullet shattered the pitcher of water, splashing the splintered phones like dead jellyfish on a beach. He placed the pistol back in his briefcase and walked out of the room. The miasma of smoke and flashing lights clouded his vision, but he could still make out a dancer with bills dangling from the strings of her bra and panties. She was performing for one of the Corona brothers who scrambled to find any crevice to hang another dollar bill. Meanwhile at another table, Jasmine was on the twin brother's lap, doing her best to spread oil without the use of her hands. He stepped out of the strip club and inhaled the crisp desert night air. The Uber rolled into the parking lot. He opened the door and stepped into the back passenger seat. As the car rolled away, he asked the driver to cruise down Las Vegas Boulevard before taking him to the airport.

He opened the window and marveled at the Strip. Its towering casinos were adorned in all manners of light. He admired the grandeur of the Paris hotel with its Eiffel tower, the engineering of the New York, New York with its roller coaster and the beauty of the Bellagio and its dancing water fountain. He took in the activity on the sidewalk, teeming with humanity, some rich, some poor, some laughing, some crying, some drunk, some destitute, and some of all of the above. He appreciated the humans and what they have brought to this beautiful and chaotic planet. But, he also understood the cyclicity of life and while he knew the answer, wondered when it would revert to the barren desert from which it started.



VALERIO PONS  
ENGLISH 126: INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING  
INSTRUCTOR: INGRID JAYNE

## 6TH GRADE CAMP

It was 6th grade camp and I was so excited. Anticipation had been building for six months about a week vacation with my classmates to an unknown location without my parents. What more could a 6th grader want than a vacation from their parents and their everyday lives? It would be a test of one's character, an opportunity for debauchery and discovery. Walking off the bus, I immediately noticed that it wasn't just my class but the entire 6th grade class of the school district. I could see the kids waiting impatiently with their loaded backpacks in the sunshine surrounded by the semi-desert wilderness. The clamor of excitement was palpable and only made the excitement harder to maintain.

We had day hikes, wilderness cooking, survival lessons, campfire songs, camaraderie excursions, star gazing, which was amazing because out in the wilderness there's less light pollution. Combined with the powerful binoculars the camp provided, gave us an IMAX experience of the stars. Still to this day, I have yet to see any stars with that level of detail and size. The 7 Sisters had never looked so good. But I have to say that my favorite activity was story time.

The kids were sorted into groups and each group had their own cabin. Almost every night before we went to bed the kids of my cabin would sit on the floor and a camp counselor would sit on a chair and read us a story. We loved it. We laughed to the point of tears. We gasped in fright and at times we were so quiet you could hear the crickets outside. Not a stir or a rustle of movement. We were glued to every word coming out of the counselor's mouth.

Unfortunately for me the food we were eating at camp was giving me major gas issues. It was bad. After almost every meal the pressure would build in my belly to the point where I had to plan my post-meal bathroom break and find a secluded bathroom where I could let the flatulence out in peace without the embarrassment of others hearing the atrocities emanating from my poor sphincter. With each passing day it seemed harder to find a deserted bathroom. This was the moment when I decided to test my character. To see what I was capable of. I decided to hold the gas in until I could find a

secure place to let it out. This in my case was about two days of gas build up.

It was night time in my cabin and it was story time. This would be exactly what I needed, a good distraction from the pain. We all sat on a carpeted floor, forty or so kids packed together in the living room of the cabin. The sound of chit chat and excitement filled the room. Man oh man, was the story good. It was a scary story. In the silence; we were frozen with suspense. And then came the pain. A very sharp pain, so strong I thought for a moment I was going to pass out. My heart started pumping faster, my eyes darted around to see my surroundings and saw everyone in the cabin was here with me. I knew I had a choice. Shit my pants here in the middle of everybody or run to the bathroom. So run to the bathroom I did.

The bathroom had no walls or door separating the bathroom area from the rest of the cabin. I walked into the empty bathroom and opened the door to my stall and closed it behind me. I remember I could hear the counselor telling his story and the movement of restless kids. Just as I sat on the toilet, I let out the loudest, longest, most dramatic fart that I ever had. The initial release of gas was so strong that my thighs started slapping against the toilet seat making a clapping sound. I held onto the sides of the stall in utter shock as my ass clapped away like a proud mother after her daughter's dance recital. Moments later, the ass claps died down and transitioned into what sounded like a high pitch gas leak interspersed with the occasional meaty fart. Ever heard an engine stalling? I hadn't. The meaty farts faded away into the echoes of the bathroom and as the last of the fart left, the shock of the situation lessened and the relief of two days of build up washed over me. It must have been sixty seconds of non-stop symphonic flatulence. With its own ups and downs and its movements typical of a classical piece.

But the relief didn't last very long because to my horror I couldn't hear anyone, not the camp counselor and not the kids. The mix of intense relief and red-faced embarrassment mixed together like oil and water. I wanted to cry, scream, and run away all at the same time, but

of course I couldn't. I was dumbfounded, I didn't know what to do. How do I reintegrate myself back into the group in some sort of graceful manner?

It didn't matter because I heard whispers coming from the living room.

"Oh my god"

"Who is it?"

"Who's in there?"

"Who's not here sitting with us...:". I swear on my grave that I heard something to the effect of, "Where's Valerio?".

My heart dropped to the floor. I heard footsteps approaching the bathrooms and two of

the kids came in looking in between the cracks of the stalls. And as they got to mine I saw two boys looking in and recognizing me. They scurried back to the living room. "It's Valerio!". The kids were laughing and teasing.

At this point I was so embarrassed that I felt like a deflated balloon. It was too late; there was no way out from this, I thought. The camp counselor shushed the kids and told them to go to their bunks because it was time for bed. I cleaned myself up and left the bathroom to a dark cabin. As I crawl into my bunk bed, I distinctly remember the whispers from the kids. "At first I thought someone was blowing on an out-of-tune trumpet in there. I didn't know you could fart for that long."

RYLEY JONAS  
ENGLISH 126: INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING  
INSTRUCTOR: JULIE CARDENAS

TINY DANCERS  
FLASH CREATIVE NONFICTION

I don't know why I remember the honeysuckles clinging to the underbelly of our deck. The delicate, buttercream flora in a constant state of hide and seek, with me as the perpetual seeker. Each morning, the dew would hang heavy as the flowerets woke up and welcomed the new dawn. Each dusk, the skirts of fairies would yawn and settle in for the moonlit chill. I would visit them often, kindly giving my regards as I savored their cherubic fragrance. I would plea permission to have one taste of their white-whipped tail's nectar, then greedily take more than was bargained. After the deceit, I would be hypnotized by the honeysuckle's ballet in the wind. I would follow their renditions of *Swan Lake*. Each dancer, adorned in decadence, practiced their rhythmic steps to perfection. I was their biggest zealot, a self-appointed confidant, one who worshipped at their roots. The choreography was a secret, never shared with the likes of me, but nonetheless I danced along until all the tiny dancers were lulled to dream.

LUCIAN SCRYA  
ENGLISH 140: POETRY WRITING I  
INSTRUCTOR: ADAM DEUTSCH

REFLECTION

Zombies are monstrous and how I feel in the morning before a jaw cracking  
yawn that ripples down my spine like on a  
Xylophone hung sideways.  
When the band sounds broken on strings of  
venom  
unrelenting in every joint, I  
try to drag myself out of the depression you made for me in the  
sour dreams projecting on stuck eyelids...  
Rewind. I have a  
question for the  
person I  
once thought I might have been when all of this was  
new. Before paths to habits formed  
maladaptive; forged of the  
lies others told of you, but you're the one with all the insider  
knowledge. External sources can calculate the height of the  
jump that will  
incapacitate your dreams, but they can't tell you  
how to keep living. When did you shed being  
gentle for an exoskeleton of  
fire and fear? When did you start hiding your truth in  
extracurriculars? When did you  
decide to  
change? Sometimes it's better to work your way  
backwards. We are all just  
animals.



*CONTENT WARNING: This work contains allusion to self-harm.*

## IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE

"You do not get to  
destroy someone  
and decide how ruined  
they are allowed to feel"  
—Nikita Gill

Anchored down inside an hourglass,  
sand sifts through the bones of my prison  
like water wasted in long showers to hide  
that I've been drowning for a while

Throat coated in a miasma of words  
that never came to my defense;  
thoughts suffocating in static

Trapped in a battleground between  
dysphoria and just end it;  
between the "yOu ShOuLd—"   
and "WhY dOn'T yOu JuSt—"

If just loving myself could fix this  
I wouldn't be holding a broken gear shift  
while you drive like you know who I am



CORY BROOKS  
ENGLISH 141: POETRY WRITING II  
INSTRUCTOR: ADAM DEUTSCH

READ BY WILL HARRIS

DIRTY

*"You are not a person and cannot be helped"*  
—Shane Koyczan

I keep trying to wash you out of me  
just how moms wash bad words  
out of their sons' and daughters' mouths.  
With a toothbrush, some soap,  
and lots of yelling.

It feels like I've tried everything to  
get you out of my head.

When the high wore off,  
you were still there.  
The antibiotics didn't work,  
you were viral.

And when I tried to distract myself,  
you came back as easily as you appeared.

## A MAN NAMED NOBODY

### A PANTOUM

A man once wandered  
for years and years.  
They called him  
Nobody. At least, for a  
while.

For years and years,  
Nobody was happy.  
For a while, he  
brought others joy.

No one was happy  
with Nobody around.  
He brought others joy  
when he went away.

With Nobody around,  
others wanted him  
gone. When he went  
away, they wanted him back.

They wanted him gone, so  
he wandered once more.  
Then they wanted him  
back, that man named  
Nobody.

#### *pantoum:*

*The form of a pantoum is written in quatrains (four-line stanzas) and uses repeating lines specifically placed from one stanza to the next to create its moveable pattern, with the first line of the poem reoccurring as the last line. Variations on the form are frequently explored in contemporary versions of the pantoum.*

ERIN EDKINS  
ENGLISH 142: POETRY WRITING III  
INSTRUCTOR: ADAM DEUTSCH

ODE TO THE CROWS

They arrive  
In the chatter  
Of old friends.  
Dark visitors strut  
Hop across pavement  
Make off with littered leftovers  
To reconvene on wire and wood.

While they laugh  
They preen  
Keen with knowledge  
That the universe  
Belongs to them.  
Black-hole birds enraptured  
With all that shines `in starlight.

Departure sounds in the flutter of  
Rorschach tests  
Ink blots still wet.  
Together they form image  
Of home and omen.

**mask** (*verb*)

conceal or hide (something) from view;  
disguise or hide (a sensation or quality)

## MASKING

AN ABECEDARIAN

Absence is an abscess  
bitter bile, soon too  
corrosive to swallow.

Do I  
ever  
feel how I should? Mirrors say I've  
gone away but,  
how absurd, that  
I might be so lucky as to  
just disappear.

Kick the horse to keep it moving,  
lose yourself to keep you needing  
-- mind the gap, you'll  
need the distance between yourself and  
oddity.

Paradigm is prison: here I do not live  
quiet, but silenced. Yet still I  
return, repent, repeat.  
Submit myself  
to you.

Under the weight of your gaze it feels  
vain, to put on this show for you --  
What use am I, once my wick wanes for you?

Xanthic life,  
your horse has died. Your  
zenith has been suffering all along.

OVERBOARD: ON SENSORY OVERLOAD  
A DOUBLE-JOINTED POEM

*"Harboring those thoughts, you'll drown."*  
—Icy Violence by Sad Night Dynamite

**Loud Dark** disconnects  
**memory from mind,** *mind from matter,*  
what matters from me.  
What's left to see?  
The doors                      My eyes  
close, shut out  
fresh air                      harsh light  
But I cannot close my ears. I cannot shut out my mind.

*It is too loud.*

I'll continue  
**thinking**                      *needing*  
whether I want to or not.  
I wish I were here;                      **I wish I weren't here**  
because...                      ...even though  
*I asked for this* I paid for this  
I'm not having a good time.  
Why can't I just  
*be normal?*                      enjoy things?

**It is too loud in here.**

I take a break outside:  
**I'm crying**                      *I'm breathing*  
**I'm embarrassed**                      *I am*  
drowning in a place  
**I don't belong to.**                      *I don't feel safe in.*  
I miss being a ghost sometimes.  
I miss being so numb I felt unable to feel.  
I don't know how to change sometimes;  
I'm tired of having to teach myself.  
I don't want to                      I don't have to  
**stay alone**                      *stay quiet*  
anymore.

I must seek some relief, or I will collapse;  
let myself collapse, lest I rupture.  
I've grown  
**too solid**                      *too much*  
to be see-through  
anymore.

But for  
tonight  
I've tied myself to the  
**familiarity** of **safety**  
isolation — a dock  
trapped anchored  
by my  
fears and obligations.

Where are my friends?  
**Having fun.** **Not here.**  
Where are we parked?  
**In the dark.**  
Are there any  
forgotten genderless  
restrooms around?  
Not here. *Not here.*

I don't know  
**who** I am *what* I am  
supposed to be feeling  
right now.  
I'm not sure how  
to heal to stop.

MICHAEL ROCA  
ENGLISH 126: INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING  
INSTRUCTOR: INGRID JAYNE

THE ROAD

I used to be a video game programmer, well paid to do something that was fun and cool and I was good at. Until the day I walked, almost ran, out of the office.

Today, I get into my car, to drive to college, like millions of other students, except, unlike me, they aren't in their fifties. I back out of my driveway, carefully checking left and right. The dark green spiny leaves of the bushes and the curve I'm on hide the road. It's hard to know what's heading for you, both in driving and life.

The final day of my video game career we were given a new schedule to meet, an impossible schedule. Management didn't believe it could be done; the lead programmer had laid it out with a slight, disbelieving smile on his face. It was window dressing for a deal, a promise we knew we couldn't meet, part of the price for a contract that would break us into the Chinese market, but now we faced months of crushing hours with no hope of meeting the goal. It wasn't the first time for me; I had been doing this sort of thing for twenty six years. My coworkers were mostly industry veterans who had also done it before. There were carefully suppressed grumbles and sighs around the room - but no surprise. We would work hard, fail, apologize, and negotiate for more time. Business as usual.

Except I broke.

My skin started to prickle and shiver; my stomach somehow froze, jumped, and fell all at once. But more than the physical feeling was the pure and simple terror that flooded into me out of nowhere. What had been the most boring possible gray and white meeting room in the most boring possible gray and white office was now impossible to stay in. All my instincts screamed that death lurked, stalking me, hidden under the Office Depot furniture. I had to leave; if anybody had tried to stop me I would have fought to get free. I walked as fast as I could out of the building, across the parking lot, and through a line of bushes, keeping my back turned, no longer even able to look at what, until then, I thought was no more frightening than any other two story block of concrete. A psychologist would later tell me it was a panic attack.

When today's drive reaches the highway entrance ramp, I wait for the light to change, then press hard on the accelerator. I eye the other drivers whipping past me, wanting to merge in and join them, wanting to get up to speed.

I was twenty the first time I thought about making video games. It was the summer after my junior year, the first time I went to college, and time to think about what I would do after graduation. I had a thick stack of paper from the career center, listing jobs for Computer Science majors. I was lying on the hard orange rug in our living room, my father reading on the couch behind me, as I went through job after job, finding nothing but the utterly dull.

"You know what I'd really like to do?" I said to Dad, surprising myself, "Make video games." I'd never considered it before; it just popped into my head.

I don't remember his exact words, but I'm sure he chose them carefully. He's a wise man and would have known it was a time to redirect, not crush, my dream. That would be nice, he told me, but how many jobs like that were out there?

None in the stack I was looking through. I ended up taking a job, from that stack, with IBM, hoping it wouldn't be as dull as it sounded.

I'm now on the 15, a highway as large as highways get, driving south. It's crowded, everybody going the same way, heading into the even more crowded city. Getting to pick your own speed is a dream. I'm persistent, eyes darting between the traffic in front and behind, looking for a chance to change lanes, to get on my own route.

That one year working for IBM was the most boring of my entire life. I quit to go to graduate school. Even there I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but after two years of it I had my Masters and went back into the job market. Somehow I thought things would be better and they were, but only in little bits around the edges. I spent two or three more years waking up in the morning and thinking, *Damn, I have to go to work.*

Now moving away from the city, I exit onto a smaller highway, split from the crowd. This road is much less traveled and feels much freer. I know I shouldn't speed, but the temptation is too great.

I was goofing off from one of those boring jobs when, on an internet forum, I stumbled across a job listing for a tiny startup company. I applied and, to my surprise, got a completely different job there, making a game that taught you to play the piano. I didn't know anything about music or pianos or how to make a video game. I learned fast. It was hectic, it was crazy, it was fun. For the first time I could imagine a customer enjoying the programs I was writing. The company was so small I could see my efforts make a difference, instead of feeling an unimportant part of a giant machine. I was thrilled.

Until the day the CEO called all twenty or so employees into the break room. Our funding had fallen through, he told us. We were bankrupt and should stop working immediately.

My friend Roy had recently taught me to play Magic the Gathering. We stayed in the break room and played through the afternoon, waiting to find out if we would get our paychecks for the last week and a half of work.

One of my managers had long experience in the game industry. In a couple of weeks Roy and I had jobs with a regular game company, making a baseball game.

Since I was a rookie, it was only after I took the job that I asked when the game was going to ship.

In three months, my new producer said.

I asked how much of the game was already working, another question that should have come beforehand.

He tried to skip around the answer, but couldn't hide the truth: nothing. We couldn't even show a player on the screen.

We missed that deadline by well more than a year.

Similar experiences followed, for two and half decades. I loved games and making them was cool and great fun; the atmosphere was always optimistic, challenging, exciting, but the hours were crushing, especially once my children came along. Companies teetered, like an alcoholic in and out of rehab, claiming everything was rosy one month, then laying off people and shutting down projects the next.

I began to have health problems: high blood pressure, stomach problems, chest pains. After one EKG a cardiologist told me, "Your heart is fine. You're under too much stress." At the time I thought I listened to him, but I simply went back to my old ways. The boring years I had gone through scared me more. Looking back, I wonder if I was addicted to stress.

I'm driving more and more alone now, fewer and fewer drivers choosing the same direction. The highway I'm traveling on splits, becomes a side road, becomes an off ramp, each road a little slower and quieter than the last.

Finally that last meeting happened, the meeting that broke me, the meeting where something vital inside me failed to keep up with the industry's relentless drumbeat. Maybe it shouldn't be a surprise; there are very few gray hairs in game development offices, though most slide out more gracefully than I did. "We don't use the term nervous breakdown any more," the psychologist told me, "but you had a nervous breakdown."

I had thought I found my place in the world, and a good one, a happy one, but the one flaw smothered all the benefits. I have nightmares about going into the office, about trying to quit but somehow not being able to. It used to be, if you asked me who I was, I instantly said, "a game developer." Now that's gone. When friends ask what I'm doing I stumble for an answer. Am I a student? Retired? Unemployed? I don't know.

I turn into the college parking lot and run down a long line of cars before I see an open spot for me. The parking lot is crowded; clearly people have come by some route other than mine, fighting, I suppose, through their own traffic.

And so here I am, surrounded by classmates thirty or more years younger than me, all having arrived at the same place, no matter how different our roads were. All of us are taking classes, learning new things, training ourselves for jobs that we don't know if we can get, don't know how we'll feel about doing day after day. We're like ancient travelers seeking some exotic land, with only a vague idea of what's really out there, what we'll really encounter, as we stumble towards places we've heard of but never seen.

For them, starting out. For me, starting over.





**CONTENT WARNING:** *This work contains coarse language and depictions of alcohol consumption.*

## THEY HAVE GONE OUT

The birds of summer had gone. Familiar shadows occupied the little creeks and rivers where they plucked under the bridges and at the edge of town. Days were short. Broken finger cornstalks stood between sheets of snow across the hills. Beyond them, beyond the perimeter, the woods rose naked and tangled, holding within them a cold and silence that pulls breath from travelers' lungs, lashes it across their faces, says to them, "you cannot survive this."

A buck lay dying under starlight. The stars burn brightest in the winter sky and are all the further away for their clarity. Power lines hum him a lullaby. The buck twitches a little and is gone; stars turn in his eyes the same as if he could still see them. Echoes of ice crack in the woods.

The first evening of deer season, Ira crosses the iron chill of main street and enters the Star Grille. The sharp taste of the cigarette smoke canopy. From his distance at the doorway, the conversations are indecipherable, but familiar. He follows a trail of melting snow from the mud room into the common space. Dim but pointedly lit, reflections of the buttery lights on the bar top, a few messy tables. The familiars amble about, commiserating, laughing, telling lies. He orders a beer and makes his way to a herd of tired eyes at the end of the bar.

"Hiya, Bailey. Tom."

"Hey, Ira. You eat yet?" Tom responded alone; Bailey's focus remained somewhere across the bar, his cigarette idling in an ashtray.

"Not yet, no."

"Well, do you want to eat with us?"

"I could have a fish sandwich, sure." He ordered dinner. "You guys go out today?"

"C'mon man."

"Well, did you get anything?"

"I had a good look, but nothing to shoot. I came in early, cold as hell for November." He clutched his thin hands together at the thought. "Perry got a nice five point, I think. Bailey has been here since before they opened."

"What is Denny doing over there?" Bailey finally spoke aloud. Ira scanned the opposite edge of the bar and there found Denny sitting alone at a

booth. Not exactly alone. In front of him sat two aberrantly shaped objects, one taller than the other. They were hard to focus on; when Ira concentrated on them, the music and noise of the bar fell away from his perception. In the silent haze of the booth, Denny just drank his beer and stared at the things. Then they moved a little.

"What the fuck?" The words escaped Ira's mouth softly, involuntarily.

"Oh, you haven't heard this one yet, I guess," Tom began, "Denny went out by the power lines up twenty-two, came back saying he found a dead buck. *Well who cares*, I thought, *maybe just a bad shot got away from somebody*. Denny said it looked like it has just laid down and died last night."

"How would he know when it died?" Bailey interrupted.

"Anyway," Tom continued, "then he just sat down there and pulled those little things out of his jacket and has been alone with them ever since."

"Are they alive?"

"What the hell? No. they're piles of trash or something."

"Did he find them next to the buck. What does that have to do with it? I don't get it."

"Hell if I know."

"Denny's pretty rough, right? I heard his wife left him," Ira asked. Bailey grimaced a little.

"She's smoking fucking heroin down in Freeport," Tom spat, "Poor Denny. She's just another dumbass. Fuck her."

"Don't be an asshole, Tom, it's not that simple," Bailey said.

"Well, what's your problem?"

Soon they were jawing at each other. Ira took his drink and made his way to Denny's booth. He sat and examined the little totems. The squat one was about the size of a grapefruit. It stood on two hardly distinguishable legs which stubbed out from the bottom of its lumpy frame. The surface upon which its face rested appeared to have been punched flat and set with a lipless, saggy mouth and two beady black dots for eyes. It was sad. The taller one stood on four legs with a long neck and bulging eyes, like a plastic giraffe effigy

melted in a microwave. A little tuft of hair rose from the top of its head.

"Hiya, Denny. How ya makin' out?"

"Oh," Denny said, thoughtfully, as if there weren't statues of trash in front of him, "you know, same ol' same ol.'" His eyes wandered to the hockey game on the television in the corner. "It's not easy in the winter. We're only just getting started, but I hate being trapped in, alone—I don't have the heart to hunt anymore, Ira."

"Me neither, Denny."

"I was sorry to hear about your brother. Never reached out, though. Sorry about that, too."

"There's nothing to it, man. We're all in the same thing here. It's good to see you."

The two men shared a moment of silence, in the smoke and the noise, accompanied by their trash companions. Then they shared a drink, and another, and, in the way that the sunset is never observed in a bar, they drank well into the evening. Others floated in and out of the booth. Rick brought shots of Jack Daniel's in little plastic cups. Ira would remember a moment when one of the little figures reached up and lit his cigarette for him. Sometimes they would bring drinks. He had never known Denny to carry on in this way, but the totems just kept the party moving along. Everybody took what they offered without a second glance. They all laughed and laughed at their weird faces and in the morning stumbled home under a sun thin and pale.

Across the week, hunters banged out shots in the woods. Through the hollows and off brick homes, rifles cracked. The deer were brought out to the beds of trucks, suspended on lines in backyards, bled and processed. Pale finger trees reflected in their eyes the same as if they could see them. They are separated, meat from bone, by man or by worm—there is no difference.

Bailey is found frozen, overdosed, and dead in the back of his van. On the solstice, his pine coffin is buried somewhere near his great uncle at the Episcopal church, where the congregation offered to pay the sum of the costs on his behalf. The attendees at the funeral are largely strangers to him. A few of his ragged friends are there. The old snow and the sky are a similar grey; the world sits quiet, waits for the body. Ira does not lift his eyes to the larger crowd and leaves before the preacher has finished his sermon.

Something like a wake assembles at the Star Grille afterwards. Denny enters late, his totems in tow, and plops down at the booth where Ira is drinking coffee with Tom and Emma and some

others, the mid-day light laying across the steam of the paper cups.

"Let's Irish this coffee up a bit, eh?" Denny suggests. Everybody unenthusiastically agrees and the drinks begin. Nobody mentions the little figures. A few drinks later, Ira tries to make a toast for his friend.

"I knew Bailey when we were just kids, you know. Trout fishing up by the Mills. When my mom threw me and Nebo out, we stayed with him a few times. His own mom had already passed by then... he was a playful guy," Ira paused, "He was always so busy out in the woods behind his grandpa's place, always screwing around, just really playful." Ira had no idea what he was doing, how to say any of this. "I remember—well—I hope he can play again. Let's just say I hope he can play again."

"Bailey," somebody cheered weakly to break the silence. Emma took a turn then. Her speech too ran off, into thoughts of her sister—taken her own life years before. Nobody knew what to say, and so they all spoke. Denny's totems began to pour the drinks again, their big wet eyes, useless limbs hardly capable of holding the glasses. Careening dumbly around the bar tops. The professions poured forth, lamentations of cancer, divorce, deceit, failure after failure. Stories of friends dead or destroyed, all of them chewed up and processed; a town, a system, a time which ground them out and left little room for imagination, getting here or there a few moments of dignity, and those fading so quickly as to be another form of humiliation. The communal shame of swinging low, the wider world reflecting in their eyes and denying them participation. All the while the little totems poured and danced. Nobody seemed to notice, or care, and, eventually, it was just another night at a dive bar.

Ira stumbled outside to relieve himself in the snow and found himself staring idly into the sky. If the stars he can see have already gone out, he wondered, are the blank spaces filled with stars that he couldn't see yet? He returned just in time to see the long-necked totem strike a match and drop it into a pool of whiskey. In less than ten minutes the bar was burning out of control.

Ira stood next to Denny and the totems while they watched. The heat licked their silhouettes in soft undulations on the ground behind them. Denny headed into the blaze and Ira pulled him back.

"It's gone," Ira told him, "It's just gone, man. Try and enjoy the fire."

"Nothing's gone." Denny turned and headed into the dark, his strange little totems following along beside him, stumbling, failing to keep up.

"Denny!" Ira called after him.

"How long are you all going to ignore those little things following him around?" Emma stood next to him, watching Denny go.

"We've all got something, Em. What am I supposed to do?"

"I don't know. We toasted to a lot of ghosts in there tonight, but he's still alive, right? So are you, for that matter." She left him standing there, flame-shadows arcing around him. Somewhere, a fireman began to yell for the crowd to get back as the roof gave out.

The Star Grille is reduced to ruin. A storm pulls in and, for a few days, hunters keep out of the woods. The deer bed down in groves of cherry or spring oak, tawny and wide eyed, and through their rising breath watch the world at truce. Here or there, the trickle of a slow flowing creek, or the impatient caws of American crows.

Four days after the funeral, Ira is standing in the mud room of Denny's house. He knocks and nobody answers. The sound of music hums through the thin walls, cheap decorations, a single string of lights that sort of trail off above a washer and dryer. He peaks through the window. On the table in the living room, the long-necked totem wanders around. It mews pathetically. He leaves his casserole on a box of old tools and heads to the garage. He finds there Denny's trail heading towards the woods and, having nowhere else to be, follows it out.

The snow doesn't so much crunch beneath his footfalls as it shatters. The shadows in the hollow are aggressively cold. He buries his hands

in his jacket pockets and forges on, the weight of snow on the branches, piled high, falling in clumps or bursts of powder around him. The tracks rise out of the denser woods to a path cut for power lines, old train lines, sharp towers of ice. He follows the tracks on and on, boots heavy with ice and mud, the sound of his effort alone in the air. Occasionally, magpie dance on the edges, where the forest has been cleared for planting. The sky is bright and clear. A few clouds amble over the barns and ponds. On a rise, he comes across a dead buck where it lies nearly buried in the snow. Beneath its exposed antler, curled and frozen, the squat totem is huddled lifeless. The sun shines down indifferently.

He gathers the little thing and, with hands that scream with the burning of the effort, buries it in the snow at the tree line. He sees there tracks which lead deeper into the woods. He wonders whose tracks they may be: Denny, or some other hunter? Maybe Bailey, or his brother. He rests at the edge of the woods and watches the tracks until his feet begin to numb. The wind pulls over the path and into the trees. He can taste ice in the air. Ira knows he will go no further. He waits for his eyes to clear, then he rises and makes his way back.

When he returns to Denny's, the string of lights on the patio has gone out. He doesn't approach the door and he never sees Denny again. As he drives home, he nearly hits a deer sprinting across the road. Jamming the brakes and sliding a little in the slush of broken ice and sand, coming to rest facing south over the valley. The town below. He idles the car and catches his breath. Three more deer cut the road in a frenzy, their wide black eyes dancing against the milky winter sky, mad and burning from their flight over the corn fields.

# MEET TONIGHT'S NEW VOICES READERS

Where provided, contact info is included with the consent of the writers, who invite you to give them a shout-out about their writing or ask them questions. Unauthorized use of this information (reposting, republishing, or otherwise distributing information without the express consent of their owners) is prohibited by law.

## AARON ATADERO

English 126: Intro. to Creative Writing  
Instructor: Julie Cardenas

**E-mail:** [aaronatadero@gmail.com](mailto:aaronatadero@gmail.com)

**Author Statement:** As an amateur writer for about a decade now, I have turned to the incredible and supportive Professor Cardenas (who instructs me in two classes) to help expedite what has been happening at a glacial pace. I enjoy warm whiskey, obnoxious music, and questionable people.

## CORY BROOKS

English 141: Poetry Writing II  
Instructor: Adam Deutsch

**E-mail:** [tarigj12@gmail.com](mailto:tarigj12@gmail.com)

**Author Statement:** I'm a returning student of the poetry program this semester, having completed Creative Writing and Poetry in past semesters. I try to find my voice and write from it, but I am constantly inspired by my peers and poet, Shane Koyczan. I hope to be a published poet one day.

## ERIN EDKINS

English 142: Poetry Writing III  
Instructor: Adam Deutsch

**Author Statement:** Hi, I'm Erin (no pronouns/he). Fall 2022 is my third semester, both at Grossmont College and taking its poetry workshop. Writing—poetry in particular—is a fun way for me to record, organize, and communicate my thoughts. Authors I'm inspired by include Sylvia Plath, bell hooks, and Pablo Neruda.

## ROBERT FISCHER

English 131: Short Fiction Writing II  
Instructor: Enrique A. Cervantes

**E-mail:** [rfish1985@gmail.com](mailto:rfish1985@gmail.com)

**Author Statement:** I have been writing for nearly a year now, as a way to try and understand my feelings about some life experiences. My characters and I often spend time just outside the perimeter of the emotions, actions, and memories I am dealing with. The result is a bunch of stories that exist in a space I never knew existed inside of me, or anywhere.

## ASHLEY GRINS

English 140: Poetry Writing I  
Instructor: Adam Deutsch

**E-mail:** [theashleynikole@gmail.com](mailto:theashleynikole@gmail.com)

**Author Statement:** I am president of the Cuyamaca Creative Writing Club, and I am a writer. Although tonight I am reading a piece of my poetry, my area of preference is novel writing, and I already have the first 30,000

words written for my own thriller/romance. I hope to one day be a published author in both my poetry and novels.

## MADELINE HAINES

English 140: Poetry Writing I  
Instructor: Adam Deutsch

**Author Statement:** Madeline Haines, also known as Maddie, is a Sociology student new to creative writing. They are taking their first course in the subject this semester and are excited to learn more from their peers and grow their body of work. They go by she/they pronouns.

## TARIQ JOHNSON

English 126: Intro. to Creative Writing  
Instructor: Ingrid Jayne

**E-mail:** [tarigj12@gmail.com](mailto:tarigj12@gmail.com)

**Author Statement:** I began my creative writing journey this semester in an intro to creative writing class. Drawing inspiration from the world around me and the context in which I exist within it, my work explores topics of identity, coming of age, and desire. As a practicing ceramic artist, I use my poetry as an alternate avenue for self-expression.

## RYLEY JONAS

English 126: Intro. to Creative Writing  
Instructor: Julie Cardenas

**Author Statement:** I recently found myself missing an environment that fosters knowledge and creativity, so I decided to take classes in my free time. I chose Creative Writing because I thought it would be a challenge that would open an avenue to my mostly dormant imagination. I have enjoyed my class and plan on continuing my written education in the following semesters.

## JOANNE KNUDSON

English 130: Short Fiction Writing I  
Instructor: Enrique A. Cervantes

**E-mail:** [joanne.g.knudson@gmail.com](mailto:joanne.g.knudson@gmail.com)

**Author Statement:** I have always written poetry and non-fiction for myself, and this year I decided to explore short fiction writing. I've met many talented writers in my class, and learned so much about the craft. I like to write about interior life, strange happenings, and unexpected futures.

## GENEVE NGUYEN

English 126: Intro. to Creative Writing  
Instructor: Ingrid Jayne

**E-mail:** [genevenguyen@icloud.com](mailto:genevenguyen@icloud.com)

**Author Statement:** I'm a 20 year old student. I'm a queer, nonbinary Vietnamese-

American writer and I've been writing since I was about 16 years old. Being able to find my voice with writing is something that I hold very dear to me, as I use it to process my life and, most importantly, myself. I tend to write about having CPTSD, my trauma, my complex relationships, and sometimes I just scribble until I find the right words to crisp my loose emotions. It's nice to meet you all!

## MICHAEL ROCA

English 126: Intro. to Creative Writing  
Instructor: Ingrid Jayne

**E-mail:** [michael.roca@students.qcccd.edu](mailto:michael.roca@students.qcccd.edu)

**Author Statement:** I'm coming back to college at middle age because... well, that's what the piece is about! I haven't written since high school, many moons ago. I read anything that's well written and have ambitions to write well myself.

## VALERIO PONS

English 126: Intro. to Creative Writing  
Instructor: Ingrid Jayne

**E-mail:** [vpons89@gmail.com](mailto:vpons89@gmail.com)

**Author Statement:** I'm new to writing in a serious manner, let's say. Whenever I was tasked to write, I remember always enjoying the process. Professor Jayne's class has done well to help me understand the process that is writing. I'm glad I took the class and now I'm ready to put my writing to the test.

## LUCIAN SCRYA

English 140: Poetry Writing I  
Instructor: Adam Deutsch

**E-mail:** [drachenpanther5@gmail.com](mailto:drachenpanther5@gmail.com)

**Author Statement:** I am an aspiring writer who also wants to be a Librarian. I've been reading and writing Fantasy and Science-Fiction since I learned how to read. Though, I never really considered myself a poet, poetry and I kept getting introduced through third party friends and I just wanted to see where it would take me.

## JAY VU

English 130: Short Fiction Writing I  
Instructor: Enrique A. Cervantes

**E-mail:** [jayvu74@yahoo.com](mailto:jayvu74@yahoo.com)

**Author Statement:** I'm an ER physician and father of two little girls who dabbles in writing. Deeply entrenched on the ground floor of society's broken healthcare system, I aspire to give voice to many of our unheard and unwanted. This piece is a silly take on the other side of the Covid pandemic, bringing to life voices from the past and present, some of which have never been heard from before.



**JULIE CARDENAS** CREATIVE WRITING / ACORN REVIEW

Sacramento native Julie Cardenas co-coordinates Grossmont College's Puente Program, teaches Creative Writing and Chicano literature, and serves as advisor to the student-produced literary journal, *Acorn Review*, for which she also teaches English 145-148: *Acorn Review*: Editing and Production. Julie holds a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism and Spanish from California State University, Sacramento, and a Master's Degree in English from the University of San Diego. In addition to having edited professional newsletters and trade journals, Cardenas has published a variety of news and feature articles, poetry, and short fiction. She will be teaching two online courses during the Spring 2023 semester: English 126: Intro to Creative Writing, and English 145-148: *Acorn Review*, Production and Editing.

**ENRIQUE CERVANTES** SHORT FICTION WRITING

Fiction writer, poet, and former Grossmont College student, Enrique Cervantes holds a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from San Diego State University. Enrique's writing has appeared in *Aztec Literary Review*, *The Writer*, *The Blue Agave Literary Journal*, *San Diego City Beat*, as well as the anthology *The Far East: Everything Just As It Is*. His novel-in-progress is about dancing, the border, and ghosts. Enrique will teach the Short Fiction Writing workshop next semester as an on-campus course.

**ADAM DEUTSCH** POETRY WRITING

Publisher/editor/poet Adam Deutsch is one of three Co-Coordinator of the Creative Writing Program and teaches Poetry Writing workshops during the fall semesters. He also operates Cooper Dillon Books, a poetry press for writers and poets. He has held editorial positions on a variety of small presses and journals, including *Ninth Letter* and *Barn Owl Review*. His own poems have appeared in *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Forklife OH*, *Thrush*, *Ping Pong*, *Arsenic Lobster*, *Across the Margin*, *Spinning Jenny*, and *Typo*. His first full-length collection of poems, *Every Transmission*, is due to be released next year by Fernwood Press.

**RICH FARRELL** NOVEL WRITING

Novel Writing instructor Rich Farrell earned a Master of Fine Arts in Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts. In addition to leading workshops on narrative for San Diego Writers, Ink, he is the Creative Non-Fiction Editor at *upstreet* and a Senior Editor at *Numéro Cinq*. His work, including fiction, memoir, essays, interviews and book reviews, has appeared, or is forthcoming, in *Potomac Review*, *Hunger Mountain*, *New Plains Review*, *upstreet*, *Descant*, *Contrary*, *Newfound*, *Numéro Cinq*, and elsewhere. His first novel, *The Falling Woman*, was released in summer 2020 on Algonquin Books. Rich will lead the Novel Writing workshop online in the Spring 2023 semester.

**INGRID JAYNE** Intro to Creative Writing

Ingrid Jayne is an adjunct instructor of English at Grossmont College and has been teaching composition, literature, and creative writing since 2014. She is a former Grossmont College student and a Navy veteran, sailing across the globe and back while coming across interesting people and diverse cultures. She transferred to San Diego State University where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, graduating summa sum laude. Continuing her education, she completed her studies, earning a Master's in Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing, focusing on fiction. She has published poetry in the SDSU English Honor Society's newsletter *Sigma Tau Delta* as well as Grossmont's literary magazine *Acorn Review*.

**KARL SHERLOCK** POETRY WRITING

Milwaukee native Karl Sherlock holds a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from University of California, Irvine. His recent poetry and nonfiction appear (or are forthcoming) in *After Happy Hour*, *Assaracus*, *Broken Lens*, *Lime Hawk*, *Mollyhouse*, *RockPaperPoem*, *Stoneboat*, *Tinge*, *Wordgathering*, and others, as well as in the 2022 dis-lit anthology, *The Ending Hasn't Happened Yet*. A Sundress "Best of the Net" finalist in 2014 for his memoir essay about marrying a conversion therapy torture survivor, Karl co-coordinates Grossmont College's Creative Writing Program and will lead the Spring 2023 Poetry Writing workshop online.

**DANIELA SOW** INTRO. TO CREATIVE WRITING

Daniela co-coordinates the Grossmont College Creative Writing Program and teaches English 126: Creative Writing. She received her Master's of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing (Poetry) from San Diego State University, and her Post-secondary Reading and Learning Certificate from California State University, Fullerton. Her poetry has been published (or is forthcoming) in *San Diego Poetry Annual*, *A Cappella Zoo*, *Encompassing Seas*, *West Trestle Review*, *Sky Island Journal*, and others. As a spoken word artist, she has competed in the National Poetry Slam. Daniela will be returning in Spring 2023 to teach English 126: Intro to Creative Writing.



# 2022-2023

## CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM

## INSTRUCTORS

See the inside back cover of this program for info about our available writing courses and workshops next semester.

Grossmont College's student-generated literary journal is packed with original poetry, short stories, novel excerpts, short works of drama, creative nonfiction, and visual art work. Sub period for our next issue is now open!



## NEW ISSUE AVAILABLE!

Now open for submissions. Guidelines on Submittable:

[gcccd.submittable.com](http://gcccd.submittable.com)



Acorn Review welcomes submissions from all San Diego County residents and current and former students and staff of Grossmont and Cuyamaca Colleges. Submitting to multiple categories is encouraged, but contributors must adhere to the submission limits in place for each category. All work is judged anonymously by student editors, and selections are based on literary and artistic merit. Acorn Review does not provide feedback on individual submissions. Student editors are enrolled in English 145-148: Acorn Review Editing and Production. Contact faculty advisor Julie Cardenas ([julie.cardenas@gcccd.edu](mailto:julie.cardenas@gcccd.edu)) for info about enrolling, or visit Acorn Review on the Creative Writing Program website: [grossmont.edu/ACORN](http://grossmont.edu/ACORN)

**DID YOU KNOW** that Grossmont College is one of the few California community colleges to offer an Associate Degree with an English major that fulfills lower division requirements at most four-year colleges and universities? In addition to General Ed and Elective requirements, anyone taking 24 credits in the courses for an English major can also earn six additional credits from our Creative Writing Program's upper-level workshop courses and qualify for a Certificate of Achievement in English-Creative Writing. Just file an official request at Admissions and Records by the mid-semester deadline of any semester.



# EARN

**A CERTIFICATE IN CREATIVE WRITING**

[grossmont.edu/CWP](http://grossmont.edu/CWP)

**START EARNING YOUR CERTIFICATE IN CREATIVE WRITING!**

# Feeling inspired by tonight's writers? Take a writing course!

Register with any of our talented creative writing instructors and working authors for spring 2023 classes. See the official course catalog for more info, including prerequisites and recommended preparation.



Grossmont College offers Southern California's largest and best community college Creative Writing Program, with top-notch classes, nurturing workshops, and talented instructors to challenge you to sculpt your voice into the next wave of cutting edge literature. We offer courses tailored to different writing skill levels, writing and editing experience, and writing genres. You can also earn a Certificate in Creative Writing with your English degree. Our courses come into several varieties: general **creative writing classes**, **workshop sequences**, and **production and editing classes**. A writing class provides you with exclusive opportunities to meet nationally and internationally renowned authors, participate in readings and literary events, publish your work, and even edit a literary journal. See what's available, and **sign up early!!!** Learn more about our Creative Writing Program at [grossmont.edu/cwp](http://grossmont.edu/cwp).

**SPRING**

**2023**

**WRITING COURSES**

The single most important show of support you can give the Grossmont College Creative Writing Program is to fill our classes and keep our workshops thriving. Whether weeks before the semester starts or weeks before it ends, less than robust enrollment can cause what is potentially the most important and inspiring class you might ever take to be put in the cross-hairs for cancellation. Safeguard these courses and your chances to work with some of the best creative writing instructors in San Diego. Register early for one of the following course offerings:

## CREATIVE WRITING

A general Creative Writing course introduces the craft of creative writing. Learn how to workshop and revise your own written works of short fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, and drama. You'll also enjoy opportunities to be included in student readings and college literary publications. No prerequisite is required.

COURSE	Instructor	Section	When and Where
ENGL 126: INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING	Daniela Sow	7263	M/W 2-3:15PM, Rm 51-577
	Julie Cardenas	7264	Distance Ed/100% Online

## WRITING WORKSHOPS

Our writing workshops offer a four-course sequence of genre-specific instruction for which you compose and submit original work and learn how to use the writer's workshop to develop your craft as a writer and your skills as a critic in that genre. A workshop puts you in the middle of a real writing community and lets you explore opportunities for recognition and public readings in venues such as New Voices. Enrolling for all four courses in the sequence is an advantage but not a requirement, nor do you have to complete the sequence of any one workshop over four continuous semesters. Break them up if you like, try all the genres, and keep expanding your repertoire of writing workshops—maybe even earn a Certificate in Creative Writing! To register for the first course in a workshop sequence, successful completion of English 126 or English 120 is recommended (but not required).

COURSE	Instructor	Section	When and Where
ENGL 130-133: SHORT FICTION WRITING I-IV	Enrique Cervantes	7266-7269	W 7-9:50PM, Rm 51-584
ENGL 140-143: POETRY WRITING I-IV	Karl Sherlock	7274-7277	Distance Ed/100% Online
ENGL 145-148: ACORN REVIEW I-IV	Julie Cardenas	4561-4564	Distance Ed/100% Online
ENGL 175-178: NOVEL WRITING I-IV	Rich Farrell	1070-1073	Distance Ed/100% Online



