

**THE BOOK**  
**Everything You Need to Know to Survive**  
**Colorado State University's**  
**Master of Fine Arts**  
**in Creative Writing Program**

(updated 10/28/2013)

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## ADVISING GUIDELINES

Your advisor will help you negotiate the rigors and pleasures of the program and is the person responsible for directing your MFA thesis. Upon being accepted to the Masters of Fine Arts Degree Program in Creative Writing, you will be assigned a temporary advisor from among the faculty in your genre. Faculty do their best to create a compatible, beneficial match between students and temporary advisors. Once your first semester begins, you should set up an appointment to meet with your advisor to discuss your proposed course of study. Do not delay!

Your advisor remains temporary until the **middle of the fall semester of your second year when you complete the GS6 form**, at which point you may either: (a) change your advisor or (b) request that your temporary advisor become your permanent advisor. In either case you will need to consult with and receive permission from your chosen advisor. Please note that to ensure that the advising load is spread fairly among the faculty, advisors are limited in the number of advisees they are able to accept each year. You will need to fill out a GS-6 form and submit it to the graduate school to avoid a hold on your registration. (See p. 15 for more on Forms.)

Advising checklists giving degree requirements and forms are available **online at <http://english.colostate.edu/docs/checksheets/mfa-checklist.pdf>**. You and your advisor should update your checklist each semester together.

### **Advisor's role & duties:**

- Giving students feedback on class selection
- Giving students feedback on their writing
- Providing students with career-related guidance
- Providing intensive feedback on students' theses during their last year of study

### **Your responsibilities:**

- Contacting advisor to set up meetings to talk about classes and writing
- Contacting advisor if you have a problem, question, or concern
- Submitting work to advisor
- Being aware of and meeting graduate school requirements and deadlines

## APPLYING FOR FELLOWSHIPS & FINANCIAL AID

If you aren't familiar with the FAFSA, visit <http://www.sfs.colostate.edu/>. This is Colorado State's Student Financial Services webpage; they have information about scholarships, the FAFSA, loans, and CSU aid. You can also search their website for CSU and other scholarships. Some CSU scholarships are available to graduate students, so make sure to check here.

Information on a national fellowship available to CSU students, the Javits Fellowship, is listed below. This is a national fellowship, with very limited funds and few recipients, so keep that in mind when applying. Visit the websites below for specific information about deadlines and applications for scholarships and post-MFA fellowships.

### **College of Liberal Arts/Department**

English Faculty & Staff Graduate Scholarship: <http://central.colostate.edu/scholarships/english-facultystaff-graduate-scholarship/>

Community Engagement Scholarship: <http://central.colostate.edu/scholarships/community-engagement-scholarship/>

Master of Fine Arts Creative Writing Fellowship Fund (Crow-Tremblay Fellowships)

- Intended to honor the talent, inspiration, and tireless efforts of emeriti poetry professors Bill Tremblay and Mary Crow, who taught in CSU's English Department for 39 years and 30 years respectively.
- Each year, two merit-based fellowships will be awarded to incoming MFA students whose writing shows exceptional promise, or to continuing students who are contributing members of the MFA program and whose writing has shown exceptional growth.
- One fellowship will be awarded to a fiction writer and one will be awarded to a poet.
- Fellowship recipients shall not have graduate teaching assistantships in the English Department.
- Fellowship monies will be deposited directly into students' accounts.
- Fellowship winners will be announced in the spring of each year.
- Faculty choose the winners at their discretion. There is no application.

### **Graduate School**

Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship:

<http://www.graduateschool.colostate.edu/documents/funding/MLK-Criteria-Call.pdf>

Jack Kent Cook Scholarship: <http://www.jkcf.org/scholarships/graduate-scholarships/>

Loveland AAUW Scholarship Program:

<http://www.graduateschool.colostate.edu/documents/funding/AAUW-Scholarship.pdf>

## **Post-MFA Fellowships (Fall-Spring)**

These fellowships are open to recent graduates of MFA programs:

- 1) Stegner Fellowship: <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/english/cw/fellowship.html>
- 2) Olive B. O'Conner Fellowship in Creative Writing at Colgate: e-mail this address for more information and application: [englishdept@mail.colgate.edu](mailto:englishdept@mail.colgate.edu)
- 3) Stadler Fellowship at Bucknel: <http://www.bucknell.edu/x3735.xml>
- 4) University of Wisconsin-Madison Fellowships: <http://creativewriting.wisc.edu/institute.php>
- 5) University of Minnesota Edelstein-Keller Discovery Fellowship:  
[http://english.cla.umn.edu/creativewriting/e-k\\_fellowship/Edelstein-Keller\\_Discover.htm](http://english.cla.umn.edu/creativewriting/e-k_fellowship/Edelstein-Keller_Discover.htm)
- 6) Emory University Creative Writing Fellowship:  
<http://www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/CREATIVERITING/faculty/Fellowshipinfo.html>
- 7) Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown: <http://www.fawc.org/winter/index.shtm>
- 8) George Bennett Writer in Residence at Phillips Exeter Academy:  
[http://www.exeter.edu/about\\_us/about\\_us\\_537.aspx](http://www.exeter.edu/about_us/about_us_537.aspx)
- 9) Bard College: <http://www.bard.edu/bfp/>
- 10) Center for Steinbeck Studies, San Jose, CA:  
[http://as.sjsu.edu/steinbeck/steinbeck\\_fellows/index.jsp](http://as.sjsu.edu/steinbeck/steinbeck_fellows/index.jsp)
- 11) Gilmore School Baltimore, MD: <http://www.gilman.edu/program/tickner-writing-center/tickner-writing-fellow/index.aspx> Contact: Patrick Hastings ([phastings@gilman.edu](mailto:phastings@gilman.edu))
- 12) Hub City Writer's Project, Spartanburg, SC: <http://hubcity.org/writersproject/fellowships-and-scholarships/the-writers-house-residencies/>
- 13) Kenyon College: <http://www.kenyonreview.org/programs/fellowship> Contacts: Tory Weber ([webert@kenyon.edu](mailto:webert@kenyon.edu))
- 14) Milton Center, Seattle, WA (for Christian writers):  
<http://imagejournal.org/page/fellowships/the-milton-center/postgraduate-fellowship>  
Contact: Anna Johnson ([miltoncenter@imagejournal.org](mailto:miltoncenter@imagejournal.org))
- 15) PEN Northwest, Elmira, OR: <http://www.johndaniel-author.net/mdb-res.php>  
Contact: John Daniel ([johndaniel48@yahoo.com](mailto:johndaniel48@yahoo.com))
- 16) Princeton College: [http://www.princeton.edu/arts/lewis\\_center/society\\_of\\_fellows/](http://www.princeton.edu/arts/lewis_center/society_of_fellows/)
- 17) Washington College, Chestertown, MD:  
<http://www.washcoll.edu/centers/starr/fellows.php> Contact: [jtitus2@washcoll.edu](mailto:jtitus2@washcoll.edu)
- 18) University of Arizona, Summer Fellowship:  
<http://poetry.arizona.edu/awards-residencies/summer-residency-program>
- 19) Loft McKnight Fellowship:  
[https://www.loft.org/programs\\_awards/grants\\_awards/mcknight\\_artist\\_fellowships/](https://www.loft.org/programs_awards/grants_awards/mcknight_artist_fellowships/)
- 20) Williams College, Bolin Fellowship: <http://dean-faculty.williams.edu/graduate-fellowships-2/graduate-fellowships/>
- 21) James Merrill Writer-in-Residence: <http://www.jamesmerrillhouse.org/>
- 22) Intermedia Arts: <http://www.intermediaarts.org/beyond-the-pure-fellowship>

Please note: Deadlines for the different fellowship competitions may change, so check the sites immediately prior to applying. We do not judge these contests in any way; we only make them known to third-year MFA students and recent alumni.

## CALENDAR FOR YOUR FIRST YEAR

### Summer before First Year

June: If you are an out-of-state student trying to get residency for the next academic year, check with Student Financial Services regarding applying for residency for your second year. Do not delay on this! Go to: <http://sfs.colostate.edu/residency>. It takes one full year to establish residency. Remember: The English Department will not pay out-of-state tuition for second-year GTAs, so it's necessary to receive residency prior to the first day of classes during that fall. Make sure to check the deadlines listed online for this.

### Fall Semester (first year)

- Meet with your advisor.
- November: Deadline for AWP Intro Journals Project competition. The Associated Writing Programs (AWP) holds this contest each year for MFA programs throughout the country. You will be asked to submit a sample of your work for the contest. For details, turn to the "Department Writing Contests" section of this document.
- Late fall semester: If you did not receive a GTA for the current academic year, you may choose to apply for the next academic year. Contact your advisor and talk to others in the department about applying for an assistantship. (See also "GTAs and Other Jobs")
- **November: Complete GTA applications. Application forms are available from the English Department office and online, and they are due by January 1.**
- Register for Spring classes. (Meet with your advisor if necessary to help decide what classes to take.)

### Spring Semester (first year)

- March/April: Meet with your advisor to discuss your anticipated course of study.
- March/April: Deadline for Academy of American Poets (AAP) University Prize (open to CSU graduate poetry students only). For details, turn to the "Department Writing Contests" section of this document.
- Register for fall classes in early April.

### Fall Semester (second year)

- **October: Complete your GS6 Form.** Propose the courses you will take throughout your time in the program and list your three committee members who have agreed to serve. **Don't wait** until a hold is placed on your registration (which will prevent you from registering for classes in the spring of your second year) to start on this form.

### Spring Semester (second year)

March: Complete the thesis application form, available from Marnie Leonard in 359 Eddy. Review it with your advisor and have each committee member sign the application. Then return the application to Marnie, who will ask the Graduate Coordinator to approve. Once it has been approved, Marnie will enter an override for the number of credits you are requesting for the fall term and then e-mail you with the CRN and approval to register.

### **Spring Semester (third year)**

Second week of classes: Complete the GS25 form, available online and from Marnie in 359 Eddy. On this form, you must declare your graduation term and make any course changes to the list you provided on your GS6. Review it with your advisor, who must also sign it, then bring the form to Marnie in 359 Eddy, to complete the processing.

Third week of classes: Review the required Graduate School formatting for your thesis. Thesis-submission-process information and the **required Graduate School thesis formatting** links are online at <http://graduateschool.colostate.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation/index.aspx>.

Defend early in the semester—at least two weeks before the deadline—to allow time for you to make any recommended revisions to your thesis and have discrepancies resolved before the Graduate School deadline. Deadlines are online at <http://graduateschool.colostate.edu/current-students/index.aspx>. If you do not defend before the deadline, you will need to pay extra to defend in the late spring or summer for a summer graduation date.

If you have completed all of your course work but will defend in the late spring or during the summer semester after your third year, please first check with your committee to see if they are available in the summer (or even late spring semester) and observe the Graduate School deadlines, update your application term online, and register for Continuous Registration for the summer of your graduation. Please note: defending in the summer must be approved by all of your committee members as faculty are often not available during the summer months.

Be sure to fill out the Embargo form so that your rights to your manuscript are retained. See Embargo information below.

## ESTABLISHING RESIDENCY

1. Go to the Department of Motor Vehicles and get your Colorado driver's license.
2. Register your vehicle in the state of Colorado.
3. Register to vote. You can do this when you get your Colorado driver's license. There is no charge.
4. If you do not have a GTA, get some form of off-campus, non-temporary employment.
5. Find a place that you can use as your "residence" (a PO Box is NOT sufficient) if you have not secured permanent housing yet.
6. Attend a Tuition Classification Orientation Session in the Student Financial Services Office (100A Administration Annex). The session lasts approximately one hour and the schedule is available on their web site listed below.
7. Residency dates change yearly, so please check the dates and the procedures by visiting the following website: <http://sfs.colostate.edu/residency>

## FACULTY AND STAFF CONTACTS FOR MFA CREATIVE WRITING STUDENTS

### Poetry Faculty

Dan Beachy-Quick, 343 Eddy, [Dan.Beachy-Quick@colostate.edu](mailto:Dan.Beachy-Quick@colostate.edu)  
Matthew Cooperman, 327 Eddy, [Matthew.Cooperman@colostate.edu](mailto:Matthew.Cooperman@colostate.edu)  
Sasha Steensen, 320 Eddy, [Sasha.Steensen@colostate.edu](mailto:Sasha.Steensen@colostate.edu)  
Camille Dungy, 318 Eddy, [Camille.Dungy@colostate.edu](mailto:Camille.Dungy@colostate.edu)

### Fiction Faculty

Leslee Becker, 335 Eddy, [Leslee.Becker@colostate.edu](mailto:Leslee.Becker@colostate.edu)  
Judy Doenges, 340 Eddy, [Judy.Doenges@colostate.edu](mailto:Judy.Doenges@colostate.edu)  
E. J. Levy, 342 Eddy, [EJ.Levy@colostate.edu](mailto:EJ.Levy@colostate.edu)  
Steven Schwartz, 329 Eddy, [Steven.Schwartz@colostate.edu](mailto:Steven.Schwartz@colostate.edu)

### Nonfiction Faculty

John Calderazzo, 315 Eddy, [John.Calderazzo@colostate.edu](mailto:John.Calderazzo@colostate.edu)  
E. J. Levy, 342 Eddy, [EJ.Levy@colostate.edu](mailto:EJ.Levy@colostate.edu)

### English Dept. Internship Coordinator

Mary Hickey, 334 Eddy, [Mary.Hickey@colostate.edu](mailto:Mary.Hickey@colostate.edu)

### Creative Writing Teaching Program Coordinator

Todd Mitchell, 323B Eddy, [Todd.Mitchell@colostate.edu](mailto:Todd.Mitchell@colostate.edu)

### Center for Literary Publishing/ *Colorado Review*

Stephanie G'Schwind, Editor  
C107 Aylesworth Hall, [Stephanie.GSchwind@colostate.edu](mailto:Stephanie.GSchwind@colostate.edu)

### English Department Contact

Marnie Leonard, 359 Eddy, [Marnie.Leonard@colostate.edu](mailto:Marnie.Leonard@colostate.edu)

Office hours of faculty are posted on office doors near the start of each semester.  
You can also check with the English Dept. Office, 359 Eddy, 491-6428.

## DEPARTMENT WRITING CONTESTS

We run several contests within the MFA program. The Assistant to the Director of Creative Writing will notify all eligible MFA students of contest requirements several weeks prior to the deadline. For most of these contests, faculty judge the entries, and entries are judged blindly.

### **Undergraduate Creative & Performing Arts Scholarships (Fall)**

- Call for submissions in early fall
- Graduate students may be asked to screen entries

### **AWP Intro Journals Project Awards, MFA Students Only (postmarked early December)**

- Poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction
- MFA students may submit in more than one genre, but only one entry per genre. One poetry entry can consist of one to three poems
- Blind read
- CW faculty serve as judges
- Submission deadline usually in November
- Three poems (which may or may not be by the same author), one short story, and one essay are chosen by the faculty to be sent on to the national contest, where they are judged by an AWP panel of judges
- National selections are published in a national journal

### **Academy of American Poets Award, MFA Students Only (Spring)**

- MFA poets submit one poem
- Blind read
- CW faculty choose outside judge
- Submission deadline usually in March or April
- Outside judge may choose one or two winners and one or two honorable mentions. Winners split the \$100 award according to judge's weighting
- Names of winners and honorable mentions are sent to the Academy of American Poets along with winning poem(s) by early May

## FACULTY TEACHING STATEMENTS

### **Dan Beachy-Quick**

I believe Emerson when he claims that the Delphic imperative “Know Thyself” and the Stoic imperative “Study Nature” are but a single command: to attempt one is also to do the other. Reading and writing—those seemingly opposing but actually co-creative activities in which we spend our time while in school—present us not only with the difficult fact of manifold voices speaking the inquiries for themselves, but implicate us in the very same process. As with most things, I think an actual education looks very different from what we had expected to gain: no repository of facts, no knowledge that remains in our minds as does a book remain closed on a shelf, no set of skills by which we can learn to annotate a text or compose a poem. A genuine education gives us to our actual confusion, and within that confusion, gives us resources—not answers necessarily, but necessarily light . . . a light that clarifies complexity without reducing it. My hopes for a class are simple to say: To begin the discussion that leads to actual learning. That discussion involves that particular poetic courage of drawing connections where none seem to exist, stitching poems to philosophy to theology to diaries to fiction. That discussion also involves putting books down and picking the blank page up, and adding our voice into the cacophony of voices (past and present) in hopes that someday, impossibly enough, the din reconciles into harmony. It seems easy to forget in the weeks a syllabus charts out that we ourselves are also part of the discussion we’re trying to have. But by the end of class, in the midst of an education, I hope we leave humbled by the audacity of the undertaking: to learn, to think, to ask a question, to write a poem.

### **Leslee Becker**

From me? A teaching philosophy? Nope. I’ll finesse myself out of such a task by describing how I operate. I steal. I take stuff from the best and worst of my teachers, and I always try to put myself in the shoes of students. I go back to my student days to recall how exciting and important this whole enterprise is—workshopping fiction—and this is why I want to wriggle out of the role of teacher. We’re writers, and we read as writers, and so I invite classmates to gush about what writers and works of fiction they love—another hard task. Isn’t it easier to say why you don’t like something? So we practice the art of struggling to say: “I love this because . . .” I discourage police tactics because I distrust anyone who says, “You can’t do this.” And this brings us back to why I cannot arrive at a categorical definition of my teaching philosophy. The best of my teachers acted like gentle border collies, nudging me in certain directions, and other teachers, more like German shepherds, barked at me, but managed to herd me toward a destination I might’ve wanted to avoid, but, oh, the payoffs were big. I can’t separate myself, thank God, by canine breed, or into the single role of being a teacher or a student, but I can swipe stuff from Chekhov, who disappointed Tolstoy on questions of philosophy. Chekhov distrusted anything that couldn’t be apprehended by our five senses. He claimed he lacked a “political, religious, and philosophical world view. I change it every month, so I’ll have to limit myself to the description of how my heroes love, marry, give birth, die, and how they speak.”

### **John Calderazzo**

The world is full of stories, stories that float inside of you and around you all the time. And it’s your job as a writer to find the most compelling of these tales and present them to yourself and to a wider audience. As a writer and teacher of nonfiction, from literary journalism to personal essays, it’s my job in particular to help you recognize, research, and shape the verifiably true stories that float among all these others. In my workshops I will try to do this by pushing you in various directions—

say, into the field to discover the stories of others. Or deep along the shady and sun-dappled trails of the past to explore memoir. Or, quite literally, along a sidewalk or mountain trail to explore what a personal essay may be all about. In fact, an essay and the drift of your mind in conversation with itself can be much the same thing. The techniques available to you as a nonfiction writer can also be much the same as those available to the short story writer or the novelist. And so I offer plenty of models and writing assignments to show how personal voice, characterization, the use of dialogue and scene and metaphor all lend themselves to nonfiction writing. I show how nonfiction writers are just as hardwired to The Muse as any other writers, and how what Eden Philpotts once said can be more true than you might ever have imagined: “The universe is full of magical things patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper.”

### **Matthew Cooperman**

My approach to teaching assumes the classroom as an exploratory setting. Whether it be a creative writing, literature, or composition class, the point is to stretch, and to stretch by doing. Process, therefore, is the key term. We learn by doing, and in our case, doing writing. It is much of what Charles Olson meant in his conception of writing as *istorin*: a way to find things out for oneself. Such a classroom requires flexibility and open-endedness, and I ask my students to therefore recognize learning as a provisional act. It requires risk and participation, in the process of doing and in the consideration of various aesthetics, texts, cultural assumptions. In our words and our imaginations we are always going somewhere, and the going many places is the hope. Variety—of materials, activities, processes, physical spaces, and authorities—enables this multiple excursion. I am very interested in procedures: the ones we do now, the ones we assume, and the ones we might discover in a reformulated approach to learning. “Now do it slant.” All of this amounts to an engagement with texts. To consider the whole text in context is key, as is the atomization of texts into parts. Global patterns obtain in local instances. We see patterns, echoes, strategies most clearly when we have experienced them firsthand. Knowing how to read, to read closely, is still the best way to get started. I start there. I want, as much as possible, to foster invention, and to make that invention leap across boundaries—of periods, disciplines, applications. The best class is always that which is a surprise; it is a class where conversation is open and quickening, and people feel free to risk their deepest selves. Simple pragmatism. If, as recent theory tells us, we are a collocation of texts, then the most useful class makes the most of our texts available. We find these by reading deeply and writing variously. Allowing wander into wonder enlarges the very real possibility of learning some THING. If we are successful, the class continues long after the grades are in.

### **Judy Doenges**

Good fiction engages the senses and the psyche as well as the intellect. Good fiction is also the result of hard work, careful crafting, and some serendipity. One of my goals is to help students foster their own kind of literary luck and, in the process, to realize how consciously one creates it. In the classroom, I’m interested in the whole writing process: Generation of material, drafting, revision, and more revision, followed by the questions that try to get to the heart of the fiction. How close is the writer to achieving the central feeling or event, the crucial connection between story and reader? What is the vibrant light of fiction? And what practical work does the writer have to do in order to connect what’s on the page to the reader’s hopes and expectations?

### **Camille Dungy**

My engagement in the contemporary writing community allows me to bring energy, compassion, and relevance into the classroom. In workshops, seminars, and lectures, I encourage students to challenge their understanding of writing and literature while emphasizing the cultural, social, and

creative implications of the work they write and study. My classes integrate the study of literature with the discussion of student writing. Students actively engage with how their work resonates as part of and/or apart from the work of their time and the work of the ages. It is my intention to provide students with the highest level of attention, feedback, and instruction. I challenge students to push themselves and their writing beyond their preconceived limits and into new spaces of discovery. It is in these new spaces of discovery where the exciting writing can truly begin. Our classroom should be a supportive environment that encourages the risk taking necessary for developing critical and creative skills. Students should be willing and able to push their writing and reading abilities beyond their current comfort zones, and they are responsible for helping to promote learning and growth in others. I encourage careful reading, develop stimulating critical and creative responses, and help facilitate fruitful discussions so that we all can work together toward the goal of writing more and more bravely every day.

### **E. J. Levy**

Teaching creative writing is rather like teaching a foreign language; as in language study, aspiring creative writers are aided by immersion in the vocabulary they seek to master—the variety of fiction and nonfiction forms. In my beginning creative writing classes, I aim to expose students to a range of formal possibilities for and schools of thought on the art of prose; I want them to understand that they are participating in a tradition. I provide a range of exercises to help them generate material and to experiment with the possibilities to see what works for them. At the same time, I encourage students to develop faith in their vision, to follow their interests and instincts, and to begin to see their lives and the world around them as worthy subjects for literature. Although the specific structure of classes varies with the subject matter and course level, in general I structure each course so that the first half of the term we discuss readings by masters of the form under consideration, and the second half we concentrate on student work. By the end of the term, I hope to have provided my students with (1) an adequate definition of the basic elements of the genre, (2) the tools to write fiction or nonfiction and techniques for its revision, (3) the opportunity to speak with me as often as necessary in one-on-one conferences, and (4) a comfortable but rigorous atmosphere in which to share their work.

Often students come to creative writing classes with concerns about talent: they want to know if they have the necessary gifts to write. I try to change that question, to create an environment in which students will ask instead: *What kind of writer am I? What interests me formally? What subjects most compel me? What stories do I have to tell?* I begin with the assumption that each student possesses a distinctive vision, a unique “psychic fingerprint” (to borrow a phrase from memoirist/novelist Michelle Herman), which we will work to discern and develop in class. In place of the intimidating T of Talent, I encourage students to focus on three alternative T’s fundamental to writing creative nonfiction: Tools for generating work, Techniques for revision, and Time to write.

### **Steven Schwartz**

One can’t say exactly how a teacher fits into a student’s development, only that the teacher is there to abbreviate a process that might take much longer on the writer’s own, to direct the writer to relevant readings and most important, to help the writer know how to revise the work. In this relationship the writer learns to trust the teacher, as well as to trust himself or herself, when to know a suggestion is right—true to the intent of the work—and when to respectfully pass on such advice. I’m particularly interested in helping students find the nexus of character, voice, and conflict in their work. My approach involves two directions: examining the work as an organic whole, analyzing structure on a large scale—a willingness to ask whether, for instance, the first seven pages, despite the wonderful writing, really belong. The other approach depends on more local attention: line-by-

line editing, word choice, transitions, all the details of craft. If there's magic in making stories work, it seems to me it happens as much in the revision process as in any initial inspiration. So much transformation can take place from one draft to another that it leaves one a little in awe (and hopeful) about the curative powers and small revolutions inherent in rewriting.

### **Sasha Steensen**

In *On Beauty and Being Just*, Elaine Scarry writes: "This willingness continually to revise one's own location in order to place oneself in the path of beauty is the basic impulse underlying education. One submits oneself to other minds in order to increase the chance that one will be looking in the right direction when a comet makes its sweep through a certain patch of sky." In the classroom, my primary goal is to encourage students to revise their locations, to consider new methods, models, and techniques so that they might stumble on beauty's path again and again. After all, the etymological root of invention is "to find," so looking with the utmost attention is crucial for the writer. Of course in the workshop, this involves careful and critical reading of texts produced not only by fellow students, but also by predecessors and contemporaries. I encourage students to view outside readings as models for their own writing and to use these texts to develop a vocabulary to constructively and considerately critique each other's work. But submitting oneself to other minds is only part of the struggle, and I ask students to document and articulate their own gathering, thinking, and writing processes. Although the most inspired moments of writing are often spontaneous and serendipitous, an understanding of one's own process is inherent in any sustainable writing practice. Poets are always re-newing—that is, the poem is both a response to the raw material that prompted it and a transformation of that raw material into something new. Watching oneself find and transform this material is what makes writing an activity. When we watch together, as a class, the chances that we might be looking in the right direction multiply.

## FORMS, FORMS, FORMS

Graduate school **forms and corresponding instructions** are available online at <http://graduateschool.colostate.edu/index.asp?url=forms>.

### **First and Second Years**

File the GS-6 form **in October** of your third semester at CSU, or when you've accrued 12 credits. The GS-6 is a forecast of the credits you'll take to complete your degree. List the courses required by the program on this sheet. If you end up taking different courses from what you list here, you'll be able to update this listing on the GS-25 form your third year.

To **change advisors or to change committee members**, you'll need the GS-9 form. Signatures are not required for members added to the committee, but you do need them from those being deleted. Signatures of both your new advisor and old advisor are required to switch advisors. Look under "Advising Guidelines" for more instructions.

### **Third year**

File the GS-25 form (Application for Graduation) by the **second week of your last semester**. You'll need to **compare your unofficial transcript to a copy of your GS-6** to complete this form.

The GS-24 form **must** be submitted **within two business days of your defense** to the Graduate School. The GS-24 is the Report of Final Exam Results, or in this case, the oral defense of your thesis. Each of your committee members needs to sign this form, so bring this to your oral defense. **You must submit your thesis electronically. Details for this process are online at <http://graduateschool.colostate.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation/index.aspx>. Pay special attention to the formatting instructions available through links on this page. You must also complete a Thesis Submission form and an Embargo Restriction Request form in order to submit your thesis electronically. Be sure to have at least ten days after your defense to complete this process.**

**Thesis and dissertations must now be filed online.** To protect your rights to your work, please fill out the necessary embargo forms. Embargo form must be filled out and filed and submitted with your thesis:

<http://www.graduateschool.colostate.edu/documents/Embargo-form.pdf?10/10/2013%208:50:57%20AM>

More information on electronic theses and embargos can be found on page 16.

## **ETDs (ELECTRONIC THESES AND DISSERTATIONS) AND EMBARGOS**

Keeping pace with national university policies, CSU has moved to an electronic format for the filing of theses and dissertations. Thus, as of spring 2011, CSU now requires that all theses and dissertations completed at the university be submitted electronically to ProQuest (UMI). An electronic repository, ProQuest provides access to graduate works for thousands of libraries around the world and is widely known and respected as the main searchable database for scholarly work. ProQuest provides advantages for libraries in that it streamlines storage and access processes and offers a redundant backup system. The electronic submission process eliminates the need to print these documents for final submission and allows students to pay online via credit card.

For many disciplines, having your work easily accessed via searchable databases is an asset. In Creative Writing, however, it may be a liability; filing your thesis with ProQuest constitutes First North American Serial Rights such that when and if you get your book published, you will find that you have, essentially, already published it with ProQuest. Depending on the press, this could be a problem. To that end, Creative Writing, along with the Graduate School and CSU Libraries, has crafted an Embargo Policy that protects the publication rights of your MFA thesis. You must follow this procedure exactly if you want to control your work. In essence, you must file your thesis electronically according to the Graduate School's requirements, and then request an embargo, using the GS-31 form, which your advisor must sign and submit to the Graduate School. This will limit access to your thesis to only the CSU community for two years. Once your thesis is received by ProQuest (within about six weeks), you can then contact ProQuest directly and request a permanent embargo. It is up to you to make sure that the permanent embargo is arranged with ProQuest. Please consult the Graduate School website for specific information (listed below) and attend an orientation meeting (offered each fall).

All the information you will need about electronic submission and embargos can be found here: <http://www.graduateschool.colostate.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation/>

## GTAS AND OTHER JOBS

There are a variety of paid positions through the CSU English Department. Those that provide the most financially are Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs). Most GTAs teach CO150 (College Composition). CO150 has a training program and extensive support system to help new teachers be successful. GTAs are provided tuition waivers and a stipend for the equivalent of nine months. These jobs are defined as twenty-hour-a-week jobs; most people find that the workload fluctuates above and below this number. To be a successful GTA and writer, it's important to manage your time and plan writing time into your schedule. **Applications for GTA positions are due on January 1.**

Unfortunately, CSU does not have the funding to offer a GTA to everyone. Other English Department positions that provide a stipend but not a tuition waiver include serving as advisor to *Greyrock Review* (the undergraduate literary magazine) and the manager for Eddy computer labs. E-mail announcements for applications for these positions go out to current MFA students in the spring semester. Students can also apply to work in the Writing Center. Tutoring in the Writing Center pays between \$10 and \$12 an hour, and tutors can work anywhere from two to twenty hours a week. Calls for applications for the Writing Center are usually sent out to incoming students in August or during the first week of classes. It's a great on-campus job, and many students who apply are able to work in the Writing Center. Those students who don't get GTAs can also search for professors who'd like an unpaid TA for an undergraduate class they are teaching, gaining experience that may help on a future GTA application. Faculty also hire students to do freelance writing and editing work. Most of these jobs are advertised via e-mail, so make sure your current e-mail address is on file with the university and department, and that you check it often.

Off-campus jobs include paid internships, which you can research through the CSU Career Center's website. Mary Hickey, CSU's internship coordinator, is also very helpful in arranging paid and unpaid internships. See the list of internships, under Internships and Service Opportunities for an idea of where people have worked in the past. Some of these internships, such as paid technical writing positions with Advanced Energy, have turned into full-time paid positions for MFA students after they've graduated. You can also find on-campus and off-campus Fort Collins jobs through Student Employment Services (<http://ses.colostate.edu/>), through the local newspaper's website (<http://coloradoan.com>) and through the university's newspaper, the *Collegian* (<http://www.collegian.com>). Other Northern Colorado job sites include [www.northerncoloradohelpwanted.com](http://www.northerncoloradohelpwanted.com), and [www.fortcollinsjobnetwork.com](http://www.fortcollinsjobnetwork.com).

Also, you can visit Student Financial Services for information about scholarships (<http://www.sfs.colostate.edu/j21000.cfm>) and grants (<http://www.sfs.colostate.edu/f20000.cfm>), both on-campus and off-campus. We have had students in the past who've received small scholarships, as well as large scholarships that include tuition and stipends. Research those that graduate students are eligible for through SFS's website.

MFA students also have the opportunity to teach Introduction to Creative Writing (E210) after taking Teaching Creative Writing (E684C). Those who do not have a GTA and teach E210 will be paid a modest stipend for their work teaching E210. For more information about E684C, talk to Todd Mitchell.

## **Tips for Writing a GTA Application**

The GTA application consists of three sections: Background and Experience; Statement of Interest; and Recent Writing Sample. Understanding what the selection committee is looking for in those three sections and writing for their expectations will strengthen your GTA application.

**Background and Experience:** Here you should describe any teaching, tutoring, undergraduate teaching assistantship work, any course grading for a professor, and any elementary and/or secondary school teaching. If you don't have direct classroom experience, describe any and all supervisory, training, coaching, or outdoor recreation experience. In short, describe your duties and experiences, and explain what you learned from any job or position in which you were a supervisor, instructor, or guide. Important: Remind your recommenders to speak to your potential for college teaching.

**Statement of Interest:** In this section, the committee wants to know about your future plans. Do you see teaching and writing as part of your life? Do you see teaching as a way to better understand writing—yours and others? Is teaching something you hoped to do as a graduate student, and are you enthusiastic about the opportunity? Make it clear that you are aware that GTAs teach their own freshman composition classes (that is, they do not assist professors); these are the courses you will be trained to teach. Also make it clear that you think having a GTA is an integral part of the graduate teaching experience, especially for a budding writer.

**Recent Writing Sample:** Include an edited and proofread copy of a recent piece of expository writing: a term paper for class, a research paper, a nonfiction essay, or, if you have none of these, a brief intellectual autobiography. Include a solid, strong sample of your writing, one in which you demonstrate your knowledge of and skill at expository writing, which you will be teaching.

## **GTA Selection Process**

When students apply to the MFA Program, they also have the option to apply for a Graduate Teaching Assistantship. What follows is a description of the process we go through in selecting applicants for teaching assistantships (GTAs).

Marnie Leonard, our administrative assistant in charge of graduate applications, starts a file upon receipt of an application. The file is placed in the appropriate section of a cabinet—fiction or poetry—and then materials such as letters of recommendation, graduate school application forms, and writing samples are collected in the file. If students want to be considered for teaching assistantships, they fill out a supplementary application declaring their interests. Remember to include a separate “teaching statement” (see above) with your application. This is in addition to your personal statement submitted with your application. Applications are due by January 1.

From here, the creative writing faculty take over. Each file is read by at least two faculty members and sometimes as many as four. When ranking students for teaching assistantships—as for admission—we most strongly consider the writing sample. We also look at GPA, letters of recommendation, job experience, and personal statements, but mainly it is the writing sample and the promise it shows that determine our selection. The fiction faculty meet as a group, as do the poetry faculty. Each group creates a ranked list of applicants recommended for GTAs. It's important to note that students currently in the program without GTAs form a part of this pool also. We strive to balance recognition of current students with recruitment of new ones in order to have the strongest program possible. We do strongly encourage GTA applicants already in the program to update their files with new letters of recommendation from CSU faculty, with current

writing samples, and with any other materials that would contribute to their qualifications as potential teachers.

After the poetry and fiction faculties create their respective lists, the lists are put together, alternating applicants from each genre. One year a poet is put at the top of the list, the next year a fiction writer.

Our ranked list is then submitted to a GTA selection committee made up of members from the different programs within the English Department. This committee reads all the files of applicants recommended for GTAs by the six different programs.

The GTA selection committee chooses GTAs with three factors in mind: the strengths of the individual applicants, balance across the six graduate programs in the department, and the needs of the composition program. Teaching and related experiences can play an important role in the selection process, particularly when evaluating applicants with similar strengths. The committee respects the rankings of the individual programs and takes care to preserve these rankings, but they are free to—and do—rearrange the rankings based on such factors as teaching experience, academic record, and the committee's own response to the application materials.

A final list from the GTA selection committee will most likely include applicants from all the programs. At this point, GTA offers are made in a first round to applicants. How many GTAs are offered depends foremost on the financial resources available for the upcoming year. It has to be noted that an incoming MFA student with a GTA receives three years of financial support from the department, a greater commitment than a student in the other English department programs, which have two-year durations.

Students extended these offers in the first round have a deadline by which to accept. Once they accept or decline, a second round of GTA offers goes out to other applicants. Depending on funds that become available to the department and how many people accept the first round of offers, students may hear late into spring or even summer about whether they will receive a GTA.

Our commitment is to support as many MFA students with GTAs as possible. But we are also constantly searching for alternative ways—internships, work-study, Writing Center employment, department opportunities—to provide resources and to bridge the gap for those who do not receive offers. In the meantime, we invite all students to apply for support and promise to evaluate their applications in a fair and timely manner.

## HOUSING IN FORT COLLINS

Some property management companies in Fort Collins include:

All Property Services, Inc. (<http://www.allpropertyservices.com>)  
Antares Property Management (<http://www.antareshproperty.com>), and  
Poudre Property Services (<http://www.poudreproperty.com>).

Also, check out the local newspaper, the *Coloradoan* (<http://www.coloradoan.com>), or CSU's newspaper, the *Collegian* ([www.collegian.com](http://www.collegian.com)).

Search online to locate other sites that assist with rental property searches. Many property management companies also have listings on Craigslist.

The best way to secure housing is to come to Fort Collins in the late spring or early summer, preferably during the week. Oftentimes, you can sign a lease that will start in August if you find a place in May. It's a college town, so some places are trashed and some landlords expect any person under thirty to be a bad tenant. There are, however, lots of nice, relatively affordable places within walking distance of campus. Some students find that the further they live from campus, the quieter their neighborhood is. We strongly recommend visiting Fort Collins, and the property you will be renting, rather than finding and leasing a place that you haven't seen.

### Housing Advice

Finding housing can be a daunting experience. There is a wide range of housing options in Fort Collins, from new apartments to old, practically antique houses—and everything in between. If you are searching from out of the area, you can search the *Coloradoan* online (see link above). Here are some housing hints.

The most affordable “student” housing is found surrounding campus. Much of this housing includes old houses that are shared by three to four roommates (sometimes more depending on the size of the house; note, however, that Fort Collins has a city ordinance that prohibits more than three unrelated people from occupying a property together:

<http://www.fcgov.com/neighborhoodservices/occupancy.php>).

Many of these houses will be cheaper rent-wise, but since many of them were built in the early 1900s, the electric and heating bills may be higher than average in the winter.

The Old Town area (north Fort Collins) is the hippest part of the city. The housing in this area usually provides a nice walk to Old Town, where the bars and music venues are located. There are also many fun, independently owned shops in this area and tons of restaurants. If you want an apartment or house with “character,” look in the area between the north edge of campus (Laurel Street) and Old Town. Rent prices go up the closer to Old Town you get, especially with studio apartments. When shopping online for studio apartments in Old Town, be sure to ask the landlord if the apartment has private or shared bathrooms (if you don't mind sharing bathrooms, youth hostel style, you may find some studios for lower prices).

The east end of campus has more houses for rent. There are more apartments past Lemay (near the hospital), but living there makes for a long walk or bike ride to campus.

The west side of campus is full of mostly undergrad housing. There are many townhomes and campus apartments on this edge of CSU. If you are seeking a quiet area to live, this is probably not the place. Rams Village is “party central” for undergrad students, as are many of the surrounding townhome complexes. However, further west toward Overland and Horsetooth Reservoir, things quiet down quite a bit.

The south end of town has more conservative, newer construction, and is more expensive. The south side of Fort Collins is more suburban with corporate chain stores readily available (i.e., Best Buy, Bed Bath and Beyond, etc). If you prefer the newest housing Fort Collins has to offer and don't mind driving to campus, this is the area for you.

Walking around campus, you can always find posters advertising rooms for rent.

## INTERNSHIPS AND SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

The English Department encourages experiential learning by offering for-credit internships to explore possible career paths before graduation. **At least 80 percent of the intern's duties should be directly related to his/her degree work and career objectives.**

- In order to register for internship credits, graduate students must have minimum cumulative GPAs of 3.0 and be enrolled in a graduate program. In addition, students must have approval from their academic advisor and internship coordinator, with required documents signed by intern, internship supervisor, and internship coordinator.
- Interns will be assessed for tuition and fees just as they are for academic credits.
- A wide variety of experience is possible: designing websites, writing articles and book reviews, teaching students in literacy programs, writing and editing newsletters and brochures for nonprofit agencies, etc. You may generate your own position in a field of interest, or you may pursue established local, regional, or national internship opportunities. Expect to invest about 40 hours for each credit hour earned. In the case of out-of-department internships, your final grade (S or U) will be assigned by Mary Hickey, Internship Coordinator, in consultation with your on-the-job supervisor. For internships conducted with a departmental faculty member, that faculty member will assign your grade.

Following is a list of internship opportunities that graduate and undergraduate students in the English at CSU have participated in:

### **Nonprofit Organizations:**

Bas Bleu Theatre  
Larimer County Partners Program  
Larimer Humane Society  
Littlest Angels  
Poets in the Park (Loveland)  
Poetry in Motion (a Colorado Poet Laureate Project)  
Trees, Water, People  
United Way

### **Publishing:**

*Bloomsbury Review* (Denver)  
Center for Literary Publishing/*Colorado Review*  
*Freestone*  
Interweave Press (Loveland)  
*Scene Magazine*  
University Press of Colorado (Boulder)

### **Businesses and Corporations:**

Advanced Energy  
All About Events

ExperiencePlus! Bicycle Tours  
Hewlett Packard

**Education:**

Kids at Work  
Poetry in Motion  
Poudre School District's International Baccalaureate Program  
Discovery Science Museum  
Teaching College English (Graduate students assist a CSU teacher of record in an undergraduate class)

For more information, please contact Mary Hickey, English Department Internship Coordinator: [Mary.Hickey@colostate.edu](mailto:Mary.Hickey@colostate.edu), 970-491-3418, Eddy 334. Also be sure to check out the internships page on the English Department website: <http://english.colostate.edu/undergrad/internships>

**OGSW (Organization of Graduate Student Writers)**

OGSW serves all graduate student writers through membership in the Associated Students of CSU (ASCSU). OGSW organizes, supports, and/or participates in the following activities:

- Provides a support group for the English graduate students and a way for them to have a unified voice in the English Department.
- Literacy Through Poetry (graduate students meet with elementary students weekly to work on reading skills)
- CSU Reading Series (contributes to cost of visiting author honorariums)
- 3 Voices Reading Series (this series is designed for first- or second-year MFA students and those in MA programs to give them an opportunity to share their work with the community)

As a recognized student organization, OGSW applies for funding through ASCSU to support the CSU Reading Series. OGSW fills the offices of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Creative Writing Committee Representative with graduate students from the English Department. OGSW strives to represent all graduate student writers by assisting with the above activities along with involvement in class offering and scheduling issues, advisor/advisee relationship issues, and other pertinent concerns of English graduate students. OGSW serves all needs of the English graduate students and exists for the sole purpose of contributing to the experience all English graduate students at CSU.

## **Literacy Through Poetry**

Initiated by Colorado Poet Laureate and CSU Emeritus Professor Mary Crow, Literacy Through Prose & Poetry (LPP) gives CSU graduate students and elementary students an opportunity to communicate and learn together through creative writing. Graduate student “apprentice writers” learn through seminars and campus visits to teach creative writing to elementary school students, and then use those skills to facilitate writing and reading among elementary students to enhance literacy.

The project aims to extend the uses of creative writing by harnessing student enjoyment of writing as a means to improving the level of literacy in Fort Collins elementary schools. Literacy Through Prose & Poetry seeks to engage children’s love for poetry and wordplay to help them become not only better readers, but also writers in their own right. So too, LPP aims to provide both internship credit and positive teaching experiences for graduate students interested in a wide range of literacy education.

## **Program Overview**

Literacy Through Poetry involves three basic components:

- judging the Martin Luther King Essay Contest, sponsored by the Poudre School District
- training to teach creative writing to elementary school students
- teaching creative writing to elementary school students in the Poudre School District

The judging of the Martin Luther King Essay contest occurs in December. Graduate students in the program screen and judge the contest. Also in the fall, LPP invites a “master writer” to discuss teaching elementary school students, facilitate workshops, and give readings for the apprentice writers. After their training, the graduate students work with a teacher in the Fort Collins area to teach eight one-hour writing sessions, culminating in a publication and a reading. Literacy Through Prose & Poetry provides an opportunity for children to explore poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, and will hopefully inspire them to continue reading and writing throughout their lifetime.

## **Graduate Student Participation**

An indefinite number of graduate students may participate in LPP. Graduate students who participate in LPP are given internship credit for their involvement at the rate of one credit for every forty hours of work. In addition, a small honorarium is provided for their services. More specifically, students in the program:

- develop appropriate lesson plans and readings
- write official reports and personal narratives on their visits
- record elementary school readers
- produce exit narratives of their experiences in LPP

## **Center for Literary Publishing/ *Colorado Review***

One of the many great benefits of our MFA program is that it offers its graduate students the opportunity to intern at the Center for Literary Publishing, which publishes the tri-quarterly journal *Colorado Review*, as well as the Colorado Prize for Poetry and Mountain West Poetry book series. Any graduate student in the English Department may register for 1 to 5 credits at the Center each semester. For each credit, the intern works at three hours the Center weekly.

While fulfilling an internship, students learn about the publishing business and participate in the following tasks: reading submissions (fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, and book reviews), copyediting, typesetting, proofreading, designing books, and working with social media (the CLP website, blog, Facebook, Twitter, etc.). Ultimately, students learn and practice valuable skills that have helped alumni acquire jobs in publishing and other related fields.

Anyone considering a career in publishing or wanting to see what goes on behind the scenes at a literary press is strongly encouraged to register for an internship with the Center. Please contact Stephanie G'Schwind at [Stephanie.Gschwind@colostate.edu](mailto:Stephanie.Gschwind@colostate.edu) for registration details. For more information on *Colorado Review* and other Center activities, please visit <http://coloradoreview.colostate.edu>.

## PUBLICATIONS

### *Colorado Review*

A nationally recognized literary magazine. See pp. 24–25 for more information.

### *Greyrock Review*

This undergraduate literary magazine is run by students, with a graduate student who works as an advisor. The graduate student advisor is paid for this work. Working as the advisor to *Greyrock Review* gives a graduate student teaching experience and experience with literary magazines.

## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### Workshops (E640)

You must take 12 credits (usually taken as four 3-credit courses) of E640, in fiction or poetry. You also have the option of taking the nonfiction workshop as an elective. Keep in mind the specific requirements and focus of each workshop depend on the instructor. It is assumed that students accepted into the workshop already command a critical vocabulary.

#### A. Fiction

Group discussion of original student fiction, emphasizing plot, characterization, style, structure, and theory. Students will normally submit one substantial story or chapter per credit hour and will be responsible for revising their own work as well as providing detailed evaluations of all work submitted to the workshop.

#### B. Poetry

This graduate workshop provides the student poet with an audience made up of instructor and fellow students who read the student's work in advance and offer analysis and suggestions in weekly class meetings. Since one of the main aims of the course is to help students develop a body of work, students who enroll are expected to produce poems every week and to be open to criticism offered in class discussion. At the end of the term, poems written during that semester may be resubmitted as a portfolio in revised versions.

#### C. Creative Nonfiction

This is a writing workshop that challenges students to learn, through reading and a lot of writing practice, ways in which to conceive, research, write, and critique literary nonfiction—from personal essays to reportage-based literary journalism.

### Form & Technique (E513)

You must take one 3-credit course of E513, fiction or poetry. You may also take E513 nonfiction as an elective course. Keep in mind the specific requirements and focus of this class vary with instructors.

#### A. Fiction

This is a reading and discussion class about the way a wide variety of modern and contemporary fiction writers use form and technique. Focus will be on the writer's point of view and on the relationship between theory and practice. Typical discussion might cover the ways in which theme is developed through voice, plot, characterization, tone, and so forth. The course, though not a history of contemporary fiction, may cover trends in fiction from the modernists to the present day—realism, metafiction, minimalism, etc.

#### B. Poetry

This course examines individual poems and critical writings by major modern poets in an effort to establish relationships between theory and practice, between poetics and poetry. It usually will trace some sources of modern and contemporary trends as they take their beginnings in the nineteenth century. Major precursors such as Whitman, Dickinson, and Hopkins may be included as well as the French Symbolists for the backgrounds they provide in understanding twentieth-century modernist poetry. Technical and formal issues such as

the use of persona, imagery, rhythm, rhyme, stanzaic form, poetic line, diction, and figurative language will provide continuity as the course moves through literary history and such movements as Imagism and Surrealism toward the contemporary period.

### **C. Creative Nonfiction**

This reading and discussion class explores a wide variety of contemporary literary nonfiction books and shorter forms and focuses on the writer's point of view—specifically on questions such as

“How did the writer accomplish the structure of this work?”

“How might you do this, too?”

“How do voice, plotting, characterization, and other techniques typical of the fiction writer help develop themes in nonfiction?”

“What kinds of research are needed to help create a credible story?”

This class might look at personal essays and any number of creative nonfiction books in the following genres or areas of interest: memoir, nature or environmental writing, science, travel, anthropology, immersion reporting, history.

### **Out-of-Department Class**

One 3-credit course (300 level or above) outside the English Department (unless your bachelor's degree was not in English) is required. In the past, students have used classes such as playwriting (offered through the Theater and Music Department) or science writing (listed as CM640) to satisfy this requirement.

### **Pre-Twentieth-Century Class**

You must take one 3-credit course concentrating on pre-twentieth-century literature at the 500 level or above. At least one course meeting this requirement is offered each semester. Contact the professor if you have questions about whether a given class will fulfill this requirement.

### **Transferring Credits**

You may transfer up to 9 credits from other graduate institutions toward completion of your degree here at Colorado State University. You will need a transcript from each graduate institution you, as well as a course description for each course you want transferred. Foreign language credits are subject to the approval of the Foreign Languages and Literature Department at CSU.

### **Portfolio**

The portfolio is designed to allow for an accurate and thorough assessment of a student's progress in the program, while granting a student maximum time for writing and study. You may complete the portfolio requirements by choosing one of the following two options:

#### **Option A**

1. A sample critical paper from a literature course.
2. A sample paper from a craft course (Form and Technique, Narrative Voice, The Short Story, etc.).
3. A sample of your creative work: one story or a group of poems selected from the thesis.
4. A self-assessment of your teaching, internship, or service while in the program. The self-evaluation should discuss how any (or all) of the positions above helped you to become a

better writer and critical thinker. You may also include a supervisor's evaluation of your teaching or internship.

5. An annotated bibliography. The annotated bibliography must include a minimum of 50 works, 20 of which must be full-length books. The rest of the works can be made up of short stories, poems, creative nonfiction, critical articles, and other primary and secondary sources. Fifteen to twenty annotations are to be submitted to the advisor over the course of each year in the MFA Program.

### **Option B**

1. A sample critical paper from a literature course.
2. A sample paper from a craft course (Form and Technique, Narrative Voice, The Short Story, etc.).
3. A sample of your creative work: one story or a group of poems selected from the thesis.
4. A self-assessment of your teaching, internship, or service while in the program. The self-evaluation should discuss how any (or all) of the positions above helped you to become a better writer and critical thinker. You may also include a supervisor's evaluation of your teaching or internship.
5. An annotated bibliography. The annotated bibliography must include a minimum of 25 annotations, 10 of which must be full-length books. The rest of the works can be made up of short stories, poems, creative nonfiction, critical articles, and other primary and secondary sources. Five to ten annotations are to be submitted to the advisor over the course of each year in the MFA Program. You may choose to annotate texts that will be central to your critical paper (see below).
6. A substantial critical paper of 25 pages or more. Papers can focus on an individual author, a formal technique or development, a contemporary thematic concern, or a literary movement. You will devise your paper topic in consultation with your advisor.

The portfolio will be evaluated in your final semester—a prerequisite to the oral defense—by your advisor. It must be submitted to your advisor three weeks before the oral defense. Other committee members may request to see all or some of your portfolio at this time as well.

A note on reading lists and annotations: In addition to the lists in **Appendix A**, suggested reading lists will be provided, although these are recommendations and not meant to be prescriptive. Ideally, the readings should arise out of suggestions from faculty members and peers, in the course of workshops or classes, from the reading lists, from informal discussions, or from your own digging around for useful and important texts. You should consider a balance between classics and more contemporary work, a portfolio that represents an informed and yet personal perspective on your genre.

Annotations should be no less than one page and should focus on matters of form and technique, and/or should place the work in a critical/historical context. We encourage you to include several annotations of international works. No plot summaries. You may not annotate works read for courses while in the program; the works must be in addition to your required course readings and should represent a selection that has contributed to your intellectual growth as a writer, editor, and critic. Annotations should be dated. You may choose to use the Writing Studio, located on CSU's Writing@CSU website (<http://writing.colostate.edu>), to help record and organize your entries. Here you can create your own projects and manage your working bibliography. Once you create your

login, you can access the bibliography section under “Tools.” For sample annotations, please see **Appendix B**.

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Will the contents of my portfolio be evaluated on their merit to determine whether I pass or fail the portfolio?*

We intend the evaluation to be a quantitative more than qualitative measurement. We won't be second-guessing the professor who has already graded your literature or craft paper. The bibliography will be evaluated as to whether the format has been followed and the minimum number of entries included. The essay will be read and critiqued by your advisor.

*Can I include more than one work by the same author in the bibliography?*

Yes. We no longer require students to study a major author and read all of that author's works. But you are encouraged to find an author of interest and influence for you and read a selection of the author's works.

*When should I start on the bibliography and where do I get suggestions for what to read?*

The annotated bibliography should be started during your first year in the program and should represent your reading—and varying interests—over your time here. Suggestions for what to read will come from your instructors, the reading lists, your fellow students, and from your own digging and discoveries. The principal responsibility, however, for generating a list of works comes from you, not your advisor.

*What should my annotation focus on?*

Your annotation, at least a page in length, should focus on some element(s) of craft in the work that you found useful to your development as a writer and critical thinker. See examples in **Appendix B**.

*Is there a required format for compiling my annotations?*

No. How you decide to arrange your annotations is up to you. You should put them together in a way that makes sense and will be understandable by your committee members. Some students have arranged their annotations by type (nonfiction, fiction, short stories, craft, etc.) and some have arranged them alphabetically. If you are concerned about the format, discuss this with your advisor.

*Do I have to teach in order to fulfill the portfolio requirements?*

No. You may fulfill the requirement by teaching, service to the program (e.g., serving as president of OGSW, creative writing committee representative, etc.), an internship, or other options such as working in the Writing Center. We hope, however, that you will take advantage of a number of opportunities in the program—teaching, internship, service—as time allows.

*Do I have to sign up for an internship?*

No, though most students find an internship helpful as hands-on experience for gaining future job opportunities and for their development as writers.

*What internships will count for credit in the portfolio?*

An extensive list of internships is included in the handbook. Students should see **Mary Hickey** (334 Eddy; **Mary.Hickey@colostate.edu**) for more information.

## Thesis

Thesis information is available online at <http://graduateschool.colostate.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation/index.aspx>

You should **choose thesis committee members by October of your third semester**. Your committee should consist of your advisor, another Creative Writing graduate faculty member, and a professor from outside the English Department. Use the GS-9 form to change advisor or committee members, and the GS-24 upon completion for approval of your thesis.

You may defend your thesis only after you successfully complete the portfolio, all course work, and program requirements. **Your oral defense must also take place by approximately the ninth week of either the fall or spring semester**. Deadlines change from year to year, so please check with the graduate school to confirm the deadline for defenses. As well, your committee should have your thesis at least three weeks before your defense date. Plan your schedule accordingly.

### *Format*

**Note: A thesis must follow the Graduate School's formatting guidelines before it will be accepted by the Graduate School.**

The **preliminary pages** are the title page, copyright page, abstract page, table of contents, and the acknowledgements, etc. The **body** is the work itself.

The thesis will be prefaced by an introduction, which is a brief discussion of the aesthetics behind your work. The introduction should be tailored to your specific concerns. Topics covered in the introduction can include influences, issues of craft, background, development as a writer, and evaluation of the works in the thesis. Before writing the introduction, it is very helpful to visit the library and read former MFA candidates' theses. Some theses can be found in the stacks and other, newer theses, will be online. The introduction can also be included as an afterward, if you and your advisor so choose. Once the full committee approves the thesis and introduction, you will take an hour-long oral defense of your thesis.

### *Poetry thesis*

A poetry thesis is defined as a book-length collection of poetry. Therefore, a thesis will have the number of pages and the quality of work that make publication a possibility, at least 48 double-spaced pages. These pages do not include the preliminaries.

### *Fiction thesis*

A fiction thesis is defined as a book-length collection of stories or a novel. Therefore, a thesis will have the number of pages and the quality of work that make publication a possibility, at least 8 short stories or no less than 100 pages, double-spaced. These pages do not include the preliminaries.

### ***Double-genre thesis***

While you are enrolled in either the poetry or fiction track as an MFA candidate at CSU, you may wish to complete a double-genre thesis.

If you wish to have a thesis that includes poetry and fiction, you must take E513 for both genres. You must compile 12 total workshop credits in the genre in which you were admitted to the program. You must also take at least one workshop (3 credits) in the genre you wish to add to your thesis. For example, a poetry student writing a poetry/fiction thesis who takes both E513 A and B must take 12 credits in poetry workshops and at least 3 in fiction workshops.

Your committee must consist of two co-advisors and one faculty member outside the department. You must have one co-advisor for each genre represented in your thesis. The co-advisors will work with you as you write your thesis; their response to your work will most likely focus on their respective genre. Ideally, the double-genre thesis will be a unified work of both genres.

To include nonfiction in your thesis, you must have the approval of your advisor. You are still required to compile 12 workshop credits along with E513 in your admitted genre, as well as E513 (Form and Technique) for nonfiction and at least one workshop (three credits) in nonfiction.

### ***How to Set Up a Thesis Committee***

Your thesis committee is composed of two departmental faculty members, one of whom is your advisor, and one outside-department faculty member. The biggest challenge people usually encounter in recruiting their committee members is finding someone outside of the department. Contrary to rumors, there is no list available of out-of-department people who are willing to be on your thesis committee. Most people recruit someone they have taken a class from (i.e., while fulfilling the out-of-the-department course) or someone who has previously served on a committee and was recommended. Ask your advisor and/or fellow students for recommendations.

## READINGS AND THE WRITING COMMUNITY

### Student Readings

As a student, you will have many opportunities to read your work. OGSW (the Organization of Graduate Student Writers) hosts The Three Voices Reading Series, which is open to all English graduate students. These readings are casual, with one poet, one fiction writer, and one nonfiction writer.

One of the more formal opportunities is a public reading during the third year of your course work at CSU. The reading is considered a capstone to your career as a graduate student writer and a chance to invite family members and others to hear what you've been doing the past three years. Typically, your advisor will introduce you since s/he is most familiar with your work. As our faculty have reading engagements and responsibilities of their own, you should contact your advisor about this well in advance of your reading.

The Assistant to the Director of Creative Writing will coordinate the date and time of your reading and will send out an announcement at the end of your second year asking your preference of available dates. The Assistant will also handle the publicity, room set-up, etc. All you have to do is show up and read.

There are also many other opportunities to read around town. Many coffee houses and bookstores sponsor open mics, as does OGSW and *Greyrock Review*, the undergraduate literary magazine.

### CSU Creative Writing Program's Reading Series

This series, sponsored in part by the English Department and OGSW, brings local, national, and international writers to give readings at CSU. Students have the opportunity to serve on the Reading Series Committee and suggest visiting readers. Some readers will host a workshop/discussion about craft, often just for MFA students. Students also have the opportunity to go to potlucks, lunch, and receptions with visiting readers. MFAs make the reading series possible through participation in OGSW, and through setting up and organizing readings. These events are always free.

### CSU Creative Nonfiction Thesis Readings

This series is sponsored by the English Department, and one reading is held in the fall and the spring semesters. The readers are candidates for the Masters in Creative Nonfiction and the readings are always free and held in a local venue, either on campus or nearby.

### Other Local Readings

Other Front Range universities, like the University of Denver and University of Colorado, host readings themselves. Since these schools are about an hour's drive from CSU, MFAs can easily take advantage of what these schools' readings series have to offer. There are many readings in the Fort Collins community. This information usually gets distributed through the English Department's e-mail list.

### Writing Community

One of the things that CSU's Creative Writing Program prides itself on is having a strong community of writers. Creating this community requires student and faculty involvement. Our reading series, and the potlucks before and receptions afterward, give students an opportunity to

mingle with each other, faculty, and visiting readers. OGSW events, including meetings, readings, open mics, and writing retreats, give graduate students time to hang out together. There are also, of course, informal parties, beer grabbings, and dinners. The most important part of maintaining this writing community is your involvement. You show up, and the community continues to grow and thrive. You will find that you will get back whatever you put in. Some of the friendships made here will last a lifetime.

## THE CSU MFA EXPERIENCE

### First Year

It's best to arrive in Fort Collins several weeks, if not a month, before classes start, so that you can find an apartment, get settled, register your car, and do other necessary things before classes start. Plan to be a bit overwhelmed at first, especially if you are a GTA. It is grad school, after all. Remember why you are here: to write, write, write. Remember that you would not have been accepted if our faculty did not see talent in your writing. Now is the time to make connections with other students and faculty, figure out CSU, and get acquainted with Fort Collins. There will be a picnic before the first day of classes to meet and greet fellow first years, second- and third- year students, and faculty.

Get involved with OGSW and internships, go to readings, and get to know your fellow writers. The best way to meet other students and former students is to attend these events. If you don't have a GTA, it can be a little bit easier to get lost in the shuffle, so attending OGSW meetings and readings will help you to get to know other MFAs. If you didn't have a GTA your first year, you may choose to reapply in January of your first year.

### Second Year

Remember to take time to write over the summer—it's a good time to focus on your work without the distraction of required classes, and many MFAs find that they can get a great deal of work done during the summertime.

Being in your second year is kind of like being the middle child, you're neither here nor there. You're wise about the ways of CSU now, but you're not a third-year about to leave the nest. Many students find that they're the most productive during their second year—they are used to the program, but they don't yet have the stress of writing a thesis. You can start thinking about what you might focus on in your thesis. Many students try to get all their requirements out of the way during their first and second years, so make sure to look closely at your requirement checklist so that you can focus on your thesis during your third year. Keep reading for your annotated bibliography.

### Third Year

Your job your third year is to write your thesis. *Start early, revise often* might be your motto. Also, look to the future: apply for fellowships, jobs, and keep submitting to magazines and contests. Get your work and yourself out there. Get your portfolio together, and make sure to submit it to your committee before your thesis defense. If you have been working on your annotated bibliography all along, this will be no sweat. Keep an eye out for the graduate school's many deadlines, and make sure to meet them.

Another major event during your third year is your MFA reading. Invite your friends, family, enemies you want to make bitterly jealous, whomever you'd like. Expect your mom to cry after your introduction. It's all about you (and the other person or two who are reading with you), so have a party.

## APPENDIX A: SUGGESTED READING

These lists are not exhaustive. Please be sure to work with your advisor to tailor your reading and annotation list.

### FICTION

#### Novels:

*Bastard Out of Carolina*, Dorothy Allison  
*Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austen  
*Pride and Prejudice*, Austen  
*Emma*, Austen  
*The Hiding Place*, Trezza Azzopardi  
*Continental Drift*, Russell Banks  
*Nightwood*, Djuna Barnes  
*The Adventures of Augie March*, Saul Bellow  
*Herzog*, Bellow  
*Humboldt's Gift*, Bellow  
*Jane Eyre*, C. Bronte  
*Villette*, C. Bronte  
*Wuthering Heights*, E. Bronte  
*The Way of All Flesh*, Samuel Butler  
*The Awakening*, Kate Chopin  
*Disgrace*, J. M. Coetzee  
*Waiting for the Barbarians*, J. M. Coetzee  
*Mrs. Bridge*, Evan Connell  
*The Leatherstocking Tales*, James Fenimore Cooper  
*Hopscotch*, Julio Cortazar  
*The Hours*, Michael Cunningham  
*The Red Badge of Courage*, Stephen Crane  
*Moll Flanders*, Daniel Defoe  
*Libra*, Don DeLillo  
*White Noise*, DeLillo  
*Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens  
*Bleak House*, Dickens  
*Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens  
*Play It As It Lays*, Joan Didion  
*Crime and Punishment*, Fyodor Dostoevsky  
*The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky  
*Castle Rackrent*, Edgeworth  
*Look at Me*, Jennifer Egan  
*Middlemarch*, George Eliot  
*Daniel Deronda*, George Elliot  
*The Sound and the Fury*, William Faulkner  
*Tom Jones*, Henry Fielding  
*The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald  
*Madame Bovary*, Gustave Flaubert  
*A Sentimental Education*, Flaubert

*Desperate Characters*, Paula Fox  
*The Death of Artemio Cruz*, Carlos Fuentes  
*Fat City*, Leonard Gardner  
*Caleb Williams*, William Godwin  
*Dead Souls*, Nikolai Gogol  
*The End of the Affair*, Graham Greene  
*The Power and the Glory*, Greene  
*The Quiet American*, Greene  
*Hunger*, Knut Hamsun  
*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Thomas Hardy  
*Jude the Obscure*, Hardy  
*The House of the Seven Gables*, Nathaniel Hawthorne  
*A Moveable Feast*, Ernest Hemingway  
*The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway  
*A Hazard of New Fortunes*, William Dean Howells  
*Portrait of a Lady*, Henry James  
*The American*, James  
*Who's Irish?* Gish Jen  
*Ulysses*, James Joyce  
*Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce  
*Thumbsucker*, Walter Kirn  
*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Milan Kundera  
*The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Kundera  
*Under the Volcano*, Malcolm Lowry  
*Death in Venice*, Thomas Mann  
*The Magic Mountain*, Mann  
*One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez  
*Property*, Valerie Martin  
*Everything in This Country Must*, Colum McCann  
Lots of novels to choose from, Cormac McCarthy  
*That Night*, Alice McDermott  
*Atonement*, Ian McEwan  
*Moby Dick*, Herman Melville  
*Billy Budd*, Melville  
*The Good Mother*, Sue Miller  
*Like Life*, Lorrie Moore  
*Beloved*, Toni Morrison  
*The Book and the Brotherhood*, Iris Murdoch  
*The Philosopher's Pupil*, Murdoch  
*A River Runs Through It*, Norman Maclean  
*Pnin*, Vladimir Nabokov  
*McTeague*, Frank Norris  
*Eugene Onegin*, Aleksandr Pushkin  
*Clarissa*, Samuel Richardson  
*Housekeeping*, Marilynne Robinson  
*The Radetzky March*, Joseph Roth  
*The Human Stain*, Philip Roth  
*Sabbath's Theater*, Philip Roth

*Mating*, Norman Rush  
*Why Did I Ever*, Mary Robison  
*Everything Is Illuminated*, Jonathan Safran Foer  
*Civil Warland in Bad Decline and Other Stories*, George Saunders  
*Austerlitz*, W. G. Sebald  
*Caucasia*, Danzy Senna  
*Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley  
*Red and Black*, Stendahl  
*Tristram Shandy*, Laurence Sterne  
*Vanity Fair*, William Makepeace Thackeray  
*War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy  
*Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy (new translation)  
*A Sportsman's Notes*, Ivan Turgenev  
*Fathers and Sons*, Turgenev  
*The Master*, Colm Toibin  
*Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain  
*The Age of Innocence*, Edith Wharton  
*The House of Mirth*, Wharton  
*Birdy*, William Wharton  
*Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf  
*The Waves*, Woolf  
*To the Lighthouse*, Woolf  
*Revolutionary Road*, Richard Yates

**Short Novels/Novellas:**

*Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad  
*Notes from the Underground*, Fyodor Dostoyevsky  
*So Long, See You Tomorrow*, William Maxwell  
*Bartleby the Scrivener*, Herman Melville  
*Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, Katherine Anne Porter  
*The Age of Grief*, Jane Smiley  
*The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, Leo Tolstoy  
*Miss Lonelyhearts* and *The Day of the Locusts*, Nathaniel West

**Story Collections:**

*The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, Sherman Alexie  
*The Collected Stories*, Isaac Babel  
*Ship Fever and Other Stories*, Andrea Barrett  
*Come Back, Dr. Calagari*, Donald Barthelme  
*Come to Me*, Amy Bloom  
*The Sheltering Sky & Collected Stories*, Paul Bowles  
*Emperor of the Air*, Ethan Canin  
*Where I'm Calling From*, Raymond Carver  
*Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*, Sandra Cisneros  
*Adultery and Other Choices*, Andre Dubus  
*Drown*, Junot Diaz  
*All Around Atlantis*, Deborah Eisenberg  
*Rock Springs: Stories*, Richard Ford

*Because They Wanted To*, Mary Gaitskill  
*The Collected Stories*, Mavis Gallant  
*The Collected Stories*, Hemingway  
*Collected Stories*, Henry James  
*Jesus' Son*, Denis Johnson  
*The Pugilist at Rest*, Thom Jones  
*Dubliners*, James Joyce  
*The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, Franz Kafka  
*Lovers for a Day*, Ivan Klima  
*The Magic Barrel*, Bernard Malamud  
*Birds of America*, Lorrie Moore  
*The Things They Carried*, Tim O'Brien  
*The Complete Stories*, Flannery O'Connor  
*The Collected Stories*, Katherine Anne Porter  
*The Collected Stories*, William Trevor  
*A Curtain of Green and Other Stories*, Eudora Welty  
*In the Garden of the North American Martyrs*, Tobias Wolff  
*The Collected Stories*, Richard Yates

**Books/Essays on Craft and Criticism:**

“The Literature of Exhaustion” and “The Literature of Replenishment,” John Barth in *The Friday Book: Essays and Other Nonfiction*, Putnam, NY, 1984  
*Burning Down the House*, Charles Baxter  
*Bringing the Devil to His Knees*, Baxter and Turchi, Eds.  
*The Story Behind the Story*, Baxter and Turchi, Eds.  
*The Uses of Literature*, Italo Calvino  
*The White Album*, Joan Didion  
*Political Fictions*, Didion  
*Living by Fiction*, Annie Dillard  
*Unacknowledged Legislation*, Christopher Hitchens  
*On Moral Fiction*, John Gardner  
*The Art of Fiction*, John Gardner  
*The Art of the Novel*, Milan Kundera  
*Mystery & Manners*, Flannery O'Connor  
*The Habit of Being*, Flannery O'Connor  
*The Lonely Voice*, Frank O'Connor  
*Art and Ardor*, Cynthia Ozick  
*Curious Attractions: Essays on Writing*, Debra Spark  
*Against Interpretation*, Susan Sontag  
*AIDS as Metaphor*, Susan Sontag  
*A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*, David Foster Wallace  
*On Becoming a Writer*, Eudora Welty

**Recommended Authors for General Work:**

James Baldwin  
John Cheever  
Anton Chekhov

Alice Munro  
Gabriel Garcia Marquez  
Leo Tolstoy  
Eudora Welty  
Flannery O'Connor  
Henry James  
Joan Didion  
Ernest Hemingway  
William Faulkner  
The Brontës

## POETRY

### Recommended Authors for General Work:

A. R. Ammons  
John Ashbery  
W. H. Auden  
Amiri Baraka  
Charles Bernstein  
John Berryman  
Elizabeth Bishop  
Louise Bogan  
Evan Boland  
Gwendolyn Brooks  
Anne Carson  
Lucile Clifton  
Hart Crane  
Robert Creeley  
E. E. Cummings  
Diane DiPrima  
Hilda Doolittle [HD]  
Mark Doty  
Rita Dove  
Robert Duncan  
T. S. Eliot  
Robert Frost  
Allen Ginsberg  
Louise Gluck  
Jorie Graham  
Barbara Guest

Joy Harjo  
Robert Hayden  
Lyn Hejinian  
Seamus Heaney  
Geoffrey Hill  
Susan Howe  
Langston Hughes  
Randall Jarrell  
Robinson Jeffers  
Yusef Komunyakaa  
Maxine Kumin  
Philip Larkin  
Ann Lauterbach  
Denise Levertov  
Audre Lorde  
Robert Lowell  
Gerard Manley Hopkins  
Bernadette Mayer  
W.S. Merwin  
Marianne Moore  
Lorine Niedecker  
Josephine Miles  
Frank O'Hara  
George Oppen  
Charles Olson  
Sylvia Plath

Ezra Pound  
Claudia Rankine  
Kenneth Rexroth  
Adrienne Rich  
Theodore Roethke  
Muriel Rukeyser  
Sonia Sanchez  
Leslie Scalapino  
Anne Sexton  
Ron Silliman  
Gary Snyder  
Gary Soto  
Jack Spicer  
William Stafford  
Gertrude Stein  
Wallace Stevens  
Cole Swensen  
Dylan Thomas  
Anne Waldman  
Rosmarie Waldrop  
Richard Wilbur  
William Carlos Williams  
James Wright  
Charles Wright  
W. B. Yeats  
Louis Zukofsky

## APPENDIX B: SAMPLE ANNOTATIONS

These sample annotations have been taken directly from past students' submitted portfolios (the student's name is in parentheses following the annotation). Each entry is a little different in that the student's style and format were maintained as much as possible to display the different ways to arrange the bibliography. Remember to be consistent when you put your own bibliography together, and be sure to consult your advisor as you devise your own lists. You can find additional examples of annotations on the Creative Writing blog. Annotations are organized first by program and then alphabetically, and you will find a range of texts represented—novels, books of poetry, craft and theoretical texts, etc.

### Fiction Program

**Bass, Rick. "Wild Horses." *The Watch: Stories*. W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. New York: 1989.**

There are some interesting and surprising uses of secondary characters in Rick Bass' story "Wild Horses." The first two secondary characters who appear have no actual life in the story. Karen's husband is introduced in the third sentence as a man who "had run away with another woman after only six months" (147) only to be disposed of in the fourth sentence, written off as someone Karen thinks about every so often. The next character, Henry, is introduced in the second paragraph as a man who "had drowned in the Mississippi the day before [he and Karen] were to be married" (147). The placement of these secondary characters within the story should immediately signify something to the reader about their functions—they are here not to "exist" in the story, but merely to introduce Karen, to give a roundness to the main character, to give a sense of her situation, her disappointing past. Henry also helps Bass introduce the story's other main character, Sydney, as Sydney is present when Henry dies. Within only a few paragraphs, thanks to Karen's husband and Henry, the stage is set for the heroes of the story—Karen and Sydney.

But the character of Henry performs a function beyond simply debuting the stars of the show, as is suggested by the sentence following the revelation of his death: "They never even found the body" (147). Though he doesn't have a speaking role, or any real action in the story besides jumping from a bridge, Henry's presence is felt throughout. The empty space he is *supposed* to take up affects the actions and gestures of the primary characters; Henry's conspicuous absence causes them to react to one another. Sydney allows Karen to take her anger out on him—to beat him—because of that emptiness; this is not an action solely transferred from Karen to Sydney and vice versa, but an action transferred from Henry's death to Sydney, to Karen. Likewise, at a moment when Sydney gets too close to Karen—holds her hand—she responds not only to Sydney's touch, but to the absence of Henry's touch, leading Sydney to confess that he had pushed Henry off the bridge, a lie less in response to Karen's repulsion than to his own guilt at having been present and helpless to save Henry. Henry pushes these characters throughout the story, brings them closer, pulls them apart, initiates conflict, provokes action, as if every scene possesses not two characters but three, each moving about the others, each with his/her own objective, each contributing to the story's forward progression.

Another interesting secondary character is Dr. Lynly, the veterinarian who takes Karen on as an assistant. Every screenwriter knows that when dealing with a love story—and "Wild Horses" is a

kind of love story—the two primary voices grow weary, the space of two lovers claustrophobic, lacking in context and complexity. The solution: give the lovers friends they can run off to, ask opinions of, get life coaching from. Though Bass manages to avoid these love story tropes, Dr. Lynly does provide a similar function to the “best friends” of the romantic comedy/drama: a breath of fresh air, a movement away from the two-person play. When Karen goes to work, she is able to gain perspective on her relationship with Sydney, to appreciate Sydney’s devotion to her, to see how Lynly’s animals either heal by trudging forward through the pain or die, and thusly, Karen can reach her turning point—the recognition that she is the one to nurse Sydney through *his* pain, not the other way around.

In addition to character growth, Bass is able to layer his story by offering a way for the reader to critically engage with Karen and Sydney’s story. That the story steps aside and explores the world of this veterinarian is a signal to the reader to pay attention, that these scenes will feed the reader’s interpretation of the central struggle, and of the characters within that struggle. That Sydney breaks horses and Lynly heals horses is no coincidence—at least not in terms of the presentation of a story. Even though they never have a scene together, Sydney and Lynly are connected; they do have a thematic relationship. Where at times they even seem foils to one another—Karen’s two suitor-types; Sydney’s love of horses and Lynly’s dismissal of them (something Karen notices, something that deepens her connection with Sydney)—they are made to coexist in this story to allow for Bass’ exploration of the story’s themes—the healing process, the caregiver/patient relationship—and of the character’s complexities—the relationship Karen recognizes between the tired, old mule and Sydney, increasing the stakes in a way that a story between Sydney and Karen alone could not do. Only after witnessing the mule, so close to death, does Karen, and the reader, see how close Sydney is to death, how tortuous and fatal his guilt is.

If a story is to have both forward motion and depth, secondary characters are a necessity; a character alone in a room cannot move forward, cannot explore his/her own complexities, let alone others’. For this purpose, Bass offers Henry as a way to introduce the primary characters’ relationship with one another and to incite their struggles—a tool for the story’s forward movement. And as if Bass realized partway through the story (when Sydney and Karen have a near climactic moment, Karen raising a gun to Sydney with 13 pages still to go), that the story was moving but not deepening, he offers Dr. Lynly, a character and a place for the story to take a side-step, to delve into the themes and complexities, to increase and complicate the reader’s, and the characters’, understanding of the story. (Nick Maistros)

**Cather, Willa. “Paul’s Case.” 1920. *The Collected Stories of Willa Cather*. New York: Vintage, 1992. Print.**

I don’t know the first work of fiction that demonstrated to me that conflict needs to come from character; I suppose I understood this at some basic level even reading R. L. Stine’s *Goosebumps* series when I was a boy. But I do remember it seeming like a fresh lesson to me when I was introduced to Cather’s nearly perfect short story “Paul’s Case” when I was a freshman in college, in a course called “The Short Story in Context.” Most pick *O Pioneers!* as Cather’s unchallenged masterpiece, but for me, “Paul’s Case” continues to cut the deepest, and continues to reward even after multiple rereadings.

It helped that the instructor of the class managed to share some important details of the story: that Cather had written it while living in Pittsburgh, where I was a student, and that the Schenley Hotel described in the story as something that “loomed big and square through the fine rain, the windows of its twelve stories glowing like those of a lighted card-board house under a

Christmas tree,” was in fact now our student union (174). So I was predisposed to like it, sure, and still am. But what Cather manages with the narrative is nothing short of masterful. Paul, an adolescent who wishes for something better for himself, even if he remains unclear on exactly what that *something* is (though he knows, at least, it has something to do with having money), makes plenty of trouble for himself as a means of achieving his vague though still quite pressing desire. He gets kicked out of school for his queer behavior, loses his job at Carnegie Hall where he was closest to that life he wanted, steals money from his father, and takes a train to New York to stay in an opulent hotel and, well, *pretend* he is who he always wanted to be. Told in summary, the events of the story seem exaggerated; false, even. But Cather is a deft storyteller, and the lessons the story has to teach are many—as deserving of close consideration in a fiction class as any Flannery O’Connor or Raymond Carver. These things happen because Cather builds the events of the story so that they seem inevitable while still remaining surprising. Of course he stole his father’s money and left; they took away the only thing he loved. And of course they took away the only thing he loved; he was failing at school. And so on.

It helps, too, that she has what is perhaps the best final paragraph of any short story I’ve ever read. I’m not exaggerating. It’s the ending I always think of when I write my endings, hoping I might, by some God-granted miracle, get my writing in even the same zip code as hers—that it might convey the same mystery and beauty and terror. It still gives me chills, even after I’ve dissected the story so many times, even when I read it outside of the context of the story itself. The “picture making mechanism” is meant to be his mind: “He felt something strike his chest,—his body was being thrown swiftly through the air, on and on, immeasurably far and fast, while his limbs gently relaxed. Then, because the picture making mechanism was crushed, the disturbing visions flashed into black, and Paul was dropped back into the immense design of things” (189). So much is worth admiring here, but among this closing’s most striking elements is her almost inhuman understanding of prepositions and adverbs, typically rather off-putting pieces of grammar that she uses to marvelous effect. The swiftness with which Paul’s body *matters* here, because we understand the power of the train that he has used to kill himself. That he is being dropped *back* into “the immense design of things” speaks volumes of Cather’s understanding of death and creation; we literally see Paul dropping, and there is nothing to be done. Chills, chills. Everything seems worth it after a paragraph like that—every long hour or week or month of working on a piece of writing. It’s worth it if writing can do something like *that*. It’s the only thing to do. (Derek Askey)

**Egan, Jennifer. *Emerald City and Other Stories*. New York: Anchor Books, 2007. Print.**

It’s remarkable to finish Jennifer Egan’s collection of short stories *Emerald City* and discover the book to be a mere 178 pages, such is the deft way in which Egan moves her characters through space and time. And it is this effective movement through setting and chronology that makes this collection so satisfying.

One way in which Egan moves so deftly through narration is by taking advantage of setting in order to play with a character’s context and thus efficiently reveal much about that character. It’s as if by moving a character into an unexpected context or setting, the character (and his/her emotional turmoil and desires) becomes all the more enlivened. And Egan plays with this heightened sense of emotions on the page to also heighten the tension and stakes for her characters. For example, in the collection’s first story, “Why China?,” the protagonist *thinks* he recognizes the man whose conned him out of twenty-five thousand dollars. As one of the only other Westerners in the off-the-beaten-path China town, the protagonist clings to this man (who could or could not be the con man). “I turned to him. He looked small – one small man, alone in the middle of China. And I

thought I saw in him some diminishment or regret...” (25). He then watches his daughters on the train packed with peasants in the countryside of China and it’s there that he can see in their faces so clearly, and so painfully, “the thick patina so many years of privilege had left behind” (15). Had the family been on a bus back in their hometown San Francisco, the effect Egan creates here would be diminished greatly.

The out-of-context settings utilized by Egan are not always, it should be noted, foreign and exotic locales. There is a stunningly tense scene, for example, that takes place in a suburban Illinois Mexican restaurant when the protagonist of “Puerto Vallarta” spots her father. Because the teenager’s father is expected to be somewhere else, his appearance at this restaurant with a woman who is not his wife (the protagonist’s mother) is out of context, albeit in a different way. When she looks at her father, “Ellen was struck by how handsome he looked—handsome the way strangers are” (120). Thus, even in a suburban restaurant, Egan effectively uses setting to defamiliarize, and thus emphasize, a character.

Not only do Egan’s characters move around in space—from Bora Bora to U.S. suburbs—but her characters also move efficiently through time within each of these settings. In my writing, I have managed to narrow the scope of my short stories from the sweeping, too-large plots I used to try to tell. However, I have done this by tightening up on the time covered in my stories so that I feel my stories have a constricted, paralyzed feel to them. For this reason, I was fascinated by Egan’s efficient movement through time, particularly in the story “Sacred Heart.” A mere 13 pages, this story covers the full academic year for its protagonist and Egan uses markers at the start of many paragraphs to signal this progression through time: “In the ninth grade” (27); “Late in the fall of that ninth grade year” (28); “It was getting near Christmas” (31); “Amanda grew thinner as winter wore on” (32). Egan also uses markers like these at the start of paragraphs to indicate a zoom-in to a scene or a zoom-out to summary. For example, a zoom-in on page 36 is marked “One night, when my mother had gone to a meeting...” And a zoom-out on page 34 is marked by “Each morning.”

Having just read her most recent novel, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, last month, it’s clear to me that Egan has been fascinated with both time and setting throughout her writing career. Therefore, her most recent novel, with its intelligent handling of time and chance-meetings can be seen as the natural progression of the obsessions this writer first explored in this collection. (Lauren Gullion)

**Havazelet, Ehud. “Pillar of Fire.” *The Story Behind the Story: 26 Writers and How They Work*. Ed. Turchi, Peter. New York: Norton, 2004. 197–224. Print.**

The protagonist, David, has just parted ways with his ex-wife, Maura, and her new partner after visiting them at their home in the Berkshires. He’s driving quite fast, and thinking of the circumstances of Maura leaving, when a driver in a black muscle car runs him off the road. Then there is a section break and the story resumes when David is at a bar calling 911 to report that he saw the black muscle car overturned in a ditch. But as soon as David hangs up, he sees the driver at the bar. The structure of the story, specifically the section break (nonlinearity) and the interspersed flashbacks, contributes to the unity of David’s character; in other words, the form reinforces the protagonist’s disorientation as he navigates these life-changing events. Because David’s 911 call precedes the more authoritative narrative recounting of events, the reader is unsure of exactly what happened. This mirrors David’s own confusion and bewilderment about the course his life has taken.

The narrator’s tone is bitter and humorous, which prevents the story from becoming melodramatic—the narrator doesn’t lapse into self-pity. For instance, after the encounter with the

black muscle car, David stands on the side of the road, pondering whether his wife is simultaneously watching the sun set. He realizes how ridiculous he seems in that moment. When David goes out to the parking lot, at first he doesn't recognize his own car because two teenaged girls are sitting on the hood—again, this scene illustrates David's disorientation and how unfamiliar his life has become to him. The teenage girls are sisters, hitchhiking, and David decides to give them a ride. This decision is integral to the story, because it is a decision that begins the character's transformation. The sisters are excited about seeing Halley's Comet, and they convince David to exit the freeway. In the final scene, about to have his eyes uncovered by the girls, David doesn't know where he is: how he ended up in either that location or at this point in his life, with no job and his marriage dissolved. Viewing the comet with the girls thus becomes more than a metaphor for the character's mindset or present condition; the comet foreshadows further transformation and suggests the character's epiphany without belaboring it.

In the brief essay that accompanies his story, Havazelet discusses the process of writing the story. His main point is that the story didn't work until he stopped patching together the pieces of it—writing around the true event that inspired him (picking up hitchhikers, one of whom exuded the chemical odor of a diabetic person not taking insulin). He realized the story wasn't working because he was writing from an experience that moved him; he concludes that *experience* is often the reason the story isn't working. Stories must be organic. This is probably my primary struggle in writing, which is why I found Havazelet's essay so helpful. The main metaphor of the story, the comet, simply appeared in Havazelet's earlier drafts as a means of tying together the story's "undeveloped tensions" (223). The comet lacked specificity, in that the event could have happened to anyone: "It isn't enough to nudge us toward the momentous ... why to this individual character, now, here?" (223). The events of a story cannot be merely "evocative coincidence" (233). Instead, the events should be transformative, a transformation assisted by interactions with other characters (in this case, the hitchhikers). Havazelet realized that his protagonist was too much in control of the narrative, and for change to occur, David had to lose some of that control. (Anitra Ingham)

**Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1925. Print.**

In this novel, Woolf writes from the points of view of several characters, and gives her audience direct access to the consciousness of these characters. Woolf takes omniscience much further than any other writer, in effect combining it with a very close third-person point of view, so that we are aware of the emotions, thoughts, and memories of many characters. The primary technical lesson I learned from this novel is how to tell a story through the stories people tell themselves, rather than through voiceless exposition. For instance, in the scene on pages 105-107, Walsh overhears a conversation between Septimus and Rezia, and he tells himself his own story about the couple. Woolf shows us in that scene that our consciousness is a story in progress, in terms of both our present and past.

The way that Woolf handles flashbacks is completely fluid, as if the consciousness of the character is seamless, not bounded by time or linearity. For instance, on page 3 Clarissa is recalling being eighteen, but her mind is there—the scene is not written in exposition, as in recorded memory; instead, I felt as if I were in Clarissa's mind at that time. Some of the essential themes that *Mrs. Dalloway* is grappling with are introduced through Clarissa's thoughts on the first fifteen pages or so. The fear of aging, of being invisible and unknown (14), the conflict between maintaining independence in marriage and sharing oneself (10). Rezia's character reinforces this theme also in her struggles in her marriage to Septimus: "To love makes one solitary, she thought" (33).

Woolf's ability to situate character is evident in *Mrs. Dalloway*. For instance, she locates Septimus's madness in his particular experience of the war. He realizes that he lost the ability to feel. Septimus's mindset is described through direct access to his consciousness—Woolf goes beyond the idea of filtering events through character, instead providing direct insight. For me, Woolf's talent for describing Septimus's psychology so elegantly is a highlight of the book. My favorite line in the novel is in the introduction of Septimus: "The world has raised its whip. Where will it descend?" (20).

*Mrs. Dalloway* also deals with class in some interesting ways. For instance, on page 263 Walsh is considering the mediocrity, passivity, and luxury of the upper class, which he of course benefits from being on the fringe of. In the character of Miss Kilman, Woolf presents a class critique without being heavy handed—the author describes the mutual dislike of Miss Kilman and Clarissa in an amusing way. Woolf gives us a few pages of an old beggar woman's memories and thoughts in the Regent's Park Tube station (122-123). Walsh has encountered this woman, and her mourning for a lost love of course echoes his own quite forcefully. Woolf interweaves the main characters' stories, secondary characters' experiences, and chance encounters with strangers to reinforce or juxtapose characters' emotions and to explore certain themes (aging and death, lost love, and madness). Septimus's story, interwoven with Clarissa's, forms the heart of the novel, and it is Septimus's death that permeates Clarissa's party in the end, and she thinks of it viscerally, "reliving" her own version of it (280).

From the very first line of *Mrs. Dalloway*, in which Clarissa says she will buy the flowers herself (3), Woolf suggests that our real lives, these richer inner lives of thought and feeling, occur between inconsequential moments such as shopping and planning parties. Woolf has used the form and structure of the novel to underpin this thematic emphasis. (Anitra Ingham)

## Poetry Program

### Agamben, Giorgio. *What Is an Apparatus?* "What Is the Contemporary?"

Trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford U.P., 2009. Print.

In Giorgio Agamben's essay "What Is the Contemporary" from *What Is an Apparatus?* Agamben attempts to address the issue of contemporaneity, the same pressing issue I witnessed so many poets struggle with in our Form and Tech readings. (I'm thinking in particular of T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and Gertrude Stein's "Composition as Explanation.") For Agamben the issue of contemporaneity has high stakes. After all, the contemporary "perceives the darkness of his time as his most personal concern." Analyzing Osip Mandelstam's poem "The Century," Agamben argues that there is both a distance or separation and a bonding required to be contemporary—a caesura (both as fracture and bonding). The individual who can position herself within this gap is contemporary with her own time. The poet, according to Agamben, is contemporary because he has a broken spine, has a non-identity with the present time at the same time as an unbearable proximity. Agamben uses the analogy of space, explaining that some galaxies are so distant, and while the light wants to move toward us, it is so far away and moving so fast we can't see it. This ability to perceive that distant light, to see what wants to be seen but can't, is the purview of the contemporary.

To further explore this concept of the contemporary created by caesura, Agamben explores the narrative of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden. This narrative had become, for me, a beautiful and powerful site for eros, as well as a site to explore the complex position of the feminist subject within this narrative, and Agamben's essay became a surprising source for further

exploration. I became fascinated with one anecdote from this essay where he uses fashion to illustrate the unique relationship to time that the contemporary has. There is, according to Agamben, “a theological signature of clothing”: it is a “tangible symbol of sin and death in the moment [God] expelled them from paradise” (58-59). The first dress was the naked glory of god, and the fig leaves (and later loin cloths) were symbolic attempts to bridge the caesura created by the expulsion from the garden. (Again, lack creating the desire to bridge what cannot be bridged.) Eve’s sin as a necessary part of God’s plan (and each individual’s access to salvation) was a narrative I was familiar with in my Mormon upbringing, but the role of the feminine as a catalyst for further creation (besides the biological) and the gender reversal created by seeing God as the first dress-maker exposed a shimmering thread overlooked in our cultural assumptions about women, creativity, and production. I found myself fascinated with cloth, sewing, creation associated with the domestic.

Within many of my thesis poems, I am preoccupied with the image of an amorphous, undecided garment and the activity of determining the shape of a garment, the object of headdress as a metaphor—to be capable or “not knowing capacity but desiring” a weight, responsibility, identity as this weight—but also the nightie, the remnant, the selvedge. I see the scraps (as fabric) as the variety of short term domestic tasks and activities that prevent women from sustained thought or discourse, according to Mary Wollstonecraft’s critique of Rousseau (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* 22): what little sustenance women are given in discourse and yet their ability to stitch these scraps together. And therefore, within my manuscript, the necessity for the variety of forms, the edges of different forms abutting each other. The stitching together becomes a site of power (à la bell hooks), a feminine method of dealing with the shapelessness associated with female form in a tradition where masculinity pervades (see Carson, “Gender of Sound” annotation). Equally important are the scraps associated with the domestic that have long been forgotten or left out of poetic discourse: Emily Dickinson’s drafts of poems written on her recipe cards, the domestic as the site of the fairy tale, Lyn Hejinian’s experimentation with the genre of autobiography and memory in *My Life*, and much of Alice Notley’s work (see annotations on Dickinson, George MacDonald, Hejinian, and Notley). Dare I say that certain subject positions stand closer to the caesura of their time? Might more keenly feel the fracture and see the work of bonding to be done within, so that the contemporary (as a space one throws their voice out in the dark into) is more available to them? This is not an argument but a personal realization that is vibrates in my core. That is, some of my questions as a female poet trying to observe the work occurring in the field of contemporary poetry. What is the value of identity politics within contemporary poetry? Does the grouping of all those with broken spines create a space and a chorus announcing distant stars? Or do the spaces being made relegate these voices so that their work within the caesura is not seen? (Cassie Eddington)

**Browne, Laynie. *The Agency of Wind*. Penngrove, CA: Avec Books, 1999. Print.**

Browne’s *Agency of Wind*, written mostly in prose, is a genius fairy tale about a girl traveling to find the origin of the wind’s power. In much of her journey, she is accompanied by a crane that depends on the wind to lift its wings for travel. Browne’s little girl—inquisitively, innocently young—also travels alone. She visits a doormaker, wears a tiara (or the tiara wears her), and visits the bank of common knowledge only to find that they won’t accept her, to which the girl replies, “I am not at present accepting refusals.”

The tale of the girl’s journey gives Browne’s philosophical ruminations grounding. If ever the reader is lost in abstracts—such as Browne’s declaration that “if certainty is a point on a line, that remains unnamed, then wind is every point on the same plain, and behind this plain is another

identical image” (35)—the reader can return to the girl and gain grounding amid the hurricane created by Browne’s declarative winds.

Another lesson to learn from Browne’s book is her use of imagistic and syntactical repetition. In the book’s second poem, she says, “I approached a windmill, but it was really a series of persons extending their limbs in a similar motion” (17). In the last third of the book, she returns to this image: “I approached a river, but it was really a series of swimmers extending their limbs in a similar manner” (76). The imagistic repetition heightens the image’s importance in the book by drawing the reader’s attention across more than 60 pages. In essence, it creates a thread across the landscape of the book, toyed with by the wind.

Similarly, the tiara from the first half of the book turns into a headpiece by the book’s end. Even the number 108 returns: “You have an idea of yourself upon rising, amidst many other ideas of yourself, and as you life up your morning, so do you lift up all of the ideas of yourself lifting the morning, so that if you could watch a film of yourself, you might see 108 images of yourself, lifting the morning” (25). Later, the narrator/speaker says, “I am of one-hundred and eight minds” (102). Repetition of image, idea, and number ground the book, as does the tale of the girl and her crane. The lesson is this: To make philosophical lyrics that border on the grand, one must be sure that the “grand” is grounded—perhaps in a piano, maybe by a bird or young girl traveling. (Bonnie Emerick)

**Goodyear, Sara Suleri, and Azra Raza. “Ghalib and the Art of the “Ghazal”.” *Transition*: No. 99 (2008), pp112-125. Print.**

Suleri and Raza begin their article with the seemingly required and omnipresent disclaimer about their approach to translation, of the ghazal in particular, and their contribution to the endless debate over whether “couplet” is an appropriate term for a “twosome,” or a *sher*. While I understand deeply that this debate over naming matters in a poet’s contemplation of the function and nature of a *sher*, I am so tired of it. Anyhow, the authors proceed with some particularly incisive observations about the *sher*, particularly the ability for one line in a *sher* to not necessarily relate directly in subject matter to the other line. Their translations of poems I have read in several forms seem a productive addition, while I would often contest their interpretation of individual *sher*. The term *marsiya* as “elegy,” and its relation to the Karbala, helps me situate the ghazal among Islamic traditions; the translators’ passing meditation on Ghalib’s relation to Sufi philosophies is thought-provoking if desperately incomplete and inconsistently uncertain.

The issue of how directly each *misra* (line) within a *sher* must relate to one another (literally, in image or continuity of utterance) is pertinent because I was, just this very morning, debating how “couple-y” a *sher* had to be between its two lines. I feel freed and vindicated by this assertion, if somewhat suspicious at its convenient timing. However, consideration of these constructions may lend weight to why a *sher* might be a pearl, able to stand apart of any poem and reside within its own perfection: because each *sher* is its own poem, micro-poem, and so two lines might pair in aching counterpoint with disparate or tangential images to achieve its effect. Often, here, these translations represent each line as end-stopped, and often the two lines of a *sher* do not enjam to form one longer grammatical phrase. Hence, a thing such as Goodyear and Raza’s version of the *sher* “The gaping mouths of a hundred crocodiles form netted traps in each wave/ Consider the labor within the sea change of a raindrop to a pearl.” In “doggedly pursuing meaning,” the translators have presumably preserved the lineation and not altered the phrasing so as to conform to some poetic sense foreign to the original. It is clear to see that the crocodiles and wave relate to the sea (change) and the forming of pearls in some sense; that each line refers to some impossible containment, that of the “netted traps” of crocodile mouths and the “labor within the sea change of a rain drop to a

pearl”...while related by their water imagery and references to containment, they are also only metaphorically related, and possibly opposed. Other *sher* seem more obviously one continuous thought: “I agree that you will not remain indifferent, but/ I will be dust by the time you become aware of me.” (The dust opposing the earlier abundant water seems an underlying poignance.) I have already realized my own approach to the ghazal is desperately less lyrical than Ghalib’s is constantly reported to be. This is certainly in part due to my translating/refusal of the metrics available in the Urdu form, since syllabic lines in English rarely establish a quickly recognizable meter, and I detest overly metered poems. Certainly, also, it is due to the translations I read of Ghalib, those that refuse to attempt a pathetic mockery of his lyricism and music and rely instead on meaning. The poetry I model my ghazal on is thus stripped of something—austere, devoid of a distracting music that might interfere with the music of meaning, intention, voice, and mystic connection/reflection.

It seems hilarious to me now that my annotation of a 15-page article should so outstrip that of a 187-page book, and that I should consistently get so angry at the texts I read...particularly as my taking apart their position leads me to clearer understandings of my own purpose. If in translating the ghazal as a form, as I have claimed I am doing, I focus so much on the ‘couplet’, as a pearl, more than the formal constraints that tie *shers* to one another...then shouldn’t I have an intimate knowledge on how the *sher* is constructed, *misra* by *misra*? In going back to other texts I am more aware of enjambment and end-stop within the *sher*, and the difficulty in triangulating where the translators have separated me from Ghalib’s original vision and lineation. (Sarah Pieplow)

### **Hejinian, Lyn. *My Life*. Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Press, 1987.**

While being here at CSU’s MFA program, I’ve realized how entirely lacking my undergraduate creative writing education was in contemporary poetry. Maybe this has something to do with the poetry faculty (my fiction professor exposed us to a variety of strange postmodern fiction), or maybe faculty were afraid undergraduates couldn’t handle anything beyond the confessional poets (such as Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath—who, granted, were pretty exhilarating for me at the time), that we couldn’t grasp a postmodern lyric. Regardless of the cause, the absence of Lyn Hejinian’s *My Life* in my life up until this point is reprehensible. I’m especially shocked at its absence because of the accessibility of the prose poetry fragments that is Hejinian’s non-linear and experimental autobiography *My Life*.

It wasn’t until I was a ways into *My Life* that I read that Hejinian had written each section as a year in her life. In hindsight, I remember how differently the first few sections felt, and when I went back and read the beginning sections of the book again I *saw* it. Exploring a child’s perspective (at various stages) has become, I’ve realized, something important to my poetry. Hejinian represents different years of her life through different sets of fragments and observations. In the first section her father (or the *time* when he left for the war) “was purple—though moments are no longer so colored” and “Somewhere, in the background, rooms share a pattern of small roses” (7). These fragments and observations seem to occupy a middle ground of her perspective in that specific time (in that year) and her adult reflection on that time. This approach to memory feels very honest and draws attention to the very gap in memory and experience that requires her fragmentary approach.

There is a texture created by these fragments and an accretion that occurs in the repetition and cycling of fragments. The roses in the first section come a few sections later “I try to find the spot at which the pattern on the floor repeats. Pink, and rosy, quartz” (14). Subjunctive clauses reassert themselves in different contexts: “As for we who ‘love to be astonished’, my heartbeats shook the bed” (22); “As for we who ‘love to be astonished,’ mother love” (30). In a later section we

get “Only fragments are accurate” (55). This realization comes later in life, though it’s been functioning all along. In this way, Hejinian illustrates how form produces thought. This method of an accretion of fragments seems such an accurate way to show the affect of experience, the very nature of being and becoming. I imagine though that the repetition of my own fragments would look very different I think than Hejinian’s, which included a privileged childhood in the 1950s, a Harvard education, etc. While I am not interested in writing a prose poem autobiography, the accretion of fragments that create a texture and sincerity of experience is something I would like to incorporate into my own writing.

I’ve also been very wary of making universal sounding or explicitly philosophical observations or proclamations in my own poems. *My Life*, though, makes these kinds of observations and statements in a way that feels very true in its subjectivity and lyric energy. A few that I related to very personally:

“There is so little public beauty” (21)

“You are not different from your friend, but with your friend you are different from yourself, and recognizing that, I withdrew, wanting to protect my honesty” (32).

“I felt self-sufficient except with regard to my feelings, to which I was always vulnerable, always in relation to someone else” (39).

“Math is like a joke I just don’t get, whose punchline isn’t funny” (40).

“I discovered that I could never quite remember how my favorite songs went” (41).

“At some point hunger becomes sensuous, then lascivious. Not a fuck but a hug” (57).

After reading *My Life*, I found myself feeling much more free to make these kinds of statements, I found myself writing much more prolifically in my own notebooks—a nice counter to the self-censorship and anxiety that sometimes comes to me after reading other poets. (Cassie Eddington)

### **Herbert, George. *The Complete English Poems*. Ed. John Tobin. London: Penguin, 1991.**

Certainly, my thesis engages with many traditions from the Alexandrian poetry of Sextus Propertius, Ovid, and Catallus to the lingual play and magical realism of Latin American poets like Huidobro, Neruda, and Vallejo, but how likely is it that my work also owes something to an English metaphysical poet who wrote primarily Christian devotional poetry? If one sets aside some of the biases one might have toward religious poetry, then the parallels start to become clear on examining my work. The poetry of George Herbert has affected my writing in several ways thematically and linguistically.

First, Herbert’s work concerns itself with Western man’s battle between the flesh and the soul, the belief that the flesh is something to shed so that the soul can commune with God. The poem “Matins” configures God as a suitor wooing human hearts (l. 9), which leads to human desire to transcend the flesh and join God in an ecstatic (orgiastic?) union: “Then by a sunbeam I will climb to thee” (20). The progression of my thesis is from seduction to sexual intercourse, from a concern with the flesh that I hope results in the shedding of the flesh to launch into more spiritual concerns, specifically naming the world. While I don’t necessarily set out to show the flesh as being secondary to the spirit—in fact, I often try to complicate and undermine how frequently Western writers privilege the spirit—I do embrace that the flesh must move toward spirit. That flesh is a method of spiritual arrival. This belief falls in line with Herbert’s idea that the flesh must be shed. We both view the physical as a vehicle to something higher.

