# Final Reflection - Intro to Creative Writing

## Prior to the class:

When I walked into our first class in January, I was convinced I already knew where I belonged on the literary map. Fiction was more of my style, plots to engineer, characters to manipulate, dialogue to tinker with - while poetry and creative nonfiction was not an interest, hovering at a ragged border, known, but alien to me. I imagined nonfiction, in particular, as either journalistic reportage or memoiristic confession; the idea that it could braid narrative, philosphy, and lyric image into one hybrid form had not occurred to me much. Four months later, the piece I chose for my final portfolio is a lyrical braided essay that smells of bone dust and hums into ontological questions. The distance between those two sentences charts the growth of the semester.

## Encountering the Foreign

Poetry quickly resisted the mindset of what I was used to. The compression of meaning into line breaks and white space felt like typing in Assembly. I realized that repetition could build momentum rather than redundancy and it opened a new world of possibilities, maybe a nonfiction piece could braid leitmotifs the way a poem repeats refrains. Through analyzing the pieces presented to us in class, and those of my peers during the workshop period, it helped me realize that poetry is much more, and has infinite possibilities, which ultimately influenced my usage of “Symphony” as a metaphor.

## Illumination Through Feedback

No feedback this semester was more valuable then the color-coded messages, and the in-depth breakdown of my poem done by the two professors. They left the impactful message that I should expand more on how I feel about consciousness, how I interpret these questions I had previously, and how to encourage and implement a more profound question to make the reader themselves think about these questions and possibly come to a new conclusion. Blue highlights indicated I should expand on that topic, purple indicated I was repetitive, pink was “Strong points” and orange was “hot”. These annotations taught me a truth the syllabus hinted at before, revision is an act of listening. Equally intrusive was sitting on the other side of that table. Reading my peer’s papers, learning how to analyze them effectively, provide actual constructive feedback, all helped me interpret my own paper in a better light, allowing me to add revisions easier. This insight, and working on other’s papers, returned while revising my own essay, as I remembered the other poems of my peers, and my suggestions on improvements of imagery and expanding and removing unnecessary words. A common feedback point I gave was “Read your essay, and determine word for word if that word is neccessary and adds to the story”. This was helpful in my own pursuit of revisions.

## Challenges and turning points

Throughout the semester, a common wall I kept running into internally was that my writing was consistently too “textbooky”. Rightly so as well, as my writing is normally geared to that of the scientific and research papers A breakthrough came though when I borrowed a technique from the course. I resegmented the essay into different movements, letting each heading announce a tonal shift and define themselves, while sprinkling an even aspect of knowledge, poetry, and context.

## Growth as a reader

I learned to approach a draft looking first for what works rather than hunting errors. Naming the hot aspects before the cold allowed me to articulate for others and eventually for myself, how metaphor, tensions, rhythm, and other poetry elements can be used to invite a reader to trust the page. As a writer I learned to shift from explaining experience to evoking it. Instead of telling, I started showing. Concrete sensory language now precedes theory, the smell of cautery leads naturally into questions of identity. Sentences grew leaner, and more fruitful with meaning. As a participant I discovered how to accept criticism, to not defend every point, but rather accept what is being told to me and adapting in response, after gauging the criticism through my own creative lens.

## Evolution of the Creative Submission.

My original draft was heavily disjointed, and relied heavily on technical jargon. Today’s version is longer, with new expanded scenes, new patient vignettes, and a closing that is more concrete. While technical jargon is still used, it complements the non-technical language used, and most all meaning can be inferred when needed. Additionally, it enforces the idea that this paper was written for the reader to experience my experiences through my creative lens, and taking their own interpretation from it. In the new paper, I emphasized threads on ontology vs neuroscience, and improved the sensory gateway. Peer margin notes guided most major changes, and the lineage of decisions is clear based on the margin notes I received.

## Why this piece matters:

I chose this essay to submit because it captures the intersections of two identities I find important to myself and identities I will continue to juggle with. The paper demonstrates the classroom lessons on imagry, braided structure, strategic repetion, all while remaining faithful to the lived reality that I experienced. Most importantly, it preserved uncertainty. I do not offer a tidy answer to whether consciousness is chemical or metaphysical, and the final movements of the paper end on a “rough duet of spark and meat” a phrase only conceivable after revisions. The paper’s best achievement, in my opinion, is its refusal to close the door it opens. I want the reader to remember the questions after they put down the paper. I believe this is my best work because it is important to me. It is a piece that I was able to produce and be proud of, while staying true to what is important to me, neuroscience, and ontology.

## Moving Forward:

This will be my last English class. I leave the class no less fascinated by the brain, but more fascinated and more aware that language can cauterize or suture experiences just as deftly as medicine. I do hope that I will explore more creative writing in my future, and I do plan to continuously take up journaling as a therapeutic measure.