

Ezra Yun

The Friend

Creative Non-Fiction

“Strainer”

It's hard to believe that this class is over. It has been an immersive experience of weaving in and out of reading and writing and discussions. I loved being able to listen to everyone's works and to receive feedback on my own works. This has been the first time I have ever written pieces like these, and it was not an easy process by any means, but it feels very satisfying to know that I have come out of this course with many new ways to look at non-fiction. Coming into this class, I remember thinking, "How can non-fiction be creative?". Compared to different creative writing classes, it felt like this course would be very limited in the way we can write. Contrary to that belief, I have never felt more creative and more unrestricted in my writing. Anything goes and you decide what you want to do and what you choose to omit.

I tried my best to write pieces that did not sound like "me" (whatever that's supposed to mean). As someone who likes to describe in detail and write by the book, I took this opportunity to take away these boundaries I had set on myself and break all the rules of my own writing. I provided unfiltered thoughts in a random order that may or may not make sense. (However, I do agree I could be more unfiltered in my writing ← but it's hard!) It was difficult, but there was something so addicting about breaking the rules. Screw your intro and conclusion! Screw your paragraphs! Screw spacing! Screw chronological order! Screw it all and write whatever the heck you want to write!

One of the things I'm going to come out of this class with is the fact that I don't need to care about what the reader thinks. Okay, I mean, yes, to an extent, care – BUT, as the writer, I have all authority over what I want to put on my piece and how I want to place it onto the piece. There's no need for context – okay, again, it is dependent on the situation – BUT context can take away from the piece. Why do we need to coddle the reader? Who cares if they fully understand or not? (Maybe publishers, I don't know, but again, I'm going to focus on the writer's POV right now). My collaboration piece was so fun because I loved seeing everyone read my piece and seeing the most "WTF" expressions on their faces. People wanted context and not because it would contribute to this piece/project, but because of their want of just knowing everything. And, I totally understand from their perspective, but I love how as the writer, I could leave it as it is. Context can be a handicap and take away from a piece that is so painfully random!

Lastly, before I finish up this introduction and we move onto the fun part (the pieces!), I think this course would not have been the same without this exact group of people at this exact time of our lives. We did not have to get along with one another or accept each other's opinions, but we all listened, and we all helped one another to become the best writer everyone can be. Our workshops have been some of the most helpful workshops I have ever partaken in. Everyone said something and asked questions and everyone was invested into each other. Our GroupMe and our daily grateful statements shows how unique and weird and how lovely our class is. This commune that we have somehow created organically throughout the past semester has been so fun. I not only felt like a student, but I felt like a friend in this class, and I appreciate how we can feel the emptiness when someone is not able to make it to class that day. Thanks for creating something that is hard to see at a university classroom setting.

Today, I am grateful for this final portfolio, this class and, myself.

A msg seasoning filled stew

At age 7, I told everyone I was going to be a fashion designer. Polka dots were my thing. Some friend's mom went to the Fashion Institute of Technology. I carried around a sketchbook and drew girls with huge heads and tiny bodies. My parents would smile, and people were proud that I had a dream.

I had a dream.

But I woke up and I had snuck out of my parent's room – all the way into the mini-fridge in the kitchen. People say microwave beeps are loud, but no one talks about the suction of fridge doors. The golden juice of Sunny-D gulping down I never got caught.

I never got caught.

Or maybe I did. Maybe God was watching as I broke into his church. Maybe He shook his head as I told the girls to wait as I find a way inside. Maybe He knew I what I was going to do and left that window opened. Maybe He wanted to give me a warning and that's why I scraped myself on the ladder. Maybe He took a break and maybe He laughed when the pastor came out as I opened the door for the girls to come in. But maybe He protected me.

He protected me?

At age 10, at the prime of my fashion loving career – someone jokingly said to me, “Prepare not to make money.”

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I guess I didn't like fashion anymore.

I did art and signed up for classes. I wanted to go by the name, “Little Monet”. Claude Monet's water lilies made me happy. Then, my mom signed me up for classes. The teacher liked to stroke my paintbrushes on my face. “Aren't they soft?” I won a couple prizes, and he told my mom that I had a natural talent. I decided to go into computer science.

We need more girls in STEM. I took commutes to Brooklyn every day to learn different languages and how to code an Arduino. Some girl taught me how to do the wop dance and another girl had a fear of bees. Someone complimented my code. My parents were very proud. They loved to brag about their “comp-sci girl”. A lot of guys came up and commended me – “congrats! you will for sure get a job straight after college! we need more girls in STEM!”

I had a 4.0 GPA. My test scores were good. I was part of every honor society possible. I prayed.

I got rejected from every school besides my safety.

My mom cried.

“I prayed that you wouldn't be far from me.”

Yup. Thanks God.

At age 18, I told people I was going to be a coder and be some feminist icon. Then, I found out I was in the wrong calculus class for my major and I cried on a random stranger's shoulder for a whole car ride. I got an 18% on my midterm. I'm pretty sure I cheated on that exam too.

After break, a friend I'm not too close with looked at me and smiled. "Hey, your face cleared up a lot!" The people who overheard got offended for me. I cried for this same friend when he broke up with his ex-girlfriend. "Ezra, you know you're more upset than I am, right?" And, you know what. Yeah, I was. I actually thought he was a bit of a monster for not being sad that he broke up with her. He saw it as a *c'est la vie* moment. I had to be consoled for his loss.

At age 20, I dipped my toes into the luscious journey called "figuring out my major".

I took an Intro to Special Education class with friends. I faked a paper. I didn't raise my voice in time in a group project when we were picking out parts and, in our presentation, I was the sock puppet with disabilities. Is this even allowed? Who approved this? Didn't Sia and Maddie Ziegler literally get canceled for this kind of behavior? I don't know, we got an A on that presentation. I sat in the back of the classroom where my friends and I would send heinous doodles to each other – (you know the phallic ones where it's only funny when it's a shared secret but the moment someone catches you and you have to reflect on your actions until you agree to never repeat that kind of behavior again, but ultimately who cares because why is one person's stern voice going to stop kids from drawing penis shaped images) – and we would try

our best to hold in our laughter while a documentary on the horrors of treatment towards people with disabilities were shown. Yeah, I know, we're pretty awful.

I drove 30 minutes to a school without my driver's license. They wouldn't let me in without ID – me and my pink coach bag must've triggered some warning signals. The blond girl who came in with me apologetically went inside. I went home and cried.

Blink. And I'm in 6th grade. I'm with my best friend – the only one who can testify that she's been over my closed-off apartment. We would lie on thick blankets on the ground of the living room. *George Lopez* is playing on TV. I have no idea what's happening, but I laugh along with the laugh track every time. We're both convinced that we have to stay up all night. We play Pictionary and the smell of black Sharpie markers penetrates my nose. Mmm. Something about the smell of a crisp Sharpie marker makes me feel at home. Not like Mr. Scent's colorful markers that make you want to munch on the rainbow nibs – the raw stench of Sharpies is more mature – more authentic if you will.

One day, a rumor was spread that I needed to be put in jail. I still don't know who came up with this – my suspicions are on the 3rd grader with muscular dystrophy who had trouble walking during recess. I walked into the big room where all the classes gather and was ambushed by dozens of little limbs. “You're going to jail, Ms. Ezra! Follow us!” I'm terrified of jail, but I let them take me this one time. The following times, I escaped, and they left me alone after I spread a rumor that I had the ‘cheese touch’. Last I heard, the 3rd grader is in a wheelchair now.

A guy I barely know once visited campus. My friend asked him to guess my major. He took a glance, rubbed his chin, hit his vape and stated, “Journalism.” When I asked how he guessed it on his first try he said I look like journalism.

In the middle of the night, I woke up to use the bathroom. I didn't want to wake anyone, so I left all the lights off. Have you tried peeing in the middle of the night? It's not only very challenging to make sure your butt meets the toilet seat – it's also terrifying to have to sit there and hear only the echo of your pee in pure darkness. The flush becomes so amplified you wonder if you have just accidentally triggered a nightmare within someone's dreams. The water from the faucet feels extra cold and you can only hope that that was soap you just pumped into your hands. And, then everything feels fine – you can do this. Until. You look up and you see someone staring straight back at you. You forget that the scariest thing in the world at this moment, is you.

Gutter Mind

Ezra, I would kill myself if someone described me as quirky.



The guy in the blue shirt and blue shorts chewing on his mask. I wonder if his mask smells like his breath or his spit.

She came to class today. Why does she even bother – it's not like she showers for this class. She also refuses to do the readings because of her anxiety.

Of course, she shops at Shein.com.

Her outfit did scream fast fashion.

What is the girl with red orange running shoes glaring at?

Her Gucci purse is kinda ugly.

Don't underestimate the hole your asshole would leave.

You are like a bathroom stall that doesn't lock correctly... broken but we'll still put up with it.

Can you go rub some sunscreen in your eyes?



You look exactly the way I thought you would.

Yes, girls talk too much.



I think I'm pretty quirky.

What a waste of space.