

# Final Portfolio

## Self Evaluation

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Where do I begin? As a writer, my biggest struggle may very well be knowing where to start, yet as soon as that spark ignites, the flow feels unbelievable. I can't wrap my head around it. Words begin to take shape as my thoughts flood on to the page, I maneuver through memories in my head, and it gives me sanctity. From a young age, I felt interconnected with writing -- it's always been my calling. Each summer, my mother would give me a notebook and since then, I haven't stopped writing. I feel blessed. My soul excites every time I gain support from family and friends, encouraging me to take this passion and give my life purpose, meaning.

I write to remember my experiences. I write to show readers the way I view this world: colorful, loving, and at times, surprisingly metaphysical. Language is erotic. I mold sound and syntax to create a rhythmic sensation; creativity grabs hold of me, twisting the gears in the lock box known as my mind. There's something about ink and the way it's able to manipulate my secrets to pour out like silk. Give me pandemonium, I'll sell you poetry from the tip of my tongue. Show me gold, I'll melt it to match the thoughts that drown me. I'm obsessed. I work with words, it's my own personal obligation to better my talent and persistently use it to my advantage.

I want to write as long as the thoughts inside my mind are chaotic. This class has helped me further my self-discovery because when given the opportunity to work with other writers and mentors, I make sense of the mess inside my head. I progressively take the next step at becoming a better writer. I've been workshopping since I was fifteen, and since the beginning, I leave every workshop feeling excited and appreciated. Past experience has taught me the essential skills necessary for a workshop to flow as efficiently as possible; there needs to be a common ground where every participant communicates on the same page.

This semester, however, was remarkably different. I remember walking into Church Street, not

knowing what to expect, but also very curious about the different types of notebooks that decorated each of the desks. I was surrounded by diverse thinkers, independent voices, poets who didn't even know writing is their identity. The girl next to me always seemed like the quiet type, but I swear her lungs are stronger than we think because she fires like a paintball gun, brilliantly chromatic, it's marvelous.

For days, I listened. For weeks, I began to recognize each of my classmates' writing style. I took their criticisms as compliments to the heart. In the past, I've always grown close to my peers within the workshop, establishing bonds that last outside of the classroom, and although I was distant with the majority of the students this semester, the few times I did interact with them made a difference in the classroom. In fact, this course actually brought me to meet one of my now-closest friends, Nicole. Had we not met this semester, I truly believe the entirety of these past months would have been metamorphosed from one experience to the next.

Similarly, one of my classmates, specifically my partner for the midterm assignment, challenged me to go outside my comfort zone with constraints that made writing poetry feel like a foreign language. I struggled, I stressed, but I pushed myself to finish only once I felt satisfied, which--believe me--took forever to find. For the first time, I worked outside the lines, and I discovered a form that allowed me to mimic the way our thought speed like a panicked train on tangled railways. I got twisted.

I grew comfortable with risk. This semester, I encountered more restrictions, limitations, constraints and constrictions, everything that challenges you as a writer to respond a certain way. Surprisingly enough, I enjoyed the variety of prompts because each lesson offered more than I expected. Structure requires you to change the way you think, guidance manipulates your direction. The outcome of each of assignments was a product from parts of my mind I had never accessed prior. I've always been a free thinker, but now I recognize that guidelines aren't there to take away your voice, but instead, amplify it.

I've always been overenthusiastic about imagery, synesthesia, and sound -- I feel like a creative

maniac when my thoughts transform from conceptual abstraction to visual cogitation. This course reinforced the skills I already utilize while revealing new strategies along the way. I know that the first line isn't necessarily the starting point, that ending on an image is inviting. Words are capsules, each carries its own weight in meaning and each helps travel sounds downstream. Thanks to the work and progress I've made in this class, I now know all that and more; I only feel that my love for writing will continue growing. Let's see where this takes me.

## Service-Learning Experience at Drury

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*How do you do it?* That was the first thing I wrote when she asked us to begin. We were at Oblongs, Rhinebeck's local bookstore, seated in a circle of comfortable reading chairs and fold-ups, and some of us were leaning against shelves stacked with titles that were, let's just say "interesting" -- I even wrote down some of their names: *Bad Sex on Speed*, *Wake*, *Lovers at the Chameleon Club*. The environment was just the right type of creative stimulation. I'm embarrassed that I don't remember her name, but I hope she knows I still do remember her. She went to Bard and majored in Creative Writing; coincidentally, she was encouraged to teach a workshop and I was encouraged to participate.

Although my memories of that workshop are foggy, the lesson still resonates and I credited much of my progress to the outcome of that experience. She was a stranger, but I so deeply wanted to emulate her growth. She was welcoming, her prompts spoke to me, and all the while, she was human. She wrote and it was enough.

When Professor Finch revealed to us that we would be able to participate in a similar class workshop, I encountered an immediate flashback and knew this was something I had to do. It was more for me than it ever would be for the students I was encountering, but that was the fun in it, the challenge, the momentum, the experience in itself. The experience, however, was inevitably different than I had expected. Many of the students were mentally exhausted to begin with, we could see it on their notebooks. Their teacher was thoroughly excited, however, and suggested it was an outcome of *one of those days*. It didn't matter, just the initial scribble was satisfying enough, to say the least. The program alone offers an experience, and each one is different depending on the students and their initiative. If given the opportunity to do it again, I would most certainly opt yes.

## Emulation

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he  
convinced me  
that home is built from a broken body  
and blankets.

his temple  
although tattered  
gave me shelter,  
safety. I found sanctity  
in the sound of his heart beat --  
knocking at the front door --

and I remember  
being warned about his  
unfinished foundation  
that let rain  
leak through his attic  
and soil the thoughts  
he stowed away  
in boxes  
or how  
it's a bad habit --  
to make homes  
out of human beings,

but that never mattered  
to me.  
I became an architect  
obsessed  
with his blueprint.

## Emulation Revision

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### *Gimme Shelter*

I heard his footsteps first  
running outside wild,  
he burst  
through the entrance  
“I’m gonna fade away”  
he exasperated.

His temple  
although tattered  
gave me shelter,  
safety. I found sanctity  
in the sound of his heart beat --  
knocking at the front door --

I always thought  
empty flowerpots  
were optimistic,  
he tried  
to think so too

and I remember  
being warned about his  
unfinished foundation  
that let rain  
leak through his attic  
and soil the thoughts  
he stowed away  
in boxes  
or how  
it’s a bad habit --  
to make homes  
out of human beings,

He said,  
*It’s just a kiss away*  
but that never mattered  
to me.  
I became an architect  
obsessed  
with a blueprint.

## Action

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### En route

The moon thinks we're crazy when we fly;  
when we are maniacs in motion  
traveling in tangled lines  
as the street lights beam into luminescent streaks,  
as the engine rumbles and roars,  
and as the wind hits and whispers  
"Keep going" -- Keep the radio raised to its zenith,  
slide your fingers out the window slit,  
watch around the corner from your rearview mirror,  
but don't think about turning back;  
think about the blurry trees passing by,  
pay mind to the clouds picking up pace;  
don't hide from the trip, look for it in the horizon;  
revel in adventure, ride like you're chasing the dragon;  
notice how he holds the steering wheel with one hand  
and thinks speed limits are suggestions --  
we drive with danger in the back seat,  
we live recklessly because the road is bewitching --  
the night sky darkens and dips the city in ink;  
when people sleep and dream,  
we rouse the streets on the grounds that  
risk is what fuels the race;  
chance is our mistress, negligence is our biggest mistake --  
we know no boundaries on an open lane;  
we are lunatics on an expressway to freedom.

## Action Revision

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En route

Keep the radio raised to its zenith,  
slide your fingers out the window slit,  
watch around the corner  
from your rearview mirror, but don't  
think about turning back; think about  
us -- Don't hide from the trip, look for it in the horizon.

Revel in adventure, because we ride  
like we're chasing rapid dragons; I notice  
how you hold the steering wheel with one hand  
and think speed limits are suggestions --  
You say risk is what fuels the race, and you  
believe chance is our mistress, but I know  
that you know negligence is our greatest mistake.

The sky quiets, and night  
dips the city in ink. When  
people sleep, we dream --  
we rouse the streets, driving  
with danger in the back seat,  
living recklessly because  
the road is bewitching, and I think  
I'm falling

We're crazy. Tell me again, why does  
the moon think we're lunatics  
when we fly, when we act like maniacs  
in motion, traveling in tangled lines  
as streetlights beam into luminescent streaks,  
the engine rumbles -- it roars  
the wind hits and whispers  
*Keep going*

## Sonnet

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### Mending

You are the dirt stuffed underneath your fingernails.

You are the calluses that cover your palms.

You are the blue and boysenberry bruises that paint your face.

You are the chip in your front tooth, the blister in your lip.

You are the sawdust tangled in your tuscan-sun locks.

You are a goddamn mess

whose wreckage stuffs and stows in my bones.

But it's tempting

how your lungs are empty,

yet they fill me with wonder...

How your skin is rough, yet to touch is contagious.

I run my fingers like criminals chasing the thrill of your body.

It's tempting

how you can kiss me broken, yet somehow I am healed.

## Sonnet Revision

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### Mending

You are the dirt  
tucked underneath your fingernails,  
the calluses that cover your palms,  
the blister on your lip,  
the chip in your front tooth,  
the blue and boysenberry bruises  
that paint your face,  
the sawdust  
tangled in your tuscan-sun locks.

You are a goddamn mess.

I touch you  
and your skin is rough --  
sandpaper for a smooth finish.  
Your lungs are empty,  
exhaling to fill me with wonder.  
Your wreckage is contagious.  
I run my fingers like criminals  
chasing the thrill of your body.  
You kiss me broken,  
I am healed.

Untitled

When the scent of last night  
stitches into my clothes,  
and I breathe in  
every past--good or bad--decision  
we committed in moonlight,

I sleep at ease.

I stink of him.  
The mint on his lips...  
The pine he wore home from work...  
Even the planted whiskey kisses  
that blossom overnight.

The trace of time  
sticks to my skin  
as if the air were incense.  
Our smoke clings to the ceiling.  
It covers the walls.  
It drapes over us like a daydream.

His fragrance sits with me.  
The aroma cloaks and holds shapes  
like impressions left on the couch  
or ripples coiling in the ocean.

It's temporary. It's tempting.  
I watch as morning rise  
like the steam ascending from my mug  
and I realize how  
he holds me  
even when the sheets are empty.  
He holds me  
until daybreak reawakens reality.

I hear his lullaby echo in my bones  
encouraging sweet dreams.  
I feel him encompassing my body.  
He holds me,  
and I sleep at ease.

*Linger*

I sleep at ease

when the scent of last night  
stitches into my clothes.

I breathe --  
and every past  
good or bad decision  
we enacted in moonlight  
perfumes the room.

His fragrance envelopes me.  
The aroma cloaks and holds  
shapes, impressions left on the couch,  
incense coiling to the ceiling,  
the mint on his lips,  
the trace of pine he wears  
home from work,  
even the planted whiskey kisses  
that blossom overnight.

I watch as morning rise  
like the steam ascending  
from my mug  
and I realize how  
he holds me  
the way citrus sticks  
to your fingertips.  
He holds me.  
His lullaby echos in my bones,  
encouraging sweet dreams.  
I feel him,  
he holds me, and

I sleep at ease.

Gold Dust

You are the earth; I am its spirit  
and together the trees act as our lungs  
that breathe under starlight and rustle  
when we are excited -- leaves wisp around  
in our wind, and I hear maracas sound  
in a hollow room -- my hips sigh and we  
glide methodically -- call it organic  
chemistry, the way our atoms repel  
from lips that give nuclear kisses. I  
am disillusioned when you ground me. I  
am found by curious fingers searching  
the contour symmetry of my body.  
You are the earth; I am its spirit  
and together we are limitless -- a  
cosmic collision in constant motion.

## Meter Revision

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### Gold Dust

You are the earth; I am its spirit  
and together the trees act as our lungs  
that breathe under starlight and rustle  
when we are excited -- leaves wisp  
in our wind, and I hear maracas sound.  
My hips sigh and we glide methodically --  
call it organic chemistry, the way our lips  
trigger nuclear kisses that repel atoms  
in every direction -- Naturally -- We speak,  
and our words radiate as subtle energies that  
translate to pure phenomena. Please,  
muse me. You are the earth; I am its spirit  
and together we experience living.

Workshop

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FRESH

Oh when you feel it --  
you know.

There's a rush that swells your chest  
and suddenly  
you discover lust in slow motion.  
My heart is ripe.  
It's ruddy

I look at you  
and I'm diced into pieces.  
My heart puckers  
and pomegranate pulp now drips  
from my ribs.

I can't tell if it's endemic or addictive  
to touch your smile and watch that contagious glow go  
from you to me.

You and me.

FRESH

There's a rush that swells your chest  
and suddenly  
you discover lust in slow motion.

My heart is ripe.  
It's ruddy

I look at you  
and I atomize --  
My heart puckers  
and pomegranate pulp begins to drip  
from my ribs.

We explore each morning  
self-confessed, your words  
Tango about me. It's passion  
tapping the earth -- wonderfully  
exotic, curiously human

You and me.

Oh

when you feel it,

you know.