

# The Relationship Between Technical and Creative Writing

ABBY WING

After taking a creative writing class in my freshman year at UMass Amherst, I realized that I wanted to become an author. Later, at an English 200 orientation meeting, I learned about the PWTC program. While my passion lay in creative writing, I decided to give technical writing a try, as I knew it was a more straightforward career path. When I first started the PWTC program, I didn't know what to expect- I thought that technical writing was the antithesis of creative writing. Before long, however, I realized that this preconceived notion couldn't be farther from the truth.

In my English 380 class, one of the projects I worked on was creating a Word manual for writing tutors. One of my favorite parts of creating my Word manual was conducting user testing, as this allowed me to see the impact of rhetorical choices on my audience, such as using the word "you" to create a sense of familiarity with my audience. Before creating my Word manual, I thought of technical writing as boring. However, the process of creating my manual showed me the role of creativity in technical writing. Technical writing involves creative thinking, as technical writers often must consider how to make their content

interesting and engaging to their audience.

Furthermore, in my English 381 class, I learned that technical writing is an integral part of the UX design process. In this class, I designed a website for UMass instructors on how to make course content more accessible to people with disabilities. Doing so made me realize all of the creative considerations that go into designing an accessible website, such as adding alt text to images, creating a consistent layout, and properly formatting structural elements such as headers and lists. I also learned how to make a logo for my website in InDesign, which showed me the role of visuals in technical writing. Technical writers must understand how to adapt information to a variety of mediums.

In the first week of my English 380 class, I learned about all of the different forms of technical writing. Before taking this class, I thought that technical writing only encompassed manuals. However, in English 380, I discovered that technical writing can include other forms of writing, which each come with their own set of creative considerations and challenges. For instance, for how-to videos, technical writers must not only become proficient in video editing software, but also learn how to best reach out to their audience using a combination of audio, visuals, and writing.

Contrary to popular belief, technical writing shares many similarities with creative writing. When writing for a particular audience, technical writers must understand how to convey information in an understandable, concise, and interesting manner. Furthermore, technical writers must also understand elements of UX design, as technical writing has a lot of overlap with UX. In addition to this, technical writers must understand the rhetorical considerations of multiple mediums as well as how to use software such as MadCap Flare and Adobe InDesign.

## Cosmic Creativity

ALEX KONECKY

*Creativity | from the Latin, creō: to give existence to, to form out of nihility. To give birth to.*

In other words, creativity is making something out of nothing. It would seem, then, that creativity is impossible. Energy cannot be created, only transformed, says the first law of thermodynamics. Perpetual motion, immaculate conception, a free lunch—no such thing.

But what of this existence? To call it creation implies a creator. The search for creativity always takes us back to the beginning of things. Perhaps it's no wonder we associate creativity with originality.

What was it like to wake up having never gone to sleep? To open your eyes in an unfamiliar world, with only questions and no answers? We were born from nothing 13.7 billion years ago. How can this be? Some have hypothesized that the total energy of the universe, positive and negative, is exactly zero, and thus the first law of thermodynamics was never violated. An elaborate dance of space and time, starting from nothing, going nowhere.

The Greek philosopher Democritus believed that there are only atoms and void. Without void, nothingness, there could be no atoms, for how else would one know where one atom

ended and the next began? The paradox of substance amidst nothingness troubled Western philosophers to no end.

But just when we think we've found the void, we listen closely and hear it buzz with existence. When Empedocles placed a finger on top of a straw and examined the emptiness that held the water in place, he found the air. Even empty space isn't so empty after all. Democritus' void, the space between atoms, is a bubbling soup of quantum fluctuations. The big bang was not necessarily preceded by nothingness. Its seeming so may be a reflection of our lack of information, a horizon beyond which we cannot see. Perhaps we were not born from nothingness, but from a multiverse, a collision of branes in the bulk.

"Everything is a remix," says filmmaker Kirby Ferguson. What at first seems original, novel, wholly innovative, is often revealed as a complex product of our subconscious influences. Even our identities can be viewed as a function of nature, nurture, and the serendipities of chaos. Peering into our apparent agency reveals a web of determinism, chains of authorless causation. True creation, it would seem, forever eludes us. It is a concept that cannot live up to its own etymology. A paradox.

Nonetheless, creativity is prolific. What are the achievements and endeavors of artists, designers, inventors, if not creative? How are we to describe their process in a way that captures the differences between it and that of the imitator, the plagiarist, the cog in the wheel?

Perhaps creativity is not an achievement, but rather, an aspirational undertaking. Those engrossed in creative work fight against thermodynamics; their creations are their futile and beautiful attempts. Creativity emulates its own impossibility, the chasing of a forever vanishing horizon. We applaud those who step out from obscurity, from routine, and we watch on with fascination.

Creativity is the blissful forgetting of our own inspirations. We don't dance in order to reach a particular place on the floor or to defy the laws of physics. Having forgotten who we are, we open our eyes in this world and try to find our way back to a home we never left.

# Imagined Barriers to Creativity

BRODIE HAWKES

When taking in the image of an ancient structure like the Colosseum, it can seem as if those worn stones grew from the Earth, as mountains are created by the slow work of nature. Walking through a museum, you will find yourself surrounded by lifetimes of work, carefully sectioned off into quickly digestible presentations. The story of the grit that went into their creation washed away with time.

Looking back, it's not too surprising that I used to feel that great works of art were simply born, not created. These larger than life structures couldn't have been brought into this world by a person like me. There had to be something inherently different between me and someone who could transform a landscape or write something that then shaped future generations' education. Nothing I had ever thought of had been so original, so remarkable, that it would supersede all that had come before or become what my time was remembered for.

My literature classes never showcased and celebrated the historical and cultural context authors wrote their art from. How can one really understand and pick apart the elements of the culture a piece of literature grew out of in a highschool class where the pace of the curriculum seems more interested in

increasing your exposure, than your chance of understanding?

Imagine my surprise on the syllabus day I had my understanding of creativity flipped on its head. It started normally enough. I sat down in the classroom for the first time and was waiting to hear what this creative writing class would cover over the semester when our instructor bustled in, set up his notes, and said, "Welcome to Cannibalism and thievery." An awkward silence settled over the room. I certainly wasn't the only one wondering if I was in the wrong class.

Unfazed, he carried on to break down the schedule. Each week we would be reading a short piece of writing before creating our own short stories. But our assignment was not to write something so powerful it rivaled the acclaimed authors we were studying. Instead of proving our worth by differentiating ourselves from all who had come before, it was our job as students in this class to instead emulate these authors. To pay attention to how their writing impacted us and to latch onto the details they used to create those effects. To rip them straight from their text and use them as the basis for our own success.

I had no clue what I had signed up for. It seemed this class was a celebration of the opposite of everything I had been told great authors were: wholly original, infallible, untouchable, born that way.

But these acts of thievery we were encouraged to engage in were far from original. The syllabus also included novels we would be reading in pairs. First, we would read a famous novel. Then we would read a novel that was written by an author who openly talked about the influence the first author's novel had on them and their writing. We were tasked with picking apart the similarities, seeing where ideas grew from, identifying what borrowing allowed the second author to then build, and then to still celebrate both of the authors for their creativity.

While each of these novels could stand on its own two legs, the latter one most likely would not exist as it does if the author had not been inspired by reading the first. And while the novels that were chosen for a class titled Cannibalism and Thievery were picked because they had clear inspirational connections, the experience of looking for those connections also helped me see that it was not just limited to these selected texts. Nothing is built without a foundation.

What we now call masterpieces are not natural phenomena that independently grew out of the ground one day. Those labeled creative were not raised blindfolded in a cultureless void. So the pursuit of creativity shouldn't involve the belief I entered that class with: that to be considered creative you need to live a life devoid of muses, lest you would be considered incapable of coming up with your own ideas. Now it is clear to me that if we are all influenced by the world we grew up in, the art we create will unavoidably also hold pieces of that world. Embracing this is the secret of creativity.

## A Response to Charles Bukowski's, "So You Want To Be A Writer"

CHRIS ESTES

if it doesn't come bursting out of you  
in spite of everything,  
don't do it.  
unless it comes unasked out of your  
heart and your mind and your mouth  
and your gut,  
don't do it.  
if you have to sit for hours  
staring at your computer screen  
or hunched over your  
typewriter  
searching for words,  
don't do it.

– Charles Bukowski

Anyone who writes will find themselves stuck looking at an empty page. No matter if you call yourself a writer or not. It is simply a fact of writing: you must start with nothing to write something. Creativity doesn't always come easy. Sometimes it's

a struggle. I know this fact well. It's been a few years since I've written, since that drive has "come bursting out", as Bukowski says. Caught up living, I've forgotten to actively create. If that is possible. It seems to me, cynicism aside, that creativity spills out in our every waking moment. It cannot be contained in writing or brush strokes or soundwaves. Creativity is a part of living.

Maybe we forget that sometimes. Staring silently at the elevator's doors, waiting for them to open onto my floor, I feel caught up in a moment devoid of creativity. Simply moving from one place to another. Every day I go to the same floor and do the same thing: eat lunch and watch some videos, then do homework. This is staring at an empty page; this is struggling with a force that must "come bursting out."

Bukowski believes that to be a writer, to be a creative, you need an incessant creative drive. Specifically, to keep writing no matter what. If you don't have this drive, then you're simply not cut out for it. And maybe he's right. But he's forgetting about all of us who don't plan on making the New York Times Bestseller List or even people that don't write at all. In every one of us, there is a creative drive that inspires the day's outfit or the tune you hum while folding laundry or the special gait that is totally your own. Everyone has that creative drive inside of them waiting to "come bursting out."

It is uniquely human, this drive to manifest the internal. To make the world see what you feel. Artists can't monopolize creativity. They are experts after all, masters of their craft. But everyone utilizes their creativity in one way or another. An offensive lineman in football, who is an expert of strength and brute force, may not seem to have a single ounce of creativity in him. And yet, we'd be wrong. Even he is prone to expressing his creative drive, whether in an improvised blocking movement on the field or a memorable turn of phrase he may craft. Our

shared humanity can be witnessed by these small, inspired acts. We don't have to be crafting our magnum opus. I'll agree with Bukowski, that is for the select few. But every one of us lives and breathes creativity. I truly believe that, if there is one uniquely human trait, it is that we are all creators.



# RBG

JADE TANG

Sunday, March 15th, 2026

“Sold for \$4,815! That price for a RBG original painting is a steal, congratulations.” announces the auctioneer. I notice the purchaser with a proud grin on their face and can’t help but smirk at their victory, unaware of the true meaning behind it. 7 hours spent on that one. It was made the day I won the case for a mother wanting to gain sole custody of her 12-year-old son. Man, that guy did not deserve to be called a father. Going home knowing that I made a profit, I got ready for bed and prepared for the new day.

Monday, March 16th, 2026

Rushing into work with my large matcha latte in hand, I feel ready to face all of the intensity that my job brings. I was hit with a reality check when my first task of the day, a divorce hearing between a married couple of 3 years, got sour. Day after day, I am faced with tough situations and draining family separations. It does feel empowering to know that all of the endless work and hours that I put in is going towards a meaningful cause, but it is just too much for one person to handle at times. This is my second year as an associate attorney and I am constantly trying to prove that I belong there. Being 26 years old, bright eyed and bushy tailed, it comes with that territory when you’re surrounded by colleagues that are nearly twice your age.

Saturday, September 12th, 2026

No work is required from me today, but I’m devoted to getting a victory for my clients. The major case that I’m currently working on involves domestic violence. I am defending the husband as he wants to file a restraining order against his wife’s abusive outbursts. Accompanying him at home is a 6-year-old daughter and 4-year-old son. I need to get to work right away as there is no time to waste. Bright eyed at 9AM, it’s time to hit the books. I shut them at 10PM and my eyes follow suit. After compiling a hefty amount of research to support our claims, I consulted other attorneys and we tidied up loose ends of the case.

Friday, September 18th, 2026

On the day of our trial, I prepare all of the valid evidence that we assembled and run through major talking points before entering the courtroom. This case was ours to lose. And we did. The judge made her decision and bangs the gavel. I feel defeated and my brain is running faster than a subway to figure out how we lost that case. I bow my head down when my client grasps my shoulder and gives it a supportive squeeze, almost as if saying, “Thank you for trying, we’ll figure it out.” Not only representing the father, I was fighting for the son and daughter at home. I let them down and I can’t imagine their devastation. This case does not end here.

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Rage and disappointment courses through my veins as I drive home. I rushed inside and shut the front door. After allotting myself some time to wallow in self pity, I reach for the paint palette and just start creating. Burgundy red, warm black, and steel gray hit the white canvas. Stroke by stroke, I slam the paint into the fibers with labored breaths. A square 30 inch frame

covered in sweat and tears. Finished in what feels like 20 minutes, is actually 3 hours that flashed by. A weight feels lifted off of my shoulders and I feel whole again.

Saturday, September 26th, 2026

Hauling the canvas into my local auction house, I have prepared myself to part ways with my creation. Pieces of me are intertwined into the fabrics and I'm ready to let go. My highs and lows, it's all evident and displayed to the public to interpret and judge. I am shedding a layer of skin with each case that I leave in the past. No one can take RBG away from me and she will be my other half for as long as I live.

## How Creativity Dies

JILL BECK

Her world was giant red alligators in school hallways. Asteroids that crashed into the moon and gave everyone on Earth gills. Ladybugs that were a million, no, a ga-jillion, times their size. Dinosaurs that came back to life to keep those ladybugs as pets. Friends that shifted from doctors to siblings to ghosts (oh no!) to teachers to butterflies to vampires to bats.

Colors were loud. Glue was constantly stuck in-between her fingers. Smudged marker lines decorated her hands. Friendship bracelets weighed down her backpack. The wait between one Christmas to another felt like a lifetime.

She didn't understand when adults said that "life flew by." They'd laugh among themselves like it was some kind of secret. She didn't understand what was so funny. Whenever she asked, her mom told her she'd understand when she was older. But she was seven now, and the jokes still didn't make sense! Sometimes, adults even claim that time could fly before they laughed. Grown-ups weren't very funny.

Even though she didn't know what the adults meant, she imagined what it would be like if life could fly. If time could fly. She imagined a digital clock launching into the air and almost hitting her older sister on its way down. (It was a joke, mommy! No, no, I didn't mean it. Noooo, it wouldn't hurt her!)

She imagined if she could fly and didn't know what was



stopping it from being a reality.

“Mommy, why can’t people fly?”

“Our bones are too heavy.”

“Why?”

“Because they’re not hollow.”

“Why?”

“I’m not a scientist. I don’t know.”

“But what if they were hollow?”

“Then I supposed we could fly.”

And then she could. She had to hollow out her bones with a kitchen spoon and grow a pair of wings, but then it all worked out. Her bones were light, which felt weird, but she got used to it quickly. She scaled skyscrapers that hit the sky’s ceiling. She made it to the edge of space, but there was a boundary that kept her from escaping the world.

“Mommy, will you come fly with me? I need help getting to Jupiter”

Her mom shook her head. “Not right now. Sorry, honey, I have to work.”

Uggghhhh work.

Her mom got paid to clash on keyboards and stare at screens all day at home in “her office.” Sometimes, she would imitate her mother, smashing her hands on an imaginary keyboard. Her mom’s job seemed booorriiiiiinnng, and she didn’t understand why her mom spent so much time doing it. Unless maybe she was watching TV on her screen.

Work made it so her mom couldn’t play games, but even when she could, she was bad at it. Her mom said her dolls couldn’t speak. That stegosaurus-dogs weren’t actually real. So, she mostly played with friends at school and her sister on some weekends. But, following one of her sister’s teenage birthdays, the now-teenager declared she was “too old” to play pretend

with her anymore.

She couldn’t figure out why.

Until one day she too realized that stegosaurus-dogs weren’t actually real. Until mornings started to feel heavier and heavier on her eyelids. Until she grew out of a booster seat and became taller than her mother. Until the days between one Christmas to another became shorter and shorter, and it became just like any other day.

The day her creativity died was just like any other. Her days blurred together until they were nothing more than cubicles with white walls. Before she knew it, she grew into the same keyboard clashing, briefcase trudging life her mother once lived. Desks with staplers with never any staples. Shoes that always pinched her toes. Vinegar and baking soda that she kept under her sink at home to clean her garbage disposal.

Sometimes, flashes of another life, an exciting one, would run through her dreams at night. She never remembered these dreams come morning.

It wasn’t until she had a daughter of her own that a spark of her old creativity came back. She watched her daughter tear through wrapping paper on her birthday with the kind of excitement and wonder that only children were capable of. She laughed as her daughter balanced on her dad’s shoulders and pretended she was a skyscraper.

Her daughter’s world was stuffed animals that came to life. Monsters that lived in the shadows but were never actually there. Dinosaur-shaped chicken nuggets that she always tried to make come alive (that her mother always ruined her fun by insisting she eat instead of play). It was friends that shifted from engineers to teachers to robots to baby bunnies to keyboard smashing, briefcase trudging adults...

# Writing Poetry from Isolation

KYLIE BANE

One of my greatest creative challenges during my time as a college student occurred as a result of the lockdown period of the pandemic. Normally, I feel the urge to write poetry in moments that inspire me, big and small. I could be at a concert, walking to class, hanging out with my friends, or driving to work. In these moments, I quickly pull out my phone and jot down a few phrases that I can use to bring myself back into this mindset later. During the lockdown, though, I was incredibly isolated. I stayed in my two-bedroom apartment with my three roommates, only leaving three times a week to work my part time job and get groceries. Every day was incredibly monotonous; I woke up, attended class using my laptop in bed, and occasionally left my bedroom to make food.

The monotony of my life did not inspire me to write poetry; the deadlines in my creative writing classes did, though. I struggled with writer's block for many weeks until I finally found a system that worked for me. In the middle of the night, long after all my roommates had fallen asleep, I would quietly creep out into our living room and sit on the couch by the window. It would be pitch black; without the streetlight down the road, I wouldn't have been able to see a thing. I found peace staring

out at my apartment complex with all those windows housing people I'll likely never meet, experiencing life in ways I'll never know. I would sit there on that uncomfortable hand-me-down couch and think about all these worlds existing just outside my own, trying to force inspiration instead of waiting for it to come to me.

Next to this couch sat a cage containing my roommate's pet rats. The sound of the rats scurrying all about and the smell of the rat droppings kept me grounded in reality, even as I floated off into my imagination. These sounds and smells reminded me to include descriptive language in my poetry, which is an essential part of good poems. All of my drafts started with a description of the rats and the couch, and then a description of the surrounding apartment complex. At this point, I almost always found something to inspire me. Maybe the drunk college students dragging a crappy pink couch across the lawn would remind me of the crappy pink couch in my boyfriend's dorm room. Maybe the rain I could just barely see under the streetlight would remind me of the light rainfall that cut short my final trip to Jaffrey Beach with my best friend before he moved across the country. Maybe the fog permeating the apartment complex would remind me of my date's white pickup truck slowly chugging through the thick fog as we worried about getting home by curfew on prom night.

It felt strange to need to artificially create this inspiration, though. In my normal life, something completely average like college students goofing off or the weather on my walk home would inspire me without any prodding necessary. Of course, the lockdown during the pandemic was anything but my normal life. Spending the majority of my time in my bed staring at my laptop did not allow any opportunity for people or nature to inspire me, so I'm proud of myself for finding a way to conquer

my writer's block by looking out into the world beyond my windows. Ultimately, I think the challenge of writing poetry from isolation was beneficial because it taught me a new way to approach my creative process.

## Creation in the Time of Corona

LEILA ELGUESSAB

**I**t took me about three weeks back in my childhood bedroom to become utterly bored out of my mind. I'd finished the semester online after being sent home due to COVID, and I was spending many of my days working as a CNA at an assisted living community. It certainly wasn't boring work; I spent my shifts cajoling residents to take their medication, providing bathing and dressing assistance, and trying to keep the folks in the memory care unit out of trouble. However, it didn't really provide much in the way of creative activity, and when I wasn't at work I was wandering around my house, hunting for a way to make quarantine a little more entertaining.

Of course, I turned to media consumption at first. I spent what has probably amounted to weeks of my life scrolling through TikTok and twitter. I enlisted my two dogs and my cat to join me in my hours-long binge watching sessions. However, this could only last so long before I was itching for something new, something that would occupy my brain with a little more force. One day, I found an old jewelry making kit that had been gifted to me when I couldn't have been older than twelve. A couple kinds of child-sized pliers, a few spools of stringing cord, some inexpensive glass beads that glinted in the harsh

fluorescent lighting of my half-finished basement. Nothing too fancy, but my magpie heart swelled at the bright bits of glass and colored wire, and I was hooked.

I started out by making bracelets for my friends, simple little things made with black string and color coordinated beads. However, I soon ran out of people to give them to, and the itch to create shiny little objects only grew as I practiced and learned new techniques. When the local Michael's finally reopened, I descended on the jewelry aisle like a hurricane blustering through a midwestern town; hell hath no fury like a woman seeking craft supplies.

I kept waiting for the day this hobby would lose its charm, the day I would get bored and move on to something else, but it never came. Instead I started selling jewelry, purely because I would have drowned in beaded earrings if I didn't find a way to get rid of them. The thrill of seeing an order notification on my phone, the joy of lovingly packaging it up, handwriting a thank-you note; these were the small delights that kept me from losing it. They helped keep my mind off the elderly residents at my job, whose dementia worsened with every day that their families couldn't visit them. I had less time to worry about my own elderly family members, or whether school would start up as usual in the Fall (Hint: it wouldn't). Even as the pandemic progressed, and even as life has started to slightly resemble normalcy, I've remained enamored with my baubles. I've created an online shop, and attempt to do my schoolwork at a desk that is covered with every manner of beads, wires and tools imaginable. I wouldn't have it any other way.

Some people used quarantine to get in shape, to find God or start writing the great American novel. I made trinkets. But through this experience, I've learned not to discount the seemingly inconsequential. One of the earliest reviews left on my

shop for a pearl necklace reads "We have 3 boys, so this was the perfect gift to remind her of our 3 little pearls. The packaging and gift wrap caused her to feel very special, like opening a treasure." I may have shed a tear or two when I first read it. How startlingly lovely it was to have brought a moment of joy to a complete stranger, to learn that something I made might be something to be treasured.

In *Wonderland*, a book on the role of play in the modern world, author Steven Johnson writes: "The fact that so much technological innovation...has emerged out of textile production can seem, at first glance, more a matter of necessity's invention. And yet the archeological record is replete with early examples of purely decorative toolmaking: a shell necklace discovered in the Sikul Cave in Israel was crafted more than a hundred thousand years ago. As soon as humans became toolmakers, they were making jewelry." I'm rather honored to be carrying on the age-old tradition.

## You Cry

MANDY DENG

One piece of art/media that has changed the way I see things or the way I view life, is the show *Midnight Gospel*. The show is an animation based on Duncan Trussell's podcast. Each episode revolves around Clancy, voiced by Trussell, who goes into a multiverse simulator and interviews a different character per episode. One episode, in particular, has changed my outlook on life: "Mouse of Silver".

In "Mouse of Silver", Clancy interviews his mother for this episode of the podcast. However, in this episode, in particular, there is little to no editing or refilming of it so that it fits into the storyline of *Midnight Gospel*. Of course, there is some editing within the episode, but the parts where Duncan and his mother are conversing have not been heavily edited. As a result of the episode not being heavily edited, it feels more raw and emotional. In addition to not being heavily edited, "Mouse of Silver" was filmed three weeks before Duncan's mother succumbed to her cancer, making her advice on the podcast seem more authentic.

"Mouse of Silver" revolves heavily around birth and death, with an emphasis on death. At the beginning of the episode, we see Duncan as a toddler and his mother carrying him as she walks around. As the scene changes, so does Duncan's and his mother's appearances; they are both animated in a way where the

audience sees that they are slowly aging. Since Duncan starts off as a toddler and his mother a middle-aged woman, his mother "dies" halfway through the episode. After her "death", her spirit then enters Duncan's body and thus makes him pregnant and in labor. When Duncan gives birth, we see that his child is his mother.

After the birthing scene, Duncan and his mother talk about things they can control in their lives. Duncan brings up the point that there is up to a certain amount of things in your life that you can control through an analogy of a tornado whipping through a neighborhood, knocking over houses. His mother then brings up the point that the moments where people's houses get knocked down are the more transformative ones. Duncan then segways over to his mother having stage four metastatic breast cancer and compares that to an "extreme, extreme version of a house being knocked down by a tornado". She then gives details on what it was like being told about having stage four cancer, emphasizing that there is a possibility of an invisible force taking out people when it's time for them to go out, and is something people can not change. As a result of that, Duncan's mother has made peace with it because it is easier to accept the idea that everyone is going to die than to fight it. Things appear and disappear all the time and that does not exclude people. She comments that because of our egos, we personalize our deaths, allowing us to think that we are a special case. We are a part of the whole; we transform and transfigure all the time. Duncan then asks how to stop the heartbreak, essentially asking his mother how he will stop the heartbreak when she passes away. Duncan's mother then says the two words that are the most heartbreaking part of the entire episode: "You cry".

Hearing a son ask his mother how to cope with her inevitable death makes you realize that life is short and it's best to go with

the flow of things, to accept death. But his mother's answer to his question puts things into perspective: because death is inevitable and makes people vulnerable, the only appropriate action is to cry. To cry is to mourn or grieve over someone, and the start of being able to cope with someone's death. This alone has made me realize that it is ok to cry over things, to be more in touch with my emotions. While death is one of the many things that break people's hearts and is usually seen as a negative thing, it can also be a positive thing. Our hearts have been closed because we do it to defend ourselves from pain; death can open our hearts up. Opening our hearts hurts, but it does not always have to. "Even the hurt transforms because if you inquire into the hurt, you know what you're experiencing is love." Heartbreak allows you to value life.

## The Summer of 2021 of the Rest of My Life

NICKYA BELLEVUE

In the summer of 2021 I watched an anime show called "Your Lie In April". This show greatly impacted the way I saw the world and changed my views and myself and other people. Your lie in april is about a piano prodigy and a girl who played the violin. This boy, Kousei, started learning the piano from a very young age. Kousei's mother was a piano player and recognising his talent started to teach him to play. When it became evident that she would die from an illness she started to abuse him and for him to play from perfection to become a prodigy. Due to her abuse Kousei was eventually traumatized and was unable to play for years after her death. Kaori was a violinist with an expiration date. After fainting multiple times she was told that her organs were failing one by one and she would eventually die. Kaori realized that she wanted to spend her final days doing the things on her bucket list. And one of them was to perform with Kousei as her pianist. Through much healing Kousei and Kaori were able to perform together.

This show really impacted how I saw the world. Before watching this show I had known that life wasn't short. People live for at least 70 years and do as much as they want during that time. However, watching this show I realized that I was wrong.



Although, life could be long but that doesn't mean you spend much of it doing what you want, what makes you happy or what makes you feel fulfilled. This show made me realize I didn't want to wait for death to make me chase my dreams and accomplish my goals. I also didn't want to regret the things I didn't do.

Kaori and Kousei had gone to the same school and met years ago when they were younger. It was Kousei's piano that inspired Kaori to play the violin but she wanted till it was too late and she only realized what she could have had when she ran out of time. They were only able to perform together less than 3 times and one of the times, she fainted on stage after the performance. She wanted to play the violin by creating her own arrangements and she only waited till it was too late. The things she wanted were simple but she didn't do them until she was running out of time.

Her story made me realize that it's not hard to chase your happiness and your dreams. You just need a little courage to do so. I wasn't afraid to chase my duty to my family by making my mother happy. I entered the medical field for her happiness to see her daughter succeed. I made sure to do things that would fulfill my duty to my church to make them happy. I attended meetings and services. I also fulfilled my duty to my race and nationality by making sure not to do things that "black/ Haitian people don't do" to follow what I thought was tradition. In the end, I put myself, my happiness, and my dreams last.

In the summer of 2021, I decided to be more selfish and try every activity that I wanted to and discover more about my likes and dislikes. So far I've realized many things about myself and I want to continue this journey of discovery and never stop.

## That moonglow gave me you

PATRICK OLSZEWSKI

The stage was the only thing that Lucas could see. The audience was in shadow with some glances and flickering eyes visible in the darkness, but Lucas kept his eyes on the piano. He tried hard not to huddle his shoulders and back over the keys, and he pushed his whole body back and puffed his chest out while looking at his director. The piano was with the rhythm section stage-left, the horns stage-right, and the few string instruments the freshman III band had stuck in the middle. The band-director looked at each of them, with a bald smile and thirsty eyes, and nodded.

The director looked at the drummer to count. The drummer smirked and looked at everyone else and counted One. Two. One two three four.

Moonglow.

Lucas hummed to the melody along with his voicings as he comped alongside his brothers and sisters in the rhythm section. He heard the lyrics in his head, thinking of the Billie Holiday record. The horns sounded superb that night. An upbeat swing arrangement the director wrote himself during his doctorate degree. Lucas rolled his eyes when the director brought the tune in for practice. Egotism. Clearly. But Lucas liked the song

regardless. He played the voicings in time with some of the high-hats and listened to the horns playing the melody. It was hard trying to keep a smile, but it probably didn't look forced. He wore a mask, and everyone liked the way it fit across his face.

First, one of the tenor saxophonists would solo, and then it would be Lucas. The sax started, and stuck close to the melody. Never straying too far – just sprinkling in some color and direction. The director nodded at this and liked what he heard. The eyes in the audience looked at the walls and at the drummer, who had a ponytail and creepy, cracked smile.

The saxophonist was ending his part. Lucas muted his voicings to only a few notes here and there and thought about how he wanted to play.

And his solo began. He thought about the playing with the melody, but it didn't sound right to him. He thought about the audience, but he didn't care what they thought, or what they wanted to hear. Lucas tried to ignore the thoughts in his head by mimicking the drum's hi-hats once more. He tried to play what he wanted, but he wasn't sure what that was exactly. It couldn't be helped – he hunched over the piano and stared at his hands, forgetting his posture. The director would scold him for this later, he was sure of it, but that was a tomorrow problem. Someone in his head, or right behind him, or in the band, or right in the audience moved his fingers up and down the keys, seducing him to play these particular notes, try that new technique, present the expected and subvert with something gross and distasteful. Something disgusting. And he hated it. He forgot his left-hand voicings and merely moved both his hands towards the solo he wanted to control. Wanted to own. But the expressions didn't sound like him. It worked regardless, but he tried so badly to ignore his thoughts and just play. Lucas thought he sounded like garbage, fighting with the keys, and arguing with

his sound. He wanted to hide in his skin hidden in his suit. The piano must be screaming. The solo just kept going and going, but he had to keep up. He couldn't stop now.

The band director looked at him, making sure he knew the solo was coming to an end. The phrase didn't sound like it was going to end, though, and Lucas knew this. He tried to finish his thoughts, but he couldn't. He was too angry with himself. With how he was playing. The colors were all wrong, phrases and emotions all twisted and messed up. The director gave him one final look, and Lucas finished with the major 9 voicing.

The horns finished the melody a minute later, and the tune was over.

Lucas's hands were shaking. He pressed them against his knees, but his knees shook too. He looked at the director, and then glanced at the band. They stared at him, eyes gawking at the animal trapped in a zoo behind the piano. The audience stood up and applauded, their eyes looking directly at Lucas. Only at Lucas.

## Finding my creative space

RYAN D'ALLEVA

I was never really the creative writing type. If asked to write a fictional story from scratch, I could do it, but it wouldn't really be enjoyable for me. I've always felt the need to write about something more real—that's why, as an incoming college student, I originally became interested in journalism. As much as I wasn't enjoying the interviewing and reporting aspect of the field, I had fallen in love with the writing. I fell in love with the idea that people could turn to my writing to learn something new, or to get their news fill. But still, I felt the need to do something even more impactful with my writing. While journalism is sometimes meant to inspire solutions and raise awareness of issues (especially issues that other journalists and outlets haven't reported on much), I still felt that I could be more directly involved in helping people and, more broadly, having more of an impact as a writer. I began looking for something that would answer that calling. I thought, however, that this could possibly come at the expense of creativity.

It was during the first semester of my sophomore year that I learned of the PWTC program at UMass. The idea of professional writing had intrigued me, but I wasn't entirely sure what that was at the time or what a technical writer even does. The first course for the certificate required students to produce a grant proposal requesting funds for a project that we were to

come up with. Typically, grant proposals follow a similar structure, and contain similar subsections. However, this didn't make me feel constricted at all—the proposal content was all mine to create. This offered all the room for creativity I needed. I decided to write a proposal requesting funds to provide wraparound services to the notorious homeless strip in Boston referred to as “Methadone Mile” or “Mass. & Cass.” Every aspect of the proposal took lots of creative problem solving and lots of research—from creating a full budget that would cover salaries, project expenses, and other costs to identifying potential partnerships with other companies to drive the project forward. I enjoyed every aspect of this project and felt very creative, though grant proposals are known to be structured and tedious, and not so much known for creativity. But with grant proposals—as is the case with other types of technical writing—the creativity lies in the way something is written, rather than the structure of a document.

While taking on PWTC courses during my junior and senior years, I felt at my most creative. I started to become comfortable with the skills I had developed, and this allowed room for lots of experimentation. For example, when constructing my website portfolio, I knew the design and layout of the page would cause me the biggest headache. The content and writing on the page wouldn't be a problem, but figuring out how to make it all look nice would be. Initially, I was determined to make my website look creative. I experimented with a few different extravagant design choices and layouts, and eventually decided that if I was going to get any good at design, it would be best if I started simple. In the end, I think the simplicity of the design is what made it creative!

This showed me that it's virtually impossible to “focus on being creative”; for me at least, I'm at my most creative when

I take a step back and stop focusing so hard—and when I'm enjoying my work of course. It's difficult to be creative when the subject is uninteresting or dry. For me, technical writing will never become dry—especially because of the broad range of industries that are now hiring technical and user experience writers and designers. I'm confident that creativity will bring me a long way in the industry, and I'm excited to see just how.

## A Hemingway Story

SYDNEY BURKE

Inspired by the shortest story ever written: For sale: baby shoes, never worn.

Mary's going to kill me. Our niece has hardly been in this world a month and I'm already giving her hand-me-downs. Not even from someone in our family at that. Oh, she's really going to kill me. Pardon me for scrambling to find a gift for a baby shower I had only found out about yesterday. The life of a novelist doesn't exactly come with a ton of benefits. I've hit the writer's block of writer's block. Now my agent will kill me too. Not just one wall stands in front of me, but multiple, with two murderers on my trail. Walls consecrated into nothingness, all blocking my mind. I can hardly think of a word without shuttering at the thought. Have others felt like this? I'm not the first writer so surely I'm not the first one in this predicament.

Predicament.

Getting my new niece something from a garage sale? That's definitely a predicament...

Baby shoes! My eyes are drawn to them the moment I pass under the threshold of the garage. Pink soles, a very clean look to them. I can't help but feel overjoyed. This is perfect! From what I can tell, they're in fantastic shape. Surely Mary won't notice I didn't buy them from the store. There's a lightness in my step as I walk over to them, my burdensome verdict finally making

headway. My fingers curl around the bowed laces, making me think of how people would throw these over the electrical wires without a second thought. For being at a garage sale, there's not a spot on the white canvas. Did the child never play outside? Maybe they were too little to walk just yet. I never understood getting shoes for babies.

My grin hurts my face, slapping myself to make it move. I probably look insane. Spinning on the balls of my feet, I search the garage for the owner. An elderly woman sits towards the back, a fold-out table with a small cash box in front of her. Quite professional looking for an ordinary garage sale. With her eyes lowered to a book in her lap, I pray that she didn't notice me—though I'm aware that's most likely not the case. I am the only other one in here, after all. I dim my smile as I approach, not wanting to unease her even more. She already had to witness a grown man jump for joy at the sight of pink baby shoes. Oh god, the things she must be thinking.

I place the shoes down on her fold-out table, a non-verbal way of asking if I could buy them. They're in such perfect condition that maybe she bought them for a granddaughter, accidentally putting them in the box due to her old age. The crow's feet from her soft smile unravel, her expression falling. She says nothing for a moment, only staring down at the pink soled canvas.

"How much do I owe?" I ask, the sweat dripping down my neck as I fear my hypothesis to be true.

She shakes her head, her expression brightening again. "Not a thing. You take them."

My eyebrows scrunch in confusion. "No please, allow me—"

"It's quite alright," she chuckles. "They were never worn."

## *Shawshank Redemption:* **A Story of Conviction and Reading**

TASHANNA JOHNSON

The movie *Shawshank Redemption* really change the way I see reading as a way to improve ones self and the justice system. It is one of my all-time favorite movies. I really enjoy the main character the story and it taught me a lot about people and what they are capable of both the good and the bad. It also make me really enjoy and see the value in reading and education. I think that one of the things that really drew me in about the movie was the raw emotion that was present. Every scene and aspect of the story built on the identity of the main characters and really defined them. Each character is going through something different in the prison whether it's a mental health problem or being convicted of a crime that they did not commit or being harshly convicted for a crime that they did at a young age based on the color of their skin. It has many scenes that would be triggering for most audiences but for me I feel like I learned lessons about people and identity and trust. What really resonated with me despite all the traumatic scenes was the fact that this library in the prison was so important because it talked about how in the prison system there was no way for people to improve themselves and the main character goes out of his

way to convince the warden to bring books into the prison so that way people can better themselves. Seeing this especially at a young age really showed me how important it was to be able to read and to have access to books and it really did make me want to read more because I saw the value in knowledge and being able to improve yourself. Even now I'm someone who really values the fact that I'm able to read and be able to freely choose what I want to read and having no restrictions over that aspect of learning.

The movie centers around someone wrongfully convicted of a crime that they did not commit and having to spend the time in jail for it, but the main character never gives up trying to find a way out of jail because he knows that he did not commit the crime that he has been charged with. It really shows the corruption in the justice system and also within the prison system. The reason why the movie really stuck with me is because it was one of the first times that I had seen this type of corruption and seeing it be done so blatantly. It really put in perspective for me what people are capable of and it made me want to be an advocate for people who don't have anyone to stand up for them. It also really taught me a lot about conviction and knowing yourself. In the movie the main character literally spends his time digging his way out of prison and once he's out of the prison cell the only way out of the prison is through the sewage pipe and he spends hours in there sifting through sludge in order to get out. That alone moved me because it just reminded me and really showed me what people can do when they know the truth.

## A Short Case of Writer's Block

VICTORIA OKORO

Orlena was always in love with horror movies since she was a young girl. Her aunt exposed Orlena to her first horror movie when she was only seven. The film was "The Clown" by William Hartford. It was about a man dressed up in a clown costume to scare and murder unsuspecting travelers who ventured into an abandoned town, Vinefort, Nevada. Her aunt showed her the movie to scare her and joke around with her, but Orla was not afraid while watching the movie. She, instead, was enthralled by the concept of horror. She became obsessed with watching different types of horror movies, whether psychological, thriller, or paranormal. She bought her first horror novel, "Into the Deep" by Miranda Willow, when she was ten years old. She was amazed at how horror could be written in extreme detail. The descriptive language and the use of sensory elements fascinated her. She began to think about writing her own horror novel that would be admired by other readers as she admired "Into the Deep."

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"For next week's class, we will be workshopping Orlena's manuscript. I will see you all next class," professor Bates announced.



“Professor, just to clarify, my manuscript has to be between ten to twenty pages?” Orlena asked.

“Correct.”

“Thank you, Professor, for the clarification. Have a good day.”

“You as well.”

Orlena gathered her belongings and left the classroom. On her way back to her apartment, she thought about what she would write for her manuscript. She had already decided it would be horror-themed, but she was unsure how to begin. She only had seven days to figure something out, and the thought stressed her. As she made it back into her apartment, she collapsed on her bed, exhausted from her day at college. There was so much work that needed to be done on top of writing the manuscript, but all Orlena wanted to do was sleep. She decided against it and went to her desk to draft her story. She took a pen and paper from inside her desk and wrote down short descriptions of different storylines. One was about a frogman who kills swimmers in Mckenny Lake, while another was about a killer robot who begins murdering the laboratory workers. She hated all the ideas she was writing down, so she tore up the piece of paper and threw it in her trash can by her desk. She sat her head down on her and let out a heavy sigh. Orlena knew she could write a horror story. She just didn't know how to start one.

“This is a bummer.” Orlena opened her laptop. “Maybe I could look up how Miranda thought of *Into the Deep*.”

Orlena held her head up and researched Miranda Willows's writing technique suggestions. At first, she did not see much. Orlena kept scrolling until she noticed a Youtube video titled “Why I Decided to Write Horror,” and Miranda Willow was on the video cover. She clicked on the Youtube video and was delighted to see Miranda Willow. It was an interview conducted by the Book Review, one of the most prominent editorial

organizations strictly for authors. Orlena listened to the entire one-hour segment and took notes as she watched. She perused her notes and concluded that writing horror was about enjoying the process and getting your ideas on paper, no matter how dumb it may sound. She reflected on the first horror movie she ever watched, “The Clown,” and thought about what she did and did not enjoy about the film. She pulled out another piece of paper and wrote down her likes and dislikes. She appreciated the use of the green-colored theme, which symbolized decay, and how the villain had a silent but deadly character trait. At the same time, she disliked the unnecessary dialogue and exaggerated emotions in the movie. Orlena finally thought of an idea for her horror manuscript. She would utilize red in her story to symbolize fear and blood while creating a killer who acted as an assassin. She would title her story *Redlight*.