

Creative Writing at the English Department of WWU Münster

This short introduction to the Creative Writing Section in the inaugural edition of *Satura*, to which this group is very happy to be able to contribute, is meant to provide a short background on our work and on how this section came about.

The Creative Writing Group began working together early in summer semester 2017. Many students with different backgrounds, both Bachelor and Master, have come to our meetings since then, but soon about ten participants joined our meetings regularly. Every three weeks the group met for ninety (extra-curricular) minutes, always beginning with half an hour of reading a short text together as an inspiration for the following half hour of writing in the group. Reading as writers, we discussed texts by Rachel Cusk, Grace Paley, John Keats, and others. We also looked at each meeting's text in terms of a particular topic, such as history or 'the everyday'. There were and are no rules; participants mostly write short fiction and poetry. During the final half hour, participants who wished to receive feedback read aloud what they had just written, and the group offered comments. Very often, we were amazed at how varied and immediately successful the responses to the text and our discussion about it had been. The group also met during the breaks; after our first summer semester together, we held a workshop on characterisation.

During the summer semester 2018, the English Department very generously funded a Creative Writing Class, for which we are very grateful. In this class, the group was able to work intensively on the revision process that is central to creative writing as well as on many aspects of the writing process, such as note-taking, research, or, of course, the role of reading. Many inspiring insights emerged especially from the collective revision process of the texts compiled here and more specifically from the authors' exchange with the group's feedback in their rewritings. We also continued to hold writing-generating meetings of the type described earlier. We no longer used texts as writing prompts, but different 'materials' such as fabrics or bodily movement. In our discussion and exploration of the revision process, we worked on two sets of texts in the course of the semester, both of which are printed in the following.

Part 1 is the result of a task the class explored in summer semester 2018. A story by Lydia Davis, *The Dog Hair* (2014), which consists of 91 words, including the title, was one of the set texts. We discussed this 'short short story', a type for which Davis is quite famous, and as a response, every student wrote his or her own text – not necessarily prose – with a maximum length of 91 words. The class then worked collectively on the revision process, since every student was expected to provide feedback on all of his or her colleagues' texts throughout four to five revision stages.

Part 2 brings together pieces by each writer that the authors selected individually. Several of the pieces originated in one of the meetings of the Creative Writing Group, for example *Dead Ends*, which was created as a response to a striking Zombie fabric during the meeting in which the class worked with fabrics, or *Awakening*, which engages with Ali Smith's story *Writ* (2008), in which the teenage self of the adult narrator arrives as a character so the two can have a conversation. The texts in this section were subject to the same collective, multi-stage revision process as the pieces presented in Part 1.

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