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# Introduction

Madeline Sonik

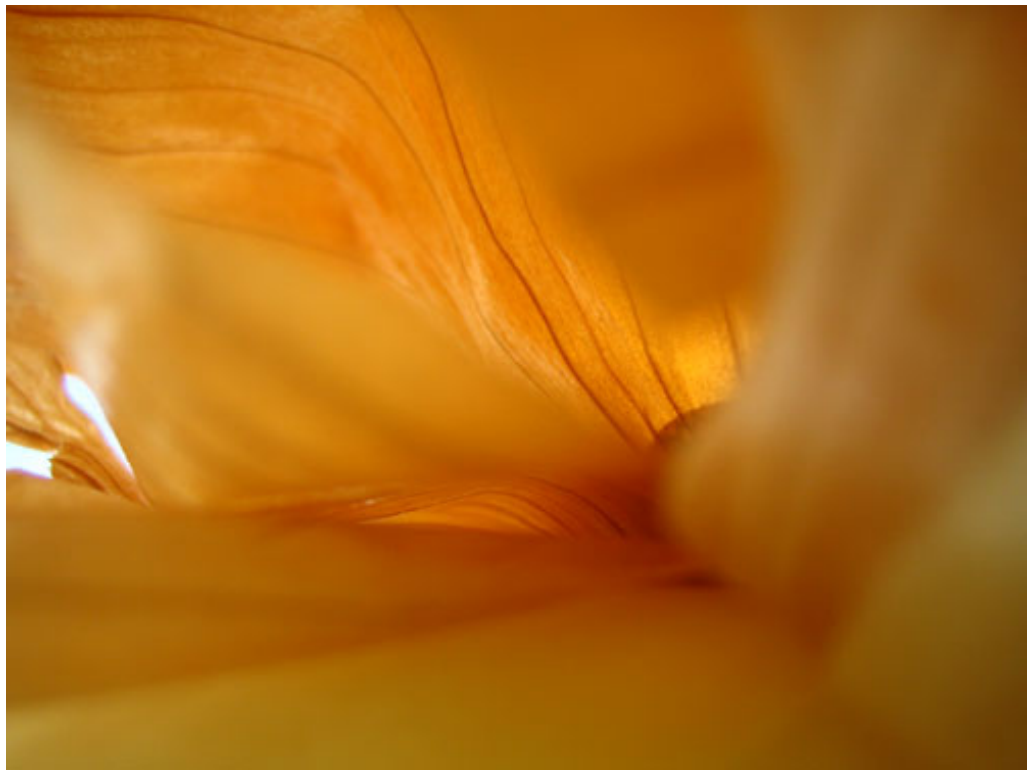


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**It was on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of post-secondary Creative Writing Education in Canada (November 2005) that *Educational Insights*, the Centre for Cross-Faculty Inquiry in Education, and the President of the University of British Columbia sponsored a series of Creative Writing panel discussions to explore pertinent aspects of the discipline's evolution. The University of British Columbia offered the earliest university Creative Writing program in Canada, 30 years after the establishment of the premiere prototype program at the University of Iowa in the United States. This special issue of *Educational Insights* arises from a desire to share some of those discussions and to further an exchange of ideas with the larger community of Creative Writing instructors who are engaged in defining this new field of learning. The call for papers for this issue brought essays from an international range of Creative Writing educators and writers, and many of the themes touched on in the panel discussions**

have been further elucidated and expanded.

While academic Creative Writing programs have proliferated, specifically in North America, Britain and Australia, the pedagogy of Creative Writing has remained more or less static. “Creative writing pedagogy,” as Tom C. Hunley puts it, “is still in a backwater area, relying on untested, unproven methods.” The emphasis has always been on the product, not the process or the theoretical underpinnings of that process. But as the young discipline becomes ever more entrenched within the academy, an overriding pressure is mounting to discover, uncover, and create a theoretical basis for its teaching. This issue of *Educational Insights* forms part of that debate.

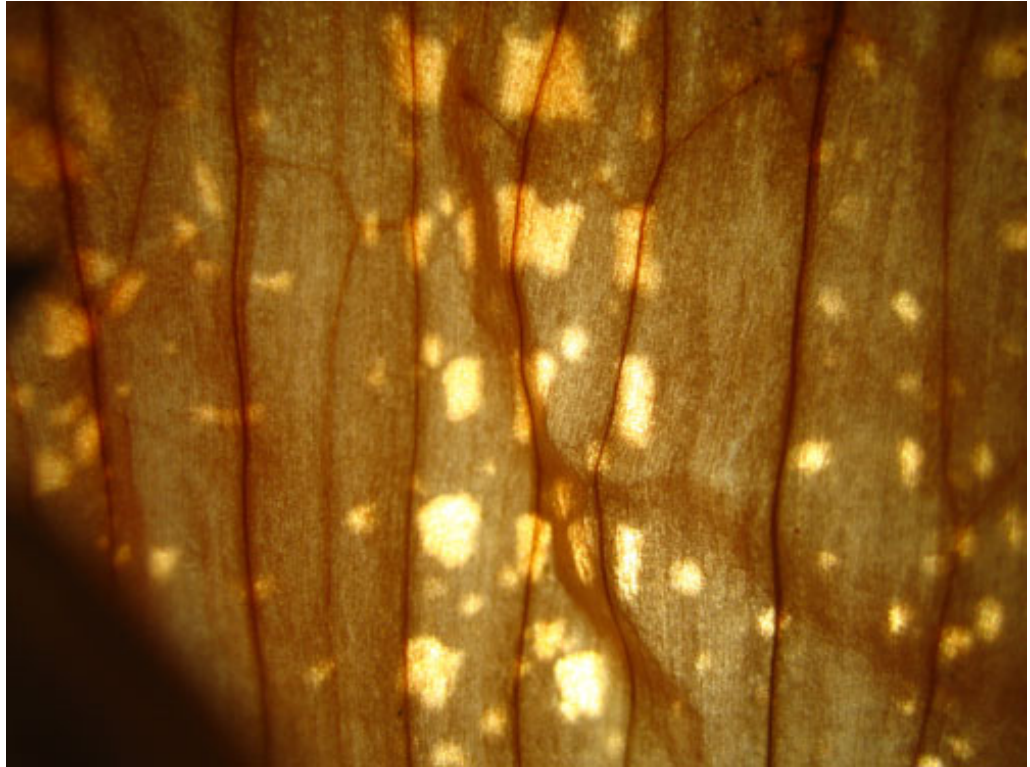


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Establishing, refining, and articulating workable teaching methods are some of the important challenges that our contributors consider. Chad Davidson and Gregory Fraser in “Polemics and the Age of Rage: Poetry Writing Students and the Lines between Polemics and Poetics,” for example, put forward a unique teaching approach to assist students in moving from polemics to poetry, while Ron Roebuck in “Pulling from the Well” suggests clustering and free writing methods to assist in removing what is “blocking the pure original manifestation of the collective unconscious.”

Several of our authors have addressed the topic of “Risky Writing” and how

**an instructor might deal with emotional subject matter in the workshop—bringing home the inescapable reality that Creative Writing is different from most other disciplines, in that writers tend to be more exposed and vulnerable in their work. Consequently, Creative Writing instructors are often required to possess a greater sensitivity to the inner landscapes of their students than their colleagues in traditional disciplines.**



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**Internationally renowned author Madeleine Thien reminisces about her workshop experiences, while Brian Payton, novelist and non-fiction writer, presents the story of his education (both formal and informal) as a writer. Poet and literary magazine editor John Barton discusses the illusion of poetic trends, while Rhea Tregebov and Joseph Hutchison provide original poems and teaching statements about their goals as instructors. In a video interview, Tregebov also comments on the enmeshments of form and content in the writing of poetry. Through experience of what works, she puts forward an approach to Creative Writing teaching that honours the emotional and psychological freedoms and the limitations of her students.**

**As an educational discipline, Creative Writing, like its literary product, consists of the idiosyncratic and the experimental and is of necessity “creative”; it will never easily lend itself to universally acceptable theories, methods or definitions. Yet we hope this issue of *Educational Insights* will engage interested readers by offering points that will broaden discussion and lead to further academic attention.**

## **About the Guest Editor**

**Madeline Sonik** is a writer, anthologist, and recent doctoral graduate of the Centre for Cross-Faculty Inquiry. Her works include a novel, *Arms* (Nightwood Editions 2002), and a short story collection, *Drying the Bones* (Nightwood 2000). She has co-edited two anthologies, *Fresh Blood: New Canadian Gothic Fiction* (Turnstone 1998) and *Entering the Landscape* (Oberon 2001).

## **About the Artist**

**Nancy Li** has been a cross-cultural consultant, teacher, and is currently completing her Master of Education in the area of language and cultural identity. For many years, she also wrote for the *Richmond Review*. These photos of onion explore the layering of self and identities.

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