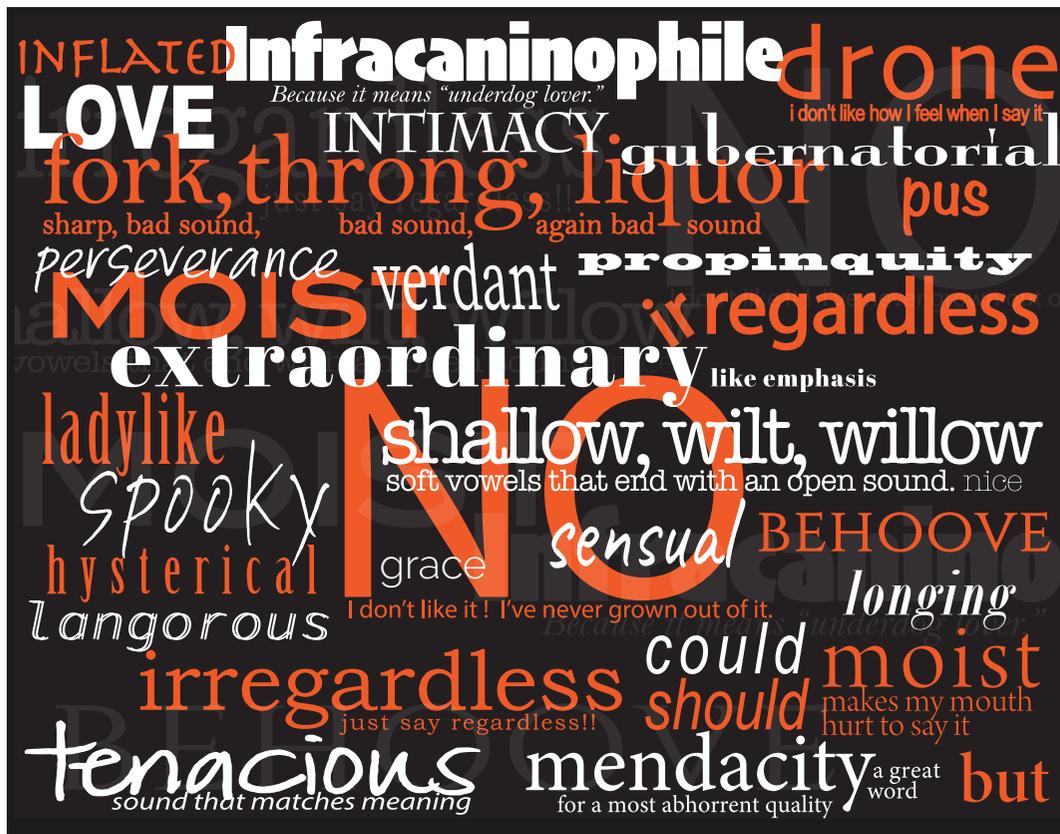




# newsletter

JANUARY 2022  
ISSUE 4



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## Raise your words, not your voice.

It is rain that grows flowers not thunder. -Rumi

I am in love with words and language, in all its wild and domesticated forms (as I'm sure most of you reading this are), hence I sent out the call to our current students to share what words they liked and disliked and the reasons for their choices. The graphic above shows the wonderful results.

I was excited to see the choices and looked forward to putting it all together, but I was unprepared for all the layers this little request would uncover. (Also, I had forgotten how peculiar, or even misspelled, words begin to look if you look at them long enough!) Words are visual, fragrant, violent, cheeky, boring, bossy, rambunctious. They are auditory and naturally vary by volume and tone depending on their form and who orates them. Words can be olfactory, whether pungent, fresh, or sweet. Words incite all the senses. Words are indeed powerful. They carry weight, antagonize, arouse, and anger, even the lighthearted. Take a word like NO. Simple in its sound and design, but hear it at the wrong time or even the right time and a plethora of emotions gush forward (I wanted to use 'rush' instead of gush, but it was the right amount of irritating to make a point.) The person speaking the word often has different feelings than the person hearing it. I have a daughter who has never accepted NO and continues her daily struggle in an effort to avoid it. Her brother has been mumbling 'hard-head' forever, but I digress.

A few of the chosen words require honorable or rather dishonorable mention: like moist. It caused the most upturned noses, disdain, and blatant dismissal. Thus the mere mention of its unfavorableness is redundant. Words like hysterical, ladylike were outright scorned, arousing a deeply-rooted historical anger related to the oppression of women. Words are often wild, and in our attempt to tame them or make them our own, we are forced to reconcile our intention or purpose and



characters suffering from leprosy, advanced syphilis, and hemorrhagic fever. These characters will cry out in extremes while their family members, life partners and coworkers desert them, and medical professionals refuse to provide them with remedies.

My last story will be produced using a new approach that incorporates scratch-and-sniff patches that bring its words to life. For example, the smell of putrefied flesh will accompany the material that addresses loathsome diseases (please see previous paragraph.)

My last story will be advertised by my publisher as the ultimate guide for pleasure-seekers, as a life-changing volume so elevated in concept and execution that it resists conventional treatment by reviewers. The hype will convince potential buyers that without it, they cannot hope to lead meaningful lives, and that it therefore commands a price requiring most to take out second mortgages. The net effect of my last story will be to curb or eliminate procreation thereby solving the problem of global warming.

### My Last Story by Sam Verini

This is my last story. I could tell the one about my dad--my proud father who's quick to laugh, with black hair, dark eyes, broad palms. I'll talk about how his nose is my nose, how I hated and fought with the baby hairs that frame my face until I realized that they came from him. How he's the one who made me feel seen, loved, beautiful. How he loves my mother in an earnest way, an easy laughing way that made loving make sense to me.

I could tell the one about my dog who died two days after Christmas. I could tell about how the last time he wagged his tail was for me, when I got up that morning. I went to therapy over that dog, over his dying, which felt frivolous. I told myself, and my therapist, that my dog dying was secondary to the pandemic in my decision to start talking to someone.

I need to talk about the house in Tennessee. Gritty red brick and green shutters with a half-moon driveway. About the smell of it--a mix of oak, wet leaves, crisp air, the warm musk

of my grandmother's perfume, sunlight, soap, nail polish and the dusty-sweet smell that the elderly seem to carry. I need to talk about the sound of that house. My grandmother's voice--her Carolina accent--the light clinkling of her jewelry, the heavy clicks when you wound up her music boxes and the chimes that followed. The sound of squirrels scurrying in through the leaves yard, cicadas singing, and daytime television. I need to talk about how she died much too young, in her sixties, before I could know her as a woman and understand the multitudes in her. How sweetly she loved, how completely, and with so much joy. I carry her picture in my wallet.

I don't think I need to talk about Clint. He knows. I am not one to leave things unsaid, to leave love unspoken.

This is my last story. I'm sad there's not more in it, more adventure or whimsy, but I suppose it's true. No more of me will be found on the page. You'll have to look for me elsewhere--in the house in Jackson, or between lantana leaves, sat atop on some lonely saguaro, wrapped up in my father's hand.

## Waterston Desert Writing Prize

The mission of the [Waterston Desert Writing Prize](#) is to strengthen and support the literary arts and humanities in the High Desert region through recognition of literary excellence in nonfiction writing about desert landscapes, through community interaction with the winning authors of the annual prize, and presentations and programs that take place in association with the Prize.

We will begin accepting submissions for the 2022 Waterston Desert Writing Prize on Saturday, January 1, 2022. The submission deadline is Sunday, May 1, 2022. **The Prize winner will receive a \$3,000 cash award, a residency at PLAYA at Summer Lake, Oregon and a reading and reception right here at the Museum!**

Click the button below for the 2022 guidelines and details. We look forward to this year's submissions!

SUBMIT

# FACULTY "UN-ENCLOSED", BETH ALVARADO

When I saw my teacher outside of school, I was always surprised and confounded as a child. These creatures did not exist outside of the classroom. Seeing them at the store buying tomatoes and toothpaste was so utterly peculiar. Did they have lives outside of school? I did not think so.

While I now know better, teachers remain fascinating people that are mostly allusive outside of their academic setting. I have never abandoned my sense of wonder at what makes these creatures tick. I say this because to teach requires a special something, an openness to learning and profound patience. This curiosity is the driving force of the monthly 'Faculty' series that begins this month. It is my hope that the faculty will share a little of who they are. This month, Beth was moved to write something about her past in place of the prescribed questions. Grateful and moved by her words, here they are:

## **A Brief Early Reading History** by Beth Alvarado

I do remember my mother taking me to the library every Saturday in the summers. I checked out stacks of books. I was 13 or younger and supposed to be watching my sister, but I was reading. My favorites were historical novels and gothic romances although, at times, I'm sure I couldn't tell the difference. Maybe there wasn't a difference. Is Johnny Tremain an historical romance about who we wished we were during the Revolution? I don't know. I haven't read it lately.

I didn't read Johnny Got His Gun, which was historical and maybe a little gothic, until high school. That one sticks. And Candide, my other favorite reading from high school, sticks, probably because my teacher accused me of plagiarizing the essay I wrote about it. The other thing I remember most about her class is that it took place in the basement, right before lunch, and I could smell the grilled cheese sandwiches and the smell made me want to smoke a cigarette and when she asked me if I'd plagiarized, I had the wherewithal to think but not to say what I was thinking.

Then I was 20 and had just had my first child. I sat in bed every afternoon, breastfeeding him and eating gallons of mint chocolate chip ice cream, reading. I

read every book ever written by Robert E. Howard. They were the only books we had in the house. My husband loved Conan, but the stories, which had supernatural elements, spooked me and when I heard cats yowling around at night, I thought they were coming to steal the baby's breath. I hung crosses all over his crib, even though I wasn't Catholic. I also spent quite a bit of time crying in the closet. I didn't know why I felt so sad, so not-in-my-body, and I was ashamed of the crying. When Fernando got home from work, I could hear him ask, "Where's Beth?"

"Probably in the closet," his brothers said. They lived with us then. "Crying."

I wish Fernando were still alive so I could ask him what he thought. Did he wonder: What's wrong with this white girl? None of his sisters seemed sad or vacant after they had babies, but then I remember him telling me that his mother did have a "nervous breakdown" once. I think he was seven and, by then, there were at least four younger siblings, the youngest probably a new baby. There was no money for food. He and a brother had been fighting over the last of the milk and down his mother went. Collapsed on the kitchen floor. They didn't have a phone. He had to run down the street to his Nana's house to get help. He said, when the paramedics carried his mother out of the house on a stretcher, her face was slack. He was sure she was dead. He remembered his Nana putting her arm up on the stretcher, adjusting her nightgown over her legs. OK, not a comparable situation. Still, it may answer my question.

I just sent something I wrote to a friend. It said, "Je suis enfermée," which, she wrote back, does not mean "I am sick" but, instead, "I am enclosed. As inside. A house." Enclosed is exactly how I felt after my daughter was born and had colic and ear infection after ear infection. Everyone was worried about me-or maybe, I think now, about the kids. My mother and sister came to the house and cleaned it. Fernando's mother and sisters came and helped with the children. (It takes a village.) In that year of being enclosed, I spent nights in the rocking chair, the baby over my shoulder, the only way she could sleep, and read from a doorstep of a book that started with Antigone and made its way to the near-present, as far as literature goes. In it, I found Tillie Olsen, James Baldwin, and Katherine Anne Porter. And then, children in tow, I went back to the library.

## JANUARY BOOK REVIEW

# how to pronounce *knife*

by Souvankam Thammavongsa

This month's book selection seemed like a natural fit in this newsletter as both explore words and the many ways in which they wield power over our lives or how we may use them, deliberately or not, to make sense of our place in the world.

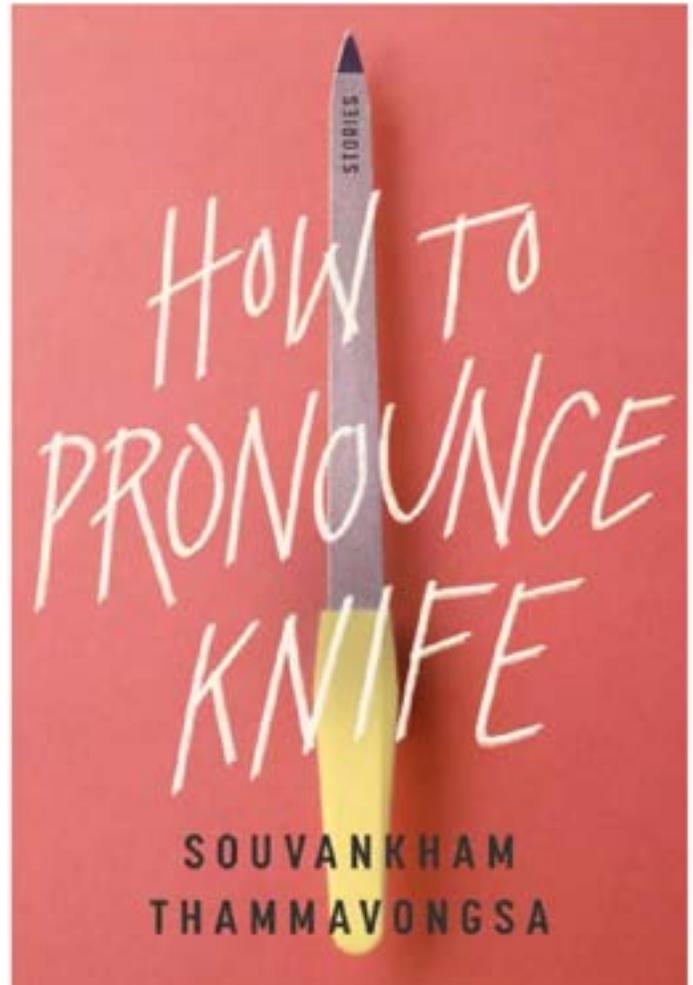
When I first picked up Thammavongsa's book, I was intrigued by its title. As an immigrant, there are many challenges, and in my opinion, none as challenging as learning a new language. A third grader in a new country, I was desperate to fit in. Having a significantly different or uncommon name does not help when attempting to assimilate, nor does making errors when speaking the language of your new country. The latter, if not both, dreadful experiences, especially when it seems a three letter word should be easy to pronounce. My experience of learning the word 'sew' (think 'new') is a story for another day.

*"When I look at a word, I can see the thing inside it. The ear inside heart"*

- S. Thammavongsa

This collection of short stories, *How to pronounce Knife*, is the first book of prose from poet, Souvankham Thammavongsa. Her stories draw readers into the depths of what it means to love, desire, dream, ache, and grieve through stories that challenge and push against the problematic American standard of beauty, the dangers of assimilation, and the damaging effects of racism. Her stories are sharp and quick while she uses repetition to magnify and shrink her characters' complexities and intimate hopes. Her stories explore what it means to live, what it means to survive and what it means to dream. Thammavongsa is an author that leaves reader believing that language, societal norms and behaviors, and identities are meant to be pushed, challenged and questioned.

While this books' subject matter may at times feel weighty or fierce, the stories glow with grace



and empathy, and are equal parts heart-wrench and humor. This book is worth a read.

(Plus, with all the reading we do as grad students, teachers, and writers, a short story collection is the perfect format!)

Send me your book review, and I'll include it in the next newsletter. Not only do we appreciate your participation but it looks great on your CV. Email Imke at:

[wernicki@oregonstate.edu](mailto:wernicki@oregonstate.edu)

Winter term 2022	
Term Dates	Jan 3 - Mar 18
Priority Registration Phase 1 (Waitlist Not Available)	Nov 14 - Dec 1
Priority Registration Phase 2 (Waitlist Available)	Dec 2 - Jan 9
Classes Begin	Jan 3
Thesis Orientation (students graduating in Aug. '22 only)	Jan 6
<b>Last Day To:</b>	
Add a Course Online without Department Approval	Jan 9
Drop a Course (100% Tuition Refund)	Jan 9
Audit a Course	Jan 10 - Jan 14
Add a Course Online with Department Approval	Jan 16
Withdraw from a Course (50% Tuition Refund)	Jan 23
Change the Grading Basis of a Course	Feb 18 by noon
Withdraw from a Course (No Refunds Available)	Feb 18
Withdraw from Term	Mar 11
Apply for Graduation (Graduate Students Only)	Mar 11
Mentorship Evals Due	Mar 11
Classes End	Mar 11
Finals Week	Mar 14 - Mar 18
Program of Study Due (students graduating in Aug. '22 only)	Mar 18
Winter Term Ends	Mar 18
Grades Available Online	Mar 23

## WRITER'S SPHERE

# The Art of Resistance

by Richard Choate

I may not be a writing expert, but after 40 years, I am an expert at writer resistance. I started writing long before computers and laser printers. I had no serious goals, mostly jotting down short pieces of nonsense and the occasional poem. By the time I got to college, the serious idea of writing had joined me; the fascination with finding other things to do besides writing had begun making frequent visits.

The technical tools for writing were limited but took priority in the ritual before writing. All the pencils needed to be sharpened. An eraser needed to be tracked down. The writing pads needed to be straightened into an orderly stack. These were usually yellow legal pads. You would write on one side of the paper until the pad was complete and then flip it around and write on the other side.

If you were lucky, the typewriter ribbon needed to be changed. I had inherited my father's 1928 Burgundy Red Royal Portable Typewriter with carrying case. He received it from his father when he entered college. It was a beauty and worked reasonably well after 40 years. It was maintained through proper cleaning and oiling of the parts. If done weekly, the typewriter stayed in fine typing condition. On the other hand, changing its ribbon was an all-day affair.

The time to change the ribbon was when the typing on the page was more indentation from the typebars striking the paper than the smudge of ink transferred to that ridge. By now, the old ribbon

was in a pretty sad shape. Typewriter ribbons came in all sizes and types, but the standard was two-spool 1/2 inch cloth. All black was preferred but also hard to find due to its demand. So, I used the two-toned ribbon - black on the top, red on the bottom. To this day, I have no idea for what red was used.

Pulling the old ribbon off the typewriter was easy. Putting the new ribbon on — not so easy. The two spools sat on their spaces either side of the escapement. The ribbon hung down between them, waiting for me to carefully thread it through the ribbon vibrator (I'm not making this up). It was a tedious, maddening, and grimy process. It was also the grandest sort of resistance.

Over the years, as I transitioned from the need for pencils and yellow legal pads to the computer, I've had to up my resistance game. But there's plenty to fill the void. Leftover from the good old days is reorganizing the books on the bookshelf, cleaning the kitchen, doing laundry (especially a series of "wash separately" items).

Many electronic devices can take you down a rabbit hole in the middle of a sentence and not return you to earth for an hour. Doing yoga or meditating is also good. Not only are they good for you emotionally or physically, but they can also occupy up to an hour and a half of your time. When I was in rehab... Oh, yes. Drinking is also a good form of resistance if you do it too much and too often.

For more tips on how to avoid writing, follow me on Facebook.

# WRITING RESOURCES

Whether you want to track submissions, find new markets to submit to, or figure out what agents are looking for, the websites listed here will help with that. Of course, there are many more if you dig a little deeper. It's a slippery slope. Just ask Alice.

## **The Submission Grinder** — <http://thegrinder.diabolicalplots.com/>

A free submissions tracking website with powerful charts and submissions tracking tools, including searching by genre, word count, and more. Allows you to track how long your submission has been out and how long a venue usually takes to get back to you. Gives average rejection times. Offers a monthly submission email newsletter. A great tool for writers, but only tracks fiction, not poetry.

## **Duotrope** — <https://duotrope.com/>

A powerful tool for tracking submissions. Costs \$5 a month. Provides much of the same abilities as the Submission Grinder, except you can track poetry. Also has lists of “fastest turnaround” journals and a Calendar feature that gives you theme dealines. Worth the cost if you're a poet!.

## **Query Tracker** — <https://querytracker.net/>

Query Tracker is like Duotrope but for finding an agent.

## **Shunn's Manuscript Format** — <http://www.shunn.net/format/story.html>

The standard manuscript format for submissions in most genre magazines. Also useful for any journal that asks for a header and author information on the first page of the submission.

## **The Review Review** — [www.thereviewreview.net/](http://www.thereviewreview.net/)

A review website for literary journals. A good resource for researching the right journal for your piece. Includes interviews and submission calls in the classifieds section.

## **New Pages** — <https://www.newpages.com/>

A website which lists reviews, calls for submissions, contests, and conferences.

## **Literary Mama** — <http://www.literarymama.com/>

Another website with monthly submission calls, sometimes with a focus on parenting submissions, but usually for all types of submissions.

## **Publisher's Weekly** — [www.publishersweekly.com/](http://www.publishersweekly.com/)

I suggest checking out this website if you are a novel writer. They list recently acquired titles — a great way to find who is buying the kind of book you are writing.

## **SFWA (Science Fiction Writers Association)** — <http://www.sfw.org/>

SFWA is a fantastic resource for speculative writers. It lists “pro” markets (those that pay at least .08/word) and provides resources such as an emergency medical fund, mentorship programs, networking and marketing, grants, and volunteer opportunities. You must have a certain number of pro sales to join.

## **Poets & Writers Magazine** — <https://www.pw.org/>

A great resource for submissions, they have a database of journals. Also you can subscribe to the magazine and it has lots of submission opportunities.

## **MSWL (Manuscript Wish List)** — <http://www.manuscriptwishlist.com/>

A list of agents and what they are looking for! Lists themes/genres that agents want to see.

## **MFA CASCADIANS! Share, contribute, send us your offering.**

We're going to keep it simple this month. I know **LOVE** may not be considered simple, probably it isn't and it's possibly why so many write about it....or is it because it's simple to write about? Either way, write something with **LOVE** in mind to share in the Writer's sphere in February. Seriously, are you writers or pretenders?

**GUIDELINES:** Student, faculty, and alumni original works are welcome. Please share your thoughts, work, unfinished or not. Prose: 300 wordsmax (excerpts from larger works welcome) Poetry: No more than one page double spaced.

-- Share your offering by **February 3rd, 2022** to: [wernicki@oregonstate.edu](mailto:wernicki@oregonstate.edu)

