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Writing Creative Non-Fiction and Memoir



Unit 1a: What Is Creative Non-Fiction?

Unit 1b: The Truthfulness of CNF

Unit 1c: Ten Writing Recommendations

Unit 2a: Types of Creative Non-Fiction

Unit 2b: Research and Immersion

Unit 2c: Narrative and Narrators

Unit 3a: Reading and Readers

Unit 3b: Scenes

Unit 3c: Information

Unit 4a: Recreation and Reconstruction

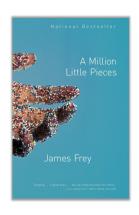
Unit 4b: Hook, Frame, and Focus

Unit 4c: Revising Creative Non-Fiction



- the use of literary craft
- the use some of the techniques of poets, playwrights, and writers of fiction
- to produce writing that is compelling, vivid, and dramatic
- to enthral the reader (Gutkind 6)
- has few established rules and conventions
- must be verifiably true
- must be imaginative, but must not make anything up

James Frey, A Million Little Pieces (2003)



- memoir written by American author James Frey
- gives a raw account of his experiences as an alcoholic, drug addict, and imprisoned criminal
- so moved Oprah Winfrey that she featured it in her book club, making it a national bestseller
- revealed by an investigative Web site to contain numerous fabrications and exaggerations
- so damaged Frey's credibility that the book is now used as a cautionary tale (Gutkind 14-15)

subjectivity vs objectivity

subjectivity

 when the writer is interested in conveying personal thoughts, experiences, and feelings

objectivity

 when the writer is "outside" of and detached, or writing about characters external to themselves

[&]quot;... any writer of any merit is simultaneously subjective and objective. He is subjectively engrossed in his work, and the quality and intensity of his personal vision will be dictated in a subjective way. At the same time, he must be removed from and in control of his material. Thus, he is involved in a paradoxical activity: an intellectually creative balancing act in which invention and judgement coalesce or coordinate to achieve and preserve equilibrium."

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GAT Techniques Affecting Truthfulness



- composite characters: creating a character who is based on two or more real people
- compressed scenes: squeezing together two or more scenes, events, or situations
- manufactured dialogue: recreating conversations to eliminate hesitations, deviations
- changed names: using a different name for a real person
- fudging: changing seemingly insignificant details for practical or aesthetic reasons (34-40)

Author Biographies

Fiona Tinwei Lam

- born in Scotland; based in Vancouver
- edited The Bright Well, a poetry anthology about facing cancer
- co-edited *Double Lives*, a creative non-fiction anthology about writing and motherhood
- "Play" first appeared in Other Voices (2006) (394, 401)

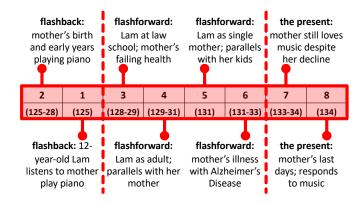
www.fionalam.net

M.A.C. Farrant

- prolific author of satirical and philosophical short fiction, memoir, drama, and other genres
- author of The Secret Lives of Litterbugs, a book of humorous essays
- book reviewer for the Vancouver Sun, and the Globe and Mail
- "We Keep the Party Going" first appeared in Grain (2002) (389-90, 401)

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☐ Fiona Tinwei Lam, "Play"



M.A.C. Farrant, "We Keep the Party Going"



... I fell down the stairs and hit my head on a large metal trunk that my mother kept there, at the side. I cracked open my skull. The man next door heard my scream and called an ambulance. There was blood everywhere. They had to shave my head to operate, to put my skull back together. This was in Toronto, in 1920. No one thought I'd live. The newspapers carried the story. After the operation I was taken to a lecture hall. The doctor who operated on me wanted to show his students.... (147-48)

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