



Refanging the Conversation;

Giving Voice to the Monstrous



From a panel facilitated by:

Spencer Keralis

Sam Langsdale

John Edward Martin

at The Festival of Monsters 2026 in
Santa Cruz California

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SCAN ME

Refanging the Conversation

In contemporary academia, the conference panel has too often become a defanged space—a toothless ritual of polished monologues that prioritizes the delivery of fixed knowledge over the slippery intellectual experimentation essential to Monster Studies. This interactive roundtable, sought to reimagine the conference as a site of active, monstrous production. Drawing on the radical traditions of culture jamming and craftivism, and innovative practices like critical making and research-creation, this session replaced the traditional paper presentation with collective action.

The session began with a curated dialogue among the participants, reflecting on our own scholarly monstrosity. We explored how our own research voices have been shaped, silenced, or monsterized by institutional norms, asking: *What does it mean to speak with a monstrous tongue in an age of increasingly homogenized discourse?*

Spencer Keralis began with Kathy Acker’s assertion in her 1984 essay “Realism for the Cause of Future Revolution” that “Language, any language including verbal and visual ones, supposes a community,” to reflect on finding a community of fellow travelers in comics and monster studies.

John Martin reflected on the “gothic confessional” and its implications for eliciting scholarly voices that both perform and resist the demands of disciplinary and institutional discourses and how his own scholarly and career trajectory have reflected this dynamic.

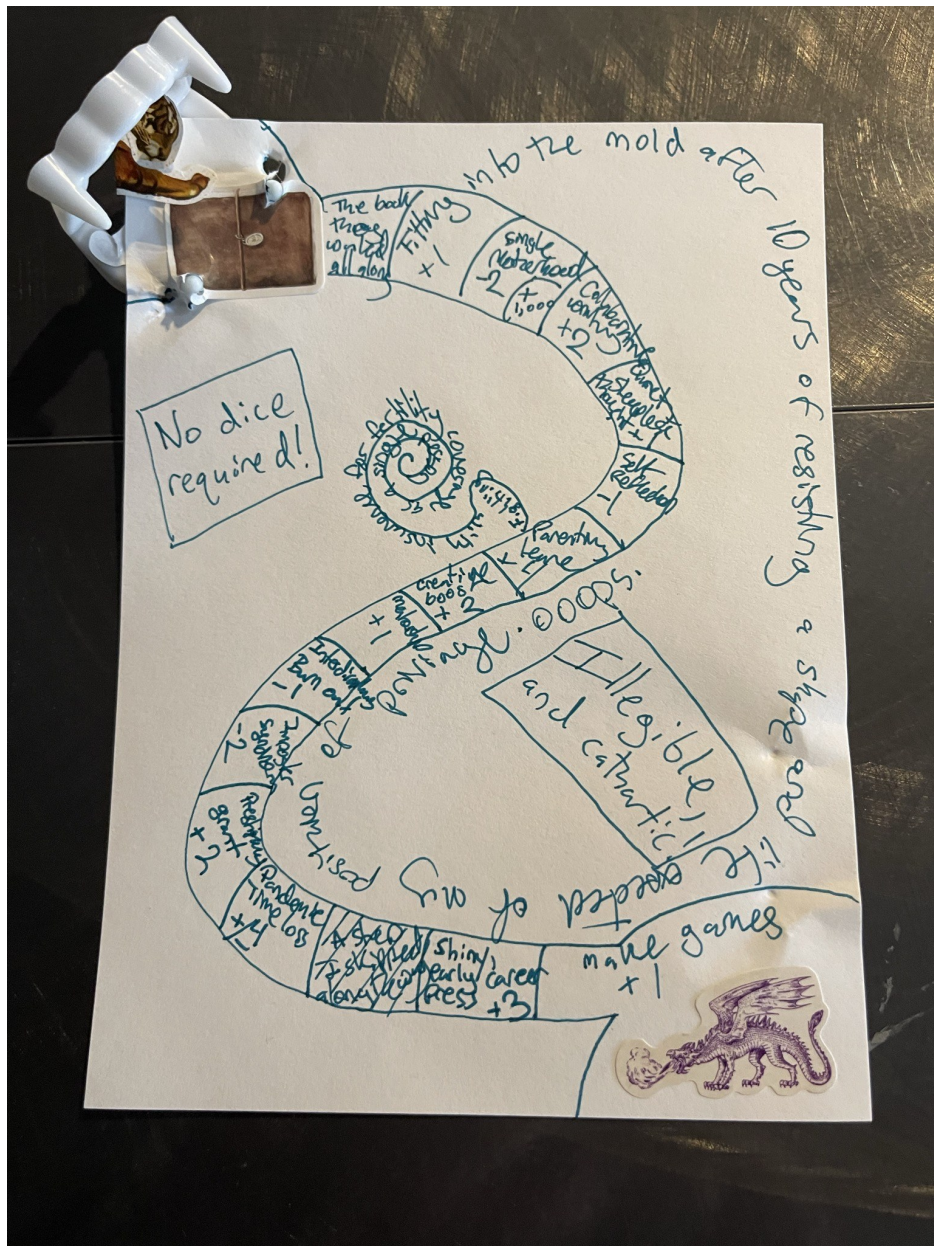
Sam Langsdale discussed how French feminist theories of *écriture féminine* have allowed her to write herself into scholarly fields where professional belonging and stability have otherwise been almost impossible to achieve.

This was not a presentation of findings, but a collective act of scholarly subversion. We are grateful to the attendees who joined us to talk, draw, and create as we negotiated the boundaries of the monstrous voice together. Elizabeth Swenson was a collegial and engaged moderator for the panel and we enjoyed her contribution to the panel’s success.

We’re also grateful to Michael Chemers, Jen Mahal, and Renee Fox for welcoming us and our weirdness into the community of the Center for Monster Studies at UC Santa Cruz. The Festival of Monsters is a safe place for experiments like this to take place, and to celebrate our monstrosity among comrades and fellow travelers.

References

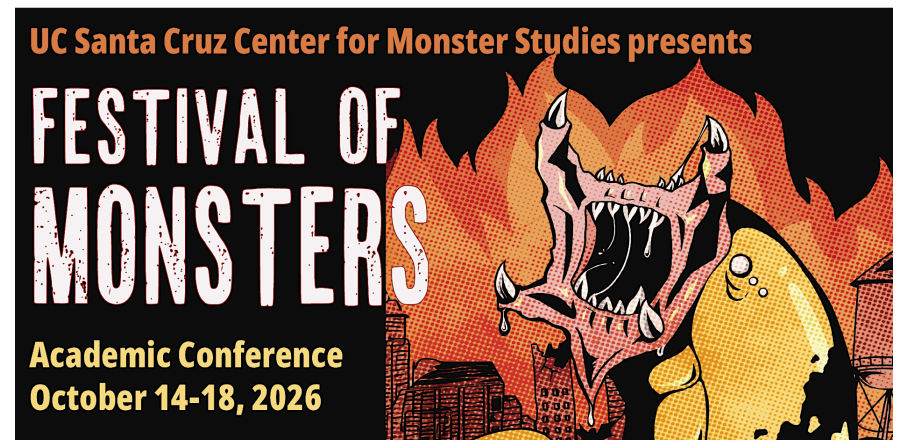
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Moving from theory to praxis, the panel pivoted into a participatory zine-making session integrating Lynda Barry's Scribble Monster Jam exercise. We provided supplies, and invited the audience to contribute panels, text, and other monstrous interventions to a hybrid publication in the tradition of the surrealist exquisite corpse. We considered the polyvocal writing and performance of films like Maggie Gyllenhaal's *The Bride*, and invited the audience to evoke their own monstrous voices in the making.

By synthesizing conversation with tactile creation, we aimed to:

- ♦ De-neutralize the academic voice through creative disruption.
- ♦ Re-center the "feedback loop" as a vital, messy component of intellectual growth.
- ♦ Refang the conference experience by embracing the unpredictable and the unpolished.







In 2011 I took a wrong turn. // This started a detour that redefined me as a scholar and professional. —

DR. **K** // Lots of therapy to deal with grief, shame, and regret.

REJECTED CONVENTIONAL CONFINES AND CAREER BOUNDARIES

FOUND CHOSEN FAMILY OF COLLABORATORS IN ALL SENSES OF THE WORD - CO-CREATION, RESISTANCE & SUBVERSION

EMBRACING AND HOLDING GROUND FOR MY OWN MONSTROSITY

BE THE MONSTER YOU WANT.

CREATING SPACE FOR CREATING, CREATING, BECOMING TOGETHER IN HOSTILE TIMES

LIBRARIAN BY ACCIDENT

OVER DUE

SHHHH!

MENTORSHIP, COLLABORATION, MUTUAL AID, RESISTANCE

my own monstrosity

INSCURABILITY

BE THE MONSTER YOU WANT.

panic + anxiety + sense of failure + profound loneliness

found by teaching

creating community

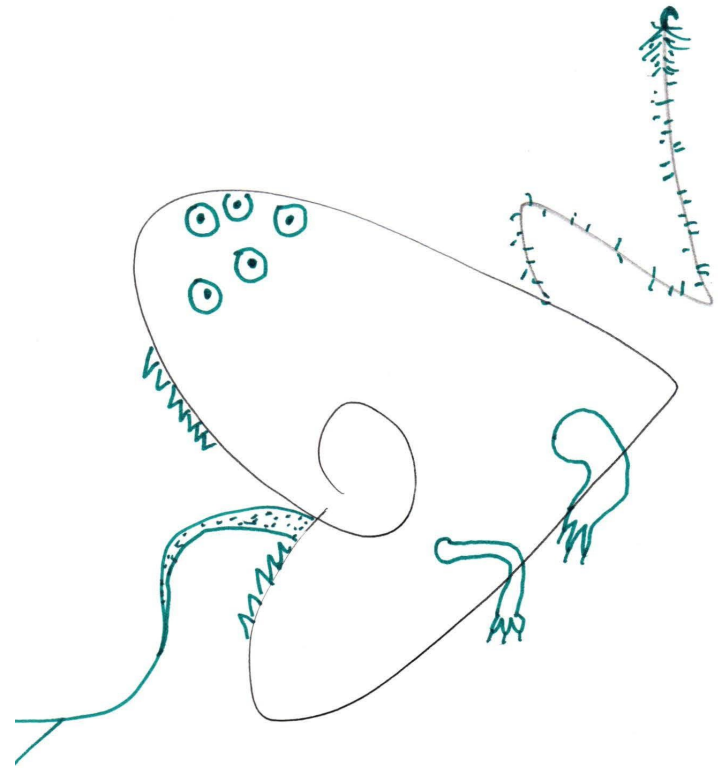
followers

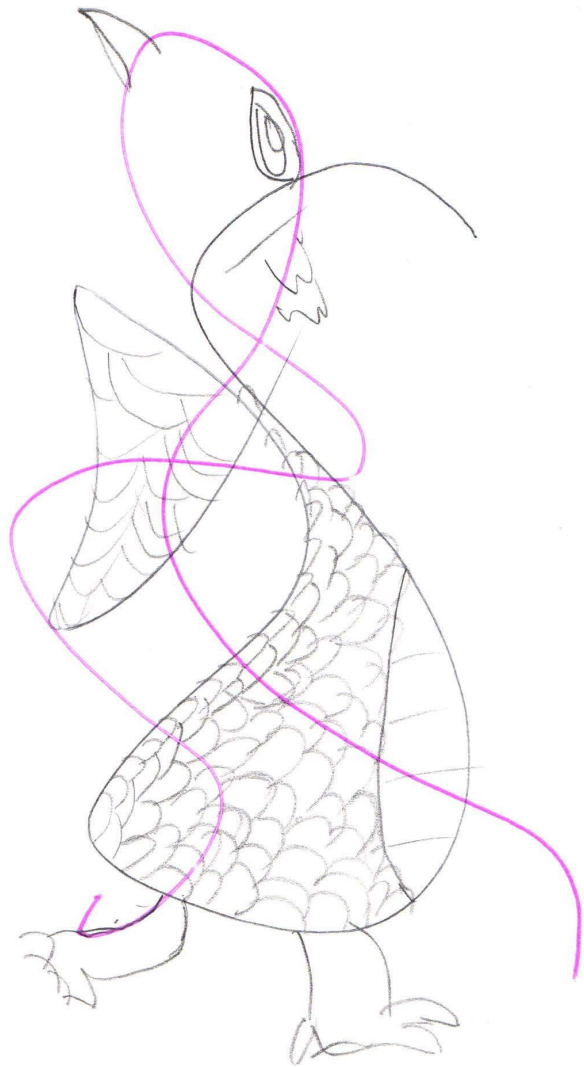
DATE DUE

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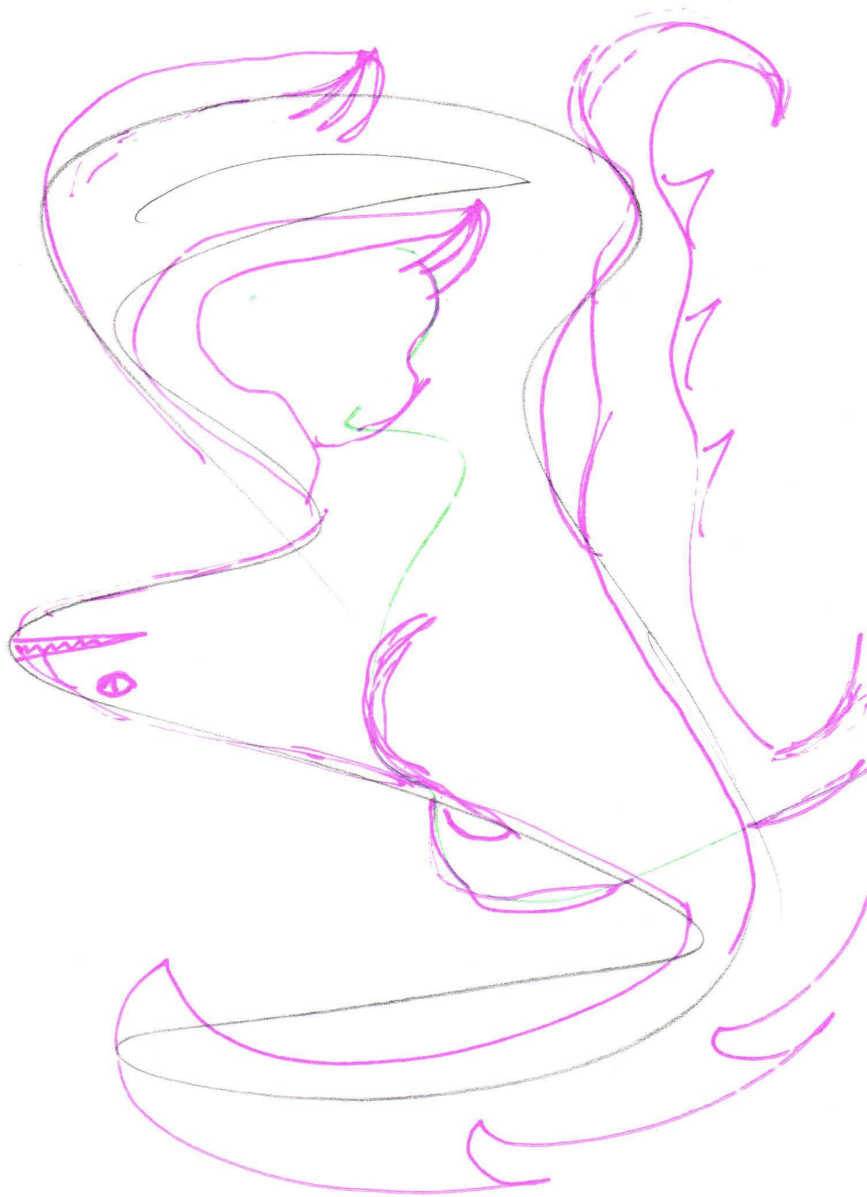
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Horror Studies Hidden identity Patriarchal/Monstrous
 Ph.D. "That's not relevant!"
 "You're not academic" Grad School
 Battered Graduate student
 Theatre Feminine Rage
 Embodied "You can't do
 low income Science Fiction
 Double Feature
 Performing Femininity
 Pressured into androgyny
 Catholic/Pentecostal
 upbringing
 Justifying my Religious
 existence in trauma
 academic spaces Not a butterfly
 but a moth





Artistic and queer but if you ask I'll say gay because gay right now - but that makes part of my life, particularly the past, with my wife INVISIBLE. It was a Real and authentic love, too, just like now but different. My monster escapes through intentional disclosure which I do when I choose to, for whatever reason; otherwise, I am fine with others defining me. I don't owe them an explanation. The explanation is my choice - so I feel at home in my body, my soul. I'm always becoming because I exist without disclosure. So I'm a monster, but on my own terms.



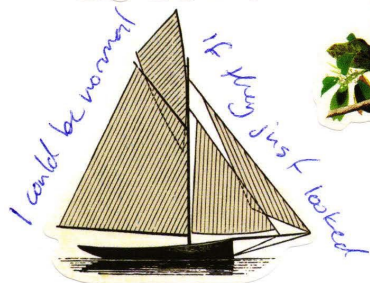


Churches employ stained glass to suggest that they are sacred. Why be the building - dull, rigid, constraining - when you can be the thing that is actually sacred: the fractal, unruly, prismatic, changeable, asymmetrical, alluring, playful, illuminating light?



Afraid of failure
Afraid of success

I



Must



The illusion of being
known
Only to be rejected



Here but there but
nowhere but everywhere
but always present but
never around



Find

Somewhere between

Wanting less wanting
more not enough
time too much
time



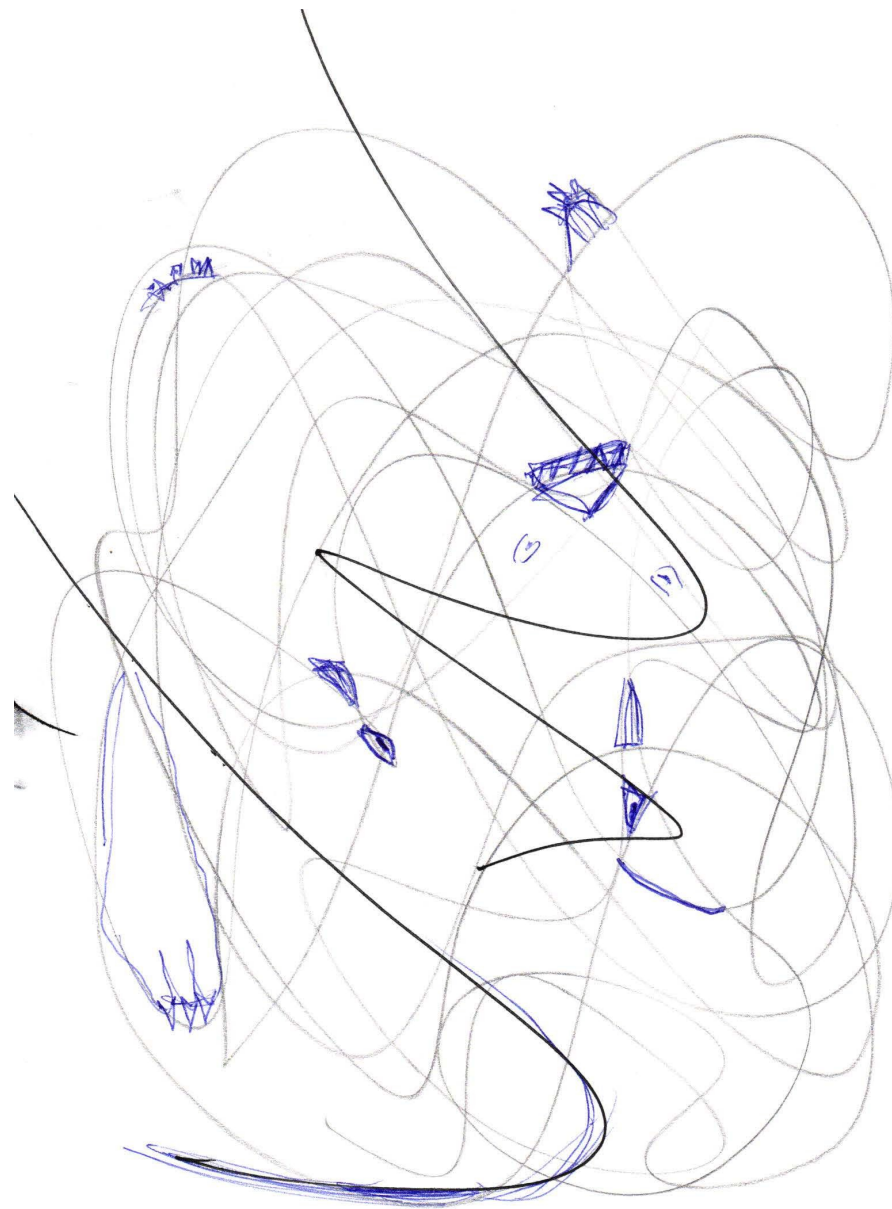
The Other

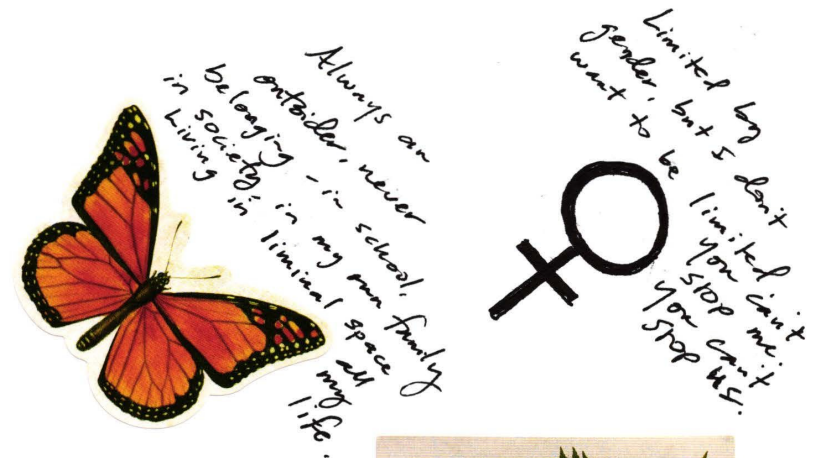
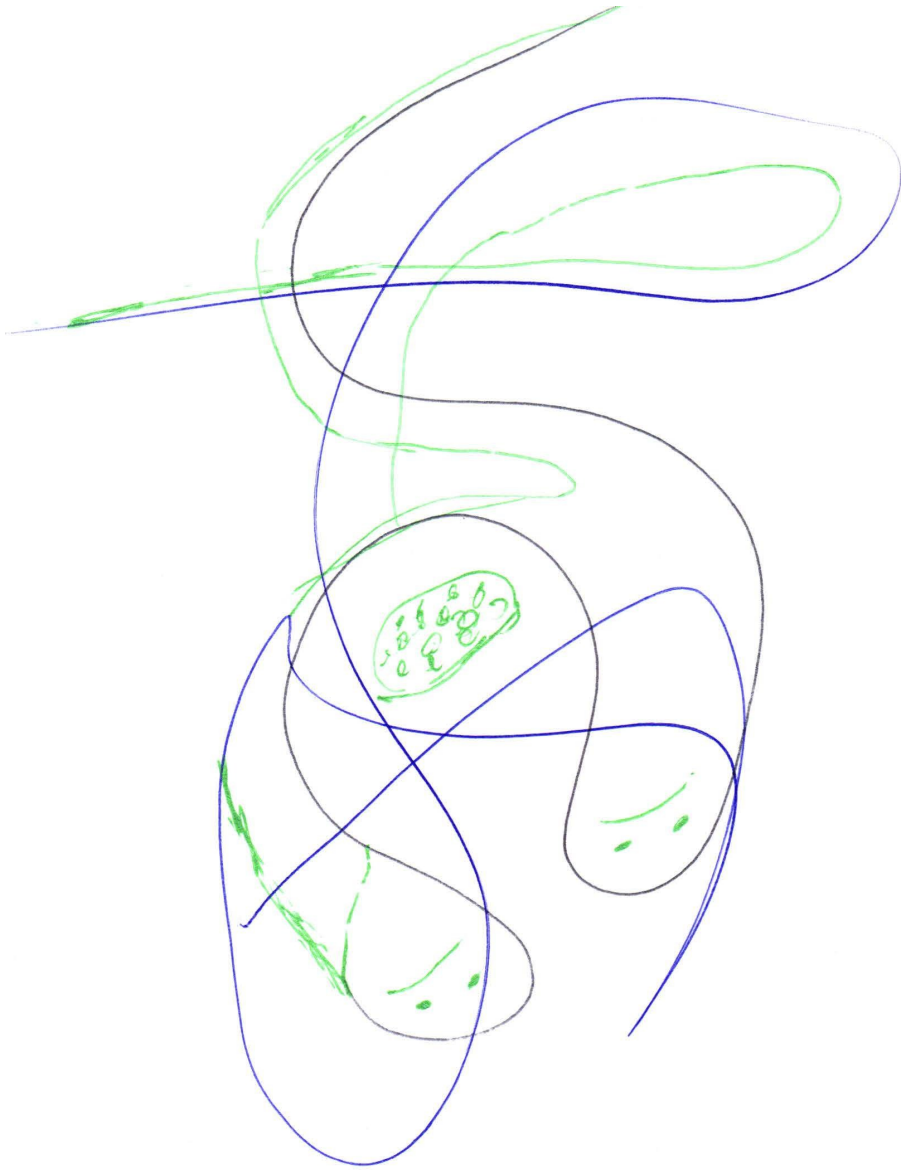
A blank page filled with
text too small to read and
too long to try

Monsters

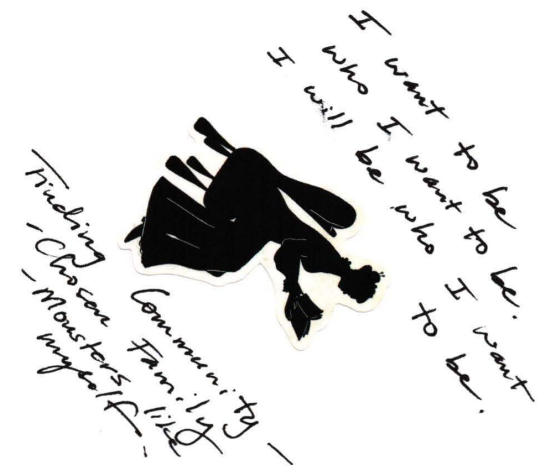
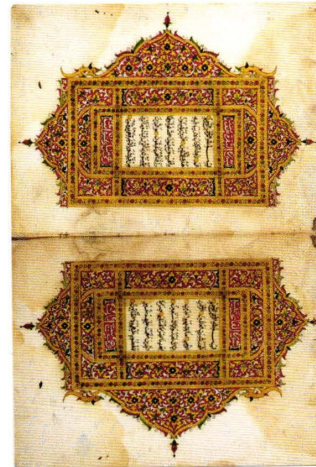


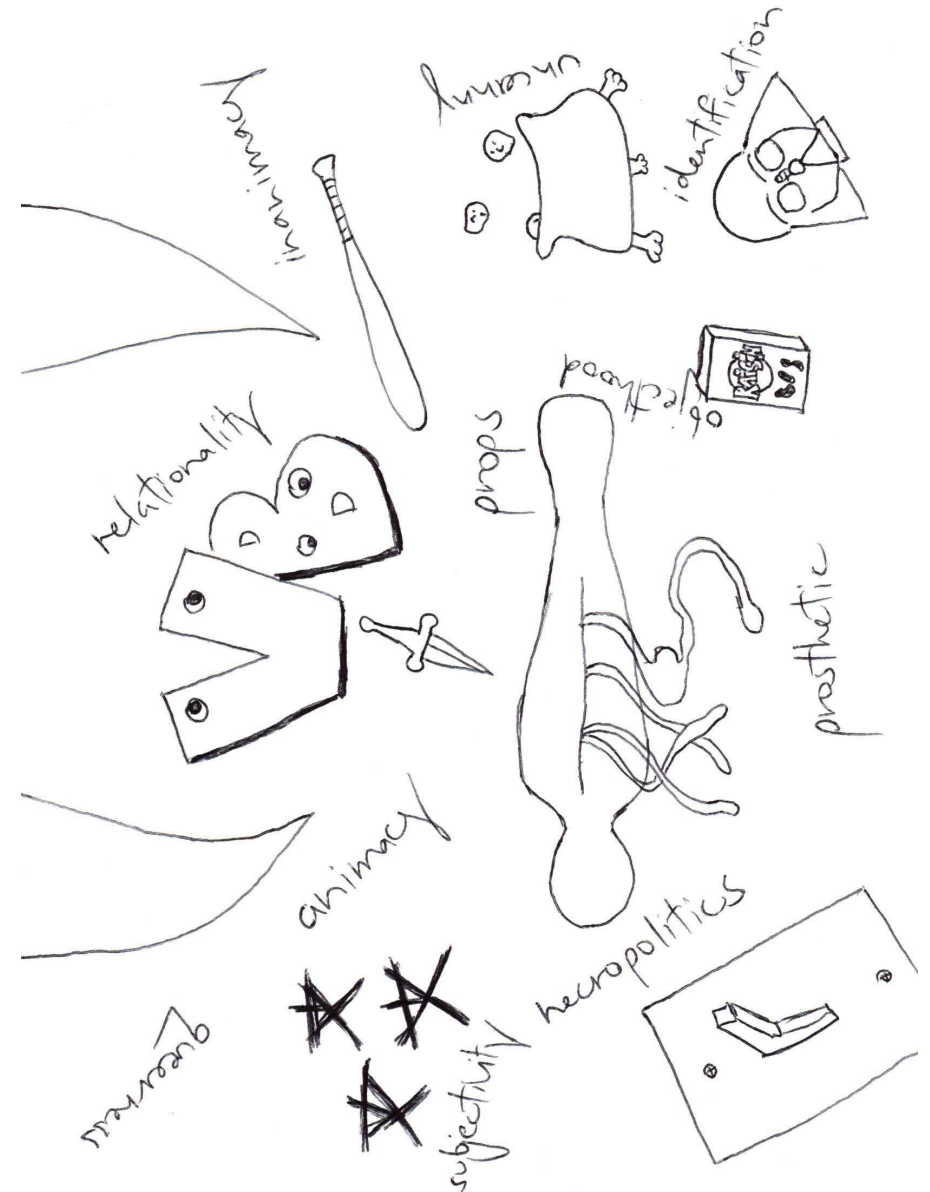
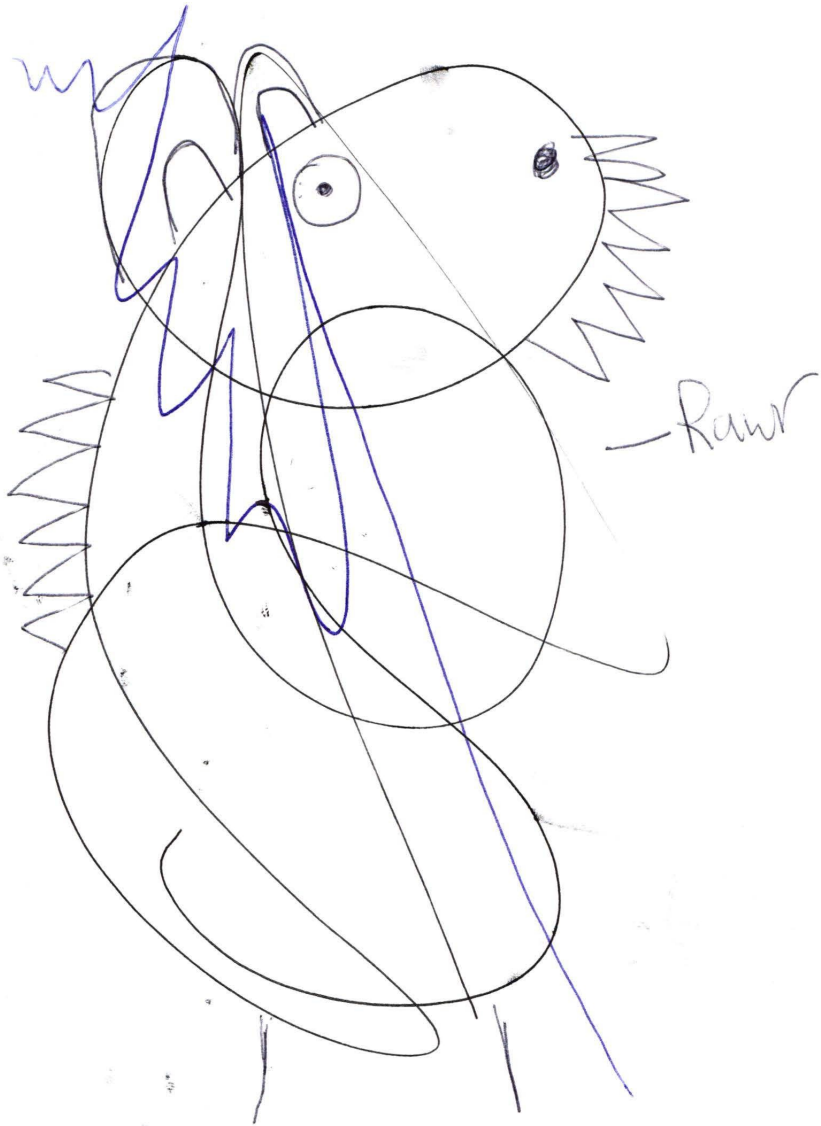
let me be free





Religion -
- my identity
- but I don't
believe it
- Don't take it
- I don't
- I want it!





Potential

Polyglot	Failure
Dichotomous Esteem	Individual
Constraint	None
Fear	Powerless
Soul on	Obscure
Music	Delight
Science	Unsettled
Sport	Codeswitch
Performance	Codeswitch
Creation	Codeswitch
Teacher	
Father	
Parent	
Husband	
Son	

— Black Man —

