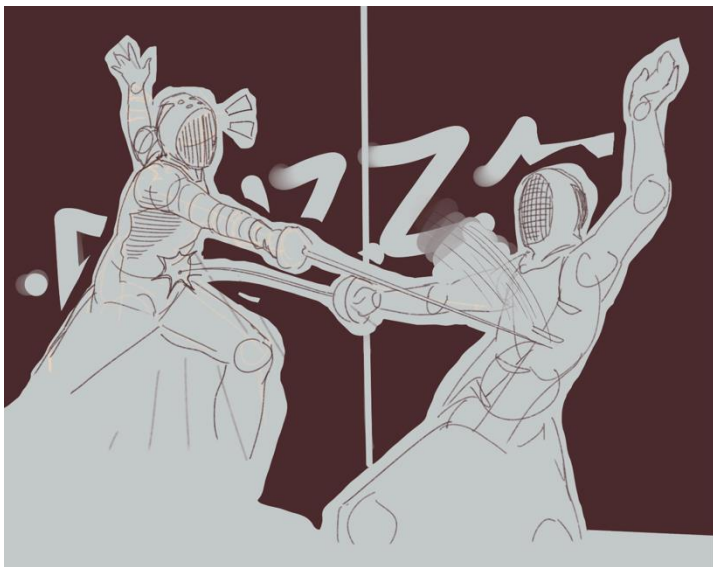


## Graphic Novel Production

Emma Paterson-Dennis, 2024

In the 2022 fall semester, I began work on a graphic novel through an independent study with Professor Matos. I ended that course with a clear idea of what story I wanted to tell and a sketch of a first chapter. After this summer, I have a fully realized final sketch of the entire novel, titled “Phase”, ready to be inked. This graphic novel is about a high schooler who, after their plan for their future falls out from under them, has to figure out what to do next and how to deal with friends who are leaving when they’re not anymore. Through all of this, past and future versions of themselves phase in and out of their life, like ghosts, sometimes advising them, sometimes infuriating them, but always showing them there are infinite paths they could take. There are so many people, especially young queer people, who get told over and over again that their life has to fit certain expectations, that linear paths of progression are normal and expected, and that deviating from these is not only immoral but dangerous and foolhardy. I want to reassure them that life is wide and open and there are as many roads they can take as they imagine. Through “Phase,” I explore topics of queer failure, the resonances between transness and embodiment, perfectionism, queer time, non-linear and non-normative life paths, self-reliance, friendships, and how important it is to have a kind, safe relationship with oneself.

Developing this project involved two phases. The first was writing out the entire arc of the novel in a screenplay-like digital script. This allowed me to look at the bigger picture of the book as a whole and focus solely on the story elements, not the drawing. I worked on this and establishing character sheets for each character with Professor Matos for the first month of the summer. After I was happy with the story, I began the second part of my work, the drawing. I used my iPad and a program called Procreate for this. I went page by page in order through the novel, following the script I’d laid out beforehand and editing along the way. My goal was to do five pages a day, which I kept to as I moved through the summer.



Figures 1 and 2: Fully realized sketches from “Phase”, a two page spread and one page respectively.

**Professor Angel Matos**  
**Professor Mary Hart**

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