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Re-Composition: Considering the Intersections of Composition and Creative Writing Theories and Pedagogies

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Composition and Creative Writing Theories and Pedagogies

by

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ABSTRACT

Maintaining composition studies and creative writing as discrete

disciplines may not be in the best interests of either field. But so long as the

majority of scholars and practitioners of either field remain largely uninformed

about one another, it is unlikely that any progress toward conjoining the two fields

will occur. Various important and constructive efforts have been made for more

than thirty years to establish a scholarly, interdisciplinary community that

dedicates itself to examining points of intersection between composition and

creative writing. Initially, such efforts appear to attract the attention from the

broader communities of each discipline. Before long, however, participation in

such scholarly discussions diminishes, as do most prospects for integrating

changes inspired by the collaborative exchange—let alone any prospects for

merging composition studies and creative writing into a single discipline.

Critical examinations of commonalities between composition studies and

creative writing, while crucially important, cannot lead to a greater alliance

between the two fields unless each field incorporates aspects of one another's

disciplinary identity into its own. Chapter One introduces my study and considers the disciplinary histories of composition and creative writing, histories that reveal when and how they came to be separated even as they consistently were (and are) situated in the same department, the department of English. Chapter Two investigates how inventional techniques that have been conceptualized primarily in the field of composition studies can assist creative writing students in developing insights about their writing. Chapter Three extends this conversation by considering the social and collaborative techniques that can benefit the creative writing workshop. Chapter Four considers how a writing classroom can integrate genres traditionally associated with either composition or creative writing to allow students to develop a broader writing repertoire and, perhaps, an enhanced commitment to its continued development.

Chapter One: The Separation of Art and Composing in Writing

> *We need to be crossing the lines between composition and creative writing far more often than we do. In fact, we may want to eliminate the line entirely.*
>
> —Wendy Bishop, "Crossing the Lines: On Creative Composition and Composing Creative Writing."

In Wallace Stegner's book *On The Teaching of Creative Writing*, he states that it is the teacher's job to keep students writing. Students need proof that they can write, a belief in and understanding of their process, and, perhaps most importantly, enthusiasm for putting pen to paper. This is true, no matter what type of writing class the student is enrolled in.

Yet I have found, in the various courses that I have taught, that there seems to be more enthusiasm, on the part of the instructors as well as the students, for certain kinds of writing classes over others. The first-year composition classes are tolerated, yet the "creative" classes are anticipated. Consider the reaction to writing non-fiction of one of my students, Lori, who wrote a response to what she learned about composing in an Introduction to Creative Writing class:

> Most of my experience with non-fiction has been in either a journalistic format or some type of research paper or analysis.

Those types of papers generally are more informative than fun, but creative non-fiction manages to be both.

Many students hold this view of the difference between composition and creative writing, which is a matter of concern for both disciplines. Wendy Bishop, a leader in studying the crossover between creative writing and composition, writes in her essay "Crossing the Lines: On Creative Composition and Composing Creative Writing" that undergraduate writing curriculums need to be revised in order to reflect the troubling beliefs students hold about the writing process because they are confused when creative writing and composition are separated into different classrooms. She cites a journal entry of her own student, who stated she used the words "creative writing" and "composition" interchangeably, even though it could be "a grave sin to use one for the other" (221). Based on her own education, the student decided that composition was an essay or term paper, and creative writing was "anything you felt like putting down on paper" (221). This disquieting view of writing continues to be held by many students, which is of little wonder when one considers how the disciplines have been separated and taught in roughly the last one hundred years.

Forced Choices and Questions of Separation

As I finish my seventh year of teaching at the college level, I continue to instruct both composition and creative writing classes. I hold an MFA in Creative Writing from Goddard College in Vermont and am working towards the completion of my Ph.D. in composition and rhetoric at the University of South

Florida, so I have a background in both writing disciplines. I am equally engaged in writing and teaching in both composition and creative writing, and have been so for most of my teaching career, as a graduate teaching assistant at a large public university, a visiting professor of rhetoric and creative writing at a private liberal-arts college, and now as an assistant professor of writing at Oklahoma City University. I find it perplexing that, at the schools where I taught previous to OCU, creative writing and composition classes were, and are, instructed by different faculty members. At the private college, the faculty members who teach composition and creative writing are divided into different collegiums, with little interaction between them; they do not even share the same building. Composition is housed in "Foundations," or the basics of general education, while creative writing is part of the creative arts collegium, which houses other artistic disciplines such as music and performance. I was one of the few teachers who "crossed" between collegia to teach. I was informed that if I wanted to pursue a tenure-track position there, I would have to choose between the two disciplines, as though they were separate from each other, even though the school had need for me to teach in both disciplines.

I did not want to choose between them.

Although the dividing line between creative writing and composition at the liberal arts college where I taught was put in bold-faced font, such a line, if less accentuated, is drawn at most institutions. When I was on the job market and looking at the advertised positions for tenure-track professors of writing, I found that most colleges advertised jobs for either composition or creative writing, as

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though they were unrelated. The split between disciplines was theory- and practice-based. Composition positions ask for samples of critical papers written on scholarly issues, while creative writing positions want proof of substantial publication in "creative" genres. The job ads reflect the underlying assumptions that composition is a scholarly discipline and that creative writing, by contrast, is practice based.

The separation seems welcomed by writing instructors. Gerald Graff wrote, after reviewing the writing program at a major university:

> [T]he [creative] writers were almost all practice-oriented, hostile or indifferent to [literary] criticism, much less theory … Each component [of the department] is beautifully and completely insulated from any danger of hearing the criticism of the other—and of course that's the whole point, isn't it? (qtd. in Myers 4)

Perhaps the separation is because those professors who write in "creative" genres are treated differently from compositionists in the university setting. Creative writers exist in a "privileged marginality" in higher academia, "mostly left alone to do what they do best—write—and teach aspiring young writers the tools of their trade" ("What's Lore Got To Do With It?" 1). Authors of novels, poetry collections, and other genres considered "creative" are treated like artists of the written work and rhetoricians like the workhorses, to teach the "practical" genres of writing persuasive essays, research papers, and various professional and technical documents.

I wonder about this dichotomy: Why must the genres, and the teaching of them, be separate? Are the pedagogical approaches different? And can the approaches be merged so that students gain a better understanding of all of the processes, forms, and genres available to them in the writing process? What can we do to help students understand the creativity in writing, without separating the creative process, and the definition of what and who is "creative," into different classrooms?

Calls for Alliance

Questions like mine have been raised and explored for some time, whether in the vein of such compositionists as Peter Elbow, Donald Murray, and Ken Macrorie, who have decried the notion that composition should focus exclusively on teaching academic discourse, or in the even more revolutionary manner of such scholar/teachers as Wendy Bishop and Tim Mayers, "crossover" academics who have backgrounds in both composition studies and creative writing. A leading voice in the championing of a greater partnership between composition and creative writing instruction, Bishop has long spoken on ways in which the lack of creative writing craft in the composition classroom unnecessarily limits the composition curriculum and the pedagogical practices found in the composition classroom. In "Crossing the Lines," she shares the thinking of another student that is indicative of the perception many students have about the difference between composition and creative writing classes: "creative writing (is the) stuff that is done for fun, and composition stuff that the teacher makes you do" (221). As the title

"Crossing the Lines" suggests, Bishop calls for instructors of composition and instructors of creative writing to recognize the commonalities of the genres and skills they teach and to develop pedagogical practices accordingly. Besides improving pedagogical practices and the negative views students tend to have about the "unpleasant task" of writing in traditional composition courses, crossing the line between composition and creative writing would, Bishop suggests, bring critical attention to the political arrangement in English studies according to which literature and literary criticism are privileged over composition and creative writing.

Tim Mayers makes the political goal of bringing composition and creative writing out from "the shadow of their dominant (and often domineering) counterpart called literary studies" the central claim to his argument that "composition and creative writing, at this particular historical moment, have much to gain by forming an institutional alliance and perhaps much to lose if they do not" (2). Throughout his book *(Re)Writing Craft: Composition, Creative Writing and the Future of English,* Mayers underscores the sense of urgency for creating this alliance now. Such urgency is indicated immediately by the epigraph that appears in the first chapter of his book, a passage from the introduction to *Rhetoric, Poetic, and Cultures: Refiguring College English Studies* by James Berlin:

> English studies is in crisis. Indeed, virtually no feature of the
> discipline can be considered beyond dispute. At issue are the very
> elements that constitute the categories of poetic and rhetoric, the
> activities involved in their production and interpretation, their

relationship to each other, and their relative place in graduate and

undergraduate work. (xi)

Sharing with Berlin and numerous other scholars (including Wendy Bishop, as noted above) the view that disciplines other than those connected to literature studies are marginalized in departments of English, Mayers suggests that their peripheral status is perhaps "the most important thing composition has in common with creative writing" (3). He notes that while there have been fruitful efforts to integrate composition theory and pedagogy in creative writing classrooms and, conversely, approaches to the "creative" craft in composition classrooms, almost since composition and creative writing began to appear together (but as separate disciplinary areas) within English departments, it is now, when there is an "increase in 'crossover' scholarship" and more and more graduate students moving from one discipline to the other, that we are witnessing an especially "fertile historical moment" for alliance and reform (103).

As a crossover academic myself, I can attest to the disciplinary encampments within departments of English. In fact, I would suggest that the division between literary studies and the two "production" disciplines of creative writing and composition is no more entrenched than the dividing lines between creative writing and composition. Likely, the marginality the two disciplines experience contributes to their separation. Lacking the privileged position of the alpha member, the marginalized members vie for a secondary position of importance with each other. The very fact that there are calls for greater alliance between the two disciplines reflects the extent of their present separation. While

an alliance may be an ideal goal, I believe it is, at best, a distant goal. Any alliance requires a "meeting of minds," and I do not find that such a meeting has occurred.

Mayers is correct to note that some theory and pedagogy from either side of the aisle can be found on the other side, but I would characterize such occurrence as mere trickles. For crossovers like myself, the small amount of "sharing" between creative writing and composition has not been enough to construct a coherent sense of professional identity. Continuing to feel the same split personality as a teacher of both creative writing and composition that I did as a graduate student in both disciplines, I fully appreciate the sense of urgency Mayers finds in the present moment, but the most urgent priority of the moment for me is to occupy my dual identity with integrity, and here I use "integrity" in the sense that Scott Consigny defined it in the well-known *Philosophy and Rhetoric* article "Rhetoric and Its Situations." Aptly enough, Consigny's definition concerned the "know-how" of writing, the knowledge that enables a writer to utilize writing arts from one situation to another. It is that know-how that makes the teaching of writing possible in the first place. Aptly enough as well, Consigny's notion of integrity is offered in response to and criticism of the view of writing as a wholly creative act, an act by a writer who has no need to consider constraints other than those he or she creates or discover points of view or lines of development other than those he or she already has. I submit that such a view of the creative act of writing is commonplace in creative writing.

I focus on how composition theory can inform the teaching of creative writing in Chapters Two and Three because, like other crossovers, I have found

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that the "sharing" of writing theory and pedagogy has been primarily one way. In *Released into Language*, Bishop, for example, remarks that it is composition that can be found to have "borrowed effective teaching methods" from creative writing, but not vice versa. Further, it is composition, according to Bishop, that improves "on those borrowings" (125). It may be that debates continue in composition studies about personal versus academic writing, about self-expression versus audience, about voice versus the conventions of discourse communities—and certainly these sorts of issues do reflect, as I will discuss in my last chapter, ideological differences that would influence the extent to which a compositionist would embrace or reject an alliance with creative writing. But much in keeping with Janice Lauer's description of composition studies as a "dappled discipline" ("Composition Studies"), compositionists by-and-large are open to utilizing theories and pedagogical practices derived from any number of disciplines, including creative writing. Possible reasons for the greater antipathy in creative writing to "outside" influence will be explored later in this work, as a review of the history of the relationship between creative writing and composition is important to such speculation.

Not to ignore the composition class, I explore in Chapter Four what composition can gain from integrating creative writing into the first-year writing classroom. Primarily I am concerned with giving students choices of genre from their earliest experiences of composing within the university setting, although I also consider how conjoining the disciplines in a college students' earliest writing experiences helps students understand that writing has many functions beyond

research and persuasion and that more than one genre can facilitate the teaching of such skills.

Historical Underpinnings

In his important article on the history of teaching composition in American colleges and universities, "The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourse," Robert Connors examines ways that classification schemes used to distinguish one type of writing from another affected how writing was taught. Efforts to differentiate some forms of writing and communication as "creative" did not begin until the 1800s, when, according to Connor, the "influential classification scheme" known as the "modes" organized types of writing into four main categories: narration, description, exposition, and argument. The first two could be argued as belonging to creative writing; the latter to composition, an argument that can be found in the highly influential text *A Practical System of Rhetoric* by Samuel P. Newman, which was the most widely used rhetoric written in America between 1820 and 1860 (Connors 445). Newman's *Rhetoric* separated descriptive and narrative forms from those that were either persuasive or offered directive:

> Writings are distinguished from each other as didactic, persuasive, argumentative, descriptive, and narrative … Didactic writing, as the name implies, is used in conveying instruction …; when it is designed to influence the will, the composition becomes the persuasive kind …; the various forms of argument, the statement of proofs, the assigning of causes … are addressed to the reasoning

faculties of the mind. Narrative and descriptive writings relate past

occurrences, and place before the mind for its contemplation,

various objects and scenes. (28-29)

In the 1860s rhetorical studies transformed even further, in accordance "with the

shift in the structure of higher education from a preponderance of smaller private

colleges to a preponderance of larger institutions." An important objective for the

teaching of writing in the university setting was envisioned to be to prepare

students for the kind of writing that a more scientific curriculum demands (446) as

opposed to writing for literary purposes.

In the 1920s single-mode writing textbooks gained in popularity, used in

composition classrooms to teach "exposition" (Connors 449), the essay.

Textbooks for teaching expository writing had in common, besides an emphasis

on the modes of discourse as types of essays, an understanding that the thesis

of an essay was the starting point for writing essays, a circumstance that would

become problematic for scholars of rhetoric and composition, as will be

discussed. Maurice Garland Fulton's *Expository Writing*, first published in 1912

and in print through 1953, continued to gain in popularity in the '30s. Fulton's text

organized the modes of writing as "definition, classification and division, contrast,

comparison or analogy, examples, and descriptive exposition" (449-50). Fulton's

list was examined and revised by multiple other textbooks; the final list became

"definition, analysis, partition, interpretation, reportage, evaluation by standards,

comparison, contrast, classification, process analysis, device analysis, cause-

and-effect, induction, deduction, examples, and illustrations" (451). Narration and description, however, "became the nuclei of creative writing courses" (451).

By considering the historical development of the teaching of composition, implications can be discerned for the development of creative writing instruction. The very fact that Newman's modes became favored over Hugh Blair's earlier classification categories that had held sway since the mid-1700s might be interpreted as reflecting a waning value in teaching composition according to Blair's notion of rhetoric and *belles lettres*. Prior to Newman's "new" rhetoric, the most widely accepted classifications of prose writing were Blair's categories of historical writing, philosophical writing, fictitious history, and poetry (Larson 204). Also widely accepted was Blair's insistence on the practice of style so that students might learn to appreciate and produce "beautiful prose" (Blair *Lectures*).

Although Blair has long been "blamed" for the popular classroom practice of teaching writing by having students study excellent examples of a given kind of writing, he cannot be cited as someone who sought to separate creative writing from composition. That practice did not emerge in full force until a hundred years later, as the notion of the kinds of writing students should be taught changed. But Blair's influence remained in the now separate teaching of creative writing, which retained for the most part Blair's writing categories.

D. G. Myers's *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1890*, recently published in its tenth-anniversary edition, has the distinction of being the first comprehensive historical survey of the discipline of creative writing. From his historical investigation, Myers has observed that from 1890 on, creative writing

has been more closely aligned with literature and the production of it than it has with composition. But this alignment has offered to creative writing little in terms of teaching students to produce works as part of the instruction they received in creative writing classrooms. Quoting Gilbert Ryle, Myers explains, "[T]he conception of literature as a knowledge *that* (as represented by philological scholarship) was cut off from any conception of it as a knowledge *how*" (Ryle, his emphasis; qtd. in Myers 35). Creative writing, according to Myers, "was an experiment in education" (4):

> In the beginning [creative writing programs were] not a scheme for turning out official writers or for providing them with the peace and funds with which to pursue their art. The goal—an educational one—was to reform and redefine the academic study of literature, establishing a means for approaching it "creatively." . . . From the first creative writing was an institutional arrangement for treating literature as if it were a continuous experience and not a mere corpus of knowledge. (8)

Myers surmises that the change was needed because, while English studies had done much to advance its scholarship in the study of the theory of literature, not much had been done to advance the study of its creation (35).

Taking a slightly different tack in his *Creative Writing and The New Humanities*, Paul Dawson points out that creative writing has been considered a separate discipline from composition and literature since the Second World War

(2). He finds creative writing is concerned more with literary production than with the study of literature or literary criticism:

> This narrative of absorption has led to an institutionalization of the traditional rivalry or animosity between writers and critics, a professional division which, in America, Christopher Beach characterizes thus: '*PMLA* and *Critical Inquiry* versus *Poets and Writers* and *AWP Chronicle*, PhD versus MFA, literature faculties versus creative writing faculties' (1999:31). This perpetuates an intellectual and theoretical division between the creative practice of writing and the scholarly or critical study of literature. (2).

Dawson believes that creative writing needs to be regarded as an academic discipline "rather than an apprenticeship which developed alongside and largely untouched by Literary Studies" (2). What Myers understands to be a relationship between literature and creative writing according to which the former has gained greater strength and relevance from the latter, Dawson seeks to reinterpret in such a way that levels the implicit hierarchy in the kind of relationship Myers describes. Specifically, Dawson wishes to position creative writing in the academy as a discipline constituted by intellectuals—"literary intellectuals"—for whom literary works represent sources for "disciplinary knowledge" (3). When creative writing is seen to occupy its own disciplinary and intellectual space, questions about its relationships broaden from those that derive from only its identity in relation to literary studies to those that include its interrelationships with all of English studies.

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Dawson's call for creative writing to be considered an academic discipline in its own right promises the benefit of ensuring it equal status with other academic disciplines. What is more, Dawson's insistence that scholars of creative writing enact their identities as intellectuals points toward the inclusion of "rhetorical" works among the "literary" works that constitute part of the field of scholarly works that creative writing scholars study. But much like the "theory wars" sought to ensure that composition studies was regarded as an intellectual discipline such that the work of practitioners—teachers and professional writers—was placed on the "back burner," the kind of reconceptualization of creative writing that Dawson has in mind would do little, it seems, to address the "teaching problem" that exists in creative writing. Composition studies continues to embrace the teaching of writing as part of its scholarly enterprise, including continued investigations of effective pedagogical practices. It's time that creative writing does the same.

Although it might seem that creative writing scholars/authors/teachers would be well-served by looking to composition studies for effective pedagogical practices, historically speaking, that has not been the case. Perhaps even more entrenched than the oppositional or hierarchical divisions between creative writing and literary studies are those between creative writing and composition. After all, creative writing can at least be regarded as the production end of literature, so it can be easily reasoned that there is an underlying kinship between the two. It doesn't take much of a leap to speculate that any oppositional or hierarchical divisions between literary studies and composition

studies carry over to creative writing and composition. According to D. G. Myers, rhetoric (and composition) formed as a separate study in the 1890s as a response to "an alternative to scholarly unconcern with literature as a creative act [for] the opponents of philology" (36). Rhetoric was the answer to the call for "something less elitist" (37) than the study of literature and its creation. While "English composition" as a name was used occasionally before this time, composition was "normally understood as referring to Latin composition." Its study was mostly grammatical in nature: "the motive in writing was to demonstrate mastery of the language," which was done through grammatical exercises, spelling tests, and "memorization of rhetorical precepts" (37). It was in the late nineteenth century that the disciplines of rhetoric and composition and creative writing were firmly distinguished from one another.

Myers explains that the decades following the Second World War, the pressures of democracy demanded that education be more fervently demanded as a right for all. The number of students attending colleges and universities continued to rise, with colleges and universities determined to accommodate the ever-higher numbers right through the baby-boom generation (5). Creative writing enlarged not just the popularity of the English department, but "the university's role in American society. It needed no further justification: if it was no longer undertaken for the sake of integrating literary study with literary practice, it could be pursued for its own sake—free of any other institutional responsibilities" (5). As has been discussed, creative writing became an art separate from literary study and theory; it became the impetus for production and craft. And because

the production of art—here, works of creative writing—has been and continues to be regarded as valuable in its own right, the measure of excellence in creative writing is the quality and quantity of artistic works produced. It is largely by this measurement that writers with MFAs are evaluated by departments and hiring committees. An MFA with a stable of good publications can secure a teaching position and earn a decent income even without teaching knowledge or experience. Thus, the position and income from it might be regarded as a "form of patronage" (5) for the artists of writing.

It is interesting to contemplate ways in which the separation of instruction in creative writing and in composition all but completely eradicated whatever vestiges of "creative" writing remained in composition. It wasn't the shift to writing by modes alone that removed creative writing from instruction in composition. Even before the *belles lettres* approach of Hugh Blair, instruction in composition had already lost sight of the importance of the rhetorical canon of invention, the "creative" canon, which had been relegated to the discipline of logic under the influence of Peter Ramus. I refer here to invention as rhetoric's "creative" canon because it is from the vantage point of invention that all writing can be considered creative. Invention is that canon of rhetoric that involves coming to judgment, thus entailing the thinking that occurs *before* the articulation of a thesis can occur. As with the other canons of rhetoric, invention had been conceived as encompassing inventional techne, artistic "tools" or "strategies." Ramus's reconfiguration of the disciplinary boundaries of rhetoric and dialectic (logic) resulted in what might be looked at as an amputated rhetoric. It is this amputated

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rhetoric that led to instruction in composition that directed students to articulate a thesis as a first act of writing. Instruction in the "how-to knowledge" of coming to a judgment had disappeared.

As the preeminent scholar of rhetoric's canon of invention, Janice Lauer explains that according to a rhetorical view of discourse, all writing forms are artistic, having come into existence through techne. For Aristotle, anything work or the product of that work that comes into existence that did not have a prior existence is something that was produced by someone with the knowledge of how to produce it. That knowledge, which resides in the mind, is the art, or the techne. It is just a matter of whether the techne was consciously learned and utilized or not. But what is crucially important to Lauer is that techne can be taught and learned. Drawing from Aristotle, Lauer explains that those rhetoricians "who learned and practiced an art were better off than those who only engaged in the activity unguided because the former knew why they were doing something and could teach the art to others" (Lauer *Invention* 6).

While invention, or the art of beginning a work, can be traced through rhetorical history as far back as Aristotle, Lauer explains that "logic, inspiration, and observation" (*Invention* 41) were the prevalent concerns of writing as creative writing and composition split from one another.

> For the most part, rhetorical invention served only to find content, proofs, and organization for the products of the mental faculties. Romanticism also contributed to the diminishment of invention by stressing intuition and inspiration as the sources of ideas and

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motivations for writing. Eventually invention gave way to linguistics

and criticism. Finally invention virtually disappeared. (41)

Of course, as contemporary scholars of rhetoric and composition recognize, the

pioneering work of scholars like Lauer rediscovered invention and recuperated

the notion that writing is a teachable art.

Writing by modes was to remain a defining feature of composition

instruction through nearly the entire 20th Century, but, beginning in the 1950s,

scholars who began to look at textbooks and writing instruction critically

recognized problems with a modes approach These efforts happened within the

quickly developing field of rhetoric and composition. Since creative writing had

already been separated from composition, the same developments were not

occurring in the field of creative writing. Instead, creative writing continued to

develop without recourse to developments in rhetoric and composition that were

directed at advancing the teaching of writing, among other things. Creative

writing remained conceptualized by the Romantic notion of art, learned through

craft with a "master writer" at the helm of the classroom. Writers of "creative"

forms learned that they could begin their works simply through inspiration and the

study of craft, elements that were not treated as accessible through inventional

techne.

The Aims of the Classroom

As a teacher of both creative writing and composition, I turn to different

journals in order to consider my approach in the classroom. For composition I

turn to journals such as *Research in the Teaching of College English*, *College Composition and Communication,* and *College English*; for creative writing I turn to *Poets & Writers* and *AWP Chronicle*. In January 2009, *College English* published a special edition issue that focused on the field of creative writing and creative writing studies; however, such an issue had not been published by the journal since November 2001 and can be considered an aberration, instead of the norm, in the study of the field of English. In fact, separating the study of creative writing into its own "special issue" further showed how English studies have separated the disciplines from one another.

Yet I find that each of the journals speak to each other, as do the theories of writing. While different terms are used—collaboration instead of workshop, craft instead of invention—the journals are still speaking of process. Each of the fields can learn from one another, if steps are taken to conjoin the disciplines.

We might focus first on creative writing. English studies have called for decades for reform of creative writing pedagogy, yet nothing has been done. Wendy Bishop comes closest in her 1990 book *Released Into Language: Options for Teaching Creative Writing*, but her untimely death has mostly halted the studies. Some books, namely Kelly Ritter and Stephanie Vanderslice's *Can It Really Be Taught? Resisting Lore in Creative Writing Pedagogy* and Anna Leahy's 2005 edited collection *Power and Identity in the Creative Writing Classroom*, continue to call for the need for pedagogical change in creative writing.

In the 1960s, new terms in rhetoric came forth which could help to redefine creative writing pedagogy. Lauer defines "epistemic" as "the construction of knowledge through discourse … Scholars like Robert Scott argued that rhetoric creates knowledge, not just transmits it and gives it effectiveness" (*Invention* 8). Scott examines in his articles "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic" the view that experience, social norms, and faith can be used to produce knowledge and to create truths (135); that examination of the self and the social is, in itself, idea-generating and knowledge-producing. The field of creative writing can learn from the term epistemic and apply it to student learning, as students construct knowledge of themselves and their cultures through story and prose. I argue in later chapters that creative writing, as it grows and thrives in academia, should not address just the artistry of creative forms, but should also consider how students create knowledge of their selves and communities through writing.

Lauer also points to the term heuristics, which emerged in the 1960s and is the "study of the processes of discovery"(8). Rooted in psychology, heuristics is "characterized … as a more flexible way of proceeding in creative activities than formal deduction or formulaic steps and a more efficient way than trial and error" (8). From composition, creative writing can learn heuristic methods such as Burke's Pentad and Young, Becker, and Pike's tagmemic matrix, which teach students how to begin and create their works. This is another aspect of the intersections of these disciplines that I explore in later chapters.

Of course there is something to be said for imagination and for allowing students freedom to err as they write. In "Articles of Faith," David Jauss writes that his teaching of fiction is an art requires a "willing suspension—not of disbelief but of beliefs" (63). He writes that creative writers are artists who need to believe in their writing and will it to happen:

> The danger is not that we'll impose our aesthetics on our students—that's inevitable and even, to an extent, desirable—but that we won't provide them room to develop their own … The best students will sift through the advice I offer and take only what serves their aims; the worst will attempt to write what they falsely think I want. (*Creative Writing in America* 63).

Invention, which guides prewriting, does not cause writers to falsely write what they want, nor does it cause students to mimic the predilections of their teachers in order to write in false voices or about subject matter that doesn't interest them. Heuristics allow the imagination to be employed, to explore all of the possibilities before the creative work begins to be drafted. Rather than causing a student to write stiffly and formulaically, heuristics give them the power to find their voices early in the writing process, in any genre.

In order to begin to reimagine how heuristical approaches can redefine creative writing pedagogy, I will be examining certain aspects of composition theory—u7hunamely, collaboration and invention—as important steps to reintegrating creative writing and composition into one classroom. Finally, I will speak to my efforts to bring both forms into a composition classroom, and the

challenges, drawbacks, and also benefits of teaching all forms and genres at the same time.

Composition can also begin to learn from creative writing techniques. Of course it is challenging enough to teach just one facet of the communication process in a semester; yet, omitting certain genres from a composition classroom, or even within the English department, might send the false message to students that "creative" genres, such as poetry and fiction, do not have purposes beyond expressing self or showing creativity. Upper-level classes can continue to specialize in genres such as "fiction," "exposition," and "business" writing, but to absent one from the prerequisite first-year composition classroom sends students the wrong messages about genres of writing. James E. Kinneavy points out:

>…Most of us make implicit assumptions about the aims of discourse when we loosely distinguish expository writing from literature or creative writing, and, no doubt, there is some validity to the distinction. Many college composition textbooks often assume a similar distinction and address themselves to the province of expository writing. But it may be that this simple distinction is too simple and that other aims of discourse ought to be given some consideration. ("The Basic Aims of Discourse" 107)

Kinneavy suggests that the aim of discourse should be directed to the effect it is meant to achieve in the listener or reader for whom it is intended. "Is the work intended to delight or to persuade or to inform or to demonstrate the logical proof

of a position?" (107-108). Works of all genres, from stories to essays to other

forms of written discourse, can achieve any of these effects. Absenting from a

first-year writing classroom any genre as a possibility in which discourse can be

best expressed to its audience does not allow writers to decide all of the

possibilities of reaching an audience. It also doesn't give students the opportunity

to consider creativity, both in its form and in creation, in the process of writing.

Finally, it wrongly sends the message that certain genres require a different

mindset in their creation.

Kinneavy believes "the restriction of composition to expository writing and

the reading of literary texts has … (the) dangerous consequence (that is) the

neglect of expressionism, as a reaction to progressive education, (which) has

stifled self-expression in the student and partially, at best, is a cause of the

unorthodox and extreme forms of deviant self-expression now indulged in by

college students on many campuses today" (115). While I do not believe that not

giving students a creative outlet in the composition classroom necessarily leads

to deviant behavior, I do believe that it limits their opportunities to discover how

writing can lead to self-discovery and creation of individual voice. Equally

important, it prevents instructors from teaching students to decide between

genres when learning to express themselves.

My dissertation will consider the claim that all writing is creative writing, an

activity that engages the imagination, stirs the passions, exercises critical

thinking, fosters new knowledge, and deepens understanding. I will research

whether dividing classrooms into genre-specific writing emphases can wrongly

send students the message that different processes and mindsets are needed in order to write either "compositions" or in those genres considered "creative writing."

Chapter 2: Invention in Creative Writing:

Explorations of the Self and the Social in "Creative" Genres

> *A man of imagination among scholars feels like a sodomite at a convention of proctologists. So I keep away as much as possible from buildings named Burrowes South and Goldwin Smith, and their denizens (1).*
>
> —Paul West, *Master Class: Scenes From a Fiction Workshop*
>
> *It's important to understand that there are two aspects to creating truly compelling writing. As (this) book's epigraph (from William Shakespeare's Hamlet) states, what's needed is both method and madness. The method can be learned in an academically rigorous, systematic manner (1, her emphasis).*
>
> —Alice LaPlante, *Method and Madness: The Making of a Story*

In higher education, the notion that creative writing cannot be taught is often perpetuated by those very teachers put in the classrooms to teach the subject. Creative writing instructors, often "master" writers (authors who are well-published) might advocate, even in front of their students, the stance that perhaps the students can work hard at their writing and learn to revise, but only the true "talent" in the classroom will go on to be authors, and only if they learn to emulate the teacher—who absents him- or herself from academia even while employed by it. Such a stance can create three main problems for creative writing students:

1. Students don't learn to write for audience or to understand their own "truths"; instead, they write to please the master.

2. The processes offered to students to become successful writers by these masters can confuse students or even become detrimental to their gaining insight into their own writing processes. Without such self-insight, novice writers lack the kind of portable know-how that can equip them as they grapple with new writing tasks, leaving them instead to write without direction.

3. Emulating master writers who distance themselves from the research and intellectual labor that characterizes the work of other professors in departments of English can give students in creative writing graduate programs an unrealistic sense of what being a professor entails. While the master-apprentice model may continue to have cachet for those graduates who will take positions in top-tier creative writing graduate programs, the model does little to professionalize graduate students who will take teaching positions that might entail multiple preps besides creative writing courses, nor does it pass on the kind of "common knowledge" and vocabulary for discussing it that exist in most other academic discourse communities.

When it is considered that the first two problems described above inhere in the third, it becomes clear why the notion that creative writing cannot be taught continues to be perpetuated. Modeling the teaching practices of the master-writers who taught them, new creative writing faculty by and large carry similar

practices forward in their own classrooms to a new population of creative writing students, who in turn carry it forward in their classrooms.

My intention in this chapter is to explore critically the question of whether creative writing can be taught and, if it can, by whom. If creative writing is only an artistic, emotional, solitary process, who, if anyone, can teach it? Can method be taught, alongside the "madness" of creative writing? My purpose is not to remove those processes creative writing instructors already use in their classrooms to prompt students to write. Instead, I want to explore ways that pedagogical methods might supplement those processes and help to make them transportable. To do so, I turn to pedagogical theories and practices of composition studies, which, like creative writing, is a subfield in English studies that focuses on writing production.

The Master-Apprentice Model as Creative Writing Pedagogy

It may or may not be coincidental that literary critic and American literature scholar Norman Foerster was a professor of English at the University of Iowa when he wrote the following in *Literary Scholarship: Its Aims and Methods*, published in 1941:

> The "teaching" of writing, as has already been suggested, is essentially a relationship of apprentice and master. The most important requirement is that the "master" be a wise man who has been or is a practicing artist and has learned to read with an artist's eyes. (210)

The scare-quotes around *teaching* should not be taken to indicate that Foerster

looked askance at the place of what was then referred to as "imaginative writing"

in the curriculum of literary scholarship. To the contrary, Foerster championed

the idea that the university English studies curriculum should consist in equal

measure of linguistic science, literary history, literary criticism, and imaginative

writing (Hassold 684). What the scare quotes indicate, then, is that the term

teaching only loosely applies in the context of a creative writing classroom. Nor

did Foerster intend such a characterization to be a disparagement of the creative

writing "teacher," as Foerster's description of the writing "master" makes clear. If

anything, the master is put on a pedestal as an artist, the only credential aside

from being wise needed to be placed in a creative writing classroom of aspiring

student writers.

On the Web site of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs, the

association that aligns itself with creative writers and creative writing teachers,

Executive Director David Fenza writes of the relationships between masters and

apprentices as though the creativity of the masters was simply handed down to

their students by their authoritative presence in the classroom:

> At Duke, William Blackburn taught William Styron, Fred Chappell,
>
> and Reynolds Price. Price, in turn, taught Josephine Humphries
>
> and Anne Tyler. E.L. Doctorow taught Richard Ford at the
>
> University of California, Irvine. Donald Dike taught Joyce Carol
>
> Oates at Syracuse. Andrew Lytle taught Harry Crews. At Stanford,
>
> Wallace Stegner taught Robert Stone, Ken Kesey, Edward Abbey,

Wendell Berry, Raymond Carver, and many others. At the

University of Iowa, Kurt Vonnegut once taught a class that included

John Casey, Gail Godwin, Andre Dubus, and John Irving among its

students. ("About AWP" par. 9)

Certainly writers can inspire, and learn from, each other. Yet the model of

creative writer as an artistic soul who writes simply out of inspiration, whether or

not under the guidance of a master writer, continues to be perpetuated in the

literature and journals most often read by those who write in "creative" genres.

The January/February 2010 "Inspiration" issue of *Poets & Writers*, for example,

showcases writers who discuss their writing muses as painting, cooking, drawing,

and photography. And while inspiration can indeed be found in any of these

activities, using them as models to help students form their own writing is sketchy

at best. Grouping master teachers into these artistic categories is problematic

when these teachers decide that inspiration is all they need to be armed with

when they decide to teach.

A master of writing, however artistic his or her inclinations might be, might

lack the pedagogical skills to translate his or her process to student

apprentices—or perhaps the master's process is different from the one that might

work for the student. So simply asking a student to imitate the process (or lack

thereof) that works for the master will not necessarily work for the apprentice. If

these masters, with a lack of teaching training, are put in front of the classroom,

the often-ensuing lack of pedagogical approaches in creative writing classes

"results in a pedagogy (where) defined learning objectives rarely exist"

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(Vanderslice 70). Students are expected to become inspired, to write naturally, and to bring in finished drafts for workshops, with little talk about how to create them. When students fail to do this, or complain that they are suffering from "writer's block," it might be blamed less on their ability to create than the inability of the teacher to explain where to begin. In "Writing Blocks and Tacit Knowledge," Boice states that this problems exists not just for creative writers, but for all writers, as educators often fail to help students process, but believe students already come equipped with knowledge of the learning and writing process, yet when teachers' expectations of students " remain private, many students will not be able to meet them" (20). I find this to be a particular problem in creative writing classes, where process is often left to either inspiration or confusing definitions.

It's of little wonder that learning objectives exist or, if they do, are ill-defined in creative writing classrooms, considering that the writing processes of master teachers are often described in vague and confusing ways. Here is how Dorothy Allison, author of *Bastard Out of Carolina*, *Cavedweller*, and many other critically acclaimed works has described hers: "[Y]ou've got all of these balls up in the air, and to get them up in the air, keep everything in your head, is an intense emotional process" (*Novel Ideas* 51). As a "sought-after lecturer and teacher" who has taught creative writing "at some of the most prestigious universities in the country" (http://dorothyallison.net), Allison has without question provided students fortunate enough to work with her concrete guidance and intangible benefits (such as inspiration). After all, well-published authors may

have teaching talent, and certainly many writing masters have done much to advance their students' understanding of writing craft and to assist their students in understanding creative genres.

It should also be pointed out, however, that the institutions where, for example, Allison has taught are described as "some of the most prestigious universities in the country." Creative writing students admitted to such universities have already demonstrated advanced talent and likely have already enjoyed some success in publishing their writing. In fact, when Foerster likened the relationship between the creative writing teacher and the creative writing student to the master-apprentice relationship, the already advanced student writer was very much the rule in creative writing classrooms. Creative writing programs used to be limited in number, geared toward advanced writers, and selective in their admissions, so admitted students probably already had their own writing processes, or an understanding of them, before they began their classes. Therefore, the instructor had less to do to guide their works in their creation; they could claim the master writer had little to do with the students' successes because students were simply talented and merely needed guidance through completed drafts. Even now, the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, the most renowned college for creative writing, has recently claimed sixteen Pulitzer Prize winners and three Poet Laureates among their graduates, while still proclaiming the program had nothing to do with their students' successes ("Show or Tell" 4).

Authors continue to find employment in academia, whether or not they have any knowledge of or training in writing pedagogy. At institutions such as the University of Iowa, the master-apprentice model for teaching creative writing may be able to impart considerable benefits. But with the burgeoning of creative writing programs that began in earnest during the 1980s and continues to the present, questions need to be raised as to whether the master-apprentice model has the same effectiveness for creative writing students admitted to programs that cannot claim the same top-tier status as Iowa, Cornell, or Boston University.

Widely published as a poet and literary author and highly respected as a compositionist and researcher in the field of rhetoric and composition, Wendy Bishop published in 1990 her influential *Released into Language: Options for Teaching Creative Writing*, a work that explores connections between composition theory and pedagogy and creative writing teacher philosophies and classroom practices. Bringing attention to the (potential) problems that can occur when the pedagogical approaches used at one program are uncritically transported to another, the work calls upon creative writing instructors to recognize that the kind of MFA program that seemed to work so well for them may not be as helpful to "more varied students drawn from a broader set of open-admissions applicants" (xiv). Singling out Iowa's Writing Project in particular, Bishop cautions that the trend toward putting graduates of such programs at the helm of new creative programs at other more open-admissions schools to continue the kind of pedagogical practices that had worked for them may have deleterious effects for novice creative writers. In fact, Bishop had recognized by

the time of her 1990 publication that pedagogical problems were already

manifesting themselves in MFA programs and undergraduate creative writing

classrooms that, among other things, relied upon the master-apprentice model of

earlier and top-tier creative writing programs.

A master-apprentice model can overlook the need beginning writers have

in the undergraduate classroom if they don't gain a better understanding of their

own and others' writing processes. Such oversight occurs in a classroom taught

by a master writer/teacher who conveys to students the notion that to be

successful writers, they are to emulate him or her, even while the writing

processes of the master have not been conceptualized by the master him- /her-

self. In such scenarios, creative writing students are left to figure out on their own

what pleases their creative writing teacher, a strategy that can lead to rewards for

the fortunate students who get it right. What the students in such a classroom

may miss is the importance of writing for an audience other than master-teacher

and of writing from a sense of self-knowing.

Telling disclosures about the master-apprentice relationship occur in Paul

West's *Master Class: Scenes from a Fiction Workshop*. Drawing from his

teaching of creative writing at such universities as Brown, Cornell, and Arizona,

West calls himself his students' "uncle" and his students "his eager ones" (7),

whom he can't bear to kick out of the classroom, even though there are too many

of them (as though he controls the enrollment in his class). He writes of his

"freewheeling" teaching, praising his students when "they tell my stories for me,

thank goodness" (11). He draws himself as the artist outside of academia,

praising his students when they think like him. Such praise is not the only reward West's students get when they demonstrate their ability to emulate their 'uncle.' Lisa Roney, a former student, was given the job of writing the preface of <u>Master Class</u>, a publication opportunity that surely represented a coup for Roney. In her preface, Roney describes how she changed her subject matter in class to write "wildly," which pleased West. In addition, Roney relates in detail of similarities between her and her mentor, giving special attention to the fact that both she and West have Type 2 diabetes, a commonality that urged Roney to write about her hypoglycemia (ix-x). The master writer's process and inclinations about subject matter directly affected West's student, causing her to consider him as the person to please with her writing and influencing her in her choice of writing topics.

If students aren't writing to please the teacher, then they might be misled or confused by other descriptions of how to employ the writing process. Joy Williams, who has taught the University of Iowa and University of Arizona, among others, generalizes about what writers experience while they are writing, yet the generalizations do little to instruct students how to write. In "Uncanny the Singing That Comes from Certain Husks," Williams states,

> writers when they're writing live in a spooky, clamorous silence … A writer turns his back on the day and the night and its large and little beauties and tries, like some half-witted demiurge, to fashion other days and nights with words. It's absurd. (5-6)

While Williams touches on one of the needs of writing–time for production and critical reflection–she does not reveal why writers gather in the classroom, then, to learn to write. In fact, if what Williams goes on to say about having the "know-how" to achieve a certain effect is any indication of her view of teaching students how to write, then she must regard such teaching and learning anathema to creative writing:

> The moment a writer knows how to achieve a certain effect, the method must be abandoned. Effects repeated become false, mannered. The writer's style is his doppelganger, an apparition that the writer must never trust to do his work for him. (7)

Actually, Williams does offer some instruction here—that the way in which a certain effect is achieved once should not be repeated again—even if she does so in a passage that, overall, reifies the mystery of writing. Even in this there is instruction, though this time not very helpful: Williams is not so much describing writing as a mysterious process as she is insisting on it.

Although writing process descriptions offered by master-writers might speak to the "madness" of writing as posited by LaPlante, when new writers try to understand writing process, these kinds of artistic, emotional, and solitary definitions from the masters can be misleading, or simply confusing. Writing can, indeed, be an emotional and sometimes chaotic endeavor, but describing it only in these terms does not help fledgling writers understand how to begin their own works and compose them to a satisfying completion. And yet master writers such as West, Allison, Williams, and countless others are routinely studied and asked

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to be emulated in creative writing classes simply because they have written well and/or successfully themselves. Rarely do they have a background in pedagogy, so it is no surprise that they can only perpetuate the master-apprentice model they participated in when they were students and refer to their own writing processes as best they can given that their lack of pedagogical understanding of writing makes them ill-equipped to recognize writing as a teachable art.

A lack of pedagogical understanding can cause master writers to believe that writing, especially in "creative" genres, cannot be taught. They see their work as an art in the rarefied sense of *art* as something created from genius and inspiration. It is an understanding of art that emerges from a focus on the finished product rather than the facility or capacity *to compose* that a writer possesses. This latter sense of art foregrounds writ*ing* as it occurs, underscoring the processual character of writing. Following from this sense of writing as art, some understanding of the processual character of writing is important to a writing teacher if he or she is to have any confidence that what is being taught is in fact teachable. Otherwise, writing instruction can make students more mystified about how to write. West, for instance, advised his students to learn to write by engaging in such activities as reading a page of Proust before sleep so "his words would engage their dreams" (x). While this technique might have worked as inspiration for West, his advice could prove confounding, or even dispiriting, to the novice writer who does not relate to Proust's works or for whom reading one author (such as Proust) does not instantaneously inspire writing.

Adding In(ter)vention to the Master-Apprentice Model

With an increasing popularity of creative writing courses and the rising numbers of creative writing programs, the master-and-apprentice pedagogy has become antiquated. According to the Association of Writers and Writing Programs, 743 new programs in creative writing have been developed in higher education since 1975 ("About AWP"). And not all of the creative writing students expect—or even wish—to become published authors, but instead simply want to write because they enjoy it. Some students regard creative writing classes as an extension of their learning about written communication, as well as their learning more about themselves and others. Such students are just as much *bona fide* students in a creative writing class as those students who enroll in a creative writing class with prior confirmation of their creative writing talents and potentials to be successful creative writers. Just as the population of the creative writing classroom has changed, so too must the classroom pedagogy change to accommodate all writing students, who come to class with varying goals. Instructors of creative writing need to have the pedagogical knowledge and skill that enables them to teach effectively students with varying motivations and varying levels of experiences and skills.

I am not arguing that master writers shouldn't teach creative writing, nor am I suggesting that creative writing teachers should shun the approaches to teaching creative writing that they may have learned when they were students in creative writing classrooms. What I am proposing is that creative writing teachers seek to enhance their instructional efforts by becoming more open to the notion

that writing—even creative writing—can be taught and by committing themselves to learning about and developing pedagogical practices that can facilitate their ability to do so. It is no longer enough for a creative writing teacher to advise students simply to imitate what has worked for the teacher, for even though there are many creative writing teachers who do not subscribe to this kind of master-apprentice approach to teaching, there also remain many who do. In fact, some master-writers express scorn about the thought of teaching creative genres within creative writing programs—even as they teach in them. In his *Poets and Writers* article "Imperative," Eric McHenry speaks of many writers' disdain of the MFA program, creating a "minor publishing phenomenon: the anti-MFA manifesto" (23). He quotes Neal Bowers, who teaches English and creative writing at Iowa State University, who said he "hopes soon to leave academia and looks forward to pursuing the independent writer's life" (qtd. in McHenry 25-26). Georges Borchardt, a book agent for more than 50 years, says "good authors have always been fairly miserable . . . . [I]t's always been a somewhat alien existence. Most authors still need to have a profession, usually in academia . . . to sustain themselves" ("Agents and Editors" 56).

If master writers who choose to become employed in academia find themselves to be more artists than teachers, still they must prepare themselves to teach—and in a way that all students can understand—if they want to hold instructional jobs. While some students might be more advanced in their writing techniques, and thus seemingly more inclined to write well under their master teachers in "creative" genres, teachers cannot depend on their students' natural

talent or inclination to write, or on the myth that placing a successful author in a certain genre into a classroom will automatically spur more successful writers. Ritter suggests that at the very least, graduate students of creative writing should team teach with regular faculty so that they can develop sound pedagogical practices before pursuing instructional positions after they graduate.

Ritter's recommendation offers one positive step toward what she calls "diffusing 'star' pedagogy" in creative writing programs (286). Team teaching would help graduate students of creative writing view the position of creative writing instructor as one that requires teaching abilities as much as a strong publishing record. Ritter's objective is to foreground the actual work of teaching creative writing as much as the reputation of the master writer, an objective that serves as the focus of *Can It Really Be Taught? Resisting Lore in Creative Writing Pedagogy*, a scholarly collection published in 2007 that Ritter co-edited with Stephanie Vanderslice. Questioning "traditional notions of the creative writing classroom as a space that privileges artistic production over intellectual development" (xv), Ritter and Vanderslice claim that creative writing has been annexed away from theoretical teachings in the English department by creative writers who find their academic posts to be chores to pay the bills, but not their true calling, which is simply to create—perhaps without truly considering or understanding how they do it. Ritter and Vanderslice, as well as the creative writing specialists who contributed to the collection, call for critical reflection on the kinds of teaching practices that have been passed down from long-standing creative writing programs in comparison to teaching that would truly serve

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today's students. The shared understanding of these practitioner-scholars is that making teaching a means for earning pay—and for some an onerous means at that—is a disservice to students who take creative writing classes hoping to improve their writing craft. Indeed, valuing writing as merely an artistic endeavor based on the imaginative hunches of an individual, instead of on a process of learning about self and community, negates the fact that creative writing is, indeed, taught, and primarily in academic settings, within writing communities.

The master writer, or any instructor of creative writing, must begin to view both writer and teacher as co-equal identities. To begin acquiring such a view of professional identity, the writer-instructor needs to consider his or her own writing processes and, yes, strategies that have proved to be successful. But instead of transporting a given idiosyncratic strategy to the writing classroom to be imitated, the writer-instructor needs to consider what from the strategy is generalizable and transferrable. Creative writing can be taught; it is just a matter of whether or not those who stand in front of the classroom understand their processes—and the several inventive processes available to writers—well enough to guide students to transform the processual strategies into their own. If the writer-teacher doesn't understand invention, it can be easier to mystify the process as only an art for gifted writers rather than a process of discovery that all writers can enjoy and learn from, no matter their skill level.

One way teachers can better explain invention to students is to take the onus off of their "selves" as authors whose processes the students must emulate and instead teach students to consider their own "selves," as individuals and as

members of communities and societies. Critical self-reflection entails examining

one's own values, beliefs, experiences, and expectations, a process of inquiry

that can be fruitful for any writing task that is to engage a writer's interest and

commitment and enlist the writer's (developing) talents throughout the process of

writing. But regarding invention as a process of inquiry that focuses on just the

single "self" of a writer would be a misunderstanding of invention, as the

discussion that follows will discuss. Also, it might be noted that any writer during

the process of any relatively sustained writing project already engages in some

degree of critical self-reflection. If such an observation is correct—and I believe it

is—then that is precisely why it can be made generalizable and, therefore,

teachable. As with any strategy of an art, the strategy may be used more or less

randomly and more or less deliberately. Lacking consciousness of the art does

not negate the ability to practice the art. It does, however, greatly limit the ability

to teach the art.

Inventional Strategies and Composition Studies

The kinds of questions about classroom practices in creative writing

courses and programs have been asked and explored in the field of composition

studies for the last several decades. It's not unusual, in fact, to find that some of

the scholar-practitioners who have brought critical awareness to the dearth of

sound pedagogical practices in creative writing programs are also

compositionists, such as Wendy Bishop, whose <u>Released into Language</u>, for

example, explores ways to connect pedagogical approaches in composition

classrooms to teaching practices in creative writing. Offering a "transactional"

model for the workshop approach to teaching creative writing (the subject of

which is examined in the next chapter of this work), Bishop calls for integrating

compositional strategies of invention, among other aids, to enhance teaching

practices in the creative writing classroom. Likewise, several other scholar-

practitioners during the same general time period as Bishop—the mid-1980s

through the 1990s—began to call for reform in creative writing pedagogy. In

1989, *Creative Writing in America: Theory and Pedagogy* came out, a collection

of essays edited by Joseph Moxley that offers pedagogical insights from creative

writers about the fundamentals of their craft and broader notions from "cross-

over" scholar-teachers about such pedagogical matters in creative writing as the

•apprenticeship model and approaches to the creative writing workshop. Author

of an essay in Moxley's collection on the ways in which creative writing programs

are separated from the institutions of learning in which they are located, Eve

Shelnutt ("Notes from a Cell: Creative Writing Programs in Isolation") published

during that same year *The Writing Room: Keys to the Craft of Fiction and Poetry*,

a work that challenges the notion that writing in creative genres cannot be taught.

A few years earlier, in 1986, Donald Stewart's textbook *The Versatile Writer* was

published by Heath. Stewart's text encouraged writers to behave like writers; that

is, to "practic[e] curiosity, concentration, and honesty" (Covino 227), and to do

this through the author's authentic voice and to consider the procedures that

student-writers must implement in order to achieve writing goals in research and

in authenticity. And with Wendy Bishop in 1997, Hans Ostrom co-edited *Genre*

and Writing: Issues, Arguments, and Alternatives, a collection of scholarly essays on genre theory and the connections between composition theory and pedagogy and views of creative writing genres.

Even as works such as the few examples mentioned above began to appear in greater numbers on the scholarly landscape, works that called for and/or illustrated by example the need for pedagogical reform in the creative writing classroom, creative writing programs have done much to continue to advocate the master-and-apprentice relationship. Often creative writing programs enjoy popularity and financial success because they employ successful master writers to teach in them, so programs consider less the master's teaching background in favor of his or her publishing background. Therefore, the program might tolerate the limited pedagogical approaches that creative writing classes have sustained in order to hire master writers to attract students to their programs. The focus on the successful writer, as master or as the creative "self" the students should imitate, brings in hopeful student writers who wish to learn from an established author, even as grumblings occur among writing theorists who argue that often there is no real teaching approach in classes that focus on the teaching of genres such as fiction and poetry, if the master writer has not been trained in pedagogy. The master writer is left to explain his writing process, and might well shroud it in mystery—if only because he hasn't considered his process yet, or whether the process that works for him might also work for his students.

Some composition theorists agree that writing might be related to natural talent, which could be easily cultivated and nurtured by a master, supporting the master-and-apprentice relationship. The argument remains as to whether writing is a skill to be learned from skilled teachers, or if it is inherent as individual ability to be cultivated by a practiced artist:

> A major disagreement festers over whether rhetorical
> invention is an art that can be taught or a natural ability that
> can only be nurtured; another discussion and debates
> continue over the relative importance of natural talent,
> practice, imitation, or art in educating a speaker or writer.
> (*Invention in Rhetoric and Composition* 4)

For some teachers, it might be easier to cling to the notion that creative writing cannot be taught, especially for the creative writing teacher who finds some students already "naturally" inclined to write in certain genres, just like the instructor. And master writers can often teach classes well, at least in its existing pedagogy of craft exercises and workshopping, for writers who have already shown skill towards a creative genre; being a master writer does not negate the ability to lead workshops and offer prompts.

However, the classroom focus must move from the teacher to the student. Bishop writes that students who write are already conditioned to write "exclusively to a teacher-as-examiner … allowed few opportunities to explore their worlds and expand their thinking through imaginative writing" (*Released Into Language* 11). Creative writing programs, and the teachers put into them, must

consider the needs of younger writers, undergraduates and less-experienced writers, resisting the temptation to teach with a model that works only for the knowledgeable or "talented" writer with an aim towards publication, but instead should supplement their teachings with pedagogical practices that allow students to consider their "selves" in their writings, and how their individual experiences can better play into their storytelling and prose. This pedagogical approach allows all beginning writers to truly find a "beginning" in their work, a jumping-off point where they can begin to consider their creativity.

Creative Writing Invention

Creative writing instructors can assist students in understanding their teaching craft by learning more about invention. Richard Young and Alton Becker in "Toward a Modern Theory of Rhetoric" define invention, a canon of rhetoric, as "systematic methods of inquiry" (127). Invention gives writers the opportunity to find subjects to write about that are meaningful to them, "to explore for ideas and arguments, to frame insights, and to examine the writing situation" (*Invention in Rhetoric and Composition* 1). When invention methods are encouraged in the classroom, students are not encouraged towards a cognitive, goal-minded theory of working towards a final product, such as a finished draft for workshopping, but instead are guided by their instructors to explore the process of writing. For writers who see the creative process as an artistic one, invention can be defined, quite simply, as the art of beginning.

This is important for creative writing students who are expected to bring finished drafts to class to workshop, yet aren't sure where to begin those drafts, or from where they should draw their inspiration. It also helps them understand how their "selves" play into their storytelling, or within other creative writing genres; as Cynthia Selfe and Sue Rodi state in "An Invention Heuristic for Expressive Writing," [the] process … actively engages students both in examining their experience for that which they find interesting and valuable, and in determining or discovering the most effective way to write about these experiences" (169). For writers who work in expressivist genres, this approach allows them to consider how their personal experiences might be related to an audience, helping the students create theme and internal conflict by using their own experiences in works that might otherwise be anecdotal, self-serving, or, as Bishop's student earlier claimed, "anything you feel like putting down on paper."

Creative writing teachers employ invention in some ways already. Lauer describes the four formative factors of invention as natural ability, examples and models of invention for imitation, extensive practice through assignments, and strategies offered to the students to guide invention (6-7). Creative writing teachers have adhered to the lore of "natural ability" most strongly; for example, the Iowa Writers' Workshop philosophy, in part, is

> though we agree in part with the popular insistence that writing
> cannot be taught, we exist and proceed on the assumption that
> talent can be developed, and we see our possibilities and
> limitations as a school in that light. If one can "learn" to play the

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violin or to paint, one can "learn" to write, though no processes of

externally induced training can ensure that one will do it well.

("About the Workshop" par 4)

Believing that students without natural ability will not be able to write well gives

colleges the ability to deny guarantees about a student's progress in their

programs, because only those "talented" students will rise to the occasion

through their natural ability. That sentiment is perpetuated through theorists such

as Ron McFarland, who posited in a 1990s *College English* article that there are

"five essentials of a serious writer: desire, drive, talent, vision, and craft … only

craft can be taught" (qtd. in "Figuring the Future" Mayers 3). This stance does not

consider, however, that if creative writing programs indeed offer courses in

writing, students would understandably hope to learn to improve their writing by

taking them. While natural ability might be a part of the student's inventive

process, teachers should not depend on talent alone to lead the way to create

works, but should simply understand that it is inherent in all students at some

level, and that it the teacher's job to draw out that ability and nurture it.

Creative writing classes also incorporate invention, as defined by Lauer,

in another aspect when students routinely read the works of other "masters" to

see how they have created works that they might imitate in form and craft.

Studying the master's craft can teach the student to "learn to imitate some of the

techniques in which geniuses are expert" (3). Katherine Haake agrees that

reading master's work can benefit student writers, adding "[W]ho would dispute

that reading serves as a guiding principle of writing? That's one thing we can all

agree on, and to suggest otherwise is nothing short of academic heresy"

("Against Reading" 17). In this model, students read and critique the works of

well-published authors, and spend time discussing what is "good" and "bad"

about the writing considering the craft elements the author implemented while

writing the work. While the model can assist students in understanding the many

techniques employed by celebrated authors, it should not be the only device

employed by teachers, as it detracts from the task of attending to the students'

work. For example, Haake said she attended a workshop where the majority of

the time was spent critiquing a master work, with little attention to student work.

Considering master models can help students find ways to approach their own

work, yet undergraduate students are often ill-equipped to appreciate the reading

of sophisticated writers, and that concentrating solely on the masters does not

offer instructors the opportunities to teach student writers to write about their own

worlds and experiences (Haake 17).

Creative writing classes implement a third aspect of invention when they

employ prewriting activities, which could be seen as extensive practice through

craft assignments. Prewriting is often seen in creative writing classes when

students journal in response to a creative prompt that focuses on an aspect of

craft. Prewriting can involve learning how to write in a certain character's voice,

or creating setting, or any of several other craft issues. The book *What If? Writing*

Exercises for Fiction Writers, edited by Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter, offers

a multitude of exercises geared to set the writer's pen "in motion" (xv). Craft

exercises in characterization, setting, dialogue, and multiple other techniques

allow the student to practice elements of writing used in story, which gives the student writer the opportunity to prewrite before tackling an entire story.

While prewriting is sometimes seen solely as invention, theorists have drawn a distinct line between the two terms: one as practice, the other as the art of beginning, as prewriting does not always lead to beginning. In *What If?,* a craft book that dedicates itself to several prewriting activities, the chapter "Beginnings" addresses the concern that new writers "often find beginnings difficult—whether they're starting a story or a novel—because they take the word 'beginning' too literally" (1). This chapter names two of the common issues new (and experienced) storytellers struggle with when creating works: trying to find a point of conflict in which to begin the work, and not understanding where the work might go (1). While Flannery O'Connor has said that writers don't need to necessarily have to know where they are going before they begin (qtd. in *What If?* 1), eventually students should have an idea so they don't have to, as stated by Painter and Bernays, "begin and begin again" (xv). Invention offers students that starting point, so that they don't write without some direction.

The difference between prewriting and invention is often misunderstood. In *Released Into Language,* even Bishop, who understands the relationship between composition and creative writing, concentrates more on craft exercises than on invention in her chapter "The Inventions and Variations." For example, she explains an exercise where she asks students to write passages that incorporate the worst clichés they can think of. While this exercise might teach them to avoid cliché—a craft issue—it does not teach them how to sustain a

longer work. However, other journaling activities can be implemented into the creative writing classroom that use invention. Later in the same chapter Bishop describes "The Muse Activity," an invention tool of sorts because she asks students to think about where their writing comes from (64). Discussions of where inspiration comes from—reading other writers, eavesdropping, traveling, people-watching—allow students to consider how they begin their own work (65). Bishop follows this activity by having writers write in reaction to a creative prompt, or several prompts. In this way she is practicing invention, of sorts, because this activity begins writers thinking metacognitively about their process, and perhaps gives them a small piece of prewriting that could grow into a larger work.

While prompts help students to practice craft and, in some cases, allow students to consider their writing process, moving beyond the traditional use of journaling in the creative writing classroom would offer students the opportunity to more fully consider theme in their writing. Invention, considered in this new way, allows students to approach their writing from the "self" by inviting them to consider dissonance. Dissonance, as defined by Lauer, is writing to discover what you "are curious, puzzled, or intrigued (about) … by something that you haven't figured out yet. In that frame of mind, you can write to gain insight and to share it with readers" (*Four Worlds of Writing* 3). Creative writing students can apply dissonance to writing as creating conflict that stems from their personal issues, or those they have within their communities and cultures, and applying it to prose. By learning to write about internal conflict, or what intrigues or puzzles

the writer, students discover how to create theme in their writing. They consider works that are richer in emotional tone and conflict, and less on exterior conflict or simple action. Learning to question for dissonance can help beginning creative writers learn to avoiding "meander(ing) for three or four pages before the story begins to rear its head" (*What If?* 3) because they consider what questions they can build their works around, trying to answer those questions as they write their works.

Because creative writing is called "imaginative" writing; students might fear to draw too heavily from their own lives (excepting the relatively new genre of non-fiction). Students might think their work would not lend itself enough to using their imagination to create characters or other fictional elements. Burroway warns beginning writers that writing only from personal experience can be a misleading rule (8) because it limits the experiences that writers can relate on the page. Gardner also believes writing only from self-experience is "limiting to the imagination" (*The Art of Fiction* 20). However, for students who are not sure where to begin, starting with self-knowledge can give them a comfort zone in which to explore their craft. So until students are ready to "write the kind of story (they) know and like best" (18), and have mastered the craft elements enough that they can employ imagination to write believable characters and situations outside of their self-knowledge, the self is a good place to begin.

In the popular introduction to creative writing rhetorical guide *Three Genres: The Writing of Fiction/Literary Nonfiction, Poetry, and Drama*, Stephen Minot states that "using personal experience selectively and honestly is almost a

guarantee that your fiction will be fresh and convincing" (46). Yet he then advises against writing the "adolescent tragedy" (which he called, in former editions of the book, the "coming-of-age" story) because young writers "lack perspective" (42). So on one hand, undergraduate students are encouraged to "write what they know" in order to bring believability to their works; but then they are told that they can't do it well yet, because they are too young to understand what is important about their lives to relate it well to prose. Undergraduate students can become frustrated with the "write what you know" adage, when they are told they do not yet have a rich palette of life experiences from which to draw to create works, or perhaps, even if they do, they don't yet understand which experiences lend to stronger thematic writing. Yet these student writers can indeed use their young experiences to shape new works, if only they are given the heuristic devices to better understand which experiences, those which have caused dissonance, which can lead to strong storytelling.

Invention Through Questioning

When beginning writers start to write creatively, often they are unsure as to what makes a good story: What should they write about, and in how much detail? Beginning with a questioning strategy can help these students decide what makes for relevant and interesting writing subjects for other readers.

In the chapter "Toward Understanding and Sharing Experience," Richard E. Young et al say writers can decide which details are "relevant and interesting" in their writing by answering two questions:

1. What kinds of details are relevant to understanding an experience?

2. What kinds of details are likely to be sufficiently interesting to a reader to warrant sharing them with others? (*Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* 54)

Creative writers might well begin with these questioning techniques when considering which of their personal experiences could translate into story or prose. Questioning can help them decide how much description is needed in their work to translate a scene or character to a reader unfamiliar with the writer's experience, for example.

Questioning also helps them to critically think about where to begin their writing; what experiences might lend themselves to theme, and what be merely amusing or anecdotal. Selfe and Bodi say students "often fail to carefully consider, weigh, and focus their experiences … they fall short of working through these experiences in writing so that their writing becomes imaginative and pleasant to read" (169). Critically thinking about the experiences with which the writer has dissonance can help him or her decide what he or she needs to write about, rather than writing work that lacks emotional significance. Selfe and Bodi offer the questioning technique of defining a student through self, social, and environmental considerations, to help students discover what is important about themselves, and what is interesting to story. Looking at the writer through past, present, and future experiences, they propose a heuristic technique that places the student writer at a "fuller, more well-rounded definition of self" by exploring, for instance, how the writer would define themselves at five years old, how others

might have seen them physically as a child, and what "things" helped them reach goals 10 years ago (171). This technique could easily be translated to story, as the student writer develops a character who might resemble the self through the lens of their own self-description, but also considers the social ramifications of how that character resolved conflicts based on the social and environmental, which could help the student create both emotional conflict and rising action based on their own experiences.

Another technique students can utilize to examine or question their "selves," according to Burke, is through the consideration of five elements: the act, the scene, the agent, the agency, and the purpose. Ostrom defines this technique as examining what is being described and what should be done about it (act), where the act takes place (scene), who is acting (agent), how the person is acting (agency), and why he is doing what they're doing (purpose) (5). This can be turned into a questioning strategy that students can use to consider how to show, not tell. I use the literary nonfiction piece "Killing Chickens" by Meredith Hall to show students how this approach can benefit their own beginnings:

> I tucked her wings tight against her heaving body, crouched
>
> over her, and covered her flailing head with my gloved hand.
>
> Holding her neck hard against the floor of the coop, I took a
>
> breath, set something deep and hard inside my heart, and
>
> twisted her head. I heard her neck break with a crackle. Still
>
> she fought me, struggling to be free of my weight, my gloved
>
> hands, my need to kill her…

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…I was killing chickens. It was my 38th birthday. My brother

had chosen that morning to tell me that he had caught his

wife—my best friend, Ashley – in bed with my husband a

year before … When I roared upstairs and confronted John,

he told me to go fuck myself (*Three Genres* 5-6).

When we discuss this beginning in class, students consider what is being shown

through the active scene: Why does the author begin with killing chickens? How

does the act convey, thematically, the purpose of the story? Why is the main

character (agent) carrying out the act, and why is this information withheld until

the backstory is offered? Through the questioning, students begin to understand

why the work is started in the "middle" of the action, and how the act shows the

theme of survival of a personal loss.

I then offer the students a journaling exercise, asking them to flatly, or

"tellingly", answer these three questions, considering their "selves" in their

writing. We begin by writing answers that explain, or tell, the answers to these

questions:

1. What was the first thing on your mind when you woke up this morning?

2. Identify an event in your life that you are excited about.

3. Identify an event happening in your life that has you worried, or even

    scared.

After considering these prompts in expository answers, I ask students to

rewrite the answer to one of these questions, showing me, through scene, the act

that causes the agency. Through this questioning technique that transforms answers to questions into scenes, students learn to begin their work that "show" their overall theme.

This shifts the invention exercise from exclusively considering a master work to considering the self in writing, while also practicing craft, a third element of invention. Students are also thinking about their dissonance, and showing that dissonance through an active scene that might begin a longer work. This gives them a place to begin their writing, and a starting point from which their work can grow through consideration of self. It also helps them understand the difference between "showing" and "telling," as they begin to tell their own stories through flat "telling," but learn to revise their answer, before leaving class, into a "showing" scene, which can be later revised into a longer work. In short, excepting the fourth element of "natural ability", all elements of invention are implemented in one exercise.

Other invention techniques, some discussed below, can help students learn which of their life experiences translate well to story and prose. Using experience to write story isn't limiting when we consider that every beginning student comes from a unique background and holds unique experiences, all of which can be expressed through, and conveyed by, imaginative writing. According to Young et al:

> The world mirrored in each man's mind is unique. Constantly
> changing, bafflingly complex, the external world is not a neat, well-
> ordered place replete with meaning, but an enigma requiring

interpretation. This interpretation is the result of a transaction

between events in the external world and the mind of the

individual—between the world 'out there' and the individual's

previous experience, knowledge, values, attitudes, and desires.

(*Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* 25)

Rhetoric, then, informs the discussion of creative writing because it helps

students decide what personal experiences are worth sharing. Even young

writers can decide how to interpret their worlds through creative means to share

their values, attitudes, and desires through story. Other questioning techniques

commonly used by rhetoricians can be employed to assist creative writers, not

just with the beginning of their work, but also with seeing their work as a whole,

as they continue to write.

Bishop points out that instructional theories that challenge current-

traditional theory, or working towards a finished product, perpetuate self-

expression and self-knowledge (*Released Into Language* xv). So while writers

shouldn't immediately see what their writing would turn out to be—which leads to

formulaic writing—they can begin to understand what they are driving towards,

thematically, through invention heuristics. An example of this can be found in

Four Worlds of Writing, a rhetoric with detailed invention heuristics. When

students learn to write to inquire about themselves, they "take time to reflect on

and construct meanings about a few of these aspects of (their busy lives)" (*Four

Worlds of Writing* 4). Writing, especially for the undergraduate student, can help

students to understand their places in their worlds, and in their storytelling.

Four Worlds of Writing focuses on both composition and also "creative" genres of writing, one of the few undergraduate composition books to do so. It also gives undergraduate students specific invention techniques to follow in order to understand how to think about subject matter before beginning to write. For example, the first chapter focuses on relationships. Chapter author Nan Uber-Kellogg asks student writers to question which relationships they have that puzzle them, hold the most consequence, or which they'd simply like to understand better (17). A questioning strategy is developed to allow students to delve into a process of inquiry that can lead to new understandings, solutions, or even courses of action (34).

In the chapter "Area of Inquiry: Relationships," Nan Uber-Kellogg asks students to consider their relationships with others as writing material, urging young writers to consider their experiences with another person, how their values formed their opinions of these experiences, and whether those experiences and values caused dissonance, or questions, about the relationship (13). This type of questioning assists students in deciding how to critically answer questions about their lives in a meaningful way, creating theme in their writing.

Students also learn to draw from dissonance in *Four Worlds of Writing* by asking an overall question about their relationship—a guiding question—and then attempt to answer it through heuristic techniques. These techniques leads the student through questioning strategies that make them consider their relationships through recurring images, through time, and through their cultures (37-38). Uber-Kellogg asks students to look through the answers to their

individual questions, highlighting those instances where they have written down

information that might answer the larger, guiding question. This also helps

students to learn how to write thematically, and also allows the students to invest

their "selves" into their writing. Lauer explains this heuristic device of writing

about dissonance for the "self" as an opportunity to "catch those swiftly passing

moments of loving, encountering, learning, wondering, and rearing and to hold

them long enough to find personal meaning … (students) learn what makes them

unlike anyone else who has ever lived, as well as what makes them like all

others who have ever lived" (*Four Worlds of Writing* 3). So for students who have

been told by their teachers that they shouldn't write about their young

experiences, or that because they are adolescents they haven't lived enough to

tell a good story, the instructor is failing to consider that theme comes from

conflict and figuring out how to answer a central, dramatic question about any

life; as Nancy Sommers and John T. Gage point out, writing about dissonance, or

disruption, in one's life helps to write engaging papers. Leading students through

questioning heuristics can help students do just this, even at the beginning level.

As Karen Burke LeFevre points out in her book *Invention as a Social Act*:

> The act of inventing—which may involve remembering or finding or
>
> actively creating something—relates to the process of inquiry, to
>
> creativity, to poetic and aesthetic invention. While these terms are
>
> not synonymous, neither are they totally distinct. Like the historian
>
> or the scientist, the poet or fiction writer presumably seeks truth and
>
> hopes to be believed. In poetic as well as rhetorical invention (or, if

you prefer, in a rhetorical view of poetic invention), the writer

wishes to be wise as well as eloquent (3).

The model of invention, as described by LeFevre, can be likened to both the

expressionistic and social understandings of creative writing: that writing

encourages self-expression but also relates to an audience.

Creative writing teachers can use this methodology and use of student's

self-questioning to teach young writers to learn both about themselves and about

their characters through another technique called "character mapping," as

illustrated below.
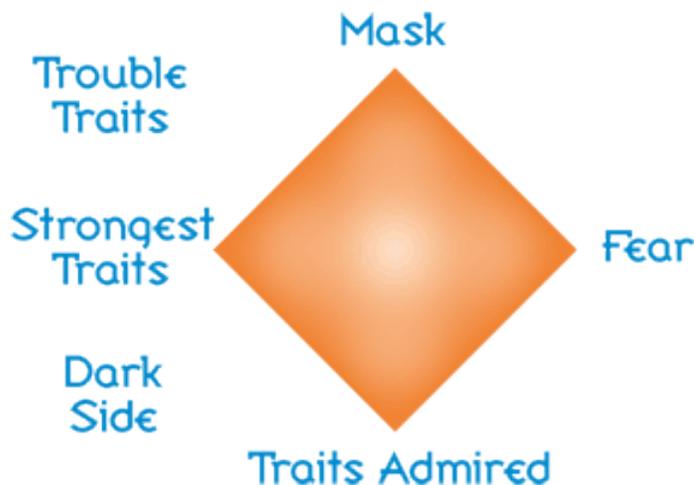
The Character Map: A Heuristic Tool for Invention of Story
Source: www.emotionaltoolbox.com

Developed by Laurie Hutzler, character mapping explores the topography of

character traits that that motivate a person's actions and choices. Writers can

use the technique to explore themselves, and then apply what they learned to

storytelling. Hutzler suggests that creative writers should first learn to map

themselves to help them "start with the personal and move to the universal" (www.emotionaltoolbox.com par. 2) Because the writer begins by learning to understand self as an "interesting, complex, three-dimensional human being (who) constantly wrestle(s) with a variety of strong emotions and … a whole range of internal conflicts" (par. 2), students learn how to translate their understanding of self to another character.

John Boe states that storytelling and writing is an introduction into finding the self; "Like ideal method actors, people telling stories from their own lives in their own voices are playing (thus finding) themselves" ("Storytelling, Writing" 31). The character map allows students to question themselves and to understand how their lives are stories that can be shaped into creative works. The character map is a guide instructors can use to help students consider their own character traits, although they can also use traits they hope to implement into their characters. One by one, students should be asked to consider the following traits for themselves, and to fill them in on the character map:

1. What is the biggest misconception about you?

2. What is your greatest childhood fear?

3. What is your greatest strength or strongest trait?

4. What is the trait you admire most in other people?

5. Which of your traits get you into the most trouble?

6. What trait in other people do you most admire?

After the students answer the questions, the creative writing instructor can explain how this exploration of self can also relate to character:

1. The "mask" or misconception: This is how the person represents himself to others, the outer "shell" or false face the person wears in public ("Emotional Toolbox"). The mask is usually created because of:

2. The "wound" or fear: This is something that happened to the writer that makes him represent himself in an inauthentic light. According to Hutzler, the fear is created because the writer worries about being unlovable or making a leap of faith towards their "true self."

3. Development of self around wound: This is the defense mechanism the writer has created in order to not deal with the wound. A strong trait creates false pride or a false sense of security, or is what the writer relies on to "get out of trouble." Often this trait must be surrendered in order to achieve:

4. What the person aspires to be. Hutzler calls this the manifestation of the writer's "truest self." If the writer can give up the crutch this true self might be achieved; if not, the writer might fall to:

5. This is the person's "Achilles' heel", or their "dark side." The writer falls to this trait when he reacts badly to stress, anxiety, worry, or fear.

6. This can also be the character's dark side, or the antagonist.

Answers to these questions offer meaningful points of entry into a story that are significant to the writer's sense of "self." For example, the first and second points, the mask and wound, could be related to a fictional story or screenplay as a conflicted character and his or her backstory, which would be the first part of the story, or act one. Act two, or the rising action, would center on the character's

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ability to rise beyond his or her greatest strength or strongest trait to achieve a higher goal. Traits five and six would cause complications in the story, the hurdles the main character would need to confront in the rising action of the story.

The character map allows new writing students to look at their "selves" and experiences, translating those experiences to fiction or non-fiction; students begin to understand how they play a part into their creative stories. Learning becomes, then, as much about self-awareness as storytelling. This has the added benefit of "finding your self, your personality," (Boe 32); or, as Carl Jung said, learning about the "optimum development of the whole individual human being" (qtd. in Boe 32) through invention and self-discovery.

Bishop also outlines an exercise in autobiography which helps students look at their own lives in correlation with their characters to understand story. She adapted an activity from Natalie Kusz to ask them to look at their lives through time, identifying key moments in their lives by outlining it at certain ages, finishing the prompts: "When I was born … when I was six …" (*Released Into Language* 103). While Bishop's prerogative in this exercise remained to "move the self *through* time" (103-104, her emphasis), I believe the exercise can also help creative writing students begin to see their "selves" in the social setting, defining key moments in their lives that translate well to story. And this exercise can assist students in moving from beyond the self to the social, once they have created a comfort zone from which they can consider their storytelling.

Invention as a Social Act

Having creative writers consider their "selves" in their story is certainly a good place to begin. However, the conversation of invention also includes writing as a social act. While chapter three of my dissertation addresses social writing as collaboration—certainly how invention works socially in the classroom--Karen LeFevre's definition of invention should also be considered when considering where creative writers might begin as they begin to write.

In *Invention as a Social Act*, LeFevre writes that the Platonic, or individualistic, view of invention has "given rise to inventional methods—the use of analogy, freewriting, and clustering—that often help writers to break through the conventional stereotypes of perception and expression, reassuring them that they do have many possibilities and resources within" (23). The creative writing teacher would recognize these several methods used to begin stories named here by LeFevre, inventional tools used both in composition and creative writing classrooms.However, LeFevre believes that only an individualistic approach to invention "neglects studies of writers in social contexts" (23). She says this individualistic approach, looking at writing as a "private and personal activity" (23)—often touted by creative writing teachers—makes the writing process seem hidden and mysterious to the writing student. Placing writing in a social context allows writers to consider the discourse communities in which they live, what Patricia Bizzell names as the social processes "whereby language-learning and thinking capacities are shaped and used in particular communities" (qtd in LeFevre 23).

Again, the tie to rhetoric, and how to begin, can be seen through craft. Instead of character, now the writer is considering language (dialogue) and setting, and how their character functions considering the social context in which they find themselves. I see this as the continuation of learning craft in the creative writing classroom: One the self is considered in story, the social should also be emphasized as another place where invention can be used to begin to flesh out story. Burroway defines setting as the illumination of a story's underpinnings, "a reflection of the emotion or revealing subtle aspects of a character's life" (173). Characters are a product of their place and culture (173), and so writers must consider how the social, and not just the "furnishings" of setting will help to set the tone and emotion of the writing. Considering the social aspect of writing will "create a world that entices [the reader] in and shows [the reader] what's at stake there" (Packer qtd. in Burroway 173).

I employ "beginning" through a social context by offering an exercise in the vignette. Vignettes are "snapshots" of scenes that link together to tell a story – but the link is implied. Writing in vignettes can help to cure a writer who has trouble adhering to the "show, don't tell" rule, as vignettes are almost all active scenes, with little to no exposition from either the author or story's narrator to explain them. However, they also require the writer to consider how the character would act and react in different social settings, depending on who was in the "setting" with the character. The beginning writer begins to grasp the social or "setting" in their work, building upon the characterization invention techniques they learned earlier in the creative writing course. When I teach vignettes, I use

examples from Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* and Mary

Robison's *Why Did I Ever* when the class discusses writing the vignette. Each of

the stories, built on vignettes, centers on a theme; Cisneros' work is shaped

around a place, while Robison's focuses on characterization (although both

works, obviously, employ characterization and setting techniques). This helps

beginning writers see the transition between the self and social. In class we talk

about how the vignettes, or active scenes, link through different craft elements—

characterization (self), setting (social), and so on, to tell the story, without

exposition.

For example, in Robison's work we look at the first five vignettes:

<div align="center">1</div>

I have a dream of working a combination lock that is
engraved on its back with the combination. Left 85, right 12, left 66.
"Well *shit*, man," I say in the dream.

<div align="center">2</div>

Hollis and I have killed this whole Saturday together. We've
watched all fourteen hours of the PBS series The Civil War.
Now that it's over he turns to me and says, "That was good."

Buy Me Something

I end up at Appletree—the grocery—in the dead of the night.
I'm not going to last long shopping, though, because this song was
bad enough when what's-her-name sang it. And who are all these
people at four A.M.? I'm making a new rule: No one is to touch me.
Unless and until I feel different about things. Then, I'll call off the
rule.

<div align="center">4</div>

Three ex-husbands or whoever they were.
I'm sure they have their opinions.

I would say to them, "Peace, our timing was bad, the light was ugly, things didn't work out." I'd say, "Although you certainly were doing your all, now weren't you."
I would say, "Drink!"

5

Hollis is not my ex-anything and not my boyfriend. He's my friend. Maybe not the best friend I have in the world. He is, however, the only (2-3).

When I workshop this piece, I ask students to consider the craft elements brought to each vignette. For example, in *Why Did I Ever*:

1. Why is the symbolism of the first vignette important to set the tone of the work?

2. How does the main character's relationship with her husbands and "best friend" offer good indirect characterization?

3. How do the social interactions (or lack thereof) between the main character and her "best friend" further show who they are?

4. Why do we need the social construct of the grocery store to further identify the theme?

5. Consider the first five vignettes: How do they build on each other to offer conflict/theme, without stating it? How is this "plotting"?

6. What is the overall tone of the work? How does Robison establish tone through craft elements, without stating abstractions in exposition?

7. How do the scenes link in order to convey a theme? What is the theme? How can you tell, without exposition?

After the students consider how craft elements can link to create a story, I ask them to consider one of their works-in-progress. In their journals, they write five vignettes based on their stories, essentially re-examining—and quite possibly rewriting—their scenes, all in an active voice. Each vignette focuses on a different craft element: characterization, setting, symbolism, and so on. They begin to see their story through not just craft, but also through how their understanding of who they are, who the characters they imagine, and the settings they both know and create can merge together to flesh out a well-rounded scene, using several craft elements. Then I ask them to arrange the vignettes for plot, allowing no exposition to explain them. The students consider how they can arrange these vignettes to create opening conflict and rising action.

This is often the exercise that helps students "get it" when it comes to showing instead of telling. Because they have no choice but to write active scenes, they move into showing. It is also one of the exercises I use towards the end of the semester, so that they see they can write beyond their "selves", offering up more imaginative considerations of craft in their work. The work begins to expand beyond self to the social. Instead of individual prewriting exercises in characterization, setting, and dialogue, they learn to see all of these craft issues as a whole, integrating each invention technique to flesh out story. One of the more impressive examples I received from a student follows:

Love Don't Live Here Anymore

I settle into the impression on the couch.

…

The sun glares through the window, casting prison bar shadows across the room. But I don't feel like getting back up to close the blinds. I just close my eyes instead.

…

I've been sitting with a pen and paper on my lap for four hours. About five minutes in, I turned on the TV. My thumb is beginning to callus.

…

I embrace the darkness enfolding me as night falls around the apartment. It feels like a long lost friend who sees you from across the airport and breaks into a run and hugs you so tightly that time stops. Or maybe this is that special brand of bottom you can only experience during the twilight hour.

…

She comes home from work and bustles about. Throwing down bags, closing doors too hard, switching on all the lights. It's too bright now, even my ears are squinting at the noise. The water is grating across the two-day-old dishes. She doesn't even look at me. I'm not leaving this couch until she does.

…

Without looking up from the dishes, she asks me how long I'm going to sit here. I don't know, I say. I glance down at where I've written that on the paper subconsciously. I scratch it out, taking my time to make sure all the strikethroughs are parallel and equally dark. My paper now contains a single, even black rectangle. This is progress, I think.

She's only awake for another two hours, but each second of it drags on into eternity. She knits in silence on the other end of the couch. I can't navigate this ocean hidden in the mere feet between us.

…

Time once again becomes irrelevant as she departs for bed, her footfalls echoing loudly off the carpet, distant and divine. I remember when she tread with grace, barely whispering as she strode. But now she walks like the wounded. The dead of night grasps at me with its tendrils, chill and inviting. I will never understand (Doughtery, used with permission).

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This work, written for a Fiction: Form and Technique class, captures the student writer's understanding of self, how he could shape his "self" into character. After the work was written, I asked him how much of it was based on himself: "Some of the scenes and character traits were embellished or dramatized for tonal effect, but for the most part it was me" (Dougherty interview). The setting, or the social aspect of the writing, offers a tone that relates how the character would feel in a social aspect where the relationship. Dougherty said the setting was not fictionalized, although he made the apartment seem bigger than his own. Upon reflection, he said he should have made the apartment seem smaller, to reflect how he felt in the relationship at the time (Dougherty interview). This showed me that he understood how the social context of his work could be reflected upon his own knowledge of place, but also fictionalized to offer the tones and emotion that Burroway spoke of for the craft of setting.

Burroway contends that it is the writer's task to write about what you care about (9). And while skilled writers will eventually move beyond their own experiences to translate creative works, they will struggle enough with craft issues and theme. So while they work on their craft, invention—considering the dissonance in their lives, a thematic source around which to shape their work -- gives them a good place to begin.

Conclusion

Debra Sparks says writers expect a lot from the beginnings and closings of their stories: "The opening is what entices a reader into a work. It doesn't matter how great the middle and end are if the reader never gets there" ("Getting In and Getting Out" 16). She jokes about a writer friend who swears she will never read another story that opens with a ringing alarm clock, until Sparks judges a contest and finds out this is how many writers begin their work; "If you don't know when your story begins, you simply start at the beginning of the *day* of the story. Better, of course, to start with story itself" (17-18, her emphasis).

A creative writing teacher who understands invention can show students how to begin by helping them considering the students' history: those meaningful events that shaped the student, as an individual or as a member of his community. He can help shape the work, using questioning strategies to probe for dissonance, which gives the writer a place of conflict from where the writing can begin, before the work is written and is given to the workshop for feedback. Helping the student understand the writing process, not just revision but also how writers begin, gives the authority of the writing to the student, instead of to the instructor as the writer to become.

Does this mean that the creative writing teacher becomes so heavy-handed with form and teaching that the student is not allowed to try on his own forms and techniques? Absolutely not. But it does mean that the teacher considers not only his process, but those processes that have worked for writers at all stages of skill, to enable his students to understand writing beyond art. The

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Association of Writing Programs acknowledges that students need to understand this part of the writing process in order to understand their place in the writing world:

> Many students, especially today's students, feel that the world is not of their making, and not theirs to form or to reform; but writing classes often demonstrate the efficacy of the human will—that human experience can be shaped and directed for the good— aesthetically, socially, and politically ("About AWP" par. 10).

By offering invention techniques considered by composition theorists, we empower our writers to understand craft as eminent through self, not through rubbing elbows with a "successful" writer. By removing himself as a "master" teacher to emulate, and giving students invention techniques to help them decide what the students' own stories should be, the teacher becomes more than a "master writer," but what Wendy Bishop refers to as a writer/teacher, someone who considers their process as much as they write ("Places to Stand").

If we give an instructor the title of a master teacher, it should because he has mastered not just his craft, but also his teaching. He considers the needs of the students and finds several pedagogical approaches that allow them to not only understand how craft issues differ in "creative" genres, but that the creative process in writing will always consider the self and community.

Of course, there is no one invention technique that will work for every writer; even Bishop, who perhaps best saw the correlation between creative

writing and composition, acknowledged there was no surefire way to help a student begin:

> There is no single, best, in-class invention technique that will get all writers drafting productively. Rather, in-class invention activities can be used to provide novice writers with insights into professional writers' self-challenges (*Released Into Language* 71).

Yet, for the teacher who is instructing beginning creative writing students, invention empowers students to begin to understand the writing process, as to what makes good story, and will help them avoid writing drafts that have no conflict in them for the first several pages. The writer teacher gives them the skills to later understand the solitary process, the "madness" of creativity, and a solid understanding that writing can be borne of inspiration, but is still centered on the self and the society, as invention tools and as places to begin.

Burroway states that some writers are "lucky … (because) the world presents itself to them in terms of conflict, crisis, and resolution" (8). Yet writers aren't merely lucky to see the world as a story; if they have good teachers, writers can be trained to consider their worlds in this way.

Chapter Three: A Meeting of Minds: Individual Voice and Social Aspects of Writing in Creative Writing Workshops

The self is not an entity, but a process.

—Karen Burke LeFevre, *Invention as a Social Act*

Sometimes writing is a lonely matter; Burroway defines the process as a "solitary struggle" (xii). Yet writing is also a transaction, an exchange between the scribe and his or her peers that can happen through the collaborative process. As LeFevre states, collaboration allows "people (to) become partners in the process of creating ideas" (62).

While composition theory has aligned itself with the collaborative aspects of writing, creative writing tends to remain expressivist, focusing on the individual as author. This dichotomy furthers the divide between disciplines. Trimbur noted:

> Compositionists (including myself) habitually claim that writing is a
> social and collaborative activity. Fair enough. There is no question
> in my mind that to understand the production, circulation, and use
> of written texts you need to elaborate complex discursive networks.
> The difficulty, however, is that dissolving the figure of the author
> into the relations of writing—the literary circles, publishers, editors,

agents, bookstores, critics, and readers—risks at the same time

dissolving the class relations that link the author as a producer to

precisely those social networks that you want to understand.

("Agency and the Death" 296)

English departments understand that creating a collaborative environment within

the classroom is important to the overall growth of a student's writing, yet

academia continues to champion "star faculty," or well-published authors, to

teach in the creative writing classroom, as I discussed in my previous chapter. Of

course, hiring well-known authors to teach creative writing alone does not stop

the collaborative process, but the practice of championing writers as individuals

can mislead students. When the master writer is showcased as the solitary figure

to aspire to become, the practice sends the wrong message that creative writing

is an isolated act of individuality and not borne of collaboration.

The problem of concentrating on only the individual in writing process is

further exacerbated if the instructor does not understand how to employ the

workshop to help students work together to create. As LeFevre states,

collaborative groups, formed not only in critique sessions but also through peer

review, can be imperfect if "one party can override the other" (63). In the current

workshop model the instructor generally has the final word, negating the

collaborative opportunities a workshop could otherwise offer.

The model also discourages collaborating during the prewriting process. In

the workshop students circulate "finished" drafts for revision, receiving praise

from the master author if they turn in "good" first drafts the first time. I have been

in several workshops that used this method; in one, the master writer did not encourage feedback from the workshop, but simply assessed each draft, told the writer what was "wrong" or "right" with it, and gave it back without asking for additional comments from either the author or his or her peers. And when I began teaching, a seasoned author told me to make sure I had the last word in every workshop, as what the students really wanted was my praise or criticism, and didn't value their peers' suggestions. In either case, the "seasoned" author was championed as having the right answer to better student writing with little to no regard of the opinions of the peers.

Some professors are unable to relinquish the power of the podium. Perhaps they had a creative writing professor of their own that demanded that the student become the "pupil" to his or her master, hoping that teaching the novice writer discipline through tough-love methods could help the writer understand how difficult the writing process can be. Swander likens the master/pupil or dictator role to the

> abusive basketball-coach method to teach writing workshops. ...We all know how it goes. The teacher tells the students to go home, write, and come back with a finished piece. Then, in front of the whole class, the teacher rips the piece to shreds. In my very first undergraduate workshop, I knew I was experiencing a strange system … We were to learn through trial by fire, through negativity, through humiliation, through hearing what we and others had done

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wrong. In any other skills-building class, from foreign language to driver's education, students were asked to practice the basic steps of the craft, carefully mastering one chunk of knowledge before adding another. Why was the teaching of creative writing so different? (167)

Ritter calls creative writing pedagogy's disregard of the collaborative aspects of the writing process an act where "*teaching* creative writing becomes consistently deprofessionalized and marginalized. The program design runs on a pedagogy of ethos, in which teaching is neither a community-based concern nor a theoretically constructed act" (284, her emphasis). For an uncertain or novice writer, a creative writing class might seem useless, according to Royster, because they were not born with the talent to immediately produce and publish works, as apparently can the teacher and some of the "talented" students who are praised for turning in a strong draft during workshop to please the master.

Royster points out that putting too much emphasis on the end product, rather than the process of writing, can hurt the "novice writer who will be less apt to experiment with new forms if (s)he is too harshly judged in the workshop":

We lose sight of what should be the real goal of workshops, or student communities of writers who share and critique each other's work: our aim is to foster more dedicated writers. Compositionists will recognize this conflict from the process-not-product debate begun in the late seventies, a debate which still affects

contemporary writing pedagogy. (27)

While the debate began in composition, it has not yet extended to professors who continue to champion the workshop model in creative writing. Although the workshop has its use, Ritter argues that writer/teachers must foster an interdisciplinary understanding of writing (285) and its collaborative process in order to assist undergraduates with the beginning steps of learning to write in creative genres. Creative writing professors need to consider how to remove the individual from the writing, focusing instead on how to better use the workshop in order to create a truly collaborative classroom. So I will be considering here how to reconsider the workshop method so that it is truly a collaborative effort, not only for finished drafts but also during the process of creating them.

Historical Debate

The debate that the "author died" ("Agency and the Death" 283), that writing is no longer an individual act, has been ongoing since the 1970s. Most notably, the Elbow-Bartholomae debate in the early 90s considered whether the writer was an expressive, individual act (Elbow's "believing game") or the result of textuality (Bartholomae's "strong readings").

Both individuality and audience are important to the writing process; Penninsi and Lawler refer to this as the difference between micro-level writing, in which the writer concentrates on developing his voice and uniqueness, and macro-level writing, where ideas of a community come into play (228-229). The

misconception in writing classrooms is that creative writing should focus on micro-level writing, where students consider their individual voice and how they can tell a story differently from anyone else; while composition should focus on macro-level writing, where writers focus on persuading an audience or communicating to them through an analytic or researched work. Disallowing the macro-level writing, in which students can consider the affect and effect their writing has on their potential audiences, in the workshop does not give them an opportunity to consider the entire writing process. Elbow says the transaction of writing should happen individually as well as in collaboration:

> I have been speaking … as though writing were a transaction entirely with yourself. It is a transaction with yourself—lonely and frustrating—and I have wanted, in fact, to increase that transaction: help you do more business with yourself. But writing is also a transaction with other people. Writing is not just getting things down on paper, it is getting things inside someone else's head. If you wish to improve your writing you must also learn to do more business with other people. (*Writing Without Teachers* 76)

A writer might need to spend some time alone in order to figure out what (s)he wants to say, yet reflecting on how other opinions and experiences weigh into that message will give the writer a deeper consideration of the subject material. In writing traditionally associated with composition, this could mean a stronger thesis or a change in the way the writer feels about a topic matter because new

insight has been offered through collaboration. In works traditionally associated with creative writing, this could mean "rounder," more empathetic characters or scenes shaped around more knowledge or experiences than those known firsthand by only the writer. The adage "write what you know" often extolled in creative writing classes can be expanded to include what those in a collaborative group know as well, offering the writer a richer palette of experiences from which to draw. For example, Arthur Golden's work *Memoirs of a Geisha* was written after extensive collaboration with a geisha, who lived a lifestyle far outside of his realm of knowledge.

Using workshops to create a discourse community gives students the opportunity to not only consider how they might find story in their own experiences, but in others' experiences as well. Patricia Bizzell points out that teachers often take "our students' thinking for granted" (75), yet creating communities where they can consider inner- and outer-directed discourse allow them to weigh their experiences along with others. As defined by Bizzell, the outer-directed discourse benefits the student because they learn "audience analysis [which] seeks to identify the personal idiosyncrasies of readers, so that the wrier can communicate her message to them in the most persuasive form" (79).

Writing solo, without collaboration, can also lead to privatized language, symbolism meaningful only to the writer, or writing about characters and scenes only known to, and appreciated by, the writer, instead of a worldlier, more

empathetic point of view. Collaboration allows authors to discover if the images and language they use will resonate with an audience, because they learn to talk with peers about what is usable language and images in their work, and what is confusing or even incomprehensible. Elbow writes, "Writing is a string you send out to connect yourself with other consciousnesses, but usually you never have the opportunity to feel anything at the other end. How can you tell whether you've got a fish if the line always feels slack? ... You need movies of people's mind while they read your words (to improve your writing)" (77). A workshop should give this support to a writer, considering the individual's intention in the work while also offering constructive criticism as to what they don't understand, or would like to see more of, in the writing. Murray states that the workshop can do this if the students are instructed in how to respond as "readers who are less involved, more removed from the writer, but who are still supportive as well as critical" (A Writer Teaches Writing 187). Instructors must learn to teach students how to use the workshop, and then share the authority of the classroom with his or her students, in order for this to occur.

Considering the Present Workshop Model

In Janet Burroway's book *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, she describes the workshop as a "phenomenon now so firmly established that nearly every higher institution in America offers some form of workshop-based creative writing course or program" (xi). She urges members of the workshop to offer

mutual goodwill, to vigorously work to make the writing "under scrutiny the best that it can be" (xii). The workshop is defined as a place where already written works are still "embryonic." Yet the work is already drafted.

According to Swander, this "traditional" way of teaching creative writing was adopted from the model set up by Paul Engle, who started the creative writing program at the Iowa Writers Workshop. The model, at that time, was meant for graduate-level writers, who might have already mastered much of the craft of creative writing; the model was created so

> young, polished writers could come for a year or two and have their
> work critiqued. Engle assumed his graduate students already knew
> how to write. What they needed, he reasoned in this post-WWII era,
> was a kind of boot camp where they would be toughened up to the
> brutality of the enemy: the attacking critics (168).

This model was not meant for undergraduate students, nor even for more seasoned writers who are still learning the genres of creative writing. Yet it is still continually employed at all writing levels. In *A Writer Teaches Writing*, Donald Murray writes that he taught the workshop model for years because he didn't know another method (193). And many writing teachers, especially creative writing teachers, are guilty of the same approach. When newly minted MFA students graduate from creative writing programs and take their degrees to other universities to start their own MFA programs, they still use the pedagogy used

upon them—but now, on less-polished writers, who might neither have mastered their crafts nor yet found a creative process.

Swander likens using the workshop method on less-polished writers to "poisonous pedagogy," or breaking a writer's spirit (170) in order to teach them discipline. Creativity doesn't flourish when the spirit is broken, so a new pedagogy is called for when teaching undergraduates or less-developed writers. Although the workshop model often employs the silence the author of the work while it is discussed, rationalizing that the writer wouldn't be in the room with a reader to explain their work in a "real" reading situation, this discourages collaboration. The workshop members can offer criticism, constructive or otherwise, without offering advice on how the work could be revised. This can leave the writer feeling frustrated and unable to write, without a clear direction as to how the work can be improved. The workshop assumes that the student author already has individuality, voice, and creative genius, without considering the need of collaboration in order to establish them. Yet if the workshop was used so that peers could collaborate together both during the prewriting and drafting stages, students would learn both process and revision in a more empowered way.

An additional drawback to the current workshop model is its code of silence. The model I have experienced and participated in involves the writer reading a part of their completed draft-in-progress. The instructor then silences the writer as fellow writers talk about his or her work's virtues and shortcomings.

The writer is not allowed to enter the conversation with his peers, although some workshop leaders allow the author to ask questions or call for clarification from the peers after the workshop has been completed. While this approach keeps the author from defending the work without listening to the input of others, it also puts him at a collaborative disadvantage and can discourage the writer's confidence about the quality of his or her writing or ability to create, because the writer is not allowed to enter the discussion about possible revision choices. He is also not allowed to discuss his intentions for the writing so that the peers consider for whom the writing is intended. In *A Writer Teaches Writing*, Murray agrees that quieting the author during the workshop stunts collaboration. He said a stronger stance is to simply ask the student, "How can we help you?" and to allow the student to voice the concerns he has about his writing (192). This allows the students to address those concerns and gives the writer an opportunity to participate in his own revision, allowing him to feel greater control over his writing process.

Prewriting in the Workshop

Creative writing instructors can be at a disadvantage because they are not routinely taught how to teach others the creative process. For prewriting models, instructors look to some of the most-used pedagogical creative writing books, such as Burroway's *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, to understand why prewriting is not well understood by novice creative writers. Burroway offers

in her chapter "Whatever Works" vague suggestions such as "Get started" and "Keep Going" (*Writing Fiction* 1). In his book *The Writing Workshop*, Alan Ziegler posits that "with creative writing, there doesn't need to be a reason to write; writing itself can be reason enough" (3). Again, the emphasis is put on the artistic part of writing without considering if the work will resonate with an audience, or even find a direction. Without some guidance in the prewriting stages, students can continue to replicate errors rather than find the meaning of their work, because they write alone and without collaboration in this limited prewriting process. Telling a new writer to just "keep going" could only encourage him to write flat, "telling" scenes or work that doesn't resonate in story or theme—which will then be harshly critiqued in the workshop. Without collaboration, the student will not take part of the growing process.

Despite its lack of attention to prewriting, the workshop model is defended by many teachers who continue to adopt it; for example, Wallace Stegner, who taught fiction at Harvard, Stanford, and the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, said workshoppping allowed him to "manage the environment" and to exercise the Socratic method, in which he could "stay out of the people's way rather than get in it" (xii). Yet the Socratic method is to encourage inquiry and debate during the learning process, not afterwards. In his article "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product," Murray says prewriting, especially for the novice writer, can take the most time:

> The amount of time a writer spends in each stage depends on his

personality, his work habits, his maturity as a craftsman, and the

challenge of what he is trying to say … (prewriting) includes the

awareness of his world from which his subject is born. (4)

Prewriting isn't completely ignored in creative writing classes. Instructors offer

exercises in journaling and responding to prompts in craft, such as those offered

in Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter's *What If? Writing Exercises for Fiction*

Writers and Robert Olmstead's *Elements of the Writing Craft*, among others; this

work might be seen as prewriting, if the ideas written in response to a prompt

grows into a story. Yet this cannot be considered truly collaborative, as it might

prove inspirational for the writer, but does not offer much opportunity for other

writers to weigh in as to where the work is going, or what is needed to sustain it,

unless all students are given an opportunity to share their journaling work before

they begin to rewrite, and peers are able to offer revision suggestions before the

student writer begins to draft. Elbow describes this as "growing," or thinking on

the page and prewriting about it, before attempting to draft. Early drafts, or even

writing that is not a draft, can be circulated in workshops or collaborative groups

in order to find direction before the work is shaped.

Writing teachers should be able to show how collaboration can, as Elbow

relates in *Writing Without Teachers*, help the subconscious bubble up to the

surface. By talking to peers in the classroom before a work is written, students

can begin to consider the theme and direction of their work before fashioning

committing it to an early draft. Collaboration gives students a direction in their

craft; it does not make a work homogenous nor does it dilute the author's voice. Instead collaboration can help the individual writer decide what choices to make in his or her writing before an initial draft is finished.

Collaboration During the Process

Reither and Vipond's article "Writing as Collaboration" can be used as the starting point to suggest how workshops can better benefit the student composer. While workshopping, or asking trusted colleagues and peers to comment upon existing drafts, is addressed in this article, how it is described here is somewhat different than what is commonly used in the creative writing classroom.

(Collaborative) Workshopping

The workshop model, as defined by Reither and Vipond, should be a conspiracy among trusted colleagues (858-859). Rather than an opportunity for the master to dictate how the work should be revised, all members of the workshop take ownership of the piece, including its author. The instructor then takes a new role as guide in the workshop, helping new writers to understand that they should not go directly to criticism when considering a work in progress, but instead should all work together to make the work as strong as it can be.

Because peers should be entrusted to help shape the work, the instructor should help them learn to be constructive in their criticism. In Jon Volkmer's *Fiction Workshop Companion*, he reminds workshop leaders that "the good in the

story shall take precedence over the bad" (42); leaders should remind students to act as an advocate of the peer writer, to compliment first before moving into suggestions for revision. Volkmer believes that the workshop should be a conversation among peers: "That means that a reader must always listen to what the other readers are saying, and be prepared to agree, disagree, clarify, or offer alternative readings" (43). In this model the author is not silenced but instead is encouraged to enter a discussion about his or her work among peers.

Reither and Vipond describe their own experiences in these collaborative relationships with their co-workers while they wrote an article, and reported that while peers did (and perhaps should) make suggestions as to conventional errors in writing, such as problems with organization, definition, and grammatical errors, they helped the most when they "persuade(d) the coauthors to reconsider the field of knowledge in which their article might fit" (858). While they were speaking of writing for academic journals, this advice can pertain to creative writers as well. For writers of genre fiction, this could help them make decisions as to what kinds of details might be interesting to include in their writing; for example, describing a shopping trip could be interesting to readers of "chick lit," while readers of a more literary persuasion might find the description tedious. Allowing peers who like similar genres—and who read those genres extensively—to help the writer decide on showing details can then allow the instructor to instead focus on craft issues, such as whether those details slow down the rising action or pace of the work. Still, the author does not give up control of his work, but instead defines his

or her goals for the piece and then asks for collaboration in order to refine the piece.

Collaboration in this manner is also the starting point for the author to begin thinking about audience, both in readership and in professional circles. A collaborative effort, as described by Hunt and Vipond, allows its participants to gain "acceptable knowledge claims … (and) also (helps) them write a piece that would withstand the scrutiny of journal editors and reviewers" (859).

Knowledge-making

Writing and reading to comprehend the creative process is often employed in writing classes. Students routinely read the works of masters in order to either take information away or to live through the experience of the text, examining finished pieces of literature to discover their meanings and dissect the works to decide what message is conveyed (Murray "Teach Writing as Process" 4); this is appreciating literature for its artistic or aesthetic value, as defined by Rosenblatt (qtd. in Reither and Vipond 860). While studying the work of the masters certainly helps students understand how craft can be implemented well, exclusively looking at master works can be intimidating in the creative workshop. Creative writing students who employ this method cannot hope to compete with literature that has been passed down for decades, even centuries, as the only models for what their writing should be. Students don't realize that these writers have written several drafts to get to the point where their work is publishable. So examining

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only the finished work as something to aspire to can be daunting, rather than helpful.

Knowledge making can be used to the writer's advantage if they are encouraged to consider what kinds of messages other authors' stories spur in their own writing. Using the workshop as a knowledge-making tool allows students to more carefully consider theme, one of the craft issues students struggle with in the early stages. Burroway defined theme as what a story is about, the "idea or abstraction that seems to be contained in it" (359). This can be a difficult concept for the novice writer to understand, even if they are asked to identify themes within other works. Because creative works traditionally have themes (an implied truth), rather than a thesis (a stated truth), students struggle with understanding how their works might come together, what to keep in their stories, and what to throw away because it is not thematically related.

Instead of the teacher asking the student to admire the work for its aesthetic value or asking them to emulate it, instructors can instead ask them to consider how the work evokes empathy: How does it cause them dissonance, and how can students relate their messages to their own lives, thus arriving at theme in their own writing? If the work under consideration is read in order to take information away, or in an "efferent" stance, the work causes critical thinking, instead of artistic appreciation (Rosenblatt, qtd. in Reither and Vipond 860).

Co-authoring

Because creative writing classes advocate the advancement of the writer as an individual and an artist, rarely does the student writer have the opportunity to consider coauthoring a piece. Yet established authors have cowritten several works: Stephen King and Peter Straub co-authored *The Talisman*; Tabitha King and Michael McDowell co-authored *Candles Burning*; in 1998, thirteen Florida authors came together to write serially the Florida-based thriller *Naked Came the Manatee*. Hunt and Vipond call this process synergy; which enables authors to accomplish things together that neither could have accomplished alone (858).

In their article "Collaboration and Concepts of Authorship," Ede and Lunsford point out that individualism is promoted not just in creative writing, but also in all forms of academia and writing (355). Yet while single authorship remains the key for merit in both academic and literary circles, Ede and Lunsford point out that the "socially constructed nature of writing—its inherently collaborative foundation—functions as an enthymemic grounding for much contemporary research in the discipline" (355). Student creative writers can incorporate an interactive writing style by considering forms such as the communal voice, in which a collective of voices are considered to share narrative authority (Lanser 21). Short stories such as Louise Erdich's "Matchimanito" and Raymond Carver's "Cathedral" can be used as models to show students how a community can be created in writing by representing several characters' unique voices and points of view. In prewriting, students can be asked to collaborate

together to create a scene in which a central conflict is shared by all of them, yet

they must "show" this conflict by having characters, each written by a different

author, interact with each other through dialogue and action.

How the Workshop Delegates Authority

If the workshop is meant for the writer, where does the instructor fit in?

Creative writing instructors, who have been encouraged to showcase themselves

as individual talents in order to recruit students to their programs, might not

understand why they should, then, diminish their authority in the classroom. Yet

the instructor must realize that he or she is not the only reader the student is

appealing to with their writing. Elbow points out in *Writing Without Teachers* that

he does not advocate a writer writing for the approval of one teacher because

rarely is a piece written to appease an educator, once a student leaves

academia. Not establishing this fact can be especially dangerous in a creative

writing workshop, where a well-meaning teacher might be seen as the person

from whom to seek approval in student writing. Novice writers might adopt the

author's voice and thematic matter for the sake of appealing to the "master," who

also controls the student's grade.

In the book *Power and Identity in the Creative Writing Classroom*, Mary

Swander writes that a good professor will learn to become the advocate and

guide of the workshop. A writing professor must learn to share, and even give up,

his authority in order to get out of an aspiring writer's way, to allow him to find his

own path and voice while gently pointing the way. Professors who learn to share

the authority of the classroom avoid the harm a workshop can do to a fledging

writer who is not allowed to speak during the workshop nor to ask questions

about his or her work as it is being discussed.

Composition models offer a different approach to collaboration. In his book

A Teaching Subject: Composition Since 1996, Joseph Harris describes a

workshop in which students

> break into small groups and begin to read their texts aloud to one
>
> another. After a student has finished reading her piece, the
>
> members of the group begin to question and advise her about what
>
> she has written. The writer takes notes on what her readers have to
>
> say and perhaps asks them some questions back. In this way the
>
> group works through the writings of all of its members … (23-24).

This model could be implemented in creative writing classrooms, allowing the

workshop's goal to become a collaborative event. Instead of silencing the author,

he or she is allowed to become actively involved in his or her works' revision. If

the author is cautioned not to become defensive but instead to critically consider

the opinions of his or her peers, they are given authority over their work,

empowering their writing during its process rather than silencing them.

If the traditional workshop is still championed by the instructor, a mix of

both approaches can be used. Creative writing instructors can, for example,

begin a workshop with the "traditional" model, asking all students to consider one

student's writing. However, the students can then break into smaller, more collaborative groups, assisting each other with their writing, allowing the author to ask questions and also to learn from the writing of their peers. They are able, in this model, to learn from more than one or two works that are workshopped as one entire group during a class period, giving them an opportunity to hear many voices in many creative works.

Of course, the sharing of authority can go too far. Many creative writing teachers seem eager to share the authority of the classroom. Instructors insist that students call them by their first names, wander into class in jeans, feeling at odds with the academic institution that tries to reign in their artistic spirit with rules. Creative writing instructors sometimes showcase their individualism while not understanding why this hurts their students. Vandermeulen says he sometimes finds himself in a "double bind between empathetic understanding and academic standards" (56). Vandermeulen, a professor with a shared background in creative writing and composition, believes creative writing teachers can even feel uncomfortable assigning grades because they are uncomfortable being judged by academia because of their own creative self-identification. Assigning grades on assignments, for these professors, is akin to assigning grades to the students' creativity.

Instructors must realize that they are commenting on drafts and not students' creative ability when assessing works, and should convey this message to students before the first grades are returned to them. Instructors should also

wait to assign grades until revision is done, so students do not feel as through

their process is what is being assessed. Also, instructors can share the authority

of writing the work by offering student writers an opportunity to write a "memo"

addressing where the work came from, where they think it is going, and what

guidance they might need from the teacher—which will address the process of

writing as much as the work itself. In workshops, Vandermeulen encourages

using a technique Peter Elbow defines as a

> descriptive response: pointing to particulars of detail or style that
>
> catch (the students') attention, summarizing, saying what is 'almost
>
> said' in the piece, and saying what, for them, is the center of
>
> gravity. Elbow's idea is that responders should read with the writer
>
> at first, saving reading against for final drafts. (50)

This allows the teacher to share authority with the students, and gives them a

comfort zone in which they can begin to understand what works—and what might

not work—in a piece of writing, making them better critics, and also helps to

support and praise the student whose work is being critiqued.

If the classroom's authority is shared, a great many voices can tell a

student what is working well, and what is not, in a creative work. In *Writing

Without Teachers* Elbow states that workshops do not need leaders at all, yet

Cantrell points out that an instructor can be valuable for the beginning writer. The

instructor's authority, just by being in front of the classroom, might dictate some

modicum of integrity in what the students are doing; the writing becomes more

serious and thoughtful, not "play." Also, the teacher hopefully has had some training in craft. Cantrell writes, " We do, after all, hold degrees that reflect, if not expertise, at least experience" (66). Instructors' challenge, then, is to offer advice to guide the writer, but also tooffer methods to help students become better with their criticism a supportive workshop, allowing everyone to become stronger writers and critiquers, leaving the workshop empowered to write instead of discouraged.

Conclusion

Writers need each other in order to develop and grow. We depend on each other for inspiration for new ideas, for encouragement when no one is accepting our work, even solace when a piece seems to be failing. Pat Schneider, the author of <u>Writing Alone and With Others</u>, believes writing itself is lonely enough work—writers need each other to collaborate with during this process:

> Most writers benefit from communication with other writers. Writing can be a lonely endeavor, much of the work must be done in solitude. However, too much solitude—or too much conversation with people who do not write, and too little with those who do—can lead to depression and despair … Writing in a group has other benefits: you learn the craft by seeing what works (and doesn't work) in other writers' works, and it can help you take risks in your work. Also, workshopping helps you publish and network. (177-9)

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The workshop can be the starting point for the author to begin thinking about audience, both in readership and in professional circles; a collaborative effort, as described by Hunt and Vipond, allows its participants to gain "acceptable knowledge claims … (and) also (helps) them write a piece that would withstand the scrutiny of journal editors and reviewers" (859). Schneider goes reminds writers of the "essential affirmations" of a good workshop:

> 1. Everyone has a strong, unique voice,
>
> 2. Everyone is born with creative genius,
>
> 3. Writing as an art form belongs to all people, regardless of economic class or educational level,
>
> 4. The teaching of craft can be done without damage to a writer's original voice or artistic self-esteem, and
>
> 5. A writer is someone who writes (186).

No one in a workshop should be disparaged, which hurts the main purpose of a workshop: to learn from and encourage each other. The purpose of the workshop is to allow writers to learn from each other and to encourage each other, not a place for the instructor to showcase his or her individuality by ruling over the workshop.

Chapter Four: An Integration of Creative Writing Methodology in Composition Classrooms

Creativity is the quality that you bring to the activity that you are doing. Whatsoever you do, if you do it joyfully, lovingly … then it is creative.

— Osho Zen Tarot

Chapter One of this work has looked critically at the separation of creative writing programs from other departmental writing programs and, more broadly, the academic roles each has in institutions of higher learning. Chapters Two and Three have focused on the ramifications this separation has had for creative writing programs and classroom practices, pointing toward inroads from the field of composition studies to strengthen creative writing pedagogy. These foci, however, should not be taken to suggest that I believe that the beneficial relationship between the two disciplines can or should be actualized in only one direction. Compositional theory and pedagogies offer much to creative writing, but by the same token, creative writing methodologies can—and to my mind should—be plumbed to invigorate and otherwise enhance instruction in writing courses that may not have the epithet "creative" but that are, nonetheless, just as creative as those so designated.

The designation "creative" writing is, in many ways, unfortunate. Applying the term to certain types of writing and not to others contributes to misconceptions about the nature of compositional activities respective to the disciplines of creative writing and composition studies instead of providing helpful distinctions about the various genres and aims within the purview of the two disciplines. Of course, problems arise as well when attempting to designate writing as "creative" on the basis of genre and aim, as the criterion of "mutual exclusivity" that is usually required for classifications cannot be met. It is little wonder that Donald Murray opposes the designation "creative" altogether as a category of writing, although Murray's objection concerns what he finds "creative" connotes: "precious writing, useless writing, flowery writing, writing that is a luxury rather than a necessity" (*Learning By Teaching* 135). But on second thought, let me omit the word *although* in the previous sentence. Read within the context from which Murray was considering the relative usefulness of the term *creative*, the frustration he felt is of a piece with my own. What Murray was responding to was the resistance that many compositionists have to include in the "non-" creative writing curriculum the kind of writing they believe should be relegated to the creative writing curriculum. It is to that resistance that I will be speaking in this present chapter.

Specifically, in this chapter I consider ways that creative writing methodologies can inform the classroom teaching of writing courses that "belong" to "composition," not "creative writing." Different course prefixes indicate into which category a course has been placed, and for the most part, one set of

faculty teach writing courses with one prefix and a different set of faculty teach

writing courses with another prefix. I say "for the most part" because there are

those who teach courses in both writing programs, as do I. I will consider my

personal "cross-over" experiences throughout this chapter, using my

chronological narrative to highlight points at which the divide between

composition and creative writing led me to question the usefulness of such

division and providing a first-hand account of pedagogical practices that have

assisted me in integrating aspects of creative writing methodology into my

teaching of composition.

Commonalities of Teaching Creative Writing and Composition

As I stated at the beginning of this work, I began my teaching career as an

instructor of first-year composition. A graduate student pursuing a master's in

creative writing, I took the path that a majority of teachers of college writing take,

which is to "pay our way" through our given graduate programs of English by

accepting the opportunity provided by teaching assistantships. Along with other

courses I took during my first year of graduate course, I took a practicum in

teaching first-year composition; a course that helped to prepare me for teaching

and that gave me my first exposure to the field of composition studies. Because I

write in multiple genres and enjoy them all, I wanted to try my hand at teaching

other courses, too. Having taken a graduate practicum required to teach

business and professional writing, and then another practicum for teaching

technical writing, I was soon gaining valuable experience teaching a variety of writing courses.

I hoped to teach creative writing as I gained teaching experience. (I use the term "creative writing" here in the context in which it is now commonly associated by most writing teachers to designate the genres of fiction, non-fiction, screenwriting, and poetry, retaining the understanding that the term *creative* is problematic.) My opportunities to teach creative writing arose as I became a more experienced teacher. Yet when it came time to enter a creative writing classroom as the teacher for the first time, I realized that my training for teaching such a course was limited to the models that I experienced with my own teachers as a student in their creative writing classes. There was no practicum for me to take to teach creative writing.

Those books I sought out on creative writing pedagogy were relatively few in number, especially when compared to the vast array of books available to me on composition theory and pedagogy. So I began to utilize my background in composition theory and pedagogy to teach creative writing, as my chapters on invention and collaboration show. Bringing what I had learned from composition studies to bear on my teaching of creative writing was not limited to merely transporting techniques, however. In the first place, effective use of compositional strategies presupposes an understanding of theoretical notions that inhere in the strategies. But I was also aware that my composition background affected how I developed assignments, how I viewed student writers, and how I viewed myself as a teacher. Even the kinds of questions that

presented themselves to me arose, I believe, largely due to my prior (and ongoing) learning from composition studies. In particular, I became more and more drawn to the field of questions raised in composition studies concerning the duality of the individual and the social. After all, according to some scholars' conceptions of that duality, I was immersed—by teaching both creative writing courses and composition courses—in both aspects of the duality. In line with the notion that "personal" writing entails a focus on the individual writer and therefore belongs in a creative writing classroom, my teaching of creative writing presumably should enable me to concentrate primarily on the "individual" side of the duality. Likewise, since composition presumably entails a focus on the "social" side of the duality, whether that be for academic purposes or other pragmatic "real-world" purposes, my teaching of composition courses ought to demonstrate to me that considerations of the individual, of the personal, are by far secondary to such "social" matters as contextual constraints and discourse conventions.

But such neat and tidy packaging of the individual/social duality contrasted greatly with the kind of learning, thinking, and writing that takes place in either type of classroom. Just as my learning and training in composition studies assisted me with teaching creative writing, I found that what I learned about imaginative writing seeped into my composition pedagogy as well. As I continued to teach writing in what has been defined as two separate disciplines—creative writing and composition—I did not see how a good writer could separate the skills of writing learned in either classroom, or if the separation even existed.

How could a good writer not learn how to research, whether for a traditional research paper or for a story, in order to create credible details? And although quotations are formatted differently depending on genre, doesn't a writer need to include the words of someone else in a piece of writing, even if a fictionalized other, in order to establish credibility, whether of the writer him- or herself or of the "character" or the "narrator" created by the writer?

According to theorists who see the correlations of teaching in both disciplines, the divide between disciplines should not have occurred in the first place. In *Released Into Language: Options for Teaching Creative Writing*, Wendy Bishop states that we must discontinue drawing lines between composition and creative writing, but instead look at the entire writing process and the students' needs to understand all types of expression, at all levels. I wondered why we'd drawn lines between the many forms and approaches of writing, into business writing, "creative" writing, essay, etc., and whether these boundaries were called for, or even necessary. I felt that drawing these boundaries forced many of the genres out of the hands of first-year writing students, and that it was to their detriment. While upper-level classes should give students the opportunity to specialize and focus on certain genres and forms—"creative" genres and technical and professional writing, for example—omitting any of the genres from the first-year composition classroom gave students the wrong impression that some genres were only meant to be experienced by "talented," upper-level students.

To me, every class was about writing, all creative, and all worthy of our students' attention. If the first-year composition classroom was redesigned, it could provide students the opportunity to expand beyond formal research papers, or those that heavily depended on the teaching of persuasion—important skills, but, to me, not the only reason why students should learn to write. I felt that, if more creativity—the craft elements that we find in creative writing classes, often absented from composition--was brought to these lower-level classes, students would enjoy learning to write. Moreover, I thought works of "creative" genres needed similar skill sets, such as persuasion and research, and to absent them from the first-year composition classroom sent the message that some elements of writing were separate from "craft."

The cross-sections between composition and creative writing weighed on me as I honed my teaching skills for the last seven years. As I continued to teach, I saw invention, collaboration, and expressionism as the main emphases I could bring to lower-level classes in order to infuse them with creativity, but also wanted to make sure that the students considered their voices and how different genres affected the writing style they chose to employ. And I thought this should be done at the earliest possible time in the students' writing careers, so students could learn to enjoy writing, and to see the multiple possibilities of writing beyond "traditional" research and persuasive papers. In short, first-year composition classes should strive to go a step further by not only utilizing creative writing methodologies but also including the teaching of some creative writing genres along with other genres.

I contemplated how composition and creative writing could co-exist in one classroom. While I did not want to disparage the skills already being taught in the first-year composition, offering the students choices as to how they approached a research paper, or how they might understand how to write an argument through narrative, might help them better understand the entire writing process, how it related not just to their professional and academic lives, but to their personal ones as well. This approach could help students to understand two disciplines of writing at the same time, to separate the distinctions between them (if they could), and to decide which genres would best serve their writing purposes.

The reservations many writing teachers have as to whether a class that combined creative writing and composition could be successful are understandable. Stanley Fish claims that being interdisciplinary, especially in an undergraduate classroom, is "impossible" (qtd. in Nowacek 493). Yet Nowaczek points out that interdisciplinary programs "have multiplied at a dizzying pace" (493), and that first-year writing seminars, learning communities, and senior capstone courses have increasingly incorporated interdisciplinary learning (493). Nowaczek is referencing the success of interdisciplinary projects that have brought courses together from different academic departments and/or methodologies and genres from different branches of academia together in single courses. If such seemingly disparate academic "units" can realize mutually beneficial interrelationships, surely creative writing and composition can co-inhabit a single program and/or a given course.

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In a brief (and admittedly, not thorough) investigation into other schools that incorporated creative writing techniques into the composition classroom, I found that most schools agreed with Fish: There are so many other tasks that must be addressed in the first-year classroom that creative forms and techniques are not. One of the few universities I found (besides Oklahoma City University, where I am now teaching) that advocates creative writing in the composition classroom is Florida State University, the school where Bishop helped to shape the FYC program. Deborah Coxwell-Teague, who has directed FSU's FYC program since Bishop's death, said roughly one-third of the teaching assistants (who teach the majority of FSU's first-year writing classes) offer a creative writing option in the first-year classroom. Students are also given an opportunity to choose between an ENC 1102 class, a "traditional" second-semester FYC class with a focus on research and writing, and an ENC 1142, Imaginative Writing for First-year Students. Students who opt for this latter course are given an additional choice, that of selecting the strand Writing Poetry and Researched Essays or that of selecting Writing Short Stories and Researched Essays. As described by Coxwell-Teague, instruction in creative writing genres accounts for roughly half of the writing done in these courses (personal interview).

It merits notice that both options entail the traditional "research essay" genre from the composition aspect of the course. I believe I stand in good company when I suggest that the writing skill of conducting research is as applicable to creative writing genres as it is to composition genres. All writing requires some type of research, whether to develop the "logos" of a researched

essay or the dialogue in a short story; the "ethos" of an opinion piece or of a character in a screenplay; the "pathos" of a persuasive essay or a poem. And of course I am not limiting the "cross-over" skills of one type of writing to another to just the skill of conducting and utilizing research. Exploring exigence, raising questions of stasis, utilizing topoi—virtually any compositional skill applies to any kind of writing. Helping students to understand these connections as they write can show students that creative writing and other kinds of writing are not so separate after all.

Although my views of writing may be similar to those of other "cross-over" compositionists such as Coxwell-Teague, my position in academia is not. Coxwell-Teague (and Wendy Bishop before her) is the *director* of the first-year writing program at FSU. Although I very much would have liked the opportunity to shape a similar course for first-year students during my teaching assistantship, the fact is that the curriculum for most first-year writing programs is either designed by or must receive the stamp of approval from the given director. What is more, many first-year writing programs operate under the belief that there must be as much consistency as possible in what is taught in all sections of composition. Obviously, teachers of a given section of composition have considerable flexibility in how they teach, and there may even exist a range of optional writing assignments and instructional materials. But by and large, teachers in first-year writing programs are not at liberty to teach entirely different writing genres from those taught in other sections.

The rationale for the kind of first-year writing curriculum that exists at most universities makes sense. According to this rationale, one of the main learning outcomes for students in first-year writing courses is that they be prepared for the kinds of writing they will need for their other courses. Coxwell-Teague recognizes that such a rationale is valid. She notes that a drawback to the instruction students receive in the ENC 1142 course options is that they might not get enough practice in "the kinds of writing they are likely to do beyond the FYC classroom" (personal interview). Nevertheless, I am of like-mind with such composition directors as Bishop and Coxwell-Teague in believing that the benefits of offering a combined creative writing/composition strand in the first-year writing program counter-balances such a limitation. One clear advantage is that both undergraduates who were interested in creative writing genres and teaching assistants who wanted to focus on teaching them are able to get the experience early in their writing and teaching careers.

Writing to "Expose"

Understanding that student writers need instruction in analyzing writing contexts—the rhetorical situation—regardless of genre, I sought to design the assignments in the course I created so that each involved students in considering how the situational constraints of a given writing project affected the decisions they would be making while composing. Since one of my goals for teaching a writing course that combines creative writing and composition is to enable students to develop a greater repertoire of genre options for writing, I determined

that even questions about which genre to choose for a writing task should be raised as part of their analysis of their writing situations. For example, reflecting critically about audience and about their own writing purposes, student writers learn to make their own informed choices about the sort of genre that best fits the situation as they envision it, whether that be a "real" situation that they are interpreting or a fictionalized situation that they are imagining.

Students would learn how to choose between storytelling and the traditional essay, considering their purpose and their audience, and would be encouraged to think critically about how an audience would best receive a message. They would compose in the manner they felt best suited their intention, and the anticipated reader's response. Story could be part of the student's message, or the entire message; as Douglas Hesse points out, "sometimes essay is a combination of story and ideas or information" (21). Writers could make the choice to include a narrative or illustrative example from their lives in an essay in order to create camaraderie with their audiences, as do other writers: "Stephen Jay Gould, for example, very often spent the opening page of his essays recounting something that just happened to him before explaining to his lay apprenticeship some scientific principles or debates" (Hesse 20). The emphasis would remain on choice; students would be enabled to move beyond narration or illustration as only part of their writing, if they chose to do so. While storytelling can indeed be an important part of any essay, students should also be given the opportunity to write only in story, if they felt it was warranted for the audience and intention of their work.

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As the instructor I explained the different genres of writing while also considering how creative techniques could help the students shape their writing. So invention and collaboration played a large part into my pedagogical approaches. And as I taught, I considered what is "creativity," and how I could help my students understand that all writing is creative, no matter what the genre.

Since most of the classes I instructed when I began this exploration already had a ready-made structure, I sought to discover whether there were any writing courses that I had not yet taught that might allow for the kind of course design I envisioned. One class offered at USF seemed to leave enough room for me to test my theories of bringing creative writing and composition approaches together: a mid-level composition class titled Expository Writing. The definition of what the class should be, and how it should be taught, had been left ambiguous by the department. The course was loosely defined so that teachers would be able to design it along lines that best suited them, enabling me to teach it as the combined course I had envisioned. This class could indeed be a testing ground, one where pedagogical approaches of writing, both "traditional" composition choices as well as creative methods, could be combined so that students could explore the creativity in all of them. I would teach some methods I offer in my freshman composition and "professional" writing classes, and others I'd gleaned from creative writing workshops. I would teach different forms of organizing a work, ways of approaching topic/theme and development, and genres in which to express these writings. In short, this class would give students room to "play" with their writing, to take it in different directions without considering its form and

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before offering different types of genres in which they could decide to ultimately shape their writing, based on what an audience would need and expect.

Pedagogical Definitions

Several definitions of exposition assisted me as I determined what types of assignments would best suit an expository writing class. Definitions that explored current-traditional approaches showed me that I could not stand in agreement with teachers who insist that certain kinds of details are the proper province of one type of essay, while different kinds of details are the proper province of a different kind of essay. Logical positivists as John Genung, the champion of the five-paragraph theme essay and the writing-by-modes approach, defined exposition in this way. For example, in *Outlines of Rhetoric: Rules, Illustrative Examples, and a Progressive Course of Prose Composition*, Genung describes expository writing as "giving the meaning or explanation of things" (263). He posits that exposition is difficult because the "subject matter with which it deals is general instead of particular; that is, instead of using eyes and ears and memory to describe or recount what he has observed, the writer is giving the idea he has formed of a whole of objects" (263). This definition came from a book that is one hundred years old, yet I find the definition to be the standard for some professors who have not allowed illustrative examples to enter into "traditional" academic essays. I wondered how students could give an idea of what the subject is without using senses or memory or observation, those techniques often associated with storytelling. Without the use of detail and story,

how could a writer express himself to audiences who learn through the narratives offered to them? While I understood Genung's position and recognized that it was an old one, I felt that it lacked inclusion of description or intimate details—those elements of writing we relish in creative genres—without which expository writing could become quite dull, both to write and read. So, for me expository writing would need to include narrative as well.

I turned to Wendy Bishop, who is well known for incorporating story into composition classes. In her book *The Subject is Story*, she states the word story "encompasses more than (literature) … and is applied to folktales and gossip, your particular essays and general cultural narratives, ways you talk about how you write, ways others talk about how you should write" (ix). Bishop's definition spoke to me because it allowed writers to consider "overall" issues in writing such as culture, which could be considered a universal or social context, while still including the personal in their works. These definitions of exposing through writing, considered along with Lopate's, created a fascinating juxtaposition of considerations of writing essays, contrasting between the universal, as described by Genung, and the personal, as defined by Lopate, who claimed when authors are writing about themselves, they are still "telling about [themselves; the author] is talking, to some degree, about all of us" (xxiii).

Writers who understand about internal and external conflict in creative writing understand that, thematically, while we relate the personal, we are still drawing universal pictures for our readers to relate to—this would relate to Genung's definition of writing about the whole of things. This is where creative

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writing would be utilized for my students; if they were to make sense of a "whole of objects,"—the universal picture—they would first need to define what that whole, or universal picture, was through its smaller parts. In other words, the writers would need to define, or "show" those parts of the writing, which could be considered personal, in order to "tell" the larger story. By using storytelling—in part, or in whole, depending on the writer's prerogative—the writer would be able to explore writing outside of heavy exposition, or what becomes "dry" writing.

For some students, expository writing became a chance to try their hand at creative non-fiction. Creative non-fiction, a relatively newly defined genre even to creative writing, offers students the opportunity to bring the "personal" to their writing, to, as described by Phillip Lopate, "[set] up a relationship with the reader, a dialogue – a friendship, if you will, based on identification, understanding, testiness, and companionship" (xxiii). This seemed more in line with what I wanted to teach the students about voice and the self in writing. Still, bringing the personal essay form, as described by Lopate, to expository writing as an exclusive model might limit the students, as the class was offered as a composition class, not expressly creative writing. I didn't want the students who took the class to feel led astray if I taught it completely in a "creative writing" format, without opportunities to write in other genres.

As I struggled with meshing the different definitions of approaching writing into one classroom I understood, then, my own ambiguity about composition and creative writing. Even for a teacher who pursued terminal degrees in creative writing and composition at the same time, and who understood the creative

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processes that existed in several genres, I still felt that the forms were somewhat different: that I still felt there was a "creative writing format" that allowed me to teach differently, in a more creative persona and approach, than those classes I taught in composition. I would have to prepare myself to keep my own process open, to try to distinguish between genres while teaching all of them as creative choices from which the students could choose. The definition of exposition, for purposes of this class, would be "an explanation of subjects and events in a creative manner." In the syllabus, I defined expository writing as:

> The definition of expository writing has been debated in composition circles. Some find the class to be about writing in different genres, or for different audiences. Others find it to be a form of creative non-fiction. I find expository writing to be a mix of all of these, and so we will concentrate on bringing the best of composition and creative writing into one class, exploring different modes of expression to write compelling pieces that are more than "research papers" – in other words, writing for more than your professor. Expository writing explains to, as well as engages, the reader. (Appendix A)

The definition left enough ambiguity for the students to consider many ways of approaching their writing, and how they could bring personal narratives into their works in order to explain larger situations in their worlds, to "expose" situations that created empathy in their readers.

The textbook needed to reflect this indistinctness between the disciplines of composition and creative writing. My choice of a textbook for the course involved the following criteria:

1) The textbook needed to present the kinds of instructional practices used in creative writing classes and those typically found in composition classes.

2) The textbook needed to include explicit discussions of genres for traditional academic discourse as well as for creative writing.

John Chafee's *Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Writing: A Rhetoric With Readings* spells out for students the similarities between disciplines, and encourages them to use the techniques used in both composition and creative writing classes. Chaffee stated that while creative writing is often associated with the genres of fiction, poetry, or drama, that creativity is associated with all writing:

> …the question naturally arises, what part does creativity have in *expository writing*, in which facts, ideas, and concepts are explored, developed, and argued? The answer: a very large part. You can use your creative thinking in selecting and narrowing your topic (if you are allowed to pick your own topic), in the way you generate and research ideas, in the way you organize your ideas, and in the way you focus on your ideas with your thesis. (91, his emphasis)

Creativity was being defined in a way that spoke to the process of writing, which was the emphasis that would be stressed in the classroom. Chaffee spoke more of just traditionally defined creative genres, but how creative processes were a

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part of all genres, which showed students how creativity was part of their writing, no matter what their approach and intention. Some of these approaches included:

Journals: Journaling, for creative writers, is "likely to be the source of originality, ideas, experimentation, and growth" (Burroway). Students record ideas in journals but often don't know if they will be of use to a finished product. As my chapter on invention suggests, I'd never been comfortable with limiting creative writing students to responding to prompts when considering how to flesh out a story. Journals could be used to record students' questioning strategies, but also students would be welcomed to write whatever they wished in them— recording interesting images, visuals, and thoughts—which might or might not become part of their finished product. This way they would still be planning towards a work, but wouldn't try to fit their writing into a structured form or product, discarding ideas they might have about the subject matter before recording and experimenting with them, moving away from current-traditional theory of working towards a finished product. In the essay "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product" by Donald Murray, he calls this kind of planning "prewriting," or "the awareness of the world from which his subject is born. In prewriting, the writer focuses on that subject, considers an audience, [and] chooses a form that may carry his subject to his audience. Prewriting may include research and daydreaming, notetaking and outlining, title-writing and lead-writing" (4). This felt like the planning had a purpose, while journaling seemed to be more of a recording of ideas that might possibly be used in writing–

but perhaps not. Prewriting, in Murray's definition, allowed for creativity, to plan without an overbearing purpose.

Workshops: Workshopping has been a standard practice in both composition and creative writing classes, although the approach to workshopping in each class differs. In creative writing classes, for example, students tend to workshop as an entire group, with students receiving the work to be discussed at least one class period before the meeting where it is to be discussed, and then coming together to collaboratively discuss its strengths and weaknesses. In composition classes, smaller workshop groups of three or four students are used, allowing them to focus on a few works at a time, while the work was still in progress. Brooke et al favor the use of small workshop groups because it allows them a comfort zone in which they can "bridg[e] the gap" between their private beliefs and the "public sphere of open discussion" (10); this spoke to me of that divide between the self and social that I wanted to help connect for my students. Smaller workshop groups also helped me share the authority of the classroom with the students, which taught students to write for audience, instead of just me. Also, the workshops allowed the students to consider their process, instead of the final product. This would be beneficial no matter what form they chose to write in. I liked the approach of the small workshop because it meant that the students would have to turn to each other for feedback on their planning and drafts, and couldn't look to me at the "head of the table" for the last word on their works; I wouldn't become the authority who could "fix" their writing simply because I couldn't be with every student at once when we had workshopping

time. Rather I would circulate throughout the groups, offering advice on whatever student work was being discussed by the group at the time, and then hope that the advice given to one student would be information they could use collaboratively. They would need to learn to critique each other's work and become their own authorities on what "good" writing is.

Also, by talking to each other about their writing, the students would get a sense of voice, or writing as we speak, simply by hearing each other's language choices and dialects read aloud. To have the class members be able to speak together, to laugh over funny writing, to frown over what was unclear or questionable – the collaborative process would show that "we experience our language or dialect not just as something we use but a deep part of us" (Elbow). So the students would decide when to put their own voices into the work, and by speaking to each other, could learn to discern what was unique about their voices that they might be able to inject into their writing. This could lend to moving away from the academic writing they were used to doing in composition classes, allowing for creativity in approach to the assignments.

The Class

First Assignment: Writing Descriptively

For the first assignment I assigned a personal narrative, or personal essay, keeping in mind Lopate's definition of the latter but wanting to explore its definition in other ways as well. A traditional essay, or a personal narrative, might use narration or illustrative essays to support a thesis or claim, while a personal

essay would have theme and be mostly narrated with active scenes in order to "show" that theme. Theme vs. thesis, development through either points with support and/or active scenes, and organization were the emphases in this assignment.

This assignment would be imperative for the students to understand that writing is a real event. More than creating reports or academic papers to please their instructors, writing is important to the creation of their "selves" on the page, or a representation of them on paper. So the writing would be expository because it required them not only to be descriptive in order to "show" themselves on the page, but also because they had to decide what details would help create a theme that showed who they thought they were in a certain way.

The narrative was not just self-expression, which is thought by some to be exclusive to creative writing. Even though the narrative would be personal in nature, it would still hold "social and institutional contexts" (Hobbs 1) that would show how they positioned themselves in the whole of a certain culture. In order for their writing to be successful, the students needed to emphasize with the reader, who must be able to identify with it, even if the experiences described by the author might not be those of the reader. The intimacy of the essay would be a bit like hearing a conversation from the writer, or a bit of gossip. However, this also considered how "personal" writing could also be universal in theme. The goal would be to write both creatively: explaining or describing an event that had a profound effect upon the writer, as well as expository, to explain why the event was so profound. The students would have to interpret their details, and still

"show" the event well enough so their readers would understand it and empathize. How much they chose to "show" and "tell" would depend on their audience, intention, and genre.

I brought examples of the differences between what I thought to be "expository" and what I thought to be "creative" to class; the works that explained scenes after drawing them, for example, I described as somewhat expository because the author stepped forward to explain the significance of the scenes, rather than letting them speak for themselves. An excerpt from Colin Powell's autobiography *My American Journey* proved to be a strong example of a descriptive essay, one that had a clear thesis, but which was still interesting to read because of the personal details used to illustrate the thesis:

> I have made clear that I was no great shakes as a scholar. I have joked over the years that the CCNY (City College of New York) faculty handed me a diploma, uttering a sigh of relief, and were happy to pass me along to the military. Yet, even this C-average student emerged from CCNY prepared to write, think, and communicate effectively and equipped to compete against students from colleges that I could never have dreamed of attending. If the Statue of Liberty opened the gateway to this country, public education opened the door to attainment here. Schools like my sister's Buffalo State Teachers College and CCNY have served as the Harvards and Princetons of the poor. And they served us well. I am, consequently, a champion of public secondary and higher

education. I will speak out for them and support them for as long as

I have the good sense to remember where I came from. (published

in *Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Writing* 10-11)

This example of expository writing meshed well with the types of essays that we

traditionally teach in the composition class: writing with a clear thesis statement.

What made the essay interesting was the personal narrative that Powell brought

to the introduction, showing his ethos as the writer by explaining his own

background with public secondary and higher education. He also made the work

interesting by using descriptive language, showing the faculty "uttering a sigh of

relief" when he graduated, and using his own voice to describe his scholarly

activity by saying he had "no great shakes" as a scholar. This was certainly one

way to bring description and voice to a work, while supporting a clear thesis.

If the student chose to instead write thematically, however, they could

choose to shape their work to show a thesis. I used excerpts from Betsy Lerner's

Food and Loathing: A Lament to illustrate the difference:

It is 1972. I am twelve years old. It is the first day of sixth grade,

and I am standing in the girls' gymnasium waiting to be weighed.

My last name begins with L, so I am exactly in the middle of the

line. The thinnest girl in class stands directly in front of me. At the

front of the line, our gym teacher, Miss Match, with her butch

haircut, slim boy hips, and two-pack-a-day gravelly voice, barks out

our names. Looming beside her is that gray piece of metal: the

scale …

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...My face is grim as I step up. I watch Miss Match's knuckly fingers work the balance toward the upper end of the scale in five-pound increments. It takes forever. This slow torture, I am certain, is deliberate. On that day of my twelfth year, I weighed 137. I was five feet tall. It was too much. *What I would give to see that number again.* (3-4, her emphasis)

This passage would be considered creative because it is entirely shown, without pausing to explain the scene through exposition. Lerner does not specify, "I am concerned that I have a weight problem," which might be considered a simplistic thesis statement, but she shows it well by drawing the scene of her dissonance when she must wait in a public line to be weighed among her peers. It was a good choice for this genre, a non-fiction novel-length piece, because it drew the reader in through active scene and conflict, and created empathy for any reader who struggled with body and weight issues in their youth, giving it a social context. This passage could be compared and contrasted with one that followed a few pages into Lerner's work, where she describes a trip to the doughnut shop with a friend and her family:

At the doughnut counter, Anna and I ask for our usual: glazed. The boys scarf down crullers. Mrs. Mankowicz sips at her black coffee. We are happily eating our doughnuts when the youngest, a strapping boy nearly six feet tall, announces he wants another. His brother chimes in that he does, too, and Anna follows suit. I keep

silent, not because I don't want another—those glazed things are like air—but because I am afraid the request might seem rude … too, my silence shelters a deeper fear: I am afraid of looking like a pig.

…"Boys, you maybe choose another doughnut." Mrs. Mankowicz begins, "but Anna, I don't want you eating another. You've got a figure to watch."

I sit there frozen. I can't believe my ears. For all the hinting and prompting and gesturing and glancing my mother does to convey her disapproval of my eating too much, she has never once come out and said "You can't eat that." She has never denied me a bite. I know that she wishes I would lose weight, disapproves when I take seconds or order something fattening at a restaurant, but she never uses her authority as my mother to limit my food intake.

"Betsy, would you like another?" Mrs. Mankowicz smiles at me, her hot pink lipstick now faded, imprinted instead on the lip of the mug before her.

I know she is being polite. But her words cut through me. If I take the doughnut, then I am admitting defeat. After all, doesn't her offer

imply that my figure is beyond watching? Already too chubby, I

might as well pile it on. (5-6)

This section of the work combined creative and expository writing because

Lerner stopped to explain her thoughts and how the scenes were relevant in

summary. The scene is both shown, or described, and told, or explained. While

the part of the work that is explained is somewhat narrative because it is told

through the author's voice, it is the summary that explains the scene's

importance. This might be seen as expository, since the author feels obligated to

explain the significance of the scene directly, instead of allowing it to stand on its

own for the reader's interpretation.

The students' undertaking, after understanding these separate tasks of

writing, was to create their own narratives, to choose either a creative (shown)

work or an expository one that implemented creative scenes and summary. To

begin, they wrote about themselves in their journals, answering the prompt: What

is important to them right now? They wrote quietly in their journals for 10

minutes.

Students then journaled to the prompt: Why might this be important to

others? How can you illustrate your experience to draw in readers? They

stopped. Some of them looked at me blankly. To write well, I said, we have to

remember that no one has to read our writing; they must want to. So who is your

audience, and how might they relate to you? How can you create empathy? They

thought for a while. Pens began to move again, and finally as quickly as they had

the first time. Some students were smiling. Towards the end of the class, the

students were talking animatedly. "We're not going to write academic essays, are we?" one student asked. If they meant by that, essays that required MLA or APA formatting and a formal voice, then, no, not necessarily, I said. Some cheered. Their definition of writing "compositions" was beginning to change, based on their ability to write using their own voices, and in a creative, showing way.

We worked on creating details for the next several classes, showing the "scenes" of our experiences, trying to decide how to best present them so that a reader would understand and appreciate them. I had not yet given them the assignment sheet that said exactly what their writing should be because I wanted them to think creatively, instead of trying to create a work to a standard form, like those modeled in the current-traditional form. However, a couple weeks into the process, some of the students began to get fidgety. I wondered if these students, many of them business majors trained to offer "results," needed closure, and wanted to know how to create an end product. Also, I remembered that I didn't appreciate not being given process lessons in my own writing classes, and that this could be no different; I couldn't depend on the students' "talent" or "intuition" to write well. I decided it was time for a lecture on organization.

Four different organizational schemes were offered to allow the students choice as to which one seemed right for their writing. The first two I learned teaching first-year composition: time segments, or parts of a whole. A time segment is looking at an experience and relating it chronologically. Parts of a whole would be breaking the experience down into its different "segments," and explaining each segment thoroughly before moving on to the next one. This

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might work, I said, if someone was explaining many aspects of a relationship, rather than just one aspect.

Then I switched over to creative writing pedagogy. I explained the memoir as it was explained to me during my MFA work at Goddard College: You create a scene, summarize what it means, and then relate it to the audience, creating a bigger picture, or empathy, to the reader's world, creating empathy through related experience. Finally, I showed them a fiction technique: the narrative arc. According to Burroway, a narrative arc establishes a conflict first, using plot points or complications to further that conflict until you reach a climatic scene (the crisis), and then shows resolution through falling action (40). This type of writing works well to attract a reader because the writer is starting with the "juiciest" part of their story first: the conflict. This strategy would be good for students who exclusively wished to expose through story, as story rarely explains. Whatever organization approach the students chose, the traditional "five-paragraph" essay wouldn't work because it is too repetitive (and repetition breeds boredom), and too formulaic.

The students workshopped with one another, offering their journals to their class members to see what they thought were the most interesting details they used in their exercises, what they should use first to appeal to the reader, and what organizational plans would best suit their writing. They were learning to write for an audience, to bring a reader into their work to consider what might interest them. One student shook his head. "My writing's too stiff, too formal," he said. "I need to learn to shake the academic voice." Was he writing for an

academic? I asked him. He pointed out that I was going to read it, and grade it, so sort of. Good point, I told him, but really, the piece wasn't for me. "Who would you want to read this? How would you speak to them? That's the voice you want for this work," he said. He nodded.

The final pieces turned in for this project were funny, intriguing, and heartfelt. One student wrote of how he used jogging to sort through his problems; as the workout began harder, his critical thinking became more complex on the page; his answer to the problem was found in the final mile of his run, showing that answers to problems could be as difficult to obtain as a rigorous workout.

Another student wrote about his struggles with controlling his temper. I asked the latter student if I could read his essay aloud in class. He blushed, but nodded and seemed pleased. He had chosen to begin his work with a narrative of how he had been arrested in a bar fight. As I read the work aloud, the class grew silent – an aberration in this now chatty class. I finished the opening and asked if they liked the work. "Yes!" some said.

"Why?" I asked.

They thought about it. "It's interesting," one student ventured. "He let us in to a little piece of his life."

The crossover between composition and creative writing had been established, I thought. He had exposed a piece of his life, and done it creatively, choosing to write in a narrative arc, putting the conflict first, drawing the readers in. When he finally explained how the events led him to understand he needed to change his behavior, I felt he'd also employed exposition, explaining well the

consequence of his scene. He had both shown and told; he'd crossed between creative and composition forms, using those he felt he needed to offer his message in an interesting way appropriate for his audience, his peers. He'd mastered the assignment.

At the end of the first assignment I asked the students to write me a note telling me if they liked the assignment; understood the assignment; and/or had anything they wanted me to cover before the end of the semester. They could write the note anonymously if they were afraid I wouldn't like what they said. The feedback on the personal narrative assignment was almost all positive. "I like the relaxed style of writing we've been doing so far," one student wrote. "It is a refreshing change from my professional writing classes."

The student who had written about dealing with his anger said he enjoyed the assignment as it became clear to him. "I think I really approached the assignment in the wrong way," he wrote. "I looked at it as more of the typical writing assignment instead of something that should have voice and tone all over it. After I realized that it was different, I began to enjoy the assignment more."

Second Assignment: Writing Analytically

In the second lesson, students wrote a character sketch. Because they weren't writing fiction, the students had to choose someone they knew. Like the personal narrative, they would have to decide how best to "show" their person, but consider their levels of subjectivity and objectivity as they did so. This lesson, illustrated how personal judgment could influence a paper. While not a typical

"evaluative" composition, the assignment would cause the writers to critically evaluate their own perceptions of people with whom they affiliated. As Chaffee states, "…a complex interaction exists between perceptions and perspectives. People's perspectives are formed by beliefs, interests, needs, age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, health, education—the multiple factors of life" (301). So while they were analyzing the person they wished to write about, they would also be analyzing how their interactions with that person stemmed from their own belief systems and cultural influences. The person the students chose to illustrate would be complex, and they had to critically consider as to how to convey "who" that person was. So the writing was analytical, which is commonly taught in composition classes; however, the creative part would be to establish that person through detail and explanation, rather than writing a thesis statement and supporting it.

We began to work with writing through a questioning strategy, focusing on sensory details and dialogue, often associated with creative writing. They responded in their journals to the following questions:

1. What is unique about your character?

2. How does their setting, or their surroundings, help to define them?

3. Why would someone else be interested in that person?

4. How might their character describe themselves differently than you do?

This was a good cross-lesson in both composition and creative writing as the students still needed to analyze their person in order to write a good sketch of

them, which would help their interpretation and analytical skills, commonly called

for in composition. It would be exposition because they would have to ultimately

decide on how they wanted to "show" their person, what details would be used to

depict who they decided their person was. However, they would also need to

draw upon creative writing skills to write good dialogue, which is not often

covered in composition classes I've encountered, other than how to punctuate it.

Their textbook was a prime example of this. The example offered on writing

dialogue showed a stilted conversation between two people, in which each spoke

in a little speech to the other, offering information that was clearly for the reader,

and not for each other:

> Dennis: Have you read about the medical uses of marijuana—that
>
> people who have cancer, AIDS, and some other diseases might be
>
> helped by smoking? I think some doctors are prescribing it, and
>
> some states may be changing their laws. This might change
>
> people's thinking more than all those discussions about unenforced
>
> laws, unjust punishments, and victimless crimes that have been
>
> going on since my uncles were in college.

> Caroline: Well, I agree that we need to think about drug laws. But I
>
> hope you agree that we have to be carful. Drugs pose a serious
>
> threat to the young people of our country. Look at all the people
>
> who are addicted to drugs, who have their lives ruined, and who
>
> often die at an early age of overdoses. And think of all the crimes

people commit to support their drug habits. So I don't know if anything that's illegal now should be legalized, … and the laws should be enforced.

Dennis: That's ridiculous. Smoking marijuana is nothing like using drugs such as heroin or even cocaine. It follows that smoking marijuana should not be against the law if it's harmless and maybe even helpful to some sick people … (*Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Writing* 495)

When I used this example of "dialogue" in class, I assigned roles to different students and had them read the work aloud. Students laughed at how the dialogue was depicted and sounded in their classmates' mouths; some students rolled their eyes. The "conversation" was stilted and forced, using language that these "characters" would not use. People do not generally talk this way, I explained. We cut each other off, we don't explain ourselves well, and the kind of dialogue offered in the book was boring anyway, apt to turn off our readers. This dialogue didn't depict "real" people. Burroway's book *Writing Fiction* showing them how character is conveyed through how they talk, what they say, and what they don't say. As Burroway stated, "A character who says, 'It is indeed a pleasure to meet you' carries his back at a different angle, dresses differently, from a character who says, 'Hey, man, what's up?'" (88). Even though Burroway was talking about fiction, her description of how people talk to each other was germane to the type of depictions the students could employ to convey how the

person they were analyzing spoke, both through dialect and in conversations with others. We also covered direct, indirect, and summary dialogue in class. I offered advice on how to know when to use each kind, advising them to write direct dialogue only when it "showed" their character well, or depicted a conversation that was interesting.

The students spent the weekend listening to different conversations, ideally with their character, to record them in their journals. When the students came back to class the following week, they spent their workshopping time reading through the dialogues and analyzing them, deciding which parts were the most interesting and showed their characters in the way they hoped to depict them. They were analyzing the "characters" based on the conversations they had with the students and with other people, and began to understand who the person was by stopping to think about their interactions. They had to be careful not to depict the people they knew in only one limited portrayal, if the conversations and dialogue warranted different points of view.

As the work was refined through revision, I decided to introduce the genre of journalism writing to the class. Because I wanted the students to consider their levels of subjectivity and objectivity, I thought they could also try their hand at writing straight news articles, which would force them to write their "stories" from two points of view, including the character's. For students who wanted to try a new genre, this encouraged them to think more analytically about their relationship with the person, making sure they weren't casting them in an unwarranted light based only on their own point of view, which could well be

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based on their own belief and value systems, but also to think about how the character considered the situation. Subjective language choices had to be eliminated in order to write unbiased, or at least balanced, accounts of the people about whom they wanted to portray. The choice to bring journalism into the class covered writing across the genres, something composition instructors teaching other sections of expository writing were also emphasizing. However, this reading also brought into question again levels of subjectivity and objectivity. I told them that, in journalistic articles that could not be classified as either columns or opinion pieces, the journalist had an obligation to be fair and impartial. Could they do that when they wrote about a character they knew so well? Many of the students decided they couldn't, and stuck to writing essays and letters, where they could put their subjectivity into the work as well. However, they discovered they still had to make decisions about how their character "looked" to their audience, based on what they decided to tell and expose through their actions, dialogue, and description.

Introducing journalism also gave me a new opportunity to talk about invention. I brought in a chapter from Donald Murray's book *Writing For Deadline: The Journalist at Work*. The chapter, "Write for Surprise," again emphasized writing for an audience, and how to make decisions as to what information to present first, and why. Murray leads writers through an invention exercise that makes them consider the journalistic "five W's and an H", or Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. Each time the writer rewrites the "lead" or introduction of

their piece, reconsidering how they might reapproach their work in an interesting way.

For those students who chose to write journalistic works, they learned that being objective taught them more about the people they thought they knew: When considered from different points of view, the person became more complex. In creative writing we call this a "round" character, or someone who is fully realized through his complexities, rather than through a stereotype. And students who wrote non-fiction were able to compare and contrast their work with the journalistic writings, considering the style in which non-fiction, "hard news," and features were written, noticing the differences in language choices, and the balance of subjectivity and objectivity. This related to writing both for the personal, as objectivity often forced the writer to remove themselves from their works in order to keep the work unbiased, as well as for the universal, as they learned to shape their works for "news audiences," offering information about their characters that considered what readerships in certain demographics would be interested in.

The students also saw that both genres were creative. Murray writes that even after he won a Pulitizer, he didn't consider himself a "real writer" because his English professors taught him that "poetry was the highest form of literature, drama was next, serious novels and some short stories were worthy of study, nonfiction in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century could become literature, but contemporary journalism was, well, journalism" (1). But by using invention and collaborative exercises that make the students consider the similarities and

differences between genres, while also incorporating dialogue into the lesson, the students were able to learn what Murray ultimately learned: "Art is first craft" (1).

One student chose to profile her sister in an essay, and the dialogue showed her sister well:

> … "I'm going to New York! You so have to keep the news on, like 24/7. You can't miss me on TV! If you miss me on TV, I will be so sad. You'll watch the news, right? This is going to be sooooooo cool."
>
> Lillie can speak 100 words without needing to breathe. Makes it hard to get a word in when she rambles in, but it's part of her charm. (Manescala, student assignment)

In addition to considering how the voice changed in a work of non-fiction, compared to journalism and academic essay, the assignment gave the students the opportunity to compare how citation and dialogue were used differently in each genre, and how the use of quotation helped to establish character and support no matter what the writer's intention.

Third Assigment: Writing Persuasively

The students had learned much about analyzing and presenting themselves and others through their writing. But had they learned enough analyzing skills to persuade audiences? Their third project would be to write an

argumentative or persuasive piece, where they had to choose an issue and stance, and then an audience that would hear that stance to try to persuade them. The assignment was to write a 4- to 6-page persuasive piece discussing an issue and their stance on it. The project was expected to be a culmination of the skills that they'd learned in class thus far: creating a compelling opening, using organization, effective details, appropriate tone, etc.

The students would be considering rhetorical appeals used to create ethos, pathos, and logos; these are the staples of composition theory and routinely emphasized in persuasive papers. According to *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*:

> Persuasion goes beyond the use of mere logic, appealing to many aspects of the audience. At the heart of persuasive writing are three kinds of appeals, which are informal arguments geared to the audience. If an audience is to be persuaded they need to (1) trust the writer, (2) be engaged emotionally, and (3) be convinced by reasons and evidence. We call these credibility, affective, and rational appeals. The master persuader interweaves all three of these appeals in any piece of writing. (Corbett and Connors)

To be engaged emotionally, the students would need to write creatively, using descriptive detail and selecting word choices to create pathos. The students considered Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech "I Have A Dream," and discussed how he not only made his point, but also put his audience into an emotional state, making his speech one of the most remembered in our country:

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow

we stand, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous

decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro

slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It

came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the

Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro

is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains

of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a

lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material

prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in

the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his

own land. So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling

condition... (published in *Genres in Context* 273).

We discussed King's use of pathos in using phrases such as "sadly crippled by

the manacles of segregation" and "lives on a lonely island of poverty." Students

also discussed how King's use of logos was artful for his audience, as he called

on the authority of what Americans hold dear—freedom—by opening with his

reference to the Emancipation Proclamation.

Creative works also have appeals, I pointed out. Ethos is created when we

trust the story and the author, who creates enough detail that we understand the

work and "buy" that it is real, even in fiction. The author must have enough

experience, or do enough research, in order to make the story believable. Logos is created when research is done to create the story; authors need to find details for setting, for example, in order to write scenes that happen outside of their personal knowledge. And, of course, pathos is needed to create conflict and an emotional reason to invest in the work. I used an excerpt from Elissa Schappell's short story "Novice Bitch" as an example:

> Two years ago, when I was fourteen my mother taught me how to throw up. She'd come home from a New York Kennel Club meeting and found me sprawled and groaning on the family-room floor, skirt unbuttoned, legs akimbo, wallowing in a sea of shiny cellophane Little Debbie Snake Cake wrappers. The way Sunny reacted, you'd have thought she'd found me doped up and naked with a Puerto Rican Boy…

> …In the bathroom she cranked the sink taps on full blast, little droplets of water praying out of the bowl, hanging in the air like a fine misting rain … "Come on," she said gently, and pulled me down beside her. "There's nothing to be afraid of."

> I nodded. This was far too weird. I stared at my mother's hand grasping the toilet seat; I couldn't even imagine her touching a toilet. I could see the tiniest little nicks on her knuckles.

"Now, you want that garbage gone, don't you? Because that's what it is right now, just garbage," she said, her voice suddenly hard and purposeful.

I nodded again.

"Gone forever from your body. You want to feel light and clean, don't you?" she said as though she wasn't just teaching me to puke but also offering to wash away my sins (<u>Use Me</u> 40-41).

This fictional work draws the scene of a daughter who cannot live up to her mother's standards; the main character eventually decides that she needs to stop seeking approval from her mother. The work contains persuasive elements because of the connotative language and pathos contained within the description and the dialogue; we hear the mother tell her daughter to rid her body of "garbage," we see her acquiescence as the daughter nods, trying to please her. The dramatic action of the scene is enhanced by slowing down the action, describing the water as it turns on, creating suspense and tension, or pathos by drawing on our heartstrings as we feel the daughter is pulled to her knees next to her mother.

Bringing fiction into the expository writing class was a risk, as I wanted the students to write "true" works. Yet I felt that craft could be learned from the piece, and that bringing as many genres as possible for the students to consider was beneficial to the writing process. Students seemed to be able to discern the craft

lessons to implement into their essays and non-fictional works without implementing fictional elements to the work, showing that genres could be crossed to explain elements of writing without confusing the students.

Visual Rhetoric

As the students considered narrative and journalistic approaches in their work, I also asked them to consider one more new element: visual rhetoric. From simple page design to the use of pictures and graphics, giving them options that would help persuade the reader—either for readability or for the persuasiveness of the visual element—would offer them a taste of writing that upper-level classes often consider in business writing, advanced composition, or even the graphic novel. As Lester Faigley et al wrote in Picturing Texts, "…stories are often illustrated with drawings; newspaper articles include photos; Web sites are full of written words, images, and sounds" (22). Bringing the visual into a multi-genre classroom would accent well the purpose of the class as it would prepare the students for upper-level writing, and could help students design their messages, no matter what genre they chose to write in. It also gave them one more element of communication to consider in a class where I was trying to introduce as many choices as possible.

Students considered how visual strategies might assist the reader. For example, if writing to a busy boss for a raise, would using bullets (as I am using below) help the boss process their points quickly? Or would using boldface and/or italics actually harm the visual impact of the message – say, in a letter to a

mother, who might not appreciate the overemphasis of words through font choices, or the professional tone that is lent through bulleting?

I gave them a handout from the composition textbook *Designing Visual Language: Strategies for Professional Communicator* to consider, which asked the students to consider the purpose of any communication, regardless of genre:

> • Audience – those who are going to use your document: who they are, what they know about the subject, their previous experience with documents like the one you're designing, even their cultural background.
>
> • Purpose – what you want your document to accomplish: persuade your readers to think or act a certain way, enable them to perform a task, help them understand something, change their attitude, and so on.
>
> • Context – the circumstances in which readers will use your document: at their office desk, in a manufacturing plant while they're completing a task, while they're sitting around a conference table, and so on.
>
> …These three elements – audience, purpose, and context – make up the rhetorical situation. As a writer, you may consciously employ heuristics to define these elements, or you may approach them more intuitively … in each document you design, you'll try to shape its visual language so that it fits the rhetorical situation" (Kostelnick et al).

This assignment tied together everything the students had learned so far. They had to write clearly, but also with heart, using creative elements such as enough details to make the situation clear and empathetic for the reader. They needed to consider how to best anticipate their audience's needs and respond in the appropriate genre. And they needed to organize, although the strategies implemented varied greatly based on genre. Additionally, students considered how ethos, pathos, and logos was used in both persuasive essays and in narratives, and also whether visuals would help create rhetorical appeals and organization, no matter what the genre. Again, students collaborated on their drafts and bounced ideas off of each other in small workshop groups, learning what they would need to be specific about and write about with detail in order to get the audience to understand and hopefully, side with their stance.

Projects varied from memos to bosses outlining why a student needed a raise, to a letter written to a husband as to why a student/mother felt she deserved to be paid for the work she did around the house. The latter student opened her letter creatively, fashioning an advertisement to find someone who would do her "job":

> Seeking: Highly motivated and reliable individual for fast-paced work environment offering great long-term rewards. Must be willing to work 24-hour shifts daily, weekends and holidays included. Background in cleaning services, food services, secretarial services, childcare, nursing, psychology, accounting, storytelling, coloring, Disney trivia, taxi driving, playgroups and crisis counseling

a must!!! Individual must be a team player. Job does not offer

health benefits, vacation time, overtime, or sick days. Call 1-800-

2B-MOMMY. (Carpenter, student work)

She used this narrative opening to apply a light touch to an essay where she

appealed to her husband to understand why she couldn't be a full-time mother,

go to school, and have a full-time job too. The student said she offered the essay

to her husband after she'd finished the assignment for class. Because she used

a creative, humoristic approach to the persuasive piece, she felt her husband

considered her writing piece more positively than if she had just confronted him,

and that he saw her point as well, she told me afterward. Use of creativity and

audience analysis made the project real and relevant for her. Another student

used persuasion to convince fellow students to travel abroad. She used an

informal tone, as well as visuals of peers enjoying time in England, to convince

fellow students to broaden their knowledge of different cultures. While she

included culturally rich destinations such as the Church of our Savior on Spilled

Blood in St. Petersburg, Russia, she also made sure to include restaurants and

clubs to appeal to peers' mixed interests (Boris, student work).

  While all of the works turned in varied drastically from one another, all

were persuasive in their intent. Because the students collaborated during the

invention of the work, they were able to help each other make choices as to the

genre, voice, and craft techniques needed to help persuade the intended

audience. Most of all, they were able to examine these genres side by side, and

began to understand that the creation of all of them involved inventive, creative techniques in order to bring them to fruition.

Conclusion

At the end of the class I asked the students if they would do more than fill out the standard university evaluation on the class and my approach. It was the first time that I taught expository writing, and I wanted to be sure that mixing both composition and creative writing strategies was not confusing. They filled out the evaluations anonymously to ensure they wouldn't give me any answers just because I thought I "wanted" them.

Comments were almost all positive. Each found something different to enjoy in the class, and to challenge them. A sample of the positive comments I received from the class include:

1. "[The] character sketch [was the most beneficial]; it taught me to describe someone thoroughly without someone else ever meeting them. Being able to describe people, places, and things will be beneficial in the future being a teacher."

2. "I liked the workshop a lot. My group was fun and very helpful."

3. "The class was a lot less restrictive than I thought it would be."

4. "I expected some lame writing class where all we did were reports/research; this was way better."

While the survey was based on the comments of just one class and by now means should be considered exhaustive, I was pleased to discover that mixing

creativity into the composition class seemed quite successful based on the students' initial reactions. The students told me they very much liked the class, and were happy to see it wasn't the "dry" composition class they had anticipated. "I don't like to write, but you made me like it a little bit more," one business major wrote. One of my students was quoted in the student newspaper that my expository writing class was one of the best classes she'd ever taken:

> The best class I've ever taken at USF was Expository Writing, under the instruction of Danita Feinberg. The course was run like a workshop. Students were put into groups of three in which we discussed and proofread each other's work. It was great and incredibly helpful to have the opinions of my peers before I turned in my work. Danita was an amazing teacher. She created an atmosphere in which it was easy to share and participate. I can honestly say that my written work has improved significantly as a result of this course. (Nolan)

From the evaluations, and from the positive review in the paper, I realized that using the creative cross-sections between composition and creative writing format was going to continue to be crucial to my teaching pedagogy, whether I was in a creative writing or composition classroom. I felt the students did what I believe to be most true about effective writing: The writing must be a work the audience wants to read in order for it to be considered successful. Be it a research paper, a work of expression, or one of argument, the tone and voice had to be considered and adapted for possible audiences, often those who would

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not always want to read a "dry" research paper. Students learned to write for more than an academic audience in this class, and walked away understanding the many forms of writing available to them outside of the academic classroom culture. By cross-teaching creative and composition techniques, I felt this class was one of the most successful I've led. Offering opportunities to write not just a narrative to support an argument, but also a narrative that was argument, or a story that thematically supported a thesis (without actually offering a thesis statement) allowed students the opportunity to consider many genres of writing—giving them the knowledge that writing and communication would continue to be an important part of their lives outside academia.

The line between what should be considered a "creative" pedagogy, and one that belonged to composition, was thin at best. While I've learned different ways to organize a work, and showed several of them to the students—for example, through a chronology or a narrative arc—students still needed to learn how to incorporate history, or backstory, into their writing at the appropriate places. The disciplines might use different terms (such as dialogue instead of sources) and ways of implementing those works into a writing, but students should not find one skill to be exclusive of the other; instead, students should learn the overreaching concerns of how works can be developed, organized, and stylized with their own voice and tone, according to their intention and audience.

While I taught this class as an upper-level expository writing class at USF, I have adopted what I learned from it as my composition 2 class at Oklahoma City University. While there is challenge in bringing many genres, crafts, and

options for writing and design in one class, giving students so many choices at the beginning of their writing career prepares them for the many types of writing they will experience throughout not only their academic career, but also their personal lives and beyond academia. By introducing different writing and craft elements in each class, and giving the students opportunity to collaborate together even as they wrote in different genres, using different elements, they became aware that writing was multifaceted, fun, and had multiple uses in their personal and professional lives. As Bishop states, "Professional writers are notoriously opinionated, but most would agree with a simple observation: writers are people who write" (*Released Into Language* 1). By bringing creative elements into a composition classroom, I was able to show students that they were all capable of multiple facets of writing, that "creative" writing did not just belong to the "talented" students, and that creativity was a part of any writing process.

The downside was that I did not teach as much MLA or APA style, which could better prepare students for their academic writing. However, I felt I was preparing them for work beyond the classroom, which is what a college education should do.

The Future of Creativity in Composition

In Edward P.J. Corbett's essay "Rhetoric, The Enabling Discipline," he states that one of the strengths of the study of rhetoric is its adaptability. Rhetoricians are able to change the "doctrines and practices" of writing in consideration of the needs and "extended or modified views of the

communication process" (26). While rhetoric continues to reach out to the latest movements in discourse, relating its theory to cultural studies and electronic communication, for example, it still has not yet reconciled the need for it to emphasize creativity in the classroom, even as the field has been calling for this reunion for decades. The field of English studies can bring together creative writing, composition, and the importance of imagination and creativity in several ways. Now, more than ever, students need to be trained to understand that creativity is part of their everyday process, not for the privileged or inspired, or that it belongs only to certain genres or "artists." Richard Florida stated in his book *The Rise of the Creative Class* that human creativity is our most valuable resource: "The ability to come up with new ideas and better ways of doing things is ultimately what raises productivity and thus living standards … the numbers of people doing creative work has increased vastly over the past century and especially over the past two decades" (xiii).

Simply because of the use of the word "creativity" to describe "creative writing," teachers in these genres are becoming quick to lay claim that creativity belongs only to them. In Steve Healey's article "The Rise of Creative Writing & The New Value of Creativity," he claims that English departments need to embrace the surge of interest in creative writing degrees, claiming that "the kind of creative skills practiced in Creative Writing are valued because they're increasingly used as a productive force in the post-industrial knowledge economy" (*The Writer's Chronicle* 30). Yet he should not be so quick to claim that

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only creative writing teaches the skills of "thinking outside the box" (30) when composition studies have emphasized collaboration and invention for centuries.

As teachers of rhetoric, we need to consider how the field should change in order to reclaim and implement creativity into students' earliest critical thinking training. Instead English departments continue to classify creativity as an expressive, individual act associated with certain genres of writing that does not intertwine with all of the aims of communication, simply by using the term "creative writing" to designate certain genres. An examination of creativity can be found in rhetoric just through Kinneavy's definition of the "aims of discourse" (27):

> Where the emphasis is on the speaker or writer, we get Expressive Discourse, with its sub-species of Exploratory, Informative, and scientific discourse; where the emphasis is on the integral structure of the message or artifact, we get Literary Discourse; where the emphasis is on the reality that the signal represents, we get Referential Discourse; and where the emphasis is on the listener or reader, we get Persuasive Discourse. (27)

Although these types of troubling classifications have become passé in rhetoric, they remain the divisions in our writing classrooms. Creative thinking and expressiveness are separated from research and persuasion, yet the intersections of these writing devices and techniques are apparent in, and part of, almost every message a student learns to create during their academic career. The need for creativity and imagination should be taught to students from the beginning of their writing careers, not separated into separate classrooms, yet

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this message is inadvertently sent to our students by calling some classes "creative" and others "composition."

The field of English needs to remember that, from its onset, rhetoric also taught imagination. Thomas Hobbes in <u>Leviathan</u> points out that "invention, fancy, and expression" (qtd. in Dawson 22) are organized around the classical rhetorical principles of inventio, disposito, elocutio, memoria, and actio. And Francis Bacon says that human learning is comprised from "History to his memory, poesy to his imagination, and Philosophy to his reason" (*The Advancement of Learning*). Separating disciplines into different classrooms negates the student's ability to comprehensively learn about the entire critical thinking and creative process, instead sending the false message that, as Bishop's student stated at the beginning of my dissertation, ""creative writing (is the) stuff that is done for fun, and composition stuff that the teacher makes you do" (221). Instead students begin to make connections between creative forms and writing they do not just to express themselves, but also to persuade and inform. Recently one of my students made such a connection in an Introduction to Creative Writing class:

> Poetry—once my sworn enemy—is not the devil I made it out to be. In fact, because I've written so many ads in my past careers, and I now manage social media, I can really see how being skilled in concise visual language, like poetry, helps [and is] highly relevant when composing effective texts. (Sherry Mullin)

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Sherry began to make connections between the different forms of writing, seeing how they helped her express herself but how they also could be applied to her work and other forms of communication. Giving students tools such as this help them see the value in all writing classes.

While creativity needs to be emphasized more in composition, creative writing can also strive to bring theory into its own fold. Newlyn and Lewis suggest that creative writing can be the basis for both a creative and critical education (qtd. in Dawson 162). They propose a model for a workshop that involves a six-stage process of "collaborative writing, individual writing, collaborative criticism, individual criticism, editing and feedback" (162). This divorces creativity from the notion that it is only an individual act based solely on imagination, but rather one that feeds from the energy and criticism of others, which can then nourish and nurture the individual thinking of a student. Considering intersections such as these is the start for tying imaginative writing into composition; if the professors and graduate students who created these classrooms approaches strove to better understand one another from the onset, undergraduates would resist championing one discipline of writing as more "creative" or "fun" than the other.

English scholars, especially those in creative writing, need to reconsider the emphasis of study in their graduate programs in order to include more pedagogy and theory in order to understand these connections. In "One Simple Word," Mayers suggests that creative writing shift its focus from craft and individual expression to creative writing studies. Instead of focusing on hiring "successful" creative writing to teach "aspiring young writers to produce

publishable work" (218), the emphasis of creative writing studies should be to embrace the theoretical underpinnings of writing as an "element of the profession" (219). While MFA programs should continue to assist students to learn to write publishable "creative" work, the training should include new ways to teach their classes, so they are eager to—and understand how to—teach a variety of classes. This can only be beneficial in a job market that continues to decline, as graduate students will become more marketable in English studies. It will also help creative writing students bring more creative techniques to their composition classes.

While composition needs to further implement creativity and imagination into its first-year classes, creative writing needs to come back into the fold of English studies and stop separating itself as an art that does not associate with the theoretical side of the field of English. New theoretical journals such as *Text, Cultural Studies Review*, and *New Writing: the International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing* newly consider creative writing not just as an art but a theoretical field; the literary journal *Southern Review* now includes essays and articles on cultural studies. Indeed, English studies should consider more venues which would make its own field interdisciplinary, connecting the disciplines of creative writing, composition, and literature; resolving the divisions within its own department before it reaches out to fields such as feminist and cultural studies for further integration. Yet, as has become the norm, rhetoric and writing marches too quickly forward without considering the steps – and missteps

– it has taken in the past century, dividing its own field of study even as it rushes to integrate others.

Resolving the intersections in English could change the course of study in English, creating a student who does not have an emphasis in literature, creative writing, or composition, but rather becomes, as is term by Paul Dawson, a "literary intellectual." Undergraduate students who study English would do so with the understanding that "there are texts to be interrogated rather than works to be read" (182); they would learn to read both theoretically and for craft, to understand their texts, the craft that created it, and their theoretical underpinnings. Graduate students and professors would redesign their classes so that these intersections could be understood by their students at the earliest possible stages of their university education, or as Patrick Bizzaro called for in his January 2004 article in *College English*, they would consider a "critical and reflexive examination of the kinds of research and knowledge-generating activities that take place in the field and ultimately for redesigned … programs" (qtd. in *(Re)Writing Craft* 5).

Doing so would assist the field in creating classes that would encompass all of the knowledge of our field. It would encourage scholars to write both in creative and theoretical forms, instead of emphasizing one over the other because of the emphases placed on our departments by divorcing the disciplines from one another. And, like rhetoric itself, it would cause instructors in the field of English to continue to redefine themselves: as creative people, as rhetoricians, and as lovers of language and expression.

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Appendix A: Syllabus

ENC 3310: Expository Writing   Spring 2006

Instructor: Danita Berg
Office: CPR 228   Hours: 5 to 6 p.m. M and 1 to 2 p.m. W
Email: darbuckl@mail.usf.edu   Department Phone: 974-2421

TEXTS   *Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Writing*, 3rd edition
               Other readings as given in class or downloaded from Blackboard or
               Library Electronic Reserve
               You need to purchase a spiral-bound notebook of about 70 pages
               for your journal, separate from what you use for notes.

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

The definition of expository writing has been debated in composition circles.
Some find the class to be about writing in different genres, or for different
audiences. Others find it to be a form of creative non-fiction. I find expository
writing to be a mix of all of these, and so we will concentrate on bringing the best
of composition and creative writing into one class, exploring different modes of
expression to write compelling pieces that are more than "research papers" – in
other words, writing for more than your professor.

This course will utilize a workshop format, which requires your participation in
small groups with your peers. Besides underscoring the idea that writing is a
social, collaborative process, the workshop format provides a forum for giving
and receiving valuable commentary, enhancing your own learning while offering
opportunities for improving your work for the course. Expository Writing will also
engage you in some research activities.

COURSE WORK & WEIGHTS

- Four Projects, including (unless otherwise specified):
  - Planning (journal entries)   **30%**
  - Polished Drafts   **30%**
  - Final Versions   **30%**

- In-Class Workshops/Participation   **10%**

Each of the categories will receive a separate grade, and a single grade for your Final Version will also be calculated. The specific criteria for the categories will be explained for each project. All work, with the exception of journal and in-class assignments, must be typed.

GRADING

Letter grades, including plus and minus grades, will be given on assignments. To determine final grades, the individual grades will be converted to points according to the Grade Point Average grading system as follows:

A+ 4.00   B+ 3.33   C+ 2.33   D+ 1.33
A   4.00   B   3.00   C   2.00   D   1.00
A- 3.67   B- 2.67   C- 1.67   D- 0.67

For final grades, averages within the range between these points will go to the higher grade (e.g., 3.68-4.0 = "A"; 3.01-3.33 = "B+"; etc.).

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory. For each unexcused absence after two on a two-times-a-week schedule, one-third grade will be taken off your final grade (e.g., for two unexcused absences, a "B" becomes a "B-"; for three, the "B" becomes a "C+"). **Excused absences** (due to illness, emergency, religious holiday, etc.) need to be cleared with your instructor. You will not be penalized for excused absences; however, since there will be a workshop portion of nearly every class, any absences, even if excused, may adversely affect your grade. Generally I will excuse an absence if I receive written verification from a doctor, clergy member, USF administration, etc.

Policy on Religious Observances: Students who will be absent from class due to religious observance must provide notice of the date(s) to the instructor at least one class period prior to the absence.

Please Note: Attendance during the collaborative project is especially critical. There will be one collaborative project during the semester. The project will involve working in groups to complete the assignments, the grades for which will be the same for each member of the group. Since the work for this project will be done primarily in class, an absence during the collaborative project will likely necessitate your removal from the group, in which case you will need to complete a different project on your own. If you know in advance that you will be absent during the collaborative project, be sure to inform your instructor. Notification prior to your absence <u>may</u> prevent your removal from the group if arrangements can be made for you to provide your group with your portion of the

work before your absence.

JOURNALS

The journaling work I ask you to do will help you plan and improve your papers before you actually begin to draft them. The only work I **require** you to do in them for a grade, I will specify as assignments, either in –class or as homework. However, these are YOUR journals, and I welcome you to write in them as often as you like – your observations, random thoughts, whatever.

TARDINESS

You are expected to be in class on time. If you know in advance that you will arrive late to class, please notify your instructor. Continued tardiness, even if work-related, will not be tolerated. You will not be penalized for arriving late up to two times so long as you are no later than 10 minutes. Beginning with the third late arrival, however, I will count each tardy as an absence, which will count against your final grade.

WRITTEN WORK

ALL WRITTEN WORK DONE OUTSIDE OF CLASS SHOULD BE TYPED, DOUBLE-SPACED, HAVE ONE-INCH MARGINS, AND 12-POINT TYPE (PREFERABLY TIMES NEW ROMAN). YOUR NAME, COURSE AND SECTION NUMBER, AS WELL AS THE NAME OF THE ASSIGNMENT, SHOULD BE ON THE FIRST PAGE, WITH YOUR NAME ON EVERY FOLLOWING PAGE. <u>MULTIPLE PAGES SHOULD BE STAPLED TOGETHER</u>.

LATE WORK

You will have the opportunity to revise your work before submitting it to be graded. However, it is imperative that you complete assignments on time so that you are able to participate in in-class workshops. Late work (work not completed by the due date for reason other than an excused absence) will be penalized in two ways: you will not receive peer or instructor response, and the work will receive one grade off for each class period late. Even if you do not understand an assignment, it is important that you complete it on time.

MISSING WORK

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. A project will not be accepted if even just one planning assignment is missing. It is your responsibility to keep copies of all your work. The instructor will not be held responsible for missing work. If something turns up missing, you will need to provide a copy of it.

CELL PHONES

Cell phones (and anything else you have on you that makes noise and interrupts class) should be turned off before the beginning of class. If you have an emergency situation – i.e., a medical crisis in the family – where you need to leave your cell or beeper on, this situation must be approved with your instructor before the beginning of class. If your phone or other disturbance goes off in class, I have many books of boring grammar exercises that I enjoy assigning to students who don't show me the courtesy of keeping disruptions to a minimum. I have also been known to require students with noisy cell phones to dance along with the ringer tone to the amusement of other class members, or to sing a song.

PLAGIARISM

Obviously, plagiarism will not be tolerated. Depending on the severity of the offense, I reserve the right to fail the project, or to fail you in the class, if you are found to have copied a piece of work and presented it as your own. I read a lot, including the assignments that are available for sale on the Internet – it's not worth it to try.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Project # 1: Personal narrative	Weeks 1-4
Project # 2: Character sketch/ exploring perspectives & relationships	Weeks 4-8
Project # 3: Taking positions/ argumentative writing	Weeks 8-11
Project # 4: Local narratives	Weeks 11-14

About the Author

Danita Berg is an Assistant Professor of Writing at Oklahoma City University, where she teaches creative writing and composition and chairs the university's annual Creative Writing Festival. She has published, or has upcoming publications, in literary journals including *Southern Women's Review*, *Redivider*, *Quay*, *Florida English*, and the *Press Pause Now Anthology for Women*, and has published critical papers on teaching writing in the AWP Pedagogy Papers. She was a visiting assistant professor of rhetoric and creative writing at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, and previously worked as a marketing writer and editorial coordinator for the University of South Florida as well as a journalist at newspapers in Indiana and Florida. She now lives in Oklahoma with her cat, Alexandra, and three rescue dogs, Oliver, Zoey, and Murphy. Danita dedicates this dissertation to her first two dearly departed rescue dogs and friends, Farley and Chloe. Rest in peace, sweet children.