

## Revisions from Within: the Potential of Ph.D.s in Creative Writing

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### **Abstract:**

As a Ph.D. candidate in Creative Writing, I understand the precarious position of those of us who pursue Creative Writing studies. Initially, there is the risk that even entering discussions about our disciplinary status undermines the systems in which we have ascended. Our future roles in the academy are uncertain, but commitments to our discipline, students, and evolving pedagogies can begin to enact the changes in Creative Writing studies that will bring our work into stronger relationships with other courses of study. In fact, Ph.D. candidacy—a period in which we can move relatively easily between traditionally divided branches of departments: literary studies, critical theory, cultural theory, Creative Writing studies, and composition studies—can be an ideal time to begin the work of reform.

In this paper I will comment on Creative Writing pedagogy scholarship and highlight pioneers of Creative Writing studies who fuse theories, methodologies, and practices from all aspects of English studies; many enact what it means to be a tri-dialectical scholar. I will discuss graduate program design in the context of my inquiry into pedagogy and then present, working from Blythe and Sweet's taxonomy, re-conceptions of the Creative Writing classroom that should prompt continued inquiry from academics who assign equal importance to their Creative Writing, teaching, and scholarship.

While specific departmental support in the form of a Creative Writing pedagogy course is an ideal measure to begin the revision of creative studies, it might not be possible in many programs at this time. Perhaps departments don't even need to formally mandate a course as the rising generation of Creative Writing Ph.D.s, following the examples of pioneers in our field, pursues interdisciplinary hybridity.

I'll admit that before re-entering the academy, for the third time, I didn't consider how a doctoral program in English with an emphasis in Creative Writing would foster the development of my Creative Writing pedagogy; I just assumed that this was part of the training. I viewed, and continue to perceive, the academy as a place to engage meaningfully in—with balanced support and autonomy—writing, teaching, and research. In August of 2008, I joined the growing numbers of American doctoral candidates in Creative Writing. However, even then, I didn't see myself fitting in Scott Russell Sander's categories from the infamous<sup>1</sup> September 1992 *AWP Chronicle* article:

We [creative writers] have entered the academy for reasons as diverse as our talents. Some of us relish teaching and the conversation about literature, while others merely grab our paychecks and rush back to our keyboards. Some of us are drawn to the university as the last sanctuary for books in a marginally literate culture. Some of us come here to escape loneliness. Others linger in the academy simply because, after eighteen or twenty years of schooling, we cannot imagine living anywhere else. (1)

Lambasting how much is wrong with this statement and questioning what it means to “relish” in teaching is nothing new in Creative Writing scholarship. Nonetheless, these misconceptions persist even as the discipline evolves, and the rising generation of Creative Writing academics immerse themselves in all aspects of English studies. I consider myself to be what Wendy Bishop calls “tri-dialectical” using the adjectives “literary, compositionist, and creative” (“Places to Stand” 21). Although I’ll fall into one MLA job category, in terms of training and developing my pedagogy—learning that should and will continue throughout my career—I cannot separate the three. Stephen North’s fusion model may have, according to Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “foundered early” (7), but it still has merit as a means to individually conceive of graduate training, even if it isn’t embraced or mandated by administrators.

My literary research influences my Creative Writing. My inquiry into composition studies, both its theory and history, translates directly into my teaching in both my Creative Writing and composition classrooms. My Creative Writing practices influence lesson plans as well as my critical analyses of literary and pedagogical texts. The one-on-one consulting I do in the writing center in addition to critical theory courses radically change syllabi and my role in the classroom.

What are we trained to do? <sup>ii</sup> We’re trained to continue what we’re *doing*—fusing many aspects of English studies into our teaching, Creative Writing, and scholarship. I believe that the “literary, compositionist, and creative” (Bishop “Places to Stand” 21) academic—one who synthesizes all three disciplines in her/his praxis, research, and pedagogy—is the future practitioner of what Tim Mayers calls Creative Writing studies.

*Creative Writing Studies*, [ . . . ] is a still-emerging enterprise that has been set in motion by some of the problems and internal contradictions of Creative Writing. Creative Writing studies is a field of scholarly inquiry and research. It can be characterized, in the words of Katharine Haake, as scholarly work that “seek[s] to move us beyond our preoccupation with the writer or the text to the role of Creative Writing as an academic discipline inside a profession that includes, but is not limited to, the production and teaching of imaginative writing. (Haake qtd in Mayers “One Simple Word” 218)

This re-conception of the discipline is the logical and necessary result of the efforts of pioneers in Creative Writing studies that respond (and report via scholarship) to influences from other branches of English studies and the needs of their students. Naturally, doctoral candidates in Creative Writing follow their examples as well as enjoy

the relative freedom to move between the factions of their departments during coursework.

There may be Ph.D. candidates<sup>iii</sup> who feel content to fill the roles Sanders defines and just be writers who don't undertake scholarly inquiry or research, but who would pursue a Ph.D. without teaching aspirations and an understanding of the necessary research into pedagogy? It's not a naïve or superfluous question but one that prominent scholars in Creative Writing studies continue to ponder in the context of the diminishing job market.

If we recall the marker of difference for Ph.D. candidates—the commitment to a life of teaching and scholarship symbolized by the Ph.D.—we can see that if such a difference is not fully exploited, then these candidates, because of their specialization, are at the bottom of the job market pile from the start, especially if their publishing record does *not* include a book published or accepted for publication. (Ritter “Revamping Teacher Training” 212)

The requirement of one or multiple trade publications deserves further inquiry, but for the purpose of my focus, book or no book, how likely is it that a creative writer who doesn't engage in pedagogy and scholarship will be offered a job in an institution where s/he will ‘plug a few holes’: teaching a variety of courses<sup>iv</sup> and/or performing administrative duties in composition programs or literary journals?

Necessary changes in the qualifications and preparation of Ph.D. creative writers are issues that Tim Mayers (see “Figuring the Future” 11), Kimberly Andrews (see “A House divided”), Azita Osanloo (see “Is the PhD the New MFA”), and, of course, Kelly Ritter deliberate. Although revisions to an often questioned and vexed discipline occur slowly, a pattern—in the more recent Creative Writing studies scholarship—of scholars, incorporating many aspects of English studies into their work, model professionalism and informed teaching practices for rising Creative Writing academics. While formal structures of support—required coursework in pedagogy—will eventually serve the next generation, in the meantime, independent reflections and careful experimentation in the classroom based on the current scholarship by pioneers in Creative Writing studies can provide the rising generation with pedagogical training.

Conversations regarding Creative Writing pedagogy go in what I see as four directions: (1) best Practices: lesson plans and lore<sup>v</sup>; (2) history: catalogues of the emergence of

the discipline, often with specific comparison to composition studies; (3) undergraduate curriculum development: the methodologies, epistemologies, and theories that inform classrooms; and (4) graduate program design: imparting all of the above to rising practitioners. In this paper I will comment on Creative Writing pedagogy scholarship and highlight practitioners of Creative Writing studies who fuse theories and methodologies from different disciplines. In short, I will first discuss graduate program design in the context of my inquiry into pedagogy and then present, working from Blythe and Sweet's taxonomy, re-conceptions of the Creative Writing classroom in light of my research and teaching experiences.

In 2001, Kelly Ritter called for structured preparation in Ph.D. programs in the form of courses—modeled on composition's pedagogy courses—and support meaning “a system of institutional authority and expertise that provides mentoring, course assistance, teacher development workshops, and experienced writing faculty as available resources throughout the candidate's doctoral training and classroom teaching” (28). In 2007, Ritter lamented that as a rule most Ph.D. programs (still) do not offer this model, and a more feasible system of support would be co-teaching programs (“Ethos Interrupted” 290) so graduate students could work beside experienced professors. Co-teaching is a solution, but not the best; Ritter advocates the pedagogy course again:

Such a vision of student-centered, collaborative professional training [in a course setting] requires that English departments themselves become less fragmented, or fractured—with students of literary theory developing interests in writing theory, and vice versa. Such a course, and such departmental unification, however remains the exception rather than the rule. Few MFA, or even Ph.D. programs, are currently equipped with writing faculty who even have the kind of pedagogical training to teach such a course (which is the problem in the first place). (“Ethos Interrupted” 289-90)

I agree with Ritter and would emphasize how necessary collaboration between compositionists, theorists, and creative writers might be in designing this course. Although departments may not have creative writers with the appropriate pedagogical backgrounds, English departments *do* have all the necessary components in terms of faculty. Imagine the scope and possibilities of a graduate pedagogy course co-taught by a compositionist, creative writer, and a critical theorist. It could be a collaborative inquiry that would engage all the necessary components of Creative Writing studies: discourses of power, poetics, aesthetics, authority, identity politics, social justice, praxis, assessment, process, invention, historical contexts, and the nature of language itself.

Now imagine how this might all translate to undergraduate students. Graduate students would transfer the pedagogical structure of such a course and some of the interdisciplinary content into the undergraduate courses they teach. I consider this in the context of David Radavich's "Creative Writing in the Academy".

Courses that teach poetry, fiction and drama writing can offer students valuable insights and experience on today's college campuses. But only if Creative Writing classes are brought into deeper and wider relationship with other courses in the curriculum; only if such programs maintain a pedagogy not geared toward packaging for the marketplace but instead emphasizing reading skills, critical thinking, language awareness, and historical consciousness, qualities and abilities that will prove useful in many walks of life; and only if such programs can be made to foster more understanding of public concerns and social responsibility. (112).

A Creative Writing that offers these skills and contexts may reach its potential to invigorate English studies. Perhaps collaboration in English departments in the service of Creative Writing will be a catalyst for greater unification. Mayers asserts that Creative Writing, the desire to write, is what draws many students to English departments in the first place ("Figuring the Future" 11). Therefore, "[i]f, as many scholars have argued, we owe it to our present and future students to craft a more coherent and less fragmented version of English studies, then certainly the theory and practice of Creative Writing are not just interesting, but rather *essential* areas of concern" (Mayers "Figuring the Future" 11). In this way, departments could pool resources; students, as the result of this unification, could gain skills from Creative Writing (like the ones Radavich extols above) that serve them in the classroom and beyond.

Also, consider the benefits of a Creative Writing curriculum that promotes public concern. George Kalamaras has written about a theory of the discipline that draws on social epistemic theories of knowledge<sup>vi</sup> and Mary Ann Cain argues that Creative Writing, because of its "counterhegemonic"<sup>vii</sup> potential, can be instrumental in the democratization of education (230-31). Students could learn a kind of writing that "problematizes and resists institutional, privatized identification by theorizing about basic assumptions that we hold about how to write and live as writers" (Cain 233).

I realize I'm getting ahead of myself; the source of this reform is, again, a course in which aspiring Creative Writing instructor/practitioners engage in a formal inquiry into the teaching of their discipline and its relationship to English studies and other areas of the

academy. Patrick Bizarro writes that in order for Creative Writing to achieve disciplinary status, student writers at all levels should do coursework that focuses on two levels of research<sup>viii</sup> that are specific to our discipline. The second tier of which aligns with Ritter's conception of a pedagogy course. This kind of inquiry has been

exemplified by the work of Bishop, Moxley, Myers, Ritter, and Starkey. This research may be into pedagogy, research methods, and disciplinary practices of Creative Writing. Creative writers, above all else must acknowledge the work by these pioneers as legitimate and even essential, if they hope for the survival of Creative Writing in an age in English studies dominated by the work of technicians. (Bizzaro 307)

Once more, I agree but return to Ritter's lament that at this time, given the structure of so many English departments, this kind of coursework may not be possible.

In Creative Writing scholarship, we've gotten beyond the *can it be taught* debate and are almost done with the *theory/anti-theory* binary. I think it might be time to put the *creative writers who intend to teach need a pedagogy course* argument aside for now. However valid this suggestion is, courses exist in few programs<sup>ix</sup> in the United States. Current Creative Writing faculty might be unwilling,<sup>x</sup> unprepared, or overburdened with their current teaching loads and advisees to take on planning and implementation. The likelihood of interdepartmental collaboration is also slim considering departmental histories, diminishing budgets, and overburdened faculty in all branches of English studies. Until more tri-dialectical scholars arrive in tenured teaching positions, doctoral candidates will have to inquire into their discipline in their own time, while fulfilling all the other requirements of their degrees. Additionally, there are ways to incorporate this work into coursework<sup>xi</sup> as well as teaching apprenticeships.<sup>xii</sup>

I realize I'm making an argument for my own experience; perhaps this means that I really am learning academic discourse. I'm also in danger of begging the question that if Ph.D. students don't necessarily need structures of support, if pursuing pedagogy and scholarship are givens that need not be enforced, what's the point in a graduate degree? I'm not saying that we don't need support, and I repeat that a guided collaborative inquiry with experienced scholars and peers is the ideal situation, but given the current system, independent inquiry is a practical option. If I argue that designing my own study into pedagogy is a way to prepare myself to function as a doctor of Creative Writing, do I fall in a postmodern trap? If I claim that there is no specific way to train doctoral

candidates, if I agree “that each writer, undertaking a Ph.D., must adopt the work approach best suited to his or her own personality as a writer” (O’Mahony 46) because nothing about the general processes of writing, teaching, or learning is codifiable, then I sound like a subjectivist expressionist.

No, postprocess theory is not about making any specific suggestions but invites us to speculate on the implications of deciding Creative Writing’s epistemology, ontology, theory, and purpose in the university. The theory, from composition studies, has us examine who is authorized to decide what doctors and undergraduates in Creative Writing need when all experiences and schooling are diversely situated.<sup>xiii</sup> Interestingly, scholars of Creative Writing studies seem to derive authority from their perspectives and understandings of other aspects of English studies and transfer these ideas into their theses. In an earlier draft of this paper, I claimed that borrowing from other pedagogies, theories, philosophies, methodologies, and epistemologies would only delay the foundational work, but now I believe that fusions of theories, methodologies, and pedagogies from many disciplines *is* the initial work. These fusions are what have enabled innovations and will sustain future research in Creative Writing studies.

Additionally, creative writers cannot decide what we definitively<sup>xiv</sup> mean when we address: Creative Writing pedagogy, Creative Writing theory,<sup>xv</sup> Creative Writing philosophy, Creative Writing methodology, and Creative Writing epistemology<sup>xvi</sup> without considering that our anti-disciplinary, counterhegemonic, subjective expressionist status *is* arguably our foundation,<sup>xvii</sup> and it’s important to note this before continuing. How can “we uncover shared disciplinary conceptions of Creative Writing, reflecting writers’ collective literary ambitions and methods” (Myers 5) if the meaning of Creative Writing as it was originally conceived, according to Myers, is characterized as “freedom from external demands and other people’s laws” (5). There may not be shared disciplinary conceptions as of now, but this will not always be true considering the recent methodologies and critical frameworks I will discuss.

Katharine Haake reflects, “[m]ostly I see Creative Writing as a still vexed discipline, where incremental change is more likely than any transformation. Also, I am not convinced transformation is in order anymore, since it presumes consensus and, as in many things, our diversities continue to be among our greatest strengths” (*What Our*

*Speech Disrupts* 42). Just as the fiction writing lore “never have your characters agree” rings true, so does innovation that comes from dialectical engagement. Pushing against creative writers who do not prioritize teaching enables me to begin the necessary work of theorizing for my classroom. Consensus between those with power, tenured creative writers in the academy, is unlikely anytime soon, but resistance to Creative Writing as an anti-disciplinary, isolated, anti-professional discipline from the next generation of academic creative writers can be catalysts of reform—each of us opposing traditional methodologies, our only agreement being that our discipline would benefit from new frameworks. These conflicts can enact the incremental change that Haake predicts.

At this point, I will detail some good (not best) practices, methodologies, and theories that may enable Creative Writing to serve a variety of students and learning objectives. In the following discussions are instructors who borrow reading strategies from theorists and literary scholars; composing and revising theories from cognitivists and post-structuralists; lore from Creative Writing’s origins; and theories of collaboration, de-centering authority, and assessment from compositionists. I do not intend to model an inquiry for all graduate Creative Writing instructors who are beginning to work out their pedagogies but point to options or prompts for instructors to consider. As much as I agree with Haake “that any viable pedagogy must be an evolving one marked by a willingness to redefine itself according to the mutability of time and circumstance. In addition, it should embrace risk, for just as in our classes, we should, in our profession, be prepared to ask questions we won’t be able to answer” (105); there is a point (one of many) where we need to constitute some course structure and prepare ourselves to ask students these questions that will inform their poetics, goals, and understandings of language—the questions only they can answer.

D.G. Meyers makes a valid argument that subjectivist expressionism is an origin of Creative Writing, but today there are objective methodologies being developed that support students and serve a kind of writing that doesn’t just pursue “the laws of its own being” (4). Fusion models can promote literacy, introduce the instability of language, and allow students to consider “how literature functions in society” (Dawson qtd in Myers 2). Yes, workshops will continue, but “[t]his is an exciting time to teach and write *about* Creative Writing, a conclusion made possible by the rich interplay of lore and scholarship [. . .]” (Vandenberg 110), and there are many of us who invigorate our teaching with

research, experimentation, investigations into long-ruling lore, and incorporation of theories and praxis from other disciplines and areas of English studies. I will discuss some of this work here.

Many compositionists have written<sup>xviii</sup> about the potential of a Creative Writing that does not just produce publishable products. Rather, Creative Writing studies could produce students who are engaged with their writing, that of other writers, and who understand how writing moves through the world. The myths—from which traditional methodological notions and practices have been drawn—of talent, genius, and Romantic muses have been roundly criticized as well. Most importantly, the traditional “Iowa” workshop method is no longer assumed to be the only pedagogy in a Creative Writing classroom. For example, Hal Blythe and Charlie Sweet answer Shirley Geok-lin Lim’s query: “Does Creative Writing possess a disciplinary base from which certain methodological notions and practices can be drawn, and if so, how should we begin to talk about such a discipline?” (151). The authors, with seventy combined years of teaching experience, isolate the histories, advantages, and disadvantages of the (1) atelier approach: the master guides the apprentice, usually in a one-on-one setting; (2) great works: the student imitates a work of the teacher’s choosing; (3) inspiration: the student is stimulated by a creative stasis, which is not necessarily the teacher who can only assist, if anything; (4) techniques: the instructor provides definition and guides students in the practice of the technical components of a literary form; (5) the workshop: a teacher facilitates multiple analyses of students’ texts using the New Critical lens; (6) the feminist: a less formal structure where the students and teacher are equal; and (7) Blythe and Sweet’s addition, the community method: students work in intimate discussion groups and are mentored by the instructor periodically.<sup>xix</sup> Introducing collaboration in the Creative Writing classroom is certainly not anything new to proponents like Wendy Bishop<sup>xx</sup>, but recent contributors call for cooperative efforts in generative exercises<sup>xxi</sup> and even grading<sup>xxii</sup>.

Allow me to discuss how fusions—my own experiments and that of established scholars—of all the above methodologies amongst others from literary criticism, composition, and critical theory promote agency, collaboration, experimentation, community, and critical thinking in the classroom. I return to the community method, one that I agree:

seems to offer an abundance of possibilities for future experiments in classes across the curriculum. Perhaps more importantly, for those of us in Creative Writing, the development of the community approach, complete with the careful reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the other approaches, will serve as a foundation or a starting point for the creation of a formal pedagogy for our discipline, a pedagogy so vital if we desire to take our place among the other, more established disciplines of academia. (Blythe and Sweet 323-24)

Although the authors tailor their approach to graduate creative writers<sup>xxiii</sup> their writing community rationale provides a framework for undergraduates to engage with work by one another and also, I believe, that of published authors. To specify, the community method entails self-selected groups forming communities that engage in small workshops prior to class meetings where they analyze one another's writing; it's basically the workshop broken into manageable, intimate units. During class the small groups are mentored by an instructor (Blythe and Sweet 316-21). The groups report on strengths and weaknesses of their texts to the mentor. Finally, the mentor facilitates discussion about techniques and revision.

While I have experience leading Creative Writing workshops, as well as incorporating workshop methodologies into secondary English and college composition classrooms, I had not put my research in Creative Writing pedagogy into practice until September of 2009. In my adaptations of Blythe and Sweet's methodology, I found that small groups were useful in a variety of exercises where students composed and/or shared shorter assignments and demystified the meanings of and techniques employed in published fiction. Additionally, I utilized the community method to workshop multiple drafts of students' short stories, which would be components in their final portfolios. One of the many issues, which I believe should be considered in further development of the community method, is that of self-selected groups. I had tried to circulate students through different groupings, but found that by mid-semester, some still didn't know one another well enough to enable selection.

I incorporated a method that looked very much like speed-dating where writers would discuss their projects, published stories that spoke to them, and how they situated their work in larger contexts (or at least these were the questions I proposed they discuss). Interestingly, when I compiled their preferences, I was surprised to find that many writers who'd appeared to have worked well together throughout the semester had no interest whatsoever in continuing collaboration with one another. Others wrote that they didn't

really care about with whom they worked. This confused me and made me question the lore that beginning writers invest too much of their experiences in their fiction, are too sensitive, and unable to separate text from identity. Also, if they had a working understanding of their poetics, which I'd scaffolded early and often in the semester, shouldn't they care about with whom they work intimately? I was wary of discord (however fruitful postmodernists find it) and what might happen since most of these writers' interactions would be independent of me.

Furthermore, I'd asked for their first drafts—meaning that they'd written short stories from beginning to end with no outlines—early in the community session portion of the course. I'd set a deadline to ensure they'd all have something to discuss. More accurately, I believed that a writer must work through a first draft independently to avoid appropriation and allow the story to go where it needs to go.

Stories moving of their own accord? Here was a piece of unexamined lore that stunk of the Romantic muses. One of twenty-one writers in the class had written a draft from beginning to end. Most had around five pages, there were many outlines, and nearly all writers had a definite idea where their characters would end up but certainly not why or how. Yes, I was frustrated; I'd warned them against pushing characters through definite plots. I observed<sup>xxiv</sup> writers offering suggestions and working together to conceive of plots. I had not entertained the possibility that writers could collaborate so early in a workshop without appropriation. Understanding how the elements of fiction work in a finished text is one thing, but identifying and executing them in an embryonic draft are quite difficult. But wouldn't this work be less imposing for beginning writers if approached collaboratively? I was willing earlier in the semester to engage writers in activities where pairs created separate characters and then each member wrote a scene that incorporated both characters, but I'd considered that as a kind of play that might open them up to characters they might not have written about otherwise.

Compositionists make arguments for the benefits of collaborative composing, but isn't the composition of a thesis-driven text different than that of a creative one? If it's true that expository texts argue distinct meaning and "speculative" (Heilker qtd in Bishop "Contracts Radical Revision, Portfolios" 110) ones invoke meaning, then their composing processes might indeed be different. Therefore, collaboration might interrupt the

composing process itself, what some critics characterize as the interplay of language in the mind of the writer.

Tim Mayers in “(Re)Writing Craft” writes about several craft critics to “show how they open up a space in which creative writers and compositionists might work together” (85). Looking at the work of Sherod Santos and Heather McHugh (who invokes Heidegger), Mayers advances a notion of creative composition that comes from a writer’s “relatedness to language” (“Craft” 85) and that “the writer does not begin with an idea or intention but rather with a phrase, a sentence, a sound, one in which the writer’s original intentions about meaning are not as important as the meanings the writing itself might tend to work toward through the process(es) of revision” (“Craft” 87). He advocates providing words and fragments for writers to work from and also resists purpose driven assignments. “We should try to help students discover that meaning can be made to fit words, not the other way around” (Mayers “Craft” 87).

Katharine Haake also asks writers to follow their instincts in language and suggests discussing signification and introducing Derrida’s the supplementary<sup>xv</sup> in order to help beginning writers:

Writing itself, for example, is ongoing, shifting, and fluid, and the meaning we agree on will not stand for long, but will continue to be subject to the arbitrary play of the very process that produced it. For instance, let’s say we’re writing a story, and we add sentence three to sentences one and two. Not only do we have a third sentence, but the third sentence has changed what one and two mean—maybe slightly, maybe enormously [ . . . ] it is important because this very same principle of shifting that inheres in how we make meaning in language repeats itself in writing, moving forward in an endlessly unfolding process that grows, paradoxically, not out of some preexisting ideas in our heads, but the logic of writing itself. (185)

She then goes on to explain that this is not how we are taught to write; instead we work backwards, “as if our ideas *did* exist somehow outside of language” (185). Haake’s feminist pedagogy and ever-evolving response strategies (see chapter six of *What our Speech Disrupts*) are indeed useful for many reasons, but most striking is her embrace of critical theory in order to “empower students to become better, more creative, more interesting writers”; “this self-awareness alone is what may ultimately sustain their writing” (49).

Haake uses theory to make beginning writers aware of their processes and relationships to language. Rather than the traditional workshop pedagogy to improve *texts* for publication, Haake's allegiance, like that of compositionists, is to *writers*. *What Our Speech Disrupts* offers rationale for the incorporation of critical theory into all levels of Creative Writing classrooms but does not, however, offer definite lessons and examples for instructors; specific application is the determination of every individual teacher. Nonetheless she writes: "I just do the old stuff, the stuff that moves writing, is all. Saussure, to begin with. Barthes. Derrida. Foucault. Some feminist, some cultural theory. And, of course, a good bit of narratology (Haake 55).

Before I continue to comment on other practitioners who employ critical theory—what is possibly an eighth methodology to add to Blythe and Sweet's taxonomy—to frame and pose questions of identity, discourse, and language to beginning writers, allow me to circle back to how Haake's advocacy of Derrida's supplementary might serve as a better theoretical rationale as to why writers might not want to entertain plot suggestions from their writing community on texts in-progress. If writing comes from language, rather than meaning, wouldn't discussing the supplementary prevent writers from writing toward a pre-determined theme as well as taking suggestions too early? Theory, however intimidating, does a better job than the old lore, "don't start from theme," "trust me, you're going waste a lot of time writing what you think you should be writing rather than what you actually write," and "don't think." Furthermore, I'd always avoided discussing the craft of early drafts—the things that happen moment-by-moment as we write because I'd thought that doing so would deny writers their authentic, very subjective processes. Wouldn't explaining the supplementary (as a theory) early in a semester relieve students' stress and allow them to realize that "writer's block" might be a symptom of writing backwards and that letting go will enable writing? Here might be another objective methodology.

Haake's implementation of theory is, as of now, the most comprehensive argument for the fusion of Creative Writing studies and critical theory in the undergraduate classroom, but she is not alone. Critical theory cannot be separated from English studies, and many scholars of Creative Writing studies continue to condemn what Amato and Fleisher call the "theoretically squeamish" (4) Creative Writing instructor as well as import critical theories into their classrooms.

Nicole Cooley discusses in “Literary Legacies and Critical Transformations: Teaching Creative Writing in the Public Urban University” her innovation of the “anonymous” workshop in order to separate authors from texts but then scraps it when she realizes that she was erasing identity from students’ work. She writes:

I want to suggest the Creative Writing class is a site of individual identity production; thus we need to think critically about how certain strategies for teaching Creative Writing may enforce a normative identity. [. . .] I do not mean that the study of criticism and theory in class comes at the expense of students’ poetry and fiction or that we import the center (“elite” theory) into the margin (the Creative Writing classroom) to devalue the latter. Rather, I am interested in dismantling the binary opposition that has instilled the very notions of margin and center. Considering identity’s diversity will only enrich student writing, allowing for greater textual play and, finally, imaginative freedom. It is essential that we reflect on how the workshop process can make students produce texts that deny their voices. (101)

Cooley points out that the workshop should begin by discussing “the fact that aesthetic value is historically and culturally specific. We need to interrogate the inextricable link between language and power, a connection not fully investigated by New Critical readings” (102).

Like Cooley, Patrick Bizarro in “Reading the Creative Writing Course: The Teacher’s Many Selves” considers how New Critical methods privilege instructors’ reading of student texts “as the meaning rendered by an exemplary reader”—“the text as it really exists” (238). He advocates for a variety of critical lenses: “reader-response criticism, deconstruction, feminist criticism, or Marxist criticism” that would “provide students with the cues they need to begin negotiating new identities as writers in the classroom” (244).

Once teachers begin to focus on the kinds of comments they can make about student writing *in process*, they will see the necessity and have the opportunity to read differently. By employing rich and interesting readings of student Creative Writing fostered by using literary-critical theories, teachers will simultaneously present themselves differently to their students and, in so doing, signal students that relationships other than (or at least, in addition to) apprenticeship relationships are possible in the classroom. (244)

Mike Harris, however, warns that reader response, just like New Criticism, approaches literary texts as finished products and is therefore unfit (see endnote 15) for the work of theorizing Creative Writing studies.

How do we get meaning and value from culture and history onto the page and into the reader’s or audience’s head? If we pay attention to reader-and-text theorists there can be no answer, because they effectively remove composition

from the process. And this is surely an insuperable obstacle to the co-option of their theories into CW course? Listen to writers and the beginning of their answer is forthcoming: it gets there in composition, through the agency and efforts of the poet, novelist and scriptwriter. As we have seen, s/he puts some of it there quite deliberately. S/he puts some more of it there in symbolic interaction between unconscious inception and conscious formulation. And s/he puts some of it there quite unconsciously. (Harris 44)

Bizzaro advocates for instructors to create “emancipatory authority” and for students to see their texts in alternative lights. On the other hand, Harris seems more concerned with what happens in the composing process itself and how it might be theorized. Harris argues the distinction between the critical reading of literary critics and that of creative writers; he warns against what seems a recent rush to theorize Creative Writing and the hasty cooption of different critical lenses. Whatever the positives and negatives of reader response criticism, further inquiry into the composition process, specifically the revision stage(s) will inform larger conceptions of Creative Writing studies

Amato and Fleisher in their own theoretical contributions ask, like Nicole Cooley, students to consider contexts of production and evaluation as well as revision.

[T]he sort of writing our students have been taught to believe is valuable (no doubt because it *is* eminently more publishable in the trades) is writing that, if anything, obscures its reliance on revision—thanks to the writer adopting, sometimes unknowingly, conventions that have been intensively conventionalized. So, since there has been little if any discussion in prior classes about the composing process as a *socially* regulated event, students busily pursue work that will be thought to speak transparently to and from their innermost selves—never mind the message of the medium, the social mechanics of publishing [ . . . ] and so forth. (20).

The authors’ aim to theorize<sup>xxvi</sup> Creative Writing’s conditions of possibility, a postmodern impulse they admit is dated (21). Much of Amato and Fleisher’s sprawling paper calls for instructors to introduce critical frameworks into their classrooms so that beginning writers will gain awareness “as to the conditions of his or her authorial circumstances—which is to say, a grasp of context in which the writing process is to take place, and in which the writing product is to be evaluated [ . . . ] (20).

Reconsiderations (or realizations) of Creative Writing’s social dimension are frequent calls to action that have obviously come about from the influences of other areas of the English department: cultural studies, critical theory, and composition studies. Indeed

these fusions provide new structures for the Creative Writing classroom and leave me to deliberate how I might invite students to consider how literature functions in society and “dramatiz[es] the clash of social viewpoints (Myers 2).

I have to admit, however persuasive these theories of introducing social dimensions into Creative Writing classrooms are, I keep returning to methodologies and practical applications. Yes, acts of composition and revision are socially regulated, but how do I introduce this idea to beginning writers? How do I not stifle my classroom with critical frameworks and engage writers in the act of actual *composing* and *revising*? As I stated earlier, I do believe in imparting the formal qualities<sup>xxvii</sup> of a genre to beginning writers so that they might “learn the forms” they aspire to, “the rules of discourse, all the prior modes of expression, and so forth” (Haake 189). Discourse cannot become transparent if we don’t see it. Again, I quote Haake:

Now I perch on tables, too, run my hands through messy hair, and grope for language, increasingly convinced that my role in the classroom is less about questions and answers than it is about providing a structure within which students can come to know themselves as writers. For their part, they just want to write, and we should let them, but not without providing a context that sustains enough critical perspective for a clear examination of writing, up to and including the possibility of change, of disruption, and the insertion of new subjects. (34)

I agree, but when, where, and how does all this happen? What about the ‘fact’ that it “is true to the experiences of most creative teachers that, on the whole, students enter Creative Writing courses without relevant reading and writing skills” (Bizzaro “Reading the Creative Writing Course” 239)? Questioning and the shaping of a writer’s identity is crucial, but what about content? Here is my present challenge: compiling all of my research, weighing different theories, and actually writing an objective on a syllabus, even if I believe that objectives are in part contingent upon each student.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Haake admits in “Teaching Creative Writing; If the shoe fits”<sup>xxix</sup> that “[i]nvariably, the struggle to master a form precludes important questions about the origins and functions of form” (57). In a later chapter she explains proper implementation of critical frameworks:

Excellence in writing, as in many things, will flourish in a climate that is open to it, wherever and however it may express itself, though we never can predict it, nor know ahead of time what it will look like. Any Creative Writing curriculum should examine the professional and institutional concerns of the discipline—publishing and so on. And in order to do so, we need to be able to describe in critical terms

what “successful” writing looks like. But these concerns are most properly addressed after, not before the writing. In the beginning, the writing is the thing, and invariably we must begin by beginning again. (72)

Is she suggesting that courses begin without any structure, with beginning writers just writing? Next, the formal qualities of a genre would be articulated in critical terms. Finally, other social frameworks would enter the picture. This seems to be what she is saying, but how would students respond?

In my own experience this past fall, I spent ten weeks going through conventions of characterization, point of view, tropes, plot, etc. (all the while resisting students’ habit of calling these “the rules”). Towards the end of course I took the floor out from under us all and asked these writers to consider *who* determined these formal qualities and how, and why. Students responded by asking me what it was that *I* wanted to read in their final portfolios. When I asked what *they* wanted and what would sustain *their* writing, they looked at me like I was crazy. I don’t blame them. Haake admits to purposely not addressing the problem of grading,<sup>xxx</sup> and calls for further inquiry. The fact of the matter is though, Creative Writing, however developed or not, is an academic discipline, and as it is now, someone must, at the end of every semester, assess how well objectives and content have been understood by students. Priscila Uppal explains:

Although Creative Writing courses and degrees are offered by academic institutions, as Kevin Brophy notes, “Creativity intersects most forcefully and problematically with institutional practices at sites of assessment” (219 qtd in Uppal). Brophy asks: “How creative can a student-writer be, who must achieve a certain score out of one hundred?” Unlike academics who receive essays from their students, the Creative Writing teacher is faced with the prospect of grading material that is understood to be *in-progress* rather than *completed*, *expressed* rather than *argued*. Any Creative Writing teacher of undergraduate students who insists on “finished” or “final draft” pieces in portfolios submitted at the end of the course is misrepresenting the craft of writing (50).

Herein may be another crucial disciplinary distinction: students of literature are expected to articulate their learning in their critical writing at the semester’s conclusion, but creative writers’ speculative texts are, even at the conclusion of a semester, early drafts that may show only initial understanding of the elements of fiction.

For this reason, I assessed students on their comprehension of content via critical writing. The first half of the semester resembled at times a literature class, but we would then use the “techniques” approach to recreate literary effects in our own work. I

assessed their ability to identify formal qualities in the texts of their classmates and the published examples that we analyzed collaboratively but wrote about individually.

Nonetheless, many students wanted extensive portfolio comments regarding the quality of their speculative texts. Their answers as to why they'd requested this kind of feedback varied, but I quickly understood that despite an entire semester of collaboration and questioning<sup>xxx</sup>, they wanted an old-fashioned New Critical assessment. They wanted me, the published writer, to hold their writing against that of experienced writers.

I was exhausted at this point and did take an authoritative stance to explain that however much they believed it, they *were not* finished, only at the very beginning of the writing process. Yes, Bizzaro argues that instructors can use different lenses to read and comment on student work in progress, but I can't help but predict how frustrating these readings might be to beginning writers. How do we, beyond making them aware of their processes and what will sustain their writing, help writers realize that their drafts are indeed in-progress? In fact, creative texts may never really be finished, and the ones students read in magazines are highly packaged and in no way indicative of the hours, days, and years of revision.

It's important to consider how much beginning writers will resist, however student-centered or egalitarian, new methodologies and theories in Creative Writing. In the end, what I believe finally convinced my students of the realities of publication and the revision process was my confession that my published, packaged stories had taken years, not just of revision but conflicts with editors, instructors, and peers. It took me too long to own and begin to know my work. Confessing my specific journey certainly isn't part of an objective methodology.

But what if I didn't dismiss this moment and assert my confession as an effective writer's report, one that might have informed the late Wendy Bishop's pedagogy of weaving theories of cognition with writers' narratives about process. The anecdotes, aphorisms, and caveats of writers—the lore—have long characterized the Creative Writing classroom, but Bishop in her extensive efforts for the "coalescence of strategies employed in teaching Creative Writing with those used in teaching composition" (Bizzaro "Reconsiderations" 258) was working out a valid methodology.

As an example of how Bishop used findings of cognitivist researchers into composition to support writers' self-reports, consider briefly her treatment of revision, in which she begins by citing well-known studies by Nancy Sommers and Lillian Bridwell. She summarizes, "[e]xperienced writers [ . . . ] have a metacognitive awareness of—an ability to articulate—their revision process, while student writers, on the other hand, speak of 'cleaning up' their writing and have underdeveloped revision strategies" (Sommers and Bridwell 20 qtd in Bishop qtd in Bizzaro) In short, experienced writers are well aware of their revision strategies because revision is essential to their writing (Bizzaro "Reconsideration" 262)

Bishop was devising a new pedagogy that might be effective in explaining the revision process (among other elements of process) beyond merely saying that writing "obscures its reliance on revision" (Amato and Fleisher 20); Bishop was actually exploring internalized conventions of processes.

I leave Bizzaro's reconsideration of Bishop's pedagogy as my final example of the innovative work that comes from the fusion of practices and theories from different disciplines. Bishop believed in an ethnographic inquiry, "a research method designed to give voice to writing practitioners" (Bizzaro "Reconsiderations" 258). Although labeled as an expressivist, Bishop envisioned her inquiry into the narratives of teachers who write or writers<sup>xxxii</sup> who teach in order to provide information to all teachers of writing that she believed was "so important that writers' reports ought to serve as foundation for all pedagogies of writing" (Bizarro 257). Accordingly, I believe that the next wave of scholarship in Creative Writing studies will come from co-learning narratives and case studies in which instructors experiment with new methodologies, not as normative examples of how students and instructors respond to one another, but sites of learning that push pedagogy forward.

My classroom practices shift when aspects of new methodologies don't coalesce with conceptions (or reports) of the writing process, my own and those of different theorists. Blythe and Sweet's community method was successful in most aspects, but didn't account for what would happen if writers composed as well as revised collaboratively. Also, students didn't accept the importance of revision or the conception of their own poetics until I shared my own experiences—specifically the ones where I fell flat on my face—despite efforts to diminish my authority. These are examples of student learning in Creative Writing studies that occur simultaneously while I learn to teach. The tension

from students pushing against our pedagogies will prove useful in revising and reconsidering the discipline of Creative Writing. Haake envisions:

[t]he Creative Writing classroom as intra-and interdisciplinary site where basic questions of language and discourse can lead to transformed notions of how we know and experience not just our writing, but ourselves. Such a classroom might be conceived of as a site of bricolage, where the teacher-writer, together with her student-writers, uses everything at hand not just to make writing happen, but to do so within a critical framework that reveals writing systems and gives students authority over their own work. (Haake 18)

I certainly want to foster this environment in my own classroom but will proceed carefully, implementing new frameworks and experimenting as I can. Again, my pedagogy is a process, and in addition to working from and with the scholarship of pioneers in Creative Writing studies, I believe that collaboration (and the reflection of such) between instructors and students will further the discipline.

In “On the Reform of Creative Writing” D.G. Myers claims that Creative Writing may not be able to reform itself from within (7), but things are (or can start) happening in classrooms where Creative Writing studies instructors push the limit of our discipline by using everything—differing theories, methodologies, and pedagogical positions from literary studies, composition, and traditional Creative Writing lore—at hand. Specifically, Creative Writing Ph.D. candidates are in a fortuitous position to immerse themselves in all aspects of English studies while they complete the requirements of their degrees, begin their scholarly inquiries, and fulfill their teaching assistantships. Indeed, the Ph.D. candidacy might be an ideal time to do Creative Writing studies work because candidates can move relatively easily between the different, sometimes very divided, factions of English departments. Nonetheless Tim Mayers contemplates:

I am well aware that graduate students who might be drawn to Creative Writing studies at this time face a dilemma: time spent on Creative Writing studies scholarship is time not spent on the production and publication of fiction and poetry, and in some cases, that might hamper a student’s already slim chances of landing an academic job some day. (“One Simple Word” 226)

I confess to have let my novel cool the past two months to pursue seminar papers and this study. I know the risks, but I persist and assert the importance of Creative Writing studies scholarship. At this time professional regard for my “accomplishments in teaching” is not equal to “those in publishing” as Mayers claims these eventually should be (“One Simple Word” 225). Nonetheless, until this is (and even if it is never) true, a

great deal of my research *directly* informs my teaching in the Creative Writing classroom, which is certainly not a waste, even if it translates into accomplishments that go unrecognized by administrators.

Mayers puts the “task of advocating the value of Creative Writing studies” first of all in the hands of those already tenured (“One Simple Word” 226), but those of us with sincere teaching aspirations will research, experiment, and implement the new methodologies by virtue of commitment to their pedagogy; reform *will* come from within. Students then, in turn, who learn in our classrooms not just what but *how* they are being taught, will come to understand that Creative Writing studies can offer learning beyond how to publish or mimic a mentor; they will gain “the experience, materials, and framework within which they can define the guiding questions that will sustain writing through the rest of their lives” (Haake 19).

Just as there are unfair assumptions as to the goals of creative writers in undergraduate classrooms (Haake 54), Ph.D. creative writers have been accused of self-imposed isolation, uniformed teaching practices, and everything else Sanders claims of our predecessors in the academy. I would argue that rising Creative Writing academics can contribute to all aspect of their departments and “*pursue* this hybridity” (Andrews 250). Kimberly Andrews’ argument in “A House Divided: On the Future of Creative Writing” is for a blended discourse combining craft and literary scholarship, which she admits to inadvertently finding and then seeking. Similarly, Katharine Haake admits to “back[ing] [her] way in” when it came to incorporating theory into her classroom (52). She explains that, as a doctoral candidate, theory

taught me how to think and talk about my work within the workshop, and thus provided a much-needed framework within which to pursue certain writing directions [ . . . ] Theory gave me permission to hold on to what I was trying out [ . . . ] Not that I ever really felt I *understood* theory the way I was supposed to, but in private it was such a great relief to know that I didn’t *have* to be an author, to begin to understand what it might mean to call writing an intransitive act, to recognize stories as convention-driven and ideologically charged, to have access to a language that explained things. (53)

Haake believes that theoretical frameworks belong “in the hands of the least powerful among us—our students, including undergrads, whose life choices should be based on something more substantive and ‘reality’-based than the compelling urge to ‘express’ themselves” (49). Although, Haake doesn’t appear to begin to import theory until

arriving at her tenure track position, her engagement with theoretical frameworks during her Ph.D. training opened-up and continue to illuminate her teaching. There will be more narratives about instructors who begin the work of re-conceiving Creative Writing based on inquiries begun during graduate training,. I really do believe that graduate students in Creative Writing with concern for classroom authority, community, critical engagement, social responsibility, educations as such, poesis, and content and form (Amato and Fleisher 17) will also find their way to “a critical vocabulary that can both align itself and evolve with the vocabulary of literary scholars, rhetoricians, and composition specialists” (Andrews 252).

Just as innovators in Creative Writing studies blend methodologies, theories, and practices from other disciplines in English departments, rising doctors of Creative Writing might come to consider their work in the academy as the ultimate fusion of English disciplines, or what Mayers calls a compromise.

Because Creative Writing studies has points of overlap with both composition studies and literary studies, while maintaining distinctive character of its own, it may harbor the roots of an institutional compromise in which the union between composition and literature does not involve one side winning and the other side losing, but rather both enterprises begin transformed so that they can meet on heretofore unimagined ground. (“One Simple Word” 227)

Mayers admits that this unimagined ground in English departments may be too fantastic a place given the traditional tensions, but compromise may not need to come from departmental mandates. Again, rising academics can engage in hybridity individually. In addition to creative writers who pursue composition and literary studies, I’ve encountered more than a few literature candidates who will confess to also producing creative texts or at one time even pursuing Creative Writing in degree-granting programs. I think with closer consideration, and with more contributions from those of us on the front lines, we’ll see hybridity and fusions coming from all angles.

Again, what is it that creative writers get from their doctoral degree? We learn academic discourse, how to theoretically situate our work and teaching, and are exposed to all the strands of our departments—a nexus that nourishes our scholarship, creative texts, teaching, and continued inquires into all of these. I’d worried at one point that as my research continued and deepened I’d correspondingly fall farther into despair upon learning that the job market is bleak for any Ph.D., but it is specifically so for Ph.D.s on

the fringes without defined roles in English departments. Nonetheless, ambiguity is an opportunity, for myself and the rising generation of doctors of Creative Writing studies, to create our own places and begin the work of reform that will ensure the discipline's survival and maybe even that of English studies.

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<sup>i</sup> Sanders covers what Katharine Haake calls “the most familiar head-in-the sand territory, arguing against what he perceives as the elevation of either theorist or reader (take your pick) over the author, whose death he continues to lament” (“If the Shoe Fits” 1994 version in Bishop and Ostrum 83). I engage Haake’s interpretation of Sanders because her work exemplifies what a doctor of Creative Writing can achieve, and she specifically incorporates theory in her classroom and scholarship. To Sanders’ claims that theory turns writers to puppets on strings of ideology, that we should concentrate on “artistic criteria,” and that language is a means to freedom (83)—Haake points out that “language is a tricky thing, and only those who have not experienced its treacheries can be complacent about the freedom it allows us” (84). Haake then questions whose “artistic criteria” Sanders means.

<sup>ii</sup> I’m responding to Shirley Geok-lin Lim’s “The Strangeness of Creative Writing: An Institutional Query” in which she separates Creative Writing at the graduate and undergraduate level; the purpose of Creative Writing in the latter is “developmental” (156). Like many scholars she advocates “programmatically and intellectual integration into the profession” (165). She questions the training of Ph.D. creative writers in the context of all English doctoral candidates, while noting this is fluid and generationally dependent, just like what we mean “when we do English” (159). She articulates some common understandings of doctoral training in English “that include certain methodological practices—bibliographic skills, and shared philosophical bases: an epistemology weighted toward hermeneutics rather than mere empiricism, theoretical embeddedness and reflexivity, the significance of language as symbolic action and /or social transaction, and so forth. When we say that we train our doctoral students to undertake certain reading practices and to think critically, we usually refer to this kind of disciplinary base” (158-9).

<sup>iii</sup> Here I mean, graduate students who enter Ph.D. programs. I’m not referring to those who pursue the M.F.A. as a strictly studio degree.

<sup>iv</sup> I only feel authorized to speak to my peers, but the root of the problem may be “creative writers who have effectively separated themselves from the discipline of English studies while remaining, nominally, under the umbrella of the English department and thereby enjoy the privileges available in such a position” (Mayers “Figuring the Future” 11). Tim Mayers, in this 2007 article, asks these writers to come out and “join a fascinating conversation” about pedagogy. Discussion of the isolated, ‘workshop only’ creative writer are common, but seem to still be relevant. Mayers confirms my vision of graduate students’ job frontiers and continues his appeal: “And if you teach graduate students, consider the alarming shortage of academic jobs that allow for the teaching of Creative Writing only. Most of your students who find employment in the academy will have to teach something else in addition to, or instead of, Creative Writing (“Figuring the Future” 11).

<sup>v</sup> I recall a conversation with another Creative Writing Ph.D. candidate who engages in pedagogical research where we came to the agreement that some of the stuff we historically do in our Creative Writing classrooms, the lore we learned from our teachers, actually *works*. What

does that mean in the context of Creative Writing reform? Ritter and Vanderslice's most recent compilation *Can It Really Be Taught; Resisting Lore in Creative Writing Pedagogy* begins the work of unpacking all this lore—whether good or bad, works or doesn't—"to *not* just to say [that lore is uncomplicated utterances, because it is in fact very powerful]; it is to question, to provoke, to account for and, ultimately, to endanger the propagation of unexamined lore in our Creative Writing classroom" (xix). Unexamined lore may not have a place in our future classrooms, but lore may never not be a part of Creative Writing studies.

Finally, examinations of the anecdote as lore become more interesting as storytelling becomes not only common and acceptable in scholarship but also valued as a method of inquiry. Nancy Grimm asks us to consider that "writing center narratives can offer more complicated understandings of the literacies necessary for a new world order with attention to social justice" (7). This can also be true of stories outside of the writing center. In this way, multiple voices can also participate. I also consider Wendy Bishop's work using the reports of individual writer/teachers to merge expressivist rhetoric with social epistemic and "teach writing from a variety of sources, not all of them sanctioned yet by the profession [ . . . ] (Bizzaro "A Reconsideration of Wendy Bishop" 267).

vi It would be a course "which blurs the boundaries of discourses and foregrounds, 'social responsibility'" and "would allow for multiple kinds of writing (and reading and talking) rather than relying only upon those language activities that merely aim for 'finished' student poems or stories [ . . . ] The analysis [an inclusion of analytical writing, rather than just intuitive] may or may not begin from New Critical roots of learning methods of composition, but it also extends away from the text into textual and cultural critique as one way to facilitate the growth of writers' consciousnesses and to help prepare an informed citizenry" (Kalamaras 81).

vii Counterhegemonic is a term from bell hooks meaning that spaces for resistance to dominant cultural and social viewpoints, practices, and organization can be created and claimed.

viii The first tier of this research would consider skills specific to creative writers that may be common to other branches of English but differ at the epistemological level. Writers read differently, garner material from observation of our surroundings, have the ability to interpret history and navigate sources through multiple lenses, respect process, understand audience, and "are adept at employing various genres" (Bizzaro "Research and Reflection" 301-3).

ix There were four specific Creative Writing pedagogy courses in 2001 (Ritter "Revamping" 218). I await further research to see where we are now.

x David Starkey laments his lack of pedagogical preparation in "The MFA Graduate as Composition Instructor: A Self Analysis", and like Mayers in "One Simple Word", argues for the division of creative writers at the masters level between those who wish to only work on craft and those with teaching aspirations. He states, "It is inexcusable for Creative Writing teachers to ignore the many advances that rhetoric and composition researchers have made, but tenured faculty have little incentive to 'muck about' in composition theory. As Shelnut points out, they are too busy defending their own citadels to spend time in the castle of anyone else" (252).

Starkey, Mayers, and Shelnut all indict creative writers who benefit from their isolation. The shape of these conversations is important to note. Shelnut is a founding critic in Joseph Moxley's *Creative Writing In America: Theory and Pedagogy*, of 1989. Starkey uses Shelnut's "Notes from a Cell: Creative Writing Programs in Isolation" to scaffold his argument against writers who support the status quo. In 2009, Mayers cites Starkey and then argues that "[t]he

task of advocating the value of Creative Writing studies must fall, first of all, on those who are already tenured” (226). Also see Bizarro’s advocacy of the “pioneers” earlier in this paper.

Much has changed since Lardner’s 1999 claim that “[i]n pedagogical texts, Creative Writing teachers too rarely cite each other’s work. There is no ‘discipline’ there” (74). Nonetheless, there’s a pattern of needing support from one another to assert that those with power in Creative Writing, what some would call the older generation (see Ritter “Revamping Teacher Training” 216), are the ones to blame, lead, or both. Indeed, criticizing the same creative writers who may have enabled the ascents’ of these advocates of Creative Writing studies—and also that of those who seek to replace the old guard as the new breed of academic practitioners—is tricky. It’s also arguable cowardly when placed in an endnote.

<sup>xi</sup> For example, I wrote an inquiry into the place of Creative Writing in the writing center for my writing center theory seminar paper; for critical theory my final project considered Katharine Haake’s application of feminist pedagogy (mostly arguing Irigaray’s influence), Derrida’s the supplementary, and the female sentence. Both professors in composition and critical theory, were entirely supportive.

<sup>xii</sup> Generally, this option is a semester of classroom observation, entails small conferences with the experienced instructor, and there are the *possibilities* of co-teaching or written reflection. Again, the structure of the apprenticeship depends on the tenured instructor.

<sup>xiii</sup> Peter Vandenberg discusses the potential applications of composition’s postprocess theory in Creative Writing to challenge the conventional “bracketing” of “defined literary genres” (“Afterword” 108) as well as studying Creative Writing “as a function of the places where it is learned as well as where it is deployed; we are sure to hear much about Creative Writing as a *situated practice*. Signifying as it does an expanded attention beyond the individual writer’s cognitive processes, postprocess theory will open up Creative Writing to the notion of positionality, ‘those markers of identity—such as gender, race, class, ableness, sexual orientation, and so on—that are either physically apparent or culturally constructed at a level so basic that they impact social relations in nearly every context we occupy’” (Vandenberg et al. 14 qtd in Vandenberg 108)

<sup>xiv</sup> “Certainty, like mastery, begins a closing down of what is possible, and in general is as bad for teaching as it is for writing” (Haake 38).

<sup>xv</sup> In *Creative Writing and the New Humanities* Paul Dawson cites international dialogues in journals and complete texts that take on theory although he fails to recognize valid contributions in *College English* and *College Composition and Communication*. In his chapter “Negotiating Theory” he continues: “Rather than maintaining a division between writers and critics, the new industry sees both as teachers, and has been concerned with understanding the place of Creative Writing in the contemporary humanities as an academic discipline, and hence with negotiating contemporary critical practices to devise not just new pedagogical approaches to the teaching of writing, but new ways of contributing to Literary Studies via Creative Writing.” (160).

Indeed, scholars consider the implications of New Criticism, Expressivism, and reader-and-text theories, but most critical methodologies are ill-fitting argues Mike Harris. “Critical reading, to be sure, is part of writing in both research and revision but it’s not the same kind of critical reading that a literature student or literary critic does. This is because it has a different purpose. The text writers read most of all is their own text, which isn’t finished yet. They read it over and over again as they revise: constantly changing it in the hopes of making it better. [ . . . ] If it is difficult to see how studying the reading methods of literary criticism is going to help writing

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students, it's even harder to see what possible uses might be the study of reader-and-text theory that has nothing to say about composition. Even Marxist theorists (who see writing correctly, as productive work) aren't interested in the actual production process of writers, no doubt because it can seem dangerously individualist" (35-6).

Harris points to an important disconnection between traditional literary studies and Creative Writing and concludes that "[i]f we want theories that do fit, I fear we may have to invent our own" (45) in order to describe what it is that creative writers do. While we've moved past the Creative Writing and theory either/or debates, we need to really consider how applicable some theories are. He has a point, but I believe that more can be done with traditional critical theory in the context of Creative Writing; moving past established theories so quickly might be a mistake.

<sup>xvi</sup> See Bizzaro "Research and Reflection in English Studies: The Special Case of Creative Writing" 296.

<sup>xvii</sup> Mary Ann Cain writes of the disciplines expansion during the 60s and 70s: "Creative Writing positioned itself as encouraging the development of unique individual voices that, by their very presence, would transform culture—the logic being that just being different was enough. And for those who struggled to put Creative Writing on the academic map, it's not hard to understand that logic, as it fell in line with the identity politics of the times; by its very presence, Creative Writing would provide the proverbial thorn in the side, the philosophical counterpoint that would (presumably) make the rest of the academy take note, maybe even wince from time to time—a reminder that education was supposed to be about living, not just how to make a living" ("To Be Lived" 231).

<sup>xviii</sup> See Peter Vandenberg's "Integrated Programmes in American Universities: Whither Creative Writing?"

<sup>xix</sup> See Blythe and Sweet's "The Writing Community: A New Model for the Creative Writing Classroom" for elaboration and analysis into the implications of each methodology.

<sup>xx</sup> See Wendy Bishop's *Released Into Language*.

<sup>xxi</sup> See Pennisi and Lawler's "Without a Net: Collaborative Writing" in Bishop and Ostrum.

<sup>xxii</sup> See Amato and Fleisher "Reforming Creative Writing Pedagogy: History as Knowledge, Knowledge as Activism" 46.

<sup>xxiii</sup> "The first half of the course was presented in the manner of a traditional graduate seminar (e.g., individual students taking the lead with reports)" (Blythe and Sweet 318). Although, the authors don't cite it, this is another methodology for conveying content that arguable comes from Jane Tompkins' "Pedagogy of the Distressed" in which Tompkins relinquishes models of authority and performance in the classroom and makes "students responsible for presenting the material to the class for most of the semester" (656). (See Anna Leahy's *Power and Identity in the Creative Writing Classroom: The authority project* for additional models and theories for dismantling authority.) I wonder if an adaptation of this methodology, one that gives students both agency and support, might be appropriate in the undergraduate classroom. I believe introducing students to the isolated elements that constitute

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a form or genre is valuable; beginning writers need to understand conventions of form in order to join the conversation and make discourse transparent. Assigning these presentations to undergraduates deserves further inquiry.

<sup>xxiv</sup> I must admit, that I didn't get to see as much as I'd liked since I opted to join (with the permission of the two remaining group members) one of the trios when a student dropped the class due to illness. The effects of sharing my own work and completely relinquishing authority—what was the closest I've ever come to a feminist pedagogy—are topics of inquiry that I plan to explore in additional papers. Throughout the course I'd participated in group-work and written from the same prompts I offered to students, but I had not planned on joining the community method groups. I will say that the experience was a positive one in terms of the group dynamics and the revisions I was inspired to make in my work; nonetheless, students from other groups did not see my focused collaboration with one group as fair.

<sup>xxv</sup> Haake explains rationale for her application of Derrida's supplementary: "[I]magine how much more difficult [than linguistic students] it may be for Creative Writing students to relinquish their ideas of the primacy of self and expression, and to accept the basic concept of language as a signifying system that does not point outside itself to something else, but is instead organized according to arbitrary relations of similarity, opposition, and placement. [ . . . ] It is a simulacrum [to view language as an object or material they work with] that, once introduced, allows us to move beyond prior notions of writing. In such a context, for example, it becomes possible to talk about Derrida's logic of "supplementary" [ . . . ] as a logic of writing. Because of the focus on finished, meaning product, throughout the educational system, writing often seems somehow static to students, as if it exists in an idealized form prior to its coming into being. Like the Derridean 'center,' this idealized writing does not exist, and to recognize this absence is to make play possible for student writers. Derrida writes, 'One cannot determine the center and exhaust totalization because the sign which replaces the center, which supplements it, taking the center's place in its absence—this sign added, occurs as a surplus, as a *supplement*. The movement of signification adds something, which results in the fact that there is always more . . . ' (119). Writing, as I teach in conjunction with this reading, is a process of "burrowing," of learning to pay attention to the 'always more,' and to respond to its imperative with inevitably, more writing" (56).

<sup>xxvi</sup> Harris likens theorizing to "jumping on a sinking ship" (35) given this age of Post Theory (34).

<sup>xxvii</sup> Blythe and Sweet speculate that young writers need to know what to do with "all that great imagination, those stimulating images, and those visions [ . . . ]" (312). They don't cite this wisdom but agree on the same page that "You Can't make Jell-O without a mold."

<sup>xxviii</sup> See Bishop's "Contracts, Radical Revision, Portfolios, and the Risks of Writing" in Leahy for some practical methods to accommodate diverse student goals.

<sup>xxix</sup> Interestingly, in a later draft of this essay appearing in *What Our Speech Disrupts*, Haake edits down the version (of the same title) that appears in Bishop and Ostrum's *Colors of a Different Horse*. Haake explains in the preface of the later draft that she was conflicted by authority and framed her arguments in more "familiar ways" (42) at the beginning of her journey (42). An inquiry into these edits, as part of Bizzaro's second strain of CW research, might reveal concerns that change and shape an evolving CW pedagogy.

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<sup>xxx</sup> See Bishop in Leahy, Rebecca O'Rourke's "Creative Writing as a Site of Pedagogic Identity and Pedagogic Learning", and Greenberg also in Leahy.

<sup>xxxi</sup> This is an explanation for another substantial paper. Using research in writing center theory, specifically Boquet's conceptions of feedback, dissonance, and improvisation, I believe that I transported effective one-with-one collaboration from the writing center, where I also worked ten hours per week last semester. I developed lines of questioning that prevented appropriation.

<sup>xxxii</sup> "[. . .] she tended to reserve the term 'writers' for people in the field [of composition studies] who strongly identified themselves as such and whose prose not only discusses processes of writing but also shows devotion to stylistic craft" (Bizzaro "A Reconsideration" 257).

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