



## Abstracts from the 2016 Creative Writing Studies Conference

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The Creative Writing Studies Organization (CWSO) held its inaugural conference September 23rd and 24th of 2016 at Warren Wilson College in Asheville, North Carolina, with conference papers and sessions focusing on creative writing and pedagogy; history; qualitative and quantitative research; the digital and multimodal; diversity and inclusion; professionalization and labor; theory, craft, and culture; and social action. The keynote speaker was Dianne Donnelly, author of creative writing studies texts such as *Establishing Creative Writing Studies As An Academic Discipline* and *Does the Writing Workshop Still Work?*. The conference attracted CWSO members from across the country eager to connect at this first event. Our vision for this first conference was to provide inclusive and accessible space to hold the difficult conversations and present the research not often supported at other creative writing conferences. To that end, I contacted scholars who work at the intersection of disability studies and creative writing studies, scholars who work on issues of race and creative writing studies, and scholars who work on LGBTQIA issues and creative writing. I invited certain proposals and made space for plenary sessions focusing on this work at the inaugural meeting. I've also been working with a group of undergraduate volunteers who served the conference as access advocates and who are now working to close caption video of the conference, which we intend to post on our website.

I have two primary values I hold as a co-founder of this organization. The first is radical accessibility. I'm proud we have an open-access journal and that the scholars in this field are committed to that. I want our conference to include as many voices as possible and to pay attention to how best to include creative writing studies scholars who may be financially or physically unable to travel to the conference's physical meeting. Our conversations are better—more fraught, more nuanced, more contradictory, more rigorous—when we include underrepresented voices.

My other primary goal has been to distinguish our aims at this conference from the work other conferences already do very well. We wanted to hold a space for scholars and teachers whose work doesn't always fit well in the programming of traditional writing conferences.

As you can see from the abstracts of the 2016 conference presentations, we succeeded in beginning to offer that space for scholarly conversations. We have more to do, and we're excited to

learn as we go. Our second annual conference is scheduled for November 2017 and will include the eight conference tracks from the 2016 meeting, as well as a conference theme of Creative Writing Studies in Trump's USA, in the hopes that we as scholars and teachers might engage in the messy and necessary conversation about what Trump's presidency and policies, as well as the rise of white nationalism, means for our nascent discipline. I hope you'll consider joining us!

Rachel Haley Himmelheber,  
Conference Chair, Co-founder of CWSO

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### Teaching the Undergraduate Literary Magazine

Janelle Adsit, Humboldt State University

The presentation argues that the editing of literary magazines can be central to the creative writing curriculum, as students draw upon craft principles, aesthetic theories, and communities-of-practice approaches (Nelson & Cole) in the journal's curation, design, production, and circulation process. The presentation provides an overview of the two courses associated with Toyon, Humboldt State University's Multilingual Journal of Literature and Art established in 1954. Students who participate in these courses use digital humanities tools (Adam Koehler) including BePress Digital Commons, website-building platforms, and archival and digitization software in special collections to narrate the history of the journal. Students interrogate the contingencies of literary value (Barbara Herrnstein Smith), the uses of literature for different audiences (Marjorie Garber), and the value and potential of community publishing (Mathieu, Parks, & Rousculp). In turn, they develop professional skills that translate readily to work in literary citizenship, community publishing, and creative writing.

### Twilight of the Vanity Press: The Case of BlazeVOX

Julie Alexander

Authorial legitimacy is complicated and challenged by the variety of alternative publishing models that exist beyond print-based commercial and scholarly publishing. In networked spaces, text is perceived as impermanent and changeable, as opposed to print's stasis and stability (Lanham, 1993, Bolter, 2001). Because ideas of authorship are

linked to text, this results in changes to the conceptualization of authorship as well (Landow, 2006).

In this presentation, I tell the story of the small press BlazeVOX which was embroiled in a controversy stemming from the press's resistance to traditional publication models. BlazeVOX made two distinct choices: they chose to publish collections of poetry using a cooperative model, and they chose to publish collections of poetry electronically as Kindle e-books. Both choices were rejected and deemed "not legitimate" by vocal members of the poetry community, causing BlazeVOX to temporarily shut down. Further, the National Endowment for the Arts, in a controversial 2011 ruling, declared that poets who had had their collections published by BlazeVOX were not eligible for NEA individual artist grants. The NEA's justification for this was that BlazeVOX was, in fact, a vanity press, a press that publishes authors' books for a fee, instead of on the basis of editorial merit.

I examine the implications of all of this fallout, asking such questions as what is legitimacy in poetry publishing? What publication choices make one a "real poet?" What do digital publication models have to do with authorial legitimacy in general?

### Craft and Identity in the Introductory Creative Writing Classroom

Julie Babcock

As Myers notes in *The Elephants Teach*, there is a gulf between those in higher education who believe creative writing is a place to understand literature and literary devices, and those who want students to understand and participate in literature as a social practice. This talk draws on the Associated Writing Program's recent "AWP Recommendations on the Teaching of Creative Writing to Undergraduates" and recent university mission statements to provide an overview of the ways this segregation is currently being administered at the undergraduate level. It also situates these facts in conversation with scholars and writers like Brent Royster and Junot Diaz, who advocate for the need to include social practice conversations into creative writing curriculum; and writers like Mary Ruefle, who remind us of how differently creative writing must position itself from composition in the ways it approaches social practice. In her essay "On Secrets," she argues that, "the origins of poetry are clearly rooted in obscurity, in secretiveness, in incantation, in spells that must at once invoke and protect, tell the secret and keep it."

This talk also offers pedagogical strategies that make use of hybridity in order to help introductory students explore the places where writing as craft and writing as a social practice productively overlap. Excerpts from student-written, hybrid-form chapbooks in an Introductory Creative Writing course at University of Michigan will be provided.

## Multiplicity of Identities in Asian-American Literature: Immigrant Identities in Constant Flux

Cinelle Barnes

This lecture explores the meaning of hybridity or multiplicity, and the essence of such themes in Asian American immigrant literature. Discussed are questions of identity, personal and cultural, and the ambiguities that drive Asian-American narratives forward. These contradictions shape the Asian-American author's perspective in books such as Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*.

"Multiplicity" and "hybridity" are used interchangeably in this discussion. Both refer to the immigrant's culturally mixed identity as the contrasting forces of assimilation and nativism create an intermediate space: a multifaceted identity affected by vertical factors known to fiction writers as "motivations."

The Asian-American author writes from the tension between being Asian and being American and all that's in between: color, socioeconomics, education, sexuality, politics, religion, etc. – exhibiting the conflict that makes narrators and characters recognizable as belonging to the contradictory human race. The Asian-American author produces literature that mirrors such multiplicities and ambiguities through voice, content, form, character, and many other literary devices. The immigrant writer constantly crosses cultural spaces while ultimately speaking to the universal by posing the question, "Who am I?"

## In the Group Home: Disenfranchised Youth and Creative Writing Workshop as Intervention

Alyse Bense

Nationwide, creative writing outreach programs, such as Writers in the Schools (WITS) and the PEN Prison Writing Program, serve schools, prisons, local community centers, and shelters. Administered by writing organizations or faculty and students from nearby institutions of higher learning, these programs empower participants through active involvement in workshops, which act as outlets for self-expression. However, scant attention has been paid to how such programs can serve as an intervention for at-risk youth living in group homes or as part of aftercare treatment. This marginalized and disadvantaged population consists of over 100,000 children in daily foster or group care, with 80% of those youth exhibiting clinical behavioral problems (Lee and Thompson 32). Such obstacles within this population present challenges when establishing programs. However, writing organizations and universities should prioritize the group home setting. Interventions through creative writing workshops can potentially help participants regain a sense of control through non-verbal creative outlets as well as

improve their communication skills (Edgar-Bailey and Kress 162-163).

Creative writing pedagogy for at-risk youth and prison programs strives to continuously maintain the humanity and dignity of its participants and argues for workshop facilitators to accompany, rather than instruct youth (Appleman 25; Sepúlveda 551). These approaches can be coupled with expressive writing strategies—which may "circumvent repressive mechanisms," encourage talking and sharing, and promote self-esteem—and psychoanalytic pedagogy, which advocates that "writing can be therapeutic and, therefore, more meaningful for the student in the long term" (Lauer and Goldman 250-251; Harris 182). James W. Pennebaker has found that "translating experiences into language" improves emotional and physical health (8). Furthermore, expressive writing contributes to emotion regulation, which desensitizes writers to traumatic and difficult events (Kliwer et al. 694).

While not necessarily trained psychologists, program organizers can still utilize these strategies. Methods such as Richard Gold's Pongo Teen Writing Method can effectively train mentors who develop programs in coordination with group homes. Through a discussion of these pedagogies and existing programs, this article aims to promote future alliances between group homes and facilitating organizations in order to foster interdisciplinary cooperation and develop programs for positive social change.

## "We Need To Talk: A New Method for Evaluating Poetry"

Bob Broad, Professor of English, Illinois State University

Michael Theune, Illinois Wesleyan University

People evaluate poetry all the time: teachers, editors, contest judges, readers, and—certainly not least of all—poets. And yet there is a hunger to explore more meaningfully how poetry gets evaluated, a drive to seek not only assessments but also the thinking behind those assessments. (To cite just one example, in "Show Your Work!," an essay written for the Poetry Foundation, poet and editor Matthew Zapruder states that he is "much more interested in the kind of thinking that led to the judgments of quality than the judgments themselves.") However, efforts to explore the evaluation of poetry so far have been hindered by certain limiting assumptions and methods. Key among them is the fact that when evaluation is actually investigated, it is typically explored using standard humanities methods: a scholar sits in solitude, examines texts, and writes to the world about her insights.

The evaluation of poetry does not, and need not, always take place in solitude, nor always in print. Rather, it often is a social practice, the result of interactions among a group of evaluators, such as judges, editors, teachers. And, fortunately, other investigative methods are available, and necessary, and in our presentation we will recommend one: Dynamic Criteria Mapping (DCM). The phrase "Dynamic Criteria Mapping" was introduced in

Bob Broad's 2003 book *What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing*. Broad describes DCM as "a streamlined form of qualitative inquiry that yields a detailed, complex, and useful portrait" of the criteria and dynamics by which people evaluate texts. DCM invites assessors—scholars, editors, teachers, workshop participants—to listen as they examine and evaluate texts together, discussing in detail what they value or do not value in those texts. As numerous qualitative researchers note, face-to-face interactions yield increased spontaneity, volatility, surprise, drama, humanity, civility, fluidity, responsiveness. DCM then analyzes the record of this conversation in order to publish a map, a rich description, of their textual and contextual values. Our presentation will offer a scholarly framework and a practical method that allows communities of people who care about verse to explore, illuminate, negotiate, and reveal to the rest of the world how they assess poetry. Not only will these poetic-evaluative communities benefit from conducting such empirical inquiries, we will argue, they also have ethical and professional responsibilities to do so.

### Place-Based Pedagogy and the Creative Writing Classroom

Jennifer Case, University of Central Arkansas

Place studies has recently emerged as a promising, interdisciplinary field within the environmental humanities, offering a shared forum for the study of human-environment relationships, whether those environments are natural, built, social, or cultural. James Engelhardt and Jeremy Schraffenberger's "Ecological Creative Writing," published in the recent anthology *Creative Writing Pedagogies for the Twenty-First Century*, situates creative writing studies within that dialogue by analyzing the ways that creative writing pedagogy can contribute to students' ecological understandings and environmental engagement. However, although Engelhardt and Schraffenberger's groundbreaking overview successfully demonstrates how an ecological creative writing can decenter human concerns, promote ecological consciousness, avoid eco-nostalgia, and establish a dynamic exchange between science and art, what "Ecological Creative Writing" achieves in breadth, it lacks in depth. In particular, Engelhardt and Schraffenberger fail to fully engage place-based composition, a discipline that has long explored the difficulties and complexities of getting students to care about environment and "place" in a culture that values global, transferable skills. As the renowned environmental educator David Orr writes, "We should worry a good bit less about whether our progeny will be able to compete as a 'world-class workforce' and a great deal more about whether they will know how to live sustainably on the earth"—an appeal place-based compositionist Robert Brooke picks up when he argues that "to become more relevant," writing education "must become more closely linked to the local, to the spheres of action and influence which most of us experience" (4-5). Such statements have led place-based compositionists such as Derek Owens, Eric Ball, and Alicia Lai to develop curriculum that, rather than harm local communities through its

"(trans)national agenda," becomes "accountable" to those communities by validating local subject matter and local experiences as worthy of—and indeed, necessary to—academic inquiry (Ball and Lai 282).

A more focused and thorough examination of place-based composition is critical to creative writing pedagogy because the tension between the local and global also manifests itself in our classrooms when we encourage creative writing students to "write what you know" while simultaneously conducting workshops as if a successful piece should have national or even international, rather than regional, appeal. As a result, this presentation will situate creative writing studies firmly in conversation with place-based pedagogy by asking the following: What assumptions about "place" does contemporary creative writing studies, along with the contemporary publishing industry, reveal? How are these assumptions influencing our classrooms? How might we borrow from place-based composition and place-based pedagogy to challenge and expand the ways in which we, as creative writers, engage and teach place-based creative writing?

### Sequential Thinking in Creative Nonfiction

Michael Dean Clark, Azusa Pacific University

Discussions about Creative Writing pedagogy more often than not skew towards one of two areas: larger philosophical frameworks within which the field must operate or individual assignments writ large through an extensive discussion of rationale and generally anecdotal outcomes. One often-overlooked facet of pedagogy is the power of sequencing, at least in terms of centering the practice critically. In many cases, nonfiction is an engrained set of practices that students have only ever experienced as a form driven, expository classroom exercise. And, rather than creating unconscious scripts in their minds as previously thought, these experiences become like intellectual muscle memory that, unless challenged, student writers will default to. As that perspective is the antithesis of creative nonfiction—and many academic forms, to be honest—building courses on a framework of assignments that challenge and broaden their interaction with other forms is imperative. The following, then, is an exploration of the way in which courses can be productively designed to elicit writing experiences rather than products, focusing not merely on the end results of that process, but also the specific steps through which those results are achieved. To accomplish this, this presentation will look at course design from three different theoretical locations. The first is an intersection between Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's work on gatekeepers in the process of creative production and Robert Epstein's drawdown of new neuropsychological understandings regarding memory. These ideas, brought in contact with theoretical notions of the practice of Creative Nonfiction from practitioners such as Eula Biss, Ander Monson, T Clutch Fleischmann, and others, create opportunities to unpack what course sequences should look to encourage in practice and in practical pedagogy. And finally, sample

sequences built around exemplar essays like Ann Carson's "Glass Essay," Monson's "Vair Dire," and Jeff Sharlet's "The Invisible Man: The End of a Black Life That Mattered" illustrate this theoretical approach in practice.

### Difficult Students in the Creative Writing Classroom

Audrey Colombe, Lisa Norris, and Patricia Jabbeh Wesley

Not much research has been done on students who wish to engage the creative writing classroom on the topic of violence. Discussions about re-shaping the traditional workshop (Can it Really be Taught, Power and Identity in the Creative Writing Classroom, ReThinking Creative Writing in Higher Education), racism in creative writing programs (Claudia Rankine's 2016 AWP address, Junot Diaz's "M.F.A. vs P.O.C.") and the legality of privacy issues in student or professional fiction, poetry, and nonfiction (The Private I: Privacy in a Public World, "Peering at Privacy in the Creative Writing Classroom") touch on related areas. Most students writing violence are engaging in a cultural fascination with aggression, whether they realize it or not. The same can be said of problematic classroom behavior—hostility is not uncommon. Vanderslice's Teaching Creative Writing to Undergraduates makes brief reference to hostility in the classroom, but guides for new faculty seem to avoid direct, uncomfortable mention. New teachers of creative writing, and particularly women, are frequently the arbiters—even unintentionally—when students with mental or behavioral issues present problematic texts for discussion, review, or a grade. Furthermore, when supervising new creative writing faculty, the discussions on a teacher's personal approach (along with the timing and manner of enforcing university policies such as F.E.R.P.A.) can help or hinder an attempt to de-escalate a tough

situation. Occasionally the issues go beyond the classroom and into university administration offices. Three presenters will reference their experiences in university creative writing programs (particularly the creative writing classroom), with disruption and disruption policies, as well as the atypical occurrences (death threats, gun violence, criminal confessions).

### Reimagining the Cyborg: Crafting New Environmental Fiction

Michelle Donahue

Writing does not occur in a vacuum; it both affects and is affected by its cultural and environmental landscape. Current writers are writing during a time of rapid technological progress and environmental change, and so their writing reflects these trends. Yet pro-technology and pro-environmentalist texts so often seem incompatible. Donna Haraway's and N. Katherine Hayles' posthumanist theories identify a cyborg world that values pattern over presence, technology over material objects. Environmentalism, however, values the material world—the ecosystem and all of its biotic and abiotic components. Indeed, some environmentalist theorists, like Jane Bennett, even argue for vital materialism, the belief that non-human entities, such as animals, metals, and plants, are quasi-agents that have their own potentials and trajectories. In *The Environmental Imagination*, Lawrence Buell outlines four key traits of environmental texts. Such texts must feature the non-human environment beyond a human-framing device, depict non-human interests as legitimate, have an ethical orientation that holds humans accountable to the environment, and understand the environment as a process rather than a given constant. In contrast to environmental texts, technology-centric fiction—typically, but not exclusively, dystopian or science fiction work—often have an ethical orientation that views technology as the solution to protect humanity, but ignores the protection of non-human life. Examples of these works include "Omegahelm" by Samuel R. Delaney, and *Interstellar*, directed by Christopher Nolan. Environmental narratives, such as *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood and *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy, often vilify technology or overlook the potential of technology to save the material world. Technological advancements and environmental protection need not be competing enterprises. Environmental writing would benefit from embracing technology, just as much as technology-centric work would benefit from valuing the material world. To craft more inclusive, ethical environmental fiction, a writer must reimagine the cyborg in order to create texts that value technology and the environment. Humans live in a world affected by both technology and environmental destruction, so our texts should more frequently reflect these potentially competing interests. Texts with ethical orientations that value technology and the environment have the potential to provide more nuanced insights into environmental and human crises than texts that value one entity over the other.

## Adding Seats at the Table: The Importance of Collaboration between Secondary and College Creative Writing Teachers

Chris Drew

Creative writing pedagogy is undergoing a renaissance, offering new considerations of how and why creative writing can be taught. However, these developments are largely limited to higher education. Secondary schools, though productive sites for creative work, have often not been privy to these advances, due partially to the perception that current teaching standards leave scant space for creative writing. However, Common Core language makes clear that “the Standards leave room for teachers...to determine how those goals should be reached and what additional topics should be addressed” (National 3). This paper will argue the necessity of opening channels of pedagogical communication between college and secondary teachers of creative writing to bolster this underutilized flexibility and also explore how such channels might be constructed.

Examples will include explorations of service learning opportunities that allow for “meaningful contact in the community” (Smitherman and Vanderslice 154), including secondary classrooms, and also how Creative Writing Across the Curriculum can enhance secondary writing “by fostering critical thinking in both low- and high-stakes writing tasks” (Peary 195). Two initiatives underway at the author’s home institution will also be considered: a university-level committee bringing teacher educators together with administrators from nearby school corporations to discuss shared concerns, and a university-sponsored workshop in which dual-credit teachers from local secondary schools meet with the author to discuss current English teaching pedagogies. The communicative benefits of social media will also be discussed, and the “Creative Writing Pedagogy” Facebook page will be cited as a noteworthy example.

Drawing on the author’s experiences as a creative writing professor, English teaching program director, and secondary teacher, the paper will demonstrate how establishing practical lines of communication is critical for advancing secondary instructional techniques, and how such communication can broaden the focus and purpose of current creative writing pedagogy at all levels while also serving as a bulwark to keep the reductive, data-driven writing assessments so common in secondary schools (Strauss) from creeping upward into higher education.

## Expectations and Assessment: Making the Grade in Creative Writing Workshop

Andrea J. England, Gary McDowell, Sebastian Paramo, Caitlin Pryor

Two great dilemmas faced in today’s creative writing classroom are the incongruence between student and faculty expectations and the issue of subjectivity in “grading” creative work. As the number of degree-seeking writers increase and job markets slow or plateau, instructors of Creative Writing must deviate from the idea that effort and participation alone are grounds for what many students call, “an easy A.” These four diverse panelists will examine assessment tools such as group critique, genre specific rubrics, hybrid texts and other workshop parameters for Creative Writing Workshop that allow students to challenge themselves and their peers while furthering their understanding of poetic consequence, genre-specific assessment, as well as group and faculty expectations. By studying the rise of the Collegiate Creative Writing Discipline, classroom make-up, and pedagogical strategies from the implementation of the Iowa Writers’ Workshop in 1936 through the present day, where we boast over 350 Creative Writing Programs just in the United States, this panel will develop a new understanding of best practice as it applies to student and faculty engagement in a discipline which often lacks reliability when it comes to genre expectation and evaluation. This panel challenges past and present norms of student and faculty expectations and Creative Writing assessment at both the undergraduate and graduate level, while encouraging reliability and transparency in individual classrooms and Creative Writing Departments as a whole, in order to meet the needs of an ever-changing discipline.

## Epistemological Liminality: Approaching Creative Nonfiction and/in the Space Between Composition and Creative Writing

Crystal N. Fodrey, Moravian College

The growing body of creative nonfiction (CNF) theoretical, pedagogical, and historical scholarship taken in tandem with published contemporary CNF provides compelling evidence that CNF is fundamentally different from the two genres historically at the core of creative writing programs at the college level. These sources indicate that CNF—although certainly drawing on craft elements of fiction and poetry writing—can be linked more directly than fiction or poetry to the socially situated audience-based rhetorical epistemologies associated with composition. While scholars like Wendy Bishop, Douglas Hesse, Lynn Z. Bloom, and Robert Root explored over a decade ago CNF’s unique position between creative writing and composition studies, more recent discussions of knowledge production in creative writing studies tend not to directly acknowledge CNF’s status as

epistemologically both/and in favor of presenting a unified front among fiction, poetry, and CNF. For example, Patrick Bizarro claims in his 2010 “Workshop: An Ontological Study” that “[creative writing] is an autonomous field with a right to its own history, epistemology, and classroom activities,” and due to that autonomy, composition and creative writing should be viewed as “separate disciplines, discrete fields of inquiry” (37). In this presentation, I argue that while working to legitimize creative writing studies within the academy, we must acknowledge and nurture the disciplinary overlaps among creative writing, rhetoric and composition, and other fields of inquiry. Specifically, I use the genre and teaching of CNF as an inclusive and multifaceted site of interdisciplinarity and epistemological liminality to illustrate how desires for autonomy should not lead us to silo ourselves off from knowledge that informs the work we already do and has the potential to enrich our teaching practices and positively impact student learning.

### Writers With Disabilities: We Don’t Have to Meet Your Genre Expectations

Elizabeth Glass

The 2016 AWP Conference came under fire by writers with disabilities for failing to accept panels on disability. This panel examines where writing with disabilities belongs in creative writing communities. Presenter 1, in “Breaking Genre Expectations in Psychiatric Memoirs,” starts with Pryal’s (2010) assertion that people with psychiatric disabilities (PPDs) can “talk back” using the “mood memoir” genre. The genre, however, has limitations: readers expect to be inspired, to read about overcoming disability, and to read a “truthful” narrative. Presenter 1 asks, What stories are PPDs expected to tell? What stories will the publishing establishment allow? How do readers police nonconforming stories? Presenter 2, in “Epilepsy, Trauma, and ‘Magical Thinking’ in Narrative Nonfiction” argues that, when epilepsy-related memory and cognitive issues intersect with trauma, they expose neurotypical biases in nonfiction tenets. When Presenter 2 published neurodivergent incest narratives, readers and editors accused her of daydream-like confabulation. Trauma may delay narrativizing of sensory perceptions (Van Der Kolk and Bessel), and epilepsy compounds this pathology, further upsetting genre expectations. In “Everything’s Gonna Be Alright’ Except When It Won’t: Examining the Effect of Disability on the Endings of Memoirs and Personal Narratives,” Presenter 3 examines a confluence of Presenter 1 and Presenter 2’s tenets. When she wrote memoir and personal narratives about having temporal lobe epilepsy, which caused her to have hallucinations, and a psychiatric disability, which caused manic and depressive episodes, she found people love the “wacky” things that these disabilities caused, but didn’t want to consider the pain they produced within her. There is the expectation in personal writing that, in the end, everything turns out okay. However, disabilities can cause unpredictability in the future. The fields of disability studies and psychology accept and presuppose such uncertainty, but many readers of creative writing—particularly of memoir and personal narratives—expect that the disability being written about is overcome. However, for writers, the disability often a ghost that haunts writers of creative nonfiction with its continuation or possible recurrence.

### Practice, Practice: On the (Un)productive Work of the Writing Studio

Gary Hawkins, Warren Wilson College

What if we let the creative writing course take on features of the studio art course? The art studio claims a space for practice, and the pedagogies of art and design education have organized the work of the studio into effective curricula (Tapley, 2004; Vaughan, et. al. 2008; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Such practice may be work toward a specific final product. But the work may be unconcerned with its product. In thinking of the writing course as a studio we re-gain an essential conception of “unproductive” practice that can be lost when the workshop—as a place to refine drafts toward finished products—remains the marquee of the course.

When we step outside of the economies of workshop production, we begin to see the fictions of improvement that lead us to present the growth of a writer as a steady accumulative trajectory (Gladwell, 2015). We want this path to be halting, eddied, and non-linear, and scholars from composition, creative writing, and other fields have long encouraged us to allow the classroom to be a more undirected and de-centered space (Bishop, 1998; Elbow, 1998; Finkel, 2000; Kalamaras, 1998; Leahy, 2005). Let’s extend these models to cultivate a practice that is playful, amnesic, and/or foolish. Let’s celebrate failures and mistakes. Let’s encourage students to explore the boundaries of their abilities and to pursue skills without immediate success.

Undergraduate students are unlikely to have yet developed a mature practice, having been trained primarily toward instrumental time-on-task by the paradigm of homework. Practice holds a common component of consistency over production (Currey 2014; Tharp 2003), and by drawing on the established means of artists—often ritualistic beginning or reward for completion—we can build a framework by which students consistently place themselves in the studio, regardless of outcome.

To structure a course to include such “unproductive” space may require us to resist student desires to present their finest and finished work. At the same time, we may need to resist our own pedagogical assumptions toward final products, especially as our primary means of assessment. Let’s reframe expertise as a proficiency of practice.

### Collaborative Worldbuilding

Trent Hergenrader, Rochester Institute of Technology

This paper will discuss collaborative world building projects completed in fiction writing courses over the past five years. Based on principles and mechanics adapted from role-playing game rules, collaborative world building

requires students to negotiate the “rules” of the shared world that they’re co-creating, including making decisions about the political, economic, social, and cultural forces at play in a given world. The process requires students to think critically about how worlds are constructed, how social forces shift over time and place, and how such forces may be felt in different ways by different kinds of people who live in that world. The collaborative aspect means that students must also discuss the rules by which our world, the one we actually inhabit, works as well.

This flexible methodology and can be used for different educational purposes. For example, post-apocalyptic futures require students to think about what would be left behind (both figuratively and literally) after a global disaster and what kinds of political, economic, social, and cultural structures people may try to recreate; a steampunk alternate history asks students to think about the ways technology and society influence each other, examine how today’s social forces differ from those of another time, and contemplate how specific choices can help shape history; fanfiction worlds allow students to operate in a setting with which they are intimately familiar, allowing them to focus deeply on how their individual characters’ make-up and social status helps shapes the types of decisions they are allowed to make.

#### Of Lore and Reality: Actual Pedagogy in Modern Creative Writing Classrooms

Jennifer Kiefer, University of Louisville

For the past twenty years, scholarship on creative writing pedagogy has been repeating the same facets of perpetuated “lore” surrounding the discipline, as viewed by those outside of it: that the “writer-teachers” simply need an easy day job; that creative writing courses are about self-expression and the “easy A;” and that creative writing cannot be taught; among many others, which have been espoused by nearly all creative writing scholars, including Kelly Ritter (2007), Tom Hunley (2003), and Kimberly Andrews (2009), among others. These are, in fact, the same concerns raised by J.M. Moxley in *Creative Writing in America*, published over twenty-five years ago in 1989. Such ongoing concerns have not resulted in significant empirical research to explore the reality of what actually takes place in a creative writing classroom. By illuminating the same issues continually, the dialogue remains circular and the issues they are addressing will not (and cannot) be solved.

In this presentation, I not only review the current scholarship’s concerns for the discipline, but I take an initial step toward a more systematic approach into current creative writing pedagogy through a quantitative examination of thirty undergraduate, introductory creative writing course syllabi, calculating specifically the amount of class time spent discussing reading, performing writing exercises, and workshopping students’ writing, as well as what type (if any) of reading the course required. I analyze twelve of these syllabi rhetorically to evaluate course

descriptions and goals: courses taught by MFA students, by assistant or part-time professors, and by full-time or tenured professors. Through this presentation and this research, I illustrate what can be learned about the reality of creative writing pedagogy through a more systematic approach to research and finish with implications for future research in the field.

#### Creative Writing in General Writing Classes: Despite Common Core and Emphasis on STEM Education, Students Want and Need Imaginative Writing

Kate Kostelnik

In this panel I will discuss classes I design in UVa’s English and Writing (ENWR) courses that incorporate literary studies, composition, and creative writing. I’ll explore why and how writing and reading fiction are valuable specifically in first-year writing/composition (FYC), and I’ll explain how I integrate writing processes, writing studies, and multiple genres into my first-year writing courses. Fiction instructors, in addition to their teaching in creative writing courses, have a distinct opportunity to bring their talents and energy into first-year-writing. In my own classrooms, by being transparent to a generation of first-year students who generally don’t value fiction—neither reading nor writing it—I’ve begun to articulate the importance of imaginative writing. These kinds of discussions can enrich creative writing courses as well as combat common core’s emphasis on informational texts. In the second part of the presentation, I’ll discuss how Echols (honors) ENWR students (who are also mostly STEM students) work on extensive, self-designed projects that are either outside of their discipline’s discourse community or that combine writing in their discourse community with other disciplinary content and genres. For example, a pre-med student wrote a novella for future heart surgeons that mixed complex medical content with narratives from the perspectives of a patient, doctor, and scribe. A pre-law/philosophy student wrote a short story in which he illustrated Rawls’ principles in scenes. We looked at Alex Peary’s work on how in using creative writing “students from any major can master course content as well as critically consider information in the disciplines” (Peary, 2015, “The Pedagogy of Creative Writing Across the Curriculum”, p. 195). Although not technically creative writing courses, my classes at UVa point to opportunities to reach more students beyond English departments and workshops. Above all, students realize the need to read fiction in order to understand the clash of social forces as well as their strong desire to write it, no matter their major or discourse community.

### Story as Connection, Story as Community: Expanding Creative Writing's Reach through Political Advocacy

Susan V. Meyers, Seattle University

Creative Writing in the United States has a long history of insularity. Critics like Wendy Bishop (1997; 2004) and Bizzaro (2004; 2009) and practitioners like Carolyn Forché (1993) have encouraged us to think more broadly about our field's connection to other disciplines—and the capacity for creative writing to make worldly impact. Indeed, in other parts of the globe, creative writing is treated much more as both a theorized discipline (Harper 2008; 2012) and a socially contextualized practice (Dawson 2005). This presentation reports on a recent creative activist project that seeks to address these concerns and to bring the U.S. creative writing field into the social—and international—sphere. (105) *Queer Crossings*—a collaboration between a U.S. university, a South African university, and a gay rights NGO—used creative writing and visual arts to promote literacy, personal expression, and political engagement among LGBTQ asylum seekers in Johannesburg, South Africa. The resulting Ebook anthology was published in March 2016 and is being showcased at a variety of international venues, along with presentations about research and pedagogical opportunities to replicate this kind of participatory, arts-based approach in other community contexts. The project's outcomes have implications for creative writing curriculum, publishing projects, and academic and national advocacy in the United States—as well as for fostering U.S. creative writing programs the opportunity to connect with international partners for further social action projects. The presentation itself will offer an overview, samples, and related analysis to model ways for others to design similar projects.

### An Epistemological Map of the Field of Creative Writing

Kelle Mullineaux

Within scholarship documenting the explosive growth of Creative Writing Studies, two major schools of thought appear to exist: the traditional, workshop-centered view, and the writer-teacher-scholars, who embrace Bishop-inspired hyphenated identities and seek to reform both the pedagogy of creative writing and its place in the university. Anthologies such as *Power and Identity* and *Can it Really be Taught?* are positioned as reactions to problems with traditionalist attitudes; the fundamental changes suggested by the authors and editors represent a shift in epistemological attitudes toward writing and could influence the shape of future English departments. However, as more scholars join in the discussion and attempt to define the boundaries or philosophies that delineate creative writing studies, they make suggestions that do not

necessarily fit within binaric perceptions of what creative writers believe. Does a traditionalist vs. progressive binary fully represent the current span of thought among creative writing practitioners? Are definable schools of thought emerging among creative writers, and if so, how many exist?

In order to find current epistemological attitudes of the field of creative writing, I have designed and implemented a mixed-methods study that elicits respondents' underlying beliefs about the nature of creativity and creative writing. By observing trends in survey responses and conducting follow-up interviews about unusual responses, I will present a suggested map of the major modes of thought that comprise the field of creative writing studies and determine whether the binary described in scholarship is an accurate reflection of creative writing's epistemologies.

New fields of study benefit when they can fully describe the competing philosophies that drive them forward. Just as Berlin's *Rhetoric and Reality* helped compositionists to place their thoughts within a contextual framework, a rhetorical and epistemological guide to creative writing studies will assist the current generation of creative writing researchers in expressing their beliefs and move creative writing closer to becoming, as Kelly Ritter and Stephanie Vanderslice described, an "uncontested teaching subject": a true field of study deserving of attention.

### Beyond Collaboration: Systems Theory and Creative Writing Instruction

Erick Piller University of Connecticut, Storrs

Rhetoric and composition, creative writing studies, and creativity studies have contested Romantic conceptions of creativity that emphasize inspiration, the autonomous individual, and genius, turning instead to social theories of invention (see, for instance, Karen Burke LeFevre's *Invention as a Social Act*). Nevertheless, as scholars such as Wendy Bishop and, later, Tim Mayers have shown, the Romantic views of creativity have persisted, continuing to significantly shape dominant creative writing pedagogies (Bishop 10, Mayers 144). I argue that Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's systems theory of creativity offers a strong theoretical basis for reshaping creative writing classroom practices. Although Brent Royster's "Inspiration, Creativity, and Crisis" already explores some potential applications of systems theory, Royster adopts Csikszentmihalyi's model only as a metaphor for the workshop community. Thus, while Royster compellingly argues for a focus on process, not product, in the workshop, as well as for a recognition of students' diverse interests and goals in taking a creative writing course, he also reduces a macro-social theorization of creativity, legitimacy, and authorization to a micro-social scale, reproducing the classroom's isolation from the broader socioculture. I suggest that by employing pedagogies similar to that described by Valerie Miner in *Creative Writing in America*, instructors of creative writing can foster among

students a critical awareness of the dynamic interrelationships between individual, domain, and field as defined by systems theory. Such an approach would encourage students to consider aspects of textual circulation and legitimation external to the creative writing workshop such as gatekeeping functions, selection and publication procedures, and the role of kairos, and develop in students something akin to Steve Healey's creative literacy: openness toward collaborative inventional processes and those tangible "skills and techniques" promoting creativity "that can be studied, modeled, discussed, practiced" (176).

### If the Shoe Fits: Using Fairytales to Connect Creative Writing to Social Advocacy

Jennifer Pullen

Fairytales are particularly well suited to the creative writing classroom that puts social advocacy at its center. An instructor who desires to help students see creative writing as a social process that contributes to and influences cultural conversations could do much worse than to use fairytales as the lens through which to do so. To some, particularly those who associate fairytales with the normative visions propagated by Disney, my claim might appear anti-feminist, exclusionary, and or misguided (Makinen 1). However, fairytales are actually ideally positioned so as to make cultural conversations visible to students, through the ideological positions manifested in the tension between, for instance, Walt Disney and Angela Carter. The fact that fairy tales are the site of so much social and ideological contention makes them more (rather than less) suitable for an advocacy based classroom.

Fairytales, according to Jack Zipes, have consistently been used as carriers of ideology, from conservative to progressive. Zipes argues that the imaginative nature of fairytales can function like a utopia, asking the audience to conceive of a world different from the one they inhabit (19). For example, Madame D'Aulnoy used the literary fairytale to articulate the sexual repression of her era and culture, 17th century France (Warner 278). In the 20th century, Angela Carter, Toni Morrison, and Emma Donoghue, among others, also use(d) fairytales for social advocacy (Wilson 1-12). In her collection, *Kissing the Witch*, Donoghue posits a world centered on relationships between women. In the first story of the collection, "The Tale of the Shoe," Cinderella runs off with the fairy godmother (8). In doing so, she pushes back against what Adrienne Rich would refer to as compulsory heterosexuality (14). Donoghue's social critique depends upon the heteronormative model of gender norms put forth by Disney and others. The move that Donoghue makes by positing a new reality for Cinderella creates what Zack Zipes refers to as form of cognitive dissonance, a place in the mind where the accepted version of reality, and the opening posited by the artist, meet and clash (155). Zipes describes fairytales as stories that "stick," repeating mimetically over and over, accreting meaning over time (20). Due to the mimetic quality of fairy tales, most students will have some familiarity with the form, giving them a chance to build upon a semiotic domain they

already engage with (Zipes xi). By giving students a familiar form to revise and respond to, fairytale retellings offer students a chance to write in a way that contributes to real debates about gender, sexuality, race, and class.

### Notes to Self: Inspiration in the DIY Age

Phil Sandick

In a recently discovered handwritten "note to self," Octavia Butler outlines a plan for personal creative achievement. "So be it!" she memorably repeats to herself, "So to it!" The note's unwavering confidence and empowering affirmation, as well as its extensive dissemination through the social web, bespeaks a lengthy—and now increasingly public—engagement with the "evidence trail of writerly action" that does not rely solely on the finished work (Harper 14). In the case of Butler's memo, the "note to self" helps a writer maintain her positivity as she continues to generate material, and today has a second life as it helps others remain motivated throughout the composing process. Creative writing instructors should examine this phenomenon of self-affirmation and the shared experiences and "interconnection" made possible through "synaptic technologies" (Harper 8, 11).

In this presentation, I will consider the ways the digital—and a more "Do It Yourself"—writing culture has changed how practitioners approach the art of writing, specifically in terms of "support" for "reciprocal human connectedness" (Harper 8). Specifically, I will contrast previous narratives of inspiration (Platonic, modernist heroes, Program Era star pedagogues, the cult of personality in authorship, the lone solitary genius, etc.) with current trends in self-directed learning, "nonlinearity," group genius, and the democratization of authorship, with the ultimate purpose of—and in the spirit of Butler—continuing to keep creative writing's move away from an "insular system of insiders" ("Beyond the Literary" 68, Harper 8, "Creative Literacy Pedagogy" 190). Borrowing also from Kenneth Burke's writing on religious systems as "systems of action" in *The Rhetoric of Religion*, I will attempt to illustrate how the mythography of creative writing has echoed religious language and inspirational narrative (e.g., the inherent faith in advice like "trust the process"). I believe that these genres of do-it-yourself encouragement might make us further aware of the important role of reflection in composing processes, and continue Healey's work in "creative literacy" that seeks to "make the stages of the writing process more familiar and approachable" ("Creative Literacy Pedagogy" 178). Butler's note to self, for instance, is a good example of the "extraliterary forms" in the teaching of creative writing that "invite" the "magic and chance of [student] imagination" (172).

Ultimately, we must ask how much cultivating inspiration is part of our work in the creative writing classroom—the "primary point of access to creative literacy" ("Beyond the Literary" 61). Instances such as Butler's "note to

self” highlight a fundamental writerly need for self-reflection; and its viral status speaks to a cultural moment of “reflexive attention to selfhood” that presents literary genres not as “closed systems,” but as part of more generalizable creative literacies (“Beyond the Literary” 71, “Creative Literacy Pedagogy” 169).

### Writers Don’t Cry: Emotional Labor in the Creative Writing Classroom

Jennifer Schomburg Kanke, Florida State University

In *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, Arlie Russell Hochschild defined and delineated the concept of “emotional labor” which is when specific human reactions or emotions are required or expected as part of a job or profession as opposed to “emotional work” which occurs (most often) in the unpaid, private sphere and is voluntary (though, admittedly, sometimes culturally expected). Hochschild’s research was thorough and complex, indicating that emotional labor could be done as both surface and deep acting, the latter actually changing the employee’s concept of self and making them doubt their own natural reactions. As evidenced by a discussion on a MetaFilter forum begun in July of 2015 and highlighted by Jess Zimmerman on *The Toast*, our colloquial understanding of the concept is limited (and sometimes inaccurate). These misunderstandings may blind us to the real issues of emotional labor at play in the creative writing classroom. While it allows us to discuss student and faculty perceptions of the empathic role often expected of female writing teachers and issues of authority as discussed in Sharmin Tanguz’s recent study “In the Eye of the Beholder: Emotional Labor in Academia Varies with Tenure and Gender,” it distracts us from realizing that the workshop system, as commonly practiced, often requires students to perform emotional labor of the deep acting variety when we tell them to “toughen up” to criticism. This paper will explore Hochschild’s original research as well as applying more recent research about the professionalization of emotions to the creative writing classroom in the hopes of broadening the discussion about emotional labor.

### Practices of Digital Writing and the Self-Identity of Literary Authors

Kathleen Schreurs, University of Western Ontario

Authorship is undergoing enormous change as digital texts increase in popularity. Despite an information rich climate, little has been written about the impact of the digital environment on the lived experiences of literary authors. Exploring the e-writing experience is a task complicated by the residual strength of print culture that,

notwithstanding the addition of “e”, guides our expectations and experiences.

According to the McGraw-Hill Science & Technology Dictionary (2003) Electronic writing is “[t]he use of electronic circuits and electronic devices to reproduce symbols, such as an alphabet, in a prescribed order on an electronic display device for the purpose of transferring information from a source to a viewer of the display device”. But it is so much more: e-writing is the shifting materiality of text and its impact on previously established concepts such as reading, publishing, and authorship. A more complete understanding reflects that e-writing is both the process of creating, as well as the product of, a digital born piece of written communication presented in and interacted with in, an electronic or digital environment. This study focuses specifically on understanding e-writing from the experiential viewpoint of literary authors. This includes how they understand the changes taking place in their profession and how it affects their practice and their self-conceptualization as authors. Working in electronic environments, crafting and maintaining an online presence, and participating in virtual communities changes how authors view their craft and their role in the production of texts.

This study contributes to building an understanding of e-writing through qualitative case studies of 8 literary authors, incorporating interviews as well as examinations of the authors’ online presences, to explore the following research questions: 1) How do authors of literature understand e-writing? 2) If and how does e-writing alter the practices of authors? 3) What are the unique challenges and possibilities of the e-writing experience? And 4) How does e-writing contribute to their identity as an author? By answering these questions and advancing knowledge on the topic of digital authorship this project aids in writing, or rather e-writing, the next chapter of the history of authorship.

### Creative Writing Styles and Transfer: Creative Writers Teaching in the Composition Classroom

Jonathan A. Udelson

Given many post-secondary institutions’ tendencies to rely on graduate student and contingent labor to teach undergraduate classes, and these institutions’ hiring of instructors from Creative Writing programs, a now-significant percentage of instructors with formal backgrounds in creative writing teach post-secondary composition courses. Yet despite Writing Studies’ investigations over the past fifteen years into the overlap between theories of creative writing and those of composition, the classroom practices of these writer-teachers, dubbed here Creative Writing Composition Instructors (“CWCIs”), have remained largely under-investigated.

This presentation contextualizes and offers insight into initial interviews with CWCIs, and uses dialogic theory and coordinated assessment procedures to understand their writing and teaching practices. These interviews

were conducted in the belief that, to best create and share knowledge, participants ought to be “dialogically and discursively engaged...in making meaning and formulating interpretations of their experiences” (Selfe and Hawisher 2012). CWCIs, as all laborers do, possess valuable work knowledge about and insight into their practices and fields (see Smith 2005). As such, I argue that a return to the assessment of self-reporting for which Bizzaro (2010) argues can provide a path by which we may both understand various writing pedagogies heretofore under-investigated and theorize new ones.

The immediate goals of these interviews have been to develop perspectives on participant CWCIs’ writing styles, their theories about style, how such styles are taught and integrated into the composition classroom, and to what perceived effect. Specifically, these interviews and analyses interrogate how theories of writing informed by a consideration of “craft”—understood through Mayers (2005) as a creative writer’s relationship with language—shape classroom practices and teacherly ethos. I turn to this term specifically since it is one which the Creative Writing discipline often uses when referring to their pedagogical goals, as well as being one prodigiously discussed in AWP panels (see “Tentative List of Accepted Events for #AWP16”). Findings in this study have pointed to the compositional and pedagogical values of exploring genres and genre-based writing practices “nonfactual, nonpropositional, [and] noncompelled by rhetorical situation” (Hesse 2010), insofar as rhetorical situations are commonly understood through the lens of “traditional” academic writing.

## Interdisciplinary Approaches to Creative Nonfiction

Naomi Washer

‘Interdisciplinary’ has as fuzzy a definition historically as the term ‘creative nonfiction.’ Rather than reject these complex terminologies, teachers of creative writing can use interdisciplinary approaches in their language, assignments, and styles of feedback on student writing. ‘Interdisciplinarity’ has been defined as including the following elements: 1) addressing a complex focus question that cannot be resolved by using a single disciplinary approach, 2) drawing on insights generated by disciplines, interdisciplines, or schools of thought, 3) integrating these insights, and 4) producing an interdisciplinary understanding of the question. (Repko, 2007). The ‘definition’ of the essay follows this same trajectory of reflection, digression, discovery, and change; a form that explores the consolidation of ideas, emotions, and facts through observation, history, religion, science, and the imagination. (D’Agata, 2009). And yet, in the creative writing classroom, students are rarely asked to conceive of themselves as interdisciplinarians or to practice interdisciplinary approaches in their writing. Students miss out on the opportunity to pursue multi-layered inquiries, strengthen their cognitive abilities, and produce multi-disciplinary works of considerable length and substance when an interdisciplinary approach is not taken in the design of the

creative writing syllabus, modes of assignments, and the higher-order level of class discussion. With an interdisciplinary approach to the teaching of creative nonfiction, students will learn to utilize investigative strategies from the humanities, sciences, and fine and performing arts to broaden not only the content of their creative work but the processes of creation, revision, and composition. If an interdisciplinary approach is not taken in the teaching of creative nonfiction, the genre risks a narrowing of its scope that could negatively impact students’ abilities to practice complex research and investigation, and collaborate with artists and researchers in other fields.

This presentation seeks to connect interdisciplinary modes of thinking to current scholarship on the teaching and writing of creative nonfiction. Tools will be provided for instructors to integrate interdisciplinary languages and approaches in their classrooms. A sample of practical applications for curriculum design, lesson plans, class discussion, and instructor feedback will be provided with examples drawn from the interdisciplinary fields of dance, theatre, and visual forms.

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