

/FACT AND FICTION/ DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN
THE PEDAGOGY OF COMPOSITION AND CREATIVE WRITING

by

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Introduction

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For many years composition and creative writing have been taught as if they were two separate disciplines--though describing them as two distinct strands of one discipline is more accurate. In short, the composition instructor or textbook rarely refers to creative writing as having any relation to expository writing; and rarer still is the creative writing instructor or textbook that discusses how theme-writing is like making short stories or poems. This separation of writing pedagogy continues because, despite recent theory which suggests that expository writing as taught in American colleges focuses excessively on the finished product, in both the composition and creative writing classroom, attention is still turned to formal analyses of finished or nearly-finished products--to model essays, or to poetry or fiction, or to pieces of writing drafted by students and presented to the teacher. And, in effect, in both classrooms, attention remains turned to form and style and composition and creative writing are taught differently because the formal and stylistic demands of expository writing are different from the formal and stylistic demands of fiction or poetry.

It is possible, though, that during the earliest stages of writing--when the proverbial blank page stares back--that distinctions between the different forms and between different methods of teaching the different forms are superfluous. A great deal of theory about these stages of writing has gained attention in the last twenty years, particularly that theory which aims to improve the art of teaching composition. However, all that

trickles down to many university classrooms and textbooks is the assertion that writer's block is a phenomenon with which all writers grapple. Instruction focuses instead on that which is already written: on student essays or stories or poems, and on those by professional writers. Robert Zoellner said in 1969, "Under our present pedagogy we are not even, as we habitually claim, teaching writing at all--we only teach written words" (280). This remains true, even though recent theory on the composing process attempts to force attention on the initial stages of writing, and also attempts to avoid rigid classification of forms of writing. However, the existing and fixed structure of the university and its departments makes any new theory--though the notion that rhetoric is about all forms of communication is hardly new--difficult to transfer into the classroom. James Moffet argues that we need to adjust our ideas not "just about 'English teaching' but, inevitably, about a whole curriculum" (212).

A reason for the tenacity of a method of writing instruction that eclipses the first stages of the writing process is that, for most writers, these stages are fraught with idiosyncratic methods and habits which occur sporadically, and in solitude, not in the classroom. A recent composition textbook points out that it cannot offer help with "two important factors that affect... writing: those acts that are not conscious and...physical habits" (Lauer, et al 20). It would be foolish to suggest that an orthodox science about invention could be developed. Yet, at the same time, writing instructors refer only infrequently or obliquely to the first stages of writing and use models and nearly-finished drafts of writing as the focus of instruction.

Certainly this is the way composition is taught. I also know veterans of creative writing workshops--myself included--who are far less comfortable with discovering ideas than they are with arranging, rearranging and revising them. However, unless a writer learns to trust the chaos that accompanies the initial stages of writing, later decisions regarding form and style, the decisions we cast under the cold light of the classroom, grow unnecessarily complicated because the content out of which they emerge has not been fully developed. To arrange ideas before they are formulated is to abort them; the creative process miscarries.

Composition and creative writing became insular disciplines because, for many years, composition provided instruction in how to produce only a few narrowly defined forms of expository writing. Creative writing classes developed in reaction against this narrow interpretation, and composition and creative writing sustained separate identities as each discipline continued to espouse disparate assumptions about the purposes of and reasons for writing. A predominant focus on form and style facilitated this division. In the past twenty years, composition theory has been improved for a number of reasons, but particularly because the emergence of creative writing classes demanded a re-examination of the definitions of writing in general. But distinctions between composition and creative writing (some of which are valid and some of which are not) continue to exist. Certainly a close scrutiny of them is necessary. Teachers of expository writing have begun to mine other disciplines in order to improve the way they teach: and creative writing pedagogy,

with what Richard Hugo calls its "cavalier intellectuality" (56), has always stressed that writing is a search for truth with language and that imposed forms hinder this search. However, creative writing pedagogy itself takes little account of recent composition theory and most composition instructors are still unfamiliar with the pedagogy by which creative writers are taught.

Failure to make use of all the means available to improve the way we teach occurs as we seek new ways to teach, yet cling to old and familiar ways without determining what they have to do or not to do with the new assumptions and procedures. Or we employ new methods we do not understand and therefore do not employ them well. Michel Foucault wrote that too often "authors...meet without knowing and obstinately intersect their unique discourses in a web of which they are not the masters, and of whose breadth they have a very inadequate idea" (4-6). This confusion increases when, as members of different but related professions, we compete for priority and funds. To distance ourselves from a subject in which we have a stake is a challenge, and, because rallying cries to new pedagogies are made so frequently, we must attempt to unweave the confusion to the extent we can. The division of two areas of writing instruction into insular disciplines should be examined, as so should the political and historical traditions out of which this separation grew. The English department, and representative literature about teaching both expository and creative writing are examined in the pages that follow. Studying writing pedagogy in general before studying it in particular is my design.

Section One: The English Department

Politics as well as pedagogical traditions influenced English departments as they developed in American universities. Departments were established as university enrollments increased and, in part by accident and in part by design, English departments came to have sovereign over the historical study of literature, as well as over all writing instruction. That is how the study of literature and writing instruction came to be one subject. They remain linked today for this and another reason: it was and is still assumed that students learn to write by reading. English departments evolved during a movement to legitimize the study of English and other modern languages, and composition was accorded a place in them. Creative writing was a minor, barely discernible strand of writing instruction. It is best to use this analogy: the study of literature is the legitimate offspring of the English department, composition is a stepchild, and creative writing was a poor cousin to that stepchild.

The University of Iowa was the exception to this rule and a pioneer in the teaching of creative writing--offering as many as seven courses in it as early as the academic year 1920-21, offering a series of ten courses in "imaginative writing" in the academic year 1930-31.¹ Stanford University also offered a major in writing and the Stanford Writing Fellowships in the 40s, but not until approximately twenty years later did other universities follow suit, and the teaching of writing literature grew, in the words of Esquire fiction editor Rust Hills, "from

an occasional course offering to virtual dominance as one of the most taught subjects on campuses now" (38). It simultaneously became a separate and insular discipline.

Creative writing instruction was non-existent at some universities early in this century.² That which was available was belletristic, a study of literature and writing instruction combined. It was believed then, as it is to a great extent today, that creative writers should read a lot and teach themselves. At a 1902 Modern Language Association meeting, an English instructor reported that 'literary' writing should begin with the formal study of English literature" (PMLA, 18, xi). Another professor wrote that instruction in creative writing should use "much comparison with the great masters" (xv). Evidence of this approach is also found in English department descriptions of creative writing courses offered in the academic year of 1920-21. For instance, the University of Oregon describes a course called "Techniques of Poetry" this way: "Study of the standard metrical forms and of modern free verse; practice in actual versification." And in 1920-21 the University of Kansas described "Prose Invention" as "Theories of literary art, with practice in original writing."³

Creative writing instruction is more accessible today. Despite the fact that Rust Hills exaggerates the present dominance of creative writing in university curricula now, his later assertion is correct: there are currently undergraduate and graduate degrees in creative writing available from universities that once offered only a few creative writing courses. In fact, until other universities modelled programs after the

Iowa Writer's Workshop, a writer who wanted to study creative writing had few options because, at most universities, creative writing was only a small area of the larger, though by no means prestigious discipline called composition. For instance, in cataloguing their course offerings for 1920-21, the English departments of three universities that offered creative writing courses then listed their few creative writing courses with their expository writing courses under the sub-heading of "Composition and Rhetoric," while other courses were listed under "Literature."⁴ As late as 1960-61, the University of Colorado listed course offerings in expository and creative writing together. Classes existed which, for better or for worse, taught both kinds of writing.

Composition, in turn, is a branch of the larger discipline called rhetoric, the theory of producing both written and orally-delivered discourse. Oratory, composition intended for oral delivery, is taught in speech departments while composition, which encompasses the area of written discourse, is taught in English departments. In fact, in describing the present day English department, which he characterized as aggressive, or at least acquisitive, William Riley Parker pointed out that "English" has somehow managed to hold on stubbornly to all written composition not intended for oral delivery--a subject which has always had a most tenuous connection with the academic study of language and literature" (350). Parker accounted for the inclusion of composition in English departments as the result of

two arbitrary facts: that college entrance exams link composition with literature by asking students to write about literature, perhaps for the same reasons we link the two today, searching, in the words of James Moffet, "for subjects for students to write about that are appropriate for English" (7). Composition remains the domain of English departments for yet another reason: graduate students in literature have come to be provided for with assistantships that require them to teach composition. For example, in 1909, at the University of Wisconsin, "everyone...taught freshman composition; in 1929, thanks to an influx of teaching assistants, only one senior professor taught it" (Brereton 89). This system is pervasive today and, moreover, most assistants required to teach writing have had experience in writing about only one subject--literature. Parker remarks that, if ever graduate students were financially subsidized by an independent source, the nature of the union between literature and composition--"a true marriage or a marriage of convenience" (350)--would be quickly determined.

The association of literature and composition seems incongruous to Parker; yet the separation of oratory from composition is at least as incongruous and a sign of an inability to perceive that teaching the production of discourse, whether that discourse is intended for oral or written delivery, whether it is intended to communicate or persuade or move, may suffer if it is arbitrarily divided. The fact remains, though, that, because of the demands of mass education, universities have been departmentalized and sometimes to their detriment. The delegation of

responsibility to department heads and committees increases efficiency. A result, though, is that because of a series of coincidences and social trends, we name and find niches for areas of study, limit what we know about them and sometimes cling to assumptions that are incorrect. Furthermore, the assignment of a fixed place for subjects of study within a curriculum occurs not only on a university-wide scale, but increasingly, as departments grow and as their boundaries become standard, within a department. Literature, creative writing, and composition-rhetoric are, for instance, separate disciplines, within a single department, with separately evolving systems of pedagogy.

William Riley Parker may have been correct in implying that literature and composition have little to do with each other and that their association is a matter of politics or convenience. Furthermore, what the association amounts to, in many writing classrooms, is a use of models. James Moffet points out a misconception about this method of teaching writing. "English, French, and mathematics," he writes, "are symbol systems.... When a student 'learns' one of these systems, he learns how to operate it" (6). Moffet also says that, because we have hardly questioned the connection between literature and composition, we have "unnecessarily deformed composition" (6), and tried to make it into a content or empirical knowledge course like biology or history or science. "Frequently the dilemma has been resolved," Moffet writes, "by claiming that certain contents are essential to learning the skills.... But learning 'form'...is quite

different than if the student practices form" (3). In other words, while wide reading can teach a novice writer a number of options, it is also true that "if the student has to work with language constantly in the functional way...he will come to know it in the professional's intimate way" (Moffet 7). Reading may also serve an expository or creative writer in another way: by exciting or inspiring that writer. Yet, as poet Richard Hugo writes, "What excites the imagination may be found in any number of experiences.... Reading may or may not be one" (xi). In short, studying literature may enhance the writing abilities of students but only because a study of literature, like a study of most subjects, broadens horizons and improves analytic skills. It is also true that reading can enlarge a writer's awareness of stylistic possibilities.

As it stands today, we do teach literature, as well as the composition of both expository and creative writing in the same department, shuttling wisely as well as indiscriminantly between reading and writing, and writing and reading. One effect of the close association is that composition students, under the assumption they are learning all aspects of a vast, unchartered subject called "English," try to emulate a voice familiar to them from what they have been asked to read, and simultaneously cultivate an alien or insincere style. Or students imitate content because they have heard the content of a model praised, yet care very little about the ideas they find there.

The sometimes distorted association between composition and literature grew out of the structure of nineteenth century colleges. "By 1883 almost no English teacher had been trained....

The typical professor...was a doctor of divinity who spoke and wrote the mother tongue grammatically, had a general 'society knowledge' of the literature, and had not specialized in this or in any other academic subject" (Parker 346). Because colleges were small and graduate education did not yet exist, literature, rhetoric and a number of other subjects were taught by one instructor. However, following the opening of the John Hopkins University, which launched graduate education in the United States, and concurrent with a pragmatic, utilitarian movement in education, as well as "the actual doubling of college enrollments during the last quarter of the century" (Parker 348), the structure of higher education changed. Departments evolved and "became competitive and ambitious, looking anxiously at any unoccupied territory" (Parker 348). According to Parker, English departments were wise to stake a claim over composition. While it was difficult to convince the burgeoning, class-conscious American public that it was practical or "more valuable to know English literature than to know Greek literature," most Americans were already convinced that expository writing was useful. Wrote Parker: "It was the teaching of freshman composition that quickly entrenched English departments in the college and university structure" (347).

This politically motivated mixture of composition and literature persists today in the form of belletristic instruction in writing. Paul A. Eschholz describes the use of models: "The traditional prose model approach with its emphasis on product tends to dictate rules, structures, and patterns for writers. In essence, students are encouraged to know what their

essays should look like before they have written them.... Because they are given no sense of priority or sequence... students...typically try to tackle all aspects of a writing project simultaneously" (25). Eschholz goes on to suggest an alternative: "Prose models are introduced on an individual basis during conference" (27). He attempts to select models "as the student needs them" while trying to "match a student's interests with an appropriate author" (27).

Although he does so in a thoughtful way, Eschholz continues to present literature as a model. By showing to a student a piece of fine writing that resembles, in content or form, the essay, poem or story the student wants to write, he suggests that aping good writing is good writing. The use of models may also prevent a student from finding the idea or construct for the idea that is his or her own. Sophisticated writing comes from minds that have grappled with sophisticated ideas. Rohman and Wlecke write that the search for "original discovery" requires "long and arduous striving--plus a well-furnished mind to draw upon. No writing teacher can give the student what only years can give" (39). Writing and thinking are related and the inclusion of reading within a curriculum, because it stocks a mind, is essential, but no more essential than the inclusion of many areas of study. To treat pieces of writing as models is to never allow them to become fully synthesized components of the writer's bank of options. In the words of James Moffet, "clearly distinguishing symbolizing subjects from symbolized subjects would eliminate such nonsense" (8).

However, while confusion existed and still exists about the

relationship of reading to writing and vice versa, composition and literature were the first two areas within the English department to assume identities as distinct disciplines. While both literature and composition continue to be taught in the same department, and while literature students still write and composition students are still asked to regard literature as a model, courses specializing in composition or in literature sprang up early. The instruction in creative writing that was available until the 1960s, however, was found listed with or within composition courses, even while it incorporated a study of literature too.

Interdepartmental divisions between composition and literature were made early. For instance, in the spring of 1903, the English department of the University of Michigan divided itself into two departments: a literature department and a composition-and-rhetoric department. The latter was headed by Fred Newton Scott, a late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century rhetorician and scholar. Not only does the establishment of a composition-and-rhetoric department suggest that the English department at the University of Michigan perceived reasons for making distinctions between the study of literature and instruction in writing, Scott's approach to pedagogy stressed context and therefore the decisions and dilemmas peculiar to the early stages of writing to a great extent. If Scott's theories had been adapted wholly, divisions between forms of writing, and between differing methods of teaching different forms of writing, would seem superfluous. Two of Scott's students, Gertrude Buck and Sterling Andrus Leonard, also saw composition

as the production of discourse within a set of constraints and, in effect, tried to remedy the notion that learning how to write is memorizing standard forms and sets of rules about usage.

In order to see how rare this approach to writing instruction was, it is essential to first understand the milieu in which these teachers and rhetoricians worked.

James Berlin identifies three major trends in late-nineteenth century rhetoric: (1) an imitation and out-of-context restatement of classical rhetoric; (2) a rhetoric based on the faculty psychology embraced by the eighteenth century Scottish rhetoricians, Blair and Campbell, which later was distorted into what Berlin calls the "current-traditional approach"--an approach focusing on "the faculty involved in scientific investigation" (63). The current-traditional approach, "the triumph of the scientific and technical world view" (62), was questioned by the minor, though compelling third trend: (3) romantic rhetoric. Current-traditional rhetoric "was challenged at the time of its inception by Scott, Denney and Buck, but not with any success and it went virtually unquestioned until...after 1960" (Berlin 62). What Berlin calls the current-traditional approach dominated composition pedagogy for more than half this century, in spite of opposition.

James Britton describes the more recent reaction against it: "In the 60s...a focus developed on what was widely called (and still is) creative writing. Impersonal writing was dominant...owing to the demands of the various school subjects... and to an implicit belief that progress in writing is associated with movement away from personal language towards more...

impersonal formulations.... The stress on creative writing... developed in part as a reaction against the limitation...of impersonal writing" (8). In effect, the dominance of the current-traditional approach and its vocational emphasis diverted attention from other, more imaginative forms of writing until the 1960s when, because it had been ignored, creative writing seemed as if it were a new discipline.

The first trend identified by Berlin--nouveau classical--was grounded in Aristotelean logic, logic that is "deductive, requiring the application of generalizations to particular situations--in other words, the use of the syllogism" (4), and was not influential even in its own time "because it was grounded in a noetic field that was being repudiated everywhere, but nowhere with such fervor as in America" (6).

The second trend identified by Berlin is more complicated. It is based on the rhetorics of Blair and Campbell which, embracing Scottish Common Sense Realism, insist on "the primacy of using one's faculties unencumbered by the interpretations of others" (6). Unlike warmed-over classical rhetoric, it enjoyed a "compatibility...with American cultural patterns" (19). Hugh Blair's rhetoric developed out of what Berlin calls "the principles of human nature" (25), but it is important to note that it is basically about style, what Donald C. Stewart describes as "belletristic rhetorical criticism" ("Historical Rhetoric" 229). Blair says, in his first lecture, "the first care of all such as wish either to write with reputation, or to speak in public so as to command attention, must be, to extend their knowledge; to lay in a rich store of ideas relating to those subjects of which the

occasions of life may call them to discourse or to write" (3). In the words of Donald Stewart, "Blair was much less interested in invention and arrangement than he was in style and belles lettres in general" (Historical Rhetoric 230). The rest of Blair's lectures, "Taste," "Criticism-Genius-Pleasures of Taste-Sublimity in Objects," "The Sublime in Writing," "Style-Perspicuity and Precision," "Origin and Nature of Figurative Language," and etc., are studded with examples of poetry and prose that exhibit, for Blair, sublimity and perspicuity and the like. Literature is both studied and used as a model for writing instruction.

George Campbell's rhetoric, based on the same psychology of how "individuals communicate through using language to act on the faculties of the audience" (Berlin 21), forces attention on decisions made in the early stages of writing. The types of discourse for which Campbell provides instruction are all persuasive in that "all the ends of speaking[,]...to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will" (Campbell 145), rely upon the same means: the attempt to "reproduce the original experience in its entirety" (Berlin 21). This is the "connexion in various forms of eloquence" (149) that Campbell finds.

In the rhetorics of Blair and Campbell, Blair analyzes style as it is adapted for varying occasions and purposes, while Campbell stresses that formal and stylistic decisions arise out of cause and occasion. However, when the instructors of courses in American colleges began to need credentials other than the clergyman's collar, and when the search for empirical knowledge replaced "preparation for life in the next world" (Rudolph 275) as

the focus of college instruction, the rhetorics of Blair and Campbell were distorted into textbooks authored by Adams Sherman Hill, Barrett Wendell and John Genung. These textbooks, authored by the same men who, in the words of Donald Stewart, "generated the 'back-to-basics' movement of the 1890s and set the study of composition in a direction that had most unfortunate consequences" (Historical Rhetoric 231), truncated eighteenth century rhetoric. Writes Berlin: "...the faculty psychology of eighteenth century rhetoric...is...comprehensive...because it attempts to take into account all features of human behavior--the sensory and rational, the ethical, and the aesthetic.... Current-traditional rhetoric, on the other hand, accepts this mechanistic faculty psychology, but removes ethical and all but the most elementary emotional consideration.... Exposition,...what is inductively discovered[,]...becomes the central concern of writing classes" (62-3).

The distortion of eighteenth century Scottish rhetoric into the current-traditional approach was opposed by Fred Newton Scott, who was "struggling to formulate a...pedagogical paradigm...that was distinctively American[,]...addressing the problems peculiar to communicating in a democratic society" (Berlin 77). Though his textbooks were "subjected to the pressures of the marketplace" (Berlin 77), in the prefaces to them and in other publications, Scott reveals an understanding about the production of language that recognizes only surface boundaries between forms of discourse. His attempt was to teach students to write first, and to deal with the constraints peculiar to a given piece of writing as the constraints arose. And Donald Stewart stresses that "Scott was alone in his time in recognizing how significantly other

disciplines could enrich the study of composition and rhetoric." Most of his work "represented some attempt to ground a theory of teaching in psychology" ("Fred Newton Scott" 31).

James Berlin notes that Scott attacked "the destruction of the student's desire to communicate by the methods used to teach writing.... For Scott, students bring with them to school the inherent ability to use language" (78). Scott also explained that "the child's language is concrete and specific, but the school requires that he perform in the area of the abstract. This new language is different in degree only, not in kind, but is offered as superior in all respects.... The student's language, growing out of an inherent desire to communicate in a social setting, is declared useless" (Berlin 79). Since Scott criticized the way students are compelled to adapt an abstract and unfamiliar voice when voice should be determined by context and nurtured by a desire to communicate, he would also have regarded the separation of different forms of discourse--oratory and writing in any genre--as an unnecessary complication.

Entrance requirements also interested Scott. Donald Stewart writes that Scott regarded them as "expressions of some fundamental differences between educators on the essential nature of a university. He contrasted a feudal conception, which sets admittance standards and lets students in only if they qualify (and thus exists in isolation from the rest of the world), with an organic conception.... Specifically, he was contrasting schools like Harvard (feudal) with Michigan (organic)" ("Fred Newton Scott" 37-8).

Scott's position at the University of Michigan made it easy

for him to embrace the organic philosophy of education. However, he was sincere in his belief that students learn because of a desire to, and he consequently strove to create an environment in which students learned to write because of their desire to communicate. Students usually communicate well with speech, and Scott saw it as detrimental that instructors force from them "the incessant writing of outlines of plots, and critical estimates which ape maturity" ("What the West Wants in Preparatory English" 14). In short, it is teaching forms to students for which they have or will have little call. Many universities today attempt to remedy this ill by offering across-the-curriculum writing courses, which, because they are aimed at teaching forms students are expected to need, should provide a better sense of audience and purpose; perhaps they do. Even so, this method of instruction is opposed with the claim that students should write in various "forms." Narration, description, comparison-and-contrast, definition, and the rest, are accurate enough descriptions of internal processes that are triggered when a student thinks or writes. When a student needs to narrate, or to describe, or to compare and contrast, he or she begins to employ these modes naturally. Certainly this was Scott's argument. And contemporary rhetoricians suggest that, to use models and to ask the student to use these forms for subjects to which they may or may not be applicable, is to use the forms themselves as heuristic devices, a contradiction resulting in imitation or banal content or both. It is possible that practice in these forms forces students to exercise capacities, but it can not, in itself, give students the sense of urgency about content that will commit them

to the vehicles suited to communicating that content.

Sterling Adrus Leonard, one of Scott's students, believed that if students want to communicate, the constraints of occasion and audience will force them to make judicious early decisions out of which decisions about form and style grow. As John C. Brereton writes, Leonard's approach to composition "advocated...a strikingly modern view of audience analysis" (81). Leonard believed that "both the composing process and the ultimate product depend on the student's motivation to communicate with other class members" (Brereton 83). Though both Scott and Leonard taught composition, their insistence that forms evolve out of occasion and the desire to communicate, reveals a holistic conception of discourse. For them, creative writing would not have seemed an activity different from composition, but the same one undertaken with a different set of constraints. Scott criticizes the repression of students' natural inclination to communicate by prescribing a form or voice before content is determined. Addressing this issue in microcosm, another student of Scott's, Gertrude Buck, criticized straight-line sentence diagrams because they analyze form before the motivations for form are established. The diagram "distorts the origin of a sentence" (Burke 8). Buck asked, "Does the sentence psychologically precede separate words or are separate words fitted together psychologically to form the sentence?" (Burke 9). As Berlin writes: "The essential difference between Scott [and his students,] and current-traditionalists can be seen in the metaphors that govern each.... Current-traditional rhetoric is governed by the image of the machine.... The process is linear

in time and space, increment added to increment. The metaphor guiding Scott's rhetoric is that of the plant. Meaning grows... out of the rhetorical act: It is not imposed from without" (83-4).

Scott believed that writing evolves out of a rhetorical situation and that different forms evolve because of differences in the rhetorical situation. Therefore, the production of all discourse is creative. In the words of James Berlin, romantic rhetoric insists that "in composing--writing or speaking--the interlocutor must be certain that he is bringing all of his faculties...to the issue at hand. He must respond not as a scientist or Christian, or even as an artist...but as a fully functioning human being" (10). Romantic rhetoric, however, was "eventually defeated at the college level" (Berlin 11), but not before Scott raised serious questions.

When Scott was president of the Pedagogical Section of the Modern Language Association (1896-1903), he generated discussion about the way composition was taught. In 1901, the Pedagogical Section "endeavored to test the opinion of competent judges on the question of whether the methods of teaching composition now so widely followed are beyond the reach of criticism" (PMLA, 17, x). The methods to which the secretary of the Pedagogical Section refers are "requiring freshmen to write themes steadily through the year" (xi), when the suggestion had been made that students might profit more from reading widely. After opinion on the matter was compiled, the secretary wrote that "the case for reading as a sufficient independent means of teaching composition has evidently, in the judgement of most college teachers, not

been made out" (xxii). Charles Sears Baldwin, of Yale University, responded by observing that rhetoric "may be divided into the logical sort" and "the artistic or literary, [which] is the affair of...few" (xxiii). With all of the weight of his affiliation with a large, eastern university behind him, Baldwin stated that writing instruction should provide "the opportunity for consecutive criticism of any artistic form...but in every college the teaching of rhetoric must devote its main time to... training...on the logical side" (xxiv).

The following year Baldwin's assumptions were questioned: should the teacher of composition teach "(a) the art of writing clearly about ordinary matters; [or] (b) the production of literature" (PMLA, 18, viii). The answers were compiled into "three tolerably well defined groups, the first two decidedly favoring one view or the other, and the third aiming at harmony of the two" (x). Among those who favored "writing clearly and correctly about ordinary matters" as the focus for writing instruction, was an anonymous college teacher who wrote: "We may be devoutly thankful if we succeed in getting that much. To attempt more is to me hallucination" (x). Those who favored an "essentially literary training" were, however, as obsessed with mechanical and stylistic concerns as the former group, stressing that a literary author must first "be saved from slovenly habits of expression" (x). Those who favored an amalgamation of training in both logical and literary composition suggested an alternative: all students should begin with instruction in logical writing and "'literary' writing should begin with the formal study of English literature" (xi). This is, in effect,

the incorporation of a belletristic method of teaching creative writing, a way of teaching literature at the same time. Support for this opinion was garnered by instructors with opinions similar to the following: "...that we are paid by authorities of state and town to make not poets but citizens out of our pupils; Second, that all the poets the country may need will be furnished by Nature, cheaper and better without our artificial culture" (xviii). It is no surprise then that, when instruction in creative writing began to be university-sanctioned, the first surges of momentum came not from the prestigious and conservative eastern universities, but from universities in the mid-west and on the western coast. They were the first to question a superstition that still exists today: creative writers are better born than taught. They are told to read a lot.

In view of these decisions about the place of "literary composition" in college curricula and the assumptions about teaching creative writing that fuel them, it is interesting to examine English department course offerings in the fifty years that follow. The information below is based on data compiled from an archival survey of the English department course offerings of fifteen universities from the United States.⁵

In 1920-21, a total of 41 courses in creative writing were offered by these fifteen universities. The universities offering the most courses in creative writing--seven--were the University of Iowa and the University of North Carolina. The University of Washington offered six. Those offering no courses were the University of Georgia, Harvard, and the University of Michigan. Berkely offered one; Cornell, two. The largest concentration of

courses were found in playwriting, followed next by narrative writing, followed by short story writing and verse writing. This description of a course called "Poetics," offered by the University of Nebraska in 1930-31, describes a method of creative writing instruction very frequently employed: "Appreciation of poetry aided through studies of metric form. Offers assistance to persons showing facility in the making of verse." The creative writing course was a literature course at the same time. Sometimes it was a course in "logical" composition too; for instance, in a course called "Narrative Writing," students could be expected to write descriptions, biographies and fiction, or all three.

By 1960-61, the total number of courses offered in creative writing at these fifteen universities had grown, from the 41 offered in 1920-21, to 110. The most heavily concentrated area of instruction in 1960-61 was the area of general or introductory creative writing, followed by fiction and poetry. Playwriting lost its lead, perhaps because radio plays were an archaism and screenplays were not yet (and are still not) considered legitimate. Furthermore, the first class called a workshop--an attempt to expose students to a real audience--was offered in 1936 at the University of Iowa. Iowa also developed a B.A. in creative writing that decade, and the University of Washington and Stanford offered degrees with emphases in written English. In the same decade, the University of Iowa offered the first graduate degree in creative writing, and, by 1960-61, four other of these fifteen universities did. Since then, many do. Rust Hills writes about the dominance of creative writing degrees now: "At

some universities enrollment in the writing program far exceeds enrollment in the entire English Department" (38). Harvard, the bulwark of a faction of influential eastern universities, did not offer a single creative writing course until sometime in the 50s, while other universities, the University of Oregon for example, offered as many as 12 courses in 1930-31. By 1960-61, Harvard offered eight courses in creative writing, while the University of Oregon offered over twice that many.

The above figures indicate this: that when, for instance, a creative writing instructor like poet Richard Hugo says creative writing was missing from educational institutions "for 100 years or so, but in the past 40 years it has returned" (53), he essentially means that creative writing was available at some universities for a long time, but that only recently have all universities--including the eastern ones--granted it status as an academic study, and, at the same time, as a specialized, insular discipline. When creative writing instruction mushroomed in the 1960s, it gained prestige, not only because of its humanitarian appeal and ability to fill classrooms, but because of its potential for invigorating composition pedagogy. It found a secure home and began to flourish, particularly at the graduate level. In 1972 George Garret wrote that "the creative writer, the poet and novelist is, by now, a familiar figure in academe" (Graham and Garret 8).

Given this status, security, and some priority in funding, creative writing instruction developed a vocational as opposed to liberal arts thrust. It exists to make professional writers and professional teachers of creative writing. Contemporary creative

writing pedagogy addresses student writers at least as seriously as if they were in medical or law school, perhaps more seriously since many of these students have opted for long years of school and pressure without a secure promise of monetary compensation. Creative writing instructor Marion Montgomery writes, "My own first concern as teacher is to root out the student who merely likes the idea of being a writer...and suggest...that one must earn the right...through the tedious agony of repeatedly facing a typewriter" (65-6). The current state of writing instruction--including creative writing pedagogy and its serious, vocational focus--is examined in greater detail in the pages that follow.

Section Two: Current Writing Pedagogy

In the first half of the twentieth century, creative writing courses were available at universities but, in terms of numbers, they did not dominate English department offerings, nor did creative writing pedagogy have much influence on composition. As Berlin stresses, the appeal of the current-traditional rhetoric that was implicit in the prevailing composition pedagogy was "to the understanding and reason, with its highest manifestation to be found in exposition and argument" (63). This rhetoric was entrenched in the college curriculum until the 1960s. Until then, little changed except that the profession itself lost prestige. "Composition instruction became apprenticeship work left to graduate students and junior faculty members" (Berlin 75). One result of the relegation of writing instruction to the bottom of the list of priorities was that the focus of writing instruction grew narrow: freshman English, "with its positivist epistemology, was probably doing an adequate job of training students for the new technical professions" (Berlin 75). Current-traditional rhetoric, according to Berlin, also redefined invention: "The invention of discovery of classical rhetoric is replaced by a managerial invention," which does not teach "the discovery of the content of discourse," but how to "manage it, once found.... This new invention is thus made a part of arrangement" (64).

The re-examination of writing instruction in the 1960s called for a search for alternatives. Berlin identifies the

three rhetorical strains that developed out of or survived the shift of the paradigm as: (1) another, though more pertinent resurrection of classical rhetoric, a rhetoric of citizenship attempting to awaken an individual's sense of political responsibility; (2) a descendent of romantic rhetoric, self-expressive rhetoric, which focuses "on the individual's private struggle to arrive at truth" (88). Berlin points out that, while rhetoricians embracing this strain acknowledge their debt to Emerson and Thoreau, they are the theoretical descendents of a much older rhetorician and philosopher--Plato. Berlin labels the third existing rhetorical strain as (3) epistemic, "a means of arriving at truth...with language at the center of the truth-seeking, truth-creating enterprise" (90). Epistemic rhetoric is different from self-expressive rhetoric in its view of language, a view which makes the following notion about creative writing attractive: Richard Hugo writes that the relation of poet to word, "the strange way the poet emotionally possesses his vocabulary[,] is one of the mysteries and preservative forces of the art" (14). Many creative writers, notably Wallace Stevens, believe that language not only interprets reality, but invents it. The surge of interest in creative writing and its pedagogy occurred at the same time that composition theory became interested in semantics, the study of the varying ways language maps reality.

At the heart of both self-expressive and epistemic rhetoric is the idea that language--written and spoken--is a "dialectic interplay between the individual and experience. Truth does not

exist apart from language" (Berlin 90). Any production of discourse, including speech, thus becomes relevant for the rhetorician. James Britton writes that "one of the great values of talk in the writing process is that it permits the expression of tentative conclusions and opinions. ...the process won't be complete until the writing is done, but the free flow of talk allows ideas to be bandied about and opens up new relationships" (30). In fact, an interest in the vocal production of discourse fueled a number of pedagogical trends; it accounts for the popularity of James Moffet's Teaching the Universe of Discourse, in which a chapter entitled "Kinds and Orders of Discourse" takes into account the features that "Interior Dialogue" (thought), "Conversation," "Correspondence," "Public Narrative," and "Public Generalization and Inference" have in common with one another. For Moffet, the kinds of discourse exist in a hierarchic scheme with an order "determined by the distance in time and space between the speaker and listener" (Moffet 32). He teaches writing as the production of discourse within a particular social context, which he diagnoses with spatial and linear terms, and makes no designations beyond these.

Moffet's book was published in 1968. In 1969, Robert Zoellner suggested that "Talk Write: A Behavioral Pedagogy in Composition" be tested. This monograph asserts that the instructor's main task is to sustain with students a "vocal-to-scribal dialogue" (298), downplaying the differences between the act of speaking and the act of writing. Sounding like Fred Newton Scott, who objected to damming up students' natural

linguistic grace with the cultivation of an impersonal and abstract style, Zoellner writes that everything in a student's "cultural and school experience has told him that thinking is one thing and talking quite another.... In short, the whole vocal-to-scribal dialogue should be designed to get the student to talk rather than think" (299), or to at least stop concentrating on the acts of thinking and writing.

This acknowledgement of the similarity and perhaps progression between the production of speech and the production of written discourse has affected composition pedagogy. Conferencing with students and insisting that they participate with other students in workshops are techniques that grow out of the belief that, as a student talks about a subject, he or she becomes better able to write about it. These techniques were first utilized in creative writing pedagogy, where the theory that students must develop confidence in the voice they have and be discouraged from the cultivation of an alien voice has long been embraced. Writes poet Kenneth Koch of his experience of teaching disadvantaged New York public school children: "Since writing was the problem, I had them say their poems outloud" (46). He adds that "vision is a strong creative and educational force. If there is a barrier in its way--in this case it was writing--the teacher has to find a way to break that barrier down" (46). He recognizes talk as a means of penetrating that barrier.

Boundaries between the production of speech and the production of written discourse became less distinct as writing

instruction strove to broaden its scope. Simultaneously, a number of rhetoricians, whose theories are now widely accepted if not employed, took into account the similarities between creative and expository writing by acknowledging that the differences arise out of the differences in the rhetorical situation. Though he is describing a movement in English schools, what James Britton says about creative writing holds true for American pedagogy too: "During the middle sixties a strong movement towards creative writing developed...and the influence of the movement has, on the whole, been favorable. It encouraged teachers to read what their pupils wrote...not with some hypothetical standard of perfection in mind. But all worthwhile writing is creative in one way or another, and imagination is not confined to poetry. Nor is the writing of poems and stories free expression: here the writer is subject to constraints of many kinds, though he may have more options open to him than, say, a research scientist or court reporter" (31).

Assent that many similarities exist between expository and creative writing underlies the composition theory of W. Ross Winterowd, who writes, "Very few people need to compose in any medium--except in the hothouse atmosphere of the classroom," and that "the potentially most useful sort of composing is the self-expressive," which "one 'uses'...to adjust to the world" (12-3). He quotes Eldridge Cleaver to defend this use of writing, thus emphasizing the fact that creative writers in general regard writing as the search for personal truth. In Winterowd's words, "The writer who opts for the self-expressive mode...enters into

the jungle with no compass and no maps" (14), that is, no imposed forms of preconceived ideas. The search for personal meaning through writing requires commitment to discovery.

The rhetoricians Gordon Rohman and Albert O. Wlecke describe writing similarly, as "a person's transformation of the events of his life into experienced, conceptualized structures revealed in language for the sake of his own self-actualization and for communication" (13). They suggest that "much writing instruction fails because...the student-writer...never is given the chance to participate in the essentials of the process which he is being called upon to master" (3). The student fails to see writing as meaningful because cliches, in diction and in thought, are too accessible: "most of the concepts that people hold they have inherited rather than formed for themselves" (6). Thus, the focus of Rohman and Wlecke's pedagogy is on the early stages of writing, where they attempt to head off retreats into familiar algorithms. They ask students to take into "true account the particulars of a subject, especially those sensory particulars" (47), to avoid "too hasty and too uncritical acceptance of pre-fabricated labels...and ready-made combinations offered by our culture" (50). And creative writing theory employs the same concrete antidote for bad writing. Poet and fiction writer David Huddle writes that students are too often taught "to respect intellect, and...to disrespect the senses" (108), and that our own experience is "enormously complicated and if we are to write about it, we...must catch something of the nature of that complication" (110). Hence, he prescribes autobiographical

writing for beginning students because it "leads...naturally toward concrete writing" (108).

It is also interesting to note how Huddle's description of the role memory plays in creative writing is very like Rohman and Wlecke's description of the role cognition plays in expository writing. Huddle writes: "You remember in small pieces, fragments," and "in the act of writing you can recover...whole chunks of your history" (106), and these fragments are altered, rearranged, and changed into fiction. Similarly, Rohman and Wlecke write that "from a mind already well-furnished with concepts, the writer must select that one which will permit him to describe a new situation by inferring that it is like an old one. He transfers the old category to the new situation" (5). The attractiveness of self-expressive rhetoric in the composition classroom is this: it has what W. Ross Winterowd calls "addresser orientation" (12), or a focus on the writer, and therefore may be the only means instructors have of securing commitment from students in the artificial setting of the composition classroom.

This orientation is to be found with the recursiveness of a sales pitch in current composition textbooks, for instance, in Four Worlds of Writing, which begins with a focus on "writing in your private world because a primary function of writing is to help you know yourself and to share yourself with others" (Lauer, et al 19). Most creative writers, on the other hand, stress that what they write is fiction, a product of imagination; yet most will also stress that they cannot write what they do not believe. In the words of William Stafford, "writing...is one of the great, free human activities," but only for "the person who follows with

trust and forgiveness what occurs to him" (77). It is composition pedagogy that tries to teach "the attitude students behaving as writers ought to take toward themselves" (Rohman and Wlecke 43). Creative writing instruction assumes that the serious writer has already resolved this question.

In its attempt to address invention or discovery and self-discovery, current composition theory has searched other disciplines for insights into the act of writing: Janet Emig's case study of The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders examines hand and eye movements; Robert Zoellner's Talk-Write stresses the necessity of employing behavioral science, while focusing on writing as anxiety-producing behavior; Mike Rose's Writer's Block: The Cognitive Dimension concerns itself with "matching cognitive psychology and stymied composing" (v). Janice Lauer argues that, unless we strive for an interdisciplinary extension of rhetorical theory, "the creation of a potent contemporary rhetoric is a pious wish" (Lauer, 81).

Since a careful examination of the writing process reveals that writing has a great deal to do with speech and thought, and memory and cognition, psychology has been the area most thoroughly mined by those seeking to improve writing instruction. Jean Piaget's influence on current composition theory is vast. Rohman and Wlecke use Jerome Bruner's insights in general and his definition of "problem-solving" in particular to describe writing. And in a volume design to address problems germane to creative writing pedagogy, Olivia Bertagnolli and Jeff Rackham include essays by two psychologists. One essay is by Abraham Maslow, who discusses creativity for the "many, many people [who]

have waked up in the middle of the night with a flash of inspiration about the novel they would like to write, or a play or a poem" (9), as well as for persons involved in the creative enterprise of psychotherapy, "the task of self-improvement" (13). Rollo May discusses creativity as the energetic emergence of the unconscious in the mind of anyone searching for a concise and elegant theory, the burst of insight that appears "in opposition to...conscious belief" (21). This is not very different from Rohman and Wlecke's insistence that discovery occurs only when the student thinks and writes without "the obscuring intervention of customary labels or standardized conceptualizations" (45).

Furthermore, as writing pedagogy began to draw on the field of psychology, psychologists perceived writing as a therapeutic tool, believing, in the words of Howard Pierson, "that a neurotic can apply reason to his problems if he can acquire words and sentences that correspond to his internal and external experiences" (10). In the 1960s, writing came to have a broader definition than as a transactional activity by which one attempts to persuade an audience. Writing was illuminated by psychology, and psychology, by the writing process. In light of this, James Moffet's proposal that the entire curriculum be reconceptualized is hardly rash.

The re-evaluation of composition pedagogy that took place in the 1960s was simultaneous with an interest in creative writing, which gained part of its prestige then because of its potential for improving composition pedagogy. Britton describes the first surge of momentum: "It was assumed that, given some attractive stimulus, original, profound and beautiful writing would emerge"

because of the "'free' expression of the creative imagination" (31). Therefore, creative writers became sought-after teachers of expository writing. A notable example is novelist John Hawkes, whose Voice Project: An Experiment in Teaching Writing to College Freshmen (1967) explores "the concept of 'voice'...and the practical ways of using 'voice' as a teaching concept" (xiv). As early as 1951, a creative writer named Roger Garrison began a book on writing instruction with "the basic premise...that all writing is in a real sense creative" (ix), and stressed that even the commercial writer must have the "maturity [that] underlies all creative effort" (206). Creative writers of stature are always committed to the search for personal truth through language and, because of this, embrace what we now call a self-expressive or epistemic rhetoric. It no doubt seemed, twenty years ago, as if they knew something about writing that most instructors of freshman English did not. The best poets, fiction writers, and playwrights recognized that language creates reality, or at least our perception of it, which is the same thing. The composition pedagogy which prevailed until the 1960s, however, stressed interpretation of an objective, existing reality.

Given this prestige, and the monetary support that accompanied it, creative writing instruction grew at the graduate level, taking on a serious and vocational focus. Creative writing programs became an initiation of writers into the profession, a place where they could make contacts, and learn technique, self-criticism and, above all, an attitude. In fact, whether or not creative writing actually gets taught is a question asked with frequency in the body of literature about creative writing

instruction. Marion Montgomery writes, "the how is presumably the point of the writing course, but...too close an attention to the how indeed may turn [the student] from the act itself, may turn him into the spectator of literature, the critic" (67). Richard Wilbur writes, "Of course, you can't show anybody how to write.... But you can sometimes be one jump ahead of him in discovering the writing he might best do" (43). And when the same suggestion that writing isn't taught was made to Fred Chappel, he responded, "It's a cliché...but, you know, it's largely true, too" (36). What does occur in a writing program? Rust Hills writes: "Students learn how to criticize tactfully and constructively and they are virtually forced to produce work..." (39).

Hills also points out that because creative writing programs pay both student and professional writers as teaching assistants and instructors, they create an economic security, though it is by no means luxurious. Hills describes the distribution of teaching assistantships to student creative writers: "There must be a thousand or more aspiring young American writers in...this situation now. It is an extent and degree of support of new talent that is unprecedented" (39). He also writes that creative writing programs "provide the otherwise missing dimension of 'community' for America's widespread authors, through the system of visiting writer-teachers...and the summer writing conferences." He adds, "One other major contribution made by the colleges and universities is in providing what modern fiction [and poetry] seems really to need most: readers." An audience is created "through college and university support of

literary quarterlies...and little magazines" (39).

Three kinds of graduate degrees in creative writing exist today. Associated Writing Programs, a national, non-profit organization and the primary source of information on creative writing at the university level, describes three programs of study: (1) Studio writing programs "most clearly parallel studio programs in music, dance, and the visual arts.... Faculty of such programs are selected for their achievement in the creative forms and not for scholarly work" (AWP Newsletter 9). Students enroll in these programs to become professional writers. (2) Studio/Academic writing programs "usually place equal emphasis, in their curricula, on the student's writing and literature coursework, believing that the study of literature is crucial to one's development as a writer" (AWP Newsletter 9), and (3) Programs in traditional literary study and creative writing "allow a creative thesis, but also expect that a significant amount of the degree work will be completed in the study of literature" (AWP Newsletter 9). Studio/Academic programs, and programs in traditional literary study and creative writing exist not only to produce writers, but also to produce writers who can teach creative writing; and the third type of program in particular exists to produce writers who are teachers of literature as well.

Current creative writing pedagogy as found in textbooks may also be categorized. One kind of instruction is of a testimonial nature, a personal account by a writer about his own processes. As Janet Emig comments, "the statements provided by different sources...contradict one another--more, they are often unique,

even idiosyncratic." She adds that "very few...deal in adequate depth...with how students...write" (50). These accounts are retrospective and therefore probably inaccurate because of "the time-lag between the writing and the description of that writing," and they often focus "upon the feelings of writers about the difficulties of writing--or not writing--almost to the exclusion of an examination of the act itself" (Emig 52-3). In addition, at its worst this testimony becomes a form imposed on the writer. In the words of John Ciardi, "Somebody comes along and asks what you thought you were doing. You pick out a theme and you're hung up with trying to be consistent.... You have to end up lying" (122-23). I recall, for instance, hearing a novelist deliver a lecture at a creative writing conference in which he insisted, correctly, that writing is an act of survival by the individual and therefore procreative. He also insisted that writing was like sex.

For better or for worse, this pedagogy attempts to coach the student from the perspective of experience. In Sweet Agony, writer Gene Olson says his book about writing is "not exactly organized...perhaps because the whole thing is an accumulation of bits and pieces collected over a 20-year period of writing and teaching" (2). On the same note, William Gass writes of his own book on writing, "there is not, among these pieces, the promised community of the completed jigsaw," and that he doubts his own "reasons for accepting these invitations to lecture" because "one's thought should be carried out in the same privacy as good poetry and fiction is[,]...for its own sake only, just as purest philosophy" (xii-xiii). And Richard Hugo writes, "I'm really,

alas unavoidably, offering my way of writing, hoping the student will be able to develop his or her own later on" (xii).

A good portion of creative writing textbooks are belletristic as well. For instance, Theodore Goodman's The Writing of Fiction is an analysis of form and style which uses literature as examples. It may have been, for creative writing pedagogy in the 1950s, what Hugh Blair's lectures were for 18th century rhetoric. And Janet Burroway's Writing Fiction "follows a traditional division of the art of fiction into elements that will be familiar to those who have studied...literature" (vi). R. V. Cassill's Writing Fiction begins with this premise: "an apprentice in the art must seek in reading the techniques within which he may give form to his own observation" (xiii). This pedagogy is inherited, unquestioned and, like the belletristic approach to composition, has disadvantages for beginning writers: the encouragement of emulation. This occurs when, for instance, the creative writer begins instead of ends with literary allusion, making the tradition out of which allusion grows paramount, while commitment to the idea embodied in that tradition remains less than tantamount. For the mature writer, however, reading exhibits "possibilities of technique, ways of execution, phrasing, rhythm, tonality, pace" (Hugo xi), but only because these elements have become a part of the reader's experience, and are not seen as a model that he or she as a writer must compete against. Reading is an activity that is distinct from writing, yet, like pacing a floor or writing on schedule, it may enhance writing. A belletristic pedagogy, though, is more defensible in creative writing than it is in

composition, because the creative writing student is expected to have gained the maturity to realize the difference.

An interesting and recent variation of belletristic creative writing pedagogy is found in the textbooks of John Kuehl and Wallace Hildick. Literature is the focal point of these books, but literature in progress. Responding to the predominant creative writing pedagogy, where "the emphasis was on product rather than process" (v), John Kuehl developed a textbook which deals specifically with the revisions made by professional writers. He found that, as students compared a holograph of the first versions of the first chapter of The Great Gatsby to the published version, "they debated these changes enthusiastically." Furthermore, "they were witnessing the resolution of difficulties not merely similar to their own, but of a more sophisticated nature" (vi). And Hildick's book, though it is geared as much toward the critic of existing pieces of literature as it is toward the writer of yet unwritten works, embraces the same idea. Clearly this is an attempt to examine the act of writing itself rather than the written work.

In short, writing pedagogy in general is striving toward a more complete treatment of the entire writing process. Creative writing pedagogy, like composition pedagogy, still utilizes finished pieces of writing as models to an extent that suggests it is the best or only resource available. Unlike composition, however, creative writing also utilizes realistic, sympathetic, and idiosyncratic accounts of the writing process. In spite of their unintentional distortions, these accounts of writing processes do bring students closer to an understanding of the act

of writing than a critic's analysis of literature can. They reveal a truth to which both the psychologist Rollo May and the poet John Ciardi allude: that writing is the evolution of unconscious knowledge into consciousness. The expository writer tries to make this transformation more explicit. The creative writer also tries to make this transformation explicit, yet strives to create, for the reader, a vicarious sense of discovery. The contribution of creative writing pedagogy to writing instruction in general is the accounts professional writers give of their own processes, and their intuitively sensible paradigm of instruction in the serious business of writing. Furthermore, belletristic writing instruction, which is now used most indiscriminately in the composition classroom, suggests a reversal of the writing process, that consciousness, or forms and formulas, precede the emergence of the unconscious, the content being revealed.

The suppression of creative writing in favor of expository writing was in part responsible for the many years that composition pedagogy was atrophied. In 1977, Richard Hugo wrote that, "in much academic writing, clarity runs a poor second to invulnerability" (55), and added that creative writers are better writers because they are "less interested in being irrefutably right than...in the dignity of the language" (56). Creative writers have illuminated composition with this perspective and by stressing that a writer "searches for ways to unlock his imagination through trial and error" (Hugo 33). They suggested that the search for meaning requires that old patterns be abandoned, that molds be broken. Another possibility exists:

creative writing pedagogy remains unnecessarily isolated from composition. Current literature about composition explores the stages of writing in which self-discovery occurs. Though creative writers have long acknowledged the importance of these stages of writing, as Janet Emig notes, they say and appear to know very little about them. Composition theory, on the other hand, has begun an exploration of the first stages of writing. Yet this literature remains unread by all but a handful of men and women who devote their careers to teaching freshmen English.

Conclusion

Today both composition and creative writing have improved their status in the English department. Eighteen major universities now offer Ph.Ds in English with creative dissertation options, and in the past twenty years, Ph.Ds in composition-and-rhetoric have become available at universities with prestigious reputations.⁶ Resources and funds are allotted to both in the form of writers-in-residence, visiting writers, and endowed chairs. It is perhaps because of the concurrent competition for priority that instructors in both areas of writing instruction tend to ignore the existing literature about the pedagogy of the other. Composition theory and textbooks have improved recently, because of their adoption of techniques from creative writing, yet many of these techniques have yet to be used widely or well in classrooms. And creative writing instructors are slow to examine the current literature about composition, which no longer focuses narrowly on the latter stages of expository writing. Furthermore, because current composition theory takes into account the role memory, cognition, and the unconscious play in the act of writing, literature about the composing process strives to establish a vocabulary by borrowing terms from the discipline from which it borrows--cognitive psychology. It seems riddled with jargon and is perhaps neglected for this reason; however, it has far-reaching ramifications for any writing instructor.

The pedagogical paradigms of both composition and creative writing are isolated from one another. Yet both are alike in that both remain preoccupied with analysis and description of

form. With communication with an audience about an objective reality as its goal, the composition classroom in particular is "ruled by formal tyranny" and students "are forced to respond to experience in given ways, the ways of cool rationality" (Winterowd 172). And in creative writing classrooms and textbooks, the belletristic tradition, an essentially formal approach to teaching, is pervasive and unquestioned. Yet, as W. Ross Winterowd writes, "the concept of form in discourse is utterly fascinating, for it concerns the way in which the mind perceives infinitely complex relationships" (163). Form is a structure revealed to the writer as it is imposed by content.

Classifications of progressions in writing are of value to writers in that they allow them to enrich their own understanding of what they have both read and written. A stored knowledge of forms--no doubt garnered from wide and not sporadic, assigned reading--is essential. Structures reveal relationships that students call up analogously as they write, or analyze, or discuss complex issues. Rohman and Wlecke describe writing as the transference of unfamiliar information into familiar concepts. Forms are similitude-dramatizing constructs, clues to the many and varying links between cognition and intuition, between conscious and unconscious knowledge. "The person's experiences are shaped into a unified structure of [existing] concepts" (Rohman and Wlecke 13). In this sense, forms that have been remembered by students become archetypes by which they judge the constructs they produce; relationships between content and form that recur take on a truth that is felt in a personal and mythic

way. In the words of Keith Fort, form is a strategy for "establishing a relation to reality" (173).

But form can only be discussed once writing has been completed. Kenneth Burke describes form as "an arousing and fulfillment of desires," that leads readers "to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence" (183). This describes the appeal of form for a reader, but not how the writer discovers it. A reader's expectations can be discussed as being met only after a skeletal shape has emerged, at the point in the writing process after which pedagogy attempts to intervene. And a preoccupation with classifications of progressions that appear with frequency in writing can distract students from the development of authentic content by keeping them from finding the constructs that are organically suited to that content. Even heuristics, the exploration of obligations to the audience and subject, help the writer only in determining how to best say what that writer has already determined to say.

As most professional writers attest, there are similarities in procedure in the earliest stages of writing in any genre. Furthermore, self-expressive writing and creative writing are very much alike in that form is imposed in a large, cultural or historical way, but then in a uniquely personal way. Persuasive writing and writing for examination, on the other hand, are fulfillments of a form imposed by an immediate audience. Composition still exists to teach freshmen to fulfill these forms because they will need them, but only for the next three years of their lives. In "Rhetorical Malnutrition in Prelim Questions and Literary Criticism," Donald Stewart criticizes this

academic habit and comments that we can expect little innovation in scholarship when--in both graduate and undergraduate courses--the student is forced "into a single paradigm: thesis statement, supporting generalizations and examples, conclusions" (122). Students retreat into this paradigm "hastily and... predictably" because it is "the one safe form which will get them a passing grade" (122). In short, form is imposed and discovery is impeded because standard constructs or cliches in form are not only invited, but insisted upon. The prescription of form permits the avoidance of the most excruciating phase of writing or thinking, when time must be allowed for content to emerge and demand its own construct. Fighting the impulse to impose the most familiar or accessible form is of the utmost importance to the person who is a serious writer or scholar, or both. Discovery occurs not as new classifications are found, but as existing ones are revealed as limitations.

Given the maturity a student must possess to explore reality in this way, we are therefore right to question the assumption that now dictates the structure of many composition textbooks and classrooms: the progression from self-expressive writing to objective writing. To begin with self-expressive writing is to attempt to secure involvement on the part of the writer, but that the gratification that comes from self-expressive writing should be confused with writing for a grade--in which case most students are terribly involved--is confusing. Self-expression might be the place where all discourse begins, but self-expressive writing requires more distance than expository writing and perhaps even more than fiction, where the writer

very often disguises his or her own involvement with the characters and their interactions. The non-fictional synthesis of personal experiences, events, and motifs, is the most psychologically demanding synthesis to be made, if it is to be made well. When students are asked to make such a synthesis, and then shown a fine example of published self-expressive writing, they find little to say. They seek out a familiar construct and polish their language. Rohman and Wlecke write that students "can see the goodness of...models...but...have an understandable right not to feel fully motivated" (83).

The same may be said about the imposition of teaching paradigms. When students produce the best writing of which they are capable, they discover for themselves the form which is suited to the content they are developing, which by no means suggests that students do not benefit from studying other forms. But an analytic study of a model is often an imposition of content and form, when the student has not yet begun to write. We ask students to avoid algorithms, yet, before they begin writing, hand them an admirable, intimidating one.

The imposition of pedagogical paradigms creates the same problems. Teachers use the best of their intuition and knowledge to offer help to beginning writers. An instructor's knowledge about writing exists in a construct that is meaningful for that instructor, and any way that it can be explained or passed along to students will broaden students' knowledge about themselves and their own writing processes. But, as Fred Chappell writes, there comes a time when young writers must be weaned from school (40). They must develop their own paradigms. Similarly, writing

instructors should read widely and cautiously themselves, and be prepared to discover truths about writing of which they are aware. A knowledge of existing pedagogical trends, and of the assumptions and traditions out of which they grew, will help instructors to develop their own theories of teaching. This is a challenge of the highest order: like self-expressive writing, it requires an attempt to examine an issue of which we are a part. To insist otherwise is to ask instructors to form teaching paradigms based on habit, and to ask them to adapt unfamiliar pedagogies is the imposition of form before content is established, a procedure that hinders discovery and leads to massive distortions about the process of cognition.

Asking students to imitate or do exercises in forms to which they have no commitment is foolhardy. Similarly, the support that develops in response to a rallying cry for a radically new pedagogy deteriorates into empty gesture. Genuine benefits occur in the dawn of a movement, but dogmatic inflexibility follows. In short, we must strive for a thoughtful synthesis of all that we know about writing instruction because fields of study lose stature and momentum as they grow isolated. The history of our profession testifies that this is so.

Footnotes

¹This information comes from an archival survey of the descriptions of English department course offerings in the academic years of 1920-21, 1930-31, 1940-41, 1950-51, and 1960-61 at the universities of Arizona, California-at-Berkely, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, North Carolina, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin, and also at Cornell University, Harvard and Stanford. I feel these universities are geographically distributed in such a way to provide an accurate representation of the kinds and varieties of writing instruction available at American universities at these times.

²In the year of 1920-21, for instance, the University of Georgia, Harvard, and the University of Michigan did not offer a single course in creative or imaginative writing. In the academic year of 1950-51, creative writing was still not available at the University of Georgia, nor at Harvard.

³See my first footnote for the sources of these quotes.

⁴The University of Iowa, the University of Kansas, and the University of Wisconsin listed their composition and creative writing courses together, separate from their literature courses.

⁵These universities are listed in my first footnote.

⁶Ph.Ds in English with a creative dissertation option are available at the universities of Cincinnati, Connecticut, Denver, Houston, Illinois-at-Chicago-Circle, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, Southern Mississippi, Southwestern Louisiana, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin-Milwaukee, as well as at Bowling

Green State University, Florida State University, Ohio State University, Oklahoma State University, and the State University of New York-Binghamton. Ph.Ds in composition or rhetoric are available at the universities of Southern California, Texas, and Iowa, as well as at Carnegie-Mellon, Purdue, Renassler-Polytechnic Institute, and Texas Christian University.

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FACT AND FICTION: DISTINCTIONS IN PEDAGOGY
IN COMPOSITION AND CREATIVE WRITING

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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Two distinct forms of writing instruction exist in American universities today--composition and creative writing--and a survey of the literature about both forms of writing instruction suggests that the reason why is that very different assumptions about writing underlie each pedagogical paradigm. Separate and insular bodies of literature have evolved for both forms of writing instruction. This is perhaps true because, for the first half of this century, composition existed to teach students to report and draw inferences from objective reality, while creative writing existed to teach students to create literary art, an enterprise requiring the subjective exploration of reality. The assumption that the composition classroom is concerned with only reason and logic, while imagination is addressed only in the creative writing classroom, was challenged in the 1960s by a group of rhetoricians who believe that truth arises out of a private vision which is constantly consulted through writing: language describes, orders, and therefore creates reality. Consequently, the assumptions behind contemporary composition theory have more in common with the assumptions behind theory about teaching creative writing than the separation of the two forms of writing instruction would seem to suggest. One reason this implicit harmony remains unrecognized is found in the focus of both the composition and creative writing classroom: attention is turned to decisions that arise late in the writing process--to form and style--and because the form and style of an essay is so different from the form and style of an essay or poem, classroom practice necessarily varies. Another explanation is found in

American rhetorical history: the simultaneous triumph of current-traditional rhetoric and the demise of romantic rhetoric contributed to the neglect of a part of the composing process that classical rhetoricians recognized as paramount: invention. It is in the province of invention that composition and creative writing are most clearly aligned.