Inviting "Millennials" to be Voices for Social Justice in Their Creative Writings

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The historical transition from the 20th Century to the 21st has sparked a boom in identifying names and classifying characteristics of the young American adults and teens coming of age at that time. Though there is much discrepancy about the starting birth year and the life span parameters of "Generation Y", generalizing descriptions abound in an effort to capture their influential "historical location"—context, opportunities, and experiences that members of this group share, particularly in their formative years. Defining qualities that are largely agreed upon among researchers include an inclination for "digital media, their confidence and optimism, and their orientation towards collaboration" (Donnison).

Most pertinent here are Donnison's ideas about what could be a truly transformational pedagogy: empowering students to be reflective, critical, and ethical community activists and advocates of social justice. Though applied particularly to teacher education, this point has relevance to all educators of the Millennials:

> While the generation may be techno-literate, this does not necessarily translate into change agency. If change agency is also having a vision for and willingness to embrace change and engage in new challenges [Day] then the generation's

propensity towards conservatism, conservation, and institutional continuity

[Donnison] poses a challenge to teacher educators. (9)

Donnison presents educators with the task of looking beyond students' generational attributes to encourage greater critical, productive, and creative application of their technological proficiency. The aim is to achieve a genuine empowerment and self-determination that is absent from the writings of Millennial authors. The challenges are to disrupt students' absorption in emotionally-vacant, dehumanized violent narratives, permeating their mass media culture, and invite them to creatively re-vision their "real" worlds. If successful, M. Greene asserts that students can share with audiences their experiences of "darkness and light", despair and hope, and cruelty and gentleness. Utilizing their abilities and skills with technology and writing, students can be inspired "to make us see, to make us indignant, to inspire us to take action against the horrific" as well as the beautiful. Their acts of creative polemics could effect positive change in our futures, but only if they become involved.

Such ambition in teaching suggests a transformational pedagogy, which contrasts with a vocational training type education of "skill sets". Reproducing the status quo of values and ingrained practices, skills training reinforces conservative acts of research, language use, employment, political participation, and so forth. As Iverson and James argue, a primary goal of higher education has consistently been regarded as the preparation of graduates for "effective citizenship": "active engagement in the civic life of their communities" (19). I join Iverson and James, Hillygus, Galston, (Dionne et. al.), and others in the challenge of educating millennial students in the importance of greater awareness of social surroundings with responsive charitable volunteerism to meet community needs, playing positive roles in democratic civic efficacy.

In American college composition courses, writing faculty conventionally assign

exposition and argumentative essays, integrating forms of evidence to support their positions.

However, in creative writing workshops, experienced and published poetry, fiction, and dramatic

writers teach classes typically to novice writers , facilitating their expression imagination within

these genres.   The development of purposeful, message-driven, and audience-oriented writing—

in other words, a rhetorical approach—on political and social topics has been systematically

omitted. As Kelly Ritter has argued, creative writing faculty learn and pass on to their students

the perception that the discourse of activism and polemics are counter to imagination, creativity,

and literary art production from their own educational experiences and pedagogical modeling. In

fact, such an attitude has prevailed for decades. Jonathan Holden explains three reasons why

poetry does not lend itself to making moral statements: the development of polemical arts such

as the sermon and journalism occupied the province of judgment; the trend of poets arguing

against Victorian didacticism evolved toward imagism, which is amoral; and "The poetic

language bequeathed to us by the modernists tends to be private and specialized—not adapted for

making large generalizations" (77). To develop an understanding of why creative writing

teachers have practiced pedagogies that stayed away from questions of audience, purpose of

work, or potential social impact can be summed up by John Gardner, a scholar who has had an

enormous influence on the field: "Art is as original and important precisely because it does not

start out with clear knowledge of what it means to say" (13).   As evidenced by trends in content

related to Gardner's theories and practices, creative writing textbooks still primarily focus on the

craft of writing description, settings, character development, plots, genres, and narrative

movement from introduction to crisis to resolution. Unlike rhetorical approaches to composition

which focus on message, purpose, and audience, Gardner's artistic production process is described by chaos and accidental experimentation that results mysteriously in art when performed by an artist. However, I advocate a rhetorical process of composition but not divorced from a creative process to write work of various genres.

Despite this consistent tradition of training young writers to disregard current social issues, many brilliant literary authors have written their texts with strong social, economic, and political critiques permeating their pages. For example, Sam Hamill, in his introduction to an anthology called *Poets Against the* War, reminds American citizens to:

> "Read the Greeks, read the Classical Chinese; tell it to Dante, Chaucer, Milton, or Longfellow. Tell it to Whitman, Dickinson, or Hughes. . . . in the language of everyday common speech, they must struggle to reveal clarity by way of musical and imagistic expression, and by transparency of emotion." (xviii, xix, xx)

Undeniably, there is a precedent for poets to provide social critiques in their art. Nevertheless, creative writing courses haven't traditionally advocated rhetorical approaches that deliberately focus on audience and purpose issues (Ritter). However, creative writing as its own academic discipline has experienced rapid growth in its recent history "with dedicated courses and programs, with professors whose scholarship is entirely or primarily devoted to reflections upon the field" (Swander, Leahy, and Cantrell 11). By offering practical ways to enable students a creative space for exploring and expressing their viewpoints on social, political, and environmental activism, I hope to enable the possibility of transformations in students as they find their passion and share it with their current and future audiences.

Creativity Meets Social Justice

Scholars of English studies, such as Tim Mayers and Wendy Bishop, claim that creativity is a part of all composing processes, rejecting to accept the monopoly that creative writing instruction has on it. Expanding its traditional boundaries of the introductory creative writing courses, Monica Berlin identifies a space to:

> "debunk misconceptions associated with writing. Poems, students come to learn, are not solely emotion placed on a page with line breaks. They need not be wholly autobiographical, ignoring any reach out into the larger world, dismissing anything that has not been experienced firsthand." (94)

Here, some members of the field of creative writing pedagogy are broadening the acceptable realms of subject matter beyond the author's expression of personal experiences, embracing polemical and rhetorical approaches to writing.

However, many still teach expressive literary writing with a strict association with Romanticism, relegating its status to a "gloriously useless" art for the sake of art. In contrast, writers of business reports, technical proposals, journalistic articles, or essay compositions have conscious social purposes for the writing and reading of their texts. They expect decisions to be made and actions to be performed—some form of change or reaction to their writing to occur. In contrast, creative writing is viewed as "surplus, excess, or luxury—as opposed to necessary or functional. Viewed from another angle, composition is value extracted, creative writing value added" (McQuade 490, qtd in Lim 154). In other words, vocational writing actually involves currency exchange for the texts as writing enables the progress of projects for profit. Even college essays allow students to complete courses, earning their grades. With public forms of

writing such as in mass media, writers are paid or compensated for communicating with others; however, they are not expected to produce works of literary art. Rather, to use James Kinneavy's concept of "aims of discourse", I see the above forms of writing tend to be information and persuasion-focused as opposed to literary or expressivistic in aims. As such, Lim argues that "the removal of creative writing from vocational and applied uses, its very 'uselessness,' positioned it as superior to freshman composition" (154). In turn, a strange paradox exists: "useless" creative writing is taught by faculty considered to be "peripheral royalty" in English departments. According to Lim, this dual positioning accounts also for the low status of students who are mostly unsuccessfully attempting to write artistic works, poorly imitating the masters of literary art, and studying under accomplished, published author-teachers.

To escape from a Romantic concept of the creative writing workshop, Brent Royster advocates that teachers reject location of "the individual is the sole agent in the production of remarkable work" (Royster 31-32). Further dismantling the Romantic mystery of the lone writer receiving an erratic jolt of inspiration from somewhere unknown in the writing process, Royster joins theorists Brophy and Csikszentimihalyi in identifying authorship as equally and reciprocally mediated between the individual, the field, and the audience. Therefore, creativity is a teachable dynamic process—particularly present in the workshop environment with writers' memories, reviewers' critiques, the philosophies and practices of "the field", as well as the world in motion all mixing together. Therefore, teaching students creative writing involves what Tim Mayer calls "craft criticism": "engaged theorizing about creative production—theorizing that arises from and is responsive to the social, political, economic, and institutional contexts for creative writing" (46-7). The approach addresses the process and act of rhetorical composition

as it relates to questions of genre, authorship, and institutionalism that teachers such as Wendy

Bishop have been converging in all of her writing classes: "As I moved as a teacher between

these worlds of composition classes and creative writing classes, my pedagogy in each became

more similar" (183). While the commonalities in instruction satisfy her sense of productivity in

the courses, she acknowledges the political and cultural discomfort members across English

studies have with her imposing rhetorical approach to creative writing workshops and creative

approach with standard composition classes. Nevertheless, she encourages her students to have

more of a commitment or "buy in" to their writing because she noticed they put more work into

it. According to Bishop, this increased commitment to writing must be coupled with instructors

writing with their students in classes, creating a cooperative classroom activity of composition

with "serious attention to writing, from drafting, response, reading, pushing, experimenting, and

succeeding even just a little bit" (290). In turn, students realize that good writing comes from

conscious attention, purpose, and revision in order to create the messages and worlds imagined

by the writer for readers to share in. Importantly, if Generation Y students excel in collaborative

learning settings, then workshop environments of creative, critical, and interactive work could

likely engage them, especially if their confidence is challenged.

Creative Writing Pedagogy and Activist Agency

In order for students to write a purposeful, socially-conscious, message-driven piece of fictional,

nonfictional, or poetic writing, they must feel some passion about injustices and the desire to

communicate it to readers. If successful, their writing could inspire readers to see the subject

differently, as the authors themselves see it. Such purposeful writing is produced by writers who

feel they have the right to convey this message, i.e. the agency for speaking on this subject.

However, many of our students enter our classrooms feeling overwhelmed and impotent to

change their personal stressors (family disintegration, economic strain, work and school

demands, health crises, drug and alcohol abuse, depression and other emotional issues, etc.) and

community problems (local crime, employment instability and unavailability, municipal leader

corruption and nepotism, etc.), much less global problems (war, national deficit, international

trade and commerce, dollar value, food contamination, lead poisoning in products, outsourcing

of jobs, etc.). While the problems are daunting, writing teachers must find a way to facilitate the

"coming out" of students' social awareness from positions of hiding in fear and ignorance to

finding their voices to speak the unbearable as well as the attainable.

Veteran scholar-teacher Peter Elbow describes an approach to narrative and personal

writing pedagogy in which he assumes that students have something to say that is worth hearing

as well as a voice that is worth cultivating in our college writing classrooms. In practice, this

concept means that students search in self-reflection for the valued knowledge they have, and

they share it with others in writing. Each student has personal knowledge to contribute to the

collective learning of the class, which instructors can encourage or discourage. In the teaching

as well as the learning processes, the instructor acts as a guide who is both teaching students and

learning from them (Cooper and Selfe) and, in turn, maintaining opportunities for students to

perform in roles that affirm their agency, knowledge, and power. While certainly not a new

perspective, Paolo Freire's critical pedagogy pertains to the construction of an activist creative

writing course: providing real world purpose for improving writing, the value of a student-

centered teaching approach to promote agency, and a concept of education that serves as an act

of self-liberation by raising students' awareness of power structures in their society and enabling their voices of indignation against social injustices (Freire; Slater). However, for a successful student-centered environment, all students must be invited, urged, and even required to participate in jointly creating a dynamic learning process.

To activate these goals, much of the responsibility lies with the instructor to teach students how to feel more comfortable expressing themselves, their views, their passions, their values, etc., if they haven't had much experience doing so. Further, students often need some instruction and encouragement to participate with agency if their previous roles in the classroom have been largely passive and imitative. With this type of classroom, students may feel emotional risk in revealing their personal views on topics of public concern, may they be generalized and based on local or limited experience, without researched evidence to support them or unpopular with their peers. The risk for students is possible embarrassment from peer criticism. Instructors must be willing to draw clear boundaries so that sensitive and controversial subjects and positions can be discussed, even passionately, but not degradingly or hostilely. In other words, the rules need to be explicit for the Millennials to understand and follow, which they are comfortable doing as long as satisfying justification for their productive intercommunication.

Getting students accustomed to writing about debatable topics of social relevance, I assigned readings by published authors who tackle, in their fictional and nonfictional works, controversial or ethical issues. In doing so, critical literacy in terms of language use and common terminology, approaches to social justice topics, and conventional questions of investigation are introduced. Some suggested inquiries that generate discussion include: political or social

messages of the work, the ways the story serves the message and the message serves the story, intended audience for this message, historical and social context for the story, artistic merits of the language and narrative elements, biographical connections to a sense of story's purpose, emotional content and reader response, and so on. By addressing this range of literary, rhetorical, and cultural considerations, teachers engage students in respectful but critical discussion of textual production and analysis, encouraging diverse perspectives about the writing as well as the provocative issues raised in the creative works.

Once constructive discourse and practices are established amongst the writing community, that same approach can be applied to the sharing of each other's writing. However, as instructors, we must demonstrate an open stance to views that differ from our own while challenging students to fully analyze their messages, characters, writing style, etc. Their learning objective is to achieve the most credible, clear, and moving work they can create for their audiences, whether they choose groups who agree, disagree, remains neutral, or are ill informed and need instruction. Through our feedback to student writing, instructors can demonstrate a productive balance of praise for the persuasive, moving, and unique ideas presented in a work; questions for revision of style, characters, descriptions and details, and language convention issues; and constructive criticism to raise awareness of audience reactions, generic lapses, underdeveloped components, and missed rhetorical opportunities (Berzsenyi 71). In turn, students and instructors can collaborate on student initiated ideas that inspire them to take a clear stand on social injustices that may seem to be foreign positions of power and responsibility for them. Further, they can create characters, writing styles, plots, as well as nonfiction stories of true experiences that deliver their messages of significance to their target readers with specific

aims and desired effects. Ideally, this is accomplished without sacrificing students' creativity,

intelligence, or artfulness to the extent they wish to foster it. In the next section, I will discuss

more particulars about getting students working on a creative writing assignment.

Lesson Description

My Advanced Creative Writing class had 22 traditional-aged students with a fairly even split of

males and females, mostly Caucasian, working class individuals who are among the first in their

families to go to college. Importantly, I am a techno-rhetorician and professional writer who has

workshop experiences writing scripts and short fiction, but I am not a published poet or

fiction/nonfiction writer. With this lack luster ethos, I assign our first writing prompt: "Write a

poem of any kind or length that addresses a social issue of concern to you." To get us started, I

chose an anthology of poetry that would demonstrate poets writing about an obviously

controversial, political, and complicated subject: war. In *Poets Against the War*, I asked students

to form groups and read a selection of poems and to share with the rest of the class the poems'

expressions of various feelings of rage, horror, longing, and despair; their spectrum of images of

combat, casualties, injury, and destruction; their uses of verse, rhyme, rhythm, and other poetic

tropes; and presented cerebral points of opposition from a multitude of perspectives. The poems

of this anthology vividly illustrated the merging of imagination, emotional intensity, and the

power of concision of poetry and effective polemical writing. In response to the readings,

students presented points of agreement and dissonance with the authors' arguments, motivations,

and emotional responses to the controversial issues and facts about war and the US government's

involvement in the Middle East during the late 1990's and early 21st century. Most students

knew very little about this historical period when they were in junior high school and had greater

popular cultural literacy about musical entertainers than a critical knowledge about our troops in

the desert. My colleagues and I have discussed challenges of teaching some Millennials: their

lack of curiosity and motivation to learn and achieve, ennui and disinterest ("whatever"), short

span of attention, impatience and frustration when working with unfamiliar material or skills,

and an expectation of being entertained in the classroom. However, I was committed to making

this assignment relevant to students' concerns, to elicit from them the subjects that at least made

their brows wrinkle with displeasure, if not desire and fury for change.

Getting Started

Together, we brainstormed topics, causes, events, movements, laws, policies, practices,

and issues that have inspired their passion, outrage, sympathy, concern, or the like. Some

identified subjects by which they felt overwhelmed such as:

- American current occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan,

- unfairness about US foreign aid to countries and peoples at the same time that people

  in our country were losing their jobs and homes and didn't have enough to eat or

  other basics such as health care,

- environmental issues such as global warming, cruelty to animals, and the destruction

  of natural habitats and animal lives due to pollution such as plastics in ocean waters

  and land,

- diversity related issues like same sex couples' rights, violent crimes and punishment,

- subtle forms of discrimination in the media through lack of representation or misrepresentation through stereotyping,

- rising costs associated with finishing their college degrees such as tuition, commuting expenses, book and supply purchases, food, and housing, etc.,

- finding cures for particular diseases afflicting their loved ones and stated support of organizations' efforts to perform research,

- a variety of American domestic issues such as the decline of religious faith in American society, immigration problems, and alcohol and drug addiction,

- globally aware students asserted criticism regarding inconsistent and self-serving American involvement with foreign countries such as passivity toward African nations with ongoing brutal military revolutionary takeovers and genocidal practices,

- opportunistic and irresponsible capitalistic practices of American companies exploiting foreign labor and resources, and

- the child sex slave market in countries such as India and Thailand.

What points this discussion brought to light were twofold. For one, students aren't pursuing knowledge on these issues that seem frightening and out of their control. When I asked them where they learned about these issues, they most often attributed their political awareness to their parents' views from discussions revolving around a short television news broadcast or news parody show with their families. Related, most expressed having the same political affiliation as their parents, but they couldn't say much about why or what it meant to them. Also, collectively they shared a wide range of concerns that they introduced to each other with

greater success than if I would have presented the information to them. Finally, as a class, we were getting under the surface of pleasant but purposeless conversation to what ignited their despair, anger, compassion, and sense of urgency for action, though they expressed a sense of powerlessness and ignorance for what to do about these problems. We agreed on trying to find the words and the imagination to confront our fears for our futures, our families, our nation, and our world together.

After several brainstorming and exploration sessions with the web and in class question-directed writing episodes, students began to gravitate to topics of preference for this first assignment. I asked them to write a draft of a poem that asked them to represent their feelings, thoughts, memories, relevant images, ideals, or the like on their subjects in verse. I wanted to see what they thought a poem was in light of what they've read and what we covered in the class. When we met again, four days later, students read aloud their poems and then explained their creative and intellectual processes of putting into written words how they saw and felt about their social topics. I was the first to read mine on animal neglect. Going first and demonstrating my lack of literary excellence but willingness to articulate and share my concerns may have encouraged some students in reading their poems. Noticeably, some poems were better than others--clearly more vividly imagistic with details that called upon readers' senses, imaginative about their use of symbols and allusions, and more sophisticated about their use of figurative language and other linguistic tropes that create rhythm and rhyme and meter in verse.   Also, students varied in terms of how detailed or realistic they represented their subjects of injustice and how raw and intense they projected an emotional relationship to those subjects. The best writing among students' presented work had specific, vivid, and unique images, purpose, and

points about their topics. However, perhaps not surprisingly, most students expressed rather vague notions of their social justice topics as demonstrated by over generalized examples and images of oppression, unfairness, destitution, and violence. Clearly writing about such topics was new to them. Therefore, we proceeded to delve deeper.

Self-Reflection

To start by addressing what might be a result of students' limited knowledge on the topics they chose, I initiated some informal but targeted response writing in order for students to discover what they knew or felt about their subjects:

- What do you know about your topic?

- What are the sources of information you have on this topic so far, in any?

- If any sources used, how credible are they for this topic?

- How do you feel about your topic—sad, hopeless, excited, challenged, other?

- What biases do you have on this topic—preconceived attitudes that lead you to see the topic as proper, against the grain, traditional, natural or unnatural, "the way things are", popular, vile, perverse, or the like?

- What are the values of right and wrong, good and bad, or should be and should not be that you have on this topic?

- What do you need to learn to have a fuller understanding of the topic?

- Where will you go to find more information on your topic? Sources?

After completing this series of 3-minute writing tasks, we discussed the fact that most students put little time or effort into the assignment and only had a superficial understanding of their

topics and surrounding details and history. Soon, students realized how hard it was to write at all

much less write well on topics that are largely unfamiliar. Some students admitted choosing

topics in haste and wanted to change them to a topic that really matters to them.

Writing Changes after Research

After students expressed consensus that each had something to learn to develop their knowledge

on their topics, we spent our next class session at the library computer lab, where we performed

research on the same topics, searching library databases for books and articles with the guidance

of the reference librarian. In addition to a presentation, the librarian supported me in assisting

students on an individual basis to research their topics specifically. The next two class sessions

were in our computer classroom where we searched the Internet for websites that included

nonprofit organizations' web pages as well as watchdog groups for nonprofits. I stressed the

need to view a mixture of perspective from more objective criticism and passionate activist

polemics. Some organizations provided more balanced or neutral information, while others

clearly had one-sided arguments for their political agendas. We examined web forums such as

blogs, web support group spaces, and social network sites on relevant topics. Finally, we read

mass media news releases and articles pertinent to the topics, utilizing online search engines such

as Google Search, Google Scholar, and Google Groups to gain various perspectives on our

subjects.

Once we were better informed, we began to write again. While I admit that our poems

progressed much more slowly than originally intended, I felt good about students' lively

discussions of the information they found once shown some resources. I called for them to play

the role of detectives, which seemed to awaken a new found curiosity. Now, I needed to make

further connections between their research and their poems, so I directed the following focused

informal critical thinking response writing activity by giving one of the bulleted prompts

approximately every 3 minutes:

- What information, images, or stories surprised you in your research about your topic?

- Did this data change in any way or degree how you feel or thought about the topic? Explain how or why not?

- What information, images, or stories reinforced your feelings and attitudes about the topic?

- Whom do you blame or see responsible for this social situation and why?

- Do you have any ideas of how to solve the problem?

- Can you participate in the solution process?

- Would you be willing to participate in the solution process?

- In an ideal world, describe how would the people, environment, animals, laws and policies, values and norms, etc. appear and interact so that this social problem no longer existed?

- What basic factors have to change to enable this vision of our world?

- What questions remain for you about and for those involved in the social issue concerning you?

- What do you want your readers to know and feel about what you have to say on your subject?

Clearly and deliberately, I was breaching the "Art for Art Sake" tradition by incorporating a

rhetorical perspective into the creative writing process to raise students' awareness of a reader

who will read their work and share in the authors' visions, whether in agreement, disagreement,

ignorance, or disinterest. Their work had a clear purpose in understanding and meeting the needs,

attitudes, and knowledge of their chosen audience group.

Now that students have had time to critically think about and explore their topics for a

few weeks, developing more informed perspectives on the subjects, I encouraged them to write

new written works—new or revised poem, short story, script, journalistic literary article, or the

like—to express their feelings, attitudes, messages, and disturbing realities on this subject.

Again, with four days to prepare, they returned to class to read aloud their creative work.   All

but three students wrote poems, one wrote a script, one an essay, and one a short story. What

was strikingly different from their first poems was the level of specificity and vividness of the

characters featured and created through words, the imaginable circumstances, the lifelike details

of the settings of time and place, and the descriptions of several aspects of injustices through a

language of verse or dialogue.

The obviously informed perspective in their writing strengthened their authorial voice

and energized their works with a voice of conviction, agency, and accuracy about their topics.

While, as a class, we had much to learn about writing poetry and much experience to gain in

doing so, this second round of poems conveyed a passion and vibrancy that was missing in their

previous poems. While some poems were overtly cerebral, others emphasized feelings, and still

others were works of imagistic expression. Students created idealized visions, details of

injustices, and portraits of social needs that stirred each other's sense of indignation and desire

for change. Students cheered each other's creative accomplishments as well as their moving and persuasive messages. These students wrote works that bridged the gap between ideas and emotions, using an imaginative outlet for their feelings coupled with intellectual and critical thoughts resulted in persuasive art. We acknowledged how their work improved and how the act of collaborative discussion, challenge, research, review, and performance motivated and enabled their success. This is the kind of writing power that may serve their campus, local, national, and global communities to which they belong.

With honesty, some students questioned whether the amount of work it took during the previous four weeks to complete one poem was worthwhile or reasonable or likely to happen again. Acknowledging the veracity of this point, I continued to encourage discussion among the students, to which some regrettably admitted that the work would just never be as good with short cuts in research and revision. Finally, one student said, "I'm glad you made us do it; otherwise I probably wouldn't have known what it's like to really go all the way, learn about a cause in detail, like you know what you're talking about and get it right." The satisfaction expressed was related both to the quality of the work they completed and to the significance of the injustices they addressed: tragedy, unfairness, discrimination, degradation, bullying, stereotyping, suicides, drunk driving and deaths, and other such worthwhile topics. Their writing represented critically conscious civic engagement of social and political change toward the democratic ideals of equity, justice, and opportunity for all (Iverson and James).

Hopes for the Future

I want students to find and assert what they have to say on topics and the worlds they wish to

create for themselves, me, and to each other. However, I want them to do so from an informed

position. I don't want students to segregate their creative work from their rational work. Rather,

bringing the two forms of cognition and expression together enables writers to communicate

their emotional, political, intellectual, and personal messages to readers, of course with special

attention to genre and its conventions, purpose, and the audiences that need to hear their

messages. Whether it is basic essay composition, business and technical writing, or "creative

writing," I hope that I encourage students to raise their voices in writing to produce what they see

is beautiful, sacred, tragic, and important to speak about in the world they see. Finally, I support

pedagogical training for creative writers-instructors. As Ritter and Vanderslice acknowledge,

creative writing faculty, unlike many other writing genre teachers, typically are not trained in the

theories and practices of teaching their craft nor has there been much pedagogical scholarship on

the subject until relatively recently (103). Therefore, an important start in expanding creative

writing pedagogical praxis is to widen the academic conversations, education, and research

among our faculty across English Studies and support the productive efforts in pedagogical

research and scholarship that may make a difference in the lives of the countless students we

teach, year after year.

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