Literary know-how: restructuring creative writing and literary studies

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Literary Know-How:
Restructuring Creative Writing
and Literary Studies

by

Jonas W. Casey-Williams

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ABSTRACT

Literary Know-How: Restructuring Creative Writing and Literary Studies

The emerging field of creative writing studies has provided new conceptions of creative writing's role within the English discipline. These conceptions focus on the relation of creative writing to composition studies, and there remains a need to reconsider creative writing's relation to literary studies.

"Reading for pedagogy"--the analysis of literary texts and contexts for the purpose of generating possibilities for creative writing pedagogy--should replace "reading as a writer" as the critical-interpretive practice of creative writing. Variety in pedagogy is conducive to variety in students' writing processes, which should be diverse so that students can extend their literary know-how. "Know-how" is knowledge inherent to process, enacted and not always available for abstract comprehension.

Through reading for pedagogy, which takes the form of critical analyses of literature, creative writing can reconnect with contemporary literary studies, contributing to a more cohesive English discipline. Within that discipline, creative writing is uniquely well suited as a site for students' learning of know-how because there are ever more ways to understand what "literature" can mean and do. Know-how is important both as an end in itself and as a means to furthering know-that. Literary know-how should replace "craft" as the basis of a restructured creative writing discipline.

Chapters One through Three analyze sites of education in literary writing: the Iowa Writers' Workshop, Black Mountain College, and Gordon Lish's writing classes.
Chapter One derives the concept of know-how from the archive of conventional American creative writing, and subsequent chapters reconsider the concept through alternative pedagogical contexts. All three chapters examine how the educational spaces they respectively analyze shape students' processes of writing and practices of know-how.

The conclusion argues for the relevance of creative writing to composition courses and curricula. It examines the relation between these two fields, distinguishing them according to expectations for student texts.
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CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ iii

Acknowledgments ......................................................................................................................... v

Introduction: Reading for Pedagogy .............................................................................................. 1

Chapter One: The Iowa Workshop Model and Flannery O'Connor ............................................. 12

Chapter Two: Charles Olson and Black Mountain College ......................................................... 109

Chapter Three: The Gordon Lish Program .................................................................................... 150

Conclusion: Aimless Knowing--Creative Writing and Composition Studies ............................ 188

Notes .............................................................................................................................................. 224

Works Cited .................................................................................................................................. 243
INTRODUCTION: READING FOR PEDAGOGY

The relationship between creative writing and literary studies needs more attention. This book provides a framework for rethinking their relationship by focusing on the connection between creative writing pedagogy and literary criticism. I hope to show a new way that these fields can benefit each other. The recent emergence of creative writing studies makes it a necessary and promising time to reconsider creative writing's place in English studies. Surprisingly, however, creative writing studies to date has mostly set aside the relation between literary studies and creative writing, instead focusing on the latter's relation to composition studies.

A brief overview of creative writing studies is in order. Research in academic creative writing traditionally takes the form of literary writings, belletristic essays (about the writing life, for example), and non-scholarly criticism that applies and elaborates upon conventional elements of writerly craft (e.g., point of view, lineation, or voice). In contrast, creative writing studies follows not the conventions of the creative writer's literary essay but those of the scholar's critical article. It has focused on such topics as creative writing's disciplinary history, creative writing pedagogy, and the future of creative writing. The resituating of creative writing in disciplinary, inter-disciplinary, and broader social and cultural contexts is an important trend in creative writing studies. Some work links creative writing to other areas of English studies: large-scale examples of these articulations include proposals for disciplinary and departmental reorganization, such as the merging of composition with creative writing (Bishop, Released; Mayers,
(Re)Writing; Owens); smaller-scale connections are often pedagogically oriented, dealing for example with the place of literary and cultural theory in the creative writing classroom (Haake, *What Our Speech*; Ramey). Other contributions to creative writing studies make links beyond the subsections of English studies--examining, for instance, relationships between academic creative writing and extra-academic literary communities (Beach), or the potential of creative writing as preparation for public intellectual work (Paul Dawson, *New Humanities*). Interventions of these sorts explore alternatives and complements to creative writing's conventional functions and expand our understanding of what creative writing can do or be. Rethinking how creative writing and literary studies relate is both an obvious step to take and a neglected one: hence this book.

This relationship has not always been neglected. When creative writing was emerging as an academic field (in, very roughly speaking, the 1930s) it required justification, which meant that advocates positioned it as a valuable aid to literary study. Arguably, creative writing was founded to be such a complement, as in the University of Iowa's 1930s New Humanistic English curriculum (Myers; Wilbers), which predated the professionally oriented Iowa Writers' Workshop. Defenders of creative writing said that it provided a view of literature "from the inside," which aided students in their literary appreciation and their critical reading. Meanwhile, studying literature was seen as helping students understand what they should strive for in writing and, through close attention to the text, how they might go about achieving it. The premise of creative writing and literary study as intertwined fields dissolved as they separated over time. Even as creative writing emerged as an academic field, it was already moving toward independence, which a few key factors encouraged: (1) starting with the establishment of the Iowa
Writers' Workshop, creative writing programs began replacing occasional creative writing courses; (2) the proliferation of these programs suggested that creative writing did not need help from literary studies to prosper; and (3) critical practices in literary studies changed extensively, and creative writers did not approve of these changes or see value in them for writers--hence the common urging among creative writers to their students to ignore literary and cultural theory, knowledge of which purportedly threatens to impede one's writing abilities (Fenza, "Words and the Bees"; Grimes; Stephens).

The original point of overlap between literary study's textual interpretation and creative writing's textual production was the practice of reading as a writer. Reading as a writer has long been a creative writing commonplace (the term dates at least to Dorothea Brande's 1934 Becoming a Writer, and its use continues today--note Francine Prose's 2006 title Reading Like a Writer), referring to the examining of literary texts as models--positive and negative, in whole but especially in part--for one's own writing. Initially this meant a New Critical lens, and in time the perspective broadened to include subsequent workshop preoccupations such as voice. Reading as a writer is a method of dissecting published texts, contextualized as a step toward the generating of new texts. It was understood, in creative writing's early years, as a two-way amplifier that simultaneously provided writers examples of effective craft and sharpened the critical eye through concrete engagement with craft's processes. Reading as a writer can be taught in the classroom, but with the basics down, it can be practiced individually. It offers almost endless applicability; there is always more to read, to learn from, and careful attention along with basic craft concepts is all one needs to continue reading as a writer.

Reading as a writer remains the critical practice of academic creative writing, but
it has long ceased to connect creative writing with contemporary literary studies. The
New Critical approach informing reading as a writer is a relic, and the practice has not
incorporated more recent theoretical approaches relevant to researchers in literary studies
today. Nonetheless, as creative writing's critical practice it serves as a touchstone and as a
placeholder for other critical practices that might emerge and take its place or accompany
it. These practices might be developed within the creative writing discipline while
drawing upon contemporary literary studies.

I call for a shift from *reading as a writer* to *reading for pedagogy*. I refer to
*pedagogy* in two senses: pedagogy as an approach to teaching, which inevitably plays a
part in students' writing processes; and pedagogy as a topic of the engagement between a
reader and a text, the focus of an interpretive act. When reading for pedagogy, the reader
interprets the text's representation or enaction of teaching or learning. The interpretation
may yield a creative writing pedagogy (or pedagogies for other subjects, though these fall
outside the scope of my project) that can be implemented. Or the interpretation may
provide avenues for rethinking and altering existing pedagogies. Thus, through reading
for pedagogy, a creative writing teacher finds new ways to conceive and teach creative
writing, making individual courses more dynamic and diversifying the creative writing
pedagogies a given student encounters.\(^2\) One might challenge the specificity of these
terms by pointing out that *any* act of reading or interpretation can have pedagogical
value. But I am not arguing that literary interpretations are pedagogically relevant; I take
that for granted. The argument is that we should read and interpret with an eye for
pedagogy as *content*, and we should discover through literary texts ways of teaching
creative writing that we would not have thought of otherwise.
This book argues for the accumulation and use of plural creative writing pedagogies, it argues that methods of literary criticism provide access to such pedagogies, and in Chapters One through Three it demonstrates pedagogic interpretations to locate options for creative writing pedagogy. These chapters read select groups of literary texts in relation to social and institutional contexts that are more or less obviously pedagogical: institutions of higher education and classes within them. The texts and contexts taken together seem to me to invite pedagogic interpretations. But in choosing to focus on them, I hope not to obscure my assertion that we can look to derive or develop writing pedagogies from any text or textual corpus—including those without a straightforward historical relation to spaces of observable educational activity.

Here I should clarify the distinction between reading as a writer and reading for pedagogy, both of which are critical reading practices with pedagogical functions. A key part of conventional creative writing pedagogy, reading as a writer is both a teachable process and a continually educative one for the practicing writer. Where reading as a writer is a means of learning all-purpose practicable knowledge of writing, reading for pedagogy is a meta-process (as a method for generating methods), informing the design of creative-writing courses, curricula, and programs. It can add further writing pedagogies to the repertoire of a program, make more dynamic the pedagogy of a given course, and offer additional writing processes to the individual. Teachers and students can all read as writers, together or separately. As the (admittedly ungainly) phrase reading for pedagogy suggests, it is foremost for the teacher's consideration. But putting it in other words—e.g., learning new ways to write by reading literature—may clarify that it can take place within the progress of a course, undergone by students and teachers together,
leading to mid-term adoption of new procedures for practicing writing. Individuals usually undertake reading as a writer on their own, though it makes its way into published articles about craft (especially in *The Writer's Chronicle*) and the occasional published demonstration (see Cassill; Oates). Cross-referencing between these publications and academic literary criticism is minimal to nil. Reading for pedagogy, on the other hand, treats contemporary literary criticism as an aid for critical reading, and it may take the form of academic literary criticism. Reading for pedagogy can mean writing contemporary literary criticism oriented toward matters of creative writing pedagogy. (And as such it should have all the depth and rigor of other varieties of literary criticism.)

My main argument--for taking up *reading for pedagogy* to find possibilities for the creative writing course and discipline--depends upon two underlying points. With each of these supporting arguments I oppose an aspect of creative writing as it is conventionally instituted.

*First*, we should recognize the creative writing discipline as an ideal framework for the learning of knowing-how (or know-how), and we should design courses and programs accordingly. *Know-how* refers to knowledge of processes or procedures, and it is implicit in directed action, including writing. What one (or a collective group) knows how to do cannot always be fully described, but it can be demonstrated under the right conditions (Ryle 40-59; Varela 3-19; Kauffman 110-11). Although philosophers disagree about whether know-how and know-that (also called know-what) are distinct from each other, it is almost a commonplace among creative writers that setting aside know-that in favor of know-how is the only way to access a certain region of the knowable.³ This is attested to in numerous writers' accounts and assertions that figuring out a composition as
you write it, rather than relying on preconceived plans, leads to desirable, crucial surprises (Cowan; Murray, "Unlearning"). The importance of these surprises can be recognized, via know-that, in retrospect, but could not have been predicted by know-that. Know-how has long had an important place in the culture of creative writing, but its role has been circumscribed so that it not shape course and curricular design.

There can be no learning divorced from know-how (even rote memorization requires one to know how to memorize). While all of English studies involves know-how, and while some prominent texts in composition studies explicitly theorize it (Lunsford), know-how as a raison-d'être particularly fits creative writing because broad variety in characteristics and values is basic to literature. Literariness has been a fraught and uncertain descriptor or demand for so long that what it marks is breadth of possibility (by way of any number of literary priorities or assumptions at odds), along with a vague indication of cultural significance. Any number of results and methods correspond to the literary, and this suits the explicit connecting of creative writing with know-how-- learning to write literature can mean practicing knowing-how-to-write in an ever expanding number of ways. A commitment to know-how means having students diversify and stretch the ways in which they write, which requires, in turn, multiple or dynamic pedagogies, since pedagogy is after all a factor in student work. The ubiquity of workshop pedagogy is at odds with the goal of expanding student know-how.

Understanding creative writing's purpose in relation to literary know-how opposes the conventional views of creative writing's aim, which evince a tension between producing professional writers and encouraging literary appreciation by way of craft (while providing an oasis from the literary marketplace). The pedagogical goal of reading
as a writer is for students to learn the craft of literary writing by examining exemplary models. The student writer's recognition of successful craft facilitates an informed striving to produce it. *Craft* is the intersection of taste and technique, technical success determined according to the criteria of established taste; it refers to the techniques of a conventionally determined range of literary writing, assuming these to be *the* techniques of literary writing. Precisely what *can* be learned in creative writing, the traditional discourse tells us, is improvement at craft. To the contrary, reading for pedagogy assumes that tastes are multiple and divergent and that the notion of an all-purpose craft, aligned to an all-purpose taste, precludes alternative literary techniques and the texts they produce. Reading for pedagogy promotes the practicing of various writing processes, and accordingly *know-how* replaces *craft* as the measure of writerly learning.

My second underlying argument: despite creative writing's longtime tendency toward separation from the rest of English departments and English studies, it should look to engage with contemporary academic literary criticism. Of course, this would also require literary studies to acknowledge and address scholarly criticism that would arise from creative writing's quarters. Reading for pedagogy offers a way for creative writing to contribute to, as well as benefit from, scholarly conversations. The boundaries between creative writing and literary studies need not be collapsed entirely, but they should certainly be muddled. Creative writing can have an important place in ostensible "literature" courses, and published literary criticism can contribute to pedagogic interpretations (themselves possibly taking the form of literary criticism, as in my following chapters). The options for "creative writing" pedagogy that result could be taken as the bases for new courses, applied to the design and implementation of existing
courses, or discovered and developed within the progress of such courses.

Pedagogic interpretations could lead to fruitful feedback loops: publishing such interpretations would bring the perspectives of academic creative writers to the conversations of literary critics; the progression of those conversations would lead to further pedagogic interpretations; and by teachers' implementing of pedagogies based on these interpretations, writers would be able to practice know-how in additional ways. Meanwhile, creative or literary writing undertaken by students in literature courses could become part of the literary critic's subject matter (much as student writing often enters into composition research), providing possible angles by which to freshly approach the literature that brought about the student writing. Finally, the student writing made possible by a pedagogic interpretation would provide the teacher-critic an opportunity to reevaluate that interpretation.

I envision writer-teacher-critics from the field of creative writing analyzing the writings of authors and literary scenes as a route to designing innovative writing courses or combined creative-writing-and-literature courses. The possibilities are broad—for example, a course in which students write after Dickens and the logic of the serial narrative (this would not be the same as asking students to mimic Dickens's fiction); a course modeled after a literary society, such as the College of 'Pataphysics or the OuLiPo; or a course on oral literary traditions, in which paper and computer screens are forbidden. In this curriculum, traditional workshops could remain, alongside courses generated through literary analysis, and there would be room for additional creative writing pedagogies not derived from literary texts. For students to extend as well as deepen their literary know-how, academic creative writing should include many kinds of
courses, encouraging in turn a breadth of possible writing practices.

This book's three chapters demonstrate reading for pedagogy; each performs a pedagogic interpretation of a site of writers' education along with selected texts written by teachers or students associated with that site. I analyze the structure, logic, and values of each of these pedagogical spaces. My analyses combine close reading with the contexts of institutional history and pedagogy. I do not arrive at complete, new, importable pedagogies through my analyses--especially not in the first chapter, which, rather than examining neglected educational options, focuses on the creative writing pedagogy most prevalent in the United States and beyond. But my readings do provide frameworks for understanding the ramifications of the values and structures of the educational sites I examine. I articulate pedagogical problems within the discipline that teacher-critics should be aware of, suggest where resolutions to these problems might be found, and articulate some fresh ways to approach designing a creative writing course. The chapters also examine how the idea of literary know-how, in these educational contexts, emerges, flourishes, and finds a distinctive manifestation (respectively). And I intend these chapters to be steps in reinvigorating the interplay between creative writing and literary studies.

My first chapter examines creative writing pedagogy in terms of the prevailing disciplinary culture and the workshop as a classroom model. I focus on the Iowa Writers' Workshop as representative of this pedagogy and Iowa alumna Flannery O'Connor as an exemplary figure within the program. O'Connor and a number of other writers attest that the idea of know-how (in different words) is central to traditional creative writing pedagogy. This tradition allows a wide variety of student writing processes and resulting
texts but only within a closely bounded range, the maintenance of which preserves the
terms of conventional success. Analogously, the Iowa tradition encourages flexibility in
how its teachers respond to the student writing submitted to workshops, but it refuses to
look beyond the workshop for alternative course structures.

Chapter Two analyzes Black Mountain College and Charles Olson, who taught
there and served as rector. Education at Black Mountain mitigated the factors that limit
open-ended processes of know-how in traditional creative writing. In Olson’s poetics, a
site of education is effective when, and to the degree, that it becomes co-extensive with
community. Learning takes place when the individual, working beyond strictly divisible
roles of student and teacher, responds to another person’s "energy-construct" by using it
in an arrangement of his or her own. Knowing is coextensive with use, which entails
letting the work of others influence one's process in unpredictable ways.

The third chapter demonstrates how a particular alternative pedagogy can forward
students' literary know-how. I analyze Gordon Lish's private fiction classes, framing
Lish's method as a self-operative program or algorithm. This program has led to various
and innovative contemporary fictions through its call for cross-contextual self-reference,
which breaks down categorical and flattens hierarchical boundaries. Lish's pedagogy
presents a web of provocations, to which student fictions amount to an array of responses.

My conclusion turns to the relation between creative writing and composition,
which I mentioned at the beginning of this introduction. I distinguish composition from
creative writing according to expectations for student texts, and I argue for the relevance
of creative writing to composition courses and curricula.
CHAPTER ONE: THE IOWA WORKSHOP MODEL AND FLANNERY O’CONNOR

To discuss the role of know-how in the tradition of creative writing represented by the Iowa Writers' Workshop, I start with a motif in the writing of Flannery O'Connor: the epiphany-inducing vision of a spread peacock's tail.

In "The King of the Birds," Flannery O'Connor's essay about her experiences raising peafowl, O'Connor describes people's reactions to the peacock's fully displayed tail. As O'Connor recounts telling a telephone-line repairman, visitors who wish to see the peacock's open tail must wait for him to open it voluntarily (Mystery 11). The curious priest in O'Connor's short story "The Displaced Person," in which a peacock plays a central role, is told the same (198). Typically, as O'Connor describes it, the peacock first shows onlookers the unspectacular back of his spread feathers. Then,

> When the peacock has presented his back, the spectator will usually begin to walk around him to get a front view; but the peacock will continue to turn so that no front view is possible. The thing to do then is to stand still and wait until it pleases him to turn. When it suits him, the peacock will face you. Then you will see in a green-bronze arch around him a galaxy of gazing, haloed suns. This is the moment when most people are silent. (Mystery 9-10)

Reactions vary. Silence, O'Connor goes on to repeat, is one possibility. Some observers find the peacock insignificant in its uselessness (10). The essay's title comes from the man who identifies the peacock as "king of the birds!" while exhibiting surprised reverence (13). Other onlookers whistle, impressed and perhaps awestruck (10). O'Connor reveals that awe was her own initial response to peafowl, and that she always feels "the same awe as on that first occasion" when observing them thereafter (6).
Some observers, such as a woman who exclaims "Amen! Amen!" (10), associate the sight of the peacock's tail with divinity. O'Connor herself repeatedly makes this connection, one hint of which is her reference to the tail's "haloed suns." David R. Mayer's "Flannery O'Connor and the Peacock" persuasively shows how O'Connor uses the peacock as a "symbol of Christ" (4) and how an individual's reaction to the peacock's display can be read as an analogue to the way the person would react to "Christ's coming into the world" (15). O'Connor signals the divine aspect of the peacock most forcefully in her fiction, especially in "The Displaced Person," in which the priest beholds the peacock's tail and proclaims, "Christ will come like that!" before half-consciously speaking of redemption and the Transfiguration (226). Significantly, Mrs. McIntyre and Mrs. Shortley, the characters dismissive of the peacock, are not pious (Mayer 12), although the story's final sentence shows Mrs. McIntyre changing in this regard ("Displaced" 235). The linking of the peacock's tail to divinity is present in O'Connor's non-fiction as well; she refers to the tail as "a map of the universe" in "The Displaced Person" (200), but also in "The King of the Birds" (14) and in her correspondence (Habit 118). The peacock has a way of crying out, O'Connor puts it, "as if this message were the one on earth which needed most urgently to be heard" (Mystery 15), and for the devoutly Catholic O'Connor, such a message would be a religious one.

The importance of O'Connor's peacock imagery extends beyond its pertinence to Christianity. Early in "King of the Birds," O'Connor discourages any exclusive association of peafowl with Christianity by noting "that the peacock had been the bird of Hera" (Mystery 4-5). When the man who names the peacock "king of the birds" has a "recognition," O'Connor refers to it as a "truth" (Mystery 13), but this truth is not one
with a definite religious inflection. There is nothing obviously religious in the recognition of the telephone repairman who, after waiting about fifteen minutes in hope of seeing the peacock's display, finally sees it just as he gives up on waiting. After an intent appraisal of the bird, he tells O'Connor, "Never saw such long ugly legs. . . . I bet that rascal could outrun a bus" (11-12). On one level the repairman serves to puncture the aura of grandeur usually associated with the peacock's tail, a gesture of deflation such as O'Connor repeatedly includes in "The King of the Birds"--for instance in her account of the peacock's "underwear," his tail's drab backside, which he shows as proudly as the dazzling front (8-9). The repairman's noticing the length of the peacock's legs is far from a divine epiphany or an otherwise profound realization, but nonetheless it is an epiphany of a sort that recurs throughout O'Connor's writing. Repeatedly in her fiction and non-fiction, O'Connor presents individuals, who do not have specific end-goals in mind, undergoing processes of waiting, searching, or writing, which eventually lead them to epiphanies. These epiphanies include the religious and the secular, grand realizations and modest insights (such as the repairman's), recognitions coded as accurate and as false.

While O'Connor criticism has understandably focused on religious revelations, attention to a more broadly defined epiphany is valuable to a reading of O'Connor's oeuvre in the context of creative writing on the Iowa Writers' Workshop model. The tail-spraying peacock, which acts on his own time and terms but ultimately rewards the patient observer, is a convenient example of what I will call the typical epiphany at work in O'Connor's writing. Despite critics'--and her own--focus on the religious epiphany in her writing, the O'Connor epiphany is not characterized by its representation within the narrative so much as by the logic of its appearance: it occurs in the course of an
individual's ongoing attentive process (which can include processes of waiting).

O'Connor's represented, fictional epiphanies are simultaneously her own writerly epiphanies--she makes clear that they surprise her, that they result from writing without specific plans. A crucial part of her contribution to creative writing lore has been to emphasize the role of writers' discoveries (epiphanies) attained through the writing process.\(^5\) \(^6\)

The image of the peacock's tail can help us to understand how O'Connor wrote as well as how she understood her subject matter. In turn, because of O'Connor's esteemed place in the creative writing lore originating from the Iowa Writers' Workshop, the peacock's tail gives us an entry point for understanding that lore. In short, O'Connor's main influence has been the prioritizing of discovery, of the writer's figuring it out as she goes, trusting that the process of writing will yield unexpected results preferable to what might have been planned in advance. For O'Connor, there are no shortcuts in writing, only faithful attention and patience. In a 1960 panel discussion, O'Connor claimed, "I sit there before the typewriter for three hours every day and if anything comes I am there waiting to receive it" (Conversations 62). "Waiting" and "writing" here become continuous. The peacock's observers wait for their epiphanies just as O'Connor awaits her own at the typewriter.

In this chapter I examine how the lore and pedagogy of creative writing in the tradition of Iowa treats writing as a process of discovery even as it sets limits upon this very process. The typical workshop's permissions and prohibitions coincide with (and are influenced by) O'Connor's ideas about how to write. Even as a given observer's attention to the peacock will result in an epiphany unpredictable in its specificity, in the context of
O'Connor's oeuvre it is predictable that such an epiphany, details aside, is forthcoming. Likewise, in Iowa-model pedagogy, discovery through writing can be open-ended as long as the results of the writing process fall within an accepted, approved range. The boundaries of this range, the maintenance of which is (I argue) the primary function of traditional creative writing lore, shape the writing process and preclude transgressive results. The lore tells us that practice improves one's writing, and that know-how applied within circumscribed limits facilitates writerly discovery, but that writers must not practice just any way of knowing-how-to-write. I argue that open-ended know-how should become the central consideration in the design of creative writing courses and curricula rather than a value in creative writing's lore mostly at odds with the rest of that lore. This chapter analyzes Iowa-model pedagogy as a step in making the case for accumulating alternatives to it.

The concept of lore in writing pedagogy was introduced in Stephen M. North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* as "the accumulated body of traditions, practices, and beliefs in terms of which Practitioners understand how writing is done, learned, and taught" (22). North's "Practitioners" are composition instructors and researchers (whose research is mostly informal) with a pragmatic bent. They are the most prevalent type of researcher in composition and the research community most disdained among others, and North argues for recognizing the value of their research (i.e. lore) (371), which is "effectively discredited" yet ubiquitous, the bulk of research in composition (328). Lore has since been adopted into the vocabulary of creative writing studies. In creative writing--workshops, writers' festivals, and the AWP (Association of Writers and Writing Programs, previously the Associated Writing Programs) Conference
and its main publication *The Writer's Chronicle* (previously the *AWP Newsletter* and the *AWP Chronicle*)--even more so than in composition, pedagogy mostly entails the transmission and application of lore. Ted Lardner notes that this "recipe swapping" involves minimal scholarly conversation: "In pedagogical texts, creative writing teachers too rarely cite each other's work. There is no 'discipline' there" (Lardner 74). Katharine Haake puts it in more neutral terms: "creative writing, as a field, is largely anecdotal" ("Creative Writing" 86). Academic creative writers generally publish literary writing rather than academic research, and both the culture of creative writing in the academy (Mayers, "Figuring" 8-9) and the tenure system (Moxley, "Disciplinarity" 233-35) discourage pedagogical research beyond lore.

In *Can It Really Be Taught?: Resisting Lore in Creative Writing Pedagogy*, a collection edited by Kelly Ritter and Stephanie Vanderslice, the editors' introduction points out that lore results from and maintains creative writing's separation from the rest of English studies (xii), that "the lore of teaching creative writing . . . is systemic, pervasive, and rooted in creative writing's isolated academic status" (xiii). This very perpetuation prevents the analysis and reconsideration of lore; lore as a body of knowledge within the (sub-) discipline of creative writing, unlike lore in composition, goes almost unchallenged. Although pieces and aspects of lore often contradict one another (North describes lore as a body of knowledge that can readily be added to but never subtracted from, which inevitably leads to inconsistencies [24]) it takes creative writing studies--criticism on the academic research model--to offer pedagogical alternatives to lore. *Lore* is just one framing term, among various names, for what creative writing studies has sought to theorize, contextualize, critique, and complement.
A great deal of creative writing lore derives from the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Attestations to Iowa's significance are easy to find. According to Andrew Levy, "Iowa's pioneering status, isolated locale, and lofty alumni roll have all become the stuff of literary folklore" (127). Wendy Bishop writes, "The development of creative writing courses at the University of Iowa provides the archetypal story of the development of creative writing within the discipline of English studies" (Revised xii). Loren Glass asserts, "a visit to Iowa City has become a standard line on the CV of any writer of any literary standing anywhere in the world" (257). Mark McGurl emphasizes the longevity of Iowa's prestige: "rarely does one encounter an institution as thoroughly dominant in its discipline as the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Not only was it the first full-fledged program of its kind, it has never been other than the most prestigious example thereof, even as some 300-odd competitors have arisen in its midst" (177). The fact that multiple books have been published that consist of, or include, recollections of Iowa's program from former students and teachers attests and contributes to the program's fame, whereas few volumes similarly ensconce other creative writing programs. These books are part of what McGurl sharply refers to as "the kind of narcissistic collective self-appreciation and memorialization that attaches to Iowa" (177). But because former Iowa students and faculty have established many other writing programs, "Iowa is in a sense everywhere" (McGurl 177-78) despite its uniquely privileged reputation.

O'Connor's importance to the legacy of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, and therefore to creative writing lore, is difficult to overstate. Institutional histories present her as the most important participant in the Workshop's earliest years (roughly, the 1940s). Stephen Wilbers calls her "the star student of the period" (94). Jean Cash states that "no other
writer of her stature emerged" during that time ("Iowa" 68) and quotes both O'Connor mentor Andrew Lytle's calling her the "only student there of exceptional talent" and Workshop director Paul Engle's asserting that she had "pure talent" (Cash, "Iowa" 67). Engle was sure to claim her publishing successes as Iowa's also--after the publication of *Wise Blood*, O'Connor's first book, Engle wrote her in part to complain that the book jacket failed to mention Iowa (O'Connor, *Habit* 45). Later Workshop alumni use O'Connor's name as a sort of exclamation point when they recount their initial perceptions of the program's high reputation (Harnack, 48-49; Godwin, "Kurt Vonnegut" 214). Everything about O'Connor's role in the Workshop seems to matter. In beginning an article titled "Humble Flannery," Brett Lott asserts O'Connor's inescapable legacy:

"Flannery O'Connor is, of course, the de facto patron saint of creative writing. It's pretty difficult to get through an education in writing, whether self-inflicted or programmed into you via workshop, without meeting someone--and maybe being someone--who strikes a match and lights a votive candle at the mention of her name" (44). "Humble Flannery" appeared in *The Writer's Chronicle*, in which articles discussing fictional craft regularly mine O'Connor's fiction for pertinent examples.

Anecdotes of O'Connor in the classroom have become part of Workshop legend. O'Connor's peers from a spring 1948 workshop recall her reading a story in class that received no criticism at all--an indication of its presumed flawlessness (Cash, "Iowa" 74). On the other hand, Kay Buford remembers O'Connor's writing to have been generally appreciated but less lauded than that of the men in the same workshops (Cash, "Iowa" 67). Former Workshop student Jean Wylder "heard that when [O'Connor] was first in the Workshop in 1945, before she had published anything, her stories had not been well
received and she had not tried to defend them" (80). It is significant that whether
O'Connor's student stories elicited positive, negative, or mixed reactions, these reactions
have entered Iowa Workshop--and creative writing--lore, as has the consensus that she
rarely spoke in class (Cash "Iowa").

O'Connor's often remarked quietness in class is one reason that she can be figured
either as (1) subservient to the workshop, "humble" in her submission to the structures
and strictures of her writing program, or as (2) aloof in the workshop, exceptional among
her peers, quiet in appraising or ignoring their workshop comments, and unengaged by
their conversation. In one legend of O'Connor at Iowa, the stories that she submitted for
her thesis and went on to publish included, word-for-word, the stories she had submitted
to her workshop courses, unaltered despite considerable peer criticism (Levy 5). If she is
the star of the Iowa program's early years, it is ambiguous whether that reputation results
more from her giving herself over to the guidance of the workshop (and the Workshop:
the larger Iowa program) or her maintaining a skeptical distance from that guidance. This
ambiguity is paralleled in the general expectations for how students should treat their
workshop experience. Modesty, a key part of the Iowa Writers' Workshop ethos, is
expected of students in the form of deference to the judgment of the workshop's teacher
and general consensus. The program also presents its primary goal as modest: to provide
already talented writers a supportive environment (Engle, "The Writer" xxx; "About the
Workshop"). This projection of modesty also tends to take place within a given
workshop. Creative writing pedagogy manages to be constricting partly because the
assertions of its lore, often stated as axioms by an instructor during workshop sessions,
are qualified by catch-all statements deemphasizing the value of the entire course,
applying a veneer of reasonable modesty over authoritarian assertions of taste-as-fact.

This chapter examines the writing of Flannery O'Connor in conjunction with the workshop model and body of lore associated with the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Despite the familiarity of Iowa-model pedagogy, at its center lies a fundamental conflict deserving of more attention. Creative writing lore--to which anecdotes about O'Connor and her own nonfiction have contributed substantially--asserts the importance of open-ended processes of writing, through which discovery (a series of epiphanies) guides the composition. Thus know-how is an essential part of the lore of the dominant creative writing culture: writing is recognized to be a practice dependent primarily on knowledge \textit{how} and only secondarily on knowledge \textit{that}. But much of the rest of this lore, along with the workshop structure, effectively precludes the full enactment of open-ended know-how by reigning in writing deemed too radical. Workshop teachers produce complex rationales to account for (or to obscure) the conflict between their urging that students write without foreseen products and their expectation that students' written products exhibit certain characteristics.

Making this conflict visible is part of my book's argument about \textit{literary know-how}--knowledge enacted in writing that is free from expectations given in advance for certain end-products--which should, I argue, serve as the basis for the discipline. This chapter shows that the value of literary know-how is already fundamental to creative writing lore, even as much of conventional pedagogy works against this value by imposing aesthetic aims on writers. The chapter also offers O'Connor criticism an extended analysis of her fiction and non-fiction in connection to pedagogy, a relation which has received little critical attention. Mark McGurl's \textit{The Program Era} is an
important exception, and I will build upon his analyses of O'Connor and the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

I will begin by analyzing O'Connor's discussions of writing to explain her understanding of what I call know-how and its importance. By proceeding to compare O'Connor's ideas to those of a variety of creative writers, I will argue that her view that represents the general perspective within (and maybe beyond) the world of conventional American creative writing. I will then examine the rules, assertions, and assumptions that the most visible tradition of American creative writing (i.e., the Iowa tradition) puts into place that conflict with the same tradition's valuing of literary know-how. My next step will be to analyze how workshop pedagogy deepens this conflict. The subsequent section of this chapter will consider possibilities for reforming or moving beyond workshop pedagogy. And then I will examine how O'Connor and three specific writer-teachers--Wallace Stegner, Harry Crews, and Katharine Haake--approach the conflict between open-ended process and limiting expectation within the Iowa tradition.

O'Connor on Knowing and Writing

In piecemeal, O'Connor's lectures and letters make a case for understanding processes of both writing and learning to write in terms of what I am calling literary know-how.

Near the end of her lecture "The Nature and Aim of Fiction," O'Connor warns student writers about overly prescriptive writing instructors: "A teacher who tries to impose a way of writing on you can be dangerous. . . . Fortunately, most teachers I've known were too lazy to do this. In any case, you should beware of those who appear
overenergetic" (*Mystery* 86). The humorous touch in her reversal of the conventional positive and negative associations of energy and laziness suggests that she assumes her advice to be surprising. Her audience probably expects an energetic teacher--an informed expert on how to write, passionate in transmitting that expertise--to be a good one, and O'Connor's humor lies in the played-up oddness of her advice.

From today's vantage, O'Connor's warning is such a commonplace that a reader immersed in today's dominant creative writing culture might miss its humor. In the sixty-some years since O'Connor studied at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, the pedagogical methods and values she encountered there have been endorsed by decades of repetition across proliferating creative writing programs. In creative writing lore one often encounters the insistence that teachers should not tell students how to write (in terms of process) or what to write (in terms of relatively specific products)--both of which dangers are implied in O'Connor's caution against "[imposed ways] of writing." Teachers should instead point out what in student manuscripts is "flawed" or what "works," the lore says, but in any case teachers should avoid prescribing, instead limiting their responses to comments on what students have already written. So in a sense the teacher's and program's roles, as O'Connor sees them, are modest--in the same lecture, O'Connor claims, "The teacher can try to weed out what is positively bad, and this should be the aim of the whole [writing program]" (84). O'Connor assumes it a straightforward matter that experts (e.g. teachers) can identify specific instances of the "positively bad" in literature. In the context of this assumption the teacher's role is *not* modest precisely in its being presented as such: the "bad" appears as a readily and objectively identifiable quality rather than as a value judgment particular to an individual, a sensibility, a
discourse community, or a culture.

While O'Connor approves of labeling certain already written textual particulars as "bad," she is wary of abstract generalizations about what literature should be that are meant to keep writers from approaching the "bad." Borne too heavily in mind, these generalizations risk the integrity of the text's unique development. O'Connor succinctly lays out her concerns about the potential harm of all-purpose requirements for literature in one of her letters to aspiring writer Cecil Dawkins: "I think your ideas about structure are too much applied from the outside, or at least too rigid" (Habit 376). O'Connor goes on to express "hope you are not tearing up stuff you write because it is not up to a par that really does not fit its particular nature. There is a danger here that you will forsake your instinct for general critical principles" (376). The "danger" in precluding instinctual or in-the-moment writing is the threat to moments of discovery that can be attained only through writing processes free from advance planning. In an earlier letter to Dawkins, O'Connor claims, "I think you discover a good deal more in the process when you don't have too definite ideas about what you want to do," although "an idea" of what to do is acceptable (Habit 248-49)--for instance, O'Connor knew while writing "Greenleaf" that "the heroine, aged 63, [would] be gored by a bull" (Habit 129). For O'Connor, it is crucial that the writer encounter the unforeseen during composition, the reader encounter it during reading, and that this surprise suits the narrative-in-progress by emerging from it in a manner that seems "organic," a term she uses in "The Nature and Aim of Fiction" (Mystery 67) and in another lecture, "Writing Short Stories": "Of course, the more you write, the more you will realize that the form is organic, that it is something that grows out of the material, that the form of each story is unique" (Mystery 101-02). Because of
this uniqueness, there is a "continuing process of learning how to write" no matter how experienced the writer (Mystery 83). The overeager instructor threatens to preempt the "organic" development and resolution of the story's individual growth.

But O'Connor's insistence that stories cannot be generalized, are organic--note "of course," which frames the claim as commonsensical--is necessarily a generalization itself, albeit at a higher order of abstraction. It is a generalization that could, if accepted as instruction for how writers should think about literary composition, preclude the writing of stories that could only follow from alternative conceptualizations of such composition. O'Connor denies the possibility of literature written through "inorganic" processes (which could be interpreted as, for instance, literary concept art or writing involving chance-based procedures). Also notable is her claim, "the more you write, the more you will realize," which asserts that general literary lessons transcend the unique "growth" of a given writing project. The implication is that by writing, one learns to write better. This is part of my book's argument as well, though for me better refers to a greater readiness to proceed, from a given juncture in a writing process, in as many potential directions as possible, whereas for O'Connor better would refer to success at meeting certain aesthetic expectations.

O'Connor's resistance to all-purpose literary prescription can be explained by her ideas about the relation between knowledge and writing. She never explicitly presents a theory of knowledge, but the approximation of such a theory can be assembled through statements scattered across her letters and occasional writings. Such statements appear in the following pages, along with my commentary. The central point is that one can write prior to understanding either the writing process that will take place or the written
text that will result: "The only way, I think, to learn to write short stories is to write them, and then to try to discover what you have done" (Mystery 102). The statement suggests both that one learns how to do something with more facility by practicing it, and that one learns about the process of doing something by reflecting upon the act of doing or attempting it. Most important is O'Connor's surmising that the writing of short stories cannot be learned except through the practice of writing them. There is no reason to think that in this respect the writing of short fiction is unique among practices, literary or otherwise. The learning by doing and the process-driven discovery that O'Connor refers to are aspects of what I am calling know-how.

Know-how (in-the-moment knowledge implicit in practice) involves aspects of intelligence or awareness that know-that or know-what (e.g. factual and conceptual knowledge and the frameworks and fruits--but not processes--of analysis) cannot always access, especially prior to illumination via know-how. Writing enables discovery at the level of know-that--when "[you] discover what you have done"--and while specific discoveries cannot be planned, a writer can anticipate discovery in general as a result of writing. "Discovery" can refer to improved understandings of how to do something at the levels of both know-how ("to learn to write short stories) and know-that ("what you have done"). Citing her own experience, O'Connor testifies to the lag of understanding behind process: "But the story wasn't complete. It needed that little boy on the side of the road, and that little boy is really what makes the story work. Of course, I don't know how you get those things. I just waited for it" (Conversations 34). The writer does not always discover, at an analyzable level of know-that, what she has done to achieve a piece of writing. In a procedural sense, O'Connor, does know "how [she got] those things" needed
for her story to "work": she "just waited." Yet in terms of know-that, she has no idea: she can neither analyze the waiting process nor explain its efficacy. So to an extent know-how can spark know-that, but this does not make available for analysis (through know-that) the full range of what know-how can accomplish. Certainly O'Connor employed some kind of knowledge during (and by way of) her waiting, for through this waiting (or what she calls waiting, which may include actions that go unrecognized) she discovered "that little boy." But this knowledge can only be analyzed, discussed, explained, or understood in a broader, discursive context.

The ideal condition for know-how may even be an absence or suspension of specific knowledge at the level of know-that; this would explain why the reliance on know-how is often referred to as a "not knowing." Knowledge that is insufficient for understanding literary complexity, is indeed an impediment to such understanding, because know-that works by way of reductive partitioning:

Some people have the notion that you read the story and then climb out of it into the meaning, but for the fiction writer himself the whole story is the meaning, because it is an experience, not an abstraction. (Mystery 73)

A story is a way to say something that can't be said any other way, and it takes every word in the story to say what the meaning is. (Mystery 96)

O'Connor insists that a story's "meaning" is accessible through "experience," not "abstraction." Any abstraction of a literary text necessarily falls short of a full meaning that can only be comprehended experientially, by reader or writer.11 This experienced meaning cannot be broken down into categorical segments for analysis or reduced to generalizations--every word counts, and there are no perfect synonyms, paraphrases, or summaries. Accordingly, know-that, knowledge necessarily dividing its subject matter into abstract pieces, is insufficient for story- (or literary) writing. Know-how makes
possible composing processes that involve more complexity than writers and readers can be aware of abstractly.

It is a fact that fiction writing is something in which the whole personality takes part—the conscious as well as the unconscious mind. (Mystery 101)

If a writer is any good, what he makes will have its source in a realm much larger than that which his conscious mind can encompass and will always be a greater surprise to him than it can ever be to his reader. (Mystery 83)

Referring to "the unconscious mind" is one way of conceptualizing how the form of knowledge that I am calling know-how can exceed the reach—at least the immediate reach—of know-that. The most important ramification of this gap in reach is that practice can lead where predictive analysis cannot, which is how it is possible for writers to continually produce surprises.

Know-that is not entirely isolated from know-how—such isolation would only apply to purely rote knowledge, since thinking is after all a process, and since most (if not all) know-that follows from or elicits some active thinking. But O'Connor finds that aspiring writers tend to over-invest in matters of know-that when writing, a tendency that she continually urges them to suppress:

You think too much of interpreting and analyzing and all that. Learn to write a story and then learn some more from the story you have written . . . (Habit 214)

I think it's better to begin with the story [rather than theme], and then you know you've got something. Because the theme is more or less something that's in you, but if you intellectualize it too much you'll probably destroy your novel. (Conversations 20)

Know-that arrived at through analysis or interpretation applied after the fact to fiction can never be comprehensive and is at best a limited step toward literary know-how. And when know-that takes precedence over know-how during literary composition, it
effectively ruins the resulting texts by precluding the possibility of desirable surprises such as O'Connor finds essential to fiction. Certainty cuts short the possibility of discovery. Here, again, the compatibility of not-knowing and know-how is apparent if the former is understood as a not-knowing of that or what: what thematic or symbolic meanings will emerge in the story-in-progress, what a plot diagram of the story being composed will ultimately look like, and so on.

To encapsulate: Across her essays, lectures, and letters O'Connor emphasizes the importance of the writer's discovering or learning during the course of writing. To allow for discoveries, the writing in question should be to a large extent an open-ended process. The discovery is of multiple types: what comes next in a narrative, practicable (and not necessarily analyzable) knowledge of how to write, and abstract knowledge about how to write. The conjunction of these multiple types of discoveries means that by writing, the writer discovers, learns to more effectively write (perhaps in ways conducive to discovery), and learns to better understand abstractly the process of doing so.

While O'Connor insists that writers should rely on know-how for its enabling of these three types of discovery, and though she makes the case on multiple occasions that know-how works best if undirected by premeditation, her adherence to set literary values compromises her embrace of open-ended know-how, know-how allowed to maximize discovery. Her account of composing the story "Good Country People," an account often cited by creative writers, illustrates (and has been taken to epitomize) how discovery occurs throughout an open-ended composing process. Yet the same recollection hints at how O'Connor avoids full dedication to such a process.

I doubt myself if many writers know what they are going to do when they start out. When I started writing that story, I didn't know there was going
to be a Ph.D. with a wooden leg in it. I merely found myself one morning writing a description of two women that I knew something about and before I realized it, I had equipped one of them with a daughter with a wooden leg. As the story progressed, I brought in the Bible salesman, but I had no idea what I was going to do with him. I didn't know he was going to steal that wooden leg until ten or twelve lines before he did it, but when I found out that this was what was going to happen, I realized that it was inevitable. This is a story that produces a shock for the reader, and I think one reason for this is that it produced a shock for the writer. (Mystery 100)

The phrase "I realized that it was inevitable" marks a discovery that occurs after the fact of writing, different from and made possible by the mid-writing discovery that "he was going to steal that wooden leg." Realized writing precedes conscious realizations about what has been written, as O'Connor's phrase "before I realized it, I had . . ." indicates. Elsewhere she makes it clear that her writing process is not usually so straightforward or so continually serendipitous as in the case of "Good Country People," which involved relatively (and happily) little "conscious technical control" (Habit 171). In a letter to Cecil Dawkins, O'Connor writes: "I've just been going on about my fictional bidnis this summer, staying doggedly on the wrong track I think, but I suppose you have to pursue the wrong road long enough to be able to identify it and then you can get and keep off it" (Habit 540; for another, remarkably similar comment, see also Conversations 19). If, as it seems here, fiction-writing is a nonlinear process of discovering what will come next, then there is always another road (whether ultimately right or wrong) to try and no necessary point at which to stop discovering.

But O'Connor does assume such a point to be necessary. In an interview with Vagabond, O'Connor describes the process of discovery as what happens in drafting a narrative, whereas subsequent revising situates the narrative as already discovered:

"When you write the thing through once, you can find out what the end is. Then you can
go back to the first chapter and put in a lot of those foreshadowings" (Conversations 23).

If a writing process includes "staying doggedly on the wrong track," how does a writer know when the right track has been fully trod? I venture that O'Connor calls for stopping when her sense of what is proper to a story's ending--a sense that, considering the homogeneity of her oeuvre, precedes the process of writing any particular story--are reached. Stopping when preconceived expectations are met obviates subsequent progress along undiscovered, alternative right tracks and precludes the knowledge attendant to pursuing those tracks. O'Connor realizes that the wooden leg's theft "was inevitable" on the basis of a set of literary values guiding rather than resulting from the writing process. Despite O'Connor's assertions of the importance of narrative discoveries that can only be made through writing, she herself effectively calls for the foreclosing of such discoveries beyond an approved boundary. If this is organic growth, it is growth within a selected container.

I have argued that O'Connor recognizes and values three kinds of writers' discoveries that occur through writing: what comes next in a narrative and in the writing process at hand, transferable practicable knowledge (know-how), and abstract knowledge (know-that). Yet O'Connor's beliefs and assumptions about what writing should be obstruct all three discovery-routes. Such restrictive certainty appears in a letter from O'Connor to Shirley Abbott, a curious student:

I couldn't tell you anything about this novel as I am not very good at talking about what I haven't completed. I hope there'll be surprises in store for me in it . . . As an undergraduate I didn't even know what fiction was but in graduate school I began to find out by reading and writing it. I think this is about the only way to find out. . . . (Habit 142, ellipses in original)

What remains for O'Connor to do in finishing the novel [Wise Blood] will bring surprises
(writing being a way to discover what's next through know-how not predicted by know-that) and enable her to discuss the novel (know-how making further know-that possible). Where matters complicate is in O'Connor's presenting "what fiction [is]" as objectively or certainly determinable. Her writing processes have led her to an understanding of "fiction" that shapes her own fiction (hence the "inevitable" plot twist in "Good Country People"--alternative narrative surprises might be neither inevitable nor acceptable and therefore refused or "weeded out"). Know-how shapes know-that, which compels O'Connor to limit know-how in turn, despite her warnings against such limitation. This may explain how O'Connor ends up writing narrative after narrative marked by revelation, each predictable in its occurrence if not its details.

O'Connor thus practices a limited, particular writerly know-how. It is striking that Tony Magistrale, rightly or wrongly, is able to claim that "all of O'Connor's stories follow a similar 'pattern' of spiritual revelation" (53). Jean Wylder can limn the typical O'Connor revelation in some detail:

[O'Connor] permits a moment of vision to descend on the main character--very like the Joycean epiphany--in which he may see himself clearly for the first time. The moment of insight, when her characters see themselves as sinning beings, comes from the working of grace for them. It is achieved through things that cannot be predicted. It is something mysterious that cannot be elucidated. (81-82).

In "The Church and the Fiction Writer," O'Connor herself demands a spiritual epiphany in every story: "The fiction writer presents mystery through manners, grace through nature, but when he finishes there always has to be left over that sense of Mystery which cannot be accounted for by any human formula" (Mystery 153). Only writerly epiphany can lead to such a "sense of Mystery," since no "human formula"--no plans, no know-that, can formulate it, yet human writers produce it through the application of know-how
and the discoveries that follow. O'Connor does use a basic formula in all cases: sit at a typewriter and wait receptively. But this is a formula for producing epiphanies without understanding them abstractly. Although O'Connor refers here to divine Mystery, the same requirement of non-formulaic narrative resulting from open-ended process serves equally for more mundane mysteries. It could not be otherwise if the epiphany's specifics must be unplanned. For example, in *Wise Blood*, Hazel Motes's spiritual realization that ends the novel has its comical, profane counterpart in Enoch Emery's idea of becoming Gonga the gorilla. Though Enoch's epiphany is absurd, false, it nonetheless follows the characteristic process of an O'Connor discovery (it is a surprise rooted in what has happened theretofore). The "inevitable" theft of Hulga's wooden leg in "Good Country People" is likewise an epiphany, even if it does not constitute a recognition attributable to a fictional character. Notably, the leg is compared to a peacock's tail (*Complete Stories* 288), which in the context of O'Connor's oeuvre signals an epiphany waiting to happen.

O'Connor's contradiction is that despite her insistence on non-formulaic process, she also insists that the end product of her composition meet the criterion of what "there always has to be." Later I will discuss how the abundance of such criteria in traditional creative writing culture join the same culture's priority of open-ended process in a tricky dance. But first I want to make clear the high place that O'Connor's ideas about knowledge and writing hold in creative writing lore. A number of writers and instructors--some associated with the Iowa Writers' Workshop, others not--echo O'Connor on how writers learn through (both during and by way of) writing. One might contend that my herding of these apparently scatt ethos testimonies is an unnecessary step, given that composition studies has directly theorized the same ideas, as in the work of theorists such
as Janet Emig and Donald M. Murray--work which I could simply cite (and be done with it). But because I hope to demonstrate that the valuing of know-how is internal to and deeply entrenched in the archive of creative writing, I am focusing on that archive in articulating the concept of know-how. Know-how should be at the center of a reimagined field of creative writing in part because of its importance to that field traditionally.

**Creative Writing Teachers on Know-How**

I have examined O'Connor's claims about relying upon the writing process to learn (1) how to proceed in composing a particular text, 2) practical knowledge of how to go about writing, and 3) abstract knowledge about writing. Now I turn to other writers who reinforce these claims. Although these writers may have reached some of their conclusions independently, the broad agreement evidenced below is partly a consequence of creative writing's influential lore. The writers surveyed reiterate what that lore has to say about knowledge and the writing process.

Numerous creative writers profess that taking part in the immediate action of writing, rather than planning that writing beforehand, best reveals what comes next (i.e. next steps in terms of narrative action, but also in contexts of non-narrative genres and non-linear processes). Andre Dubus emphasizes avoiding planning: "I try never to think about where a story will go. This is as hard as writing, maybe harder. . . . I try simply to go to the desk and receive what will come" (90). Dubus's intent to "receive what will come" recalls O'Connor's "waiting to receive" before her typewriter. François Camoin makes a statement along the same lines, though he perhaps implies a more active writer: "The student who learns that he has no intentions worth talking about--that he has
nothing to say when he sits down at the typewriter, only something to make—will write much better fiction" (5-6). It is a frequent claim that writers most effectively discover what comes next in a text being composed during the moments of writing rather than through forethought:

[A] writer needs to lose control, to lose control of language, of voice, of plot, of character, and just follow what happens. (Leebron 55)

I feel that it's important to let the process of writing bring about things rather than be just the writing down of things that are already brought about. (Stafford 106)

[W]e don't know what will work for us until we take the breathless plunge, until we follow the original impulse to wherever it tries to take us. (Garrett, "Elephant" 2)

I write almost totally without a plan. (Wilkinson 75)

Clarence Major attributes know-how to "instincts," distinguishing instincts from—and favoring them over—conscious knowledge: "[I]f you're a writer . . . you have to go with your instincts. Follow them and you can use that knowledge that is there. It knows more than we know" (63). And we may be wrong about what "we know" consciously. When interviewed by Richard Gilman, O'Connor agrees with his judgment that her characterization of Rayber in The Violent Bear It Away was "one of the few occasions when her art had failed because she hadn't sacrificed what she thought she knew" (Conversations 55). Gilman's phrasing ("thought she knew") identifies apparent knowledge (know-that) as deceptive, suspect. Such (pseudo-) knowledge preempts more accurate knowledge that the act of writing makes available.

Donald Barthelme puts the same principle in somewhat different terms, according to which the deployment of know-how is figured as the absence of knowledge (that):

"The not-knowing is crucial to art, is what permits art to be made. Without the scanning
process engendered by not-knowing, without the possibility of having the mind move in unanticipated directions, there would be no invention" (12). It is interesting to compare Barthelme's "invention" to O'Connor's "discovery" and "surprise." "Invention" evokes (at least within the sphere of twentieth-century fiction writing) a sensibility to which O'Connor would not subscribe--it suggests the linguistic and formal flexibility of Barthelme's fiction rather than the more or less traditional narrative structures through which O'Connor aims to write the "inevitable." When George P. Elliott compares a successful teaching experience to "writing a story, as I have done a few times, the whole thrust of which is toward a final revelation which I know only when I get there" (49), his term--"revelation"--is, much more than "invention," one we would associate with O'Connor. But the basic idea, in each case, is the same: the suspension or failure of conscious, general knowledge of how to write makes possible a desirably unpredictable writing process. This is because know-that can never fully address the sheer particularity of a given compositional situation. Wendell Berry acknowledges this gap between general knowledge and particular process: "Every good book is to a considerable extent a unique discovery. And so one can say with plenty of justification that nobody knows 'how to write'" (23). For Barthelme, a writer's knowledge of the text-in-progress "comes into being at the instant it's inscribed" (12), and writers can count on this emergent knowledge--the fruits of know-how--even as their abstract knowledge fails them: "Writing is a process of dealing with not-knowing, a forcing of what and how. We have all heard novelists testify to the fact that, beginning a new book, they are utterly baffled as to how to proceed, what should be written and how it might be written, even though they've done a dozen" (12). That these novelists at least sometimes manage to write their
next books is a testament to know-how. Barthelme does not specify whether writers can improve at "dealing with not knowing," which would mean that through writing, writers learn transferable practicable knowledge (though, under his terms, it does not register as "knowing"). If O'Connor's stories tend to be relatively similar to one another, perhaps this similarity explains how her understanding of discovery through writing allows for the learning of a degree of transferable abstract knowledge that Barthelme might not admit. In any case, abstract knowledge is never enough, never sufficient to relieve the "utterly baffled" without truncating open-ended writing's crucial discoveries.

Does know-how beget more know how--knowledge of practice attained through practice? In other words, by writing does one improve at writing? For Barthelme and Berry, each writing project demands that its writer proceed without relying on previously learned knowledge. But for Marvin Bell, improvement through practice is a straightforward matter: "[O]ne of the great secrets--I hope it's not really a secret--about writing, is that if you do anything seriously enough, long enough, you'll get better at it" (Interview 2). In my research in interviews with and essays by creative writers, I have not often encountered this claim, perhaps because it appears obvious, whereas the advice that writers should let themselves be surprised by the unanticipated directions of their writing might seem both more glamorous and more in need of emphasis. Ron Tanner puts the notion that writing improves through practice in such simple, matter-of-fact phrasing that further consideration would seem labored: creative writers "learn by doing; they learn writing best by writing; and they learn practical criticism by practicing criticism in the workshop" (Tanner). Barthelme and Berry are not necessarily disagreeing with O'Connor, Bell, and Tanner. A degree of literary know-how is always available to a writer, or else
both writing successfully (however one interprets "success") and improving at doing so would be impossible. And writers never acquire absolute or full know-how, which is more to the point of Barthelme's and Berry's claims. They are not asserting that writers can learn to write nothing with more facility so much as they are calling for writers to challenge themselves through sufficient unfamiliarity in each new writing project that bafflement results. For Barthelme, only such challenging writing processes can lead to art. And Berry is effectively arguing against there being a universal or best method of writing. Clarence Major articulates the priority underlying these assertions. Writing, for Major, "involves discovering a new approach with each time, with each step. I could write to a formula, and write the same book over and over. Some writers do that." But, he insists, "the only way to attempt to write anything that has any vitality" is to avoid such repetition (55). This does not mean that no practicable knowledge is learned through writing that might be used in the course of future projects, if these projects have "vitality." Such knowledge may even make these projects possible--a writing process may build upon prior learning and be more ambitious for doing so without depending solely or mostly on that learning.

Recognizing the porous boundaries of "writing" as a distinct process can explain how literary know-how is never absent and never mastered, though it can be developed or expanded. It cannot be cleanly differentiated from other categories of know-how (e.g. knowing how to observe details, knowing how to see projects to completion, or knowing how to make people laugh), such categories being abstract divisions imposed upon continuous experience. Thus O'Connor's enacting of know-how involves her daily routine of waiting at the typewriter. For Deborah Eisenberg, sitting with a typewriter is only one
of any number of experiences inseparable from writing: "Writing fiction, because we never quite know what a particular endeavor is until we have completed it, has no discernible borders. Whether we're at the typewriter or in the tub, our minds are in some way at the service of the thing that's taking shape within them" (119). O'Connor would disdain the notion of tub-work. In fact, her typewriter comment is a response to Caroline Gordon's comment that doing housework is a necessary part of her own writing process. But O'Connor's response is mostly a matter of propriety, an insistence on the seriousness of fiction and accordingly the discipline it demands; for O'Connor, as Mark McGurl puts it, discipline was "a kind of religion" (135). Although O'Connor's daily routine of three hours at the typewriter ostensibly separated her fiction-writing time from the rest of her day, this same writing routine was made possible by her discipline in organizing her other activities around the window for writing. The writing process cannot be neatly cordoned from other processes.

Allen Ginsberg, no matter his literary, political, and pedagogical distance from O'Connor--he disagreed entirely with O'Connor's pedagogical approach of finding the "wrong" in a student's text (43)--speaks to how knowledge of processes is transferable and, for O'Connor, how discipline beyond the typewriter enters into the discipline of her writing. Ginsberg claims, "Knowing how to walk across a street is the same thing as knowing how to write a haiku; learning how to walk across the street is the same thing as learning how to write The Brothers Karamazov" (41). What both walking and writing involve is knowing "how to use perception" (41). Taken together, Ginsberg's understanding of the transferable relevance of know-how (i.e. everything we do is potentially relevant to writing) and Eisenberg's notion of inextricable processes (i.e.
writing is always taking place) can offer an explanation of how O'Connor's daily typewriter routine relates to elements of sameness across her body of narrative writing, including the reliable occurrence of epiphanies. Circumscribed writing processes lead to circumscribed written results; O'Connor's focus means a know-how honed to specialized ends. Robert Creeley attests to the role that writerly "habits of limit" ("Writing" 38) play in allowing "only certain kinds of feeling" and writing (39), and he recounts successfully altering these habits--using a notebook instead of a typewriter, for instance--and experiencing an attendant change in the range of writing he produced (41). O'Connor's refusal to accept that a writing process extends beyond an isolated daily window disconnected from the rest of her experience parallels her resistance to applying her writerly know-how to ends deemed, in advance, unsatisfactory. While insisting that process reveals the defining boundaries of short stories, novels, literature, and art, this process, in its stability, is not allowed to redraw those boundaries.

If process is allowed to restructure writing's frameworks, rather than only taking place within them, then the accumulating of multiple and alternative writing processes would increase the aesthetic flexibility or options of writers. Taking "process" in the broad sense, these would include not just the activity of the mind at the moment of putting words on page and the routine or non-routine behaviors framing that activity, but also what goes on in writing classrooms, writing programs, and literary communities. In "Potentially Dangerous: Vulnerabilities and Risks in the Writing Workshop," Gaylene Perry describes how she has students write in various ways, through various prompts and exercises, over the course of an hour in the classroom (124), and she argues that "[b]y giving [a] student triggers that they may not otherwise use, the student also gets to know
a wider variety of approaches and perspectives" toward writing (125). According to this thinking, a "student grows used to the feel of writing" as a broadly defined process by writing according to numerous arbitrarily separable "approaches" (125). For O'Connor, and for many instructors of Iowa-style workshops, much of the writing Perry encourages may not count at legitimate or literary--but, for that matter, from their perspective neither does a considerable amount of published fiction and poetry.\(^{13}\) Even Perry states that what students produce in her classroom has no "intrinsic value as writing--as literature" (25), but it is, she judges, worth the students' time.\(^{14}\) I contend that literature should be understood not to designate texts exhibiting a set of favored qualities but instead to stand for writing that cannot (otherwise) be categorically defined. What makes literature possible is the potential of know-how to make possible writing that could not be planned, predicted, or described abstractly. O'Connor and the writers who follow her contribute to a concept of writerly knowledge, literary know-how, that makes my contention possible, even as they attempt to foreclose the profoundly endless applicability of this very knowledge.

In the second half of Perry's class, students discuss their experiences writing during its first half, and "[t]here is an expanding awareness that possibilities for writing are endless" (125). This awareness, manifested in class discussion, is an obvious example of know-that made available through the know-how of writing. O'Connor's observations that abstract knowledge results from writing processes are mirrored in statements made by other writers, including Iowa faculty Paul Engle and Marvin Bell (who was also an Iowa MFA student):

[W]hat the writer is really doing is not so much writing a poem or play or story which he has firmly in mind, but rather is using his writing to
discover what it truly is he is trying to say. Often he will not know until
the final revision of the last page what he had been trying to do from the
start. (Engle, On Creative Writing 14)

The poet is really giving himself or herself over to the process and then
counting on recognizing and working with what emerges during the poem,
but even more so, in my case at least, afterwards. So revision is partly a
question of recognition of what's there. (Bell, Interview 16)

Engle and Bell, in accord with O'Connor, call for writers not to presume to know their
intentions in writing a given text until they begin writing. Through composing,
knowledge about the text becomes available. Moreover, Bell (and perhaps Engle)
assume, along with O'Connor, that writing proceeds by way of drafts. These are, of
course, subject to revision, but they are also trustworthy indicators and more or less
complete versions of what the finished texts will be. It is significant that, for Bell,
revision takes place "afterwards," beyond the writer's primary know-how-driven
"process"; subsequent discovery is abstract recognition of what has already been written.
Writing is conceived as a method of finding out that which might otherwise remain
unrecognized, even though limiting assumptions about that process--and, in turn, what
can be discovered--persist.

Assertions of writing's function as a mode of discovery are not limited to Iowa.
Some, for example, are offered in contexts of academic criticism. Judith Harris makes
such a claim from a psychoanalytic perspective, a claim compatible with O'Connor's
testament to writing's unconscious aspect: "Writing is a process of finding out what is
already, on some level, known" (183). Writing, then, is a way of improving access to
one's own knowledge, making it increasingly conscious and available for abstract
consideration. The writer's imminent discoveries can be understood, per Harris, as
writers' self-recognitions. No matter where the discovered was previously located, within
or outside of the writer, awareness and appreciation of writing's function to spur
discovery is shared by writer-critics within the Iowa tradition, outside of it, and arguably
opposed to it. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, who could be taken to represent this last category,
writes of discovery through writing: "writing is a practice--a practice in which the author
disappears into a process, into a community, into discontinuities, into a desire for
discovery" (172). DuPlessis's valuing of "community" and "discontinuities" may align
her apart from writers such as Engle and Bell. And the type of "discovery" through
writing to which she refers is left open. But such discovery certainly can be taken to
include abstract knowledge that, arrived at through "practice . . . process" and as such can
be consistent with O'Connor's perspective.

Know-how reaches ahead of--but facilitates rather than discourages--know-that. It
is one matter to know how to, say, take a walk, and another to know what the walk entails
in terms of physics, biology, local geography, etc.--and more frameworks for know-that
are always available to be applied. Knowing how to take a walk practically can, but will
not necessarily, help the walker understand the walk abstractly and think about it
analytically. Writing, especially open-ended or literary writing, is an extraordinarily
complex process, and the know-how of writing can be an aid to our relatively deficient
abstract knowledge of writing processes and the thinking built into them.

Know-how is recognized and valued in the archive of creative writing lore, and it
may be the most important part of this archive. But this recognition can reasonably
trouble critics when it contributes to an anti-intellectual view of writing. It is the figuring
of the writing process, including the discovering accomplished thereby, as mysterious
that Tim Mayers takes issue with:
Although creative writers (like proponents of creationism or intelligent
design) assert a level of "irreducible complexity" beyond which the tools
of intellectual analysis cannot probe the alleged mysteries of creativity,
practitioners of creative writing studies (like evolutionary biologists)
believe that, even though intellectual analysis may never lead us on a
perfect, straight-line march toward the absolute truth, we ought not assume
that what cannot be explained today will never be explained tomorrow.
(Mayers, "One Simple Word" 219)

Mayers is right to challenge notions of writing and creativity that deny the possibility of
addressing their "alleged mysteries" through analysis. But while creative writing lore
includes such denials, the underlying notion of mystery as part of the writing process
nonetheless is an idea with intellectual value. Calling writing a mysterious activity is in
one sense another way of saying that the practice of writing may be the only available
way to access through know-how what abstract knowledge cannot yet grasp. Analysis
works within frameworks, chosen among innumerable potential frameworks, while
know-how makes possible the production of texts whose total complexities elude the
scope of a given framework. None of this means that writing processes cannot or should
not be analyzed and theorized. It is through antagonism to critical and theoretical work
that creative writing in the Iowa vein discourages writers from maximizing their literary-
know how and the range of their textual production. Peter Vandenberg provides a
relevant caution:

> When we fail to recognize, or recognize but fail to teach, that "theory" is
not an enemy of creative writing--indeed, that creative writing is itself the
product of theory, a particular set of concepts, definitions, and
propositions--we are necessarily engaged in the production of mystery. We
are inviting commitment to a state of unknowing belief. (107)

Theory is always present, and not recognizing it means falling back on what Mayers in
(Re)Writing Craft calls "institutional-conventional wisdom," the uncritically accepted
"system of belief" common in creative writing and deeply informing of its
institutionalization (13). At the same time, scholars in and beyond creative writing studies can gain from the theorizings (which in this chapter I have gathered into a loose theory) of know-how substantially present in creative writing's archive, though complicated by this lore-dominated archive's disorder and contradiction.

The problem is that the discipline of creative writing has not recognized and acted upon the important ramifications of these ideas so often and authoritatively emphasized within it. Thus what writers such as O'Connor say about literary know-how is used to exempt creative writing from critical analysis, whereas the same ideas could become a basis for restructuring creative writing with an emphasis on its relevance to such analysis. For Mayers the "alleged mysteries of creativity" secure an uncritical institutional-conventional "system of belief"; for Vandenberg the "production of mystery," of a "state of unknowing belief," are consequences of a refusal to theorize. While agreeing with the gist of both claims, I find mystery itself to be both compatible with and conducive to critical and theoretical approaches to creative writing. To locate mystery (in terms of know-that) in processes of writing need not obviate or devalue creative writing studies; to the contrary, writing practice can be understood as complement and catalyst to analysis and theory--the conjunction of practice and theory is necessary if the practice's potential discoveries are to be fully realized. As Vandenberg writes, "purposive actions, whatever they are, are the enactment, the practice, of theory" (107). And if know-how can lead writers where know-that cannot, then it follows that the emergence of some theories is possible only through their enactment--first--in writing. But creative writing on the Iowa model discourages the practice of literary know-how outside a controlled, accepted zone, which limits its theory-producing potential. O'Connor's views on writing exemplify this
conflict, and those of the other writers I have cited affirm and perpetuate it.

Rules, Assertions, and Assumptions

I have focused on the importance, to O'Connor and in the dominant tradition of creative writing, of open-ended writing processes unimpeded by plans and principles that would limit writers' surprising discoveries. As I have suggested, creative writing modeled on the Iowa Writers' Workshop (in whose annals O'Connor's importance is extraordinary) can be characterized by a conflict between, on the one hand, the recognition of the value of open-ended writing processes as a route to know-how and, on the other, limitations that obstruct know-how by shaping those processes. Traditional creative writing constrains student writing through two main avenues: (1) numerous stated certainties about what literature (or good literature) is, which promote acquired, restrictive aims and sensibilities; and (2) workshop pedagogy, which--in addition to functioning as a vehicle for the transmission of lore--tends to maintain conventional literary expectations and discourage writers from more adventurous directions.

The recurrence, discussed previously, of representations of epiphany across O'Connor's oeuvre is representative of her fiction's general sameness. If, in McGurl's words, O'Connor could "be said to have written the same perfectly crafted short story again and again" (144), epiphanies are only one commonality among her stories. Significantly, her published fiction uses only the third-person limited narrative point of view (Schloss 102, McGurl 129). Much of her imagery, not only the peacock, reappears across several stories; Patricia D. Maida's analysis of O'Connor's images of the tree-line, the sun, and the color purple suggests that these are symbols are used almost
schematically (Maida). O'Connor's descriptions of her own fiction can be startlingly specific and absolute, as when she states, "All my stories are about the action of grace on a character who is not very willing to support it" (Habit 275). Even as she counted on discovering her narratives through the process of writing them, and even as her narratives again and again represent patterns of epiphany, the epiphanies are not surprising when viewed in the context of her work. Discovery becomes part of the fabric, not just the punctuating surprise, of her fiction. These discoveries emerge from and remain within, rather than transgress, the confinements of the values, conditions, and definitions of literary fiction to which she subscribed--de facto rules. Her insistence on writing through limitation (which I will return to in more detail) streamlined her writing process and led to a coherent body of work but compromised the full possibility of the process to take that work in less predictable directions.

Despite O'Connor's suspicion of general principles for fiction, she offers such principles willingly. Two of her most adamant assertions are that fiction should prioritize, first, sensory descriptions and, second, imperfect but redeemable characters. In both cases she phrases substantially debatable claims matter-of-factly:

Fiction begins where human knowledge begins--with the senses--and every fiction writer is bound by this fundamental aspect of his medium. (Mystery 42)

The first and most obvious characteristic of fiction is that it deals with reality through what can be seen, heard, smelt, tasted, and touched. (Mystery 91)

[E]very mystery that reaches the human mind, except in the final stages of contemplative prayer, does so by way of the senses. (Mystery 176)

The serious writer has always taken the flaw in human nature for his starting point, usually the flaw in an otherwise admirable character. (Mystery 167)
It seems to me that all good stories are about conversion, about a character's changing. *(Habit 275)*

If there is no possibility for change in a character, we have no interest in him. *(Habit 199)*

O'Connor makes unverifiable statements in absolute terms: knowledge starts "with the senses," the senses are "fundamental" to fiction, mystery is transferred through the senses, character flaws are the first focus of "serious" writers, and only characters who might change can interest readers. Even her qualification "[i]t seems to me" modifies an absolute--"all good stories," qualifying her ability not to judge which stories are "good" but what the good ones "are about." She also assumes she can identify which writers are "serious," universalizes her reading experiences ("we have no interest"), and takes her claim about the central function of sensory details in fiction to be "obvious" rather than contestable.

The valuing of both sensory descriptions and dynamic characters supports O'Connor's broader concern that fiction be "largely presented rather than reported" *(Mystery 73-74)*, an assertion commonly distilled in creative writing culture to *show, don't tell*. Ron McFarland writes, "The advice to 'show' rather than 'tell' qualifies as universal" *("Apologia" 34)*. O'Connor's letters evidence her repeated recourse to this prescription when commenting on the fiction of friends and acquaintances:

*[W]hen you present a pathetic situation, you have to let it speak entirely for itself. *(Habit 83)*

He was writing a deeply philosophical novel (thought he) about a lad horribly like himself who was going to commit suicide in the last chapter. All the chapters leading up were devoted to his reasons for this action, full of stuff about the "sense of time." . . . I discreetly tried to suggest that fiction was about people and not about the sense of time but I am sure made no impression. *(Habit 254)*
[R]emember that you don't write a story because you have an idea but because you have a believable character or just simply because you have a story. (*Habit* 219)

It would be better not to mention the South. It appears as if you were trying to make a point. (*Habit* 295)

The phrasing indicates rules, not guidelines: "you have to," "fiction was about," and "remember that you don't." Even the last of the examples quoted above implies a rule: "It appears as if you were trying to make a point," which is to say that fiction should not make points. The rules relate to literary know-how in that the crucial discovery occurring during the process of writing is only possible, O'Connor insists, if preconceived abstract goals are done away with. The assumption is that telling tends to preserve these goals and showing to bypass them. To "speak for" a narrative, to focus on ideas over characters or stories, to render philosophical or political ideas--these would be impositions of knowledge into the act of writing. Yet O'Connor's own rule-stating creates just such impositions. By trying to curtail abstract threats to writing's discoveries by denying a broad swathe of options--intractable characters, guiding themes, pointed or philosophical narrative intrusions--she closes off discovery beyond familiar avenues.

The demand to show or present rather than to tell or report is closely connected with O'Connor's requirement that a work of fiction be a whole dramatic experience: "the present state of the case is that a piece of fiction must be very much a self-contained dramatic unit" (*Mystery* 75). This claim corresponds with her theorizing of the reading and writing of literature as experiences that cannot be understood if they undergo the fragmentation that analysis effects. O'Connor deems abstractions extraneous to drama and therefore inessential: "any abstractly expressed compassion or piety or morality in a
piece of fiction is only a statement added to it" (Mystery 75). She recognizes that know-how enables writing of a level of complexity that the influence of abstract know-that, which might be manifested in abstract statements, could foreclose. Yet such abstractions—such as her concept of form—direct how she understands and writes literature. O'Connor equates literature with the boundaries of form: "The form of the story gives it meaning which any other form would change, and unless the student is able, in some degree, to apprehend the form, he will never apprehend anything else about the work, except what is extrinsic to it as literature" (Mystery 129). "Form" stands for the undivided dramatic experience, and when dealing with the genre of "the story," such form defines a given story "as literature." O'Connor can elaborate on what defines a literary story's form: "A story is a complete dramatic action—and in good stories, the characters are shown through the action and the action is controlled through the characters, and the result of this is meaning that derives from the whole presented experience" (Mystery 90). So the whole, literary form of a story comprises a dramatic interplay of character and action. But what of even conventional lyric poetry, let alone unconventional prose works, in which characterization and action are not always prioritized? Literature, for O'Connor, is based fundamentally on genre conventions, which for the short story and novel include dramatic conventions. To qualify as literature, a fictional text must be "a self-contained dramatic unit," and the terms according to which it can be judged as such—character and action—prevent O'Connor and those who agree with her from writing fiction not properly dramatic (except where they deem their own fiction flawed).

In her letters O'Connor naturalizes both the criterion of dramatic completeness (which should be understood in a broad sense, according to which every word-choice
contributes to the story's total unity) and the criteria for determining whether
completeness has been achieved. After expressing hesitation to William Sessions about
commenting on his fiction, citing and accepting its difference from hers, she asserts
"unity" as a universal value: "The trouble with being a writer and taking on the activity of
critic is that you tend to think everybody else's work should be like your own. . . . you
have to work out the unity of your way of doing things" (Habit 181). It is assumed a
given that dramatic unity is desirable in fiction, an aim transcending acknowledged
differences among writers; hence there can be various "way[s] of doing things," each
amounting to its own dramatic unity. O'Connor tells Louise Abbot that a story of Abbot's
"doesn't quite 'come off' as a complete story," using this observation as a springboard for
specific criticisms. O'Connor adds, "I think you ought to write a lot and that the more you
write the more complete your stories will become" (Habit 224). The goal of completeness
is universal, she implies, and consequently learning to achieve and recognize
completeness in a work of fiction is a transferable lesson that all serious writers will (or
should) learn. Thus she criticizes certain stories of James Purdy that "seem . . . merely
thrown together," as opposed to his preferable stories that "have a single effect [and] do
exactly what he must have wanted them to do" (Habit 292). Elsewhere she states,
"Actually there is no such thing as the short-story form. A nutty phrase" (Habit 283),
which is to imply that dramatic completeness is not a feature of form, therefore not a
debatable criterion, but instead a defining and inarguable feature of the short story.
O'Connor is not alone in treating completeness as a rule with precedence over more
elastic principles. Francine Prose, for instance, a few pages after arguing that short stories
need follow no necessary rules, presents the "sense of the artistic whole" as a defining
quality of the genre ("What Makes a Short Story?" 7, 11).

Both "show, don't tell" and the story's dramatic unity are priorities that support the goal of communicating, for, O'Connor tells us, "[u]nless the novelist has gone utterly out of his mind, his aim is still communication" (Mystery 53). In a letter to the correspondent anonymously designated "A" in The Habit of Being, O'Connor blames herself for Catharine Carver's misreading of "The Comforts of Home": "Yes'm she don't get the moral point. But the reason she don't is because I have failed to make it plain. . . . The very arrangement is undramatic; also the position of sentences in paragraphs; points are stated and then shown; it's full of waste" (Habit 362). O'Connor understands drama--presentation of the complete essential action--as key to communication. For O'Connor and in creative writing lore, communication is foremost a matter of clarity. O'Connor advises Cecil Dawkins that "one never writes for a subtle reader" (Habit 296) because clarity should be maximal. Clarity is one of creative writing lore's most adamantly posited values:

What a teacher can supply: clarity of line and clarity of vision, patience for what's good and impatience with what's bad. (Wright 191)

In my opinion the struggle to maintain meaning, sense, and clarity is the primary activity of any writer. (Conroy, "Writer's Workshop" 84)

I suppose that's the most valuable thing that gets done in a half year of writing-teaching: people come to learn that they have to go to extraordinary lengths to compel a trained and willing reader to see something of what they want to show, think something of what they want thought. (Wilbur 171)

For these teachers, clarity is a technical matter, not an aesthetic one. The possibility of risking clarity for other gains is never fielded, or it is dismissed as naïve. Clarity must, the conventional thinking goes, be strived for and upheld, and it requires no sacrifice
worth mulling over. The problem with clarity lies in the rarely questioned acceptance that it is fundamental to good writing. Katharine Haake contends, "Clarity, linked to mastery, provides the kind of certainty that works to shut down any other possibility" (Haake, "Creative Writing" 184). Wendy Bishop, observing the prioritizing of clarity in creative writing culture, shifts the framework of the problem to make a point related to Haake's: "over the years, I would learn to distrust rules like these: learn the master plots, imitate the masters; aim for clarity, coherence, and correctness" because the imposition of such rules keeps supposed mastery in the hands of the expert teachers ("Afterword" 284). A teacher can label a text *unclear* on any basis, which need not be specified because, while the achievement of clarity should be self-evident, the reasons for a text's murky prose or confounding organization need only be deemed, along with the text, unclear. What is unclear is not understood because, supposedly, it cannot be understood--thus John Cheever can dismiss fiction so celebrated as John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor* (Boyle, "This Monkey" 9), to say nothing of student fiction, on the basis of inaccessibility.16

Traditionally, creative writing teachers make numerous evaluative judgments about student and published writing, determining which texts or aspects of texts (such as clarity level) are successful--in typical parlance, what does and does not "work." Often, in the classroom and in publications such as textbooks, interviews, and articles on craft, the expert writer-teacher provides a caveat that qualifies all previous and subsequent claims, a caveat stating that writing has no universal rules, or that all advice given, no matter how forcefully stated, is merely advice for consideration. O'Connor makes such a statement herself in "The Nature and Aim of Fiction," but she also signals just how cursory a qualification it is: "It is always wrong of course to say that you can't do this or you can't
do that in fiction. You can do anything you can get away with, but nobody has ever
gotten away with much" (Mystery 76). O'Connor was not a writing instructor, but if she
were, she--and to an extent, student consensus--would decide what each student could
"get away with."

Admitting that literary writing has no steadfast criteria, in the context of a
semester full of explicit and implicit judgments, effectively licenses the expert writer-
teacher to determine whether a student is successful in either following conventions or
diverging from them. L. S. Simckes offers a caution that, like O'Connor's, leaves deciding
what "works" to readers: "[A]ny rule in art, when followed too closely . . . threatens to
pinch the neck of discovery. A story can get the reader to read it in almost any way it
wants; at least it can try" (211). Simckes is wary of the effect of rules upon potential
discovery, pointing us back to the importance of open-ended process (which I have
aligned with literary know-how) to creative writing. But "at least it can try" reminds us
that through whim or reason readers can always judge a given text worth reading or not,
flawed or not, and an expert's judgment of success or failure is bound to carry weight. In
the conventional workshop, the teacher's role can be understood as that of a maker and
explainer of judgments. Former Iowa director Frank Conroy sees such judgment as
fundamental to his teaching: "I announce right away that I reserve the right to be wrong,
because not to do so would severely restrict my ability to talk at all. Narrative fiction is
complex, judgments can be subjective, tastes differ, and rules seldom hold" (Conroy,
"Writer's Workshop" 81). While a caveat such as Conroy's suggests that students are at
liberty to disagree with the teacher's judgments, the fact that these judgments amount to a
steady stream of course-long commentary, constituting much of what students ostensibly
learn during the term, means that students in wanting to perceive the course as worthwhile may feel pressure, in addition to that imposed by the conventional classroom power dynamic, to accept the teacher's judgments uncritically.

Ron McFarland is mindful of the force of a teacher's (and published writer's) authority but considers his own self-qualified authority to be mostly harmless when he comments on student writing:

I always insist that the poem belongs to the writer, and anything I say must be considered strictly as a suggestion. Of course I recognize the weight that a teacher's "suggestion" has on a student, and I do wish I could be certain that my advice was taken critically. Most often, I think, it is taken that way, and I frequently find students rejecting my suggestions, sometimes for the better and sometimes not. (McFarland, "Apologia" 43)

McFarland's "An Apologia for Creative Writing," which includes descriptions of his participation in the drafting and revising of two students' poems, drew a response from David Radavich, who challenges the assumptions underlying McFarland's suggestions to students, assumptions McFarland is "blind to" (Radavich 220). Replying in turn, McFarland emphasizes that he repeatedly frames his comments to students as "suggestions," not "rules." He adds, "I suspect that we teachers sometimes flatter ourselves that our clumsy efforts and errors will destroy our students and corrupt their lives, but I believe our students are made of sterner stuff. They are not such automatons that McFarland's ostensible 'rules' will warp their perceptions for life" ("Ron McFarland Responds" 221). Two observations seem necessary. First, McFarland may be unusually vigilant in contextualizing his responses to student poems. Second, the fact that Radavich reads McFarland's suggestions as rules is evidence that students, despite McFarland's dedication to downplaying the power of these suggestions, might also overestimate their purported weight.
Perhaps the main reason that caveat-statements appear cursory is that exposure to expert judgment can be readily understood as the raison d'être of a creative writing course, especially in the absence of other stated premises. The more explicitly understood it is that the teacher's claims always should be weighed and sometimes should be dismissed, especially when the convention of the writer's silence during workshop prevents the claims from being challenged, the less obvious the gain from participating in such a course might be. Students who accept such a course at face value may incline to accept the "rules" for reasons such as convenience, an investment the idea of the teacher's right judgments, and a vision of healthy program-participation. This is to say nothing of the temptation to adopt the rules for the purpose of earning a high grade or, at the graduate level, of seeking publication with help from the approving teacher's reputation and professional network.

The combination of de facto rules such as O'Connor impresses on her audience and the usual hedge that the "rules" are not definite, effectively leaves readers in the position of deciding both when a literary text successfully follows conventions and when it successfully deviates from them. In the workshop, the teacher traditionally performs this decision-making function, a performance of foremost visibility and apparent heft, even if the teacher's authority has been qualified in advance. If the teacher and classmates provide a student writer with what have been contextualized as informed suggestions, the weight with which these suggestions are often posed may be substantial. This commentary amounts to aesthetic conditioning, at times almost without content. On a book of fiction by Elizabeth Fenwick Way, O'Connor writes of the characterization, "It is just right and never overdone and everything in it is necessary and works." 17 I never know
though why I like anything. It's either dead or alive to me and this is alive" (Habit 162). Such judgments, when spoken or written in the context of a workshop, urge student writing to appeal to a particular variety of taste, a "just right" for some but never for all readers. McGurl describes O'Connor's fiction as shaped in this way, as by a homeostatic process:

O'Connor is a case study in modulation by way of negative feedback, in which the output of a system is to some degree reversed before reentering it as input. This is the model of homeostasis, as when a thermometer registers the heat it has triggered as too high and temporarily shuts the heater down, and its literary version is a "classical" style that is neither maximalist nor minimalistic, neither over-nor under-written. (128)

So O'Connor both gives and receives such guiding feedback. Of Catharine Carver, O'Connor writes, "I value her opinion and she will tell me when something is bad. I have a horror of somebody publishing something of mine when it isn't fit to publish" (Habit 392). O'Connor's readiness to subordinate her own judgment (and that of publishers) to that of a trusted reader may be startling. It is important to note that O'Connor does not require the reasoning behind Carver's opinion. Trust is what matters, and O'Connor directs her fiction to a "just right" condition determined by the judgments of trusted readers in addition to her own. James B. Hall quotes Andrew Lytle, who taught O'Connor in a workshop at Iowa and supervised her master's thesis, as saying, "You only have to tell her something once. And she's got it. The same mistake won't show up again" (quoted in Cash, "Lytle" 186). Lytle and O'Connor share a view of literary fiction according to which writers make definite errors of a general, rather than text-specific, nature--mistakes can "show up again," and O'Connor trusts Lytle's word on what is a mistake. If there exist no sure rules, identifiable missteps can at least be avoided. A literary streamlining results through accumulating lessons in what not to do.
The Workshop's Corrective Control

I have surveyed determinations about what literature should be, determinations robustly present in the lore of creative writing. These discourage student writing processes from aiming toward unapproved regions. Now I turn to the workshop's role in shaping student writing processes through negative feedback and the transmitting of conventions. If O'Connor's composing process, including her reactions to criticism of her stories-in-progress, can be understood as homeostatic, homeostasis more obviously describes the operations of the typical creative writing workshop. Student texts are input into the workshop-system, in which received and internally consistent commentary calls for these texts' modification. The student subsequently alters the text by taking into account this workshop feedback (often submitting the revised text to the teacher by the end of the semester). Meanwhile, workshop criticism shapes in advance student texts subsequently submitted to the workshop by the same writer and by others. Workshop commentary--especially from the instructor--shepherds student texts (correcting the case at hand and modeling correctness for future cases) so that they develop within established boundaries. Students may follow the teacher's lead in providing criticism, and they often arrive to a given workshop course having experienced and been influenced by other workshops, so that students often reinforce the instructor's vision of the range of proper literary possibility.

When experienced students bring absorbed lore and critical tendencies with them to a new semester's workshop, the influence of a more open-minded teacher can seem drowned out by the voice of creative writing culture, transferred through and represented
by the students. William Cotter Murray recollects an Iowa workshop headed by
Marguerite Young, who defended Cotter's "'Goats' . . . my poor prize story . . . against a
barrage of attacks" from his classmates, "the realists" (202). Though Young appreciated
the story, the workshop (at least within the Iowa Writers' Workshop program) is an
institution (even in 1956, when Murray took Young's class) that makes heard its own
literary priorities. These priorities are sturdily embedded not only through transmission
and repetition across workshops but also through publications such as *The Writer's
Chronicle* and how-to-write handbooks (not limited to textbooks adopted for creative
writing classrooms). Andrew Levy finds, in his study of the American short story, "The
short story handbooks codified and popularized the most seminal axioms of creative
writing pedagogy; it is because the axioms are so central that the influence of the
handbooks remains invisible" (104-05). It is not only the individual college's or
university's creative writing program, but also a larger academic and extra-academic
disciplinary culture, that sets and stabilizes expectations for what a workshop should be.

As a homeostatic system, the workshop does not change from within, only
through active external restructuring--the workshop persists according to how it is set up.
The usual stipulation that the writer whose text is under discussion remain silent helps
keep the system internally stable, as does the resetting of discussion with each student
text dealt with. This means that institutional convention largely determines workshop
process, and creative writing lore heavily influences comments provided during
workshops. The more radical the student writing, the more forceful the workshop
response in yanking the text back to the region of acceptability, or, if such correction is
not possible, in denying that the text is *literary*, a descriptor rearticulated as needed. By
encouraging student texts to stay within comfortable, accepted boundaries, the workshop can maintain in turn a familiar kind and range of commentary, letting it fulfill repeatedly the same role in students' writing processes. As a homeostat, the workshop is a pedagogical context at odds with open-ended literary know-how, for the classroom experience is part of the student-writer's writing process and, because the workshop is so dominant as creative writing's primary pedagogy, this experience is minimally variant.

A "mistake," such as Lytle would direct O'Connor's attention to, is considered readily identifiable through the workshop process. Paul Engle, considered a good deal responsible for the Iowa program's rise to influence and fame, puts it simply: "The writer finds that the students around him are alert to his faults and quick to praise his virtues" ("The Writer" xxvi). It is understood that writers' "faults" and "virtues" are objectively identifiable. This includes the work of published writers, George P. Garrett suggests: "Sometimes--and it's high time that we admit it--the works that turn out to be most teachable are flawed in one way or another (it's always worth a period or two to show what's wrong with a book)" ("One Kind" 165). According to this view, flaws are flaws, and flaws are wrong. The notion of examining them as aesthetically justifiable decisions does not enter the picture. Indeed, what is taken as justifiable is the objectivity of their wrongness, as Frank Conroy's treatment of student prose during workshops attests: "I will search out every weakness in the prose that I can, explaining as carefully as I can precisely why I consider each particular discovered weakness to be an actual weakness, rather than some idiosyncratic response" (Conroy, "Writer's Workshop" 85). Conroy, we have seen, "reserve[s] the right to be wrong," which frees him to base his workshop role on the assumption that he is right. Here, rightness is supposed to be an objective, "actual"
quality; there is no possibility of coexistent, discordant but legitimate cases for rightness. Conroy's pedagogical approach may be most useful for reasons other than the direct transmission of expert opinion; he models for students one thorough and thought-out process of editing, and he represents one particular aesthetic stance that students can evaluate and incorporate as a landmark into their understandings of literature or art as a range of possibilities. But taken at face value, his hunt for "actual weakness" should raise concerns. Determinations of what is weak or strong in literary writing should be considered contestable, not objective or "actual." More importantly, they can discourage students from writing in ways that seem likely to produce "weakness," precluding the development of know-how by way of unfamiliar or risky directions. The finding of so-called flaws and the discouraging of their reoccurrence is arguably the main function of the conventional workshop. Of "the Workshop" (the capitalization aligning general workshop pedagogy with the specific program of the Iowa Writers' Workshop), Tom Grimes concludes, "Everything it teaches, essentially, is a form of No" (8).

As McGurl observes of the workshop as it emerged at Iowa, and as it has persisted, "If there was a positive element to workshop training—beyond the perennial call to 'write what you know'—it was in the offering of examples" (131). The teacher's decision of which texts to provide as "examples," models for students to emulate or at least to learn from, has crucial ramifications. Katharine Haake recalls, during her experience as a student in workshops, a trend toward doing away with the reading of published texts, excepting those "of other contemporary writers--the friends and peers of the teachers themselves" (Haake, "Creative Writing" 163). The student's encounter with only a narrow range of models can take place within the single creative writing course
but also at the programmatic level. Haake writes, "students finish classes--even whole degrees--with limited exposure to a small selection of writers whose work reflects the interests and tastes of a small group of teachers," which may leave students unable to learn to read different sorts or texts and maybe even unaware of their existence (Haake, "Re-envisioning" 187). Sandra Lea Meek, in accord with Haake, accuses creative writing faculty at many programs of "constructing a canon that fits their own aesthetic preferences" (86). This is a canon reflected in students' reading assignments as well as in the writers invited to give readings on campus and in the selection of the program's new faculty hires (86). The similarity among the positive literary models offered by the course or program tends less to disparage than to make invisible literary writing from alternative traditions.

Undergraduate creative writers can bring this deficient sense of literature's breadth with them to graduate workshops, contributing to workshop commentary informed by a narrow perception of literary possibility. In graduate workshops students might not read published literature, or they might read little that opens them further to literature's vastness. Hypothetically, a graduate of a master's program in creative writing could go on to a lifetime of writing without ever reading literature beyond the bounds of contemporary trade-press-published American writing of a single, traditional genre (e.g. the short story or the lyric poem). This would be extremely unlikely, but its possibility suggests a strong tendency among creative writers to find enough published literature of interest within familiar contexts rather than looking beyond those contexts (e.g. looking internationally, underground, or to older but not canonical literature). In the dominant culture of creative writing, which makes visible only certain regions of literature, the
the possibility of writing in widely various ways—even though doing so would be consistent with that culture's valuing of know-how—might seem unimportant, even hard to fathom.

It can be a short step from judging student writing weak, locating its mistakes, and opposing these to the writing in published model-texts, to denying the potential of some student-writers altogether, as Lee Martin demonstrates: "students start to see that they need a certain aptitude for the art in order to be successful. The truth that starts to sink in is that not everyone can write good literary fiction, no matter how dedicated to that purpose or how excellent their instruction" (172-73). The problem is that setting a bar for "good literary fiction" is not simply a matter of moving the bar higher or lower on a sure scale. Such a scale must also be set according to criteria that reflect literary politics and modes of reading.

In creative writing culture, texts deemed to be of low literary value can be what Diane Wakoski calls "ghastly, nauseous, adolescent, roses are red, swooning violets, worse than Hallmark Cards stuff," which she unapologetically gives low grades for (134), but they can also include the work of serious, experienced writers (and serious novices influenced by them) when that work is built on literary values and traditions other than those of the assessor. Former Iowa student Kiyohiro Miura recalls a scene that makes clear the danger of trusting the expert valuation of writer-teachers; translations of Japanese poems by Kenneth Rexroth had just been published:

This was the first time I heard the word "beatniks." According to Paul [Engle], they drank a lot and drugged themselves to write wild poetry and laughed at our poetry workshops. A teaching assistant, then present, added, "They are calling us 'The Cornfield Poets.'" Paul nodded and asked me if I could write a critical essay on the book. A severe one. (60)

It is not hard to imagine a poetry instructor dismissing student work in the tradition of
(for example) the Beats, even as a sizable population of educated poetry readers exists that would appreciate that same tradition. Charles Bernstein puts the situation as follows:

To pretend to be nonpartisan, above the fray, sorting the "best" from the "weak" without "ideological grudges"--as a highly partisan poet recently put it, as if to mark his own partisanship in the course of denying it--is an all too common form of mystification and bad faith aimed at bolstering the authority of one's pronouncements. (2)

It is quite possible, I would contend, that some creative writers really do believe themselves "above the fray," especially since many programs combine an aesthetic and cultural kinship to other creative writing programs (through former students and faculty of one program--Iowa is famous in this regard--founding programs elsewhere) with an isolation from the rest of English studies, from the rest of the university or college (e.g. the departments of fine arts), and from non-academic art culture. In such a program, Language Writing, for example, is so far from what faculty and students of most M.F.A programs usually encounter that it may genuinely seem extra-literary and thus, when subjected to the familiar criteria, bad literature. Hans Ostrom explains why literary appraisal from the perspective of conventional programmatic traditions might be troubling in its narrowness:

We may... idealize published writers as "those who know best." But when only the "best" writers know best, then the world of successful creative writers--those who gain tenure-earning jobs--becomes inbred, elite, and reactionary. Why? Because "best" often means only those like us, and because "best" may be contingent on a range of biases, patterns and accidents of history, and social constructs. (xiii)

Despite exceptions, such as William Stafford, who "would postpone, dilute, avoid, play down the idea of evaluation" in his workshops (107), the dominant workshop tendency is to assess the literary quality of student texts, textual analysis taking the form of evaluative judgments of aspects of those texts (e.g. voice, characterization, line breaks,
imagery). And judgments of student texts inevitably blur with judgments of student talent. When O'Connor states that a teacher "can't put the gift into you, but if he finds it there, he can try to keep it from going in an obviously wrong direction" (Mystery 83), she supposes that an expert reader can distinguish a student's "gift" from "direction," just by reading. In making this claim, O'Connor assumes that her preferred aesthetic position is the only such position. This assumption makes possible the identifying of an "obviously wrong direction," whereas in fact a student's aptitude might best be understood in the context of a literary direction that O'Connor would consider "wrong."

It would be false to suggest that negative value judgments of student writing are a feature particular to the workshop among creative writing courses (although the workshop's ubiquity might lead one to wonder what other kinds of creative writing courses exist). And I should acknowledge, generally, that the workshop has its virtues. My book's conclusion discusses the conventional creative writing course (inevitably a workshop) as better than most composition courses at leaving expectations open for the writings students produce--an openness that encourages writing processes to stretch rather than streamline. And the workshop certainly improves upon published how-to-write guides that tell writers directly what to do. Workshops are collaborative, and they let students--by proxy of their submitted texts and as first to comment (before the teacher does) on peer texts--take the lead in directing class discussion. These are valuable qualities. But the premise of the workshop is to improve, through criticism, the texts students submit, and this premise requires continual value judgments of those texts. The writer's silence during the workshop, the discussion's beginning with the submitted text at hand (rather than discussion's developing from topical concerns in history, theory,
culture, or aesthetics), participants' likely familiarity with the workshop structure, and
that structure's resistance to change all encourage an approach to student texts that locates
flaws by subtraction from an imaginary, ideal text. Pointing out what is "wrong" with a
text has been a basic practice in the creative writing discipline at large, but it is especially
inseparable from workshop pedagogy.

A close cousin of literary valuation is literary definition, and even though, as we
have seen, O'Connor was wary of defining the short story or novel and risking over-
prescription, she freely explained what fiction is not. She counted on her status as an
experienced literary author to make her negative definitions credible: "Everybody thinks
he knows what a story is. But if you ask a beginning student to write a story, you're liable
to get almost anything--a reminiscence, an episode, an opinion, an anecdote, anything
under the sun but a story" (Mystery 89-90). O'Connor, along with "[e]verybody" else,
also "thinks [she] knows what a story is," which is in no way hypocritical if we accept her
authority at face value. For a creative writing teacher--a position that conveys authority,
no matter if the teacher is less celebrated than O'Connor--negative literary definition
(including definition of genres, such as the short story) can serve as a version of
corrective commentary similar to but less obviously contestable than comments on
literary quality. Narrow genre definitions might circumvent some students' stubborn
open-mindedness about what good literature can be; it sounds more factual to stipulate
what a story is than what a good one is.

Negative definition can always be expanded through additions to the list of what
art, literature, or a literary genre "is not," a way to blacklist selected types of texts from
the realm of literature. As Wendy Bishop puts it, "Limited positive definition and wide-
ranging negative definition are discourse moves that camouflage the critics' aesthetic biases" ("Suddenly" 261). It is negative definition in particular that allows teachers and writers to discredit texts that they do not approve of, almost at will and out-of-hand.

O'Connor's definitions are illustrative; it is clear that her list of what a story "is not" can grow indefinitely. In "A Symposium on the Short Story," O'Connor is asked what a short story is. She replies that she does not define the genre positively, then she begins to define it negatively, and she goes on to suggest that an extraordinarily specific litmus test for whether a text is a "story."

I have been writing stories for fifteen years without a definition of one. The best I can do is tell you what a story is not.

1) It is not a joke.
2) It is not an anecdote.
3) It is not a lyric rhapsody in prose.
4) It is not a case history.
5) It is not a reported incident.
   It is none of these things because it has an extra dimension and I think this extra dimension comes about when the writer puts us in the middle of some very human action and shows it as it is illuminated and outlined by mystery. In every story there is some minor revelation which, no matter how funny the story may be, gives us a hint of the unknown, of death. (Conversations 17)

To be fair, she frames her elaboration on the "extra dimension" of short stories as speculation ("I think"). But while that dimension--a "minor revelation" evoking "a hint of the unknown, of death"--is narrowly defined, it is also abstractly put. What constitutes a "revelation"? What sort of "hint" is appropriate, and how does the writer know when it is hint enough? What distinguishes a "very human action" from a moderately human action? It would require O'Connor to provide her expert judgment to every would-be story, one at a time, to decide whether the "extra dimension" is in effect in each case, making the text a "story." The abstractness of O'Connor's crucial "extra dimension" gives
her leeway to apply her criterion as she sees fit, every time she reads. This is in addition, of course, to the fact that her list of "what a story is not" can always be expanded; recall that a story is also not "a reminiscence, an episode, an opinion."

In a fiction workshop, it can be said that a student text in conflict with the literary vision of the teacher (and sometimes of other students) is not a story (as opposed to an unsuccessful story, a claim more obviously debatable); in a poetry workshop, not a poem. Creative writing, as Katharine Haake observes, "works to fix and stabilize itself inside its classroom practice [in part] through the concentration on fixed genres" ("Creative Writing" 185). This means that the failure of a text, by a student or a published writer, to meet the presumed requirements of the genre aligned with the course can effectively disqualify that text and the qualities it represents from being taken seriously in class discussion and, in the case of student texts, in written feedback. Of course, it can be a definition of literature generally, rather than a particular genre, that invalidates whole regions of possibility for writing. R. M. Berry recounts arriving at the Iowa Writers' Workshop as a student engaged by "[w]riting that acknowledged its kinship to Stein, Beckett, Wittgenstein, et al." and finding that his "ability to use the word literature had come into conflict with the word's social and institutional embodiment" (148) because the writing that mattered to him was considered un-publishable (145).

An example of how conventional workshops limit student writing, whether through criteria or definition, is the common claim that literature should not be political, or that strongly political writing is not literature. O'Connor is adamant that art must "be something," not "do something" (Mystery 123) such as make political statements. Like "[p]ornography and sentimentality" (Habit 134), politics in art is extraneous for
O'Connor. When she admits politics a place in fiction, that politics is built into the narrative's drama: "If you do manage to use [the novel] successfully for social, religious, or other purposes, it is because you make it art first" (Habit 157). O'Connor's prominence in creative writing lore has contributed to the continued discouraging of politically oriented writing in creative writing programs and workshops, a phenomenon that troubles some writer-teachers. Lisel Mueller perceives "a uniquely American and English tradition of disassociating writing from what goes on in the world," a tradition contributing to "a great bias among young writers against political writing" (99). Conventional creative writing workshops can be thought of as incubators of such biases in students, which is another way of saying (to put it in a formulation that some writer-teachers would approve) that workshops develop students' taste in literature, and political writing is usually perceived to be in poor taste. Kass Fleisher points out that even when the literary avant-garde is represented in writing programs, it may be "[a strain of the avant-garde] that privileges (say) literary sentence-play over (say) literature of social revolution" (112).

The stigma of politically oriented writing in workshops may be manifested directly in prohibitions (e.g., "don't write politically" or "political writing is not art") or indirectly as through declarations that the "voice" of a text should be universally relevant, the drama or emotion communicated by the text universally recognizable.20 Shirley Geok-lin Lim argues, "in the creative writing workshop, engaged, socially situated expressivity, particularly as it may be seen thematically to address a collective identity distinct from the privileged 'universalistic' 'uniqueness' of the authorial subject or voice, is overtly rejected and philosophically denigrated" (86-87). The belief that texts should
speak from a position of supposed universality rather than from "raced, culturally, communally, and marginally specific subject" positions (Lim 84) suppresses texts that voice these positions and codes them as "political" (and as, therefore, in poor taste). The ideas that "voice" should be universal and that texts should not be political are mutually reinforcing; this reinforcement devalues texts with a recognizably situated voice because such voices are read as political and because as such they make more visible the politics of all texts.

One reason for academic creative writing's refusal to accept literary texts it registers as political or otherwise utilitarian may be that these texts suggest an alternative basis for creative writing altogether. Chris Green makes the case for such a praxis-oriented creative writing pedagogy: "Before asking how students can better write 'good' poems, I propose we look beyond the gaze of the sublime reader and ask how students can write useful poems" (159). Green's "sublime reader," like Lim's "universalistic' . . . authorial subject or voice," is a reader-ideal whose particular position, in its privilege, goes unmarked and is presumed non-political. A pedagogy such as Green's would threaten the roots of creative writing in the Iowa tradition, in which identifying and encouraging "good" writing is the goal, by privileging an alternative goal of usefulness. Significantly, Green finds that good means marketable in the conventional workshop; the sublime reader is constructed through the workshop's orientation toward the marketplace (159). Hephzibah Roskelly describes how workshop participants efface their uniqueness as readers to step into the shoes of "something like an editor, or arbiter of taste, appropriateness, or expedient notions of 'what the market will bear,' not a reader at all" (53). This non-reader is Green's "sublime reader" in other words. The traditional
workshop bars politically oriented writing both directly, through authoritative prohibition, and indirectly, by positing a generalized reader without marked cultural specificity.

The literary market influences, sometimes heavily, the judgments of literary quality made in workshops, despite some instructors who see the workshop as an oasis from the sphere of publication. This literary market has a harmful effect on student writers, Clarence Major argues:

The problem with writing for money is that, almost without exception, one allows one's knowledge of the market to dictate the form and direction of the work. And the market place and its notion of how things ought to be, is invariably wrong or shallow or mediocre; all those structures that have been tested, have proven to be sellable, are the kinds of structures that editors and publishers try to insist on. (61)

It is important to understand "writing for money" as a matter of more than book sales. Publications are the main basis for decisions to hire and promote the faculty members to sit at the front of workshops, a position that represents successful "writing for money" via an academic career (and, perhaps, participation in the writing programs' reading circuit). Major's argument about the influence of the market--that it pushes writing toward hackneyed results--suggests the incompatibility of writing for publication and the pedagogical value of open-ended literary know-how. Where Major sees the market influence as a threat to literary possibility, creative writers are more often ambivalent about that influence upon the workshop. They see the workshop as a space simultaneously protecting students from the marketplace and letting them practice participation in that very marketplace. James B. Hall remembers the Iowa Writers' Workshop as a place where "the highest literary standards," not market-determined standards, held sway. Yet "most of us understood a student publication in a good place
was powerful medicine in the Dean's Council House" (16)--the student writers are reminded that the deprecating division sometimes supposed between the academy and "the real world" is false.21

The influence of the publishing sphere in the workshop both encourages and is encouraged by the tendency to keep discussions of aesthetics (including its intersections with politics) outside of the workshop; writing for publication is a default assumption, not a decision up for debate. Marketability is not everything for Morris Freedman, but it is a key part of the literary equation. For Freedman, the evaluation of literary "talent" takes into account market expectations as well as goals not tied to salability: "Only the genuinely talented [students] seem to combine a realistic respect for the market with a dignified sense of their capacities as related to meaningful criteria" (24). Paul Engle also links student writing to the market, seeing workshops as a step toward unbuffered participation in the publishing world. The workshop, Engle writes, "represents a helpful and at the same time less hazardous form of publication" ("The Writer" xxvi). The creative writing student is in a best of both worlds, "freed from the imperatives of the market place, as he may never be again" and able to "have a manner of publication without losing too much blood" ("The Writer" xxvi). Although Engle presents the workshop as site of exemption from the market's constraints, the goal of publication looms over and contextualizes the workshop's activities. He lauds the criticism workshops provide students partly in relation to publishing: "tough and detailed criticism of a young writer can help him become his own shrewd critic so that, when he publishes, the critics will not have to be tough on him" ("The Writer" xxiv). It is telling that Engle assumes the teacher, the student-writer, and "the critics" (i.e. book reviewers) to share an
aesthetic wavelength, which makes criticism a matter of being "tough" (the tough teacher's target not the manuscript but its "young writer," as if to emphasize the teacher's ability to bruise) rather than one of aesthetic positioning. Aesthetics are not to be discussed in the workshop or to emerge from it but to be adopted from the broader, dominant literary culture.

Student-writers are assumed to share goals and criteria with one another and with contemporary, mainstream American literary writing. For some creative writing teachers, publishing is an inescapable concern, no matter how the workshop's function is formulated. Willie Maley provides three metaphors for the workshop: the laboratory, the factory, and finishing school, the last of these connected with business (polish, professionalization), the first of these with art (87). Even so, publication for Maley transcends these comparisons: "No writer writes in order not to publish" (87). George P. Garrett offers "three possible categories of discussion: writing as craft, writing as art, writing as profession" ("One Kind" 167) that would at least make it possible to talk about literature without focusing on publication, even though publication (through "writing as profession") is always available as a focal point.

Not all creative writers treat the workshop ambivalently as both a preparatory step toward publication and as a site for making art unfettered by the market; some see publication as the student's obvious, flat-out goal. Ron Hansen takes such a stance: "There is no point in taking a creative writing workshop if one is only writing for oneself. We begin with the notion that we are writing for strangers, that we intend our work to be read by a wider public than we can imagine, and we entertain the mercantile hope to finally get good enough to be paid for our labor, just as any professional does" (236). To
be "good," for Hansen, is to make a successful career of writing, and any other reason to write is unthinkable, unmentioned. It is significant that he makes these statements in the context of a response to Richard Kostelanetz's "Teaching and the 'Alternative' Writer." Kostelanetz, after explaining his reluctance to pursue a position as a professor of creative writing (partly because he is at odds with the "creative writing biz" ["Alternative" 231]), describes four courses that he would teach if he were to take such a position. Hansen's response ignores any validity underlying Kostelanetz's proposals, stating their wrongness rather than by engaging them seriously. It is with such glibness that Hansen reduces art to business, refusing to consider the possibility of artistic success outside the terms of the publishing market (whose trade presses, incidentally, Kostelanetz critiques at length in 1974's The End of Intelligient Writing).

Assuming that students are guided by the literary sensibilities of the presses privileged among academic creative writers obviates otherwise valuable workshop considerations such as--as Tim Mayers puts it--"which audience a text seems to invoke" (Mayers, "Poetry, F(r)iction" 103). Mayers, rather than assuming that students (or writers more generally) should write for one audience--that which directly or indirectly pays--allows that multiple audiences for literary writing exist, including audiences who value texts that differ from the dominant sensibilities of contemporary American fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry. There is no all-purpose best audience, for Mayers, but there should be an audience: "If no possible audience can be identified--not even a potential one--the student writer may need to ask whether the text in question is ever likely to have any readers outside the workshop" (103). Chris Green's vision (a corrective to the conventional workshop) also includes the possibility for each student to write for
one of many knowable audiences, "chosen vernacular interpretive communities and their literary traditions" (Green 155). Katharine Haake refuses to assume that student-writers necessarily want to or should seek audiences at all; she finds that the conventional workshop's emphasis on publication "does not begin to account for the thousands of . . . creative writing students who just want to write, or for the value writing may have in their lives" (Haake, "Creative Writing" 181). This statement would be unthinkable to some creative writing teachers perhaps less because of Haake's recognition that students do not all hope to publish than because of her refusal to accept that students should aspire to produce publishable writing. Conventional creative writing workshops are premised on the idea that students learn to produce the best literary writing they can (whether to publish it, to become readers of such writing, or to round out their understandings of such literature by getting to know it from the writer's perspective), and in the absence of alternative premises, market forces largely determine what is "best."²⁴

The literary establishment can be understood as a network of academic writing programs, the AWP, high-visibility literary journals and presses, well-known literary awards and prizes, and elite reviewing publications. This establishment sets the parameters within which a literary text is conventionally expected to stay, while allowing endless variety within those parameters. Writing that falls beyond the these boundaries is rejected or maligned because writing falling inside of them can be defined as acceptably unconventional and, collectively, acceptably diverse. These parameters are in some places obvious and intractable, in other places hazier or more flexible. Certain conventions might be broken if most others are kept to; these are the conventions that change over time, such as, in fiction, expectations regarding degree of realism, dramatic
structure, point of view, and roundedness of characters. On the other hand, the establishment firmly enforces conventional expectations of "clarity," including an accessible prose style, familiar grammar, and univocal meanings at phrase and sentence levels. Jed Rasula's discussion of the dominant mid-twentieth-century poetry establishment's view of Charles Olson provides a useful example of how writing considered too distant from literary norms is marginalized:

The availability of such handy contrasts [as Robert Lowell and Theodore Roethke] within the establishment went far in justifying neglect of outsiders. If "process" could be associated with the free verse set pieces of Roethke, largely on the basis of thematic peculiarities like his botanical imagery, Olson's pronouncements on such matters as proprioception, dreamtime, and Whitehead's cosmology were bound to place him at the lunatic fringe. (239)

A view broad enough to include Olson as a legitimate poet would locate Roethke closer to Lowell than to Olson, Roethke's poetic value (along with Lowell's) closer to (finely wrought) "thing" than to "process." The boundaries of asserted acceptability are naturalized, so that the range of institutionally accepted writing is taken for the whole of possible writing.

Writing that falls outside this range sometimes occasions attacks by commentators invested in literary convention. Hansen puts down Kostelanetz's proposal for an experimental art course with a series of claims about artistic experimentation in which Hansen's sensibilities stand in for substantiated arguments:

A focus on experiment for its own sake is too apt to produce writing that is confusing and inaccessible, meretricious and odd. We notice the author, not the characters; the form, not the content. William Kennedy once told me that he wrote Ironweed as he did not because he was trying to be different but because "It was the only way I knew how to tell the story." The tale itself comes first, not its costume. (236)

Ironweed, Hansen implies, is a novel that might be called "experimental" (though it is
obviously not what Kostelanetz has in mind with his proposed course), and one that was not intended as an experiment. So Ironweed serves Hansen as an example of incidentally experimental writing used to discredit writing more experimental in premise and degree. Frank Conroy's and T. Coraghessan Boyle's observations about John Cheever, taken together, loosely repeat what Hansen writes of Kennedy. Cheever "told [Conroy] he never once knew the ending to any of his short stories, and had to discover the ending and how to get there while in the act of writing each one of them" (Conroy, "Writer's Workshop" 87). Combined with Boyle's noting that Cheever claimed his own writing to be experimental (Boyle, Interview 33; Boyle, "This Monkey" 9), this amounts to saying that experimentation is simply what happens when writers rely on literary know-how unimpeded by anticipated results. Cheever does not know his story's endings in advance; according to Hansen, Kennedy does not have in mind his narrative's final "costume." He knows "how to tell the story" before knowing the final result of that telling. While Hansen denies that "experimental" has positive value, Cheever advises (in Boyle's paraphrase), "All good fiction is experimental . . . and don't get caught up in fads" (Boyle, "This Monkey" 9), claims which amount to the same effect as Hansen's. If all writing is experimental, experimental loses any meaning as a useful term of differentiation (whatever it precisely means to any one reader), depriving certain non-mainstream writing of a label that could connect it to an appreciative audience and encouraging the use of conventional criteria to assess all writing (according to which much serious art will be judged failing). It should not be surprising that while calling his own work "experimental," Cheever dismissed that of "[Robert] Coover, [Thomas] Pynchon, [Donald] Barthelme, and John Barth" (Boyle, "This Monkey" 9).
This is not to say that such dismissals are universal across writing workshops--after all, Barth, Barthelme, and Coover all taught or continue to teach in writing programs. But in the culture of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and its relatives, literature with qualities that locate it outside of the accepted literary lineage tends to be dismissed. Tom Grimes, in "Workshop and the Writing Life," makes an exemplary, admittedly "sweeping claim" with an absurd offhandedness: "ironically, rather than saving beauty, the endgame of Romanticism, found in High Modernism's often tortured sterility, buried it. In defense of this sweeping claim, remember four words: *Finnegan's Wake*, Gertrude Stein. A pose is a pose is a pose. Case closed" (2). One must assume that student writing resembling Joyce's and Stein's would be verbally trashed in a workshop run by Grimes. Students are to see where their writing processes take them, but they must respect the lines of conventional program-tradition taste.

Students may find it difficult to predict when the workshop will demonize, when it will tolerate, and when it will laud deviations from convention. The easiest, most rewarding path, in terms of earning program and establishment approval--which largely means writing to publish--is (or may seem to be) to avoid risk, to write safely. The perception (if not fact) that this is the case has led to the complaints leveled, as by John W. Aldridge and Donald Hall, that writing programs churn out undistinguished and indistinguishable writing. Aldridge's *Talents and Technicians: Literary Chic and the New Assembly-Line Fiction* argues that M.F.A. students write safely because doing so pleases classmates and professors (23). Well-received workshop writing means "[becoming] part of a complex network of in-group patronage through which [the student-writer] will be given access to important career opportunities" (21). Where Aldridge focuses on fiction,
Donald Hall's "Poetry and Ambition" makes the infamous charge that creative writing programs lead writers to produce undistinguished, by the numbers "McPoems."

Underlying the conflict between defenders of the workshop and detractors of what has been called "the workshop poem" or "the workshop story," including Aldridge and Hall, is the question of degree: how various should a set of workshop-submitted or -incubated writings be if they are to be considered sufficiently various? A given group of Hall's "McPoems" might strike another reader as diverse. And a selection of texts that Hall might consider admirably varied (as presumably constitutes his anthology To Read Literature) could, from a more encompassing perspective, seem monolithic. Specific workshop classes may be more or less accepting and encouraging of a variety of writing, such that in some cases this variety would match the hopes of Aldridge or Hall. But the general influence of the workshop is centripetal: it compels the writing of participating students toward the region of the familiar, conventional, and inoffensive, while exerting an indirect pull on the writing of graduates, of readers of handbooks by writer-teachers, and of these writer-teachers themselves. The borders of this region are justified in part because endless textual differentiation can exist within them. Writing transgressing these parameters marks its writer as an outsider to the dominant disciplinary culture, a deviant to be reeled in or cast aside. Creative writing encourages putting literary know-how before know-that as long as the resulting texts respect the most entrenched disciplinary conventions. This amounts to forbidding a full embrace of literary know-how.

**Stretching Within or Stepping Beyond Workshop Pedagogy**

Just as student writing is generally free to proceed in a variety of ways as long as
it respects the constraints set by the workshop, so is the workshop a pedagogically flexible structure that can only stretch so far. When commentators articulate pedagogical priorities that the workshop fails to address, they diverge on whether it is malleable enough to be successfully reformed, or whether it should be set aside in favor of alternative pedagogies. I argue that creative writing courses and programs should aim to maximize students' opportunities write in various ways and thereby expand their literary know-how. Accordingly, the workshop should be a variable, not a relative constant, in students' writing processes. Workshops should either become a small part of a diverse set of creative writing courses or become deeply mutable.

One could contend that the workshop is variable enough to serve sufficiently, even ideally, as creative writing's core pedagogy. Some observe that despite defining similarities, workshops are various:

[The workshop is a genre of pedagogy, just as the Western is a genre of film. (Leahy 70)

Certainly writer's workshops around the country reflect wildly different assumptions about what the work should be, what the goals are, and how progress might be measured. (Conroy, "Writer's Workshop" 80)

One of the successes of creative writing programs is that there are as many different kinds of workshops as there are teachers. (Fenza, Rev. of Creative Writing in America 240)

Everywhere I go the workshop instructors are designing strategies to revivify workshops, to make them more exciting or more directed for the students, to make them more . . . bearable for the instructors. There is a doubt about the procedure, almost a kind of crisis. (Stern)

To call the workshop a "genre," as Anna Leahy does, is to indicate a loose category including diverse instantiations, an observation consistent with Frank Conroy's and D. W. Fenza's perceptions. Gerald Stern speaks to the variability of the workshop as well, but
his comment differs in that it treats an individual workshop's distinctiveness more as phenomenon than as simple fact. Stern's phrase "the procedure" suggests a basic set of expectations for the workshop, expectations so central to creative writing that what distinguishes a given class are its deviations from them. It is odd that, for Stern and perhaps for the teachers of whom he writes, these divergences signal "a crisis." For a perceived crisis of trust in workshop pedagogy to lead to "revivified workshops," with no mention of pursuing alternatives to the workshop altogether, speaks to the centrality of the workshop to the disciplinary identity of creative writing. There is a sense that the workshop has sufficed as creative writing's dominant pedagogy to date and that, with occasional tinkering, it can continue to do so.

Dianne Donnelly makes the case that the workshop as a pedagogical model is flexible enough that defining or criticizing it poses serious challenges ("If It Ain't Broke" 10). Through a survey of 167 creative writing teachers (3), she has found that their implementations of "the workshop" collectively challenge any neat conception of what the workshop is:

[1] If one teacher supports, encourages even, personal self-discovery (and recovery?) and another endorses the objectification of the text, excluding all outside factors; and the instructor in the neighboring academy focuses mostly on writerly techniques found within the current Best American Short Stories with the last 15 minutes dedicated to writing activities, and if a creative writing teacher in Boise, Idaho sanctions the bulk of classroom time to the critique of students' texts, and if the instructor who teaches inner city students refuses to abide by the author gag rule of the traditional workshop because her students' voices have been silenced long enough, then how can the writing workshop be contained within the same pedagogical model? How in fact can it not be paradoxical in nature or contradictory in its aims? (8-9)

What makes all of these courses workshops? Perhaps there is a primary indicator that a course is a workshop: students' commenting on their peers' writing. But it is more likely
that the identity "workshop" amounts, for a given creative writer, to a loose average of the workshops he or she experienced as a student (Ritter 90-92). About fifty percent of teachers in Donnelly's survey report using a "basic workshop," about forty percent "a variation" on this model, and only ten percent a pedagogy "markedly different than the traditional workshop" (3). What a phrase such as "basic workshop" evokes is ambiguous and mutable.²⁵ It is, one can conclude, the conjunction of a number of structural and procedural tendencies rather than any single feature that marks a course as a workshop. And even though the workshop may be used to encourage a particular aesthetic, or even to enforce adherence to it, there is no single aesthetic necessarily connected to the workshop. Paul Dawson remarks on a transition in what Australian creative writing workshops have favored in student writing, from the "sublime" to the "avant-garde" ("Future" 84). Mainstream American creative writing has never stopped privileging the sublime--"operationalised in the workshop by praising the well-wrought line, the striking metaphor, the finely constructed scene, the authentic 'voice'" (84)--but a case can be made that over the decades it has favored different corners of that territory. Just as workshop pedagogy can follow a variety of procedural means, potentially it can promote a variety of aesthetic ends.

Some creative writing teachers assert a goal of treating all student writing fairly and helpfully by addressing each text according to "its own terms" (a common phrase within the discipline). The implication is that a more-or-less traditional workshop pedagogy is compatible with all aims and aesthetics of writing (regardless of whether it encourages only certain varieties), as long as the teacher's approach, background knowledge, and perception are up to the task of responding to whatever texts students
submit. On the premise that students have a right to the intentions they choose (similar to O'Connor's admitting a writer's right to "unity" as he or she understands it, except without the implied criterion of coherence), the teacher tries to comment on each student text appropriately:

I try most of the time to figure out what somebody's trying to do and help the person do that. And that means often that I may withhold my judgment of whether it's worth doing. (Brown 48)

I shall not question either the practicality of the student's aim or, in general, his means. Shall question and seek to find some answers, ways to help him realize his aims within the limits of his means and the terms of his rules. (Garrett, "Teaching Writing" 68)

[T]he central effort is to encourage people to write the best they can the way they write. That is, not to impose a house style. It's so simple, and yet a lot of schools don't do that. (Dillard 76)

[T]he only question the man who undertakes to teach can ask, is the question of the adequacy of the writing to its own intent. As a writer himself he may call it "good" or "bad." But as a teacher of writing it is not his task to tell his students what they should try to write or to judge their work by the standards he would apply to his own or his betters. (MacLeish 91)

Taking my cue from Vance [Bourjaily], I have always striven to get students to criticize fiction on its own terms, not according to some generalized canons of taste. (Garber 208)

Where Rosellen Brown, George Garrett, and R. H. W. Dillard focus on the student's intentions--"what somebody's trying to do" or "the student's aim"--Archibald MacLeish attributes intention to "the writing" itself (the text, not the process), and Eugene Garber writes of "terms," which are perhaps the writer's intentions insofar as the text reveals them (or seems to). In all cases the writer-teacher aims to understand the intentional context corresponding with the student text, but the variations in how this context is referred to are significant. To talk of intentions as a text represents, signals, or even has
them is to allow for the possibility of a teacher finding intentions in a student's text that are at odds with the student's conscious (and even unconscious) intentions in writing it--and then it is a small step to dismiss the student's aims as subordinate to those arguably signaled by the text. Even if the teacher aims to take a deferent approach, the task is challenging: recognize what the writer or text is trying to do, figure out and articulate feedback helpful to the writer, and guide the rest of the students in the class to offer feedback appropriate to the intentions associated with the text at hand.

Not all teachers have the necessary patience, interest, or ability required to decipher a text's "own terms" and to determine an appropriate response to them (if doing so is even possible). The workshop only increases the challenge by isolating each text distributed and discussed and usually refusing students the opportunity to introduce their writing. To complicate matters, a student's intention for a particular text may still be developing, may even be inchoate, when the text arrives in the workshop. Even given fair, insightful--ideal--commentary and class management from the teacher, the workshop is still a workshop: it is built upon student and teacher comments on student texts. Although aesthetic variety may be tolerated, respected, or even vocally encouraged by a teacher dedicated to criticizing texts on their own terms, the workshop structure persists, and this structure either is or is not sufficient as the discipline's prevailing pedagogy.

Some find the workshop suitable to pedagogical variation and evolution. Philip Gross makes a point of altering the workshop process throughout a course's term to prevent "the build-up of habit and assumptions" (60) and offers seven sample variants on the traditional workshop, each specifying who in the class comments on the student manuscript at hand, and how they do so. Gaylene Perry considers the workshop,
"because it is underpinned by the very notion of creativity . . . particularly open to re-invention and renewal" (128). But in American creative writing, workshop pedagogy has evolved minimally over the past seventy years. Even naming a creative writing course a workshop establishes associations that can limit the course's conception, design, and ongoing management--the traditional workshop, so well established, must exert a pull upon the expectations of teacher and (experienced) students. Stephanie Vanderslice argues that the workshop's "iconic tendency" hinders its contributing effectively to "the educational landscape in which it currently exists." Vanderslice calls for revising the workshop (30), but it may be that putting aside workshop as label and category is necessary if creative writing pedagogy is to become more versatile. And it should do so--for creative writing courses play a role in students' writing processes, and if students are to learn to write in the expansive sense of broadening their literary know-how, the influence of pedagogy on writing process should be made dynamic through pedagogical variation across and within courses.

An especially relevant criticism of the workshop, contra Gross and Perry, is that it is structurally inflexible, particularly in its focus on products over processes. Eve Shelnutt worries, "We rather seem to be more product-oriented than oriented toward imagining a student's forty- or fifty-year career and preparing him or her for that long haul" (Shelnutt 196), and she finds that this product-orientation encourages students to repeatedly produce texts with characteristics that have received positive workshop feedback rather than for each student to "perpetually work at expanding [her or his] range of devices and of vision of form" (203). To adapt Shelnutt's argument to the context of mine: the workshop's high valuation of product discourages adventurousness conducive to the
practice (practice both as use and as training) of literary know-how. Brent Royster comes to a similar conclusion, finding that "a product-centered pedagogy stifles growth. Such a system places too much emphasis upon subjective agency, too much emphasis upon particular, validated modes of writing, while devaluing other valid, though unfashionable, styles and voices" (35). The workshop's tendency to favor certain kinds of writing over others is closely related to its focus on products, a focus maintained at the expense not only of treating the writing process as part of lifelong practice (Shelnutt's concern) but also of identifying contexts for valuing those written products outside the workshop-as-vacuum. Shelnutt insists to students "that I am teaching with a point of view, that I'll make my aesthetics known to them, and that I hope my aesthetics, as well as theirs, will be up for discussion and argument" (199); her emphasis on making visible the aesthetic considerations underlying the reading and writing of literature effectively highlights their invisibility in the traditional workshop. Priscila Uppal reflects on creative writing courses' typical obscuring of meaning-determining contexts:

Too often my experience as an undergraduate student was structurally and contextually constrained in the classroom rather than transformed. In a strictly workshop-based model of creative writing, we wrote, photocopied, and discussed. Rarely were we introduced to theories of creativity and literature, historical or political artistic movements, or competing traditions. (48)

In Uppal's phrase "strictly workshop-based model of creative writing," workshop refers to the pattern of distributing, reading, responding to, and returning of student texts as, potentially, one component of a creative writing course. Workshop is often used, on the other hand, to refer to the creative writing course itself, the assumption usually being that the activities described by Uppal--often called workshopping--constitute the bulk of the course. In the case of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, the program, the course, and the
workshopping are all conflated in the famed program name. So terminological differences are present; nonetheless, for Shelnutt, Royster, Uppal, and concurring critics, the dominant example of the creative writing course (called, in this chapter, "the workshop") is structurally inert, fixated on improving student texts to the detriment of students' learning.

Shelnutt and Uppal both adopt alternatives to the conventional workshop course. Shelnutt decides to have students turn in stories only to her, not to their peers, and to use the extra time during class for "discussion of published texts and of form and language" (201). Uppal's call for "a creative writing classroom that is truly creative" (47) is interesting in that her vision for such a course (which she calls a "workshop" but which departs from what workshops characteristically do) applies the values of discovery and open-endedness, which disciplinary discourse so often links to the individual's writing process, to creative writing pedagogy:

A creative writing teacher must be active in the workshop process of discovery and exploration, where boundaries are pushed and questioned. S/he must act as a guide to this uncharted territory. For me, this requires challenging students' preconceptions about art and the artistic process; introducing them to competing artistic traditions through required and suggested readings from a variety of eras and nationalities; and prompting a variety of approaches to artistic expression. (50, emphases Uppal's)

The purpose of the creative writing course, as Uppal here presents it, should be to catalyze and inform students' processes of learning about artistic possibility. This learning takes place at levels of both know-that (through information about "competing artistic traditions") and know-how (through the "prompting [of] a variety of approaches to artistic expression"). While students explore "uncharted territory" (uncharted at least for themselves--it is unclear whether the teacher has the metaphoric charts), the teacher
acts as "a guide" at least relatively familiar with the terrain. The phrase "workshop process of discovery and exploration" seems to refer, primarily, to a process students undergo within and via the workshop (e.g. creative writing course). But Uppal's description also hints at a more radical idea, namely that the "workshop process of discovery and exploration" is one undergone by the workshop itself. What if the creative writing course, including student and teacher participants but also the pedagogical structure that shapes the interactions among them--in other words, the course's playing out--goes through an exploratory process whereby it reorganizes itself, altering the patterns by which it operates? Because pedagogy plays a role in students' writing processes, the ideal of open-ended process should apply to the creative writing course as well as to the individual's composition.

What would it take for creative writing courses (labeled workshops or not) to evolve as they go, ever redirected by the writing and the classroom interactions of student and teacher participants? Can a teacher rely on pedagogical know-how, analogous to literary know-how and conducive to it? How does one devise a course that alters itself to repeatedly shift the context for student writing so that students write, accordingly, in shifting ways? Maurice Kilwein Guevara, calling the workshop "unimaginative," argues that teachers should "practice pedagogically what we want to develop in our students: originality, imagination, and creativity." This can mean devising alternatives to the traditional workshop, which might remain as one member of a broadened array of creative writing courses, as Guevara recommends (Guevara). An additional step to pursue is a course designed with only a structural starting-point, malleable according to the collective efforts of class members. If "creative" or "imaginative" writing is marked by a
primary reliance upon open-ended know-how (which the discipline, I argue, finds to be the case), then a more "creative" writing course should be likewise driven by know-how. Creative writing pedagogy might be discovered as much as decided, an aspect of participating students' writing processes, an aspect working against their foreclosure.30 Whereas the discipline has tended to conflate creative writing pedagogy with the workshop, students would benefit not only from alternative pedagogical structures, which would diversify creative writing curricula, but also from pedagogical variety within the individual creative writing course, which might shift unpredictably in tandem with students' unpredicted writing processes.

**Negotiating Disciplinary Contradiction**

I have surveyed a central conflict within the discipline of creative writing: despite its emphasis on discovery through open-ended writing processes, disciplinary lore and workshop structure limit these processes. It may be instructive to examine with somewhat greater care how particular creative writer-teachers have negotiated this conflict. Although O'Connor was not a classroom teacher, her approach to writing, her beliefs about writing and the learning of it, and her literary sensibilities are worth considering because of their influence upon writers and writing teachers. I will also examine the attitudes of three writer-teachers. Novelist and teacher Wallace Stegner founded Stanford University's prestigious creative writing program. He earned an M.A. from the University of Iowa in 1932, taking creative writing courses and submitting a thesis consisting of three short stories, graduating four years before the Iowa Writers' Workshop was founded (Fradkin 58). The late fiction writer Harry Crews learned, as did O'Connor, from Andrew
Lytle (Hedegaard, Shräge, and Abramson 57-58) and went on to teach at the University of Florida. I will focus on Crews's 1969 essay "Teaching and Learning Creative Writing." Katharine Haake, a former M.A. student of creative writing at Stanford, is a fiction writer and an important voice in creative writing studies. O'Connor, Stegner, Crews, and Haake's respective thoughts on creative writing pedagogy add up to a sampling (not necessarily a representative cross-section) of approaches to the contradiction of the discipline's valuing of both unconstrained writing processes and limiting expectations for writing's products.

There are at least two ways in which O'Connor can be read as addressing her--and the discipline's--conflicting values of open-ended process and aesthetic conservatism. One is her assumption that writers are responsible for contextualizing and evaluating all criticism (which refers here not to scholarly, interpretive commentary but to judgments of quality and advice for improvement) of their writing: the writer must decide which readers can be trusted. O'Connor was adamant in making sure that the criticism her fiction received aligned with her aims before she gave it credence. As seriously as she took the opinion of a trusted reader, such as her Harcourt editor, Catherine Carver (Habit 392), O'Connor put no faith in readers who seemed poorly attuned to her writerly concerns. In her correspondence with John Selby at Rinehart & Company about her first book-length manuscript (Wise Blood), she stood up for her own vision of the novel, no matter the ramifications on her writing career. She wrote to Selby, "I am amenable to criticism but only within the sphere of what I am trying to do; I will not be persuaded to do otherwise" (Habit 10). Rinehart's response to her writing, as she complained to Engle, "totally missed the point of what kind of a novel I am writing. My impression was that
they want a conventional novel" (Habit 13). At stake was the integrity of her own intentions, which she deemed unconventional. In "The Grotesque in Southern Fiction," O'Connor defends novels such as Wise Blood, novels of what she calls the "modern romance tradition": "as long as they present something that is alive, however eccentric its life may seem to the general reader, then they have to be dealt with; and they have to be dealt with on their own terms" (Mystery 39). Like many in creative writing, O'Connor respects writers' rights to their respective "own terms" if those terms differ not too much from her own.

While O'Connor is careful in evaluating the criticism her writing receives, the criticism she offers in lectures and letters follows her own consistent set of "terms" or priorities, so it is the responsibility of the criticized to consider the suitability of her feedback. Conventionality is relative here: O'Connor criticizes the narrow conventions of literary publishing; academic creative writing's conventions are somewhat more elastic, more or less overlapping with her own literary expectations and tolerances, allowing for that which is unconventional in the context of contemporary published fiction; finally, there is "so-called experimental fiction" (Conversations 97), which she considers to be something other than literary fiction, off-the-map rather than "unconventional," preserving the latter descriptor for her own writing. While O'Connor saw her fiction as too unconventional for some publishers, she refused to see more radically unconventional fiction at all: as she tells Gerard E. Sherry, "If it looks peculiar I don't read it" (Conversations 97). O'Connor disdained experiment but also condemned the kind of writing that publishers did, she figured, want. Her defense of the "modern romance tradition" immediately follows an attack on more popular fiction marked by superficial
realism and lurid content ("Mystery 38-39). O'Connor is effectively saying, one can conclude, that writers of the "experimental" or the "conventional" should ignore criticism from detractors such as herself, just as she should ignore criticism from Rinehart. What becomes of the criticism is the writer's responsibility, not the critic's--a view echoed throughout the creative writing discipline.

Within the workshop, most criticism presented during class goes unexamined there, left for the student-writer to examine afterward. Putting the burden of evaluating criticism on the writer who receives it frees the reader to criticize in the authoritative manner characteristic of O'Connor, when O'Connor responds, in lectures and letters, to manuscripts (single or grouped). An argument from Richard Hugo in The Triggering Town, a collection of essays on the writing of poetry, articulates this logic:

If he is worth a damn, any poet teaching poetry writing constantly and often without knowing it is saying to the student, "Write the way I do. That's the best sound you can make." The student who shakes this, who goes on to his auditory obsessions and who writes the way the teacher never told him, may become a poet. (29)

The effect of Hugo's claim differs slightly but significantly from the caveats, discussed previously in this chapter, that accompany and qualify experts' authoritatively posed literary judgments. Hugo provides an all-purpose hedge to the rest of his assertions throughout The Triggering Town, but he also anticipates (and ambivalently encourages) reader (student) resistance--an expectation further licensing the expert's obstinacy. It would be unfair to attribute Hugo's words to O'Connor by supposing that she generally wants writers to rebel against the advice they receive about writing, but she certainly does warn against careless acceptance of that advice. As she tells longtime correspondent "A": "I am becoming convinced that anybody who gives anybody else any advice ought to
spend forty days in the desert both before and after" *Habit* 241). At times in her letters, she expresses hesitation over giving criticism (or advice). That she proceeds to give plenty of it may reflect an assumption, it *is* fair to say, that her correspondents will review her criticism critically, without necessarily being told to. Creative writing teachers might come to the same conclusion about their students as Hugo does. The conflict in the discipline between the values of open-endedness and limitation can be read as, in part, a consequence of the tension between creative writing's ethos of modesty and the emphasis of the writer-teacher's authority as an expert practitioner. The underlying, easy-to-miss assumption is that student writers have the final say in how they write, they know that this is the case, and they will respond to criticism accordingly—even though the fact of grading and the possibility of the teacher's support in aiding students' writing careers (help in finding publication, for instance, or recommendations for graduate programs, awards, fellowships, and so on) suggest otherwise.

In a second way O'Connor reveals how conflicting values of unplanned process and imposed convention coexist so quietly in the discipline: her idea that artistic limitations are paradoxically and uniquely freeing. For O'Connor, "Possibility and limitation mean about the same thing" *Mystery* 170) in that an artist's adherence to artistic limitations maximizes the possible relevance of that artist's work to other spheres, especially the religious. The logic is that (here O'Connor cites Saint Thomas Aquinas) "a work of art is a good in itself," and "what is good in itself glorifies God because it reflects God"; therefore, "art transcends its limitations only by staying within them," and when it oversteps those boundaries it is no longer "good in itself" *Mystery* 171). O'Connor variously ascribes such limitations to the (particular or general--this is ambiguous) artist
or fiction writer, to art or fiction itself (Mystery 170-71, 27, 146), or to the presumably more specific "necessities that present themselves in the work" (153). The rub is that the "necessities" of either the artwork at hand, of art generally, or of a species of art (such as the short story) are arguable but go unargued by O'Connor. She makes clear that the Catholic (or sometimes, more broadly, the Christian) writer has no limitations additional to those of any serious writer (Mystery 27, 153); Catholic fiction writers should not preach but should try to write fiction that succeeds as artwork according to the same framework for success shared by non-Catholic writers. What reader and writer alike can discover or learn through texts--and here the secular joins the religious--is somehow an extension of that foundation called by many craft (see the discussion of Crews, below). O'Connor may not explain what it means for art to succeed qua art, but for her, literary success certainly entails not stepping too far from established modes. The problem is O'Connor's assumption of her particular understanding of this framework as absolute. If, as McGurl puts it, O'Connor had "a faith in formality in its most abstract sense" (155), she recognized only certain species of formality. She is not alone in having found a positive correlation between limitation and possibility, but this correlation becomes a contradiction from a perspective that sees her idea of "proper limits" (Mystery 171) as onerous. Her understanding of limitations would not encompass, say, an Oulipean lipogram, which she would find too strange to take seriously.\(^{32}\) In short, limitation is a variable in writing processes, but O'Connor, while emphasizing limitation, treats it as a constant.

Wallace Stegner also emphasizes standards of propriety in student writing, and, more so than O'Connor does, he provides a rationale for "proper limits" by framing the
realm of creative writing as professional rather than artistic. Writing that exceeds the
range of propriety is writing that neglects "the professional's obligations" (Teaching 33),
and attending to these obligations is a matter of ethics, for "an honest writer is a member
of a worthy guild" (Teaching 10-11). According to Stegner, "good writing is an end in
itself" (Teaching 10-11), and the goodness of that writing can be frankly determined
according to the expectations of the profession. These expectations cannot be too
specific, as the acceptance and promotion of individual variations is an important part of
disciplinary ethos--Stegner insists upon "taking a piece of writing seriously . . . and
criticizing it with a view to helping it be what it wants to be" (Teaching 64). But he and
his "guild" have no tolerance for what he calls "mere eccentricity" (Teaching 71), for
writing that does not prioritize painless and conventional communication (Teaching 69),
or for writing unfriendly to mainstream literary publication. He demands that writers not
pander to "a specific audience" but seek an audience for their writing (on its own terms)
through publication (Stegner, Interview 121), which makes that writing "fully real"
(Teaching 63). Accordingly, "good" writing out of line with literary trade-press
expectations is unthinkable. Stegner's juxtaposition of the applications of two
candidates to Stanford's creative writing program, one successful and one not, illustrates
his refusal to acknowledge unconventional writing as valid. In Stegner's words, the
admitted applicant, Tillie Olsen, simply "wanted to write stories," whereas the rejected
applicant "wanted, terribly, to be 'literary.'" Stegner describes the latter's letter of
application as "Faulker crossed with Tristan Tzara or Monty Python--so turgid that one
strained for its meaning--and it was four pages long" (Teaching 15). This account
valorizes the craftsperson of stories and dismisses a (not necessarily would-be) literary
artist along with what might be some of his artistic touchstones. In Stegner's view, straightforward communication and adherence to genre norms constitute professional fundamentals, and aspects of some (not Stegner's) notions of literariness are extra-professional, their misguidedness reflected in their outsider relation to the literary establishment.

This establishment, or guild, Stegner strives to uphold. He assumes what variety it permits to be generous and concludes that texts and writers transgressing the approved limits threaten that variety. Thus he states, "When [academic critics in English departments] are allowed to pick writing teachers, they often pick what I feel are the wrong kind: esoterics, cult figures, bearers of some advanced or arcane True Faith" (Teaching 53). This remark may be largely prompted by Stanford's hiring of fiction writer Gilbert Sorrentino, encouraged by Albert J. Guerard--whose steps to innovate Stanford's writing curriculum had long upset Stegner (Benson 337-39; Fradkin 151-53)--a decision leading the retired Stegner to threaten removal of his name from Stanford's famed writing fellowships (Benson 387-89; Fradkin 282-83). Stegner finds that "the catholicity of a writing program, and the flexibility of its teaching, is better served by writers picked by their fellow writers" (Teaching 53), perhaps gauging that writers he considers "esoterics," such as Sorrentino, are in their opposition to the creative writing establishment threats to overturn or replace it altogether with a narrower professional-literary program. In any case, it is ironic that Stegner charges the scholars and critics of English departments with hiring those creative writers most like themselves while remaining blind or unresponsive to a larger realm of writerly possibility (Teaching 53)--for these are accusations often directed at creative writing programs. As Stegner sees it,
literary values out of line with the professional establishment are distractions to the world of letters. The own terms of a writer are to be respected, but some terms are not those of legitimate writers, and these, Stegner has it, must be recognized as mistakes.

It is craft that connects discovery and constraint in "The Teaching and Learning of Creative Writing" by Harry Crews (1969). The essay is exemplary in its placing of craft at the core of the discipline, even where doing so involves curious reasoning. In a close variation of O'Connor's near-equation of limitation with possibility, craft for Crews enables the writer's "freedom to discover" (8). Within the context of the writing classroom or program, the "principles of craft" as Crews understands them (14-15) become de facto rules, enforced not directly by the teacher's stipulations but indirectly by the teacher's authority as a recognized expert. Crews is adamant that "[t]here are no 'Thou shall nots' in fiction" (3), and moreover that "no rules, no formulae . . . can be stated about its making" (4). Crews speaks to the importance of unplanned developments during the writing process, but he subordinates this phenomenon to craft. He attributes to Robert Penn Warren the idea--common in creative writing, and the focus of much of my chapter--that writers learn what they are writing in the course of writing it. Additionally, "Robert Penn Warren has suggested that all a writer need to do is depend upon his knowledge of craft to discover the story and its meaning" (7).

To elaborate on how craft forwards discovery, Crews paraphrases an unnamed painter's account of the roles of craft and serendipity in the making of art. As Crews's paraphrase proceeds, increasingly it asserts artistic principles:

[Y]ou have to be willing to let mistakes happen. After they happen, you have to know enough to distinguish the good mistakes from the bad. Then you have to have courage to let the good mistakes stand and delete the bad mistakes. Finally, you have to have a sure enough command of craft to
make something out of these mistakes. Everything inside the frame, everything on the canvas, must be related to everything else inside the frame. Every splash of paint, every physical attitude, every consideration of perspective must be in some way related to every other. And on top of all this, these individual relationships once formed, once the key to their integrity is found, must mean something, must make some statement about the human condition. (7-8)

How can there be "no 'Thou shall nots' in fiction" if the shalls include such a specific and involved requirement as achieving a certain kind of unity among elements? Everything within a frame necessarily has a relation (i.e., sharing a frame) to everything else within it, so to demand a relation among these components implies a presumed but unspecified type of relation. Furthermore, within the context of a discussion of artistic processes, to say that "these individual relationships . . . must mean something" related to "the human condition" is to imply that the meaning is for the artist, not the audience, to determine. If we can imagine viewers according to whom certain (say) abstract expressionist paintings do not communicate about "the human condition," then we must assume that Crews is demanding that artists ensure their art's communicating in certain kinds of ways--not just any communication will do. He expects artistic compositions to attain particular sorts of unity and to communicate particular sorts of messages: for him, art (and fiction) do have rules, but he does not label them as such. Crews goes on to claim that if an artist lacks a good handle on craft, "his only alternative--at least the only alternative I know--is to work from a rigid, preconceived plan in which there is no freedom and can be no discovery" (8). Sifting through, keeping and discarding "mistakes" according to priorities other than conventional craft cannot even be acknowledged as a possibility. In Crews's view, "rules" may not be immediately necessary for writers, but the principles of craft are necessary if discovery is to have any place in art. These principles amount to rules, and part of the
writer-teacher's role is to convey and enforce them. Crews describes a generalized
teacher-student interaction in which the student defends his or her writing's deviation
from "principles of craft" on the basis of published, lauded writers' texts having done the
same. Whereas in the student's text, a transgression harms the fiction, even "ruin[...]" it
(15), the same maneuver in the published text is presumably acceptable. Crews vaguely
attributes this difference to the published writer's greater experience and to the
particularity of each text (14-15). The teacher and student, Crews continues, go on to
respectively interrogate and defend the student's text, "pushing" until "the novice comes
to understand better what his story really is and how it can best be told" (15). Supposedly,
the teacher is certain "what [the] story really is" from the outset, and the student comes to
agree. The teacher, authorized by professional standing, knows more than the student, or
presumes and projects a superior knowledge, or simply pushes harder. Again the teacher
speaks highly of open-ended process and diverse results, so long as these results stay,
lassoed if necessary, in the approved range of literary possibility.

The influence of the teacher's authority on the direction of student writing is one
of the impediments to discovery-oriented process that Katharine Haake hopes to remove
from the pedagogy and culture of creative writing. Haake goes as far as anyone in
rethinking creative writing at the level of the course. Her ideas epitomize the kinds of
choices that might be made if literary possibility as accessed through unpredicted
process--what I am calling literary know-how--is given clear pedagogical priority. Haake
addresses the threat of the teacher's authority to individual student and collective class
discovery. She connects authority to mastery, and mastery to certainty--a nexus of
attitudes that foreclose possibilities: "authority, when linked to mastery and like a bad
psychic habit, is terribly seductive" ("Dismantling" 99); "Certainty, like mastery, begins a closing down of what is possible, and in general is as bad for teaching as it is for writing" (What Our Speech 38). As I hope my discussion of O'Connor has made clear, it is nothing new to find a negative correlation between certainty (as a knowing of what will be written) and discovery (as a consequence of the writing process). Haake logically finds mastery coincident with certainty, implicating craft--a closed set of privileged, teachable, and learnable writing practices--as merely restrictive rather than (as per O'Connor and Crews) a limitation continuous with possibility. Haake's claim that certainty, mastery, and by extension authority are "bad for teaching" gestures to the role of course structure and teaching practice in encouraging literary know-how. To dismantle one's authority in teaching (I refer to the title of Haake's article "Dismantling Authority: Teaching What We Do Not Know") is to do away with certainty and mastery too, impediments to student writing, while (in the form of teaching) modeling a practice of unimpeded know-how.

Haake's answer to the obstacle of authority is to try to learn about the topics of her courses as she teaches them: "if I am to maintain a proper skepticism about authority in my own classroom, I can rely on a simple trick that always seems to work: invent and teach classes about which I know nothing at all" ("Dismantling" 100-01). That she designs and teaches creative writing classes about a subject matter is itself significant. In a survey of creative writing as a field, Haake brings up, approvingly, alternatives to the traditional workshop, classes in which "not just the practice but also the subject is writing" ("Creative Writing" 182-83) Rather than directing class attention to the improvement of manuscripts by way of the homeostatic workshop and its stable values, courses with writing as their subject matter "work to develop a metadiscursive self-
consciousness about what it is we think we are doing when we are writing, and why, and what value that might have to ourselves, privately, or to the culture at large" ("Creative Writing" 182). In the traditional workshop, the teacher's authority is necessarily implicit and therefore dangerous. It is an authority based on presumed mastery (at least relative mastery, given that many teachers readily admit that there is much they do not know about writing) of writing as know-how, and as such it cannot be directly shared or evidenced in class. By contrast, knowledge of a subject, as know-that, can be stated or shared readily, which lets students evaluate the teacher's statements rather than having to defer blindly to the teacher's authority. By not only centering creative writing classes around topics but also making these topics unfamiliar, Haake goes further in mitigating the force of her authority as teacher. Student and teacher discovery certainly happen in other creative writing courses, but in the absence of the teacher's supposed mastery in Haake's topical courses, discovery through learning (for students and teacher) is inevitable. Elsewhere she calls the topical creative writing course a "hybrid class" and emphasizes that such a class "should, like writing itself, proceed with all new material, making discovery part of the practice of learning" ("Re-envisioning" 189). Here Haake identifies discovery through practice as a function the class (its participants taken collectively) analogous to the function of the individual writer.

Haake sounds somewhat like O'Connor when conveying the importance of discovery through writing, but where O'Connor's interest lies foremost in discoveries of what comes next in a given narrative, Haake's interest inclines to generalizable discovery: "I think most of us are drawn to writing in the first place (and stay there) for reasons as least partly related to what we can discover, through writing, about the way we use
narrative and language to shape and give meaning to experience" (*What Our Speech* 76). All of this is compatible with O'Connor's understanding of writing and knowledge. Where Haake departs from O'Connor and disciplinary tradition is in her clear, active steps to do away with the obstructions, rooted in aesthetic and literary-political values, to the practice of literary know-how. For Haake, "It is not about a writing product but a writing logic, and it is never about already knowing" (*What Our Speech* 145). She identifies her experience as a creative writing student at Stanford as an obstacle to her "own development as a writer for years" (*What Our Speech* 71). As a teacher, she ensures her classes' unpredictability and variability by adopting unknown topics, which aligns with her recognition that stable (and stabilizing) workshop pedagogy can obstruct process-based discoveries. Hence Haake makes her classes mutable vehicles for discovering, for example by designing hybrid courses any by rethinking of the role of writing (*What Our Speech* 145) and reading assignments ("Against Reading" 21) in creative writing. Haake moves beyond the workshop, and the disciplinary conflict between limitation and discovery it manifests, altogether.

O'Connor, Stegner, Crews, and Haake reveal a handful of ways of accounting for a key internal conflict of the discipline. O'Connor, Stegner, and Crews do not perceive the process-limitation conflict. For O'Connor, feedback that seeks to limit writers is always, implicitly and no matter how forcefully presented, subject to the writer's discretion and therefore not categorically restricting. Moreover, O'Connor sees limitations as a means to possibility and discovery. In Crews's view, craft comprises just such a set of enabling limitations, although he refuses to recognize their amounting to *de facto* rules. Stegner frames the discipline's purview as professional rather than literary
writing; in this context, creative writing is necessarily conventional. Haake recognizes and attempts to resolve the process-limitation conflict by removing pedagogical impediments to writing as a mode of discovery. Haake's concern with theorizing the discipline (What Our Speech 239-40) is probably no coincidence. Creative writing's non-theoretical, sometimes anti-theoretical culture lets writer-teachers get away with pedagogical inconsistencies. Ultimately, most creative teachers are unwilling to suspend value judgments based on aesthetic and literary-political positions, judgments that pressure students to streamline their ongoing and future writings, even as these teachers vouch for the importance of know-how as a means of taking writing in unanticipated directions.

Abstract Paradox and Specific Corrective

If know-how is to be put at the center of the creative writing discipline, students' writing processes must be encouraged to produce texts that fall across the established range of literature and extend that range, unbarred by aesthetic and literary-political prejudices. Haake's pedagogical steps are compatible with these goals. More generally, creative writing must look beyond the dominant programmatic tradition (in shorthand, the Iowa tradition), which as an institutional force and an artistic culture leads to the proliferation and enforcement of restrictive expectations for literary products. When students absorb these product-expectations, whether consciously adopting or unknowingly internalizing them, the students' writing processes inevitably alter, directed (at least in significant part) by anticipated end-results. It is important to examine alternative institutional and non-institutional sites where the teaching and learning of
creative writing has taken place; otherwise, attempts to reform or restructure creative writing can be understood only in relation to the Iowa tradition, only as negative responses to tradition rather than extensions of pedagogy that has emerged elsewhere.

One might object that resistance to writing for discovery, resistance to putting limitations upon writing processes, paradoxically becomes a limitation itself. Does positing open-endedness of process as essential to literary writing amount to the imposing of a new restriction for student writing--in its singularity, a restriction perhaps more harmful than the grab-bag of conventional and lore-based constraints traditionally imposed upon student writers? Steve Kowit's "A Poet's Anti-Rule Book" can help convey the problem. Kowit challenges the necessity of each of a number of "rules" drawn from the lore of creative writing, and he identifies writing-to-discover as one of these rules:

As for the writing process itself, facilitators often recommend that students refrain from determining in advance what they wish to say in a particular poem--for poetry is too elusive and surprising to be plotted in advance. Rather, participants are advised to trust their intuition and let the poem discover where it wishes to go. Do not underestimate your reader, the student is sometimes cautioned: that is, nurture subtlety, nuance, and ambiguity rather than having some paraphrasable "message" or thesis and hammering it home. (62)

The "Rule" of Kowit's essay title should be interpreted loosely; in this passage, the rule to write without a predetermined end-goal is a recommendation, a piece of advice. But Kowit's use of rule in this sense recognizes the weight of such advice in the context of creative writing, in which "facilitators" may make suggestions emphatically, without qualification, from a position of authority, and with the backing of other writers (teachers and students) with similar literary sensibilities. So when students are told to "refrain from determining in advance what they wish to say," they are--to change the terms slightly from Kowit's and to make the paradox apparent--effectively given a rule not to put know-
that before know-how. The command that one must write without following directive, abstract rules is itself such a rule. Logically, this is a conundrum. A meta-rule (e.g., "follow no abstract rules when writing except one, which is to write without direction from abstract rules") would be needed to address the paradox, but this meta-rule would only recreate the paradox at a higher order of abstraction, requiring another meta-rule in turn (ad infinitum).

However, in arguing for the reimagining of creative writing around literary know-how as its central value, I am not trying to present a logical system but a corrective specific to the status quo. The influence of creative writing's disciplinary tradition is hefty, and if traditional workshop courses become scarce in the foreseeable future, the reason is much more likely to be class-size increases resulting from budget cuts than to be the influence of any argument against the workshop pedagogy's disciplinary dominance. And I am not arguing to do away with workshop pedagogy, which--to name a few benefits--does help students to read more carefully, to reconsider and revise their texts more thoughtfully, and to be aware of their writing's audiences. If the workshop were endangered, I would even propose taking steps to ensure its preservation. But it should not be the only creative writing pedagogy that most undergraduate and graduate students encounter, including those who take several creative writing courses. Because pedagogy factors into writing processes, encouraging a diversity of processes means implementing a variety of pedagogies.

I differ fundamentally from Kowit when he states, "It is the product that ultimately counts. . . . And how the poet got there is not the issue" (67). Seeing process as merely the means toward end-products is most justifiable when the course's primary goal
is to facilitate students' publishing their writing in periodicals and with presses recognized and favored by the creative writing establishment. Workshop pedagogy is less suitable to course objectives such as students' long-term professional development (Shelnutt 196), publication including alternative venues, or goals unmeasurable by publication. Kowit's claim that "In the end, no process is better than any other" (67) only makes sense if the purpose of creative writing is to help students to produce texts that receive workshop approval and to go on producing similar texts thereafter. Rather than basing creative writing on student production of texts to be evaluated according to often vague criteria, we should center creative writing on writing as a mode of learning, as an open-ended practice of know-how. This is not to say that students in process-oriented classrooms will not publish. The next chapter analyzes writing pedagogy at Black Mountain College under the administration of Charles Olson, a pedagogy playing an important role in the writing careers of a number of students who looked to and created venues and movements outside the "Iowa" network of legitimation. Writing as a process can and should be a means to the bottom-up structuring of individual and collaborative projects, of literary scenes and traditions, and of new contexts for reading and writing, rather than being an activity contained by contexts already established.

This book's introduction presented my central claim that literary know-how should become the basis for the restructuring of creative writing at the levels of course and curriculum. The proposed methodology for this restructuring involves reading for pedagogy--analyzing literary works, oeuvres, and scenes alongside the historical and institutional contexts of their production to generate a variety of creative writing pedagogies. This chapter has examined creative writing on the model of the Iowa Writers'
Workshop along with the body of creative writing lore drawn from and beyond workshops. (Flannery O'Connor has served as an exemplary figure within this tradition.) In this case my analysis does not generate a new pedagogy but explains in a new way the most visible and powerful pedagogy in American undergraduate and graduate education. Namely, Iowa-model creative writing has at its core a conflict between, on one hand, the valuing of students' letting their writing processes take their texts in unpredictable directions and, on the other hand, the imposing of an array of implicit and explicit expectations for textual products that discourage students from straying too far from conventions. It is worth speculating over the feasibility of workshops that encourage students to write within a limited range, but that range one determined by alternative values--for instance, fragmentation instead of unity, dissonance instead of clarity, the unpublishable instead of the publishable--workshops that could be placed alongside traditional ones to enable students to write toward different end-results in different courses. But the association between the pedagogical structure of the workshop and the lore of conventional creative writing in the Iowa tradition is so strong that encouraging a limited array of alternative literary values might be impossible without implementing alternative classroom practices.

The next chapter turns to Black Mountain College of the 1950s, during Charles Olson's years as rector. Black Mountain College provides a unique example of an educational site that suspended (as much as possible) limitations to the open-ended developments of students' writing processes. Creative writing classes describable as workshops were part of the education of Black Mountain students, but these classes cannot be neatly separated from the college's larger frameworks of education and
communal living, all of which need to be examined together.
CHAPTER TWO: CHARLES OLSON AND BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

A Pedagogical Alternative

To give a particularized sense of what made education in the late years of Black Mountain College (BMC) distinctive and deserving of analysis, I begin with two anecdotes from former students of the college. During this period, Charles Olson taught at BMC and served as its rector, but my first anecdote is not about him. While Olson's presence and influence, more so than those of any other individual, are inescapable in any consideration of the college's final years (1951-56), the general shape of the institution's late-period pedagogy and community grew out of the values upon which it was founded in 1933, values that persisted through the eras of rectors John Rice and Josef Albers into that of Olson. As influential as Olson was at BMC, the college's past oriented his work (as poet and as teacher) in turn. The habits and patterns of life and learning at Olson-era BMC did not begin wholesale with his arrival, and understanding "Olson's" Black Mountain requires a sense of what went on without (before and around) him.

In An Emotional Memoir of Franz Kline, Fielding Dawson, a writer, painter, and former BMC student (from 1949-53), provides glimpses of how he learned about painting from Kline, who taught at BMC in the summer of 1952. In addition to weekly class meetings, Kline's teaching took place in students' studios, which he visited to examine student projects and offer recommendations (6). Dawson reveals the boundaries between in- and out-of-class blurring more strikingly when he recalls his nighttime habit of visiting Kline's studio, watching from outside through a window as Kline would paint...
One afternoon I knocked on the door and he let me in; he had finished a painting, I knew, and I wanted to see it up close with him. It was about four by six feet, black on white. We looked at it for a while. He said it was finished, and I said something about how I thought it was horizontal not understanding at all what I was saying, he was surprised and said it was vertical, and he began gesturing the way the black lines went up, he glanced at me and said it was vertical. (10)

They debate the question, Dawson indicating with words and hands his understanding of the painting as a "horizontal" image, Kline doing the same to persuade Dawson to recognize it as a vertical movement in paint (10-11). Eventually, Kline persuades Dawson to literally see the painting differently, and Dawson, stepping back and perching on the sill of the window, views it anew. Finally, in an inextricable mixture of words and gestures, which only make sense in the immediate physical presence of the painting, they affirm their agreement in acknowledging it as an image of vertical motion (12).

This scene is important for at least two reasons. First, it shows how students at BMC were in a key way equal to the faculty members: they were given the opportunity to work as artists and to speak as critics; this opportunity (for both students and faculty) was respected to the utmost, even where specific projects and opinions were not. Certainly students deferred to the faculty in basic ways: the latter set up and ran classes, oversaw the general curriculum as well as the progress of individual students, and broadly speaking ran the college, which from its outset did away with non-faculty administrators (it is in this spirit that Rice, Albers, and Olson were called rectors, not presidents). But at the moment in Kline's study when he and Dawson put forth competing understandings of the painting, Kline's view wins out not because it comes from an authority figure (or even because it comes from the creator of the painting at hand) but simply because it is the
view that, in its place and moment, proves more compelling. Despite the fact that as an experienced painter and a professor Kline can be expected to advance more persuasive arguments and demonstrations than his student, it is these persuasions rather than his academic position that carry weight. More precisely, it is the investigation itself, the process together undergone by Kline and Dawson to better understand the painting according to an abstract directional framework, that holds authority. That Dawson is given a role in this investigation, even given the chance to spark it, is important: it reflects the base of artistic and critical practice that BMC afforded its students, which enabled them to participate as equals in the sense that, just as faculty members were, students were working practitioners involved in processes of composition and research (whether artistic or, say, scientific) with indeterminate end-points.

Second, Dawson's recounting suggests the heady atmosphere of wide artistic and social possibility at BMC, the way in which campus life centered around student and faculty projects (usually but not exclusively in the arts, including writing), projects that lent substance and direction to interpersonal encounters such as Dawson and Kline's. Not only was Dawson's learning to paint a serious enough endeavor that he took to watching Kline at night, but Dawson's own work gave meaningful context to his assertions about how to understand the painting in question. Art was fundamental to the Black Mountain community, regularly on its members' minds, practiced at any hour, at home in both formal and informal conversations, and a cause for various collaborations. Such interactions as Dawson relates were not just possible but usual. There is a risk that in recollections of BMC the deep investment in artistic work that prevailed there might be mixed up with and obscured by the personally idiosyncratic and culturally transgressive
behaviors and values that obtained. For example, Dawson tells of another occasion, when he and Kline, drunk on moonshine, tried to paint together--on the same canvas, with two brushes--in another student's studio (8-9), a story that could appeal to aspiring artists as much because it flies in the face of hierarchy (teacher and student working together outside of class) and decorum (drunk and in another person's space) as because it represents the vitality of art to campus life.\(^{36}\) The main take-away of anecdotes such as Dawson's should be that learning extended beyond the classroom to permeate BMC. It is noteworthy merely to observe that students worked with Kline both in and out of class, just as it is significant and compelling that Olson's classes famously bypassed convention by continuing late into the night and sometimes well into the next day (Creeley "Olson" 299).

Olson is at the fore of the next anecdote, reported by writer and former BMC student Michael Rumaker. On the surface, and in contrast to the Dawson-Kline scene, it appears not to resist but to reinforce the social hierarchy of professors over students, of experts over novices. Rumaker worked in the dining-hall kitchen, and on one occasion he found himself ready to leave and return to writing a story, except Olson was eating and talking at length, preventing the final dishes from being collected and washed.

Finally, others at Charles' table began to notice me waiting by the dishwashing machine through the large serving window and remarked on it. Charles, still chewing and talking away, suddenly stopped and boomed out in a voice loud enough so I'd be sure to hear it, "I'm more important than any fucking dishwasher!"

His inconsiderateness pissed me off at the time, but I later came to agree that he was right. What I should've done was left the dirty dishes and said to hell with it, because my story was more important than any dirty dishes, even Olson's. (Rumaker 137)\(^ {37}\)

Rumaker's take on this anecdote may have changed over the years. In recounting it to
Martin Duberman (for *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community*, first published in 1972), Rumaker grants Olson exceptional status: "He was a law unto himself in a sense, and not badly so. He was a man who had his own quirks and his own idiosyncracies" (Duberman 403). But in *Black Mountain Days* (2003), Rumaker interprets Olson's behavior as a model for how anyone should prioritize intellectual and artistic work (such as Rumaker's story or Olson's discourse) above quotidian chores and rules (e.g. that all dishes need to be cleaned before closing the kitchen [Rumaker 137]). So while Olson in Rumaker's anecdote can be read as abusing his institutional-social privilege and alleging Rumaker's subordinacy--far from Kline's treating Dawson as a fellow painter (albeit one with much to learn)--the lesson Rumaker gleans is to ensure that what Olson often refers to with the usefully vague term *work* (which can refer to humanities scholarship, scientific and mathematical research, projects in visual, performing, and literary art, and discussion about the same) be the focus of one's energies, especially at the expense of social niceties. Ultimately, both Dawson's and Rumaker's accounts reveal a BMC at which the impetus of work--learning, including artistic practices in which learning inhered--trumped the social and institutional norms of higher-education.

Traditionally, authority in educational settings is conferred by markers such as professorial position or canonical status. But Olson-era BMC represents, and the pedagogy communicated by Olson's writings furthers, a relocation of authority to the very process of undergoing research and art projects. And in this formulation, if the process is to bear authority, it must be open-ended. It would be incorrect to suggest that BMC faculty were not in positions of power over students; on the other hand, the culture of the college discouraged students from accepting received knowledge simply because it
came from conventionally authorized positions. Memoirs by former Black Mountain students reveal a trajectory according to which they increasingly received treatment as capable equals in particular contexts (e.g. as writers, as painters, as dancers, as actors, etc.) as they gained persuasive proficiency in the relevant kind of work. According to this prioritizing of projects over the statuses of the people doing them, faculty and their own projects were subject to sometimes vehement scrutiny by colleagues. Olson was not reluctant to claim that he pushed Buckminster Fuller out of BMC--and at the time, in the summer of 1949, Fuller was the key representative of a substantial strain of the BMC community oriented toward engineering and the sciences (Muthologos 336). 38

In arguing that the pedagogy of 1950s BMC resituated authority, my challenge is to reconcile this claim with the fact that Olson was a passionately opinionated, self-certain, looming figure there, and one quick to judge. Put differently, he could be called authoritarian. His pressuring Fuller off campus was a particularly striking example of this. But his interactions with students often were also harsh, in contexts both extracurricular (evidenced by his scorn for the attentive dish-washing Rumaker) and curricular (seen for instance in his classroom hazing of new student John Wieners and his hard criticism of novice writing generally). 39 Even so, part of what makes Olson's scathing critiques notable is their equal-opportunity application: students, colleagues, and writers dead and living, including Olson's principal influences or "fathers" (Seelye xxiii) such as Edward Dahlberg, were all susceptible to Olson's scorn. He was often forceful, maybe tactless, but in being so he was not much informed by official hierarchies. 40 And Fuller (toward whom Olson projected a preternatural disgust) excepted, the purpose behind Olson's bluntly and frankly brandished critiques was not to burn bridges. He
figured that, if they were people he could interact with meaningfully and substantially, they would take the criticism in stride--and his assuming that even new, teenaged students could do so was a sign of respect and optimism. Although he struck some as intimidating or callous, his way of dealing with people was actually consistent with his theoretical writings about how people can usefully interact, in terms of poetics, pedagogy, and in broader terms.⁴¹

Olson's essays, lectures, interviews, and letters reveal that for him, pedagogy in writing (literary or creative, though he would not use those terms) amounts to the circulation of unique forms for use and the reformulating of the same.⁴² Each person's action determines the arrangement of available forms on that person's plane of engagement, or field. Another person can work with the resulting form by incorporating it, with meaningful differences, into a new field. Forms might be, for example, poems, philosophies, performances, historical accounts, mathematical theories, periodicals, or even social interactions. This pedagogy of circulating forms is the same for areas of study beyond writing--art (of all varieties), criticism, research, and any intellectual work harder to define. Moreover, interdisciplinary use of materials was a matter of course at BMC and for Olson in particular. Faculty and students studied beyond the scope of any one narrow field. A case in point is Olson's fascination with dancing (many found his attempts, as a physically hulking amateur, memorable enough to describe years later). Also telling are the collaborations involving student and faculty artists working in disparate media (such as a glyph-themed multimedia event [Katz 186]). The idea of use is crucial to Olson, and work in any academic area is available for use in other areas, especially by the poet.⁴³

According to a pedagogy aligned with this way of understanding poetic practice, students
should learn both to make texts (forms) complex enough to be used or given reformulation by someone else and to locate and use extant forms to meaningful effect. The forms in question are not merely adopted from canons accepted in the academic world but retrieved from diverse and often obscure sources. Thus where Iowa-model programs and workshops perpetuate the transmission of relatively static tastes among students, institutions, and generations, BMC in Olson's era encouraged individuals to locate their own, often idiosyncratic, forebears and bibliographies. Working open-endedly and making use of the forms provided by others are harmonious processes for Olson: "if a man does not stay OPEN, in exactly the sense of OPEN TO ALL, & ANYTHING--not just to what is sensory . . . he'll find the NOT-FINDING so hard to bear he'll start to RIDE--and jesus, that means, he'll put his elbows on something outside himself" (Olson and Creeley 7: 115). Being "OPEN" in one's work means being "OPEN TO"--in other words, what one encounters factors into processes of working. To "start to RIDE . . . on something outside" is the harmful shortcut of adopting someone else's form wholesale without shaping it critically and deeply into one's own field of work.

Perhaps the greatest praise Olson gave to BMC was calling it a polis or "city" (Muthologos 278-79, 286; Collected Poems 426). For Olson a polis is a place where residents do their work in close enough contact and communication that in going about their respective projects they are also providing materials for one another to use. Thus the yield of each individual's work correlates positively with the collective yield. So Olson could say that Black Mountain was "the largest city I've ever known, the swiftest, and, you know, it's all there, absolutely all there" (Muthologos 278-79): it was "largest" not in population but usable circulating work; it was "swiftest" in the rate of meaningful
exchange of forms and ideas; it was "all there" in representation of diverse and immediately accessible academic fields, artistic practices, and practical work (e.g. constructing campus buildings, farming, and tending to cattle), to say nothing of "housing... food for everybody... salary, a little bit" (Muthologos 329). As a polis, Black Mountain was an effective educational site for students--who studied broadly but took up projects, outside the scope of a particular course's assignments, that centered and served as reference points for their wider learning (Gerard van de Wiele reports that as important as painting was at the college, there was no painting class when he enrolled in 1954--students painted anyway [quoted in Katz 205]). BMC also encouraged the artists and scholars who taught there to learn by way of their unusually close proximity to one another and in their frequent interactions. It is worth observing that faculty regarded the work of the most proficient students highly, sometimes above that of their colleagues. The potential of new students needed to be taken seriously, then, but if they were to become active contributors to the polis of BMC, these novitiates needed to get up to par with expectations, which posed a challenge.

Olson himself had long been deferential toward his own literary mentor Dahlberg, finally managing to interact with him as an equal only at the expense of their good relations. The change seemed to come far too late for Olson, and both his poetics and his personal relation to Dahlberg demanded it. In large part the slowness of this shift owed to how Dahlberg, in letters, positioned himself as Olson's superior (Christensen vi-vii), and it is reasonable to speculate that Olson did not want his own students to remain hostage to his authority in a similar manner. In fact, Olson refers to "[appeals] to authority" as "an old logical fallacy" (Olson and Creeley 7: 27). But before students
attained equal footing with Olson as working artists (in his own eyes), he addressed them as subordinates. He uses the word *love* to refer to the arranging of forms for others to use, and he could be understood as supplying his students with the forms his own study and poetry led him to--these materials he made available for students to take up. Meanwhile, in reading and responding to student work at length and with brutal seriousness, Olson worked with what his students gave him as best he could, unequivocally, and told them exactly how he found their writing worthy or insufficient for use. Tough love, then, Olson's approach could be called, except that the colloquialism does not hint at the complexity with which Olson's poetics address *love* (and as goes his poetics, so goes his pedagogy: for Olson "the poet is the [only] pedagogue" [Olson and Corman 1: 34; Olson and Creeley 2: 84]). The very fact of Olson's attention to student work, especially when he gave this attention privately, in letters or on manuscripts rather than aloud and for the benefit of a whole class, signaled Olson's respect. As Rumaker puts it, "Charles, once he cared for you, had to be an authority on everything you did" (223).

It may appear that the central problem examined in the previous chapter returns in this one: BMC students learned to write in unforeclosed ways, using the sources that compelled them while arranging new forms on fields all their own; at the same time, the judgments of an unsubtle and strong-willed Olson would seem a contrary clamp upon this freedom of process. What must be clarified is how peculiarly individual Olson's critiques were. While at times he used terms common in Iowa-lineage workshops--such as "craft" (Olson and Boldereff 203), the call to "write what you know" (Rumaker 151, 295; Olson and Corman 2: 30-32), or even the O'Connor-ish "habit of art" (Olson and Creeley 7: 80-81)--his employ of these terms does not overlap neatly with their meanings as passed
down in the conventional institutions of creative writing. Olson has little in common with and had little interest in the academic writers of his day, and his critical perspective and tack developed idiosyncratically. In Chapter One I argued that the traditional workshop reigns in student writing that exceeds predetermined bounds of acceptability, evaluating submitted texts in terms of their deficiencies when compared to ideal texts. In contrast, Olson encouraged student writing processes to proceed in unforeseeable directions, pushing students to follow diverse paths in developing their ideas and methods. While his criticisms could be crushing, they were at least personalized. Unlike the workshop as homeostat, which nudges student work inward from the edges of its the approved range, Olson's courses did not observe established canons of taste and avoided foreclosing most possibilities for student writing. The pedagogic goal was to intensify those processes by discouraging predetermined answers and the crutches of convention. Olson had a high tolerance for the unconventional, a category in which his own poetry can be included, and he disdained the notion of literature and culture as markers of elevated taste. He aimed to help students achieve writing that would enable them to participate in a polis—a community characterized by the exchange of usable forms, whether at Black Mountain or elsewhere—which required students to produce writing complex and meaningful enough that others would turn to it in the course of their own work. It may have been inevitable that Olson's feedback on student writing made that writing more Olson-friendly, more of interest to him, but this is a step in his enabling them to use, to extend their working processes beyond what would occur to them independently.

In Chapter One I argued that the Iowa model of creative writing puts students in
the conflicted position of pursuing open-ended literary know-how through their processes of writing while simultaneously adhering to predetermined limits upon what they should write. The Black Mountain College of Charles Olson's time, examined alongside Olson's pedagogy that informed and was informed by BMC, shows what allowing student-writers and -artists to work in radically open-ended directions can look like. For the most part it is a pedagogy conducive to making literary know-how a primary goal of education in creative writing and in English studies more generally--the goal I argue for. It is true Olson and other members of the BMC community pressured writers to take certain directions and not others: Olson told his students (as a group and as individuals) what to read, and he told and demonstrated to them what they should value in poetry and in other work (art and research); meanwhile, Olson's students were fierce with their opinions, which tended to coalesce into collective, forceful put-downs.\footnote{On the other hand, his pedagogy required that no student work as if from a vacuum and that he or she instead look to the art and research of others (within and beyond the college community). Olson and his classes can be thought of as providing placeholder materials (which might provide either useful form or subject matter--Olson saw these categories as fused) for students to use until they found more individually suitable materials on their own.} So despite some largely superficial similarities to traditional MFA-program writing pedagogy, Olson's Black Mountain represents a pedagogical alternative whereby authority resides in any given writing process, each of which creates a context for understanding how that very process should develop. For Olson, writing processes involve using the work of others and making one's own work available to others, so the processes undergone in an effective polis (such as BMC) have a collaborative as well as
an individual element. Accordingly, Olson's pedagogy encourages unpredictable bottom-up literary-social structuring through the exchange of work--this can lead to developments such as magazines, poetry scenes, and small presses alternative to those of more dominant literary institutions and cultures. As much as possible, BMC did away with top-down authority structures that could limit and shape in advance the individual's work.

My analysis of the writing pedagogy of Olson and BMC in the 1950s treats it as both a singular case and a significant example of the release of limits upon student writing processes. The role of set ideas about what poems and prose pieces should be is minimized. Moreover, BMC shows how the precedence of the writing process can lead to changes to the contexts in which writing takes place: first-order practice alters its second-order frameworks.

**Inter-Influence: Charles Olson and Black Mountain College**

The Black Mountain College of Olson's rectorship emerged from the college's traditions of the 1930s and 1940s even while basic curricular and social changes altered it. Duberman, Mary Emma Harris, and Katz provide histories of BMC in far more detail than I have room for. But a handful of premises and practices of the college's earlier years are crucial to my argument. At founding, John Rice and rest of the faculty decided to put the fine and performing arts at the center of the curriculum, making them no less (or more) crucial than traditional academic subjects (Duberman 38; Katz 19; Olson *Muthologos* 272). The founders thought suspect the very notion of curriculum as separate from extra-curricular life, and they aspired to do away with divisions between these areas
(Duberman 38). Katz summarizes what made the educational structure at early BMC distinctive:

The school would be run solely by its teachers, with genuine input from its students, who in turn would be free to create independent patterns of study, their careers divided into two divisions, Junior and Senior. In the Junior division, teaching would be in small classes; in the senior, largely on a tutorial basis. . . . When a student felt ready to graduate, he would request an examination, which would then be conducted by an outside examiner. (Katz 16)

Students as well as faculty members, then, took part in fulfilling the duties given over, at other colleges and universities, to administrators. Nor were trustees or endowment contributors to have a place in Rice's vision (Olson Muthologos 292). For college operations to be so transparent and democratic could not have been painless--the entire campus could attend and speak at meetings about the most important of the college's issues (Katz 17), which seems equally admirable and inefficient--but it evidences the seriousness with which BMC manifested its value of total participation (everyone taking part in everything).

BMC took its own periodic reinvention as a matter of course. In another example of putting its principles before convenience, members of the college attempted to regularly and explicitly rethink their aims and processes. There was even a physical analogue: when in its earlier years the college rented its premises, all of the "college paraphernalia" had to be packed away during the summer and set up again in the fall--it was, Duberman observes, "a tangible demonstration of the claim that each year the college started from scratch" (65). At the beginning of the academic year in the fall of 1943 (by which point Albers had taken over as rector from a departed Rice), Robert Wunsch's welcome to the college community exemplified this ethos of self-renewal.
Wunsch spoke of ongoing change as ideal for BMC:

[W]e are really beginning a new college. I think we must say this to ourselves each year, lest we begin to let the past become the dominant force in our lives. . . . An institution, to serve the most people in the best way, should take something of the shape of the people who make it up--have a form somewhat organic with their needs, their desires, their beliefs. (Duberman 168)

Olson's admiring observation that Rice opposed the college's owning of property or supplies--it was to rent instead (Muthologos 292)--and Olson's evident pleasure in paying off BMC's debts after it closed (Muthologos 336, 343) attest to his same valuing of a mutable, unburdened BMC.

The early years of the college, especially the figure of Rice, interested Olson, and it is not hard to perceive their influence upon him. He esteemed Rice but moreover considered him a like mind in a like position. Olson calls BMC "the first breakthrough in curriculum since the Middle Ages . . . [yet] right up to date, the only communal invention that has substituted for the damn Western conception of society, which sort of is assumed as though it has to be administrative, it has to be government" (Muthologos 292). And while Olson here credits the Black Mountain community, elsewhere he singles out Rice as "the chief reformer of education since the Middle Ages" (Muthologos 272). Olson's affinity to Rice extended to seeing both Rice and himself as pressured to leave BMC by faculty (for having "too much mouth") but supported in staying by students (Muthologos 287). 52

In some sense Olson's becoming rector marked a new direction for BMC (Katz refers to the college as "intellectually up for grabs" after Albers and Ted Dreier left in 1949 [182]), but pedagogy and community in the Olson years had substantial precedents. Not least: the expectation of change, and the planning for it, had been built into the
college's ethos and methods from the start (Duberman 168); As Louis Adamic put it, in an article published in Harper's in 1936, "the place is a process, a way of education (which, in the BMC concept, is synonymous with life" (quoted in Katz 19). Accordingly, the college could have been expected to evolve along with its community. Olson became BMC's directive force, its "heartbeat," but Rice and Albers had filled that role previously (Duberman 356), so the fact of such a central individual was not new, even if the particulars of Olson's leadership were. And while his specific priorities differed, Olson "admired his predecessors and the history and philosophy" of BMC (Katz 216), indeed seeing the college in its 1950s manifestation as "that very core of the old apple" of Rice's vision (Olson Selected Letters 393). It is not a stretch to see BMC's orientation toward process as an influence on Olson's poetics and his view of history as well as his perspective on education.

But the specifics of how people lived and learned at BMC, along with the size of the community (shrinking to about fifteen people by the end of 1954 [Duberman 423], from twenty-six faculty members and 55 students when Olson first arrived [Muthologos 285]) and the physical status of the campus (falling into neglect [Duberman 355]), did come to differ markedly from previous years. In a May 1952 letter to Creeley, Olson claims BMC as "mine, that is, i have poured in here" (Olson and Creeley 10: 91). The college, Olson perceives (in agreement with retrospective histories) was taking on a new "formulation," situated "as against that design biz, 'art' crap, which may have fit the 30s but don't do for now" (Olson and Creeley 10: 91). 1952 was an important year in BMC's evolution, one in which the college moved toward codifying its principles in new ways. Olson's centrality to this process is apparent in documents from the period, such as
the minutes of faculty meetings from the 1951-52 academic year, which reveal a clash of visions for BMC between Olson and "the new 'social science' appointees" John Adams and Victor Sprague (Duberman 358-60). In these meetings Olson defends "living knowledge" over the "history of knowledge" (358), an idea he spells out to Ping Ferry in a 1951 letter: that "education . . . very much needs . . . the active professional man, in the arts and in the fields of knowledge, who is not an historian (as, basically, all 'professors' are) but is himself actively a maker of 'history!’" (Olson Selected Letters 139). Where BMC always posited that the arts need be at its curricular core, Olson contends that they should be prioritized above, not placed alongside, traditional courses. The minutes record Olson as arguing, in opposition to calls for more conventional academic classes, that "knowledge is of no use in itself but only in use . . ." (Duberman 360). And he argues against structuring the educational experience, insisting (and not out of line with the ideals of BMC’s past), "you don’t make a priori definitions of what you intend to accomplish" (Duberman 359). Another telling document, the "BMC prospectus for Spring Semester, Feb, 11-June 7, 1952" (Katz 202), which accounts heavily for Olson's perspective (if it is not written by him, word for word, which is entirely possible), amplifies the importance to the college of usable knowledge, open-ended process, and artistic fields of work. Olson's influence on BMC's pedagogical approach appears definitive here: "a faculty fit to face up the student as the [curricular] center have to be measured by what they do with what they know"; "it is not things themselves but what happens between things where the life of them is to be sought"; "Our central consistent effort is to teach method, not content; to emphasize process, to invite the student to the realization that the way of handling facts and himself amid the facts is more important
than the facts themselves" (Katz 202, boldface in original).

The following academic year of 1952-53 saw BMC fully adopt Olson's educational vision by changing the curriculum to one of "institutes"--more formally, the Institute of the New Sciences of Man (Maud Olson's Reading 97) or the Institute of General Studies (Olson and Creeley 10: 92). The planning and implementation of the "institute" as educational framework, which grew out of the summer sessions that had long been part of BMC's reputation and community, was the proverbial last straw that compelled most of Olson's critics among the faculty to leave BMC (Duberman 360).

The hope was to have five institutes, each lasting for eight weeks. As originally planned, the first would be in crafts; the second would "converge the interests of actors, dancers, writers, musicians & painters in the theater"[;] . . . the third would deal with the "new sciences of man"[;] . . the fourth would be in the natural sciences, with emphasis on ecology; and the fifth, to run during the summer, would be, as always, centered on the arts. (Duberman 360-61)

The attempt to run the college on the institute model both signals Olson's ascension to the point of maximal influence at BMC and roughly indicates the point at which the college's pedagogy and culture turned noticeably further toward disorder. The implementation of the institutes did not match their plan. Scheduled courses were overabundant and undersubscribed--many courses were canceled. And except for the summer institute, the courses that were held barely resembled their official descriptions (Duberman 361-62).

BMC had certainly been a site of wide social and educational freedom before Olson's joining the faculty, but in the final years with Olson as rector, the freedom was, in Rumaker's words, "almost anarchic" (143). While Rumaker accepted this as a boon (142), not all students could "adjust to developing the responsibility and discipline of working on their own, and those who couldn't adjust, left" (143). Years before becoming rector in
1951, after his initial encounter with BMC, Olson wrote of the same perception in "Black Mountain College as seen by a writer-visitor, 1948" (Maud Harbor 120-21), in which he lauds the "freedom of Black Mountain--no degrees offered, no examinations in course, no separation of men and women, nor faculty from students, no bells" (121) but finds that this freedom makes an individual's self-discipline imperative if that person is not to "[die] off to the place as dead cells or bad bones" (121).55 Peculiarly, when Olson reflected upon BMC in interviews that took place more than a decade after its closing, he came to emphasize the structure of education there (Muthologos 276, 283). Other observers are in agreement with one another that under Olson's purview "the learning experience became less structured" (Katz 190), that by the mid-1950s "course titles, even course content, were beside the point" (Duberman 432). Duberman describes 1955-56 as a non-hierarchical "learning environment" (432) in which "the distinction between 'staff' and 'students' was all but nonexistent" (416) and "continuous dialogue" filled the air (432).56 As for the student artistic and academic work that contextualized and was contextualized by this talk, learning became increasingly individualized--tutorials, independent projects, and casual discussion substituted for classes in subjects as important to BMC's identity as painting (Katz 205).

The dialogues among BMC students and faculty (including in the 1950s individuals such as Dan Rice, who were technically neither but participated in the community) took place not only in the circles of those working and studying in a particular artistic medium (let alone a genre) but also between those whose efforts extended into different regions of the arts. The college, before and after Olson's arrival, put much stock in specific collaborative work and general interplay among various fields
and the individuals representing them. It may be that Black Mountain, as a place "where all the arts overlapped" (Dawson *Black Mountain* 9), where students could "learn our craft in a dynamic and interdependent relatedness to all other fields" (Rumaker 461), encouraged Olson's theorizing of poetic and historical action (see this chapter's next section) as the use of the work others have provided and the making available of usable work in turn. In his 1951 letter to Ping Ferry, Olson describes the interplay among fields at BMC:

Shahn teaches Olson one hell of a lot about his verse, Katy Litz picks up clues for pushing her own important advance in dance, Harrison makes music for Abby Shahn and others, Bernarda comes to listen to Olson when she can and shoots in the shots of perception about the stuff he reads to the students which opens the eyes of sd students and lets them find out how to hear, how to dig the jug out of their own ears and clean the gurry off their senses[.] (Selected Letters 140)

The BMC catalog of "two years ago" emphasizes, to the same effect, that (as the catalog, in Olson's language, repeats) "what happens between things" and among people is the college's focus (Selected Letters 141). Olson wanted BMC to "break down all stupid walls, even the wall of art as separate from society!" (Selected Letters 143).\(^{57}\) For him and for BMC generally, art emerged and progressed through the social actions of its artists--as he puts it in a letter to Creeley, "ideas [are] only resident in things & in actions, and so, where, otherwhere than, the guy in front of yez" (Olson and Creeley 8: 168). The interactions among people correlated with the interactions among the arts. As one example of how this manifested, composer Stefan Wolpe offered a course for non-musician artists in which he spoke about "the creative process for a composer" (Gerald van de Wiele quoted in Katz 205) as a way of providing other kinds of artists a fresh vantage. In the 1950s, Olson, Creeley, and Robert Duncan found ways of understanding
writing through music, painting, drama, dance, and architecture (Power 292).

Discrete collaborative events at BMC included the "LIGHT SOUND MOVEMENT WORKSHOP" of 1949-50; Olson's "1949 class in 'Verse and the Theatre,' which called for woodwinds and percussion, flute, slides and color projections, marks, 'various combinations of the human voice, without music, without dance, but with gesture, posture, the skill of speech'" (Katz 187); a Glyph Show in 1951, occasioned by Olson's return from the Yucatán peninsula, that involved poetry, dance, music, and painting (Katz 186; Olson Selected Letters 143; Olson and Creeley 6: 178); and in 1952 John Cage's Theater Piece no. 1, credited as the first "Happening" (Katz 138). Olson wrote dance-plays specifically for BMC dancers, and he participated in at least one (non-dance) play (Maud Olson's Reading 96). Even events that were not strictly collaborations had effects on Black Mountain's community across fields or media; Olson recalls returning to the dining hall, sweaty from playing baseball, and listening from the porch as campus visitor David Tudor played a concert of Pierre Boulez compositions. Olson had not encountered the efforts of Tudor or Boulez before, and they became catalysts for his own thinking and writing (Olson Muthologos 292-93).

Despite his becoming 1950s BMC's foremost voice and leader, Olson was not without doubts and disgusts over the college. He initially agreed to teach there only because Albers let him "come once a month for five days" (Olson and Creeley 1: 28), whereas (as he wrote to Cid Corman at the time) "living in the midst of them . . . dread it, dread--fear it!" (Olson and Corman 1: 191, "dread" and "fear" both twice-underlined). He feared a double sapping of his energy: the requirements of his attention to the college, and Black Mountain's disconnection from a larger city that energized him (Washington,
D.C.). And after settling in, he expressed frustration at times, as in a 1951 letter to Creeley, in which he complains about "these little bastards [students], and this frou-frou administration" (which might refer to the faculty meetings, given BMC's absence of designated administrators), and the "evil greeding environment" itself, which he perceives as a threat to "the work, our own work" aside from educating (Olson and Creeley 6: 160; Olson and Creeley 8: 101). After BMC's closing, it took years for him to come around to appreciating it again. Duberman describes him as "noticeably tired of teaching" by the 1955-56 academic year (432). According to Dawson, "Olson told me in person in 1959--in Gloucester--that he was altogether finished with Black Mountain. He was through finished--sick of it, and perhaps sick from it. . . . In the early sixties at Buffalo he was more than finished (this is common knowledge)" (Black Mountain Book 64). So it is significant that in his late-1960s interviews Olson referred to Black Mountain as a polis or city rather than a place experts periodically left the city to visit. But even in 1957, in "Obit," which Olson wrote upon closing BMC and paying its debts for good, he showed that he thought of the place as a polis:

"It was a polis," sd his friend, "no wonder you wanted to take part in its creation." ("Obit" 60)

What "his friend" says aligns with Olson's perspective on place and work--the most satisfying work uses and is used in the work of others, and what a "polis" indicates is the meeting of workers who collectively push one another through such use.

**Olson's Poetics and Pedagogy**

In his poetics and pedagogy--which are continuous, both accounted for under the
umbrella of his thinking about history and action--Olson recognizes the relevance of know-how to writing. In basic respects, he tends to agree with writers in (and beyond) the Iowa tradition (whom the previous chapter has surveyed) about the importance of the writer's unplanned, in-process figuring out how to proceed. A sampling of his statements make this evident:

[O]ne does not learn a craft except in the practice of it[.] (Olson and Boldereff 203)

[F]ollow your nose in writing[.] (Olson quoted in Rumaker 235)

I don't know what I am up to! And must stay in that state in order to accomplish what I have to do. (Olson and Corman 2: 63)

[A]ll you [addressed to Robert Creeley] honestly need to do--to unlock the long form--is to take up a certain freedom[.] (Olson and Creeley 7: 225)

Two key aspects of know-how, previously discussed, return here: (1) a writer discovers, in the course of writing, how the text at hand will develop; and (2) by writing, a writer becomes more proficient and adaptable. Furthermore, at times Olson observes that know-how outpaces know-that (though he does not use these terms). Speaking of Jeremy Prynne's review of *Maximus IV, V, VI*, Olson remarks, "he says everything right, accurately, and I'm sitting here and I'm thinking, 'Isn't it terrible? You know, until somebody says it to you, I don't know nothing, I didn't know I did any--I didn't know what he says I did. Then I know I did what he said I did" (Muthologos 377). Olson's process of composing was not mindless, but retrospect (with Prynne's help) was necessary for him to realize at the level of know-that what inhered in his writerly know-how.

Where creative writing on the Iowa model sets predetermined limits for acceptable texts, limits that are at odds with the open-ended progress of know-how,
Olson and many of those associated with him are aware of, and warn against, the effect of such limits. Letters between Olson and Creeley touch upon this problem from various angles. Olson admiringly writes of D. H. Lawrence as having perceived "that the intellect was a temptation" to writers (6: 39). The problem for Olson (and presumably Lawrence) is that the intellect's tendency toward conclusions--its falling back upon know-that--prevents writing from proceeding from the individual's situational, bodily, in-process particulars, putting in place instead the shortcuts of abstract thought. Olson sees the intellect, then, "undoubtedly the hardest, & most crucial of all the problems, simply because, language is, itself, an intellectual medium" (39). By contrast, "dance is forward because, in dance, due to the medium of a physical body, there is no way to split same, and so material and motion are one" (Olson and Creeley 6: 164). The temptation of abstract determinations is mitigated in dance, whereas the ubiquity of abstraction in language makes it a constant threat to the writer. Olson's advice to Creeley sometimes follows this gist. Olson warns against a determined notion of what a novel should be (Olson and Creeley 7: 224-25); complains that a particular poem falls into the "death-trap, that, to discuss expression in expression causeth same to cease as same" (Olson and Creeley 9: 261); and swears against "goddamn outlines" (Olson and Creeley 5: 168). But it may be Creeley who articulates the problem most elegantly in stating, "a man cannot exist in any frame which is not declared, fresh, at each instant" (Olson and Creeley 6: 197). If writing is to be an open-ended process, then in the course of that process, first-order (framed) actions should reorganize their second-order contexts (frames) rather than existing within set frameworks without disrupting them. And this attitude toward process certainly applied to the structuring and running of BMC itself during Olson's years there;
thus Olson insisted at a faculty meeting, "you don't make a priori definitions of what you intend to accomplish" (Duberman 359).

Olson's differentiation of methodology (or method) from technique (Olson and Corman 1: 269) encapsulates the extra step the writers of 1950s BMC took with regard to know-how. Olson writes to Creeley that "method is not the path but it is the way the path is known" (Olson and Creeley 10: 152), which makes methodology "the science of the path" (Olson and Corman 1: 275) or "how to get the FORM" (Olson and Boldereff 245). Technique is a formulaic activity; methodology--as "the struggle, to clear [oneself] of the technicals" (Olson and Boldereff 430)--replaces given formulas but does not produce new ones, for methodology always applies (Olson and Creeley are adamant) to situational particulars (Olson and Boldereff 430; Duberman 414). BMC student Joel Oppenheimer, speaking of Olson as a teacher, affirms that Olson "would not stand for" imitators of his own way of writing. Instead, Oppenheimer continues, "he was a profound influence in forcing you to find out where your poetics were" (Duberman 401). Poetics is an almost absent term within the culture of Iowa-derived creative writing programs, but it is essential in poetry communities in the tradition of Olson and other "New American Poets." Poetics equates to method, except that the latter is more obviously applicable to activities beyond writing, a broadness that suits Olson's understanding of poetry as only one (and never a self-contained) species of history-making action.

A brief comparison of how the Iowa tradition treated the artist's right to his or her premises and the handling of the same by Olson and BMC may clarify how these pedagogical orientations differ. Just as teachers and writers in the Iowa tradition ostensibly (but often disingenuously, I have argued) admit the writer's "own terms,"
Olson wrote, in a letter to Frances Boldereff, of a similar allowance: "a man's premises [which in the context of the letter could read: "an artist's premises"], if they are his own, is the man, & you don't engage a man as you do a syllogism--you listen, warmly" (Olson and Boldereff 187). But Olson recognized that some writers and readers are poorly matched; as he reportedly said during a class at BMC, "Well, if you don't want to dance with the writer, you don't want to dance. Nothing you can do about it" (Rumaker 121). Perhaps, as Rumaker suggests, the comment reflects Olson's attitude conditioned by dismissals of his own poetry (121). For his part as a reader, Olson was not willing to indulge just any writing, whether by students or professionals. But whereas the pedagogical tradition of Iowa is often unable to digest highly unconventional writing, Olson's impatience (though not necessarily that of other Black Mountain participants) was with writers whose "premises" amount to the adoption of literary conventions. For instance, Olson distrusts narrative because it "is an outside structure" (Olson and Boldereff 230), whereas workshops in traditional MFA fiction tracks take narrative for granted. In a letter to Frances Boldereff, Olson elaborates on his dislike of narrative:

I am hammering here at the same idea the piece of PRO-verse was after: to stay in the struggle for open verse as against closed, in order to arrive at forms which come not from the outside, inherited or--the better--the narrative, but from the inside, from the working along with the self and the stuff in the open until some form comes out of it which is fresh and implicit to the-thing-needed-done itself. (Olson and Boldereff 230)

When he encountered Creeley's writing, Olson came around to the potential of narrative, and his target shifted from narrative to fiction (in its conventional forms) as a problematic "outside structure" in prose writing (Olson and Corman 1: 81; Collected Prose 283-84). In any case, conventional forms are "outside" or "inherited," and they prevent the structuring of forms that are "fresh and implicit to the-thing-needed-done"
through the writing process. In other words, giving know-how priority over know-that leads to forms more relevant and energetic than those already known (about or that) by convention. Olson favors, for instance, the forms that emerge from written correspondence.62

Olson's theorizing about process--whether the process pertains to writing, art-making, or otherwise significant (what he might call historic) actions--gives a prime place to the notion of use. All species of subject matter, he writes to Creeley, are "TO BE KNOWN FOR WHAT USE IS IN THEM" (Olson and Creeley 8: 217)--the point of knowledge is to be able to do something with it. Know-that has no place in Olson's view: "the only sense in which knowledge makes sense . . . is methodological. It can be used" (Special View 30). In this line of thinking, the purpose of art is to use and make usable, aims that Olson opposes to what he calls (in a letter to Cid Corman) "AESTHETICS pah bad shit" (Olson and Corman 1: 45). The value of art, for Olson, is not at all to make objects of admirable beauty. Nor is the use to which art can be put narrowly determinable (e.g., the point of a poem is not for it to be of use specifically for the writing of secondary criticism). In "The Praises" Olson succinctly suggests what "use" means and why it matters:

What is necessary is containment,
that that which has been found out by work may, by work, be passed on
(without due loss of force)
for use

USE (Collected Poems 100)

Nothing is more important to Olson than meaningful "work," which has two characteristics: (1) it follows from an individual's process undertaken with integrity--not relying on shortcuts provided by received authorities or by predetermined forms and
conclusions--and (2) it circulates so that it can contribute to the work of one or more other individuals. To learn something is to use it in one's work, and to work is provide others something to use (and therein learn). Passing on, "for use" and "by work" is therefore integral both to pedagogy and to art-making. "The Praises" highlights "containment" as essential: preserving the used as reusable in the course of one's working. In different words, Olson's "These Days" gets at the same crux: "leave / the roots on, let them / dangle . . . to make clear / where they come from" (Collected Prose 106; Olson and Creeley 7: 113). From the vantage of an aesthetic sensibility that favors polished writing--which might appear formal or effortlessly casual but not roughly cut or unfinished--Olson's frequent and prominent inclusion of source material (whether published books or private letters, whether mentioned, quoted, or given interpretive summary) would read as eccentric, slapdash, and indecorous. But by "leav[ing] the roots on" Olson demonstrates how his writing engages the work of others and makes all of that work available for subsequent use.

In accordance with his emphasis on "use," in Duberman's words "the main function of [Olson's] workshop was to turn people on to the possibility of using all the areas around them" (399). Olson introduced his own concerns to his students in class. He did so to spark their projects by providing usable materials (Duberman 400) through his own work and that of the artists and researchers who fascinated him. Simultaneously, he was "demonstrating, thru USE: a method, a way: of transmitting: communicating: idea/thought/history,' etc" (Olson and Creeley 1: 80). This demonstration was more important than his connecting students to particular texts and ideas. In a letter to Creeley, Olson implies that the teacher's role in "pass[ing] it on to the next guy, for what use, etc."
is a step toward getting students to independently find their own materials for use in their respective processes of work: "this teaching or critical function is going to be less & less interesting. I would honestly surmise that such activity is demanded only when men have got mighty ignorant of the simplest things" (Olson and Creeley 10: 108). And Olson argues that people have indeed become so ignorant. *The Special View of History*, a series of lectures Olson delivered at Black Mountain in 1956, begins with an epigraph by Heraclitus: "Man is estranged from that with which he is most familiar" (*Special View* 14) and clarifies that this "most familiar" matter is "what he is" and equally "what he does" (26)--the taking of actions that use forms in arranging material newly across a field that may be artistic and is always social. In other words, Olson sees people as "estranged from" work, including finding materials for their use. It should be, as he sees it, a natural effort to do one's work; he writes elsewhere to Creeley, "I am puzzled to realize that for most people art is not natural" (Olson and Creeley 7: 80). Ideally, teaching from a position of authority would give way to an intuitive, productive back-and-forth between Olson and his students as equals, and with time this tended to happen. Rumaker, for example, wrote a piece on Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" that excited Olson; suddenly, from Olson "Ideas came tumbling out: we could print a broadside together, or a pamphlet, we could set it up at the print shop--He would write a new piece on Melville; he'd get others to contribute, and of course he would include my piece on 'Bartleby'" (Rumaker 164).

Olson's taking Rumaker's essay as an inducement for collaborative work, while acknowledging the essay as a catalyst by publishing it, is a positive instance of "use" as Olson understood it. *Use* in its everyday sense does not always equate with the kinds of
use Olson favored. In a letter, he warns *Origin* editor Corman of the need to distinguish contributing writers "who will *use* you and your mag to get things published" (a negative use) from readers and writers who would put the magazine to "deep use" (a positive variety) (Olson and Corman 1: 62). The following are positive examples of use that Olson modeled or favored: his incorporation of aspects of *Gilgamesh* and *Descent of Inanna* into his own *Maximus Poems* to bring these ancient poems to bear upon the society he writes from and for (Olson and Allen 79), William Carlos Williams's inclusion in his own autobiography of Olson's "Projective Verse" (*Muthologos* 304), and Boldereff's helping Olson finally appreciate and use Walt Whitman's poetry (Olson and Boldereff 101). In contrast to "deep use," Olson finds, as he tells Boldereff, "it is one of the most terrible of all things, to find image or event or personage which is swimming in your self wrong used, cheaply used" (493). An example might be the insult Olson felt when Melville scholar Merton Sealts attributed ideas to F. O. Matthiessen that had originated from Olson (Sealts 109). And while Olson looked to the past to find resources for his work, he takes issue with researchers who fail to convert the materials they find to a presentation in present-day "rhythm and images" (Olson and Boldereff 110).

Two further concepts should be covered in an overview of Olson's poetics (and pedagogy) of process and use: *history* and *field*. When Olson writes that "TOTALITY is the reality . . . METHODOLOGY is the discipline to . . . express it" (Olson and Creeley 10: 89), he means no less than that every individual, in taking an action, is responsible for everything--not only for the page or for a canvas or for a cleanly bounded field of research. There is no partition between a poem, say, and any other aspect of human experience, although we might insert the illusion of a partition and reaffirm it through
conventional practice. Olson tells Bolderreff, "When you say there are things more than poems you are not right" (123), which is to say that poems should not be viewed as contained within their pages but engaged in--drawing upon and playing roles in--all areas of the lives of readers and writers. The writing of a poem cannot be separated from its writer's other activities. When someone uses a poem, or uses research and ideas to make a poem, that use is an arrangement across a field, a field that may include writing in the narrow sense of indicating words upon pages but that also extends beyond the page. A field comprises whatever one's vision encompasses in the course of an action. In "Projective Verse," the field is the scope of the poem, meaning that "every element . . . (the syllable, the line, as well as the image, the sound, the sense) must be taken up as participants." But even here Olson indicates that field is not only on the page: "these elements [of a poem] are to be seen as creating the tensions of a poem just as totally as do those other objects create what we know as the world" (Collected Prose 243). The "projective act" used to create open-field poems is more generally "the artist's act in the larger field of objects," an act that "leads to dimensions larger than the man" (247) by shaping objects in the field into a "high energy-construct" (240), from which others can receive and channel energy through use. Objects in a field may be in a poem or outside of it--Olson insists that there is no realm of textuality separate from the rest of the world. Discussing the process of working in the visual and plastic arts, Olson identifies "the only three-dimension which ever properly mattered" as "that cultural one (not that evolutionary one of two eyes without a snout" (Olson and Creeley 10: 107), a claim that might be misread from a contemporary academic lens, which reads culture as a complex of forces that shape values, thinking, behavior, and specific actions. Here by "cultural
Olson refers to the snouted life, in which the artist has "two eyes, a nose, a mouth" (107), a sensory, bodily experience in which an art work is situated and from which it develops, rather than a trained ("evolutionary") experience of art in which the artist and viewer are reduced to seeing-functions.

Anything can enter the field by and upon which work is done--including the past, which continues to be active in the instant of one's work (Olson and Boldereff 478; Olson and Creeley 9: 177). *History*, for Olson, does not equate with the past. Instead, "the present is prologue, not the past. The instant, therefore. . . . Down with causation. . . . And yrself: you, as the only reader and mover of the instant. You, the cause" (*Collected Prose* 205). Olson refuses to see the present as determined by the past's consequences; hence he writes, "Down with causation." Instead, history is the individual act, to which "the present is prologue"--the present is the situation awaiting the act, and the past is material for use in the same act. Olson's lectures published as *The Special View of History* explicitly elaborate his theorizing of the writing process to apply to all human acts of significance--"historic" acts that "produce" and are "uncertain" (*Special View* 16). History is an individual's process of action in the instant, and as a process history is knowledge as know-how (which is the only kind of knowledge Olson recognizes): so, Olson says, "By history I mean to know" (20). Olson equates what a person "is" with what that person "does," which also equates to "history" (26). History should be natural but is not as automatic as breathing--thus Olson takes from Heraclitus his epigraph, "*Man is estranged from that with which he is most familiar*" (14). Historic acts are what Olson elsewhere calls "work," and they involve the "use" of the energy-constructs others have made available in the fields of their poems, their research, and elsewhere.
Olson and Creeley's extensive correspondence serves as a fine model of ongoing, mutual use. Rumaker refers to this correspondence as "love letters" (183). The description is apt in ways that Rumaker may not even intend, for love as Olson uses the word marks the overlap between (1) the providing and using of forms and (2) the fulfilling and enabling of interpersonal connection. The connection between love and form is a motif in Olson's poems. In "The Alba," "[l]ove is form" in the sense that it signifies the arranging of all else, of objects, across a field:

Love is no object
Love is form because love
is its own subject,
love is the only subject, the rest
requires form (Collected Poems 369)

In other words, love is the generating or arranging--the forming. The love-form connection also appears in the first of The Maximus Poems, in which "love is form" (5) and "one loves only form, / and form only comes / into existence when / the thing is born" (7). If form describes the novel arrangement of material over a field, love is both another name for form and is applied to form. This is because form emerges from use: one uses forms to make new form through historic action. Love draws attention to the fact that the transformative reuse of forms provided by others is substantial human interaction. Olson emphasizes this connection in his Paris Review interview: "all that eases the greatest fucking loneliness is that somebody will say something relevant to what you have gotten yourself involved in. . . . it's so important that it's . . . love" (Muthologos 385). When Rumaker recognizes the Olson-Creeley letters as "love letters," he identifies what was initially absent in his relationship with Olson, who told him "I can't help you because I don't love you" (Rumaker 139): Olson did not love Rumaker at
the time because they were not evidently giving each other form to work with. This changed with Rumaker's "Bartleby" essay, his stories such as "The Pipe," and his ideas about the unconscious, all of which Olson lauded and engaged with.

*Love* indicates the interpersonal aspect of the exchanging of forms that occurs through one individual's use of another's work. The hope is that the number of people involved in such an exchange extends to include the whole of a community, at (or approaching) which point the community becomes a polis. So love ultimately refers to the taking part in a community's well-being, not only to relationships between two people. Olson saw it possible to build an effective, healthy society through use and the making available of usable form. The structuring of such a society proceeds from the bottom up. Olson writes to Creeley of the need for the two of them to "restore society in the act of communicating to each other" (Olson and Creeley 7: 79, italics in original). Ideally, a "restored" society reaches "a golden age . . . in which all citizens are as active as creative men must be, that all act as though act were only relevant as art" (Olson and Creeley 8: 76-77). Such "act," in being "relevant as art," is historic action--that which takes part in the circulation of forms by arranging received and generated material newly across a field accessible by members of the polis. And those who participate in the polis benefit from the participation of others. Creeley recalls, "I remember his saying once, 'I need a college to think with'" (Creeley "Olson" 302), and Olson put BMC, the college-as-polis, precisely to his use.

**Learning and Teaching After Olson**

Olson understood that action at the individual level plays a role in the larger-scale
structuring of social movements and patterns. The interaction between a given pair of people has exponential down-the-line potential, then, in generating alternatives to limited and limiting artistic and social contexts. In response to the news of Creeley's writing receiving journal rejections, Olson exclaims, "Let's you and I, by God, write for each other! IT's the only deal" (Olson and Creeley 2: 43). Olson is not proposing that he and Creeley retreat into the vacuum of each other's (and no one else's) readership. Writing for each other through letters encouraged the momentum of their work (their thinking as well as their writing) and factored into their correspondence with other individuals (such as Origin editor Corman), in which they referred to each other to help explain their own ideas. As these multiple relationships overlapped and built a network or community of readers and writers, alternatives to extant venues for literary writing began to emerge. Origin gave Olson and Creeley prominent place, and it connected them to other writers of potential mutual interest. With the advent of The Black Mountain Review Creeley and Olson could bring other writers, as well as BMC students, more tightly into their sphere of concerns. The Review and the teaching of writing at BMC contributed to Black Mountain's playing a significant role in the developing of literary scenes, publications, and identities alternative (or oppositional) to the dominant academic and trade-press publishing institutions. Olson saw the lesson of BMC, for those who admired it, to be the getting on with new work--not to mimic what the college already achieved. Referring to his poem "The Kingfishers," written during his time at BMC, Olson urges the young to generate new possibilities: "That's the point of the kingfisher: he lays his eggs in holes dug in banks. I mean, lay some eggs, for god's sake! Be fecund! Students, be fecund!"

(Muthologos 328). Olson's pedagogy and poetics demonstrate how such generation can
The influence of Olson and Black Mountain College on little magazines, small presses, and literary-social scenes supporting writing in the traditions of the New American Poets is indisputable, even if the validity of the designations "Black Mountain School" and "Black Mountain Poets" has been challenged. Olson called the latter category misleading and denied his being part of a literary movement (Muthologos 280), maybe because such a category seems a threat to recognition of any individual poet's distinctiveness (Duberman 353), partly because BMC's writers did share a poetics (Muthologos 281), and surely in part because Olson despised categorization.\(^6\) The fact that many writers published in The Black Mountain Review never set foot upon the college grounds and that editor Creeley started the magazine before joining the faculty also explain the reluctance to categorize.\(^6\) As Duberman states, the "Black Mountain School" writers "held varying relationships to Black Mountain as a place, a review and a section in a history-making anthology" (412). Nonetheless, Creeley and Oppenheimer have been able to find commonalities in the writing of poets associated with the name "Black Mountain": the seeking of alternative processes to those of convention, the close link between the words on the page and the situation from which the writer put them there, a focus on the line, and an approach to sound in relation to the body and its breath (Duberman 414).

Labels aside, the 1960s poetry scene of Manhattan's Lower East Side found direction in the values and methods of Olson's work in addition to those of Black Mountain generally. Daniel Kane ascribes the sensibility of the scene partly to the frontier language and attitude of Olson's "Projective Verse," for instance; less admirably,
Kane also finds in "Projective Verse" roots of the scene's male-centeredness (Kane 17-21). Former BMC faculty members including painters Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline, composer John Cage, choreographer Merce Cunningham, and students such as poet Joel Oppenheimer all contributed to the Lower East Side arts and poetry scene (1, 3, 38). Although Ed Sanders was not a Black Mountaineer, Olson calls Sanders's magazine *Fuck You/ A Magazine of the Arts*, which played a key role in the scene, "practically the successor of Black Mountain" (*Muthologos* 280). This claim stems from the magazine's bringing together writing from the local polis (which, as Olson uses the term, can be framed as the Lower East Side community of poets and artists, rather than the larger populations of Manhattan or New York City as a whole), from the kind of writers it published, and from its independent, low-budget (what today we call "DIY") production. At Black Mountain, Olson encouraged the self- and independent publishing of one's own work and admired work of others (Katz 198) instead of accepting the strictures of the established network of academic poetry's publishers.67

This bottom-up structuring of literary-social scenes and venues such as those of the Lower East Side (which in turn encouraged like scenes elsewhere), which have a strand of emergence in Olson-era Black Mountain, created an alternative to the established outlets and institutions of contemporary literary writing. *Oppositional* is not too strong a word for these movements and Olson's role in them. His disdain is clear for the academic term "creative writing" and for academic and other well-known publications. These include the *Beloit Poetry Journal*--whose writers Olson refers to as "those people" (Olson and Corman 1: 260)--and the *Partisan Review*--characterized by "piece after piece trying to finish themselves off, to fit an arbitrary form, never growing
from the nerves of the man" (Olson and Creeley 1: 22, 28). Olson's antagonism is somewhat complicated by his critiques of certain unconventional writing, as when he complains about recent publications by the press New Directions (Olson and Corman 1: 166), and by his and Creeley's openness (at least initially) to publishing their own writing in established, relatively conventional magazines. Interestingly, Charles Boer claims that Olson saw his own work as more traditional than did the younger poets he influenced (in the following Boer refers to Olson as "you"):

To young poets, who felt they belonged to an 'underground' that opposed a literary "establishment," you appealed inevitably as a great guru of myth and mysticism and as the leading "underground" poet. It mattered little that you claimed to detest mysticism and guru gimmickry. Or that you saw yourself as the main line of American poetry after Pound and Williams. You were the establishment. (69)

If indeed Olson continues "the main line of American poetry," then the poets affiliated with the dominant poetry institutions of the day--university magazines, university and prestigious trade publishers, and graduate creative writing programs (though MFA programs were only beginning their proliferation during Olson's lifetime)--represent a turning away from that line. Conservatism of verse characterizes this diversion, but so does the notion of the professional academic poet. Although Olson taught at BMC and later at SUNY Buffalo, BMC paid its faculty very little, and his life there was not comfortable in the middle-class sense. Of more conventionally situated creative-writing professors, Olson writes, "i honestly don't understand such a class, understand writing as that kind of professionalism. there is a difference (one i cannot tolerate) between commitment, and that sort of thing" (Olson and Creeley 2: 87). "Commitment" in this case means a willingness to risk security and prestige for the sake of projects and relationships that might never get off the ground but would, when doing so, evolve in
ways undetermined by convention. It means a willingness to, Olson adds, "squeeze blood fr life from art, squeeze same fr art for life" (87). Olson may have been traditional in a sense—he looked to predecessors and to the past—but he clearly opposed the interpretation of literary tradition associated with the most visible academic poets of the mid-twentieth century.

To call "oppositional" the literary movements and scenes that claim Olson and BMC as ancestors could falsely suggest that these literary-social developments only have purpose in relation to a more solid, established nexus of conventional institutions. Dissatisfaction with established outlets for literary work may have initially spurred Olson and Creeley to write for each other and to use Origin and The Black Mountain Review to reach like minds (much as disaffection toward traditional institutions of higher education may have occasioned BMC). But the way the alternative poetry scenes progressed, expanding from inside-out—writers associated with BMC interacting, then the substance of these interactions expanding to reach other writers and artists, even as the Black Mountain scene made closer contact to other groups of innovating writers (as in the last volume of The Black Mountain Review, which prominently included a number of writers associated with the San Francisco underground), all leading to the Lower East Side poetry scene and, subsequently, the Language Writing movement and numerous local and online communities of writers and artists—this progression has integrity independent of the literary institutions it offers alternatives to. To recognize the importance of alternative or oppositional movements, it is not necessary to claim that they are preferable to the institutional network comprising MFA programs, program-affiliated magazines, and the AWP. It is enough to acknowledge their connection to an additional pedagogy of literary
writing that educators—even in relatively conventional institutions—can use as a model to help generate new course offerings. This pedagogy does suggest both how students might be encouraged to write with minimal impediments to their open-ended processes and how these writing processes have a long-run potential to contribute to the structuring of new contexts for literary writing.

I claimed in my introduction that know-how can serve as the central value of a reorganized creative writing curriculum, and I posited that the reading of literary texts and contexts with an eye toward pedagogy can generate courses to offer alongside traditional workshops as a way to diversify the educational experience of creative writing students, encouraging their literary know-how to develop broadly as well as deeply. The first chapter argued that while open-ended know-how holds an important place in the archive of Iowa-model creative writing, the conventional workshop course and creative-writing program's literary values and politics enforce the expectation that student writing stick to an expected range of possibilities. The writing pedagogy at Black Mountain College during Charles Olson's time as rector shows what kind of educational context can release open-ended writing processes from such constrictions: an environment defined by serious interaction among the arts, humanities, and sciences and shaped by commitments to reorganizing itself and to removing academic and social barriers to learning. Such an environment makes possible a pedagogy that relocates authority from prestigious positions and canonized texts to the processes of writing, art-making, and researching. This pedagogy's link to the emergence of new literary publications and scenes is a testament to the potential of a process-orientation applied to both first- and second-order writing contexts. Figuring out how BMC and Olson can help guide the design and
teaching of new kinds of creative writing courses would be a valuable challenge for creative writing teachers (and one that lies just outside the scope of my book). The next chapter turns to the private workshops and published fictions of Gordon Lish, which will serve as a of a further set of texts and contexts from which to derive new creative writing pedagogies.
CHAPTER THREE: THE GORDON LISH PROGRAM

In 1995 the audience at the Eden Mills Writers' Festival in Ontario forced Gordon Lish offstage by clapping repeatedly during his reading. He was reading a passage from Zimzum that struck listeners as vulgar in its sexual content, tedious in its verbal repetition, or both (Marchand; Ross). Lish defended the passage, which was in some respects an homage to his late wife (Ross). The controversy became a hot topic, Lish called the clappers "barbarian[s]" and "trogloodyte[s]" (Ross), and he returned to the festival a year later to be interviewed by filmmaker David Cronenberg "in front of a packed room" (Punter).

The Eden Mills incident encapsulates much of what has made Lish a phenomenon in the literary world and suggests much about the relationship between Lish and his students, who--rarely allowed to speak in class, mainly there to listen--can be understood as Lish's primary audience over the years. These students are not perfectly interchangeable with the Eden Mills attendees: Lish's students are aspiring writers who were willing to pay 2,400 dollars in 1986 (Kramer 38) and 2,800 dollars in 2009 (Hogan) to attend a series of his private lectures on fiction writing, and who were further filtered according to their motivation levels (Lish, Neubauer 155). But Lish's relationships with the Eden Mills- and student-audiences are largely analogous. In both cases, Lish's prestige as a person of letters is reflected in his positions of prominence, whether on stage at a writing festival or at the front of an exclusive class. This prestige is based on relations internal to the literary world rather than on his fiction, which has disappointed
the Eden Mills crowd and some of his students alike (Bowman). Tensions arise between Lish's privileged status in the contexts of the festival and classroom and his vulnerability in other contexts—for instance, among an Eden Mills audience disinclined to fawn, or in the popular press. Notable too is the way Lish's listeners become fascinated by him, even in their displeasure: festival-goers awaited his return to Eden Mills, while former students (including David Bowman, George Carver, Amy Hempel, Eva Hunter, and Mimi Kramer) published reactions, laudatory and condemning, to his classes. The use of clapping to communicate disapproval is a rather Lishian irony, as is the way condemnations of Lish have contributed to his mythology. Most importantly, note how the context in which Lish delivers content verbally is folded into subsequent content. He retaliates against his Eden Mills audience, calling them rude in large part because of their lack of sympathy toward a work written and read in mourning (Ross); in emphasizing the personal tragedy occasioning his narrative, he resists a conventional division of the fictional text from its non-fictional context. The fiction becomes a piece of a larger non-fictional story, including his preface, the audience's response, and the reading's aftermath, all of which becomes available as possible subject matter for his performance as interviewee a year later. While Lish's classroom does not play a central role in his fiction, his literary readings (performances not unlike his classroom lectures) do: the novel My Romance is a transcription or simulation of an improvised Lish reading, and in it the narrator repeatedly draws attention to his audience, including those who walk out (My Romance 100). Repeatedly, Lish resituates performative or textual context as content.

Previous chapters have performed pedagogic interpretations of texts and social
sites connected to the teaching of literary writing. These interpretations have three main goals: first, to evaluate what the pedagogy of each site can offer creative writing programs and courses today and in the future; second, to contribute to the criticism of relevant literary figures by analyzing their sometimes neglected relationships with respective pedagogical contexts; and third, to support an argumentative arc that develops the idea of literary know-how as a premise for a restructured discipline of creative writing. Of these three goals, the first two can be applied to any pedagogic interpretation, while the third is specific to the previous chapters. This argumentative arc, developed in two chapter-steps, begins with the Iowa Writers' Workshop and its graduate and icon Flannery O'Connor, examining how the lore of the workshop (including advice from O'Connor's lectures and letters) calls for an open-ended process of writing-as-discovery while contradictorily precluding written products that exceed authorized, circumscribed boundaries. Know-how is central to the discourse of the Iowa-model workshop and its culture, yet this workshop discourages students from unconventional practices of literary know-how. The second step shows how Charles Olson, in accordance with the character and values of Black Mountain College, shifts the location of authority from the institution or individual to the artistic (or literary) process itself. For Olson, one contributes to the student's literary education by offering complexes of language and ideas to be uniquely learned in the instant of the student's permutative use of them--in this case know-how proceeds through the individual's particular writing process, enabled but not determined by the guidance of teachers and already written texts. In beginning this third chapter, I want to reiterate the claim of my project's introduction that insofar as no agreed-upon definition effectively limits literature, and given that the practice of knowing-how leads
to further knowledge in the forms of accreted modes of knowing-how as well as reflective knowing-that, creative writing should be designed to involve students in a variety of processes of literary writing. This chapter treats Gordon Lish's fiction-writing class as a distinct, influential pedagogical site that invites a pedagogic interpretation whereby we can consider its value for a creative writing curriculum. Meanwhile, it contributes to and updates critical discussion of the role Lish and his classes play in contemporary American letters, challenging and elaborating criticism from more than two decades ago while extending more recent work such as Mark McGurl's *The Program Era*.

We are overdue for new readings of Gordon Lish. With the phrase "readings of Gordon Lish" I intend in part the conventional shorthand use of a writer's name to represent the writer's published work, but I also mean the reading or interpretation of "Gordon Lish" as a performance or persona. Not only are the narrators of his fictions often named "Gordon Lish," narrators who cannot be neatly identified as either accurate or inaccurate representations of the author, but additionally, in speaking situations such as private classroom lectures and public performances, and in non-fictional writings such as letters, forwards, and his own dust-jackets, Lish's self-presentation undercuts--through outrageous claims, histrionic delivery, and direct cautions--the trappings of an authentic self that conventionally attend a speaker or writer in non-fictional contexts. It is insufficient to analyze in isolation Lish's work as a writer, teacher, or editor because, in his case, these roles overlap fundamentally. His classroom lectures can be considered performed texts, ambiguously fictional demonstrations of the compositional processes he teaches. The fact of his longtime status as a powerful editor cannot be ignored as a factor
in the arrival of ambitious, aspiring writers to his classes, and several of these writers did go on to publish with Alfred A. Knopf under his editorial eye, increasing the perception of the classes as a gateway to possible publication. Writing and publishing often show up as the subject matter of his fictions--the titles of two stories and one novel include the phrase "How to Write." Criticism of his influence on American fiction frames this influence in terms of his work as both teacher and editor. So "reading Gordon Lish" requires looking beyond his novels and stories proper.

Criticism and the Lish Program

Lish's visibility as a figure of literary importance peaked from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, a span during which several academic and popular articles about his work as a writer, teacher, and editor were published. But this broad interest subsequently subsided, and even though much of his published fiction appeared later, it has drawn little response. The general consensus in, roughly speaking, the mid-1980s: Lish was influential, his teaching methods were polarizing, and the writers he taught and successfully promoted could be called Minimalists.70 Since then, to make a reductive but useful generalization, most writing about Lish has fallen along two lines, neither of which takes the form of academic criticism. First, essays in large-circulation publications, including The New York Times and The New Yorker, and accounts in books, such as Carol Polsgrove's It Wasn't Pretty, Folks, but Didn't We Have Fun?: Esquire in the Sixties and Carol Sklenicka's Raymond Carver: A Writer's Life, have dealt with Lish's extensive editing of Raymond Carver's fiction. Second, on blogs and in literary magazines, in addition to weighing in on Lish's teaching and editing, commentators have
asserted Lish's importance to certain literary communities (which can be roughly indexed through publications such as _elmae_, _Gigantic_, _The New York Tyrant_, and _Unsaid_, among others in the aesthetic line of Lish's _The Quarterly_). What makes Lish significant to these communities is not so much his relatively well-documented influence upon frequently anthologized writers who emerged in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Raymond Carver, Barry Hannah, Amy Hempel, Mary Robison), but more importantly his later support and teaching of innovative and notable writers such as (and not limited to) Brian Evenson, Noy Holland, Michael Kimball, Sam Lipsyte, Gary Lutz, Ben Marcus, Dawn Raffel, Christine Schutt, Lily Tuck, and Diane Williams, who have long been important outside the literary mainstream and have at times found mainstream exposure and success (e.g. several of them have published in high-profile magazines, Tuck has won the National Book Award, and Schutt has been a finalist). An important academic exception to the two main lines of commentary on Lish is Mark McGurl's _The Program Era_, arguably the first academic criticism to analyze Lish since 1990. McGurl provides a sweeping view of post-World-War-II American fiction and writing programs, within which Lish's work is one landmark among many. _The Program Era_ treats Lish primarily in terms of the well-established context of Minimalist fiction exemplified by Raymond Carver. McGurl does, however, take the further steps of analyzing _English Grammar_ (1964), an unusual two-volume textbook Lish wrote when he worked in Palo Alto's Behavioral Research Laboratories, before his high-profile editorial jobs. McGurl discusses the tension demonstrated in _English Grammar_ between artistry and rules--rules required of Lish by his employer as well as rules required of English users by grammar--and links _English Grammar_ to Lish's later fiction-writing classes by referring to both as "programs" marked
by "interactivity" (288-93). One function of my analysis is to build upon these observations, analyzing in the Lish program the interplay between rules for writing and individuals' literary differentiations achieved within the scope of those rules or in response to them.

Consistently, Lish's work has elicited intense, divergent reactions. Former students have provided fiercely positive and negative reflections on his teaching, sometimes in the same sentence.72 Lish has complained of "hatchet piece[s]" from ex-students (Lish, Neubauer 175), while more appreciative students have contributed to at least one festschrift for him (Bauman). Joe David Bellamy's essay "Lifestyle Fiction" (1985) presents one extreme stance on Lish, though perhaps typical in the fact of its extremity, claiming that Lish "has made Alfred Knopf, or at least his corner of it, a citadel of literary Republicanism during his tenure there" (82). The phrase "literary Republicanism" refers, for Bellamy, to American fiction of the late 1970s and the 1980s that "[reacts] against the complexity, intellectuality, self-consciousness, the presumed moral evasiveness, and the polymorphous formalism of the postmodern consciousness" (75). Bellamy argues that Lish "may be responsible for imposing his own evolving tastes on an unsuspecting public," and may be influential "enough to make it rain if he wants it to rain" (82). In the past fifteen years, controversy over Lish's editing of Raymond Carver's earlier short stories has led to further questioning of Lish's professional and aesthetic judgments, though these concerns are posed in a new register, considering not whether Lish is too powerful in the literary world but whether he oversteps propriety or taste specifically in his role as editor of Raymond Carver.73

In 1986, Sven Birkerts framed the discourse on Lish by opposing Bellamy's
"Lifestyle Fiction" to Amy Hempel's "Captain Fiction" (1984); Birkerts calls the latter "worshipful" (Birkerts 253). Though "Captain Fiction" is mostly laudatory, it acknowledges dissent: "Most of us feel that Lish knows in his bones what good fiction in about. One or two feel that he is full of shit" (Hempel 127). If Lish imposes his taste, Hempel reveals, he does so with limited success, polarizing even the students who went to some trouble to learn from him. And the antagonism among students who continued, after all, to attend Lish's classes was regularly eclipsed by that of the critics of Minimalism who, as David Seabrook puts it, viewed Lish as "the grey eminence behind . . . literary anorexia" (Seabrook 124).

Assertions about the conservativism of Lish's taste and the magnitude of his influence, such as Bellamy's, mostly disappeared by the mid-1990s, after Lish's firing from Alfred A. Knopf in 1994 and the ceasing of The Quarterly's publication in 1995. No longer editing, except in the occasional capacity of a guest-editor, Lish eventually stopped teaching and stopped publishing (Krupp's Lulu, his most recent book of fiction, appeared in 2000), and accordingly he received less interest from the press (at least in traditional print media) and from scholars. The controversy involving Raymond Carver conveyed upon Lish a subsequent wave of higher visibility, but what notoriety it brought him has differed from the sort that occasioned Bellamy's and Birkerts's criticisms, which address the possibility of his holding a dangerously large share of literary clout. Lish's falling in and out of the public eye since the mid-1980s makes Bellamy's stance inadequate to a longer, updated view of Lish's career.

Characterizations such as Bellamy's were largely based on the fast success of some of the so-called Minimalists whose fiction Lish edited, such as Carver, Hannah,
Hempel, and Robison, and on the fact that his students sometimes went on to publish through him at Knopf (though of the writers mentioned above, only Hempel took Lish's classes--most of his students who published remain less celebrated). In contrast, the early publications (e.g., stories in The Quarterly and collections at Knopf) of writers with whom Lish worked later went mostly ignored. Even in the cases of those writers such as Evenson and Marcus, whom Lish championed and who made names for themselves relatively quickly, their respective modes of writing are never grouped under the usual labels associated with Carver's and Robison's work (e.g., Minimalism, K-Mart Realism, Dirty Realism).

It is true that Lish's editing position accelerated the advancement of some writers' careers, and surely some students took his classes at least partly in hope of finding publication. In a 1986 article for the magazine Spy, Mimi Kramer compares the students to "young hoofer trying to break into show business" (36). Although Lish has said that his goal as an editor is "to raise levels of acclaim" (Hempel 92), he differentiates acclaim from financial success when, in an early 1990s interview with Alexander Neubauer, he laments that the "temptations of the marketplace" divert his students from focusing on the "moral requirement" that he demands of them (169), the difficult and risky excavation of "those objects in themselves which have the greatest potency (165). Divorcing the goal of acclaim entirely from the marketplace might seem unlikely, if we assume that acclaim requires readership and that readership in turn requires publication. However, Lish is not simply disingenuous in claiming to value art over market--at Esquire, he often promoted fiction from little-known writers that was unpopular among the rest of the staff (Polsgrove 240-45), and the books he oversaw at Knopf often sold poorly. In conflict are
the authority lent Lish by his position as a gatekeeper to the publishing world and his admonishments against market-oriented (including literary market-oriented) writing. The relationship between Lish and Raymond Carver illustrates this complexity. Lish's changes to Carver's stories made them less conventional and perhaps less conventionally acceptable in the market, yet Lish's positions at *Esquire* and Knopf allowed him uncommon leeway in supporting whatever aesthetics he chose. Accepting Lish's changes was Carver's ticket to trade-press publishing--first under a Lish-edited imprint of McGraw-Hill, which published *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please* (Sklenicka 272)--and we can only wonder whether Carver would have responded differently to such an active editorial hand from a less-renowned editor at a smaller press. Certainly Carver had other significant supporters among the literati--he was, for instance, given a one-year faculty appointment at the Iowa Writers' Workshop before the publication of his first short-story collection, on the basis of a story submitted for the Iowa Short Fiction Award (Sklenicka 247)--so just how necessary Lish was to Carver's career is not easy to determine, but Lish did help Carver find publication.

And what of Lish's conservatism? Birkerts argues against Bellamy's reductive "literary Republicanism" by dividing the writers Lish has edited into "camps" (257), only some of which prove continuous with Minimalism. For Birkerts, even if, "from a certain angle, taking a tight noon-hour squint, one can discern a common style" among fiction from the "School of Lish" (262), this fiction's tendency to the "slight" is a characteristic less of the Lish school in particular than of the day's predominant fashion (256). In the years since Birkerts's essay, Lish's own publications have presented him as--far from a conservative force--an important voice of the avant-garde. The paratextual components
(e.g., biographical information, cover design, blurbs, etc.) of Lish's editions published by Four Walls Eight Windows situate his writing and influence fully within a framework of innovation, and to a moderated extent this is also the case with his *Collected Fictions* published by OR Books in 2010. The solitary blurb, from Frank Lentricchia, on the hardcover jacket back of Lish's *Arcade: Or How to Write a Novel* simply calls Lish "America's true avant-garde artist," and the back jacket flap (of multiple Four Walls Lish hardcovers, including *Arcade*) claims for him a place "at the forefront of the American literary scene." Bellamy's characterizations of a Lish-centered "Literary Republicanism" or "Lifestyle Fiction" do not foresee the frequent outrageousness and occasional linguistic sprawl of later Lish-circle publications such as Evenson's *Altmann's Tongue* (in which one story begins, "Having sewn Jarry's eyelids shut, Hébé found himself at a loss as to how to proceed" [109]) and Lutz's *Stories in the Worst Way* (consider the long opening sentence of "The Bride")--both books dedicated to Lish. One could claim, though, that the actual fiction of an early Lish-circle writer such as Barry Hannah predicts these directions, even if the labels applied to that fiction by critics do not. What all of the writers whose emergences have been connected with Lish, across the writerly generations, arguably do have in common is a primary focus on sentence construction. Even so, it is difficult to determine whether beyond a given case this sentence-level attention should be attributed to Lish, or whether on the other hand writers already deeply engaged with sentences tended to gravitate to Lish's classes.

About twenty-five years after the publication of Bellamy's, Birkerts's, and Hempel's appraisals of Lish's teaching and editing, our vantage lets us recognize that while Lish's pedagogy--including his teaching methods and their rationales--has remained
remarkably consistent, the writers Lish has taught and supported range from realists to fabulists, seemingly conventional storytellers (though traditional dramatic arcs are rare) to risky experimenters. Janet Kauffman's oeuvre on its own runs these gamuts; Birkerts's characterization of her early fiction as "domestic portraits" (255) does not suggest the adventurousness of what would follow. If Lish has pushed a style or mode, it has not simply been the Minimalism once assumed. We should consider how the "School of Lish" has produced writing various enough to receive, in some cases, prominent reviews in general-audience publications, and in other instances, as exemplified by Lish's own fiction (as well as that of, especially, Marcus and Williams), to be called avant-garde.

We can understand Gordon Lish as the programmer of a self-operative algorithm for literary production. I call this algorithm, as it is enacted and represented, the *Lish program*.\(^8^0\) When students sign up for Lish's classes, they are signing up for a program of study or a program of structured activities (McGurl, analyzing institutional writing programs, uses "program" in these senses). And when Lish speaks over the several-hour course of a class session, or at a reading engagement such as the one at which he improvises the narrative published as *My Romance*, his presentation is another sort of program--a performance or show. But in proposing to understand Lish's pedagogy as a program, I mean foremost a *program* in the sense of a series of steps designed to lead to a particular result. In this sense, Lish provides an algorithm for the writing of fiction. The algorithm produces or guides the process of textual production, but because it is written or coded in English rather than a language of mathematical symbols, a high level of ambiguity attends the directions for each algorithmic step as well as the method of applying each step to the work-in-progress at hand. This ambiguity explains how Lish
can elaborate for many hours about a few basic principles and methods: the built-in imprecision of language allows for endless discourse about, and demonstration of, an algorithm designed and presented in the selfsame language. Because of interpretive variance, writers come to different conclusions about how to proceed according to the algorithm's steps, if indeed they choose to follow it. Amplifying or exacerbating the ambiguity of Lish's procedure for writing is the fact that it has no meta-rules; no clear boundary or framework contains it. Unlike a computer algorithm, there is no necessary and consistent differentiation between hardware and software, or among computer, code, and information. The Lish algorithm is not merely self-reflexive (or self-referential)—it is self-operative, able to act upon and alter itself. Put differently, following it does not necessitate sticking to first-order operations but can mean breaking down the frameworks that contextualize and delimit those operations. In this program of literary work, everything is literary, including the person/persona "Gordon Lish" and the interactive performance that transpires in the classroom. The Lish program's ambiguity and open-endedness make it possible that Lish's students can follow it in multiple ways and also that any student who responds to it—even through resistance or refusal—can be understood in some sense to be following it. 81

For creative writing studies, Lish's pedagogy is of interest for a few reasons. It has generated responses—student work—of notable repute and startling diversity. It looks little like the ubiquitous Iowa-modeled workshop. 82 It serves as an example of an algorithmic pedagogy, which leads student writers to practice a sort of literary know-how that other pedagogies would not. Furthermore, this algorithm inspires variance of process among students who interpret and enact its steps differently, and it mutates through its self-

162
operative recursivity, so that it actually enables a number of potential writing processes. It is not necessary for a creative writing instructor to adopt or adapt Lish's particular program in implementing an algorithmic pedagogy, but studying Lish's program can yield insights for the more general use of algorithms in the creative writing classroom and curriculum.

Interpreting a Program from Fragments

A digression is in order to acknowledge that I frame and analyze the Lish program through a necessarily limited body of texts. Only Lish knows firsthand the total content of his years of lectures, and relatively early on he forbade audio recordings of his classes that might make even a single session in its entirely accessible for analysis. Of course, relying on a handful of accounts of a given series of class sessions to represent two decades of teaching is reductive. Lish could elaborate at length on any of his statements paraphrased or quoted herein, and he probably has done so while lecturing. George Carver evidences as much when he relates how Lish poses a brief question, "How do you go to the instrument and strike a note newly?" (italics Carver's) and follows "with a half-hour definition of what the question asked," then "over the next three days, continuing for nearly twenty hours in six to eight hour stretches . . . in great rhetorical swathes and in minute detail . . . [answers] his question" (Part I). The reductions I make in generalizing about Lish's classes and ideas (based mostly on interviews and students' accounts) may be dramatic. Moreover, I conflate Lish's classes, whereas he tells Neubauer, "[i]t's hard to give you a picture of these classes. I mean, they're different in every instance--every class from every other class" (168). Finally, examining fiction written by a number of writers
in the Lish circle and analyzing how this fiction speaks to the Lish program would be ideal but would require a book- rather than article-length study.\textsuperscript{83}

Yet I insist that enough is publicly known of the Lish program that one need not join Lish's class to analyze his pedagogy. Academic Lish criticism might, moreover, encourage the publication of further information about Lish's classes from former students. The main reason for confidence in the possibility of analyzing the Lish program is the persistence of a few basic principles and methods (in the program, these methods are often called \textit{tactics}) at its center. Lish describes his compositional process to Rob Trucks as "writing the same mark over and over and over again" (Lish, "A Conversation" 100). It is with such methodical repetition that he teaches by justifying, explaining, and especially demonstrating a few fundamental priorities and processes. When discussing \textit{recursion} and \textit{torque} with Alexander Neubauer, Lish notes: "there are sophistications in this procedure which can keep us seated here in an exchange for months without having touched the right ones" (159). But without delving into these "sophistications," Lish is still able to convey their basis in a reasonably straightforward way--a basic sense of the core programmatic points is enough to work with. Lish's central "Tactics of Fiction" referred to by Hempel (91, 93) are discussed prominently in interviews from the 1990s and in memoirs of Lish's classes as recent as George Carver's (2000); there is remarkable consistency to Lish's fundamental teachings. Most crucially for the following pages, the tactic of \textit{torque} and the principle of \textit{tension} remain stable if not identical from text to text, year to year. The ways in which Lish imparts his principles and tactics and through which he allows his students only tightly constrained voicings during class appear similarly constant.
Open-Ended Self-Alteration

In calling the Lish program a self-operative algorithm, I claim that through recursive steps it can alter itself. Severely rule-bound classroom practices suggest, however, that the Lish program is anything but open to change. Lish's limiting of student participation during class serves to maintain the program's constancy by minimizing the possibility of student feedback through which challenges to the program could emerge and threaten it. When Lish allows students to speak, each may read a single sentence of what he or she has written before Lish decides whether the student may read another. At any point Lish can deny the student further voice, and usually he does so after only one sentence. Besides this small window permitting students to read single sentences from their work, and more sentences only with permission, students must keep silent, refraining from commenting and questioning, while Lish lectures for hours (Bowman; Callis; George Carver; Kramer 38, 40; Lish, "Magnificence" 43). This unbalanced pattern of voicing implies that students must write precisely as Lish tells them to write, or near enough for him to grant them more reading time; otherwise they must write outside the scope of the Lish program altogether, which would obviate their paid attendance in the class. The exception--effective subversion condensed into a single opening sentence--seems practically impossible, especially given the class's high cost and unbalanced distribution of authority. Combativeness and tension, moreover, are crucial aspects of the program, and it is not obvious what it would mean to subvert these. Thus the structure of Lish's class sessions and the specificity of the compositional process he teaches understandably lead some to conclude that his classes threaten to promote a narrow or
monolithic range of writing.

As a fiction editor, often editing writers who have been his students, Lish similarly maintains maximal control. His editing of Raymond Carver's manuscripts is infamously nervy. Sklenicka summarizes the editing of Carver's 1981 collection published as *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*: "[W]hole pages of stories were excised. . . . Main characters became nameless. Secondary characters nearly disappeared. Landscapes and weather were gone. Endings that tended toward epiphany vanished" (356-57). Though Carver was not a student in Lish's class, the Lish-Carver relationship illustrates Lish's investment in aesthetic control, and it suggests how, in and beyond the classroom, Lish insists on limiting how his algorithm can be interpreted and enacted. Even so, the Lish program has managed to produce writing of enough variety to spur Birkerts's "camps," enough variety to include both Lish's own "avant-garde" work and fiction such as Hempel's large-press, anthology-friendly publications. When students follow the Lish algorithm, especially in doing so beyond the scope of direct contact with Lish as teacher or editor, their writing extends in unpredictable directions. To consider more carefully the production of such variety means reading the program closely.

Despite the Lish program's apparent regulative strictness, it is possible to read the program against itself and to discover a contradictory pattern of relations among its writing principles and methods. This pattern indicates that the program actually calls for its own undoing; applying the program's own logic to itself encourages and even demands such a reading. The very constraints posed include the means of their own fruitful dissolution. The keys to this process are Lish's tactics of *consecution* and *swerve*—"the consecution being the business of creating new sentences from elements of prior
sentences; the swerve, the process of deforming of what was prior so as to avoid predictability in the work" (George Carver, Part II). Swerve in the Lish program also goes by the names torque and combat (Lish, Neubauer 159). Lish describes torque as the productive conflict that takes place at each of a series of steps, the conflict at each step making the next step possible.\textsuperscript{85}

\textit{[O]n the one hand one finds the origins for one's current utterance in what is prior, but one is always in a combative relation with what is prior. And this combat, this torque, must issue forth sentence by sentence or utterance by utterance by utterance. One can construe the parts of the composition as sentences if one wishes, or as paragraphs, or as other kinds of units, entirely depending on the steepness of the arc one is in search of.} (Lish, Neubauer 159)

The possibility of "other kinds of units" occurs as the third member in a series beginning with "sentences," followed by "paragraphs" in the second position. The order suggests, without requiring, that the "other kinds of units" be larger than paragraphs. Their scale appears limitless: chapters, books, or ouevres within literary lineages. Lish's revision of his earlier fiction in the revised editions published by Four Walls Eight Windows and in \textit{Collected Fictions}, and his interest in Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence" (Lish, "A Conversation" 91), hint that such large-scale, arguably combative relationships align with the Lish program in creating torque.\textsuperscript{86}

Furthermore, these "other kind of units" might take forms beyond ink on paper, through human action taken generally (rather than literal writing) against a backdrop of living possibility (rather than paper or a computer screen). Lish connects the tactics of writing to those of living: "It is not enough to be adroit at the composition of sentences; one must be adroit at living a life in the face of the prospects of defeat" (Lish, Neubauer 156). He gestures to the importance of torque in the process of living when he asks his
students to share their secrets and adds, "the best secrets are those that dismantle your own sense of yourself" (Hempel 91). Lish effectively tells his students to apply torque to their familiar personas. His stating, only after students have told their secrets, that these secrets may be invented (Hempel 91) further contributes to the students' acts of dismantling by troubling the normative boundaries between "reality" and "fiction."

The inextricability of Lish's own persona as a teacher and speaker from the narrators of his fiction makes possible an exemplification of simultaneous combat with and carriage of the extant focal point, or what Lish terms the object (George Carver Part II; Lish, Neubauer 161). Lish claims: "I'm my object. I'm my character. I've got no other. I don't believe in any other," and "[e]verything I do is an effort to remake myself" (Lish, "A Conversation" 123, 97), and to the extent that we believe him, we observe his principles of composition as aimed simultaneously on and beyond the page, as a sort of fractal—the torquing movement is reproduced at multiple levels. By making himself his object, Lish can apply tactics of fiction to his beyond-the-page, "real" identity. In other words, Lish is always "literary," as much so as his fiction is, including when he teaches and edits. Likewise, he speaks of students' "selves" and "objects" almost interchangeably (Lish, Neubauer 167) and teaches students to apply the same tactical process to their writing and beyond it: "I can establish their vision of what the composition is, and I can sharpen their possession of themselves as persons able to arrive at solutions for every potentiality" (Lish, Neubauer 164). The Lish program presents writing as a mode of problem solving, an operation by which "to arrive at solutions", though these in turn become part of a new problem. 87 Writing is a lie (Lish, Neubauer 161) that simultaneously engages and produces problems:
[A]s you go forward in an act of composition, as you accrue sentences, accrue utterances, that theme becomes infinitely complex. There are an infinite number of moves for every number of moves. The artifact that you are struggling to achieve answers you at every unitary step with a widening array of moves. And you have to therefore find ever more complex solutions. So as the lie exfoliates, it becomes compounded exponentially. (Lish, Neubauer 162)

If, as Lish indicates, literary composition (writing) and self-composition (living) operate in the same manner, then life can be mapped as an ongoing game of making strategic "moves" that counter each most recent obstacle posed by the self (the object) in the aftermath of one's previous move.

When Lish says that "the lie" of literary composition "exfoliates," he alludes to the preoccupation with his body, more specifically with his skin and the psoriasis that ails it, that occasions his story "The Psoriasis Diet." Torque--recursive dismantling--is in play in several ways both within "The Psoriasis Diet" itself and in the story's relationship to the larger contexts of Lish's literary oeuvre and his life. Torque occurs within the story's narrative, across its revisions, in its relation to the narrative "In Reality," and in relation to the physical body. David Seabrook insightfully connects the logic of psoriasis to the logic of the story's narration: "This is figuration as disfigurement in which each sentence spoken is another skin sloughed" (125). The opening of "The Psoriasis Diet" is as good a passage as any to read for examples of torque--recursive verbal scratchings whereby each consecutive verbal development (a sentence or a segment of one) updates and replaces what has led to it, metaphorically skin-sloughing.

Here is how the story begins in the first published version of What I Know So Far (1984):

I don't know about your first lesion, but let me tell you about mine. It was just itching when it started, just a tiny itching place, a little dot is all.
My mother said it was a bee-sting or something like that which got me. It wasn't. But everybody said so right up to the time it got as big as a dime, and then they all said if only it was a dime again. Because it wasn't long before it was a quarter and a bigger quarter and then a half-dollar. *Psoriasis.* (94)

The comma in the opening sentence breaks it neatly in half. The first clause of the sentence is a hook, establishing a mystery (i.e., what is there to know about the lesion of the addressee?), which turns out to be a false lead when we encounter the second clause. The narrator does not really care about the addressee's lesion--if indeed the narrator addresses a particular person, psoriasis-sufferer or not ("you" serves at times in "The Psoriasis Diet" as a colloquial alternative to the pronoun "one," at other moments indicating a reader or listener)--and we understand that "your first lesion" is not the narrator's topic but his springboard to discussing his own lesion. The second sentence, while logically following the first, revises the label "lesion"--it is now "just itching"--then revises twice more: a "place," a "dot." Concretely, the same symptom is continually discussed (consecution is in effect), but verbally its identity changes (swerve). The rest of the paragraph describes a series of corrections in the identification and description of the lesion: it is a "bee-sting," then not necessarily a bee-sting but "something like that"; then "[i]t wasn't"; yet "everybody said so" until they no longer did; finally it becomes coin-like, but the coin's type and size are continually reevaluated. This paragraph-long pattern of staccato correctives is one manifestation of Lish's torque.

The revisions of "The Psoriasis Diet" both increase torque within the narrative and produce another level of torque in the transition from version to version. Here is the opening of "The Psoriasis Diet" as revised for *What I Know So Far's* 1996 edition:

I don't know about your first lesion, but let me tell you about mine. It was just itching when it started, just a tiny itching region, a little dot is all.
My mother said it was the sting of like an insect or like of something like that which made it itch. It wasn't. Everybody said it was something like that which made it itch right up until the time it got as big as a dime, and then they all after that started saying after that if only it was the size of a dime again. Because it wasn't long before it was a quarter and a bigger quarter and then a half-dollar they were all saying it was the size of.

It was money.
It was psoriasis.

Psoriasis. (137)

While the revision includes some cutting and some paragraph-combining, the most tangible change, which is observable in this passage, is the insertion of additional phrases. These are mostly superfluous in terms of the established narrative action but are important sonically, increasing the frequency and density of repetition among phrases ("something like that"; "which made it itch"; "after that"), words, ("like") and sounds ("place" becomes "region," rhyming with "lesion"; "got me" becomes "made it itch," rhyming with "which"). These additions give the narrator's voice a clumsier, less classically literary, more improvisational quality ("they were all saying it was the size of"), and they bring the rhythm of the narration closer to the process of a mind at work: a mind qualifying, hesitating, and lurching.

The insertion in this version of the two three-word paragraphs--"It was money" and "It was psoriasis"--emphasizes the open-endedness of "it" as a placeholder. "It" is psoriasis but not only psoriasis, a trope whose broad applicability is stressed by a sentence new to the second edition that appears in the story's middle: "It turns out to be all one big spot of it--the dictionary, your skin, probably everything" (138). The juxtaposition of "the dictionary" and "your skin" suggests the continuity of language and the body for Lish (Lish, "A Conversation" 93). What encapsulates "probably everything" is the process of scratching--whether with words or fingernails, the process of
composition that Lish teaches, scratching yet another term for torque. This sentence, especially in the phrase "one big spot" recalls Lish's representation of psoriasis in My Romance, in which he cites the importance of drugs "to keep me from having lesions all over me until I am nothing but one big lesion again" (20). Psoriasis can "cover [Lish] all up completely" (My Romance 20), taking him over physically and figuratively, and it is not merely a surface condition but one inseparable from his inside, core, or heart: "Just the itching, there was no end to it. Even when you had torn all the skin off, it was still down there somewhere, so that you just kept clawing at yourself until you were sort of all ripped open but still itching" (My Romance 56). The ironic cure that the narrator of 'The Psoriasis Diet' offers is "Eat your heart out, sucker!" (96 1st ed.; 139 1996 ed.; italics Lish's). Eating one's heart out, as a (non-) solution to psoriasis, functions on multiple levels of meaning. There is the idiomatic level, according to which the cure is no solution but a rug pulled from under one's feet. At the concrete level, the cure works but demands self-destruction—if the itch of psoriasis is always "still down there somewhere," at (or as) the heart, then death is the only relief. Another register yields the suggestion that nourishment can be found, perversely, in suffering—the narrator goes on to indicate as much, after a deadpan admission that "you" might not want this cure: "I can understand that. Some people just don't want to be worse off. I didn't, either, until I decided I was" (96 1st ed.; "that" becomes "this" in the revised edition [14]). And in a crucial sense, there is a hope the cure may be available in language's realm of expansive possibility. This is the miracle cure of altering the body through words. "With your language, you are looking for a new heart," George Carver learns from Lish (Part III, italics Carver's), who evokes a page supplemental to the body, a page through which the heart might be lost or
 replaced.

In turn, "The Psoriasis Diet," ostensibly fictional, is cited in the final short

narrative in the collection Self-Imitation of Myself, titled "In Reality"--a text whose title

and unique formatting within the context of the collection signal it as non-fictional.\textsuperscript{89 90}

The relation of "The Psoriasis Diet" to "In Reality" is one of torque: the latter text

narrates Lish's finding a cure for theretofore incurable psoriasis through a briefly

available product called Skin-Cap, in which, it soon comes to light, "is some rogue

component . . . that can kill you" ("In Reality" 332-33). The premise of "The Psoriasis

Diet" is initially shown to be outdated in "In Reality," only to be restored with all the

more relevance and stability. The torque of "In Realty" includes the dismantling of the

distinction between art and reality not only as it applies to its own few pages but also to

"The Psoriasis Diet," to (by extension) the rest of Lish's published fiction, and to bodily

suffering. "In Reality," as its title hints, addresses its own relationship with fiction: "How

on earth does any of this bear on the matter of fiction? Well, it's a story, is it not? And if

it isn't, then what--as far as I could possibly be earnestly concerned--is? Oh but you must

not tell me art is the art of the insincere" (333). Whether "reality" or "fiction," Lish sees it

all as art, all as story, physical reality connecting with narrated reality and narrated fiction

through a compositional circuit of recursion, a circuit that includes and bears on the body.

Repeatedly, Lish links writing to the writer's body: "the body is continuous with the

sentence at its best" (Lish, "A Conversation" 93); "What I want is some kind of

sufficiency in reply to the incommensurable insult of death" (Lish, "A Conversation" 92);

and Lish experiences teaching as his most rewarding activity because, as a teacher, "I

come closer to getting myself shed of what I don't like about myself" (Lish, Neubauer
Exfoliation, as writing and as the performance of teaching, represents control over the physically uncontrollable, a move made to address the capriciousness of the afflicted, mortal body. In art's extension of the writer's materiality beyond the body to the sturdier page, "art is the only escape. . . . the only pretense that has any durability" (Lish, Neubauer 173). This suspension of conventional boundaries between fiction and bodily reality, coupled with the persistence of Lish's fictional tactics, designates the physical world to be no less fictional than is a narrative product of imagination. And the tactics applied to "reality" and those applied to "fiction" become inextricable in a recursive process of grand-scale dismantling: As George Carver quotes Lish, "Nothing is fiction. Everything is fiction" (Part III, italics Carver's). No boundaries limit the application of Lish's literary algorithm. In addition to My Romance, the photographs of Lish on the front covers of his Four Walls Eight Windows books speak to this condition of thoroughgoing literariness. On one level these headshots of Lish simply tag or label the books. But the photographs also create an effect by which Lish's head appears to rise out of the books, the pages therein figured as textual bodies--parts of the Lish corpus.

Discrepancy and Tension

Lish's vision of such a thoroughly permeating dismantling process calls into question his reliability. If Lish develops his "sense of self" through his tactics of fiction--if his teaching, editing, embodied persona is as fictionally produced as his fiction's narrators (no more, no less, and to an indeterminable extent)--then his authority appears dubious, especially where it takes the form of consistent insistences, assertions of that which goes un-dismantled. Can we believe Lish? Some discrepancies suggest that we
cannot. As Birkerts points out, the achievements of Lish's model writer Harold Brodkey--as might be said of other favorites Don DeLillo, Cynthia Ozick, and Cormac McCarthy (Lish, "A Conversation" 91-92)--seem not to align with Lish's idea of unit-by-unit torque. We can grant Birkerts's aesthetic observations without necessarily agreeing with his interwoven value judgments: "Where Brodkey's prose aims at grandeur, at a dynamic totality that can embrace ideas, psychological motivations, moral and spiritual questioning, Lish's progeny come across almost without exception as purveyors of the slight and fragmented. They are sculptors of sentences rather than worlds" (Birkerts 255). Perhaps Lish's ideal of torque at multiple levels, as implied by his advice to "dismantle your own sense of yourself" in addition to combating sentence or paragraph units, approaches "a dynamic totality," but this totality would be a happy byproduct rather than a primary goal, since he insists that only one unit of recursion (sentences, paragraphs, etc.) be in operation at a time, a unit which "[depends] on the steepness of the arc one is in search of." Furthermore, an ideal based on recursion would seem dynamically limited in the sense that it provides no relief from compositional recursivity. If, as Birkerts writes, "Lish . . . is the paradigmatic Lish author" (257), if his own fiction exemplifies the work of his program, then a gap between Lish's paradigm and his models marks either his unreliability or the difficulty of communicating the program's ideals in language.

On a similar note, the very reasons that Lish interests students may be unrelated to the tactics, such as torque, that he professes and supposedly demonstrates. Although ex-student George Carver perceives a useful overlap between the information and method of Lish's discourse--"If you paid attention not just to what Lish was saying, but how he said it, you could see how one might walk the path" (Carver Part II)--the appeal of Lish's
language is evident even where torque is not in effect, for instance in "A Kind of Magnificence," which was the title given by Harper's to a private letter from Lish to prospective students that the magazine published in 1990. Lish subsequently sued the magazine for "copyright infringement, false representation, libel, and 'tortious infliction of emotional distress'" (Weber), the latter three charges based on the fact that about half of the letter was deleted, without ellipses, when published (Reske). Lish contended that the deletions made him appear foolishly pompous ("Names in the News"). The letter is important for my purposes if we assume that the deletions Harper's made have ruined whatever sentence-to-sentence torque Lish originally achieved. The letter as published begins, "It is absolutely unacceptable to me that this term not prove to be our most heroic yet" (Lish, "Magnificence" 38), and this opening claim does not appear to be opposed or mitigated subsequently by torque. But the letter's language remains potentially attractive to aspiring writers, as a sample passage demonstrates: "It is, in the opinion of some, a kind of magnificence, this class--and it confers, many claim, a kind of magnificence upon those who have managed to make their way from start to finish. Swell" ("Magnificence" 43). The parallel logic on each side of the dash (i.e., "it," verb, comma, qualification, "a kind of magnificence," completion), intensified by a vagueness ("a kind of magnificence") made palpable by repetition, plus the grandiosity of the statement punctuated by the colloquial reversal "Swell"--all this manifests a serious playfulness conceivably attractive to aspiring writers for reasons having little to do with the Lish program's tactics of consecution and swerve. Despite Lish's libel claim, his ostentatiousness, as the published letter conveys it, can easily be read as an intentionally over-the-top and entertaining performance, another source of intrigue for the letter's
recipients.

If there is a disconnection between reasons why students might take Lish's classes and the primary tactics for writing fiction that the classes teach, this disconnection is important insofar as it reveals a desired, ironic tension between Lish's stated and demonstrated values. Hempel remarks on a regular Lish student who seems fascinated by Lish's quick analyses of writers' personalities through their sentences. According to the Lish program, writing can be risky, which appeals to other students; Anderson Ferrell says that learning from Lish "made [writing] dangerous, and, therefore, worthwhile" (Hempel 93). Perhaps some student interest develops through curiosity over Lish's more puzzling claims and rationales. The following anecdote from George Carver serves as evidence:

Lish's ear: a heavy-set man in his twenties submits the following: "The kid's name was Bummer and we stole his house." Lish dismisses the sentence as predictable, its predictability augmented by the conjunction. He moves on to someone else's sentence, then abruptly stops and returns to the blackboard. He has an idea for an opening. He writes the following: "The kid's name was Bummer and we stole his name." (Part II, italicized in source)

In the context of the class, given Lish's emphasis on recursive torque, whereby a writer composes by renewing and struggling against already composed elements, Lish's preference that the student's sentence end with a repetition of "name" rather than introduction of "house" seems at once exemplary and predictable. "Name" becomes more predictable than "house" to the degree that recursion defines the contexts (e.g., the Lish program and the student-writer's work) in which the two words appear. Why "house" would be more predictable than "name" remains mysterious, at least without further information. The anecdote does point to reasons why students might take Lish's class,
entirely aside from improving their fiction: suspense at how Lish will react to student writing, and interest in his unpredictable analyses. Such curiosity about Lish's persona partly explains Arcade's back jacket flap, which states, "[a] kind of mythology has accumulated around the person and work of GORDON LISH." A kind of mythology, a kind of magnificence: to the extent that students perceive these claims to be true, or want to evaluate them firsthand, the claims threaten to overshadow the act of writing as the basis for taking the classes. Lish insists that his students follow a specific method of writing (albeit one that can be implemented variously) in torque, but he sways his audience with a rhetorical and performative palette alternative to this method. There are two important complications, however, in evaluating the consistency of Lish's methods as he discusses and demonstrates them. First, we can read Lish as attempting a paradoxical swerving from the tactic of torque, applying torque by combating (thus maintaining) it. Second, the role of tension (a term found in one of Hempel's quotations of Lish in "Captain Fiction") in the Lish program encourages this paradox. Tension invites and values contradiction; torque in the self-operative algorithm is applied to itself, necessitating contradiction.

In stringing together a series of evidences that Lish "knows . . . what a story is," Hempel quotes Lish on the role of tension in storytelling. Lish states: "A story arises out of the tension between two or more equally persuasive, appealing values or feelings as they try to occupy the same place at the same time. That they be equal in appeal is the key" (Hempel 92). Since the Lish program insists upon the continuity of artistic composition with the composition of living, tension can be seen as fundamental not just to "story" on paper but also to Lish's behavior, including how he leads students to
respond to him--for Lish effectively invites them to enter with him into a relationship of tension. While Hempel does not discuss tension further, and while it is not a term Lish emphasizes, I stress it because it is a useful, elastic notion that can explain discrepancies in the Lish program that I have drawn attention to--that the models he holds up do not clearly suggest the use of the algorithm promoted by Lish and manifested in the fiction of the Lish program's writers, and that the tactics he posits as crucial are not necessarily the part of the program that appeals to his students. The principle of tension can account for further discrepancies: for instance, Lish insists on the importance of both truth-telling and lying. When Patricia Lear, interviewing Lish, praises him for being "genuine and real" in the classroom, Lish surmises that "it may all be the teacher's device. One doesn't know. It may all be an act. I don't know what I do when I'm teaching" (Lish "Interview with Gordon Lish" 61). The sheen of truth can be a fabrication--just as the dark "secrets" Lish compels his students to tell do not, he reveals after these secrets' airing in class, "have to be true" (Hempel 91). Mimi Kramer compiles a list of "pronouncements" made by Lish in class, arranging them to contrast the (faux-) earnest against the (faux-) perfidious:

Speak so God will hear you, because your heart is pure!
Exploit anyone and everyone you can!
Never be petty, rancid or unclean!
Everybody's a whore: we're all spreading our legs for something! [. . .]
Everything is bullshit anyway: the only truth is that which issues from the heart spontaneously! [. . .] (40)

The "bullshit anyway" line establishes tension all by itself; its first claim calls its second claim directly into question.

The way Lish selectively identifies with his published output illustrates the structural inescapability of torque and tension, taken together. Lish has written entire books not claimed or named as his own: "I wrote about twenty books before [Dear Mr.
Capote: A Novel], under other names, and as long as it was under another name, I didn't give a shit what I'd done, what kinds of errors might be in place" (Lish, "A Conversation" 114). Such turns from his public, literary persona (or to that persona, if we understand the "didn't give a shit" books as predating his serious writing) enact the Lish program's basic principle of tension by putting into opposition two writerly identities. Lish can be interpreted as swerving from such a tension in the case of "For Rupert--with No Promises," a story he wrote and originally published anonymously in Esquire during his tenure as its fiction editor. He lauded "Rupert" before (and after) announcing that he wrote it ("Gordon Lish, Fiction Editor"; Mullins). Lish's retrieval of "Rupert" for his named oeuvre reflects, perhaps, his high opinion of the story's merit (in contrast to the books he ghostwrote and wrote pseudonymously), or possibly reflects the fact that it failed to pass as a J. D. Salinger piece (Mullins). Although Lish did not publicly identify as a fiction writer in 1977, when he claimed "Rupert" ("Gordon Lish, Fiction Editor"), the story would become fully integrated into his growing literary corpus, published in What I Know So Far and republished in The Selected Stories of Gordon Lish and Collected Fictions. As "For Rupert--with No Promises" echoes Salinger's "For Esmé--with Love and Squalor," so "Rupert" can be read as a key Lish text that leads to, in a torque-turn, Lish's "For Jeromé--with Love and Kisses." As David Seabrook puts it, the relation of "Rupert" to "Jeromé" is that of "logical proposition" to "emotional outburst" (126). And this relation, as the stories' titles and Salinger references indicate, is palpable.

There is no obvious hierarchy of principles and tactics in the Lish program. If we take tension to be subordinate to torque, then torque can be understood to incorporate tension in the form of the combat or dismantling that takes place at every recursive step.
But supposing that tension is the larger context, containing torque, complicates and illuminates the relationship between Lish and his students. In this case an alternative to torque is called for to balance it, shifting its position from overarching method to one of multiple methods in tension with one another. Lish foresees and demands his own undoing; his tactics promote their own dissolution and maybe ensure it—between the methods of tension and torque, Lish anticipates most possible responses to his teaching. A rebellious student can be described either as contributing to torque by swerving from or combating Lish's algorithm (thus paradoxically following the algorithm at the same time) or as enacting tension such as the Lish program values by using an alternative to torque and thus opposing Lish. There is no boundary preventing the rules from becoming subject to themselves. On the contrary, the Lish program works to dismantle such boundaries. Consequently, anyone responding to the Lish program can be interpreted as following it. The Lish program is a self-operative algorithm in that it encourages—even demands—compositional processes alternative to itself as it is manifested at a given point in time. Upon enactment, these alternatives expand rather than exit the Lish program's scope.

**Rules and Assumptions in Peru**

Birkerts's comment, on Lish's novel *Peru*, that "nothing exists beyond the recursive monody of the narrator's voice and the handful of images that it summons up" (257), does not address the relationship between that "recursive monody" and the situations the narrator describes. My argument has discussed *torque* and *tension* in the Lish program fiction at some length. Lish presents these as rules, and the Lish program makes the roundabout demand that students, to undo, outdo, and surpass Lish, must
combat the rules, even if the combat can never entirely escape the rule-bound domain. Given the importance to the Lish program of the imposition and contestation of rules, *Peru*, in which rules play a pivotal role, invites scrutiny. The narrative follows the adult narrator's memory of being six years old and playing in the sandbox of a boy named Andy Lieblich, whose nanny sets forth rules for their play. When a third boy, Steven Adinoff, plays with them in the sandbox and breaks the nanny's rules, the narrator kills Adinoff. *Peru*'s depiction of the sandbox as a site for competition, governed by the rules the nanny imposes when the children play there, bears on Lish and his students. The sandbox and nanny do not allegorically mirror the classroom and Lish, respectively, but suggest a semi-parallel, meaningfully askew.

The nanny in *Peru* presents herself, and the narrator accepts her as, the authority on the sandbox's rules (Lish *Peru* 12). In addition to rules of conduct, she also provides the structure for the boys' method of play the sandbox: "she was the one who more or less set the game up . . . who always said, which three games she was going to give us to pick from, and . . . who would not ever let us switch to something different, to another game, no matter what" (33). Within the structure of a selected game, the boys have freedom to play or compete, but they never can alter the system that determines how they do so. Within the framework, they may interpret: for example, the narrator believes that although "nobody had gone ahead and said it was a game to begin with . . . there was always a winner" (21). The narrator, not the nanny, insists on the competitive aspect of play in the sandbox, and his certainty echoes Lish's stated belief in the value of competition: "[c]ompetition becomes the dynamic by which all growth takes place. It necessarily follows from the circumstance, one hardly has to inject it" (Lish, Neubauer
172). For Lish, such competition takes place not just among students but between the student and the teacher (Lish, Neubauer 175), whereas Peru's narrator displays total loyalty and trust toward the nanny, the rule-maker, which forecloses any competition that would require conflict. Even though the nanny suspends or breaks her own rules in letting three boys into the sandbox at one time (91), the narrator avoids, or never considers, faulting the nanny; instead, he insists, "I was not the boy who broke the rule" (47) of letting sand leave the sandbox. The narrator insists that another boy--Steven Adinoff--"broke the rule." The reference of the phrase "broke the rule" to the singular rule-breaking of Adinoff's elides the nanny's own rule-breaking. The narrator, as "the boy who kept the rule, and every one of the other rules, too" (47), places all of the fault on Adinoff.

The nanny resembles Lish in that, while choosing and imposing the rules, she also lectures on their importance: "She said that the reason you had to have rules was to keep boys from being flighty and fidgety. She said that if we ourselves were ever in her shoes, that then we would have to have the same rules which she did because what goes up must come down" (98). The nanny's rules may seem effective in that the narrator, when the rules are broken, becomes "flighty and fidgety"--a litotes--to the point that he murders Adinoff. But of course it is the rules themselves that occasion the murder; Adinoff's dumping sand outside of the sandbox incites the narrator precisely because Adinoff breaks a rule. Rules exist, the nanny claims, "to keep things from getting to be all at sixes and sevens for everybody" (34), and the murder functions on one level as an enforcement of this meta-rule. The nanny claims that the boys, in the nanny's position, "would have to have the same rules which she did" (98), which assumes that the sandbox and its rules
will remain unchanged into the future and that only the individuals filling the slots of the relevant roles will change. But the breaking of the rules, as punctuated by the murder, proves irreversible: "there was not really any way for anyone to get all of the sand back up into the sandbox once they had broken the rule . . . and dumped it out" (186). The nanny assumes the persistence of the rules because the assumption that their application will be effective and continual is necessary to their functioning as systemic laws and not just imposed orders--breaking the rules, she suggests, is not merely disrespectful, not even only the end of playing in the sandbox, so much as physically impossible. Thus the nanny can treat the rules of the sandbox as if they are as certain as the rules of gravity: "what goes up must come down." As a figure of authority, the nanny differs from Lish in this important way: she insists on repetition and perpetuation without change, with at most a shift of individuals among positions in a system; he demands recursive torque, a loose repetition whereby the system can evolve.

The distinction between the stability and mutability of rules for the nanny and for Lish, respectively, leads to differences in how competition functions within each of their rule-bound systems. Following the rules of the nanny, the narrator competes to win at sandbox games; in Lish's class, students compete with one another. The narrator of Peru never thinks to play outside the confines of the nanny's sandbox rules or to challenge or blame the nanny for breaking her own rules and letting three boys into the sandbox. He absolutely refuses to question the rules. Lish enforces his own classroom rules by monitoring who gets to speak and for how long, but he encourages students to compete against him and not only one another. Such competition might play out in various ways: according to Lish's rules, Lish can win, a student can win, or one or more students can
play according to different rules (here the paradox of the Lish program emerges), going "outside the box"--the box of sand or the box of the classroom--and nullifying the competition. This last possibility allows for a situation in which no one wins or loses the competition, but the competitors together enact an artistic composition, on and beyond the page, through the torque and/or tension created by their maintenance of, and their combat against, the rules.

**Rewriting the Writing Program**

Looking just below the surface of the Lish program shows that the student, in following the program, must find her own way to resituate Lish's monolithic and extensive lecture content as part of a larger, suspended tension, but that Lish cannot directly tell her how to do so, regardless of whether he consciously or outwardly knows that his program makes such a demand of her. The Lish *program* does make this demand. The program always awaits being recontextualized as part of a broader program, whether by becoming one part of a larger structure of tension or through its paradoxical self-dismantling. Thus, giving a twist to the liar's paradox, Lish urges, "Don't believe me anytime. Don't believe me anytime. I don't think I'm worth believing" (Lish, "A Conversation" 109), putting his audience in a position of ironic uncertainty: to believe or disbelieve Lish is to disbelieve Lish--the only option. Indeed, Lish values irony, equates it with sophistication (Lish, "Magnificence" 43) and is, in an interview with Rob Trucks, "willing to . . . offer, with my comments, the ironic interpretation that they may be completely without value" (97). Repeatedly in his interviews, readings, dust jackets, and fictions, Lish calls for a breaking down of the boundaries between authenticity and
performance. Recall this line from "In Reality": "Oh but you must not tell me art is the art of the insincere" (Self-Imitation of Myself 333). The statement is ambiguous but amounts to an insistence that fiction is no less sincere than non-fiction, and it echoes Lish's demands that his students reveal secrets that need not be true. Lish's exemplary self-destructive, self-renovating moments aside, the fact that he holds and conveys strong views about writing is important because it spurs students to equally strong opposing responses, only thereby positioning them to perform torque, in various ways, against him. Here I will repeat at greater length a quotation from Hempel's Captain Fiction that appears earlier in my argument:

Most of us feel that Lish knows in his bones what good fiction is about. One or two feel that he is full of shit. A few feel that he knows in his bones what good fiction is about and he is full of shit. This is called "learning to entertain contradictions," and Lish observes that it is a valuable thing in fiction--"being in awe of it and being arrogant...not losing that blithe spirit you came in with." (127)

The crucial contradiction to entertain, if we can trust Lish here, is that in trusting him we must also distrust him. This means, for students, that following the Lish program can mean doing other than what Lish says to do. The catch is that Lish is borne in mind, his program necessarily, for those students, part of the equation of composition. The Lish program is shown to be self-operative not explicitly, through Lish's theories or demonstrations, but through the writing of those who seem to have considered and abandoned the program, and who in doing so nonetheless follow it by disbelieving Lish.

The variety of writing to come from the Lish program can include work as popular or as avant-garde as there are ways of balancing, addressing, and overcoming Lish's professed principles and methods of writing. This is always the problem: how to proceed--a problem that applies to any program, for all programs are authoritarian unless,
and except where, a reading and rewriting process takes place that allows the subject to work simultaneously with and against the program's prescriptions. The Lish program shows how a literary algorithm can be productive not so much because it claims to offer a definite, best path to the composition of literature, but because it is--can be read as--mutable, interpretable, and provocative. Multi-hour lectures arguing for specific methods of writing, addressed to serious students, inevitably will generate responses, and the fact that these responses include rejections of the program that induces them can be understood as a success rather than a failure of that program.
CONCLUSION: AIMLESS KNOWING--CREATIVE WRITING AND
COMPOSITION STUDIES

I have argued for making literary know-how--unbounded, enacted knowledge of
writing--the basis for creative writing as a disciplinary sub-field. Chapters One through
Three have focused on the reading of literature for the purpose of deriving new creative-
writing pedagogies, a practice which would make deep connections between literary
studies and creative writing and would further students' literary know-how by making it
possible for them to write in additional, varied ways. The more common angle in creative
writing studies to date has been to work at the intersection between creative writing and
composition, and the question should be raised of how composition fits into my proposed
scheme for a restructured English studies.

A basic question might serve as a useful starting point: What, anyway, is the
difference between composition and creative writing? Criticism in both composition and
creative writing studies attests that at a theoretical level any such difference is far from
definite or obvious. Difference is clearer in how these disciplinary (sub-) fields are
institutionalized, for example in terms of curricular roles, pedagogical conventions, and
expectations for faculty members. But are aspects of the respective institutionalizations of
these fields definitive? In other words, on what basis could creative writing, if it were
imported into a composition classroom, still be identified as creative writing within its
new context? And on what basis could a creative-writing course play a meaningfully
distinct and important role in a composition-centered writing curriculum? Bringing
creative writing into composition could be understood to mean, for example, using workshop pedagogy, asking students to write poems and short stories, emphasizing aesthetics, or encouraging the use of literary devices. But none of this necessarily falls outside composition's own domain. I proceed from the premise that the most important distinctions we can make between composition and creative writing may not be those most familiar or certain--theoretically if not institutionally, perhaps such distinctions cannot be certain--but those that make visible how each field can benefit from the other.

In considering creative writing and composition's potential contributions to each other, I propose the crucial distinction between them to be how they respectively shape the student writer's aims, borne in mind during the process of writing, for the resulting finished text. In composition, students write with relatively specific aims in mind for their textual end-products. Creative writing students frequently strive to produce texts that meet certain criteria, as my chapter on the Iowa workshop model has shown, but these criteria (which both teachers and the students themselves may supply) tend to be less definite than those pursued by composition students. The more that creative writing students understand literature as set of texts dispersed across an open-ended plane of textual possibility rather than as a set of objects that can be readily judged according to convention and craft, the more these students' writing processes approach aimlessness, in that they are not directed toward a preconceived writing product. Despite the word's negative connotations, creative writing's aimlessness may be its most valuable offering to composition. Writing with relatively undefined aims can help students in multiple ways, the most significant being, I argue, the expansion of students' know-how in unanticipatable but valuable directions. Creative writing, in the form of writing
assignments and classes that suspend or shift the aims that inform student writing processes, can be included in a composition course or curriculum as a way to help students become more resourceful, flexible writers by writing beyond the box of clear-cut expectations for writing's final products.

The course- or unit-shaping pedagogical readings of literary works and oeuvres that I have argued for and demonstrated in earlier sections of this book would demand, in all likelihood, too much a commitment of planning, explaining, and implementing to become part of a single undergraduate composition course (e.g., a first-year writing class). In such a course, creative writing either in the traditional sense (of assigned poems and stories) or in a more idiosyncratic but still simple formulation (for example, the use of writing exercises) would provide supplementary alternatives to primary assignments that have relatively definite expectations for end products. At a curricular level, pedagogical interpretations and creative writing courses resulting therefrom could have a place in complementing composition courses.

Coexisting in a curriculum that prioritizes literary know-how, what composition courses offer to creative writing, on the other hand, is a set of contexts in which expectations for student writing are relatively restrictive. Any one of these contexts, given too much weight, would be an obstacle to the orienting of students to write according to an expanding and open-ended array of processes. But when students experience multiple contexts for writing--a class in argumentative and analytical writing one term, a class in community service writing the next, followed by a class in technical writing--then each of these frameworks is relativized by the meta-context of the student's education in college-level writing. Each limiting context becomes an option to be added
to an array of options. Ideally students learn not only to call upon flexible writing practices within a given context (first-order practice) but also to sift, switch among, and blur these contexts (second-order practice), whether through decisions born of conscious analysis (know-that) or through the practitioner's expertise in processes of using language (know-how).

**Disciplinary Distinctions**

Abstracted from their historical and institutional contexts, *composition* and *creative writing* might be synonyms. Writers compose poems and short stories, after all, and it is a frequent declaration in English departments that critical writing--or all writing--is creative. Whether all writing can indeed qualify as creative is a question of definition. Paul Dawson's *Creative Writing and the New Humanities* includes a useful survey of the history of the terms *creativity, creative power, creative imagination*, and *creative writing*, showing that what *creative* means, and whether it refers only to texts conventionally categorized as literature, has varied dramatically over the last three centuries (29-41). Even if a general assumption persists that creative writing deals with the writing of literature--or "pseudo-literature," as Robert Scholes, puts it (5-7)--the meaning of *literature* is wildly debatable, and it is not a category necessarily separable from composition. As a label, though *literature* indicates value, it describes no necessary textual characteristics, even if it suggests possible ones to a given reader. Claims can certainly be made about what *literature* or *literariness* mean, but any number of discrepant definitions would put a given claim into relief.

Shifting the terms by drawing parallels between the relationship of composition
with rhetoric, on one hand, and creative writing with poetics, on the other, offers little clarity. The meaning of *rhetoric* has been variously formulated (Covino and Jolliffe 3-26), and *poetics* refers to such a breadth of theories and practices (as a comparison between, say, Aristotle's poetics and Charles Olson's makes apparent) that it cannot be assumed to refer to any consistently circumscribed range of texts. Each term can apply to genres more commonly associated with the other--for example, as Wayne C. Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* demonstrates, fictional narratives are inevitably rhetorical, in the sense that their writers make decisions about communicating with a reading audience. Moreover, rhetoric and poetics are not neatly distinguishable; Jeffrey Walker's *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* makes an in-depth case that they have been inextricable from the outset (if we mark that outset in Classical Greece). James A. Berlin finds that historically, rhetoric and poetic have each at times been understood to include the other (3). Definitions lead back to the simple claim that composition is what happens in composition classrooms and creative writing is likewise observable in its authorized spaces (e.g., classrooms, colonies, and readings) and in the publications of its faculty members.

Some of the foundational work in creative writing studies addresses the problem that while disciplinary history and structure at multiple levels (e.g., departmental, or in national organizations) divide composition and creative writing, closer interaction could only help them. For example, Wendy Bishop's "Crossing the Lines: On Creative Composition and Composing Creative Writing" (1994) challenges the assumption that only certain kinds of texts fall into each field's province. After surveying critical positions that complicate a conventional association of composition with nonfictional and creative
writing with fictional writing (190-93), Bishop observes, "claims are being raised formally that we can (and should) read non-fiction as non-nonfiction. To me, these claims suggest that some of the deepest categorical assumptions of our writing classrooms and writing research models may be simplistically exclusionary" (192). To "read non-fiction as non-nonfiction" is to suppose, in other words, that nonfiction is just as literary, just as available to be treated in privilege-conferring aesthetic terms as is fiction. Published about a decade later, Bishop's "Suddenly Sexy: Creative Nonfiction Rear-Ends Composition" focuses on the increasingly visible emergence of *creative nonfiction* as a subdivision of creative writing and reiterates the "need to get serious about creating new, fused pedagogies" that unite composition with creative writing (as well as, Bishop specifies, rhetoric and literature) (273). If a fiction/nonfiction distinction were ever an excuse for keeping composition and creative writing apart, "creative nonfiction" means the pretense has been dropped, no matter the continuing segregation of fields. Bishop urges again, given the absence of logically exclusive territories, for composition and creative writing to integrate. 

*Composition* and *creative writing* persist as structural categories in English--affecting, especially, a department's curriculum and the organization of its faculty body--because of disciplinary stability and convenience. Particularly in the present climate of ever-deeper budget cuts and ever-stretching faculty responsibilities, the risk and energy involved in shaking up a department's structure might be understandably off-putting. But forgivable inertia aside, the primary (and quite cynical) gain from maintaining the lines is to keep unlike minds apart and longtime territories well marked. Evie Yoder Miller speculates, "Perhaps because neither wants to be the 'lowliest,' composition and creative
writing have fought to distinguish themselves as different types of writing, thus
discouraging the transfer of skills from one to the other" (4). Bishop sees the sphere of
composition's "by default" ("Suddenly" 265). David Starkey finds composition,
meanwhile, wary of extending its own reach: "The reluctance to experiment too radically
is, unfortunately, pervasive in composition studies. . . . Perhaps this constraint originates
in a feeling that it is possible to get too close to literature" (viii). Whatever the history of
intra-disciplinary boundaries may be, their upkeep has become a priority. Bishop
illustrates the vexedness that challenges to these boundaries can provoke when she
describes the proposal of one of her department's graduate students (in composition-
rhetoric) to make "literary nonfiction" his "minor area of degree study," to which the
graduate committee reacted with "vehemence" ("Suddenly" 259-60). The proposal
bothered the committee because it saw literary or creative nonfiction as not falling neatly
under the sole purview of composition, literary studies, or creative writing. If Douglas
Hesse rightly sees composition studies as having ceded creative nonfiction just as it was
eagerly claimed by creative writing (in, roughly speaking, the 1990s) (37), the
disproportionate debate in Bishop's department can be explained as a reaction to the
perceived transgression of composition-rhetoric specialists reaching beyond the territory
recognized as theirs.

It is worth considering what it would mean to stop partitioning university writing.
Derek Owens's *Resisting Writings (and the Boundaries of Composition)* is "a call for
pedagogies of composition privileging supreme variety rather than an aesthetics of
exclusion" (11), one vision of a writing pedagogy and curriculum that invites the broadest
imaginable array of compositional practices. Owens argues for removing the creative writing-composition boundary entirely and for composition courses to move fearlessly into regions traditionally creative writing's. The premise is that any given way of using language enables writers uniquely, and students should therefore encounter a breadth of discursive options and try using them. Students thus build their compositional repertoires and, by transgressing the outer bounds of academic discourse, attain discursive vantages that add up to a fuller view of language and communication; as Owens puts it, "Providing students with a polyfocal vocabulary of discourse forms gives them greater material with which to compare their own generally unexamined habits of writing and speaking" (10). Resisting the assumption that students can do certain kinds of writing only in creative writing courses, Owens's proposals obviate creative writing as a distinct field within English studies (217-19), and they are rare in advocating such radical change. Typically, calls to rethink the role of academic creative writing maintain its break with composition, if only to set up the navigating of, or the struggling against, that break.

In a sense it is odd that the creative writing-composition division is rooted so strongly because, though it is familiar, it is not commonsensical. The questioning of this partition certainly preceded the advent of creative writing studies. In the introduction to *Writers as Teachers/Teachers as Writers* (1970), a collection of essays by fiction writers and poets about the teaching of writing, Jonathan Baumbach asserts that divisions among higher-education's writing courses are meaningless: "Colleges like to make distinctions between creative writing and what they call expository writing (also called Freshman English). There are, I've discovered--after years of believing the myths--no sensible differences between them" (9). Baumbach continues: "what is said in this book about the
teaching of creative writing holds true for the teaching of expository writing" (10). Of course, Baumbach gestures to the crucial difference between creative writing and expository writing (or composition): institutional separation itself. His point—that what happens in these writing courses, labels aside, need not be distinguishable—remains relevant today. Marvin Bell's "Poetry and Freshman Composition" (1964) is less daring in that it assumes poetry to be fundamentally different from other genres of writing, but Bell does call poetry "a form of composition" and advocate its presence in composition courses (1). Bell argues for the reading—not the writing—of poetry in such courses, though it would be easy to translate most of his argument into a case that first-year-composition students should write poetry. Still, implicit in Bell's essay is the idea that poetry is an advanced genre, worth or requiring unique extra attention: "the presence of accomplished composition in a poem is not usually enough to justify our calling it a significant or effective work of art" (1). For Bell, poetry is not not composition, and it has a place in the writing curriculum, but poems involve exclusive, extra-compositional demands.

The disciplinary segmentation of writing helped to occasion what is arguably the inaugurating text of creative writing studies—Creative Writing in America: Theory and Pedagogy (1989)—in which editor Joseph M. Moxley's "Tearing Down the Walls: Engaging the Imagination" urges an "interdisciplinary approach" (27) to composition, creative writing, and literary studies. For Moxley the partitioning of English studies obscures how specialized courses contribute to a larger contextual whole (of reading and writing education). Student learning is thereby hamstrung:

Our passion for specialization has encouraged us to divide and subdivide what should be considered to be an integrative and generative process of
discovering and shaping meaning. All writing carries the seeds of creativity: when our images and concepts develop, combine, and connect and take shape in the form of words, writers discover and construct their meaning. (26)

The compartments of English studies all contribute to the ideal "holistic" (26) processes of knowledge-making. Moxley argues for "communication among our related disciplines" (42-43), manifested for example in creative writing practices influenced by composition research (27) and "professional writing programs that are informed by the dynamics of the creative process" (42). These proposals would encourage student and faculty writers to freely cross (intra-) disciplinary lines, but significantly, and contrary to Owens's vision, composition and creative writing would be maintained as two distinct entities. If theoretical differences between composition and creative writing are elusive, as independent fields they persist sturdily. Perhaps it is simply too difficult to restructure English departments unconventionally. In his afterword to the recent collection *Does the Writing Workshop Still Work?*, Moxley remarks on *Creative Writing in America* and the challenge that institutional stasis poses: "Now, over 20 years later, my belief in the need for greater collaboration among literature, creative writers and composition specialists remains resolute, yet I have a much stronger appreciation for the enduring power of the status quo" (231). "[G]reater collaboration" reads as a modest goal, but the English department as an institutionalized and institutionalizing setting presents challenges.

Tim Mayers observes in *Re)Writing Craft* that "the rhetorical connections between composition and creative writing mean very little unless they are considered in light of the institutional differences between composition and creative writing" (xiii). That these differences are largely "the result of historical accident" (xii) does not lessen their stubborn persistence; Mayers, again: "moving any reform proposal into the
structural realm is more 'difficult' than any theoretical exploration could ever be" 
((Re)Writing 129). This structural intransigence provides one answer to Dianne 
Donnelly's question (in 2011) of why "Moxley's and Bishop's . . . positions on the 
crossover of composition and creative writing have yet to significantly penetrate our 
pedagogy today" ("Creative Writing" 106). Determining the difference between the fields 
requires focusing on their respective disciplinary histories and practices. Institutional 
factors trump logic in maintaining the fields' separation.

An example of these institutional factors is the effect of writing organizations, 
namely the AWP (Association of Writers and Writing Programs) and CCCC (Conference 
on College Composition and Communication). Hesse finds the variance in how these 
organizations approach writing (especially in their respective annual conferences) to be 
"tellingly metonymic of contrasts between academic creative writing and composition 
studies" (31-32). In the course of Patrick Bizzaro's analysis of how the AWP and CCCC 
"represent" creative writing differently and how "those representations may very well 
characterize a split of university creative writing teachers into two distinct camps" 
("Writer's Self-Reports" 119), Bizzaro implicitly underlines how influential the 
organizations are. AWP nurtures creative writing's traditions (129-31), whereas CCCC 
accepts creative writing to the extent that it is treated in composition-friendly terms-- 
"(com)positioned," Bizzaro puts it (120-25). The fast-growing AWP is poised to keep the 
role of the dominant organizational force in creative writing and to encourage the field's 
ongoing isolation within English studies. Meanwhile, the treatment of creative writing in 
critical academic research--such as might be found in CCCC's contexts, or in a book such 
as this one--remains too marginal to lead composition to much dialogue with mainstream
creative writing.

Institutional aspects of the composition-creative writing division tend to reinforce one another. Many can be located, for instance, in relation to the fact that creative writing faculty rarely take part in academic critical research, whether among themselves or with specialists in other regions of English studies. In addition to longtime disciplinary habit, ongoing differences in publication expectations for composition and creative writing faculty members explain the paucity of critical discourse originating in creative writing's quarters. The basic demand upon academic creative writers is that they produce "primarily imaginative work" (Bishop, "Crossing" 185), and when creative writers write about writing or teaching, they rarely follow the model of critical conversation, punctuated by citations, that compositionists follow (Haake, "Creative Writing" 186; Lardner 74). Theorizing in creative writing, not only of textual production but also of pedagogy, remains unusual--research in creative writing studies is still an exception at the disciplinary fringe. Tellingly, as Kelly Ritter points out, pedagogical training in creative writing usually takes the form of uncritical graduate student "impersonation" of professors (90-92). Creative writing's frequent independence in funding, housing (Ritter 86), and curricular role--its offerings are often consist solely of electives--encourage the separatism of its research and teaching practices from those of English studies' other branches.

Because of divergences such as these, ratified over decades of disciplinary habit and tied into disciplinary identity, it is easier said than done to "[cross or eliminate] the line between composition and creative writing" (Bishop, "Crossing" 181). Certain line-transgressions would seem to mean rebuilding English and writing departments from
scratch. Owens's proposal, in its full merging of composition and creative writing, would do away with the latter as a field--ramifications for undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members would be substantial (217-19). Mayers's (Re)Writing Craft urges intervention at a similarly broad scale, calling for an alliance between composition and creative writing that would "strive to invert the traditional hierarchy of English studies, which privileges interpretation over production" (xv), an ambitious proposal that would mean putting the fields into greater collaboration while keeping their disciplinary identities separate. For example, one of Mayers's ideas is a "coalition" between AWP and CCCC ((Re)Writing 164-65). Genre by Example, a collection edited by David Starkey, represents a more bottom-up approach to restructuring English. Although its contributions not explicitly address the structure of English departments and fields, the collection "confronts our hesitation to make literature out of our scholarship" (Starkey ix) by modeling "academic writing" that transgresses conventional genre boundaries. Bishop is not alone in making the more modest argument for the inclusion of creative writing in first-year writing programs ("Crossing" 193). Alan Kennedy, Christine M. Neuwirth, Kris Straub, and David Kafuer propose a first-year curriculum in which composition, creative writing, and literary and cultural theory are considered a "triad" (237) of mutually reinforcing "literate practices" (235). The authors insist, "The effort to blur boundaries need not diminish the level of specialization within the department, but should add to the reflexiveness that makes one a more thoughtful and self-critical specialist" (238). Simpler than incorporating creative writing in first-year writing programs would be to include it in an individual composition course. The challenge in either case is for a teacher or writing program to decide to what creative writing, in the context of that course, should
refer. We are left with imperfect generalizations based on disciplinary practices, and we need to resort to these if, in thinking through the potential value of creative writing to the composition course or curriculum, we are to decide what creative writing should mean.

**Aims and Results**

I propose that a key distinction can help us understand the importance of creative writing in composition-centered contexts. The distinction: *composition presents more specific expectations for the end products of student writing than creative writing does; creative writing allows broader possibilities among satisfactory end products of student writing.* Some qualifications are in order. Certainly exceptions can be found for any such generalization about disciplinary practice. And surely there are other valid grounds for distinguishing composition and creative writing; this distinction is simply useful in clarifying how creative writing can benefit composition and what its doing so would entail. I am not arguing that the distinction makes terrific sense at a theoretical level--only that in practice it obtains. Moreover, it bears remembering that all writing is "goal-directed," as Linda Flower and John R. Hayes recognize (377), even when the goal at hand is "writing for discovery" (380-81). My point is not quite that composition is more goal-directed than creative writing; it is that the latter encourages more idiosyncratic and open-ended goals.

Composition's firmer ideas of what a proper product of writing can be shape student writing processes to a degree that creative writing's vaguer images of successful writing products do not. It is harder to identify or agree upon "good writing" in a creative-writing context, in which a poem or fiction--or to give more specific examples, a
fabulist short story or autobiographical lyric poem--may be characterized as successful on the basis of positive qualities (e.g. "authentic details" or "vivid imagery") that may be altogether absent in other "successful" texts of the same genre. As I have argued in my chapter about creative writing on the Iowa model, fuzzy expectations for writing products obtain even in a classroom with narrowly conventional literary values, and students receive (and re-transmit) these values mostly through piecemeal negative feedback, rarely through specific positive expectations. In composition, on the other hand, it is possible to more nearly approach making (for the teacher) and meeting (for the student) a checklist of qualities that a "good" writing product should exhibit. The fact that two composition teachers may have very different criteria for student writing does not contradict the probability that both of their respective sets of criteria are more definite than that of a given creative writing teacher. I am not suggesting that either narrower or broader criteria are simply preferable. I do argue, though, that creative writing in the composition classroom and the composition-centered writing curriculum can provide relief from relatively definite expectations and lead students to try things in writing that they would not otherwise try, thereby expanding their capacities and adaptability as writers. Finally, to claim that products of student creative writing are guided by and evaluated according to relatively vague expectations is not to admit what Bishop calls "the myth of 'free creativity'"--the belief that in the creative writing classroom, anything goes ("Crossing" 186). Creative writing teachers may provide formal and topical requirements that partly direct students' writing processes, just as composition teachers sometimes may not (as in the case of freewriting). Even when creative writing teachers encourage unconventional writing, their students often bring a prior understanding of genre conventions to the
course and its assignments. But creative writing's strived-for end product, the finished text as it is anticipated during the writing process, does leave students comparatively free or aimless in their writing processes. Sometimes, if the broadest definition of literature is sanctioned, "free creativity" may even be put into play; the creative writing classroom allows this possibility, even if most teachers would rarely take it up.94

In a general sense, the privileged goal for composition's end-products is communication, as the disciplinary association between composition studies and rhetoric suggests. For creative writing, the corresponding goal is art (literature). Numerous subordinate aims are necessarily attendant to these broader ones. Aims impressed upon student writers are largely conventional. Students do have idiosyncratic aims for the texts they write, but it is these texts' levels of success in conventional terms that will be recognized academically and rewarded. Conventions in writing are crucial in composition, somewhat less important in creative writing; while art is expected to differentiate itself from predictable language use, to a large extent we measure the success of communication by its adherence to conventions. The genre of the traditional argumentative academic essay evokes some conventions--such as introductory and concluding paragraphs, thesis statements, and topic sentences--so strongly that even teachers who do not teach these conventions often find their students loyally adhering to them. And the genre's criteria tend to be conventional: clear prose, logical essay structure, and explicit reasoning are ready examples. In somewhat different composition genres, alternative criteria include features such as the voice that seems authentic or the terminology that marks a disciplinary insider. Although criteria vary among courses and teachers, and despite disagreements over premises and methods in composition
(disagreements that labels such as "current-traditional," "cognitivist," and "post-process" loosely index), criteria in a given case tend to be clear-cut enough that students and instructors might imagine in relative detail the texts that assignments aim to produce. "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition," a document that avoids describing in overly prescriptive terms what students should learn and do, is nonetheless indicative of composition's orientation toward conventional communication. The "Outcomes Statement" emphasizes concepts--such as "rhetorical situation," "genre," and "conventions"--that correlate the success of a text to its fitting into already established frameworks of expectation.

A creative writing teacher could demand adherence to some of the same conventions, such as transparent prose, as a composition teacher. But no matter how much disapproval poetically opaque prose receives in one creative writing class, validation of that same style may be as near as the next teacher. While an obvious premise of all writing courses is to help students improve at writing, creative writing's orientation toward art complicates the idea of improvement. A student-writer's aesthetic position may be at odds with end-product criteria that reflect conflicting aesthetic priorities. The role of conventionality in creative writing is further complicated by the fact that literature is often understood to connote language distant from conventions, especially those that could be read as clichés. But literary genres necessarily have their own conventions, which can be downplayed or amplified within the contexts of particular literary communities. So a tension subsists in creative writing between following and departing from conventions, some of which are deemed gauche, others of which authenticate the text as literary (or as "good" literature) for a certain audience. In the
same vein, conventions are closely linked to publishability, which the discipline traditionally holds up as a key aim that is, depending on whom one asks, in awkward balance with art, the measure of art, irrelevant to art, or harmful to art. Publishability as an aim is a requirement at the level of faculty research, a sometimes raison d'être for graduate education, and perhaps a pie-in-the-sky ideal (which nonetheless exerts influence) at the undergraduate level. When the fact that literary values vary among venues and communities is obscured or dismissed--let alone the possibility of writing for valid reasons other than publication--some teachers use the notion of publishability to impose the conventions of a particular literary strain. This is one reason why others resist positing publication as an ideal for their students (Haake, "Creative Writing" 181-82). An individual creative writing course might require relatively specific products of student writing, but such expectations would be unusual, far from field-characterizing.

Creative writing is nearly unified in its expectation that students try to produce literature (or Scholes's "pseudo-literature"), but definitions of literature and bases for measuring literariness are incredibly various. Andrew Cowan aptly observes "what has been called the 'ontological groundlessness' of literature, and indeed art. Defining literature is difficult, defining art notoriously so" (sec. 2). Literature is difficult to define because there is no obvious or necessary way to do so. Moreover, its pool of definitions can always grow. Cowan's discussion of literature and art continues: "They are both the product of discursive practices--in a sense, they are products of our efforts to define them" (sec. 2). The category literature not only approaches open-endedness because of how it has been defined but because it can always be defined, again, otherwise, and these definitions construct as much as conceptualize the categories to which they refer. The
possible and valid views of the literary, when taken together, mean that practically any end-results of student creative writing are satisfactorily literary according to at least one valid position (and this is to say nothing of definitions of literature as encompassing all written texts). However, student creative writing is not usually written with a maximally broad understanding of literature in mind (as per Bishop's "myth of 'free creativity'") but, rather, is guided by genre conventions and by any demands of particular teachers, whose aesthetic positions may be couched in objective-sounding terms of craft. Still, even the students of a creative-writing teacher whose course imparts the narrowest understanding of literature may be able to recognize the diversity of legitimate aesthetic positions--as long as these students have at least a few encounters with alternative sensibilities or theories of literary writing. (By "alternative" I mean that which is outside the dominant contemporary American vein.)

The breadth of possibility allowed by the goal of literature is a crucial factor in distinguishing creative writing's end-product expectations from composition's. This difference results from creative writing's disciplinary connection and composition's disconnection from literature, which are de facto but not inevitable relationships. Owens, bringing creative writing's traditional purview into composition's, shows what literature's breadth transferred to composition's setting would entail--and indeed, what literary breadth can mean in a creative-writing context:

As we read a series of passages that successively deviate from academic standards of appropriate expository prose [by writers including William Hazlitt, H. D., and John Cage], readers might be led to two possible conclusions: either all these forms, no matter how startlingly unique, will be valid options for the writer (depending, of course, on her targeted audience); or else some of these techniques will be simply inappropriate, clearly examples of "bad writing." (42)
My argument for creative writing's value to composition pertains to instances where their institutional melding, such as Owens proposes, has not taken place, instances in which creative writing remains the site for dealing with texts such as he refers to here. What composition as Owens envisions it has in common with creative writing is an acknowledging of the vastness of possibilities for student writing. Either literature (or writing in general, for Owens) can be anything, or some would-be literature is "simply inappropriate," in which case one's reasons for deeming it so can nonetheless be contested (by, perhaps, the creative writing teacher in the next classroom). Creative writing as a field has space, somewhere, for all writing.

Although I propose creative writing's role for composition to be that of a framework of broad possibility through which writers can try what they would not attempt in narrower contexts, thus developing flexible writing abilities, the valuing of such a framework has notable precedents internal to composition and rhetoric. My argument falls roughly into one of two categories of critical articles on creative writing that Hesse identifies (38-41), a category that advocates a "general skills approach" to writing (41) and, by seeing "writing is an art whose techniques are broadly transferrable from one situation to another" (39), argues for creative writing as a means of practicing that art. Hesse finds that this perspective aligns with the work of Peter Elbow, though it meshes poorly with more recent trends in composition studies, which emphasize writing's taking part in specific, topical conversations rather than its attracting interest more as if from scratch (40-41). But writing pedagogies based on the accumulation of transferable language skills have theoretical grounds far predating Elbow. Erasmus's treatise On Copia of Words and Ideas proposes (with demonstrations) that writers practice both
varying the syntax and diction of given statements (Book I) and embellishing (as well as abbreviating) ideas, for instance through detail, contextualization, and digression (Book II). Erasmus's pedagogy of copiousness aims to make writers adaptable and widely capable, its methods of producing copious possibilities for writing proceed from the narrow frameworks of already determined messages and ideas, unlike creative writing as it might best contribute to composition. A crucial aspect of creative writing is its encouragement of writers to take directions that cannot be anticipated (despite possible restrictions of this open-endedness by genre conventions, narrowly framed aesthetic values, and so on).

While Erasmus himself refers to Quintilian and Cicero, among others, as providing antecedents to his art of copiousness (12), we can look to these figures alongside Aristotle for theories of invention that allow for unanticipated developments to emerge in the work of rhetors and writers. Critics such as Carolyn R. Miller have focused on Aristotle's topics, or topoi, for their function as generators of novel ideas or arguments (133-36). Modifying Aristotle's treatment of the topics, Cicero considers them to be, in Richard McKeon's words, "seats (sedes) or sources of arguments" (26), explicitly understanding them as useful for invention. Quintilian finds rhetorical training to be the primary benefit of the topics. As Michael C. Leff puts it, to Quintilian, "the topics . . . are less important as molds for producing a type of argument than as exercises for developing the intellectual faculty of making arguments in general"—they prepare the rhetor to invent on the fly (33). Quintilian recognizes the value of the topics to lie in their preparing of the rhetor to take unpredictable verbal steps in accordingly unpredictable situations. Both ancient rhetorical invention and Erasmus's copiousness serve as mechanisms for
developing general rhetorical skills, though the use of language according to these mechanisms (both of *topoi* and copiousness) is constricted by already determined ideas of what needs to be said. Creative writing's role in the preparation of writers allows for, without requiring, the putting of language use before the determining of message. This is a key example of creative writing's comparative open-endedness, whereby the act of writing is less directed by expected results than in composition.

Students' perceptions of such broad possibilities in creative writing are bound to affect how they write. Every step of a given writing process is directly or indirectly influenced by the writer's sense of what the resulting text should be. If that targeted product is hazier in creative writing, crisper in composition, then composition students and creative writing students are practicing writing in significantly different ways. Evidence for the distinction between how composition and creative writing, respectively, typically frame expectations for student writing takes multiple forms. I will address three: (1) differences between the grading of writing deemed literary from the grading of other writing, (2) the function of craft as a teachable, identifiable intermediate step toward the vaguer destination of literature, and (3) the relative liberty of creative writing students to deviate from writing conventions on aesthetic grounds.

Many teachers present creative writing as exceptional through their grading methods, though these methods vary widely. When I was an undergraduate student, one of my creative writing professors promised *A* course grades to all students who met attendance, page-count, and deadline requirements. It was a way of asserting that the quality of creative writing could not be reliably judged. Another approach is to grade creative writing according to "effort," which R. H. W. Dillard defends as preferable to
impositions of subjective "taste" (88). A third approach, which I am not alone in having used when teaching creative writing courses, likewise stems from reluctance to subject art to a grading scale: require students to submit, alongside their literary texts, complementary analyses, then grade these more traditionally academic texts instead of the literary ones. (The reasoning behind this approach parallels that of the common requirement in creative writing PhD programs that the dissertation include a critical component.) All of these methods locate the main work of creative writing beyond the reach of definite value judgments.

Treatment of creative writing in curricular and professional contexts tends to reinforce this perception. Ritter notes that some creative writing programs "[work] on a pass-fail grading model" (86), and it would be an unusual curriculum (not leading to a degree or concentration in creative writing) that required students, even English majors, to take creative writing courses. Treatment of the field as an inessential curricular supplement can only muffle any imperative for rigorous grading schemes. Ted Lardner refers to "torturous discussions at professional conferences about grading creative writing"--grading creative writing is an established problem--and attributes these persistent conversations to the murkiness of "assumptions with which creative writing teachers assess growth and development in their students" (76). It may be unavoidable that such discussions tend to recur without progressing, given that creative writing is a field whose self-reflections rarely cite and respond to one another. An intervention such as Patrick Bizzaro's *Responding to Student Poems: Applications of Critical Theory* (1993) deserves to be read and engaged by serious discussants of evaluation in creative writing, but this and other formative contributions to creative writing studies still wait at
the disciplinary outskirts, unwelcome at its established center. Meanwhile, creative writing teachers continue to regard grading with unease.

Determining the success of student writing in composition is not always straightforward, but it is relatively uncontroversial to accept that such judgment is possible. Even Bishop, a pioneer in urging greater interaction between composition and creative writing, admits in "Crossing the Lines," "I still find myself in situations where I may talk about the average essay although it remains impossible (not-creative-writing-field-sanctioned) to hold serious discussions about the average poem or story" (189). None of this is meant to obscure the fact that some teachers do assign individual letter (or numerical) grades to their students' literary writings. But resistance to (or at least unease with) such an approach is much more common.

Creative writing's emphasis on craft helps to justify relatively open-ended expectations for the end-products of student writing. Mark McGurl equates craft with technique and finds craft "strongly associated with professional pride and the lessons or 'lore' of literary tradition" (23). Katharine Haake explains craft as it applies to fiction: "Craft is writing habits, rules of thumb, helpful tips. But it's also architecture--plot, character, setting, conflict. It's how to build a shapely story and where to find a form" ("Creative Writing" 184). These are fairly standard descriptions, and they describe craft as I use it here, though Mayers makes a compelling case that craft should be used to refer to a more diverse range of concerns: "To make a very broad generalization: some creative writers are currently pursuing a notion of craft that includes but is by no means restricted to technique" ((Re)Writing 67). Exceptions aside, creative writers generally associate craft--in the usual parlance, which Mayers calls the "reductive sense of craft-as-
technique" (ReWriting 66)--with what can be taught in the classroom, as opposed to "talent," which describes the unteachable (ReWriting 67). It is possible for a teacher to convey a very narrow version of craft, consisting of technique only as it supports a particular sensibility. But no matter how specifically craft is delimited, its mastery never guarantees that a finished text will be recognized as literature that "works."

For certain audiences, the display of appropriate craft can be a literary requirement, but proficiency in craft is only a reachable stepping-stone on the way to a more distant, foggy bank of indefinable literature. According to the conventional disciplinary discourse, reaching that bank requires unteachable talent; moreover, it is always debatable whether a writer successfully makes the leap. The concept of craft allows the teaching of conventions and the measuring of performance while refusing simplifying claims about what constitutes literariness. The teacher can choose to evaluate a text's craft in lieu of whether the final goal of literature is met; no concept plays an equivalent role in composition. I do not mean simply to laud craft. Hesse observes that the domain of craft "may strike compositionists as precious compared to logical reasoning and forceful, politically astute analysis" (42), an impression not groundless.

Even so, Hesse himself, while critiquing craft as a term and concept (36, 42), advocates creative writing's place (if not the notion of craft) in composition, asserting that "[t]he aesthetic has a rhetorical force even as the bellettristic can carry information and idea" (48). My point about the virtue of craft is somewhat oblique: despite its limitations, craft provides a way of conceptualizing how the learning and practice of creative writing is possible and verifiable, while leaving open the specifics of what a literary text--even a well-crafted one--should be.
I have already brought up aesthetic positioning--by which I mean the writer's choice of what vision of art to pursue--but it deserves further attention as an aspect of how student creative writing is written and received. More creative writing than composition courses encourage students to take aesthetic stances. Of course, composition students do take positions regarding subject matter, especially in argumentative writing. Such position-taking, encouraged by what Gary A. Olson calls a "rhetoric of assertion," can even be understood to characterize the field (9). Yet taking an aesthetic position is another matter. As discussed in Chapter One, it is a common refrain in the lore of creative writing that teachers should respond to a student's text "on its own terms." Furthermore, the structure of the traditional creative writing workshop, in allowing a series of opinions to be voiced without necessitating that they harmonize into a consensus, suggests that the coexistence of various aesthetic values in one classroom is to be expected. It is true that the student writer's position can be challenged when teacher and peers identify the text's "own terms" differently than the writer does, or when these readers simply do not value those terms. But even if a workshop audience attacks a student's aesthetic position, in a sense this opposition solidifies the student's right to hold the embattled position: to censure an aesthetic stance is to recognize it as an option.

Also relevant are the cultural ideals and images of artistic freedom circulated outside of the academy. Students take creative writing courses often having already internalized a view of art as a free possibility-space, a view influenced by cultural representations of art and artists that, while not utterly off the mark, do tend to promote the uncritical assumption that art's premise is self-expression. Donnelly's observation that students in creative writing often "expect rule-less forums of free expression" (Donnelly,
"Creative Writing" 108) is telling in its connecting of "expression" to an absence of rules-bases for writing other than expression do not seem to enter the generalized student mindset.

For creative writing to approach a condition of rule-less-ness would not inherently be a problem; creative writing is already a site of relative freedom within higher education--hence the difference between literary and other kinds of know-how--and, accordingly, constrictions upon the work of student creative writers should be careful, sparing. The key is that students must come to see expression as only a limited framework--one of many--for literary writing, a framework to think beyond, a self-imposed rule to dissolve. In What Our Speech Disrupts: Feminism and Creative Writing Studies, Katharine Haake calls for creative writing classes designed to "give our students options to form their own poetics, to choose where they will go and who they'll be as writers" (99). The goal of students' "form[ing] their own poetics" lays the basis for a mutually enabling relation between critical thinking and the freedom to find or develop a unique aesthetic position. For creative writing students to take such positions need not be a license for willy-nilly self-expression. On the contrary, aesthetic positioning is a route beyond the uncritical equation of self-expression with creative writing.

Creative Writing in the Composition Course

I have argued that composition and creative writing differ in the specificity of their expectations for the end-products of student writing. At the curricular scale, creative writing courses--including innovative classes based on pedagogic interpretations of literary texts (interpretations such as Chapters Two and Three have demonstrated)
alongside more traditional workshops--can complement composition courses in setting up students to compose through alternative writing processes. But what does the distinction between creative writing and composition mean in the context of the single composition course, designed to help students practice, for example, academic writing, critical writing, self-reflection or -expression, argumentation, or writing as civic engagement? Assigning genres such as the poem or short story would serve as a convenient vehicle for introducing creative writing into the composition course, but there can be other ways to do so if we identify the composition-creative writing distinction in terms not of genre but of the handling of expectations for student texts. In that case, what creative writing in composition actually means is the releasing of students and teachers from certainty or agreement about what a successful writing product constitutes. This release from well-defined expectations, however it is achieved, lets students write by way of processes with open-ended, unpredictable elements that the students' prior aims for their finished texts, aims more focused and limiting, would preclude.

When prompting this release by having students pursue hard-to-define literariness through creative writing in established literary genres, teachers can present the genres in relatively broad or narrow terms. One could assign, for example (in order of increasing specificity), simply "a poem," a prose poem, a personal essay in the vein of Montaigne (if, anyway, this genre is no longer seen as part of composition proper), or a flash-fiction version of a roman à clef. The risk and benefit of the more general genre assignment (e.g., to write a story or poem) lies in the fact that a student can be expected to have an understanding of the genre already. Whether this particular understanding suits the course and the teacher is another matter, and it is where the risk lies--a teacher could receive
clichéd texts that appear to have challenged the students neither to think deeply nor to stretch verbal skills. But these known genres—setting aside what a given student knows them as—can be assigned with minimal prior contextualization, and they can quickly elicit results, getting students to write by routes other than those followed for more typical assignments. Assigning writing in more tightly defined genres lessens the risk of receiving disappointing student work but requires more preliminary classroom attention to the genre. A literary genre can be presented to an extent and with a focus that suits the teacher, who might, for example, concentrate on the role of direct dialogue in fiction while setting aside concerns with (say) plot.

Such assignments can acquire focus not only through the teacher's delineation of the genre in question but by direct stipulations for students. These requirements might be topical, in keeping with either the ongoing concerns of the class or the subject matter of a model text in the assigned genre. (One of many possible topics: immigration to the United States.) Or they might be formal, demanding that student texts display one or more characteristics (primary or minor) either of the genre in question or of a particular model text. For instance, a published text that combines textual narrative with visual art such as photographs or diagrams (the fiction of Debra Di Blasi comes to mind) could inspire an assignment for students to incorporate visual images into texts turned in earlier in the course. A third type of requirement is process-oriented, directing students to compose by mirroring the approaches of selected authors, as revealed in process notes, interviews, biographies, and so on. The work of the Oulipo, for instance, might provide a path to composing by algorithmic steps (Motte). These stipulations de-emphasize traditional genre conventions, and the point of such assignments, after all, is not the
practice of writing in a particular genre for its own sake but the shift in framework that the switching among genres provides. From each framework, students will find different compositional routes open to them.

Creative writing can enter the composition course through avenues other than literary genres. To widen students' senses of what the texts they write might be, perhaps simply ask them to produce written art (with all the nebulosity the term art carries intended). Beyond the literary, any assignments that result in texts more loosely defined and less burdened with conventional expectations than the argumentative essay could also do the job. Critical writing assignments might be explorations of the complexity of a topical problem rather than arguments about it. For instance, students could be asked first to investigate in writing the bases (ascribed to culture, class, biography, and so on) upon which two reasonable people could disagree about a given topic, then to speculate on the secret doubts the same people might hold about their respective positions. As with assignments in literary genres, teachers can implement topical, formal, and process-based restrictions to displace more conventional expectations--such as a thesis-driven argument situated in a critical conversation--to encourage a more elastic range of resulting student texts. One could even explicitly assign students the task of composing a meaningful text that outright breaks some of the writing requirements that have otherwise held throughout the academic term, asking students to explain what rules they have broken but leaving it up to them to discover a productive way of doing the breaking. Assignments like these keep students oriented to compositional possibilities while diverting their focus from conventional expectations for the texts they are expected to write, expectations which can loom over and constrict writing processes.
Occasional aimlessness, by requiring the writer to proceed without a predetermined end-point in mind, can lead both to subject-matter discoveries (perhaps otherwise unobtainable) and to a more flexible, extensive knowledge of how to write. This entails teachers' leading the way in letting go of preconceived notions of an ideal student text.

So including creative writing in the composition course--shifting or suspending the aims of writing--enables students to write in ways that they otherwise would not. The concept of literary know-how is useful in articulating why their doing so can benefit their writing both for the course at hand and beyond. To recapitulate: in general, know-how describes enacted knowledge; know-how is often defined by way of its difference from know-that, which refers to abstracted knowledge about subject matter. Higher education privileges know-that because students, teachers, and researchers can readily share it, for instance as research. Know-how, on the other hand, can be demonstrated only indirectly, through its fruits (e.g., texts, performances, and behaviors). In the context of my argument, literary know-how refers to a student's writing proficiency, which can deepen and broaden through practice. Time and repetition spent on one type of writing assignment, or a narrow range of assignments, can improve efficiency and polish. But it is at least as important for students to stretch their knowings-how broadly by writing in diverse ways, thereby practicing their flexibility, adaptability, and resourcefulness as writers. Know-how is theoretically extensible without limit; there are always more ways to write. Consequently know-how, as I use the term, is far from a pejorative indication of mere mechanical knowledge.

In my emphasizing of why know-how is an especially valuable concept where
literary writing is involved, Michael Carter's "Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines" is a convenient reference point. Carter chooses to understand disciplines "as based on ways of doing and thus ways of knowing and writing, modes of inquiry rather than static territories of knowledge" (410). "Knowing," for Carter, means knowing-how (381), so that according to his view, writing in a discipline means accessing the know-how it makes available. Practicing writing in multiple disciplines, according to this logic, is a way of accumulating know-how of multiple kinds (which amounts to what I mean when I refer to the expanding, rather than the sharpening or deepening, of one's know how). Unlike the writing in the disciplines that Carter addresses, literature is writing definable by its open-endedness, by an absence of agreed-upon "ways of doing" or textual results thereof. Instead of enacting established disciplinary know-how, literary writing can be thought of as a practice of discovering new know-how.

By expanding and discovering literary know-how, student-writers can also increase their knowing-that, arriving at insights about a given subject matter by writing about it in new ways. Andrea Lunsford makes a persuasive case that know-how precedes and supports know-that, linking Gilbert Ryle's articulations of "knowing how" and "knowing that" to research from a handful of disciplines. Lunsford conveys how actions (such as writing) are a means to abstract understanding (39-40). If we assume that there is not a single most skillful way to write--that there are, on the contrary, ever more valid ways to write--then an aimless approach to writing has the potential, by letting students write in ways not shaped by what they already know, to help them come to conscious realizations about their subject matter. Owens recognizes this close relation of ideas to ways of writing--especially the dependence of unconventional ideas on unconventional
(or "resisting") writing: "Many ideas simply cannot make themselves heard within the conventions of the tradition; for many, resisting forms are the only way for certain thoughts to evolve and take shape" (17). As thoughts find shape in written forms, so the process of composing these forms shapes thinking. Outside the realm of conventions, there are no limits to new written forms, to processes that construct these forms, or to attendant recognitions that.

The best evidence of the happy interplay between know-how and know-that may lie in the assertions, common to both composition and creative writing, that writing is a method of discovery. In composition-studies contexts, Donald M. Murray has argued that writers figure out what it is that they are communicating in the course of composing it (e.g., "Writing as Process"). Murray's "Unlearning to Write" interweaves quotations from about three dozen fiction writers to the same effect. Murray suggests that "unlearning" is necessary for the writing of fiction; in the terms of my argument, what he warns is that abstract knowings that can interfere with the enactment of know-how. In "Blind Spots: What Creative Writing Doesn't Know," Andrew Cowan provides eight writers' quotations that likewise emphasize the importance of writing from a position not fully (abstractly) understood (sec. 7). Cowan refers the condition of the writer as one of "non-knowing" (sec. 7), which I take to indicate a non-knowing of that. It seems Cowan and Murray are calling for a temporary bracketing of know-that's influence during writing processes so that know-how can proceed by ways not mapped in advance, but this is not a banishing of know-that altogether. After all, in the course of composing, writers at some point look at what they have written, recognizing then if not sooner the abstract knowledge that their processes so far have led them to. As Janet Emig observes, "information from the process
is immediately and visibly available as that portion of the product already written" (125). That "information" surely influences the writing to come. Not only is know-how compatible with--and a catalyst for--know-that, but these aspects of knowing are mutually necessary.

When students write, they learn. If, while writing, they are not sure what they aim to end up having written, then their learning can enter territory they would not otherwise have approached. They learn how to use language in various ways and learn more about that which they think. When they return to more conventional assignments, this learning can come along. When composing, say, a rhetorical analysis, a striking arrangement of words learned during the writing of a poem might prove unexpectedly useful. So might a recognition, gleaned when writing fictional dialogue, about how people communicate.

I end by touching upon two additional pedagogical advantages of aim-shifting. Switching the frameworks for student writing--frameworks including genres, disciplinary communities and conventions, explicit assignment parameters, rhetorical situations, and aesthetic positions--gives students experiences writing across multiple contexts. Taken together, these experiences facilitate a more expansive view of rhetoric and poetics. Students who can consider a given context for writing amid other possible contexts might better anticipate what it takes to successfully adapt to future writing tasks of kinds not yet encountered. And seeing writing's contexts from a broad perspective may even help students better recognize the cultural forces that influence those contexts, shaping the way we write and know.

Finally, assignments that provide students relief from firm, convention-determined aims encourage student-writer agency by revealing that what seems to go
without saying in writing (those conventional expectations usually accepted as givens) actually involves choices. The more aspects of their writing that students recognize as subject to choice—even if these choices align with conventions—the more fully student-writers can identify as empowered decision-makers.

In Closing

In today's English departments, creative writing's role is too often adjunct and ill-fitting, theoretically backward compared to the more dynamic (if still academically slow) literary studies, the younger and more self-aware composition studies, and the array of other fields that may be part of a given department: cultural studies, rhetorical theory, professional and technical writing, new media studies, film studies, digital humanities, and so on. Yet creative writing is ever more popular, its oddness within English studies no deterrent to its growth, whether measured by course offerings within the typical department or by degree-program proliferation.

The dominant vein of creative writing, traditional in its methods and their rationales, amounts to a missed opportunity for making creative writing conceptually essential to contemporary English studies and for helping to raise the public visibility of English as an indivisible discipline. And it would be a reasonable step to replace the discipline of English, here, with the larger academic terrain of the Humanities and the Arts, which I take to be mutually necessary. For the sake of focus, I have limited my argument to a consideration of creative writing within the context of English studies, but creative writing's relevance, as a catalyst for the expansion of know-that, applies well beyond the framework of a single discipline. And the continuity of creative writing with
other fine and performing arts--as sites for the practice of know-how--should be obvious. My larger case is that the arts and humanities are inextricable and that their collective importance, in substantial part, lies in their function as a nexus of open-ended and of meta-know-how, where transferable knowledge of processes--of writing, thinking, composing and enacting on and beyond the page--is developed, examined, and used to prompt further learning.
Notes

Introduction: Reading for Pedagogy

1. For a history of the development of creative writing in American higher education, see D. G. Myers's The Elephants Teach. For international perspectives, see Paul Dawson's Creative Writing and the New Humanities and Micheline Wandor's The Author Is Not Dead, Merely Somewhere Else. For a history of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, see Stephen Wilbers's The Iowa Writers' Workshop.

2. For convenience, I use reading for pedagogy and pedagogic interpretation as synonyms throughout this book.

3. For philosophers on know-how and know-that, see for example Stanley and Williamson; Koethe; and Bengson, Moffett, and Wright.

4. In some ways this argument is compatible with proposals to increase the interplay between creative writing and composition studies. The exception is a case such as Tim Mayers's (Re)Writing Craft, insofar as Mayers calls for creative writing and composition studies to ally themselves against literary studies.

Chapter One: The Iowa Workshop Model and Flannery O'Connor

5. In referring to the writing process as a singular noun, I do not mean to imply that writing can take place through only one universal or proper process.

6. In turn, this aspect of creative writing's lore likely influenced developments in composition studies, such as the practice of freewriting (in particular) and the process movement (in general).
7. Books about the Iowa Writers' Workshop include Frank Conroy's *The Eleventh Draft*, Robert Dana's *A Community of Writers*, Tom Grimes's *The Workshop*, and Stephen Wilbers's *The Iowa Writers' Workshop*. John McNally's *After the Workshop* is a satirical novel prominently featuring the Iowa Writers' Workshop by name. There is even *The Iowa Writers' Workshop Cookbook*, edited by Connie Brothers.

8. Two exceptions--programs often written about--are the Creative Writing program at the University of East Anglia and the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Naropa University. A collection of writing from students in East Anglia's M.A. program is published annually. Books associated with Naropa include Tom Clark's *The Great Naropa Poetry Wars*, Sam Kashner's *When I Was Cool*, Ed Sanders's *The Party*, and the anthologies *Disembodied Poetics* (edited by Anne Waldman and Andrew Schelling), and *Talking Poetics from Naropa Institute* (edited by Waldman and Marilyn Webb).

9. Although this is a rumor, perhaps unable to be confirmed, O'Connor was skeptical (at best) of students criticizing their peers' writings (*Mystery* 86).

10. Hardy establishes O'Connor's serious engagement with problems of knowledge by emphasizing how knowledge figures in her fiction (3-5).

11. O'Connor implies that every text has a single privileged meaning, experienceable by writer and readers alike. However, assuming on the contrary that every reading of a given text is unique encounter, resulting in a unique experienced meaning, would not be otherwise incompatible with O'Connor's understanding of knowledge and learning.

12. Both Emig and Murray show up in Joseph Moxley's seminal collection *Creative Writing in America: Theory and Pedagogy*; Moxley's article "Tearing Down the Walls: Engaging the Imagination" draws upon Emig's "Writing as a Mode of Learning" in
evidencing that "[w]riting not only stimulates thought, but is itself a significant mode of thought, a way of generating ideas" (Moxley 29-30). Murray contributes directly to the collection with his article "Unlearning to Write," which argues that the fiction classroom demands that students let go of what they have learned about other kinds of writing (103-04). Murray at times reads uncannily like O'Connor: "Most students arrive in the fiction class with a dangerous assumption: they believe in the precedence of theme" (104). He marshals an impressive array of quotations from celebrated writers that speak to writing's close relation with discovery, much as I aim to do in the forthcoming section. (The sets of quotations that Murray and I respectively collect overlap only in one statement by O'Connor.) Hardly less relevant is Murray's theorizing of writing not explicitly fictional. In "Writing as Process: How Writing Finds Its Own Meaning" he states, "we teach our students to write by allowing them to experience the process of writing. That is a process of discovery, of using written language to find out what we have to say. . . . We can let [students] discover how writing finds its own meaning" (Learning 31). All three types of discovery through writing recognized by O'Connor are represented in Murray's claims: learning the know-how of writing by writing ("to experience the process"), learning know-that from writing ("to find out what we have to say"), and learning what comes next in the text at hand ("writing finds its own meaning"). O'Connor may have influenced Murray's thinking here, indirectly through the chain of creative-writing lore if not directly.

13. O'Connor, for instance, expresses disdain for "the very vocal writers of San Francisco" (Mystery 82).

14. It may be worth observing that Perry is an Australian academic creative writer and
therefore somewhat removed from dominant U.S. creative writing lore.

15. In "The Writer on Writing," Paul Engle makes a remarkably similar claim: "fiction deals with character, which determines action, and thus actions illustrate character" (On Creative Writing 4).

16. Clarity is no less of a priority in composition courses, but its role and meaning in composition are more readily accepted as premises shared among students and teachers. The conclusion of my book discusses this at more length.

17. Perhaps the book is Days of Plenty, by Elizabeth Fenwick.

18. Haake's "Against Reading" argues against assigning students texts to model their own writing after; doing so misrepresents the possibilities for what narrative writing can mean in today's (digitized, international) world. Haake argues instead for teaching the problem of reading (in the context of creative writing) itself and for helping students to figure out on their own what, why, and how they should read.

19. See Chapter Three for an examination of a distinctive how-to program with more potential.

20. For examples of how this stigma plays out in the closely related realm of creative writing handbooks, see Westbook, who argues that "most handbook exercises . . . teach students to remain submissive to authority" and to "preserve the status quo" (147).

21. According to Mary Ann Cain the workshop fails to represent an alternative to that "real" world (which as it applies to literature tends to mean the world of publication). As a student Cain experienced the workshop as "a microcosm of the 'real' world it was meant to prepare students for" (52). She notes that the writer's weighing of "meanings and purposes," the reader's arriving at the "meanings of their readings," and the writer's
considering of peer and instructor feedback all happen outside of the classroom. During class, participants neither "try out their emerging meanings" (52) nor work together to find and consider possible literary purposes.

22. Incidentally, Maley does not teach in an American creative writing program. He is a Professor of Renaissance Studies at the University of Glasgow.

23. An example of Hansen's dismissiveness: in response to Kostelanetz's suggesting that students-artists of various media work side-by-side in the same course, Hansen declares that "as a practical matter it is impossible for . . . the various art forms do not involve common problems" (236, emphasis Hansen's).

24. This is not to say that best amounts simply to saleable, such that the New York Times Best Seller List would determine the reading material of M.F.A. students. But according to the smaller market of the academic-literary world, manuscripts should be marketable as literary to prize committees, English departments, and even academic libraries. And the higher-profile literary presses make decisions in hope of at least modest sales.

25. For example, a "basic workshop" today probably features student manuscripts physically distributed and written upon, whereas a "basic workshop" the early days of the Iowa Writers' Workshop would entail student work being read and criticized aloud.

26. The rest of Alexander Neubauer's interview with Dillard makes clear that Dillard's phrase "the way they write" implies that students choose, intentionally, to write in their respective ways.

27. A Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Glamorgan in South Wales.

28. For example, the "Goldfish bowl" is one of Gross's workshop variants: "a small
group of volunteers give the writer feedback, with the others watching quietly, thinking what they would say if it was them (and maybe, offering advice); from time to time, the 'interviewing panel' changes, until everyone has had a go" (60).

29. Even Iowa, however, has seen exceptions to the standard workshop class. One example is Robert Coover's course, which had students write fiction during class, following Coover's prompts--e.g., the narrator discovers an ancient manuscript written by Scheherazade (Godwin "Kurt Vonnegut" 221; Godwin Interview 130).

30. I have no easy answers to the question of how to run a creative writing course that evolves unpredictably in substantial, structural ways as it proceeds. But such a course would probably require a flexible design and syllabus, able to shift direction in terms of reading assignments, writing assignments, course topics and methods, class procedures, and ways in which teacher and students engage student writing.

31. I stipulate "effectively" because of the alternative, entirely plausible interpretation that O'Connor simply saw the criticism she gave, based on the values she held, as superior to that of readers whose judgments she found wanting.)

32. The OuLiPo (short for Ouvvoir de Littérature Potentielle) is a society of writers interested in discovering writing procedures, especially procedures incorporating constraint. In a lipogram, one or more letters go intentionally unused.

33. For a recent and direct criticism of the guild metaphor for academic creative writing, see Shivani.

34. In an interview with James R. Hepworth, Stegner complains that book reviews unfairly focus on the work of writers located on the coasts (especially New York) who hobnob with the elite in-groups of publishing. Nonetheless, Stegner concludes, "If you
write well enough, you'll find a publisher who will be happy to publish you, even if he
doesn't make much money out of you" (Hepworth 32-33).

35. Haake was a tuition-paying M.A. student who took workshops with three other
M.A. candidates, four Stegner-fellowship recipients, and one "Texan" of mysterious
status. Her workshop writing received only one written comment, a paragraph that she
describes herself coming to appreciate in retrospect. Significantly, its source was Albert
Guerard (What Our Speech 67-71), whom biographers depict as a foe to Stegner.

Chapter Two: Charles Olson and Black Mountain College

36. It may be a concern that such romanticizing would muddy BMC's educational
significance that led Olson, in a 1969 interview, to insist repeatedly that formal schooling
always remained its "spine" (Muthologos 317) or "plank" (351), community always
secondary to pedagogy, and that perceiving otherwise would be a "danger" (322). He
followed BMC founder John Rice in holding this opinion (Duberman 128). The
community of BMC has indeed had a hold on imaginations--to which the very title of
Martin Duberman's Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community is one testament. But
contrary to Olson's plausible concern, precisely what commentators on BMC emphasize
about its community tends to be the way it made innovative learning possible. BMC
student Michael Rumaker's account of his experience as a young gay man attending the
college is exemplary: "Before coming to the college, I had spent so much time hiding
from myself, and hiding that hidden self from others--although I'm sure I fooled no one--
that I had had no time or energy left for discovery. At least at Black Mountain was
breathing space to begin and learn" (Rumaker 304)--in Rumaker's case the social
openness of Black Mountain enabled the openness to learning (from various quarters and in unexpected directions) that defined BMC as a pedagogical site. Duberman argues that BMC proved "that 'art' and 'community' could coexist, could even be mutually supportive," but he also shows how art and community were taken up as competing priorities at the crux of key BMC conflicts (253-54). Olson's position in the interview is strange, since his poetics treat art (and therefore art pedagogy) as necessarily social; in 1951, during his time at BMC, he claimed "that PROJECTION, with all its social consequences, is the mark of forward art today" (Selected Letters 143).

37. The details of this scene differ slightly in the account Rumaker gives to Martin Duberman (Duberman 403).

38. As Ralph Maud tells it, their showdown has a whiff of legend. Fuller went to Olson's campus residence "with his men"; "he went into the house alone with Olson for an hour; then he came out and took his men off to New York" (Maud What Does Not Change 116). Telling the story to Robert Creeley, Olson reports demanding of Fuller, "In what sense does any extrapolation of me beyond my fingernails add a fucking thing to me as a man?" (Olson and Creeley 10: 68). Olson found no value in either sciences that engaged regions beyond the immediate human sensory system (Olson and Creeley 8: 216)--eyes and skin, for instance--or engineering and design that removed humans from their natural environments (Olson and Creeley 10: n103).

39. The class had recently lauded Rumaker's story "The Pipe," and Olson asked Wieners, who was ignorant of the positive reception the story had received, to critique it in writing. In response to Wieners's negative appraisal, Olson "laced into him, chastising him roundly for his 'misreadings,' telling him he had got the story all wrong and that he
needed to learn to read" (Rumaker 424).

40. On the other hand, Rumaker found unofficial hierarchy very much in place, calling Olson "Patriarch, Black Mountain his patriarchy with all the attendant, tacit and plied, hierarchical orderings and groupings" (214).

41. Olson had a low tolerance for harsh appraisals about himself. Rumaker claims, "you either surrendered to Olson or you didn't; if you didn't, you were as good as dead as far as he was concerned" (295). I choose to interpret this not as a logical inconsistency in Olson's pedagogy but merely as a human flaw. Complaints of Olson's deficiencies are not uncommon. His sexism, for example, is an easy target (Katz 188; Rumaker 188).

42. Olson saw the category literature (as distinguishable from non-literature in writing and non-writing in art) as a harmful, false boundary (Olson and Creeley 9: 115). Creative writing struck him likewise while also smacking of the academic literary establishment (Olson and Corman 1: 260).

43. Olson attended an informal class by Natasha Goldowski, a physicist on the BMC faculty, about Norbert Wiener's Cybernetics. Wiener's having worked with specialists from an array of research areas impressed Olson, except that he insisted that a poet should have been on the team (Duberman 396).

44. Olson's eventual poetics take the writer, here and now, as the starting point of important action and subordinate prior literature to its relevance to the writer-in-the-instant. Olson's view would have little room for Dahlberg's romanticizing of the past. Nor would it allow him simply to submit to Dahlberg. In 1950, Dahlberg's continued pressuring of Olson to write a positive review of The Flea of Sodom was a breaking point--Olson complained that "all you want is a PUFF" (Olson and Dahlberg 165). Olson
eventually revealed his vehement disagreement with Dahlberg's *Flea*--especially its assumption of "a whole system . . . applied and applicable" from its outset (Olson and Dahlberg 224-225). Their relationship subsequently chilled for good.

45. As for "voice," former BMC student Joel Oppenheimer uses the term to describe what the so-called Black Mountain Poets--a category that is of disputed value but that does include actual BMC students--have in common: "we're all concerned with finding our own voice." Although "find your voice" is an MFA workshop cliché, Oppenheimer uses it here with a specific, unusual orientation toward breath and the body: "the poem should read on the page as I myself read it to you aloud. It should have my breath in it" (Oppenheimer quoted in Duberman 414).

46. Olson's personalized reading recommendations for Rumaker included Theodore Dreiser and the novel *Bread Givers* by Anzia Yezierska (Rumaker 37, 125). See also "A Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn" (*Collected Prose* 297-310). Of course, Olson also pushed certain texts, such as D.H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*, on all of his students (Rumaker 124).

47. Kevin Power writes that *The Black Mountain Review*, which Olson had a major hand in (even though Robert Creeley was the editor proper) "undoubtedly provides an opposition front to the dominant poetics" (281).

48. Olson saw the very notion of taste as a mistake. He presses upon Cid Corman the need for the magazine *Origin* to get beyond "(what i have here dubbed 'Taste' dangers, and, in so doing, seen as inherited culture patterns which, a magazine devoted, as yrs is, to fresh energies, has to cut away" (Olson and Corman 1: 142). In "A Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn," Olson refers to taste as a byproduct of a fallacy (*Collected Prose*...
49. This is not to say that Olson found the unusual inherently worthwhile. For example, it offended Olson that former BMC student Jonathan Williams, who published Olson's early *Maximus Poems*, went on to publish unconventional writers such as Kenneth Patchen, Mina Loy, and Bob Brown (Duberman 406).

50. Olson could encourage his students' viciousness. Rumaker recounts a telling incident, when a visiting playwright read at the college. During the performance, Olson, "chuckling, began to sneer at it, first in whispers, then loud enough for the playwright to hear, egging the rest of us on. Although I felt sorry for the guy, having been there myself, still I joined in as part of the chorus, laughing along with the others, by now having become a regular Black Mountain thug" (355).

51. In "Projective Verse" Olson states, in a phrase that he often repeats in letters and that he attributes to Creeley, "FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT" (*Collected Prose* 240).

52. For accounts of Rice's ouster, see Duberman (148-52) and Mary Emma Harris (57). Olson never faced pressure to leave equal to that of Rice but claimed he was "refused faculty return" by Flola Shepherd and other faculty members in 1951 (*Muthologos* 287) before M. C. Richards and BMC students accommodated his return by offering Richards's "apartment and her 'room and board' slot" (Richards was on leave) and one hundred dollars raised by the students (Duberman 355).

53. Olson cites the allurement of going further, the possibility (which he implies he should resist) that he could "push this whole damned place forward on my own steam, in this sense, make it Olson's University" (Olson and Creeley 10: 92).
54. This is an ambiguous distinction--"design biz" could refer to either of two orientations: that represented by Fuller (presumably marketable work in mechanical and architectural design and engineering) or by Anni and Josef Albers (work in the visual arts influenced by traditional and commercial crafts [Katz 20, 31]).

55. Dawson's *The Black Mountain Book* begins with an emphasis of these same terms: "Black Mountain was freedom. . . . And within that freedom I and others developed a discipline . . ." (7).

56. Between the omnipresent talking and the Olsonian value of use--of digging for and finding meaning in what offers possibilities for one's own work--it may have been inevitable that writing Olson disapproved of circulated at BMC in ways aligned with his poetics. Rumaker mentions a handful of writers effectively prohibited, given Olson's disdain for their writing--Carson McCullers, Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, and especially Hart Crane--but which were important to Rumaker and other students, especially to gay aspiring artists, and which very much had use as materials and models for students to work with (Rumaker 122, 376-77).

57. This might entail, for example, students' engaging intellectually and socially with the writers and editors of *The Black Mountain Review*, and in so doing connecting them directly to extra-academic artistic "work" (Duberman 416).

58. Olson listed the actors and actresses (members of the BMC community) by name in the *dramatis personae* of his ballet "The Born Dancer" (*Fiery Hunt* 49). "Apollonius of Tyana" was written specifically for student Nicola Cernovich (Butterick *Fiery* xvii). "Document" Olson identified as "a play written for the dining hall of Black Mountain College" (*Fiery Hunt* 82).
59. It requires mention that my terms are not Olson's. In his dance-play "The Born Dancer" (published in *The Fiery Hunt*) he describes the major characters in part through their respective relations to knowledge: "Diaghilev is power as the world is power, know-how" (50); Nijinsky "has worked with such men as Picasso, Massine, whoever Stravinsky--and is more knowing (in fact more knowing, in the true sense, than any of them!)") (52). Olson's abstract descriptions of dancers are not terrifically accessible, but it is clear that the implications of "know-how" here are not positive--"know-how" is not connoting versatility and boundary-crossing adaptability (qualities that, in "The Born Dancer," would describe Nijinsky, not Diaghilev), as I would have it do.

60. Olson's "D. H. Lawrence and the High Temptation of the Mind" explores this topic in more detail. In short, Olson admires that "Lawrence somehow chose the advantage of moral perceptions to those of the intellect" (*Collected Prose* 135).

61. The category "New American Poets" dates to Donald Allen's *The New American Poetry*. The anthology presented Olson's poetry first among that of all poets represented.

62. After David Ignatow, guest editor of a "Political Poetry" issue of *Chelsea*, solicited Olson for a contribution, Olson responded with a letter on poetry and the political, then suggested that the very letter be published in lieu of a poem (*Selected Letters* 267-71). Olson explains, "My own experience is that such 'forms' coming via the occasion carry a drive into discourse that the older formalisms (of paragraph etc) don't" (*Selected Letters* 271).

63. Olson muses that "an amateur is one for whom the habit of art is not 'natural' and, because it is not, there is, therefore, a decision of art called for" (Olson and Creeley 7: 80-81). It is telling to compare this notion of a "habit of art" to the same phrase as Flannery
O'Connor adopted it (from Jacques Maritain): a painstakingly conscious disposition toward the making of art (Fitzgerald xvii). This is not to say that O'Connor's writing practices involved only conscious--never unconscious--thought. Rather, for O'Connor, the very habit of daily writing meant the repeated, daily, active decision to write.

64. For another example of the form-is-love motif, which also refers to the providing of a form as a birth, see "The Babe" (Collected Poems 101-02).

65. In "Human Universe" Olson argues that "Idealisms of any sort, like logic and like classification" (157) impede in-the-moment action, which has been harmfully displaced by abstract discourse as the focus of human lives.

66. Critic Ralph Maud especially takes pains to combat the notion of a "Black Mountain School" (Olson's Reading 113).

67. Some of Olson's writing was published by former BMC students. Jonathan Williams published the earliest of the Maximus Poems (Maud Harbor 144). Robert Howley's Oyez Press published The Special View of History as well as early Olson criticism, Ann Charters's Olson/Melville (Maud Olson's Reading 120).

68. Olson submitted poems to a number of high profile literary periodicals before 1951, at which point he stopped mailing unsolicited submissions (Butterick Collected xxviii-xxix). Creeley continued to publish in conventional literary magazines, but he was (at least at first) unimpressed by the emerging MFA programs that were culturally and aesthetically associated with them. After the Kenyon Review accepted one of his stories, its editor (and well-known poet) John Crowe Ransom offered to write Creeley a recommendation for--as he puts it to Olson in a jaunty dismissal--"fellowship, to--ah-- --

U/of Iowa. Phew. No thanks, old sport. Will sit this one out. . . . Enclose his letter for a
giggle, eh?” (Olson and Creeley 3: 117). Olson had his own encounter with the Iowa Writers' Workshop via magazine submissions. Olson had published poems in Ray West's *Western Review*, but after the magazine relocated and became affiliated with the Iowa Writers' Workshop, Olson's recent submission "The Praises" was rejected by the editorial board, which included Paul Engle. Olson had once scolded Engle for speaking poorly of Ezra Pound, and Olson figured that this rejection was Engle's revenge (Maud Harbor 90-91).

Chapter Three: The Gordon Lish Program

69. An example of an intermediary step that could be added here: to analyze Gertrude Stein's salon as an educational site. Compared to the Iowa workshop model, the Stein salon represents a thoroughgoing alternative for artistic and literary pedagogy, in which firsthand experience trumps received lore and in which claims of individual authority (especially in the person of Stein) supercede and challenge institutional authorities. This examination, together with Chapter One, could demonstrate how differences in the bases and manifestations of authority across pedagogic sites can allow wildly divergent values and procedures for literary writing. Ranges of potential kinds of practicable know-how vary accordingly.

70. Sodowsky provides an excellent overview of critical controversy over the literary value and cultural meaning of *Minimalism*.

71. Depending on whether and how one distinguishes criticism from scholarship, Sklenicka, Polsgrove, Max, and Hemmingson ("Esquire's Failure") have also published Lish criticism during this span.
72. For instance, George Carver writes, "He was brilliant, arrogant, a pedigreed chauvinist, charismatic, perhaps even a tad mad" (Part I).

73. Various opinions about the appropriateness or achievement of Lish's editing of Carver's stories can be found in Benfey, Ford, King, Krawiec, McGrath, Rich, "Rough Crossings," and Wood. Günter Leyboldt finds the controversy mainly irrelevant to the study of Carver's fiction, downplaying Lish's role as "the type of influence to which authors tend to be exposed" (318 n2). It may be that Lish's editing of Carver's fiction is less important to studies of that fiction than to considerations of contemporary American fiction more generally, in which Lish's broad influence is more visible.

74. In 2009, after a hiatus of about ten years, Lish returned to teaching with summer courses at the Mercantile Library Center for Fiction.

75. In an interview with John Lee and Vernon Chatman, Lish claims to have prevented the publication of a further novel, Mysterium, when it reached the proofing stage (76). Evidence of Mysterium exists on library search databases (e.g. WorldCat) and, as Lee and Chatman note, Amazon.com.

76. Anderson Ferrell received a contract for his first novel, Where She Was, the day after he read two paragraphs aloud in class (Hempel 93).

77. The narrative of former Lish student David Leavitt's Martin Bauman: Or, A Sure Thing begins and ends with interactions between the title character and Stanley Flint, characters largely resembling Leavitt and Lish, respectively. Flint rebukes Bauman for his commercial-mindedness, a charge that hangs over Bauman throughout the novel.

78. Gerald Howard remarks Lish's unrelenting control over matters such as the cover art, jacket copy, and typeface of his books.
79. "The Bride" begins as follows:

If this is to be a story instead of what it was initially intended to be—an answer to
the question of how you go about finding an outlet for what you are not sure is in
there to begin with—then there might as well be two women instead of just one
and, for a change, just the one man, who is no longer the one I threw my body
away on but just somebody where I work, somebody with little say over what it is
I do, which, I gather, is to look lonely from afar. (Lutz 63)

80. I am not inventing this phrase. Mimi Kramer, for one, uses it offhandedly (38).

81. Even the Eden Mills audience, in chasing Lish offstage with ironic applause,
entered a relationship with his persona and program—the event became a topic of interest
and led to Lish's return to the festival to interview with Cronenberg. More variables are
involved when students respond to Lish insofar as their responses are in language.

82. Despite Morton and Zavarzadeh, who take Lish's class to represent the dominant
workshop culture.

83. Michael Hemmingson's *Gordon Lish and His Influence on Twentieth-Century
American Literature: Life and Times of Captain Fiction*, forthcoming from Routledge,
will perhaps be such a book.

84. The version unedited by Lish has recently been published as *Beginners* (2009),
which can also be found in *Raymond Carver: Collected Stories* (Library of America).

85. *Recursion* is present in that each next step in the series involves the results of the
previous step. Recursion necessarily accompanies torque.

86. Lish later may have come to "despise" Bloom (George Carver), but the idea of
"anxiety of influence" remains useful in suggesting one level at which torque can be
conceived.

87. *Change: Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution*, by
Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch, observes that effective problem-solving often means the initiating of higher-order change—the taking of actions that lead to recontextualization, where prior first-order attempts at problem solving have only maintained the context that incubates the problem. By comparison, problem-solving in the Lish program requires the continuance of the problem in a recontextualized form. The Lish program effectively does away with higher categorical orders, making everything first-order and subject to programmatic treatment. Higher-order programmatic rules are an illusion; they are literary, too, and as such can be artfully combated and put into tension.


89. The very title *Self-Imitation of Myself* demonstrates recursion in language, more so than an alternative such as "My Self-Imitation." The effects of the second appearance of the word "self" (as part of "Myself") are emphasis and repetition but also distancing. The title suggests a nesting of selves—a relationship inviting our puzzling over it—and depends for effect on the passing of time as a reader encounters and processes one "self," then another.

90. "In Reality" is reprinted in *Collected Fictions*, in which it is formatted the same way as the rest of Lish's "fictions."

91. Lish was awarded 2,000 dollars in court before the award was subsequently
rescinded ("Greatest Genius").

92. It is possible to introduce here another principle, seduction, which Mimi Kramer argues is central to Lish's project (38, 40). Some of Lish's appeals not attributable to torque can be ascribed to this principle. Further principles could be added as well. A clear-cut list, let alone a hierarchy, of Lish's principles and tactics has not been published, though torque is well documented and tension is as essential for thinking through Lish's self-presentation. Whatever the number of principles beyond tension, this result is the same: it is possible and desirable for Lish's principles and methods to be at odds, at tension, with one another.

93. Page numbers are from the 1997 Four Walls Eight Windows edition of Peru.

Conclusion: Aimless Knowing--Creative Writing and Composition Studies

94. This book has argued for such a broad view of literature, but not for unguided "free creativity" in the practice of student writing. Rather, the idea is that a variety of pedagogical frameworks should be implemented to differently enable methods of student writing. Still, the pedagogies I have associated with O'Connor, Olson, and Lish, respectively, all allow student writing a great deal of open-endedness compared to conventional composition courses.

95. Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines programs, when they direct students to compose in multiple specialized frameworks, each in its turn (rather than to find and stick to one specialized writing context) align with this logic of aim-shifting according to framework-shifting.
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