



Composition, Creative Writing, and the Shifting Boundaries of English Studies

English studies is in crisis. Indeed, virtually no feature of the discipline can be considered beyond dispute. At issue are the very elements that constitute the categories of poetic and rhetoric, the activities involved in their production and interpretation, their relationship to each other, and their relative place in graduate and undergraduate work.

James A. Berlin, *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures:
Refiguring College English Studies*

ASPIRING PROFESSIONALS IN ANY academic discipline must learn that discipline's boundaries; they must work toward a clear understanding of the discipline's object or objects of study, its accepted research methods, its guiding questions and modes of inquiry. In many cases also, newcomers to an academic discipline need to learn the history of their chosen discipline—the trajectory the discipline's inquiry has followed; the theories that have been developed and then either kept or discarded; and the current methodological, ideological, or interpretive disputes (if any) in the discipline. This is rarely an easy process. It is, after all, more than simply gathering and remembering information. Ultimately, it involves a reorientation of worldview; it involves allowing the discipline to shape (at least in part) the kind of person one is and the way one looks at things.

If this process of professional enculturation is challenging for aspirants in most disciplines, it can be downright maddening for those in composition or creative writing, for these are almost always (at least administratively) subsidiary pieces of a larger structure called “English.” This larger structure exerts tremendous influence on composition and creative writing, sometimes in ways that compositionists and creative writers find objectionable. Newcomers and outsiders often feel that composition and creative writing ought to have a great deal in common—as, on an intuitive, “commonsense” level, they certainly should—but are puzzled and dismayed to discover just how different the two areas are. This highlights the challenges of the project in which this book engages: an argument that composition and creative writing, at this particular historical moment, have much to gain by forming an institutional alliance and perhaps much to lose if they do not. Such an argument must take into account the historical, ideological, and institutional underpinnings of the fact that composition and creative writing are now, for the most part, separate fields of activity, even though they are putatively “united” as part of English studies and even though some people are actively working to cross or blur the boundaries between them.

In the Shadows

Both composition and creative writing, in spite of their rapid institutional growth during the latter half of the twentieth century, still exist largely at the periphery of English studies, in the shadow of their dominant (and often domineering) counterpart called literary studies. Quite recently, scholars in both composition (Crowley) and creative writing (Ritter) have lamented that these fields—not to mention the work done by practitioners within them—are often “invisible” to many in the very academic departments in which they exist. Literary studies serves as an institutional wedge separating composition and creative writing, compelling most members of those disciplines to understand their own fields either in complete isolation from the rest of English studies or only in relation to the dominant presence at the center.

I recently taught, for the first time, a graduate seminar in “rhetoric and composition.” During the first class meeting, before distributing the syllabus, I asked students to meet in small groups to formulate definitions of what they

would be studying for the semester. Or, to put it more simply, I asked them, “What is ‘rhetoric and composition?’” Some of the students seemed to know a bit about rhetoric—that it had to do with making speeches, with persuasion, and with argumentation. A couple even asked pertinent and interesting questions about whether or how well the principles of rhetoric as they apply to speaking could be effectively brought into the realm of writing. A number of students attempted to define composition as well, and while these definitions were sensible, they also tended to be superficial, identifying composition merely as the physical act of stringing words together on paper or perhaps typing them on a computer keyboard. What none of the students seemed to know, however, was that “rhetoric and composition” is the name (though certainly not the only name) of an academic discipline—or “subdiscipline,” or “field,” if those terms are preferable—that focuses on the functions and purposes of writing in schools, workplaces, and other contexts. Some readers may not find this lack of knowledge about rhetoric and composition unusual; indeed, perhaps it is fairly common. But these were all graduate students; they had all been through complete undergraduate curricula in English; they were all bright, skilled, capable people who were nonetheless unaware of the very existence of the subject they were about to study. How many graduate-level classes are there in other disciplines, I wonder, where something like that happens?

For those who professionally identify themselves with rhetoric and composition, or any of the field’s subtly different names, like composition studies, the scene described above may seem all too familiar, though perhaps regrettably so. For rhetoric and composition, composition-rhetoric, composition studies, composition—whatever one chooses to call it—exists, as I have already noted, at the periphery of English studies. Or, at the very least, it exists at the periphery of most individual English departments. Perhaps this is the most important thing composition has in common with creative writing, though the two fields have arrived at and frequently dealt with their peripheral status in different ways. And while a good deal of work has been done recently—mostly by compositionists but also by creative writers—to question, cross, and redraw disciplinary boundaries, almost none has adequately accounted for the sheer dominance of literary studies over both composition and creative writing in most English departments. This is not intended primarily to criticize those who engage in such efforts; rather, I believe this absence

has more to do with the very structure of English studies—its ideological structure as manifested through its administrative incarnations, which tends to install literary study so “naturally” at the center of the discipline that most professionals (and certainly most students) in English never question it, and many compositionists and creative writers (consciously or unconsciously) understand their own fields as mere branches of literary study.

Anyone who doubts the proposition that literary study is the dominant institutional core of English studies need only read a few of the histories of the discipline published within recent years, most by compositionists, but some by literary scholars. They all tell different versions of the same story: college and university English departments built themselves into large academic empires, usually much larger than those in other liberal arts disciplines, as a result of housing the first-year composition course—the course that is, in Sharon Crowley’s apt term, the “universal requirement,” the one course that virtually all students at virtually all American colleges and universities are compelled to take. Yet this course, the economic engine that allowed the discipline of English studies to grow and prosper, was never regarded as the intellectual center of the discipline. Far from it, in fact. Much more often, the composition course was (and in many cases still is) regarded as a necessary evil. Teaching it is something to be tolerated or endured while one struggles (often unsuccessfully) to move up the career ladder into the institutional nirvana of literary teaching and scholarship. Large doctoral programs in literature use the first-year composition course as an institutional support mechanism. Students aspiring toward careers as scholars and teachers of Shakespeare, Milton, Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood, or contemporary horror films teach composition not because they have any interest in it but because it offers the benefit of a full tuition waiver and a modest stipend while they work toward their Ph.D.’s. The same is sometimes true, though far less often, for students working on graduate degrees in creative writing. The emergence of composition studies as a legitimate academic field has done surprisingly little to undo this institutional arrangement, in spite of scathing critiques authored by scholars like James Berlin, Sharon Crowley, Susan Miller, and Thomas Miller, to name just a few. In most English departments, the notion that literary study is the center and primary reason-for-being of the discipline has demonstrated incredible staying power.

Of course, the disciplinary centrality of literary study has not prevented

signs of discord from emerging. Much of the discourse surrounding English studies is now volatile and chaotic; strands of argument that seem utterly independent and unconnected coexist within individual departments and occasionally in the same professional journals or at the same conferences; discourses steeped in a rich consciousness of history, ideology, and institutional reality stand alongside those that seem oblivious to all those things. A wonderful example of this can be found in the January 2004 issue of *College English*. Patrick Bizzaro's "Research and Reflection in English Studies: The Special Case of Creative Writing" is a groundbreaking and much-needed inquiry into the present and future disciplinary status (or potential disciplinary status) of creative writing, arguing for a critical and reflexive examination of the kinds of research and knowledge-generating activities that take place in the field and ultimately for redesigned graduate-level degree programs that specifically articulate the epistemological and methodological differences between creative writing and other branches of English studies and train students to be not only writers but also teachers, scholars, and responsible institutional citizens. The innovative nature of Bizzaro's work here cannot be overstated. His project challenges conventional wisdom both in creative writing as it currently exists and in English studies generally; it takes virtually nothing for granted and asks readers to question their founding assumptions about what they do and why they do it.

Immediately prior to Bizzaro's article in this issue of *College English* is "Who Killed Annabel Lee? Writing about Literature in the Composition Classroom," in which Mark Richardson revisits the issue of how best to incorporate literary interpretation into composition classrooms. Like all good scholars must, Richardson realizes that the debate he wishes to enter has a history, and he briefly outlines that history in order to contextualize his own argument. As most people working in English studies probably know, the debate over whether or not literary texts are appropriate material for composition classrooms is an old one, having much to do with the fact that composition teaching was often (and in some cases still is) viewed as an apprenticeship for aspiring scholars and teachers of literature. Such people, of course, are likely to bring into their classrooms that which they know best and love most. Probably the most recent full-scale flaring up of this debate occurred as a result of the widely read and much-debated exchange between Erika Lindemann and Gary Tate in the March 1993 issue of *College English*. (Sharon Crowley, in

Composition in the University, later provided incisive analysis of this debate and its significance to the institutional relationship between literary study and composition.) Richardson summarizes the debate well but argues that scholars and teachers really need to “move beyond” it, primarily because “graduate English programs aren’t changing quickly enough to produce a new generation of rhetoric and composition teachers sufficient to meet the staffing needs of first-year composition at all of our colleges and universities. For the foreseeable future, many postsecondary institutions will continue to staff FYC [first-year composition] with faculty trained primarily in literary studies.” Likewise, Richardson argues, “the debate prevents us from examining best practices for writing about literature in FYC” (280). I find this reasoning nothing short of stunning. In two deft moves, Richardson asserts that it is essentially useless to debate whether writing about literature is appropriate for the first-year composition classroom because the practice *will* continue; then he asserts that such debate is useless because the practice *should* continue. In other words, Richardson takes a debate that may very well illuminate one of the major structural fractures in English studies and banishes it into irrelevance so that he may move on to what seems most interesting to him, that is, the best possible *methods* for writing about literature in first-year composition classrooms.

It is difficult to imagine such debates continuing for so long in other professional contexts. What if, for instance, orthodontists were performing root canals or automobile mechanics were repairing jet engines on commercial airliners? Could these practices be justified by arguing that a continued shortage of oral surgeons and certified jet-engine mechanics makes them necessary? Would it be possible to assert that arguments about whether such situations should persist prevent us from looking at the best ways for orthodontists to perform root canals or auto mechanics to repair commercial jet engines? If some readers find these analogies overstated or exaggerated, perhaps that is because the purported “naturalness” of the relationship between literary interpretation and composition is so deeply embedded in the “institutional unconscious” of English studies that it seems strange even to question it. Still, it stuns me that Richardson can recognize that the practice of writing about literature in composition courses stems in large measure from an overproduction of literary scholars and an underproduction of compositionists without focusing on how that problem might be solved as soon as possible. Perhaps a clue,

though, can be found in the biographical note accompanying Richardson's article, which reads, "Although his degrees were originally in British literature, he has since then developed into a teacher of writing concerned primarily with disciplinarity in writing programs" (278). Perhaps Richardson's project involves an attempt to reassert the putatively essential disciplinary connection between reading literary texts and learning to write at a time when the emergence of composition as a disciplinary force within English studies threatens to undermine this once-unquestioned practice.

The appearance of these articles back-to-back goes a long way toward illuminating the volatility of discourse in English studies today, where forward-looking and groundbreaking discourses challenge the "givens" of disciplinary history and practice while reactionary discourses aim to cover over the cracks emerging due to the contradictory ideologies embedded within disciplinary structures. Bizzaro, while not ignoring the roles of institutional structures, ideology, and inertia, nonetheless works actively to overcome these conditions. Richardson, on the other hand, accepts them as givens and attempts to work in spite of rather than against them. Some readers might be tempted to argue that such a contrast actually demonstrates the health of a discipline that can support such different strands of debate as scholars and teachers examine the myriad issues (pedagogical, administrative, and theoretical) facing English studies. I would counter that discourse like Richardson's cannot be considered healthy; in fact, it represents a fundamental failure on the part of many in English studies to understand their own discipline except through utterly insufficient ideological lenses. This is a prime manifestation of "the privilege of unknowing" (Schmertz 78) through which literary scholars and teachers, by virtue of their positions within the dominant strand of the discipline, can essentially get away with knowing little or nothing about composition or, for that matter, about creative writing.¹

From Required Course to Expanding Field

For many who profess composition today, reflecting on the situation of their chosen enterprise reveals some striking ironies or paradoxes. Although the institutional inequities decried by many prominent scholars in composition have remained, there can be little doubt that scholarship in composition has

become a thriving enterprise. Likewise, recipients of doctoral degrees in composition, if they find full-time academic employment in English departments, may find their work ignored or undervalued. But the graduate programs that produce such degree holders are thriving, as are the professional journals, conferences, and other forums where the fascinating “work” of composition studies proliferates. On some levels, composition studies might be called one of the most impressive academic success stories of the twentieth century, a genuinely interdisciplinary field of activity and knowledge-making. On other levels, composition remains the unwanted stepchild of English studies. How could it have come to be both of these things at the same time?

Composition’s history is perhaps different from that of any other academic discipline or subdiscipline. By most accounts (e.g., North, *The Making*; Young and Goggin) composition did not exist in anything like its current form until the late 1950s or early 1960s. Some historians argue persuasively that composition’s origin came even later, with the emergence of process-oriented theories and pedagogies in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Further, the theoretical explosion of the 1980s and 1990s transformed composition into an enterprise so diverse that some of its original practitioners and scholars might no longer recognize it. No matter where one stands in the debate over composition’s origin, though, the fact remains that the discipline of composition came into full existence long after composition burst on the scene as a course taken by students at American colleges and universities.² And, in fact, it was composition-as-college-course (or, more precisely, the proliferation of real or perceived problems associated with its teaching) that at a certain historical point seemed to compel the formation of composition-as-academic-discipline. The origin of composition as a universally required course in American institutions of higher learning is probably quite familiar to those in composition studies, though inevitably surprising, and sometimes even shocking, to those encountering it for the first time. As several scholars tell the tale, the college composition course first appeared at elite Eastern American institutions late in the nineteenth century as the classical curriculum—a rigid set of requirements taken by all students—was giving way to an elective curriculum in which students chose areas or subjects to major in and as the older practice of assessing student learning through oral declamation and disputation was giving way to the practice of assessing student learning through written composition. Professors and administrators at these institutions became

horrified at what they believed was the virtual illiteracy demonstrated by their students (students, ironically, who had attended the most prestigious preparatory schools and academies in the nation). In 1875, Harvard replaced its required sophomore-level course in rhetoric with a freshman-level course in written composition that, it was believed, would correct the linguistic infelicities of its entering students and prepare them to engage in college-level writing tasks. The measure was supposed to be temporary; Harvard's administrators imagined that the existence of this new course would implicitly compel preparatory schools to clean up their acts and do a better job preparing their students to write and that after some time the required composition course could be discontinued. They could not have been more wrong. By the turn of the twentieth century, virtually every college and university in America had a required first-year composition course, almost always housed within an English department—and that fact remains, with a few notable exceptions, even today. When composition emerged as an academic discipline later in the twentieth century, it was largely because a number of factors—demographic, economic, historical, and institutional—seemed to create the sense that the college composition course was not succeeding in what it was supposed to do, that is, teach students how to write at the college level. This practical concern quickly spawned widespread theoretical inquiries into the questions of just what, exactly, writing is and just how, if at all, knowledge about writing might engender better teaching of writing.

Composition studies developed quite rapidly from the late 1960s through the early 1980s, so much so that Stephen North in 1987 could publish his groundbreaking *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*. This book is both an extensive catalog and a methodological analysis of many of the disciplinary strands compositionists had crafted by 1987; North carefully traces the development of composition scholarship with roots in history, philosophy, ethnography, cognitive psychology, and other academic fields. And it certainly would not be a stretch to argue that composition studies continued to develop and diversify with increasing rapidity after the publication of North's study. A decade later, in 1997, Victor Villanueva published the first edition of *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*, an anthology designed primarily for people new to composition studies, especially graduate students. Composition studies has become more diverse and sophisticated, Villanueva writes, adding, "But with the greater diversity and sophistication

has come greater confusion” (xiv). Naturally, the more complex and developed a field becomes, the more difficult it is for practitioners—especially new ones—to gain a broad understanding of its intellectual currents. That a second edition of *Cross-Talk* appeared in 2003 indicates that the development continues and shows no signs of slowing.

One of the most interesting debates within composition studies now—at least in terms of the argument of this book—revolves around the role of the first-year college composition course as a subject, direct or implied, of composition scholarship. Some scholars argue that the development of the discipline (i.e., the development of scholarly and theoretical treatments of writing) is hampered by the notion, sometimes called “the pedagogical imperative,” that all scholarship ought to serve the cause of teaching, especially teaching in the required first-year composition course. In other academic disciplines, these scholars argue, no such arrangement exists; most scholarship is geared toward the discovery, production, or reassessment of knowledge. But in composition, the pedagogical imperative limits the available field of knowledge and therefore, in the minds of some, prevents the emergence of writing scholarship that does not have any obvious applicability to teaching. Other scholars argue that a constant and intimate relationship to teaching is precisely what makes composition different from other academic disciplines and that this relationship ought to be preserved. No matter what one’s position is in this debate, it serves as evidence, I believe, that composition studies has reached an important stage in its development and is possibly ready to expand its scope to encompass territory commonly thought to belong only to creative writing.

The Privileged Marginality of Creative Writing

Creative writing, as an academic subunit of English studies, has a good deal (though not, by any means, everything) in common with composition. Like composition, creative writing has an interesting and unusual academic history. If composition is the only discipline to have been spawned by a single college-level course, perhaps creative writing is one of the few disciplines to have originated within an economic conundrum. According to D. G. Myers, author of the only book-length historical study of academic creative writing,

the discipline (if one can call it that) began in the early part of the twentieth century largely because writers of fiction, poetry, and drama often could not earn enough money through writing to support themselves and therefore needed jobs.³ College and university teaching, though not always palatable to such writers, nonetheless seemed more desirable than most other kinds of employment, since it at least offered the possibility of spending a good deal of time reading and discussing books, as well as the opportunity to use publication for career advancement.

Creative writing thus differs from composition and most other academic disciplines and subdisciplines in the kind of outside-the-classroom publication or professional work expected of its practitioners. The oft-maligned “publish or perish” dictum is perhaps even more pronounced in creative writing than in other academic disciplines—largely (and ironically) the result of a hyper-competitive market for teaching positions—yet many creative writers, not to mention academics from other fields, do not consider their work “scholarship.” Indeed, creative writers most often publish, and are expected to publish, original works of poetry, fiction, and sometimes drama or so-called creative nonfiction. While most academic disciplines have engendered the development of scholarly journals where research findings can be published and shared with a national or international disciplinary community, creative writing has spawned the development of numerous journals and magazines where poets and fiction writers can publish their work. Yet many outside the discipline might be surprised to discover that creative writing has also developed or co-opted a series of other professional discourses or genres as part of its professional “work.” And it is from some of these discourses that we might tease out an interesting analysis of creative writing’s guiding assumptions and ideologies.

An extensive analysis of the professional discourses of creative writing (i.e., those discourses other than poetry, fiction, drama, and creative nonfiction) would be tangential here, so I will simply outline what these discourses are and mention their relative importance within the field. Book reviews are probably the most common, and though book reviews are part of the discourse of almost any academic discipline, they are perhaps even more important in creative writing as guides for interested readers about which books they might (and might not) want to read or buy. Interviews, perhaps not quite so common in other academic disciplines and fields, are very common in journals

and magazines for creative writers; the *Paris Review's* widely read interviews with writers are probably the most notable examples, but many other journals continue to publish interviews with creative writers. Perhaps the prominence of interviews as a form of discourse within creative writing indicates that many in the field do not think of creative writing as a body of knowledge enriched or moved forward by collective contributions so much as they consider it an arena for individual achievement. Textbooks, fixtures in many academic disciplines, also have their place within the professional discourses of creative writing and are important as indicators of creative writing's prevailing notions and ideologies. Finally, we might include among creative writing's professional discourses a type of writing that perhaps is just now beginning to emerge—the scholarly analysis of creative production. Though some of this scholarship is produced by people located institutionally within literary studies, it differs significantly from most literary scholarship, which focuses almost exclusively on interpretation. A few interesting examples of this kind of scholarship are Marjorie Perloff's *Radical Artifice* (an examination of poetry writing in a culture saturated by other sorts of media), Vernon Shetley's *After the Death of Poetry* (an argument that contemporary American poets need to appeal to readers of literary theory and criticism), Timothy Clark's *The Theory of Inspiration* (a fascinating attempt to explain and demystify exactly what might be happening when writers feel “inspired”), and Jane Piirto's “*My Teeming Brain*”: *Understanding Creative Writers* (an extensive analysis of 160 contemporary creative writers that draws heavily on cognitive psychology). Though this kind of scholarship certainly harbors the potential to transform, perhaps dramatically, the field of academic creative writing, it has yet to exert much influence.

Throughout most of its history as an academic enterprise, creative writing has not been very visible to most outside its rather insulated circle of practitioners; in fact, creative writing has often remained virtually invisible to many within college and university English departments. During the 1990s, *College English* published only one article devoted entirely to creative writing—Ron McFarland's 1993 essay “An Apologia for Creative Writing.” Though I do not imagine either McFarland or *College English's* editors intended it this way, this article served as one of the primary official representations of creative writing to the rest of English studies during the last decade of the twentieth century. And tellingly, I believe, this article provides a neat and cogent sum-

mary of the often unstated assumptions that guide theory and practice in creative writing, McFarland cuts to the heart of his argument when he claims: “I once ascertained five essentials of a serious writer: desire, drive, talent, vision, and craft. . . . My point . . . is not altered whether the list is held at five, cut to three, or expanded to twenty: of the essentials, only craft can be taught” (34). A whole cluster of assumptions about writers and writing lurks beneath the surface of this statement. But four essential elements of this position might be stated as follows. First, “creative writing” as understood in academic terms is “serious writing.”⁴ This presumably distinguishes it from commercial or utilitarian forms of writing, though this distinction is certainly problematic. Second, most of the really important, essential elements of creative writing cannot be taught, because they are, in essence, intrinsic aspects of the writer’s personality or psychological makeup. Third, only “craft,” a minor though nonetheless essential aspect of writing, can be taught. Craft, in this context, refers to rules and techniques; it resides in surface or formal features of particular texts. Students, assuming they are motivated enough, can learn to master craft, but they either have or do not have the other essentials of a “serious writer,” and nothing a teacher of creative writing does can change this. Finally, there is the implication of a strong connection between creative writing and literature: “What else we do, generally, in creative writing courses [besides critique student writing in a workshop setting] parallels what we do when we teach courses in literature, and most of us do teach those courses” (35).

Together, the beliefs articulated by McFarland constitute what I call the “institutional-conventional wisdom” of creative writing. Though perhaps it sounds a bit awkward, this term is intended to denote a system of belief that often appears to some creative writers to be a form of “natural” or “common-sense” knowledge. Thus, it is “conventional wisdom,” believed by many to be beyond dispute. But it is also “institutional” in the sense that it has become embedded within institutional structures and therefore has helped to form the kind of academic enterprise creative writing is. And because creative writing has developed into an enterprise cut off in many ways from other academic enterprises—simultaneously a part of English studies and something apart from English studies—this institutional-conventional wisdom has not often been critiqued or challenged from within creative writing. In fact, the most notable challenges to this wisdom tend to come from outside creative writing, which means that they often rely on limited understandings of what

the field is like. Theoretically minded readers will likely wonder why I have not simply named this cluster of beliefs the “dominant epistemology” of creative writing. Certainly that term would be appropriate too, but “institutional-conventional wisdom” should serve as a constant reminder that the field of academic creative writing possesses a sort of “commonsense” knowledge of its own subject, a knowledge that is reinforced and naturalized by the institutional positioning of creative writing, in relation to both English studies and the academy at large.

Briefly summarized, this institutional-conventional wisdom holds that creativity or writing ability is fundamentally “interior” or “psychological” in nature and that it is thus the province only of special or gifted individuals and is fundamentally unteachable.⁵ What *is* teachable in creative writing, according to this institutional-conventional wisdom, is “craft,” which is understood in this context as a collection of skills or techniques that writers can explore or use to demonstrate their creativity. Those people who possess the right kind of creative talent, if they can learn to master craft, can produce “serious writing” or works of “literature” that are aesthetically distinguishable from other kinds of texts. The institutional-conventional wisdom of creative writing also characterizes professionals in the field as writers first, teachers second. In fact, it is often argued or implied that achievement as a writer of fiction or poetry is an essential (indeed, at times the only) thing that qualifies one to teach creative writing to others.

Abundant anecdotal evidence attests to the existence of this institutional-conventional wisdom. Patrick Bizzaro offers the following story in a review essay: after presenting a paper on creative writing pedagogy at the annual convention of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP), Bizzaro was approached by “a poet acquaintance” who “explained that she was of the opinion that *real writers* spend their time writing, and that AWP’s Pedagogy Forum wasn’t really taken seriously by writers anyway. . . . Creative writers, she insisted, ‘don’t give papers at conferences’” (“Should I” 286; italics mine). In the end, though, the evidence goes far beyond anecdotes. Articulations of the institutional-conventional wisdom of creative writing appear throughout the professional discourses of the field.

Michel Foucault’s idea of the “author-function” has become a commonplace concept within much of the scholarship of English studies. For the purposes of examining the institutional-conventional wisdom of creative writing,

however, I find it more useful to refer to the “author-figure”—a concept also suggested by Foucault in “What Is an Author?” when he writes, “I want to deal solely with the relationship between text and author and with the manner in which the text points to this ‘figure’ that, at least in appearance, is outside it and antecedes it” (101). This term suggests a person—a body, a “character”—implied by a piece of discourse and also reminds us of the importance of *figurative* language as an element of academic creative writing. I do not wish to argue here that it is better, in any general sense, to think of the author as a “function” or as a “figure.” I merely mean to suggest that in the discourse of creative writing, the author is virtually always treated *as* a figure. The author-figure constructed in much of the professional discourse of creative writing is a *psychologized* figure. By this I mean that all aspects of the text-generating situation are supposedly governed by the writer’s “imagination”; the author’s solitary mind is the source of all texts composed and even in many cases pre-determines what the purpose of the text and its audience will be. Everything about the text is purported to come from “within” the writer.

Mary Kinzie, in *The Cure of Poetry in an Age of Prose*, advances the idea that poetry is a “calling,” a moral activity, and that “real” poems can only be written by a particular type of person. She asks (possibly in a challenge to Language Poets or post-structuralist literary theorists), “How can a *real poet* take the deep divination of poetry to be illusory?” (xv; italics mine). Later, she writes, “However different the religious beliefs and social ease and individual forwardness of artists in time, only one kind of individual—someone intimately possessed of personality, if not with the egoism that often comes with it—ever composes poems worth saving and rereading” (307). In other words, a real writer, a real poet, is a transhistorical and transcultural creature, a type of person who (though rare) occurs in many different time periods, cultures, and situations. From this notion proceeds the belief that it is the job of creative writing teachers to identify and encourage “real writers” when and if they show up in creative writing classrooms.

So when Mary Oliver asserts, boldly, “Everyone knows that poets are born and not made in school,” apparently erasing the possibility that creative writing should even exist as a school subject, she hastens to add, “This book [*A Poetry Handbook*] is about the things that *can* be learned. It is about matters of *craft*” (1; italics mine). In this, Oliver quite neatly sums up one of the key elements of creative writing’s institutional-conventional wisdom: it is not

possible to teach people to *be* writers (since they either are or are not that “one kind of individual” Kinzie extols), though it is possible to impart to them certain (though quite limited) technical things *about* writing. Oliver continues, “Something that is essential cannot be taught; it can only be given, or earned, or formulated in a manner too mysterious to be picked apart and redesigned for the next person” (1). This brings to light another facet of creative writing’s institutional-conventional wisdom—the notion that since creativity is individual, intrinsic, even “mysterious,” it cannot really be analyzed or explained in any significant way. In many cases, this notion has been deployed to argue against the idea that creative writing courses should even exist. But Oliver insists that some aspects of poetry writing can be taught. “Still,” she writes, “painters, sculptors, and musicians require a lively acquaintance with the history of their particular field and with current theories and techniques. And the same is true of poets. Whatever can’t be taught, there is a great deal which can, and must, be learned.” And what can be learned, as we have already seen, is craft, which is “that part of the poem that is a written document, as opposed to a mystical document, which of course the poem is also” (1). For Oliver, then, craft is that part of poetry writing that can be learned, as opposed to that part that cannot. While one cannot be a poet without being born a poet, one can learn the technical aspects of poetic composition. One can learn to employ “devices of sound,” “the line,” “given forms,” “verse that is free,” “imagery,” “voice,” and other such devices, devices that are the subjects of the chapters of Oliver’s handbook. For Oliver, craft encompasses the technical devices—the tools—that can be learned by students. It does not encompass the “essence” of being a poet, that mysterious thing with which a precious few people are born.

The claim that “real” writers are particular kinds of people is not limited to commentary on poetry writing. Fiction writer and critic John W. Aldridge paints a bleak picture of the contemporary landscape for fiction writing and blames creative writing programs in large measure for this bleakness, noting that “the writing programs have not yet devised a way to reproduce or incorporate into their curricula the conditions that are best suited to the creation of writers.” He further explains: “Part of the problem is that most *real writers* have already been formed psychologically to become writers long before they are old enough to enter a program. At some time in childhood or early adolescence they will have learned to live with the fact that somehow they are differ-

ent from others, that there is a detached and perversely watchful ingredient in their natures that causes them to stand just outside those experiences to which their contemporaries so robustly and mindlessly give themselves” (28; italics mine). Aldridge’s larger argument is that “real” writers cannot be cultivated in college and university creative writing programs and that such programs have (perhaps irreparably) harmed the very enterprise of fiction writing. In an ironic sense, then, Aldridge affirms the institutional-conventional wisdom of creative writing, though perhaps in a way that would make many academically employed creative writers uncomfortable.

This notion that “real” writers are particular, often rare, kinds of people is intimately linked (as we have seen in Mary Oliver’s case) to the idea that the creative writing class should focus only on matters of craft—that is, matters of surface-level technique. Fiction writer Madison Smartt Bell claims: “It’s not that a student’s inner process can’t be influenced from without. It’s that it shouldn’t be. Inner process is the student’s business and not the teacher’s. An ethical teacher may *recommend* devices to stimulate the process of imagination, but that is a different matter from *participating* in them. It’s probably true that, for the individual, the practice of art is not entirely distinct from the practice of working out one’s private psychological problems, but as a teacher, you don’t want to go fooling around in the area where these two overlap. As a student, you really probably don’t want anyone else messing around with the *inside* of your head” (15). Frank Conroy echoes these sentiments, arguing: “The [creative writing] workshop cannot tell or teach a student what his or her text should be in the service of. Such presumption would be outrageous. . . . If the text is to have pressure it must be the author’s pressure, which can only come from the *inside*. . . . In the end it is the intuitive preconscious forces at work *in* the writer that matter the most” (87; italics mine).

While such theories, articulated and implied in the discourse surrounding academic creative writing, do not always entirely erase or deny the importance of social elements in the process of composition, they certainly—at the very least—make social (and political, cultural, and economic) factors far less important than an individual’s psychology. As such, creative writing seems radically opposed to much of what goes on in composition studies and literary studies at both the theoretical and pedagogical levels. Therefore, creative writing cannot, in any sense, currently be considered part of either composition studies or literary studies. Nor can it be easily assimilated into either of these

strands of the larger discipline of English studies, unless, of course, creative writers can successfully challenge—from within the field—this institutional-conventional wisdom.

Creative writing's major professional organization, the AWP, serves as a powerful force maintaining this institutional-conventional wisdom. In 2000, D. W. Fenza, the executive director of the AWP, published "Creative Writing and Its Discontents" in the *Writer's Chronicle*, AWP's official journal.⁶ Fenza styles his essay "an apology for the profession of writers who teach," presumably made necessary by an increasing chorus of criticism about academic creative writing programs. It will be worthwhile, I believe, to engage in a rather detailed analysis of this essay here, since Fenza, even more so than McFarland, appears to articulate and defend creative writing's institutional-conventional wisdom. As executive director of creative writing's official academic professional organization, Fenza writes from a position of notable authority—the authority, that is, to define what creative writing is and what it does. In fact, Fenza has a history of trying to do just this; in 1992, he published an essay savaging "theory" for its alleged contamination of English studies and arguing that theory ought to be kept out of creative writing.⁷

The opening section of "Creative Writing and Its Discontents" is, in my estimation, a shrewd piece of rhetorical analysis—a quasi-Aristotelian tour of the topoi of criticism directed at creative writing programs. Fenza deftly sums up some of the strategies writers can use to compose effective (i.e., persuasive to a significant number of readers) cultural criticism. His point is to demonstrate how "easy" it apparently is to criticize creative writing programs—and even to provide plenty of evidence for these criticisms—without addressing the "reality" of the situation. Plus, Fenza argues, people want someone or something to blame for what they see as "bad writing," and creative writing programs are an easy target; in other words, there is a ready market for this criticism. As a result, creative writing programs are subject to "lurid misrepresentations." Although this is an important cautionary note, I think Fenza's argument takes several unfortunate turns after this. He simplistically attributes all of the criticisms of creative writing to the selfish agendas and ambitions of those doing the criticizing. Then he goes on to provide a defense of creative writing that is perhaps even more dependent on assertions and shaky evidence than any of the criticism he denounces.

Fenza stakes out creative writing as perhaps the last academic territory in which the notion of individual control over the circumstances of the world (or in his words “the efficacy of the human will”) can be maintained. Creative writing is the only strand of English studies, Fenza maintains, in which it is still possible for students to feel that they can actually do something that matters. Fenza makes this claim by setting up a stark, polarized opposition between the (alleged) goals of “literary theories” and those of creative writing. He complains that “professors of literary theory often deprive writers of their humanity,” making writers, in other words, “mere unwitting conduits through which society, markets, religion, politics, and prejudices of all kinds—the real authorities—manufacture literary texts.” We all live, Fenza asserts, within “a culture where individual acts often seem of little consequence.” Creative writing classes offer respite from such a culture: “Word by word, line by line, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, students make personal choices in a creative writing class, and each choice makes a difference. The students create worlds of their own making.”

Much of Fenza’s argument revolves around the notion that creative writing is a necessary complement to the study of literature. There is merit to this argument. D. G. Myers traces out in careful detail how creative writing may very well have originated as a counterpart to interpretive literary study. And there can be little doubt that one way—though certainly not the only way—to learn about certain kinds of texts is to attempt to write similar ones. So I am not disputing this aspect of Fenza’s argument, but it does seem curious that he neglects or refuses to address the possible relationships between creative writing and composition. He comes closest to doing so when he draws a distinction between the goals of graduate-level creative writing programs and those of undergraduate creative writing classes. Fenza believes the goal of graduate programs, particularly MFA programs, is clear: “The goal of graduate study in creative writing is to become, first and foremost, an accomplished writer who makes significant contributions to contemporary literature. All the other goals, like becoming an academic professional, are ancillary to that artistic goal.” Undergraduate creative writing courses, on the other hand, “differ from graduate workshops because their primary goal is not to educate artists but to teach students critical reading skills, the elements of fiction and verse, general persuasive writing skills, and an appreciation of literary works of the

present and past.” Fenza is not particularly clear about how creative writing classes teach students to read critically or write persuasively, except to note that such classes “usually include reading assignments and a critical paper or oral presentation.” What I find most interesting about Fenza’s series of assertions here is that they mimic many of the justifications that were offered throughout the twentieth century for the value of literary studies. Although he does not use these terms, Fenza effectively tries to characterize creative writing as an enterprise in which the “traditional” goals of English (literary) studies are preserved and protected. It is only creative writing among all the strands of English studies that remains unsullied by developments within the academy and the corrosive forces of society at large. Literary study, in Fenza’s eyes, has become contaminated by theory, and composition studies does not even merit any direct consideration.

Ultimately, I believe Fenza’s essay can be read as a bid to preserve and protect creative writing’s isolation from the rest of English studies. He does make a number of valid and useful points, particularly with regard to how creative writing courses can, as part of a larger curriculum in English studies, provide students with opportunities for intellectual development. Even so, he appears to articulate virtually every element of creative writing’s institutional-conventional wisdom as I have outlined it above, and he appears to do so quite purposefully and willingly. He proudly refers to academic creative writing as “the profession of writers who teach,” elevating the former term over the latter. He also argues, in numerous ways, that creative writing is all about individuals making choices that “matter,” thus making individual psychology or “the human will” the center of the field. He goes on to assert—without offering any solid evidence—that those who write well (as determined by the amount and kind of acclaim they get for their writing) make the best teachers of writing. As such, Fenza’s argument, situated firmly within the institutional-conventional wisdom of creative writing, severely narrows the field of pedagogy for creative writing. In this version of creative writing pedagogy, “craft,” understood as the manipulation of the surface features of language, is the only legitimate thing that can be taught, and the teacher becomes little more than a technician, albeit a highly skilled one.

Creative writing thus tends to be positioned as an anti-academic field existing within academic institutions. For some in the field—especially those whose writing is the currency that gained them good academic jobs—this

arrangement has proved fortunate. They enjoy what might be called a “privileged marginality,” insulated largely from the turmoil of English studies, not drawing much attention from outside their own coteries of students and like-minded colleagues. But this arrangement has never really worked for everyone in creative writing; there are never enough academic jobs for all the holders of MFAs and creative writing Ph.D.’s, and many graduate students, as well as many professors with some background or interest in creative writing who also have some connection to another part of the discipline, have begun to question and challenge this arrangement. While there may be considerable debate about where creative writing should go, and how it should get there, it is difficult to deny that, as David Radavich argues, “We stand again at a crossroads for creative writing programs” (112).

The Discourse of Change in English Studies

English studies has never been a particularly stable enterprise. Maureen Daly Goggin, while introducing her compendious bibliography of the history of the discipline, concludes, “From the beginning, English studies has been a contested site; debates over how to define it and what it is have raged on since the turn of this [the twentieth] century” (64). Delving even further into disciplinary history in *The Formation of College English*, Thomas P. Miller argues that English studies is perpetually involved in a sort of identity crisis because it originated in a moment of crisis during the eighteenth century, when cheap print technology allowed written material to be spread across England and the British cultural provinces, creating an expanded, literate reading public and necessitating (at least in the minds of some) a need for standardized rules of language use. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Goggin and many other historians note, were times of turmoil for English studies in America, as literary studies grew out of and later supplanted the German-influenced philology that had characterized language study at the university level in prior decades. I would add, though, that once literary studies became established (although it was almost always wracked by internal disputes), it did lend at least an apparent stability to many departments of English—especially in the practices of organizing curricula according to national literatures, historical periods, and canonical authors and of hiring new faculty members on the basis

of their specialized expertise in these categories. In many departments, these practices still operate.

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, the crisis in English studies intensified; or, at the very least, the amount of attention paid to it intensified. Many more scholars turned their attention to disciplinary history, and quite often the historical impulse was yoked to a reformist impulse. In other words, people began to study the history of English studies not only to understand how things came to be the way they are today but also to argue that things should change. Scholarship focused on redesigning English studies for the future has become a vibrant strand of disciplinary discourse, and although some practitioners have advocated change since the very inception of English studies, the number and type of proposals for the future undeniably increased in the 1980s and 1990s; this pattern shows no signs of slowing. The notion that English studies ought to rethink and change its practices has become so common, in fact, that in 1994 the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) inaugurated the “Refiguring English Studies” book series. Writing in *College English* in May 2003, Jessica Yood argues: “The rhetoric of ‘crisis’ about the ‘fate of the field’ is not some elusive idea; it is the material of a new genre of writing. . . . The genre of disciplinary discourse has created a new kind of scholar—one who searches for deep relations and connections between systematic ways of knowing and experiential realizations of knowledge” (526, 538). In other words, discourse about where English studies came from, where it is now, and where it can or should go in the future now constitutes a genuine scholarly subfield in the discipline.

This is neither the time nor the place for a detailed overview of such historically and future-oriented scholarship. However, the project of this book—examining past, present, and future relationships between composition and creative writing—needs to be contextualized within this sort of discourse, because I intend this book to be both a contribution to the discourse of disciplinary change and a critique of that discourse. For the purposes of this discussion, we might divide this discourse into two rough categories, the theoretical and the structural. By theoretical discourses, I mean those that leave departmental and institutional hierarchies intact, that do not disturb the boundaries between literature, composition, and creative writing. Scholars who propose theoretical changes usually argue for alterations in the *way* in which poems or novels are interpreted, or the *way* in which writing is taught,

but do not challenge or question the institutional and curricular divisions between courses. Gerald Graff, for example, urges that competing interpretive theories should be highlighted, and thus brought into conflict, in literature classrooms. But he does not challenge the idea that the interpretation of literary works (however this term might be understood) is what should be going on in English classrooms. And thus, Graff's discourse remains at the level of theory.⁸ By structural discourses, I mean those that challenge, disrupt, and perhaps even break down the boundaries within English studies. Scholars who propose structural changes often suggest that elements of *all* the existing subfields of English studies might be brought together in the process of revising the entire English curriculum. Frequently, these scholars contend that reading and writing should be given equal weight in courses across the English curriculum. James Berlin, for example, argues that student writing should become a focus of class discussion in courses where it often has not been so, such as surveys of literature from specific historical eras.

The presence and progression of theoretical proposals for change are quite visible in the history of literary studies in the twentieth century. Calls for theoretical change came in many forms, often because scholars and teachers found operative definitions of "literature" too narrow for their own purposes. There were, for instance, pointed debates at one time about whether there was such a thing as "American literature"; more conservative scholars and teachers argued that there was not, since the United States did not yet have a long and distinguished enough tradition, and that most of the works of poetry and fiction produced in America were inferior to those in the much more refined and noble tradition of British literature. Others argued, eventually with some success, that there was in fact such a thing as American literature and that it was every bit as worthy of university-level study and scholarship as British literature. This pattern tended to repeat itself again and again, with new sorts of literature, once excluded, being ushered into the expanding canon. In some ways, this process transformed the category of "literature" into the much broader category of "text," so that films, television shows, comic books, and many other types of discourse became part of the potential field of analysis. What remained remarkably unchanged, though, through much of this development, was the general method—interpretation—applied to the field's objects of study. This allowed many of the institutional structures in individual departments, like curricula and hiring practices, to remain relatively stable

even while the field of scholarship was in virtual turmoil. This institutional stability, in turn, allowed the different strands of English studies to develop and exist largely in isolation from each other.

This stability, though, was not without its critics, and these critics began to offer structural discourses of change. Structural discourses seek to challenge, and often to eradicate, many of the institutional lines drawn within English studies, most notably the lines between composition and literature or between textual interpretation and textual production. Frequently, scholars working in this mode argue for some sort of unification of the disparate strands of English studies. James Berlin, for instance, provides an extensive argument in *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures* for replacing the traditional dynamic of English studies, in which textual interpretation is privileged over textual production, with one in which production and interpretation are given equal weight. Stephen North, concentrating on doctoral-level graduate education, argues for the bringing together of literary study, composition, and creative writing in a “fusion” model where the concerns of each strand are continually brought into dialogue and negotiation. Other scholars propose drawing together the separate strands of English studies under some overarching umbrella concept or method that would render traditional disciplinary divisions untenable. For example, Richard E. Miller proposes rethinking the history of the discipline and reimagining its future by focusing centrally on student writing, and the various kinds of responses to student writing, in all English classes. Patricia Bizzell argues that the notion of “contact zones” is an organizing principle under which the differences between composition and literary study would be largely eradicated. And James Seitz offers metaphor (and the constant dynamic interplay between figurative and literal uses and interpretations of language) as a central concept that would unify the various strands of English studies.

I believe that the significance of these structural reform proposals cannot be overestimated; indeed, some of these proposals would move the discipline forward in dramatic and much-needed ways. Still, it seems to me that these proposals in general tend to suffer from two significant kinds of flaws. First, many of them tend to divide English studies in half—usually between literature and composition. When this happens, other areas of the discipline, usually creative writing, are either ignored or regarded as not important enough to consider. D. G. Myers offers an excellent and cogent critique of the tendency

among scholars to thus divide English studies, although the division may take a number of different manifestations, such as literature versus composition, reading versus writing, or interpretation versus production. Myers finds two-part division inadequate to describe what has gone on historically within English studies: “What I am suggesting is that historically there has been a three-way split in English departments: the terrain has been carved up into sectors representing scholarship, social practices, and what I am going to refer to as constructivism” (9). Myers goes on to note: “I am going to base my own historical analysis on the premise that scholarly research in English, the teaching of practical composition, and constructivist handling of literature are three distinct ‘faculties’ of study, thought, and activity in English, differentiated by aim and method, by the uses to which they put their materials, at times even unrelated to each other. . . . English itself is not a consistent order; its existence is bureaucratic (or ‘economic,’ if you prefer), not logical. . . . It is less a name than the designation of a plurality of interests. For historical reasons, English has become home to several logically indistinguishable and perhaps even mutually incompatible modes of activity” (10).

For this line of argument alone, Myers’s *The Elephants Teach* is a crucially important contribution to the history of English studies. It opens up the possibility that English studies might be analyzed not in terms of an ongoing battle between two rival camps but rather as a constantly shifting coexistence of at least three general kinds of *ideas*, each of which is bureaucratically, economically, and institutionally inscribed within a particular department and each of which occasionally overlaps with one or more of the others. But since his interests are primarily historical, Myers focuses almost exclusively on how things got to be the way they are and leaves unanswered the question of where things might go in the future.

In many cases, the tendency to view English studies as a two-part enterprise prevents scholars from considering interesting possibilities. For example, when Richard E. Miller proposes reconceptualizing English studies by focusing first and foremost on the solicitation of and response to student writing, he seems to miss a tremendous opportunity, considering how this would change the institutional relationship between literary study and composition but not how creative writing would fit into this mix. Other scholars who at least recognize the triple division of the discipline tend to be so unfamiliar with creative writing that they offer it only passing attention; perhaps the best example of

this can be found in James Berlin's *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures*, where creative writing is considered as a potential "player" in a reformed and unified version of English studies but only offered a few pages.

The second major problem with the vast majority of structural reform proposals for English studies is that they fail to acknowledge the significance of literary studies' dominant institutional position and its capacity to absorb and neutralize ideas that might challenge its structure. Compelling demonstrations of how this happens can be found in much of Gerald Graff's work, where he describes how the "field coverage" model in literary studies has allowed the discipline to deflect a number of oppositional discourses by institutionally transforming them into new fields that are then tacked on to the existing apparatus of the discipline. For example, many of the theories that found their way into English studies in the 1970s and 1980s—especially post-structuralism and some variants of feminism and Marxism—directly challenged some of the very assumptions upon which literary study is based, like the notion that literature encompasses a type of textuality so different from other sorts that it merits a discipline of its own, and that literature is best categorized in terms of nationalities and historical eras. But the potentially transformative power of these ideas was blunted because "theory" (at least on the institutional level) became its own field to be covered, and many English departments simply hired a "theorist" or two to cover that new area of the discipline, leaving the rest of the apparatus completely intact. Even some scholars who offer institutionally radical plans for reorganizing English studies, like James Berlin and James Seitz, do not seem to consider the possibility that their plans to make composition and creative writing equal institutional partners with literary study might likewise be severely diminished by the ability of literary scholars to preserve their institutional authority by assimilating (and effectively rendering powerless) oppositional discourses. Stephen North seems far more aware of this potential problem, as is evident when he writes that his "fusion-based" proposals for change "will present more of a challenge for some departments than for others. There are a number of institutions—including some of the most hoary—in which the field's discounting practices run so deep that no tenure-track lines whatever are devoted to scholars in . . . writing-related areas" (North et al. 259). By "discounting practices," North means those tendencies in English studies to devalue—in terms of institutional capital and monetary capital—the practice, study, and teaching of writing. He

does not spend much time, however, speculating about how this problem might be overcome.

Perhaps the only recent works of reform-oriented scholarship that do adequately take into account the dominance of literary study within English departments are two edited collections, *Coming of Age: The Advanced Writing Curriculum* (Shamoon et al.) and *A Field of Dreams: Independent Writing Programs and the future of Composition Studies* (O’Neill, Crow, and Burton). In somewhat different ways, these two collections explore the provocative notion that productive advancements in the study and teaching of writing might only be realized *outside* of English departments or, at the very least, in the form of separate and autonomous curricular tracks within English departments. *Coming of Age* outlines a series of courses—some already existing, some as yet only imagined—that together might form complete undergraduate majors in writing. *A Field of Dreams* examines a number of independent writing departments (most of which “split away” at some point from the English departments at their institutions) and explores the significance of such programs to the ongoing development of composition studies. Many of the programs described, however, include areas not traditionally connected with composition studies—especially creative writing—raising the possibility that “composition studies” may be too narrow a term for the field of scholarship such independent writing departments would support.

I will return later in this book to the question of whether independent departmental status for writing, separate curricular tracks within English departments, or some form of fusion between writing and literary studies is the best option; local conditions probably make it impossible to provide a single satisfying answer to the question, though I believe the first two options are infinitely preferable to the third. First, though, I would like to explore some of the provocative questions raised by the very existence of *Coming of Age*, *A Field of Dreams*, and many of the other structural discourses about the future of English studies. For instance, has the institutional separation of composition and creative writing, with literary studies wedged between them, prevented or forestalled potentially productive developments in the study and teaching of writing? Have the two fields grown so far apart that fusing them now would do irreparable harm to both, or would some sort of merging of the two fields actually create a much stronger and more institutionally viable entity than composition and creative writing currently, and separately, are?

What are the theoretical, pedagogical, historical, and institutional points of overlap between composition and creative writing, and what kinds of work might be done to bring these points of overlap into sharp relief? Not all readers of this book will be inclined to answer these questions in the same way or to agree with all of the answers I will attempt to provide. These questions, however, must be asked, and the issues implied must be explored and debated, as the sprawling institutional apparatus called English studies attempts to continue its work into the future.