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# "The Road Not Taken": A Writer's Approach to Research on Poetry Writing in Creative Writing Studies

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# “THE ROAD NOT TAKEN”: A WRITER’S APPROACH TO RESEARCH ON POETRY WRITING IN CREATIVE WRITING STUDIES

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Grounded upon a scholarly foundation laid by Wendy Bishop, Patrick Bizzaro, and Jason Wirtz, this performance-based study tests fifteen poetry writing strategies extracted from three experienced poets’ self-reports on how to write poetry with the intention of developing a research method to test the reliability of using poets’ self-reports in teaching creative writing. By reading what three expert-practitioners say they do when they write poetry—Fred Chappell’s *Plow Naked*, Richard Hugo’s *The Triggering Town*, and William Stafford’s *Writing the Australian Crawl*—it is possible for a researcher to chronicle and test the strategies that expert-practitioners say they use to produce the poetry they write. Using a content-based approach to analyze the strategies that three experienced poets self-disclose in their published self-reports on how to write poetry, we may demystify much of the lore which characterizes the teaching and production of poetry writing in the academic setting. By testing the strategies that experienced poets say they use to write poetry, we may use these strategies in teaching students how to write poetry, an approach creative writing scholars agree has been used for as long as creative writing has been taught (Bishop).

Using a reflective writer’s journal to chronicle the strategies experienced poets say they use to write poetry, the researcher in this study: (1) extracts fifteen strategies

from three expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry, (2) writes poetry using the strategies that three expert-practitioners say they use to produce the poetry they write, and (3) argues whether or not the strategies followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing in the collegiate setting. Based upon the results of this study, the researcher recommends that instructors of poetry writing should consider formal, euphonic, and expressive approaches when they teach students how to write poetry.

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To the past, which is memory and reflection.
To the future, which is hope and expectation.
To the present, which is greater than the sum of these parts.
To my wife, Ashley Dupak-Long, for all of the happiness and joy that you bring.
To my colleagues, my committee, my family, and my friends: Your emotional and financial support have made this penultimate dream a possibility.
And to me, because I worked hard, and I earned it.

*Nudus ara, sere nudus*.

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> [ . . . ] while teachers of composition are encouraged to continue interrogating the way they teach reading and writing, only recently has this responsibility applied to teachers of poetry writing.
>
> —Patrick Bizzaro, *Responding to Student Poems* xvi

> [ . . . ] we have spoken about creative writing in one way while knowing, intuitively, humanly, accurately, that it was another.
>
> —Graeme Harper, "Foreword: On Experience" xv

## 1.1 Introduction to the Problem

This performance-based study addresses an urgent need to conduct research on poetry writing in creative writing studies using a research methodology designed specifically for the purpose of studying creative writing, not as literature or composition writing, but as creative writing. In the January 2009 issue of *College English*, Patrick Bizzaro recommends, "It is time to reopen scholarly conversation about how we might revisit writers' self-reports as an avenue into the development of new pedagogies of writing" ("Writers Wanted" 267). In the September 2010 issue of *College Composition and Communication* (CCC), Douglas Hesse, former president of the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) and former chair of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), echoes Bizzaro's recommendation, and he urges composition studies to "unilaterally explore the place of creative writing—of creative *composing*—in teaching, in scholarship, and in our expanded sense of ourselves as text makers" (50). Hesse, who restates a view taken by Bishop nearly twenty years earlier, argues that research in creative writing has traditionally favored "authors' own accounts, in memoir, essay, or interview, as far more valuable than anything in the guise

of ‘scholarly article’” (32). This being the case, it is possible for a writer to conduct research on experienced writers’ self-reports in creative writing studies. Using poetry writing as a research methodology, as David Hanauer has recently urged us to do, we may further illuminate “our expanded sense of ourselves as text makers” (Hesse 50). In doing so, we shall also provide “important information for the development of teaching methods based on what writers actually do” (Bizzaro, “Writers Wanted” 262).

### 1.2 Research Questions

- What are some of the methods a researcher might use to conduct research on poetry writing in creative writing studies?
- How can we test experienced poets’ self-reports in creative writing studies?
- What can we learn from experienced poets’ self-reports that may be applied to the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting?

### 1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is three-fold. First, the purpose of this study is to make an important contribution to research on poetry writing in creative writing studies. Since most of the research on writing in creative writing studies has been purely historical and/or theoretical, we need to conduct more research on writing, particularly as the research pertains to poetry writing. The second purpose is to test the advice—that is, insight about poetry-writing strategies distilled from three expert-practitioners’ self-reports—on how to write poetry. One way we might achieve this goal is by actually doing what experienced poets say *they* do when they write poetry. Indeed, writers’ self-reports have been the primary means for learning how to write (and teach) creative

writing for nearly one hundred years.[1] By writing poetry using the strategies expert-practitioners say they use to write poetry, we shall gain a better understanding on some of the ways experienced poets produce the poetry they write. Finally, the third purpose of this study is to see what we may learn from poetry writing that can be applied toward the teaching of poetry writing in the collegiate setting. By testing some of the strategies experienced poets say they use to produce the poetry they write, we may not only improve our poetry writing, but we may also improve some of the ways poetry writing is currently being taught in the university setting.

**1.4 Background of the Study**

Historically, self-reports from creative writers on their writing have been instrumental in helping teachers of creative writing explain and improve their teaching and writing. Thus, in order to deepen our understanding on some of the ways that poetry writing is produced, it follows that we must take a closer look at the methods experienced poets say they use to produce the poetry they write. By analyzing the suggestions extracted from expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry, we shall not only gain experiential insight on what it means to write poetry, but we may simultaneously begin the development of new pedagogies we might apply toward the teaching of poetry writing in the collegiate setting.

To date, there has been very little research on poetry writing in creative writing studies.[2] Although research on writing processes is not new to composition studies,

[1] For a historical account of creative writing instruction in the American university setting, see Myers' *The Elephants Teach*. See also Moxley's *Creative Writing in America*.

[2] See Chapter Two for an overview of research on poetry writing in creative writing studies.

applying a different approach to research on poetry writing in creative writing studies has the potential to inform our understanding of the techniques experienced writers say they use whenever they sit down to write poetry. Wendy Bishop, one of the earliest pioneers in creative writing studies, believed "writers' insights can be joined to composition research and theory to further clarify what it means to be a writer and have a writing process" (*Released* 18). In order to conduct research on poetry writing, it makes sense we must use a research methodology well-suited for research on poetry writing in creative writing studies.

In "Research and Reflection in English Studies: The Special Case of Creative Writing," Bizzaro argues:

> [ . . . ] research methods employed by creative writers differ significantly enough from methods used by scholars who conduct research in literary study or composition or technical and professional communication to merit courses of their own and that, in acknowledging this difference, creative-writing programs must consider teaching students *how to obtain* these skills. (297, Bizzaro's emphasis)

One important way we might help students learn how to obtain the creative skills Bizzaro refers to is by conducting performance-based inquiries on experienced poets' self-reports on how to write poetry. By reading expert-practitioners' self-reports for strategies experienced poets say they use to produce poetry writing, it is possible for researchers to test these strategies by writing poetry themselves. Using a writer's journal to chronicle the observations gleaned from three experienced poets' self-reports on how to write poetry, we may gain a fuller, more accurate representation of the strategies experienced

poets say they use whenever they sit down to write poetry. By testing what experienced writers say they do when they write poetry, we can also demystify much of the "lore" that has come to characterize the production and teaching of poetry writing in the university setting. Thus, in order to gain a deeper understanding of poetry writing—what it is and how experienced writers perform it—we need to chronicle, test, and examine what experienced poets say they do when they produce the poetry that they write. In doing so, we may be able to improve some of the ways that poetry writing is currently being taught in the university setting.

Since research on writing processes helped distinguish composition studies apart from the field of Rhetoric in the 1960s and 1970s, it is reasonable to assume that a similar investigation on poetry writing will further establish the field of creative writing studies. In "Writer's Self-Reports, (Com)positioning, and the Recent History of Academic Creative Writing," Bizzaro begins his article by stating a "readily observable" truth, namely, "Creative writing has become a discipline in English studies" (119). However, the status of creative writing as a discipline in English studies is one that may be characterized as "a much-divided country, where writers have taken sides on issues related to whether creative writing can, indeed, be taught, and whether it should be colonized by other closely related subject areas" (119). Importantly, the colonization of creative writing by composition studies—what Bizzaro refers to as "(com)positioning"—has had a detrimental impact upon some of the ways creative writing is studied and researched in the university setting. Nevertheless, "By teaching skills unique to the research creative writers do, teachers of creative writing will function independently in the English departments that house them" (Bizzaro, "Research" 297).

With the recent emergence of creative writing studies as a discipline in the academic setting, we are at the beginning of a new era on writing research in creative writing. In "The Writer-Teacher in the United States: The Place of Teachers in the Community of Writers," Bizzaro recognizes that "any method devised to help people live in the new world at the beginning of time must require individuals to theorize paths through wildernesses, all of which are new to them and unique to their situation" (406-7). With the recent emergence of creative writing studies in the academy, we are most certainly at "the beginning of time." Importantly, Bizzaro understands "the American project of determining how to survive in the wilderness that is the new world begins in action and experience" (407). Indeed, "The development of a method for converting action into transmissible knowledge is a fundamental outgrowth of the Puritan mission" (Bizzaro, "Writer-Teacher" 409). Beginning with *action and experience*, we may take what "becomes generalizable as knowledge" and transfer this knowledge to "others who must traverse the same or a similar terrain to achieve similar ends" (407). One important way we might be able to determine "how to survive in the wilderness" that is creative writing studies is by actually doing what experienced poets say they do when they sit down to write poetry. According to Bishop in *Released*, there is a lot of hyperbole and self-contradiction to work through in writers' self-reports. So the issue becomes, How do we determine what parts of what writers say they do will be useful in the poetry writing classroom? Bishop insists that it is only through writers' self-reports that we know how to teach creative writing. Thus, by chronicling and testing the advice experienced poets self-disclose in their self-reports on how to write poetry, we shall not only gain experiential

insight on what it means to write poetry, but we may also begin to improve some of the ways poetry writing is currently being taught in the university setting.

Indeed, "scholars must find out *from their experiences* what works and then pass that information on to others" (Bizzaro, "Writer-Teacher" 407). Thus, if we define a pragmatic education as "the process of transmitting known habits from the experienced to the novice" (411), as Bizzaro has done, then it is possible for a researcher to chronicle and test the poetry writing strategies that expert-practitioners' say they use and thereby transmit this experiential knowledge to others. By conducting a series of performance-based inquiries on expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry, we can take what we learn from this experience and transfer this knowledge by reporting on the actual experience. In doing so, we may simultaneously begin research on creative writing which seeks an answer to the question, What can we learn from experienced poets' self-reports that may be applied to the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting?

**1.5 Introduction to the Research Design**

In order to capture an accurate representation of the strategies three expert-practitioners say they use to write poetry, the researcher in this study uses a reflective writer's journal to chronicle and test fifteen poetry writing strategies extracted from three experienced poets' self-reports on how to write poetry: Fred Chappell's *Plow Naked*, Richard Hugo's *The Triggering Town*, and William Stafford's *Writing the Australian Crawl*. By analyzing three expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry, we may find evidence to support the idea that poetry writing is epistemologically different from other forms of writing. In addition, by actually doing what expert-practitioners say they do when they write poetry, it is possible for a researcher to capture the act of

invention as it unfolds across the written page. In this way, we may further illuminate the role of invention in poetry writing, a topic that rightfully belongs to Rhetoric, creative writing studies, and expressivism.[3]

Certainly, "The recent and continuing emergence of creative writing provides a unique opportunity for us to study how and why a subject area becomes established in English studies, much as rhetoric-composition and technical and professional communication already have" (Bizzaro, "Research" 294). By reading what experienced poets have to say about writing poetry, and in order to see how experienced poets produce the poetry they write, it is possible for a researcher to chronicle and test the strategies that experienced poets say they use whenever they sit down to write poetry. By chronicling what experienced poets say they do when they write poetry, we shall have a written account of the researcher's experiences using the strategies that three experienced poets say they use to produce the poetry they write. Using poetry writing as a research method, we may further illuminate the role of invention in poetry writing.[4] However, before we can see what we might apply from research on poetry writing to the teaching of poetry writing, we must first "develop research methods designed to figure out how to teach writing based upon what writers actually do when they write" (Bizzaro, "Workshop" 48).

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[3] Borrowing from Cross' definition of holistic pedagogy, I define expressive pedagogy as a teaching philosophy centered upon "engendering a writing experience that contributes to the discovery, development, and healing of the writer's spiritual and emotional *self*" (70, Cross' emphasis). For a definition of rhetoric, see Chapter Two on Aristotle.

[4] In *Poetry as Research*, Hanauer conducts a quantitative and qualitative study on poetry writing performed by second language learners. See Chapter Three for a detailed description of the methodology used in this study.

After reading and distilling what three expert-practitioners (e.g., Fred Chappell, Richard Hugo, and William Stafford) say they do in their self-reports on how to write poetry, the researcher in this study writes poetry using fifteen strategies these three expert-practitioners say they use to write poetry. Immediately following the production of a poem, the researcher logs a retrospective report in a reflective writer's journal. Based upon the researcher's own experience and reflections on following the expert-practitioner's advice, the researcher argues whether or not the strategy would be useful for teaching poetry writing in the academic setting. After each poetry writing session, the researcher: (1) identifies the activity and/or suggestion being responded to, (2) reflects on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion, and (3) argues whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.[5] Using observational analysis, a description of each poem's textual features (e.g., word count, line count, number of drafts, and time spent writing) is reported for each poem.[6] Using conventional content analysis, the writers' self-reports on how to write poetry are analyzed for: (1) strategies that experienced poets say they use to produce the poetry they write, and (2) strategies for producing poetry writing we might apply toward the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting.[7]

The research conducted here recognizes that the way we understand poetry writing will have an important bearing upon the ways that poetry writing is taught,

[5] See Appendix A for a blank sample of the reflective writer's journal entry.
[6] Angrosino and Rosenberg provide a synopsis on the classical tradition of naturalistic observation, but they also address challenges that have arisen as a result of "the postmodernist critique" (467). See also Perakyla and Ruusuvuori for an informative article on analyzing written texts.
[7] Building upon Ericsson and Simon's work on protocol analysis, Greene and Higgins highlight the benefits of retrospective reporting. See also Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon for applications of content analysis on retrospective reporting.

researched, and theorized in the academic setting. For this reason, I consider how research on writers' self-reports have influenced the field of English studies, particularly as the research pertains to: (1) the teaching of poetry writing, which falls under the purview of creative writing studies, (2) the inventive act of composition, especially as manifested in expressivist teaching and writing, and (3) the methods by which investigations and research on poetry writing may be conducted, now and in the future. Therefore, this study aims to address these pressing concerns, and it does so by actually doing (and reporting on) the things that experienced poets say they do whenever they sit down to write poetry.

**1.6 Contextualizing the Study**

In March 2012, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) published an article titled, "'Catching Tigers': Bringing the Creative into Writing Instruction," which will help us contextualize a debate surrounding a key issue central to defining what it means to write (or even teach) poetry in the collegiate setting. In an interview with Judith Rowe Michaels, an instructor of graduate students at an MFA program in New Jersey, Michaels argues that on some level, "all writing is creative" (Aronson 12). Michaels, who is also a published fiction writer and poet, goes on to say, "You can't craft even a business memo or a set of instructions without first *imagining* your audience – *creating* in your mind a vision of their needs and assumptions; then you must listen, an act that also requires creativity" (Aronson 12). For Michaels, *all* reading and writing is creative.

If we agree with the claim that all forms of writing are creative, what are the characteristics which distinguish the texts we write in creative writing workshops from the texts we write in composition classrooms? Do writers use different kinds of writing

processes, and do these processes depend upon the genre (or mode) of the text that a writer is writing in? What are the criteria that make creative writing *creative*? In *(Re)Writing Craft: Composition, Creative Writing, and the Future of English Studies*, Tim Mayers recommends we outline the differences between composition and creative writing in order to see the "theoretical, pedagogical, historical, and institutional points of overlap between composition and creative writing" (28). In *Negotiating the Personal in Creative Writing*, Carl Vandermeulen rightfully states, "Identifying differences between composition and creative writing would be a good place to start a course in creative writing pedagogy" (12). What are the differences between teaching writing in composition and teaching poetry writing in creative writing studies? How can the structure of these courses inform our understanding of what it means to teach poetry writing? By examining the differences between teaching composition writing and teaching poetry writing, we shall see how approaches to research on writing have shaped some of the ways we teach, research, and perform creative writing in the academic setting.

There are at least three ways in which the teaching of poetry writing differs from the teaching of composition writing in the United States. To make matters more complex, each of these differences varies according to the methods that individual instructors use in their classrooms to meet their intended goals. Nevertheless, the general differences that distinguish the teaching of composition writing from the teaching of poetry writing can be summarized in the following ways: how the classrooms are structured, how the writing is taught, and how the reading of (and responding to) writing is performed. Although I do not wish to eliminate the likelihood there are other key differences in the teaching of

writing within these two fields, these three characteristics strike me as the most salient features that distinguish the two disciplines from each other. In the analysis that follows, I will provide a brief explanation on the differences between teaching composition writing and teaching poetry writing in the three areas I have identified. Once we see the differences on some of the ways these two courses are structured in the university setting, we will gain a better understanding on some of the ways that teaching composition writing and teaching poetry writing are truly different from one another.

### 1.6.1 The Workshop Model

The first difference between teaching composition writing and teaching poetry writing lies within the structure of the college writing classroom itself. Writing courses built around workshop models are easily identified by anyone familiar with the teaching of English in the United States. Upon entering a writing workshop for the first time, an outside observer would notice that students typically work in groups, and the observer would also notice that students spend most of their time sharing and responding to each other's writing. Although many first-year composition classrooms may be seen using peer review groups and/or small discussion groups to help students develop and respond to their writing, the workshop model has typically been the mainstay of courses in creative writing.[8]

In *Released Into Language*, teacher-poet-writer-scholar Wendy Bishop proposes a transactional workshop model for teaching creative writing. In her important text, Bishop draws similarities between the often segregated fields of teaching composition and teaching creative writing. The transactional workshop model Bishop proposes relies

[8] See Donnelly and Vandermeulen for descriptive studies on creative writing workshops in the United States.

heavily upon writing techniques and invention strategies appropriate for teaching creative writing, but they might also be used in any college-level course that requires large amounts of writing. Importantly, Bishop believed that, "by adding strong components of exploratory and instrumental writing to the undergraduate writing workshop, we better help novice writers understand what it is to become a writer" (*Released* 30).

Although Bishop refers explicitly to an undergraduate writing workshop in creative writing, the kind of exploratory and instrumental writing Bishop recommends might be used in any kind of classroom, particularly as a means for students to generate ideas and content on the subjects they have chosen to write about. Indeed, workshop models are becoming increasingly common in freshman composition classrooms across the United States.[9] This being the case, a better question might be whether or not the workshop as it is used in creative writing is any different from the workshop as it is being used in freshman composition.

In Joseph Moxley's *Creative Writing in America*, Moxley observes, "most creative writing teachers at the undergraduate and graduate levels follow the same studio method established at Oregon and Iowa over ninety years ago" (xiii). Stephanie Vanderslice points out that the first creative writing workshops were "designed as a kind of 'boot camp,' which would 'toughen' students so that they could withstand inevitable adversity and criticism as an artist" (31). Still, the creative writing workshop offers a time-worn solution to instructors of creative writing. According to Bizzaro, "Teachers of creative writing, in the absence of any formal research on the effectiveness of the workshop, have long relied on what Steven North calls 'lore' to determine what they

[9] In *National Healing*, Claude Hurlbert discusses the benefits of using workshops in composition classrooms.

should do in instructing their students" ("Research" 296). And yet, "Despite the rapid growth and popularity of courses and programs in creative writing, pedagogical techniques [in creative writing] have not evolved all that much" (Moxley xiii). Presently, the creative writing workshop remains "a model of instruction over a hundred years old but basically unrevised" (Bizzaro, "Research" 296).

Certainly, the creative writing workshop must "respond to the educational landscape in which it currently exists instead of the one in which it was conceived over half a century ago" (Vanderslice 30). How might we help the creative writing workshop respond to the "educational landscape" of today? One way we might improve the workshop-model in creative writing studies is by conducting research on expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry. In doing so, we may also discover new information which may be vital to improving the teaching and researching of poetry writing in today's collegiate landscape.

In "Workshop: An Ontological Study," Bizzaro points out that courses in creative writing typically use workshop models for teaching creative writing because creative writing is based upon epistemological assumptions that are different from other types of writing courses. These assumptions then get translated into pedagogies for teaching writing that get manifested in different ways. In other words, the fact that creative writing is taught differently from other writing courses suggests creative writing is most certainly "a horse of a different color." Thus, another key difference between teaching composition writing and teaching poetry writing are the genres taught in these two courses. Recognizing this difference may help us understand what traditionalists in creative writing studies have known for years. Certainly, some forms of writing are more creative

than others. Thus, the use of the workshop in creative writing is a strong signal that some forms of writing are fundamentally (e.g., epistemologically) different than other forms of writing.

Without arguing over the question, "What kind of writing constitutes creative writing?," it is sufficient for the discussion to concede that there are some degrees of creativity in most forms of writing. However, the magnitude of this degree will determine the manner in which assignments are written and taught in composition and creative writing classrooms. The prevalent use of workshop models in creative writing (as opposed to the minimal or infrequent use of workshop models in composition classrooms) is an obvious point of difference which can be seen when we look at the teaching of writing in these two fields. What are some of the other differences that serve to distinguish composition writing from poetry writing? How do instructors approach the teaching of writing in their respective fields?

### 1.6.2 The Teaching of Writing

In *Responding to Student Poems,* Bizzaro acknowledges that "no course in writing is more difficult to teach than poetry writing" (xi). In spite of this fact, "little scholarship has been published in recent years concerning how to teach students to write poems" (Bizzaro xi). It is somewhat telling that a plethora of instruction manuals on teaching composition can easily be found, but there are few handbooks on how to teach poetry writing. For Bizzaro, a lack of scholarship on teaching poetry writing represents "our profession's lack of curiosity concerning what happens when teachers read and evaluate student poetry" (xi). Fortunately, Bizzaro's important text, *Responding to Student Poems*,

"fills a yawning gap in pedagogical scholarship on the teaching of poetry writing" (Simpson 226).

Undoubtedly more so than in composition, the question of whether or not creative writing can be taught is a question that hangs over creative writing like a miasmic cloud. In the "Introduction" to Kelly Ritter and Stephanie Vanderslice's, *Can it Really be Taught? Resisting Lore in Creative Writing Pedagogy*, Ritter and Vanderslice propose the following question: "If the subject can't be taught, why (and to what ends) are we teaching it?" (xvi). The purpose of Ritter and Vanderslice's text is not to provide any clear-cut answers to this difficult question. Instead, they intend to explore many of the issues raised by the teaching of creative writing. For instance, can creative writing be taught? Are great writers born, or are they made? What is the role of culture in creative writing, and how does a writer's culture help shape the texts a writer writes? By re-examining some of the ways that teaching creative writing has perpetuated composition lore, Ritter and Vanderslice hope their text will allow "teachers to reconsider commonly held assumptions about how student creative writers 'learn' to write" (xvi). Although Ritter and Vanderslice acknowledge "the prominent scholarship in creative writing has focused on either practical lesson plans for 'how to' teach creative writing or has simply catalogued the history of creative writing as a discipline" (xiii), Ritter and Vanderslice do not provide a critical or theoretical perspective that grounds the kind of curriculum design they call for. For Ritter and Vanderslice, "Creative writing courses, as they exist today, continue to be more difficult to puzzle out" (xii).

If so little is known about teaching creative writing, what are some of the ways instructors teach it? In *Responding to Student Poems*, Bizzaro writes that the work of

Lucky Jacobs gave him "a point from which I might depart in exploring the dilemma of teaching students to write poems" (18). According to Bizzaro, "Jacobs highlights three methods for teaching poetry writing: the models approach, the activities approach, and the models-and-activities approach" (18). Although Bizzaro finds "it is possible to teach from Jacobs' three approaches" (23), Bizzaro discovered that the way he read student poetry writing influenced the way he responded to their writing. By applying reading methods he learned from literary theory to his own reading practices, Bizzaro found that the way he responded to student poetry writing was largely influenced by the critical lens he used to read, interpret, and respond to student writing.

The ways that instructors read student texts can be just as important as the reasons why instructors ask their students to produce the texts that they write. In "Writing in Public: Popular Pedagogies of Creative Writing," Michelle Cross outlines four pedagogies that creative writing instructors typically use to guide their creative writing instruction: literary, commercial, holistic, and iconic (68-73). In literary pedagogy, teachers focus on teaching one kind of genre (e.g. literature or poetry from a specific time period) and then use a particular author as a model for producing "good" literature (Cross 68). In commercial pedagogy, Cross identifies a Marxist approach to the teaching of creative writing, and she characterizes the creative writer as a kind of laborer that must either "publish or perish" (69-70). A third type of creative writing teaching philosophy, holistic pedagogy, is one that "focuses on engendering a writing experience that contributes to the discovery, development, and healing of the writer's spiritual and emotional *self*" (Cross 70). In holistic pedagogy, it is easy to see a close correlation to the expressivist movement in composition studies that many historians (such as James Berlin

and Stephen North) have identified. The fourth type of creative writing pedagogy, iconic pedagogy, is a teaching philosophy which relies upon experienced writers' self-reports as the primary means of creative writing instruction (71-3). According to Cross, these four pedagogies offer important ways that instructors teach creative writing.

Getting students to write about their own writing can be an important way for students to refine their writing processes and, therefore, their writing. But writers' self-reports should not be used as the only method for writing instruction. According to Bishop, "In the reports of creative writers on their own writing processes, there is some unison, much contradiction, and a wealth of unsubstantiated yet intuitively accurate knowledge" (*Released* 17). Graeme Harper writes, "we have spoken about creative writing in one way while knowing, intuitively, humanly, accurately, that it was another" (xv). Natalie Goldberg, author of *Writing Down the Bones*, reports her writing processes are different for every book she writes (Stewart 18). By themselves, writers' self-reports are not "trustworthy enough upon which to base a pedagogy or curriculum" (Bizzaro, "Writer's Self-Reports" 123). However, this observation helps explain why it is necessary for researchers to test writers' self-reports for the strategies that experienced writers say they use to produce the poetry they write.

By themselves, writers' self-reports aren't reliable enough to construct a theory or pedagogy of writing. But it is precisely this objection to writers' self-reports that explains why it is necessary for a researching-writer to "test" these self-reports for their usefulness prior to their implementation in the poetry writing classroom. Once these strategies are tested for their utility (or effectiveness) in producing poetry writing, only then should we consider what we might apply from such an investigation to the teaching of poetry

writing. Certainly, teachers and students need to be cognizant of the fact that writers' self-reports should "be read with the understanding that each writer is telling us, primarily, about his or her own writing process as he or she understands it *at that moment*" (Bishop, *Released* 18). Importantly, the "moment" that Bishop refers to is generally long after an author has written a text. For this reason, writers' self-reports are often accused of being hyperbolic. Indeed, "Even the reports of esteemed poets in various craft interviews [ . . . ] are filled with guesswork and uncertainty" (Bizzaro, *Responding* 15).

Despite some of the problems associated with retrospective reporting, we should not reject writers' self-reports as invalid forms of data research, mostly because "writers' knowledge can illuminate why some writers succeed at their art" (Bishop, *Released* 18). Identifying some of the "uncertainties" in experienced writers' self-reports may have the potential to reveal important insights on the strategies that experienced poets say they use to produce the poetry they write. In addition, the things that experienced writers say about their own poetry writing may shed more insight on writing processes than the texts they ultimately write. Capturing a fuller, more accurate representation of creative writing, particularly the role of invention in poetry writing, offers one important way we can broaden our understanding of what it means to write poetry. Thus, if we can inform the poetry writing classroom "with the intuitive knowledge of professional writers, the cognitive research of compositionists, and the theoretical problems of discourse theorists, we introduce students more realistically to the world of [interpreting and producing] writing, writers, texts, and readers" (Bishop, *Released* 30). In this way, we might also help transform our students into better readers and writers.

By analyzing poetry writing practices in creative writing studies, we can more readily see how experienced writers' self-reports might improve the teaching of poetry writing in the academic setting. According to Bishop, "By looking at our own processes and by studying current writing research, we can build a foundational understanding of composing that will help us choose and evaluate our own pedagogy" (15). Similar to Bishop's call for more research on writing processes, Dianne Donnelly argues creative writing "must undergo an inquiry into its field, much like composition studies did in the middle to late 20th century" (Introduction 6). For Donnelly, this also means considering the "ways in which the field of creative writing is set apart in its scholarship from composition studies" (7), an aim that this chapter partly intends to address.

### 1.6.3 Reading and Responding to Writing

In *(Re)Writing Craft*, Tim Mayers examines the institutional and disciplinary structures that have informed creative writing and he finds, "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" (4). Historically, the traditional hierarchy of English studies has privileged literary "interpretation over production" (Mayers xv). Because studies in English are embedded within this literary tradition, the way that literature is taught draws largely upon the reading and interpretation of literary texts, as opposed to their production. Thus, the way that texts are read in writing classrooms offers another major point of difference between teaching composition writing and teaching creative writing.

This raises an important question: How do instructors in creative writing studies read and respond to the creative texts student-writers write? In *Responding to Student*

*Poems*, Bizzaro takes what he learned from critical theory and conducts a meta-cognitive analysis on some of the ways that he evaluates and responds to student poetry writing. Using New Critical, Reader-Response, Deconstructionist, and Feminist reading techniques, Bizzaro used a tape recorder to playback and analyze his own responses to student poetry writing. Ultimately, Bizzaro found that the way he read student poetry writing determined *how* he responded to their writing. For Bizzaro, New Critical response methods that insist upon a "meaning in the text" approach to interpreting student texts tend to cause teachers to appropriate what a student is trying to say (7). Bizzaro concludes that teachers who use alternative approaches to New Critical response methods return ownership of texts to the students who wrote them in the first place, without appropriating any of their writing.

Teaching our students how to read is an important consideration in any writing classroom. Indeed, "If students are to have an understanding of the composing process and a knowledge of a variety of composing strategies, teachers must be conscious of the variety of ways a single text can be read" (Bizzaro, *Responding* xviii). According to Bizzaro, "For nearly forty years, the New Criticism alone has had a place of unquestioned authority in its relationship to the reading and evaluation not only of canonical literature, but of student texts as well" (3). Since English instructors are educated in the literary tradition of New Criticism, it is a technique that most writing instructors are trained in and familiar with. Importantly, New Critical approaches to reading and interpreting student texts situate "meaning" within a text itself, thereby projecting notions of an "ideal reader" or an "ideal text" onto the writer. In the same way that English departments have (historically) prioritized literary interpretation over literary production, New Critical

approaches to reading and interpreting student texts have generally dominated teachers' reading and response methods. Certainly, the way that college institutions structure their English departments and classrooms will have an important bearing upon some of the ways that English writing instruction is theorized and taught. However, by teaching students (and teachers, too) how to read and respond to student writing using alternative reading methods, we can avoid many of the problems that New Critical approaches on reading and writing tend to propagate.

Although it is likely there are more differences between teaching composition writing and teaching poetry writing than the ones I have identified here (for instance, one might consider the actual texts instructors ask their students to write), these three differences—how the classrooms are structured, how the writing is taught, and how the writing is interpreted and evaluated—offer strong evidence to suggest that composition writing and poetry writing are two distinct forms of writing. At the very least, courses where creative writing is taught are structured differently enough from other types of writing courses. Thus, it follows that scholarship within one subject area of a discipline (e.g., creative writing studies) will be different from scholarship in a related but completely different area (e.g., composition studies). Truly, "any argument for the improved status of creative writing at this point in the subject's history must first explore the nature of scholarship in creative writing" (Bizzaro, "Research and Reflection" 300). This is not a moot point. If teaching creative writing requires teaching methods that are different from those used to teach writing in composition studies, then it is reasonable to assume that researchers need different approaches for conducting research on creative writing in creative writing studies.

In an essay by James Zebroski titled, "Toward a Theory of Theory for Composition Studies," Zebroski recognizes that, "Theory is not the opposite of practice; theory is not even a supplement to practice. Theory is practice, a practice of a particular kind and practice is always theoretical" (39). For Zebroski, "Theorizing practices, then, are related to writing practices, teaching practices, curricular practices, disciplinary practices and professional practices" (39). Creative writing, "as a field and discipline," has "disciplinary and professional practices," and "these practices ought to play some role in our courses" (Zebroski 44). By doing what experienced writers say they do when they write poetry, we shall implement some of the writing practices experienced poets say they use whenever they write poetry. In addition, by testing the writing strategies that experienced poets self-disclose in their self-reports on how to write poetry, we shall further distinguish "fact" from "fiction" as it applies to the production of poetry writing. Since experienced writers' self-reports are often accused of being hyperbolic, testing the strategies that experienced writers say they use is one way we can demystify some of the lore that characterizes the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting.

**1.7 Significance of the Problem**

In *Clueless in Academe: How Schooling Obfuscates the Life of the Mind*, Gerald Graff "examines some overlooked ways in which schools and colleges themselves reinforce cluelessness and thus perpetuate the misconception that the life of the mind is a secret society for which only an elite few qualify" (1). For Graff, the way institutions organize themselves (secondary schools and colleges in particular) explains how "academia reinforces cluelessness by making its ideas, problems, and ways of thinking *look* more opaque, narrowly specialized, and beyond normal learning capacities than they

are or need to be" (1). The institutional divisions Graff refers to often create and perpetuate a divide between academic and so-called "street" intelligences. Unfortunately, some of these divisions are easily recognized in today's English departments in colleges across the continental United States.

For Graff, "unresolved debates over academic discourse tend to reach students in the form of curricular mixed messages rather than straightforward discussions of the problem" (246). Graff summarizes this argument nicely when he writes:

> The issue of academic discourse has divided the field of writing instruction, where advocates of teaching persuasive argument clash with those who favor such "expressive" forms as personal narrative, autobiography, and creative writing. Whereas the first group wants students to acquire an academic voice, the second wants to encourage them to find their own personal voices. (246)

Ever since the 1960s and 1970s, advocates of the writing process movement (such as Ken Macrorie, Peter Elbow, and many other "expressivists") have "urged student writers to move toward the personal and away from the dead scholarly paper" (Graff 247). Certainly, the issue of voice in academic writing is a debate that is central to defining the field of English studies, and it remains a controversial topic to this day.[10]

As Graff demonstrates, the structures and values of an institution will have an important bearing upon the way an institution necessarily defines, and therefore achieves, its goals. Nowhere are the divisions that Graff refers to more readily apparent than in the field of English studies, particularly between Literature departments, writing instruction

[10] For additional reading on student voice in writing, see Bartholomae, 1997; Bowden, 1999; Elbow, 1997, 2003, 2007; Macrorie, 1985; Yancey, 1994.

programs, and Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).[11] In addition, the institutional divisions Graff mentions help reinforce the notion that some types of writing are clearly different from other forms of writing. But for the purpose of this present discussion on the differences between teaching composition writing and poetry writing, it is sufficient to concede that the way these disciplines (e.g., creative writing, composition, literature, and TESL) are structured in the academy will have an important bearing upon some of the ways that creative writing is taught, researched, and understood, both inside and outside the academy.[12]

In "Writer's Self-Reports," Bizzaro identifies a significant division between writing instructors in English studies. On one side of this division, Bizzaro sees a group of "compositionists" who "align creative writing with college composition in an effort to assert the similarities suggested by research into the area known as 'composition studies'" (119). On the other side of this division, Bizzaro identifies a second group of writing instructors, "traditionalists," and these teachers may be recognized by "their continued employment of time-worn methods for teaching creative writing, including reliance on writers' self-reports, methods we now associate with the 'lore' of creative writing instruction" (119). Bizzaro writes:

> Many who believe creative writing can be taught disagree on the principles that inform their teaching, whether cognitivist or social constructionist. Thus, the connection that Bishop fought so hard to make has resulted in a rift between composition pedagogy and creative writing

[11] To see how these divisions have impacted TESL programs, see Matsuda.
[12] See Lim for an informative account on a multilingual writer's experiences in a creative writing workshop.

> pedagogy, between those who continue to (com)position creative writing and those traditionalists who continue to rely on self-reports in their workshops. (125)

According to Bizzaro, the "(com)positioning" of creative writing by composition studies has caused a rift among instructors who teach writing, largely because the "(com)positioning" phenomena he astutely describes has "solved the dilemma we have all lived with: whether creative writing can be taught at all or whether the particular skills associated with creative writing are skills a writer is born with" ("Writer's Self-Reports" 120). Unfortunately, the ambiguity surrounding much of our understanding on creative writing, particularly the purposes behind its instruction, have translated into pedagogies that are being used in today's college-level writing classrooms.

In Richard Fulkerson's essay, "Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century," Fulkerson identifies three axiologies that drive approaches to teaching composition writing in the United States: the social epistemic, the expressive, and the rhetorical (655). Returning to an analytical schema he developed in the 1980s, Fulkerson postulates that, "in order to have a philosophy of composition upon which you can explicitly erect a course, you must answer four questions" (657). Fulkerson argues that debates in the field of teaching English are no longer between expressive and academic writing camps. Instead, Fulkerson sees a major divide between "a postmodern, cultural studies, reading-based program, and a broadly conceived rhetoric of genres and discourse forums" (679). According to Fulkerson, "All composition perspectives assume some view of the writing process; that is, any concept of composing and/or teaching composition must presuppose an answer to 'How are texts produced?'" (658). This is the

second of four criteria that Fulkerson posits as a schema that writing teachers must answer, and it is a debate centered upon the question, "how do written texts come into existence?" (657).

Toward the end of his essay, Fulkerson laments the fact, "as a field we no longer do research into writing processes" (670). For Fulkerson, we need to revive research on writing processes, mostly because additional research on writing can inform how we should be teaching it in the twenty-first century. In "A More Spacious Model of Writing and Literacy," Peter Elbow writes, "Any theory of writing needs to be complex, and in particular to account for the contradictory behaviors of people and the differing conditions and experiences in which they write" (229). By re-examining some of the ways poetry writing is produced, particularly the methods that experienced writers say they use to produce poetry writing, we can shed further insight on the writing practices that experienced poets follow when they produce the poetry that they write. And by testing what experienced poets say they do when they write poetry, we may further illuminate the elusive role of invention in poetry writing. After all, until writers begin to analyze their own writing practices, there will continue to be "a genuine controversy—*within* the field, not in the eyes of the public, the administration, or the legislature—over the goal of teaching writing in college" (Fulkerson, "Composition Turn" 679).

**1.8 Problem Statement**

In the twenty-first century, very little is actually known about teaching poetry writing, what it is, or how it is performed. Although many scholars agree there needs to

be more research on writing,[13] nowhere is the need for more research on writing more pressing than in the field of creative writing studies.

Many of the core assumptions teachers and scholars believe about creative writing—and the most effective ways to teach it—have been shaped by the process movement in composition studies that happened nearly fifty years ago. When composition studies emerged as a field, it began by researching writers as they composed. In fact, Peter Elbow's influential text, *Writing Without Teachers*, is based upon a journal he kept on his own writing practices as he worked on his dissertation (xvi). But ever since the publication and rapid dissemination of James Berlin's "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," researchers on writing in composition studies have abandoned a research focus on writers' self-reports.

When composition studies shifted its focus from pre-process to process-based instruction, there was a simultaneous shift from researching written texts to an increased awareness on the processes surrounding the production of these texts. But in the transition from pre-process to process-based pedagogy, a teaching focus on the thoughts and feelings of individual writers (e.g., expressivism) was generally abandoned in favor of a teaching focus centered on the life-circumstances surrounding individual writers (e.g., the social-epistemic). In turn, this shift influenced the ways that teachers use writing in their curriculum, what they use it for, and how they think they know how to use it. But after decades of research and scholarship on writing, the inventive act of creative writing—and by implication, the teaching of it—remains an act shrouded largely in

[13] Some scholars in English studies who have called for additional research on writing (in general) and creative writing (in particular) include Dawson, 2005; Donnelly, 2010; Elbow, 2003; Faigley, 1995; Fulkerson, 2005; Yagelski, 2006.

mystery. Does reading good writing help a student produce creative writing? Are students born with a natural propensity for creative writing? Can creative writing be taught? All of these questions are debates central to defining the field of creative writing studies, particularly the assumptions behind what it is, the writer's role in the process, and what it means to teach (and even perform) creative writing.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, most of the research in creative writing studies has been purely historical and/or theoretical. In other words, there has been very little research on poetry writing practices in creative writing studies. This might be due to the fact that, until recently, scholars in creative writing haven't really known how to conduct research on poetry writing in creative writing studies.[14] Although many scholars (i.e., Bishop, Donnelly, Faigley, Fulkerson, Yagelski) have made urgent pleas to reinvestigate the inventive aspects of writing using a different research methodology, not many have answered this call. However, by conducting a performance-based inquiry on the strategies that experienced poets say they use when they write poetry, it is possible for a researching-writer to test these poetry writing strategies for their effectiveness prior to their implementation in the creative writing classroom. In doing so, we may simultaneously begin research on developing new pedagogies we might apply toward the teaching of poetry writing in the academic setting.

Although a brief history of research on writing in composition studies is necessary to contextualize this investigation on expert-practitioners' self-reports, my ultimate aim is to chronicle and test the strategies that three experienced poets say they use to produce

[14] For current applications of research methodologies on creative writing in creative writing studies, see Kroll and Harper's *Research Methods in Creative Writing*. See also Harper and Kroll's *Creative Writing Studies: Practice, Research, and Pedagogy*.

the poetry that they write: Fred Chappell, Richard Hugo, and William Stafford. Clearly, no two writers will ever write alike. However, the methodology used in this study can be replicated and improved upon by future researchers in different ways. After all, post-process scholarship on theories of composition have successfully demonstrated that chronicling the things that happen to writers can be just as important as the text(s) they ultimately write.[15] The act of composition does not reveal itself in a text after it has been written, nor does it reveal itself in the personal testimony of authors long after they have written a text. Although writers' self-reports can tell us what a writer is thinking at a moment in time, we need a fuller and more accurate representation of the choices that experienced writers say they make. As many scholars have demonstrated, *ex post facto* accounts by writers on their own writing sometimes contradict themselves, and they do not provide an accurate representation of the writing phenomena as they describe it. Nonetheless, despite some inconsistency in these accounts, writers' self-reports have proven to be an invaluable tool for creative writers concerned with capturing, analyzing, and improving their own writing. By keeping a written record of the strategies that experienced writers say they use when they sit down to write poetry, it is possible to see what poetry writing strategies we might apply to the teaching of poetry writing in the twenty-first century.

For these reasons, and in response to calls from various scholars in English studies for additional research on writing, this study proposes a new method for conducting research on poetry writing in creative writing studies. Certainly, the method

[15] For scholarship on post-process theories of composition, see Dobrin, Rice, and Vastola, 2011; Enos, Miller, and McCracken, 2003; Kent, 1999; Perry, 2000; Trimbur, 1994; Vandenberg, Hum, and Clary-Lemon, 2006.

used to conduct research on poetry writing must be an approach that studies creative writing *as creative writing*. In addition, the approach should be one based upon theories of creative writing which originate from the discipline itself.[16] By illuminating some of the poetry writing strategies experienced poets say they use to write poetry, this study will not only inform current and future research on poetry writing in creative writing studies, but it will also contribute to a deeper understanding on the choices that experienced writers say they make whenever they sit down to write poetry.

Since I am interested in examining three expert-practitioners' self-reports for strategies they say they use to produce poetry writing, a journaling approach to research on poetry writing provides a unique method whereby a researcher may document and test experienced writers' self-reports on how to write poetry. By testing what experienced writers' say they do when they sit down to write poetry, we shall gain deeper insight on the choices that experienced poets say they make when they actually write poetry. Although the research conducted here may be of primary interest to instructors and researchers in creative writing studies, this study has implications for all teachers or researchers who use creative writing as part of their curriculum and/or research design. At the end of this performance-based study, I conclude with a discussion on the implications this research may have for teaching poetry writing in the twenty-first century.

### 1.9 Concluding Remarks

It is unlikely that a simple answer to the question, "What is creative writing?", will ever be found. Nevertheless, responses to this question have shaped notions of what

[16] Hesse (2010) and Zebroski (1998) provide compelling arguments for the methodological approach adopted in this study.

it means to be a creative writer, particularly what it means to teach poetry writing. Currently, there is no systematic research on poetry writing that tests creative writers' self-reports in creative writing studies. For this reason, I propose that we need to conduct additional research on poetry writing, particularly as the research pertains to strategies we might apply to the teaching of poetry writing in the academic setting. In doing so, we shall simultaneously aid the development of new pedagogies for teaching poetry writing in the academic setting.

The research conducted here isn't simply about documenting and recording the strategies experienced poets say they use whenever they sit down to write poetry. This study also attempts to examine some of the departmental divisions that have come to characterize the teaching of writing within colleges and universities across the continental United States. The construction of knowledge, very much like the act of composition, is a recursive act that continually requires revision. In this regard, the field of English studies needs a new understanding of teaching writing, and it must be an understanding capable of recognizing the merits that each of the sub-disciplines within English studies has to offer. In short, we need to deepen an old philosophy on writing—expressivism—and turn the direction of research on writing processes into a post-expressivism. The field of English studies needs a new philosophy on creative writing, one that is in a new key.[17]

But before we can move any further on conducting research on poetry writing in creative writing studies, we must take a step back and see where research on writing has been. Once we have revisited studies on writing that examine writers who were writing,

[17] Building upon the work done by Langer, Collins and Miller construct a theory of textual production that describes "presentation and discourse and relations between them as major components in the evolution of text from thought to written language" (91).

only then shall we be ready to lay the groundwork for a fresh, new look at one of the ways that poetry writing may be used as a research method. In this way, we can also begin research into the subject of invention, a topic that rightfully belongs to Rhetoric and creative writing studies. Conducting research on experienced writers' self-reports will help establish creative writing as a discipline set apart from composition studies, and it will also help us see how some forms of writing are truly "horses of a different color."

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

> Where does the drama get its materials? From the "unending conversation" that is going on at the point in history when we are born. Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him [sic]; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself [sic] against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.
>
> —Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* 110-11

> Clearly, things are getting complicated these days in the profession of writing instruction.
>
> —Wendy Bishop, "Writing is/and Therapy" 152

## 2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

The issues I discuss in this chapter summarize a critical debate happening in the field of English studies, and it is a debate with important implications for the nascent field of creative writing studies. In this chapter, I address the following question: What are some of the methods a researcher might use to conduct research on poetry writing in creative writing studies?[18] However, before we can identify some of the research methods currently being used to conduct research on poetry writing in creative writing studies, it will be helpful if we examine some of the pivotal approaches to research on writers' self-

[18] Kroll and Harper's important text, *Research Methods in Creative Writing*, answers the pivotal question, "What methods might we use for exploring creative writing as a process as well as a product?" (6). See also Harper and Kroll for applications of creative writing research methodology.

reports in composition studies. By revisiting some of the major approaches that have been used to conduct research on writers' self-reports, we can more readily see how research on writing has influenced the teaching and researching of poetry writing in English studies. In addition, by reviewing some of the ways that research on writers' self-reports have been conducted in the past, we may see how research on writers' self-reports in creative writing studies is different from research on writer's self-reports in composition. A review of the scholarship that helped set composition studies apart from the field of Rhetoric will allow us to see how research methodologies in creative writing studies are distinct from research methodologies used in composition.

Applying a new approach to research on creative writing can have important implications for the field of English studies, especially as the research pertains to the de-emphasis of expressivism in teaching college level writing, but also as the research pertains to the teaching of creative writing, particularly poetry writing. Collectively, the literature presented in this chapter lays the foundation for a new approach to test research on writers' self-reports in creative writing studies. By keeping a written record of the strategies that experienced poets say they use whenever they sit down to write poetry, a researcher may test these poetry writing strategies for their efficacy prior to their implementation in the creative writing classroom. In this way, we may be able to improve some of the ways that poetry writing is currently being taught in the academic setting.

Chapter Two has been divided into three sections, and each section informs a reader on historical conceptions of writing. In the first section of this chapter, I present a brief outline of ancient Greek views on writing. Despite Aristotelian rhetoric's heavy influence on teaching composition in the United States, Aristotle is not generally credited

for having a similar influence on teaching creative writing. This is surprising, largely because Aristotle's rendering of literature in the *Poetics* offers one of the earliest examples scholars have on poetic interpretation and analysis. In section two of this chapter, I examine some of the seminal research on writers' self-reports in composition studies, and I consider the impact cognitive research had on writing research and pedagogy in the United States. In doing so, I intend to demonstrate that we need to re-visit research on writer's self-reports, particularly as the research pertains to research on poetry writing in creative writing studies. In the third section of this chapter, I review some of the research methods currently being used to conduct research on poetry writing in creative writing studies.

Since most of the research in creative writing studies has been historical and/or theoretical, a new approach to research on poetry writing will have important implications for English studies, particularly as the research pertains to: (1) the de-emphasis of expressivism in teaching college level writing, and (2) the role of invention in producing poetry writing. Because I partly intend to demonstrate that the way we understand creative writing has an important bearing upon the ways we teach and research creative writing, this study proposes a revised method for conducting research on writers' self-reports in creative writing studies. Although I have tried to limit the scope of my literature review to a discussion of research on writers as they were actually writing, the literature examined in this chapter lays the foundation for a researcher to test experienced poets' self-reports for strategies we might apply to the teaching of poetry writing in the academic setting. In the chapter that follows, I outline a method for conducting research on creative writing using a methodology appropriate for research on

poetry writing in creative writing studies. However, before we can answer the question, What are some of the methods a researcher might use to conduct research on poetry writing in creative writing studies?, it will be helpful if we examine some early viewpoints on writing espoused by the ancient Greeks. By examining early conceptions of writing, particularly the role of invention in oratory and persuasion, we shall be in a better position to see how Plato and Aristotle's thoughts have influenced the teaching and researching of creative writing in the Western academic setting.

**2.2 Plato and Aristotle on Invention in Writing**

Most scholars in the field of English studies agree that composition studies emerged from traditional Rhetoric and became a distinct, disciplinary field sometime during the early-to-middle twentieth century.[19] But as Stephen North mentions in *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, "Any date chosen to mark the beginning of 'modern' Composition is bound to be arbitrary" (9). This being the case, one might argue that composition studies has its roots much earlier than the middle-half of the twentieth century. If we turn our academic gaze in the direction of the ancient Greeks, we find that the first person to speculate on some of the things that writers do is Plato.

In Plato's "Phaedrus," Socrates laments a burgeoning text-based culture, a place where "every word, once it is written, is bandied about alike among those who understand and those who have no interest in it, and it knows not to whom to speak or not to speak" (38). According to Plato's Socrates, the only purpose in writing is "to treasure up reminders for oneself," particularly "when [one] comes to the forgetfulness of old age" (39). Although Socrates concedes that writing can be "a noble pastime," he believes

[19] For pivotal texts on the history of composition studies, see Berlin, 1987; Brereton, 1995; Faigley, 1995; North, 1987.

that writing on the things we care about is frivolous, mostly because "serious discourse" can be achieved only "when one employs the dialectic method" (39). For Socrates, dialectical conversation is an activity much nobler than the solitary act of writing things down. In order to gain true knowledge, one must engage in "serious discourse" with other people through dialectical conversation. By the end of Plato's dialogue, Socrates adopts a negative stance on writing, but Plato's account of Socrates is the earliest record we have on a person who speculated on some of the things writers do whenever they sit down to write.

In Book X of *The Republic*, Plato expresses a concern about education, but his argument extends to all writers who lived in ancient Greece. For Plato, poets are particularly dangerous because they are "by nature third from the king and the truth, as are all other imitators" (268e). Plato's concern about writing stems from the idea, "an imitator has no worthwhile knowledge of the things he [sic] imitates," but his concern also stems from the idea that, "all the tragic poets, whether they write in iambics or hexameters, are as imitative as they could possibly be" (273b). Since "imitators don't even have the kind of insight that makers do, they have only opinion—sometimes true, sometimes false," imitators are not reliable teachers of virtue and, therefore poets, "because of their disturbing influence even on good people, should not be admitted into *Kallipolis"* (Reeve 264).[20] In this way, Plato expresses a deep concern regarding the social impact poets might have on the citizens of *Kallipolis*. Although Plato should be commended for being the first person to recognize the psychological and social

[20] *Kallipolis* is Plato's conception of the perfect city-state, as outlined in Book X of *The Republic*.

dimensions of writing, Plato eschews this emerging technology (e.g., writing) for fear of the collateral damage poets might cause to society.

It is unlikely Aristotle was ever curious about the things that might happen to writers whenever they sit down to write. Nonetheless, Aristotle's conception of rhetoric has been (and largely remains) the *de facto* standard for teaching rhetoric in the Western college landscape, bar none. Aristotelian rhetoric, "in the most general sense, is the energy inherent in emotion and thought, transmitted through a system of signs, including language, to others to influence their decisions or actions" (Kennedy 7). Although Aristotle is primarily concerned with a speaker's use of rhetoric in the public sphere, he recognizes the powerful influence of rhetoric on the production of literature and writing (Kennedy 7).

In Book One of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Aristotle introduces his conception of rhetoric, and he outlines the "means of persuasion" that are available to orators whenever they address an audience. According to Aristotle, the means of persuasion in argument are the *logos* (persuasion from logic), *ethos* (persuasion from personal character), and *pathos* (persuasion from emotion). In the first half of Book Two, Aristotle addresses a need for understanding the role of emotion and character in persuasion, and he explains some of the ways a speaker might arouse emotions in an audience. But throughout his *Rhetoric*, it is clear that Aristotle downplays the role of emotion in favor of a predilection toward "the logical side" of persuasion (Kennedy 9).

George Grube, a prominent scholar in the field of ancient Greek literature, writes, "The Greek word *rhetorikê*" had "a much wider significance than our word 'rhetoric'" (xxix). For both Plato and Aristotle:

> The desire to be able to speak in public had provided the original stimulus for the study of language, and 'the orator' always remained, in classical times, *the* prose artist, just as for Aristotle the writer of tragedies was *the* poet. But the study of *rhetorikê* was conceived as the art of language, especially in prose. We should not forget that, in the *Poetics*, Aristotle himself refers us to the *Rhetoric* for the means by which to express thought even in verse. (Grube xxix)

For most (if not all) of the ancient Greeks, the act of "reading" was never distinguished from oral performance. In other words, poetic texts were often listened to, but it is unlikely these texts were ever "read." According to Grube, "the written word was always *heard*. This helps to explain the emphasis in ancient criticism upon the sound of words and the importance attached to prose rhythm" (xxix). Importantly, the ancient Greeks did not make a distinction between reading silently and reading out loud. This might also help explain why some contemporary poets believe poetry is a performance, and it is one that must be spoken—performed—in front of a live audience.

Given the critical influence of Aristotelian rhetoric on teaching composition writing in the United States, it is somewhat surprising there hasn't been any research on invention until the emergence of expressivism in composition studies.[21] Aristotle's influence on teaching writing cannot be underestimated, and the account presented here on ancient Greek views toward writing is bound to be reductive. Aristotle does well to describe the ways an orator might invoke thoughts or feelings in an audience, but

[21] According to Kennedy, Aristotle "offers no general term" for describing invention until the end of Book Two, and here Aristotle uses the word *dianoia*, or "thought," to describe invention (25).

Aristotle's emphasis on logic preempts the other means of persuasion. Over the centuries, Aristotelian rhetoric took hold in Western thought and culture, and it replaced the Platonic notion that the ideal form of a thing exists in the thing itself.

Like most of his peers, Aristotle believed that ideas originate from our sensory perceptions and our experiences with the world. But Aristotle also believed that ideas originate from logical conclusions (e.g., syllogistic logic). Importantly, logical ideas will always be better than ideas which simply reflect our sensory experiences. For Aristotle, logical ideas are better, mostly because ideas which derive from logic can be demonstrated by way of the dialectic, but also because our senses can "trick" us into believing false ideas. For these reasons, logical conclusions will always serve a higher purpose (*teleos*) than ideas that simply reflect our sensory impressions. Aristotelian logic eventually substituted the Platonic form of a thing for its content, and the mind slowly became the true seat of knowledge. Plato's "ideal forms" weren't that ideal any longer, and the means of persuasion eventually became a tool that an orator could use in order to ascertain Truth. Slowly, over time, the standard by which things were judged moved into the realm of cognition.

Aristotle presents a rigorous and systematic approach to constructing arguments in his *Rhetoric*, and he presents an equally systematic rendering of literature in the *Poetics*. As with Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, "The influence of the *Poetics* upon European literature and criticism since the Renaissance can hardly be exaggerated" (Grube xxvii). Indeed, Aristotle's *Poetics* "contains the first formulation of some extraordinarily seminal ideas which are at the very root of our appreciation of poetry, and of tragedy in particular—ideas which have continued to grow and develop" (Grube xi-xii). In Book

One of the *Poetics*, Aristotle begins his systematic analysis of poetry, "with basic principles," and he accomplishes this by expounding upon poetry's "different genres, the specific effects of each genre, the way to construct stories to make good poetry, the number and nature of its constituent elements, and all other matters which belong to this particular inquiry" (3; bk. 1 1447a).

Early in the *Poetics*, Aristotle recognizes that "the art which imitates by means of words only, whether in prose or verse, whether in one meter or a mixture of meters, this art is without a name to this day" (4; bk. 1 1447b). Unfortunately, there was not a "common name" Aristotle could use to describe the "poetry" he writes about (4; bk. 1 1447b). For Aristotle, this is due to the fact "people join the word poet to the meter and speak of elegiac poets or epic poets, but they give the same name to poets merely because they use the same meter, and not because of the nature of their imitation" (4; bk. 1 1447b). According to Grube, Aristotle mentions *mimesis* (e.g., imitation) at the beginning of his *Poetics* to make the argument that "the different genres of poetry should be differentiated by the nature of their imitation" (xix). Ultimately, Aristotle believes poetry writing is distinguished by its degree of imitation.

For Aristotle, one of the defining characteristics of poetry is its degree of imitation. In Book IV of Aristotle's *Poetics*, Aristotle discusses two causes that have led to "the birth of poetry" (7; bk. 4 1448b). The first cause which led to the birth of poetry lies in the belief, "all [people] take pleasure in imitative representations" (7; bk. 4 1448b). Aristotle posits that imitation is "natural" from "childhood," and he proves his point by stating people enjoy things because "they learn as they look" (7; bk. 4 1448b). The second cause which led to the birth of poetry is based on an innate idea: "imitation and

melody and rhythm are ours by nature," therefore people are "naturally gifted [for poetry writing] from the beginning" (8; bk. 4 1448b). According to Aristotle, "Poetry developed in different ways according to [people's] characters" (8; bk. 4 1448b). In the evolution of poetry writing, "The more serious-minded imitated the noble deeds of noble men; the more common imitated the actions of meaner men; the latter wrote satiric verse while the former wrote hymns and encomia" (8; bk. 4 1448b). Here we can easily see Aristotle's disdain for satiric verse, and this is likely an influence he adopted from his teacher, Plato.

Aristotle provides a thorough analysis on the descriptive features of poetry and tragedy in his *Poetics*. In fact, Aristotle uses Sophocles' *Oedipus* as an "ideal text" against which all other tragedies must be measured. Surprisingly, this idea is similar to New Critical approaches which writing instructors often use to measure the success of students' writing. However, Aristotle does not adequately explain how poets get their ideas in the first place, except for a "natural need" to imitate.[22] For Aristotle, people are "naturally gifted" with imitation "from the beginning," but he does not attempt to describe how people create poetry "out of their random utterances" (8; bk. 4 1448b). Plato considers the idea that people get their inspiration from the gods in "Ion," but it is accepted as a given truth that the gods act upon poets in mysterious ways (41). Indeed, Aristotle's rendering of literature in the *Poetics* parallels a similar criticism that English studies has been charged with, namely, there has always been a central focus within

[22] In Book X of *The Republic*, Socrates ably convinces Glaucon that "makers" are better people than "imitators." Unfortunately, Socrates does not identify a "prime maker," someone whom Sophocles may have gone to for assistance with his prose.

English departments on literary interpretation over literary production.[23] According to Grube:

> The question is sometimes raised whether we should look upon the *Poetics* as a handbook of rules telling tragic poets how they should proceed in order to write good tragedies, or whether it is rather a collection of musings, often extraordinarily illuminating, by a great thinker on the subject of tragedy. (xviii)

Ultimately, Aristotle's primary focus in the *Poetics* is on explaining the descriptive features poetic texts should have, and he does not consider the ways an author might use—or even be used by—invention while writing a text.

Aristotle's rendering of poetry in the *Poetics* raises an important question: How does one go about studying writing processes? How may one capture the elusive act of invention in creative writing? If we can discover the elements required for writing a particular kind of text, and if we can teach those elements, then creative writing instructors don't have to worry about teaching creative writing processes. Unfortunately, research on invention in poetry writing did not concern Aristotle, nor is it likely that he had the right means to investigate the question properly. In the words of Earl Buxton, it would be centuries before anyone would attempt to research "the student's feelings, attitudes, and self-concepts which form the invisible components of the 'composition' that the teacher perceives as an arrangement of words, sentences, and paragraphs to be read, criticized, and evaluated" (v). A focus on the type of research that attempted to examine writing processes from a writer's perspective would not happen for a long time,

[23] For an important history on teaching writing in the American university setting, see Berlin's *Rhetoric and Reality*.

and research on writers' self-reports would not happen until significant developments were made on writing research during the latter-half of the twentieth century.

### 2.3 Research on Writers' Self-Reports in Composition Studies

In order to see how research on writers' self-reports has been studied in the past, it will be helpful if we examine some of the pivotal research on writers' self-reports in composition studies. From the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, cognitive approaches to research on writing relied heavily upon writers' self-reports as a means to conduct research on writing processes. However, according to Bishop, "cognitive researchers moved beyond writers' self-reports to observe writers as they composed" (*Released* 19). Inevitably, the "movement" Bishop refers to "forsook the research direction that would enable scholars to discover the decision-making processes of experienced writers when they write" (Bizzaro, "Workshop" 47). This is unfortunate because "the fallout from the undoing of cognitivist methods of inquiry" meant "dismissal entirely of what writers say they do when they write" (Bizzaro 48). What happened to research on writers' self-reports in composition studies? How come researchers aren't relying on writers' self-reports to conduct research on writing? Part of the answer to this question has to do with the social turn composition studies took in the mid-1980s. In order to see how this social turn impacted research on writers' self-reports, we must take a closer look at some of the ways writers' self-reports have been used to conduct research on writing processes.

There are at least two major causes which have contributed to the undoing of research on writers' self-reports in composition studies. The first cause can be attributed to James Berlin's critique of cognitivist rhetoric. Since the 1987 publication of Berlin's "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," there has been very little research on

writers' self-reports in composition studies. This is likely because Berlin's conception of social-epistemic rhetoric instigated the development of a post-process theory for composition studies which tended to exclude expressivism from research, theory, and practice.[24] As a result, writers' self-reports are used by scholars and researchers in English studies in different ways, and they are used to achieve different aims.

The second cause which led to the undoing of research on writers' self-reports can be attributed to Wendy Bishop's unsuccessful (although well-intentioned) attempt in the early 1990s to align creative writing with composition studies. Unfortunately, Berlin's critique of cognitivist rhetoric, and Bishop's attempt to merge creative writing with composition, have both contributed to the dismissal entirely of research on writers' self-reports in composition studies. In order to see how research on writers' self-reports fell into disrepute among scholars and researchers in composition studies, we must examine some of the pivotal approaches that researchers have used to conduct research on writing processes. In doing so, we shall also see how research on writers' self-reports in creative writing studies is different from research on writers' self-reports in composition studies.

### 2.3.1 Berlin's Critique of Cognitivist Rhetoric

Before we discuss the impact that Berlin's critique of cognitivist rhetoric had on researching writers' self-reports in English studies, it will be helpful if we start with a brief outline of research on writers' self-reports in composition studies. Janet Emig's research on writing is particularly important because she is one of the first compositionists who used writers' self-reports as a means to conduct formal research on

[24] For additional reading on post-process theories of composition, see Dobrin, Rice, and Vastola, 2011; Enos, Miller, and McCracken, 2003; Kent, 1999; Trimbur, 1994; Vandenberg, Hum, and Clary-Lemon, 2006.

writing processes.[25] At the beginning of her influential study, Emig builds an argument for a cognitive approach to research on writing because "descriptions of what occurs during [composing in writing], not to mention attempts to explain or analyze, are highly unsatisfactory" (1). For Emig, "An investigator who attempts to characterize the composing process fully and accurately finds that the sources available are too disheveled and contradictory to provide a coherent characterization" (1). In order to address these deficiencies, Emig adopted a "think-aloud" approach to research on writing by observing, recording, and analyzing student writers' self-reports as they actually composed.

According to Emig, the participants in her study "met four times with the investigator" (29). During two of the meetings with Emig, participants were asked to "think-aloud" while they wrote (29-30). Importantly, the participants in Emig's study "sat in a position where it was possible for the investigator to observe and make notes on [their] actions" (30). In addition, Emig used a tape recorder to record the "composing aloud" participants engaged in as they were being observed. In this way, Emig observed and recorded the thoughts of eight high school seniors (from six local-area high schools in Chicago) while they were actually engaged in the physical act of composition writing.

A critical moment happened in English studies when Emig published her influential study**.** According to Emig, "the probable values of a case-study approach" can "illuminate the psychological dimension of methodology in composition" (2). The impact Emig's research had on writing pedagogy was profound, and it helped kick-start the process-oriented movement on teaching writing in composition studies. In addition,

[25] For landmark research on writing processes in composition studies, see Britton et al., 1975; Flower and Hayes, 1997; Hayes, 1996; Hayes and Flower, 1980; Loban, 1976; Perl, 1997; Rohman and Wlecke, 1964.

Emig's research helped pave the way for future research on writers' self-reports as a means to investigate what writers think about whenever they sit down to write. By capturing student writers' thoughts as they were actually writing, Emig attempted to "illuminate the psychological dimension of methodology in composition" (2) by observing writers as they actually composed.[26]

Early in her study, Emig references the work of another important compositionist, James Britton. Published in 1975, Britton's *The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18)* recognizes "there has been very little systematic direct observation of fluent writers at work" (19). For this reason, a team of researchers including James Britton, Tony Burgess, Nancy Martin, Alex McLeod, and Harold Rosen set out to conduct "a developmental study of the processes by which the written language of young children becomes differentiated, during the years eleven to eighteen, into kinds of written discourse appropriate to different purposes" (50). Ultimately, the aim of Britton et al. research on writing abilities was to find "a system of categories which would overarch the disciplines," regardless of "function, audience, and context" (9). By analyzing student writing over an extended period of time, Britton's team of researchers developed a system of categories "to trace the stages at which school students acquire the ability to modify their writing to meet the demands of different situations and thereby move from one kind of writing to another" (9). Britton et al. longitudinal study on writing is an important one, especially when we consider how they conceptualized their research on

[26] For important scholarship on cognitive approaches to research on writing using talk-aloud protocols as the method of data analysis, see Bizzell, 1997; Cooper and Holzman, 1983; Ericsson and Simon, 1993; Flower and Hayes, 1985; Hayes, 1996.

writing, particularly their focus on invention, which they believed happens through the expressive function of language.

In "Expressive Pedagogy: Practice/Theory, Theory/Practice," Christopher Burnham writes, "[By] locating participant and spectator roles at either end of a continuum, Britton introduces a third mediating role, the expressive, in which the writer functions as both participant and spectator" (26). In *A Theory of Discourse*, James Kinneavy argues, "it is by language that man [sic] finds both his [sic] self and his [sic] thoughts, and since self is emotionally grounded, it follows that all discourse is emotionally grounded" (403). For Kinneavy and Britton, "being is grounded in a situational context," and because of this, "all discourse is based on expression" (Kinneavy 404). Drawing upon Britton et al. conception of writing, Emig argues "the notion that all student writings emanate from an expressive impulse and that they then bifurcate into two major modes is useful and accurate" (37). Emig simplifies the model proffered by Britton et al., and she renames Britton's modes of student writing; but Emig retains the idea that the expressive function of language is the focal point where all writing originates (37). The view that all language originates from an expressive impulse was an important development in research on writing, largely because it had an overarching influence on the ways writing would later be taught and researched in universities across the United States (see figure 1).

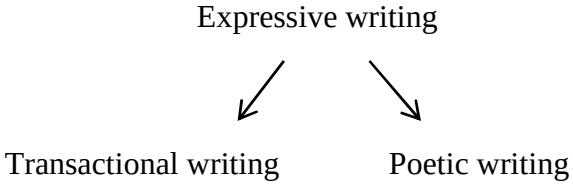


Fig. 1. Britton's theoretical model on written language.

No longer were researchers focused on researching written end-products, but they became increasingly focused on the processes writers used to generate the texts they wrote. However, a focus on writing processes also meant considering the ways written texts came into existence in the first place. After all, if writing is composed of multiple processes, what are the thoughts that instigate these processes? According to Britton et al.:

> It is tempting to think of writing as a process of making linguistic choices from one's repertoire of syntactic structures and lexical items. This would suggest that there is a meaning, or something to be expressed, in the writer's mind, and that he [sic] proceeds to choose, from the words and structures he [sic] has at his disposal, the ones that best match his [sic] meaning. But is that really how it happens? (39)

Britton et al. consider the possibility that lexical and semantic choices govern the way writers think, but they are right to question if this is how writing actually occurs. Britton et al. conception of expressive writing is an important one, and it is one that Linda Flower and John R. Hayes consider in their essay, "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing."

In their research on developing a cognitive process theory of writing, Flower and Hayes believe, "the best way to model the writing process is to study a writer in action, and there are many ways to do this" (254). Unfortunately, Flower and Hayes do not suggest any of the "many ways" researchers might "study a writer in action" (254). Nonetheless, Flower and Hayes acknowledge that "after-the-fact, *introspective analysis* of what [writers do] while writing is notoriously inaccurate and likely to be influenced by their notions of what they should have done" (255). For Flower and Hayes, "thinking

aloud protocols capture a detailed record of what is going on in the writer's mind during the act of composing itself" (255).[27]

In their research on modeling cognitive processes, Flower and Hayes propose "a theory of the cognitive processes involved in composing in an effort to lay groundwork for more detailed study of thinking processes in writing" (252). In part, Flower and Hayes develop their cognitive process theory to answer the question, "What guides the decisions writers make as they write?" (251). Based on their "work with protocol analysis over the past five years," Flower and Hayes believe they found "a good deal of evidence to support" their "working hypothesis" as a "springboard for further research" (252).[28] However, Cooper and Holzman point out, "models of cognitive processes cannot, in principle, be valid as literal descriptions" (285). According to Cooper and Holzman, Flower and Hayes's work on developing a cognitive model "ignore its status as a model and consequently ignore the question of whether it is valid" (284-5). This is one of two problems Cooper and Holzman identify with Flower and Hayes's research on writing. The other (and more serious) problem Cooper and Holzman identify with Flower and Hayes's research on writing has to do with the notion of replicability. In other words, Flower and Hayes research "is too underspecified to be testable" (287).[29]

Almost seven years after the publication of Flower and Hayes's research on a cognitive process theory of writing, James Berlin published "Rhetoric and Ideology in the

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[27] In *Protocol Analysis*, Ericsson and Simon discuss "how giving verbal reports affects subjects' cognitive processes," and they also discuss "the validity and completeness of such reports" (xi). See Greene and Higgins for a revised approach on retrospective reporting.

[28] For a description of Flower and Hayes's cognitive process model, see Hayes and Flower's "Identifying the Organization of Writing Processes."

[29] See Flower and Hayes's "Counterstatement" for a response to Cooper and Holzman's methodological critique.

Writing Class." In his influential essay, Berlin critiques what he considers to be three types of rhetoric that occupy "a distinct position in [their] relation to ideology" (680). Based on the idea, "Ideology always carries with it strong social endorsement" (682), Berlin examines three transactional rhetorics he believes have come to characterize the teaching of college level writing in the United States: the cognitive, the expressionistic, and the social-epistemic.

Toward the beginning of Berlin's critique of cognitive rhetoric, Berlin writes, "Cognitive rhetoric has made similar claims to being scientific, although the method called upon is usually grounded in cognitive psychology" (683). Here we can easily see Berlin's apprehension with regard to cognitive rhetoric, cognitive psychology, or perhaps even both. Berlin references Emig's work as an example of research on writing that "attempted an empirical investigation of the way students compose, calling on the developmental psychology of Jean Piaget in guiding her observations" (683). However, Berlin does not mention any of the reasons why Emig used writers' self-reports to conduct her research on writing processes. In addition, Berlin incorrectly identifies the number of participants in Emig's study. According to Berlin, "In studying the cognitive skills observed in the composing behavior of twelve high school students, Emig was convinced that she could arrive at an understanding of the entire rhetorical context" (683). It is easy to forgive Berlin (and the editors of *College English*, too) for his mistake on identifying the actual number of participants in Emig's study, but Emig is forthright in her belief that, "this report does not claim to be a definitive, exhaustive, nor psychometrically-sophisticated account of how all twelfth graders compose" (4). In the twenty-first century, it is difficult to find anyone who believes, "the structures of the

mind correspond in perfect harmony with the structures of the material world, the minds of the audience, and the units of language" (Berlin 683).

In the same way Berlin pigeon-holes Emig's research on writing as pseudo-scientific, Berlin defines cognitive rhetoric as "a set of structures that performs in a rational manner, adjusting and reordering functions in the service of *the goals of the individual*" (685, emphasis added). Indeed, any argument (or method) which purports to be scientific will necessarily ascribe to a positivistic epistemology. Erroneously, Berlin contradicts himself by stating, "the business of cognitive psychology is to enable us to learn to think in a way that will realize goals, not deliberate their value" (685). But Berlin is adamant that "any examination of a rhetoric must first consider the ways its very discursive structure can be read so as to favor one version of economic, social, and political arrangements over other versions" (679). In "Considering Values: The Poetic Function of Language," Art Young, who paraphrases Britton et al., states that, "The poetic function of written language becomes important when individuals attempt to relate new knowledge to their [individual] value systems" (78).[30] And here we see Berlin fall into his own ideological (rhetorical?) trap.

Berlin bases his critique of cognitive rhetoric on the grounds that Flower and Hayes claim scientific objectivity and thus avoid the ideological question. However, it is quite plausible the "discursive structure" Berlin refers to is inextricably linked to individual conceptions of value. After all, Berlin concedes that cognitive rhetoric "adjusts" and "reorders" cognitive functions according to "the goals of the individual"

[30] In *Personal Knowledge*, Polanyi argues that all acts of knowledge require personal subjectivity. See also Berthoff's *Forming, Thinking, and Writing* and Elbow's *Writing with Power*.

(685). Flower and Hayes do not claim, nor do they insinuate in their study, that their approach is the only way to characterize—or even research—conceptions of writing processes. According to Flower and Hayes, "the way in which people choose to define a rhetorical problem to themselves can vary greatly from writer to writer" (257). No less are the ways researchers might "choose to define a rhetorical problem to themselves" (257). David Bartholomae reminds us that students must "invent" the university "by assembling and mimicking its language while finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, on the one hand, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline, on the other" (590). But in "The Rhetorical Situation," Lloyd Bitzer argues, "situations are not always accompanied by discourse" (2). For Bitzer, "it is the situation which calls the discourse into existence" (2). Although Flower and Hayes reference Bitzer's work on defining rhetorical situations, Flower and Hayes are not entirely correct when they say, "Bitzer argues that speech always occurs as a response to a rhetorical situation" (251).

As cognitivists, Flower and Hayes were interested in the cognitive operations of the brain during the composing process. Interestingly, Flower and Hayes decided to collect writers' self-reports, which creative writing teachers have long held as valuable in determining how to teach creative writing. However, "researchers went further than self-reports by devising methodologies" which "enabled writers to comment on their decision making as they wrote" (Bizzaro, "Writer's Self-Reports" 122-3). A cognitive approach to research on writing was (and still remains) an attractive approach to many scholars in English studies, but at the same time these approaches suggested "the viability of a

composition studies approach to developing creative writing courses" (Bizzaro, "Writer's Self-Reports" 123).

Historically, cognitive approaches to research on writing have relied upon protocol analysis as the best method to analyze writers' self-reports for the "inner process of [a] person producing [a text]" (Flower and Hayes 253). But as Bizzaro points out, "creative writers tend to be skeptical about research that intrudes into their writing practices" ("Writer's Self-Reports" 123). This reason alone is enough to account for the lack of formal research on creative writing, particularly poetry writing. Still, for research on the creative strategies experienced writers say they use to produce the creative texts they write, it is not necessary to capture and/or analyze writers' inner, cognitive processes. On the contrary, it becomes necessary for a researcher to test the poetry writing strategies experienced writers say they use in order to see if the strategies would be useful for implementation in a poetry writing classroom. In fact, Patricia Bizzell recommends that research on writing "should focus upon *practice* within interpretive communities" (387, emphasis added). Precisely, by examining the writing strategies expert-practitioners say they use to write poetry, we may shed insight on some of the ways that poetry writing "conventions work in the world and how they are transmitted" (Bizzell 387).

Ultimately, Berlin criticizes Emig and Flower and Hayes for reducing "the rationalization of the writing process" to "an extension of the rationalization of economic activity" ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 686). In "A Portrait of the Student as a Young Writer," Stephen Schreiner writes, "Emig's influential notions about authorship limited composition scholarship and pedagogy because such notions apply well only to a limited

number of students" (103). Nevertheless, "At the root of Emig's study is an author whose composing process has less to do with students' composing practices than with a notion of literary authorship based on a modernist aesthetic prevalent in an academy shaped by new critical methods" (Schreiner 88). Thus, "[Emig's] conviction that the processes of established writers—principally poets—reveal how good writing works in general underlies her observations of the composing processes of twelfth graders" (88). Importantly, composition studies originated with research on writers' self-reports. In a different turn, Berlin criticizes Flower's *Problem Solving Strategies for Writing* for its lack of attention to "artists," and he chastises Flower for "focusing instead on 'real-world' writing" ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 684). But as Bizzaro points out, none of the cognitivists "actually studied writing as it was done by creative writers. Instead, findings of writers in the act of writing expository prose were applied to the situation of creative writers writing creatively" ("Writer's Self-Reports" 124). Sadly, Berlin does not commend Emig or Flower and Hayes for any of the contributions they made to research on writers' self-reports, but it is unlikely Berlin thought these were particularly important contributions for the field of English studies, either.

Berlin's critique of cognitivist rhetoric had staying power, and this had a significant impact upon some of the ways that research on writers' self-reports has been understood and conducted in English studies, both now and in the past. Fortunately, Stuart Greene and Lorraine Higgins frame their perspective on writing research in the following way:

> A decade ago, researchers (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1981) were using protocols to describe whether and how novice performance differed from that of experts. Today researchers are building on [cognitive research] by asking why such differences exist, why writers recognize and attend to some strategies but not others [ . . . ]. (117)

Astutely, Greene and Higgins ask why some writers "attend to some *strategies* but not others" (117, emphasis added). In their discussion on applications of retrospective reporting to writing research methodology, it is rather telling that Greene and Higgins use the word "strategies" as opposed to "writing processes." This is an important insight, and it is one that lends credence to the idea that *writing strategies* are radically different from *writing processes*. Indeed, the *strategies* that writers use to generate writing of any sort (e.g., poetic or expository) should not be conflated with the *cognitive processes* writers use when they produce said writing. Thus, in order to examine the *strategies* that experienced poets say they use to produce the poetry they write, we must analyze experienced writers' self-reports for the poetry writing strategies expert-practitioners say they use to produce *creative* writing.

### 2.3.2 Bishop's Merger with Composition Studies

In "Writer's Self-Reports, (Com)positioning, and the Recent History of Academic Creative Writing," Bizzaro argues that Bishop's "discipline-defining book, *Released Into Language*, provides a point of departure for understanding the way creative writing has evolved as a discipline in English studies" (119). According to Bizzaro, "when cognitivist approaches to research in composition fell into disfavor among those contemplating a poststructuralist pedagogy for first-year writing, Bishop's theorizing in *Released into*

*Language*, because it too was rooted in cognitivist methodology, fell as well" (122). What exactly happened as a result of Bishop's theorizing in *Released*? How did Bishop's work in *Released* impact research on writers' self-reports? Certainly, a look at Bishop's *Released* is not only "essential to the work of any English studies historian," but it will also help us see "how creative writing grew into disciplinary stature in English studies over the past 15 years" (Bizzaro, "Writer's Self-Reports" 120).

Given the fact that creative writing has evolved into a distinct discipline under the English studies umbrella, it makes sense that there are important reasons which led to this development. According to Bizzaro, "Bishop examined what we knew of creative writing pedagogy in the late 1980s in light of what we knew of composition theory then and offered a rationale for doing so" ("Writer's Self-Reports" 121). By drawing upon the similarities between teaching composition and teaching creative writing, "Bishop intentionally '(com)positioned' creative writing and, for better or worse, influenced the way CCCC has thought of creative writing ever since" (Bizzaro, "Writer's Self-Reports" 121). Unfortunately, the "rapid ascension" of composition studies in American universities has contributed to a "hypercorrection" which Bizzaro refers to as the "(com)positioning" of creative writing ("Writer-Teacher" 412). As an unintended consequence of Bishop's attempt to align creative writing with composition studies, Bishop inadvertently contributed to the dismissal of formal research on writers' self-reports in composition studies.

Certainly, Bishop's well-intentioned effort "resulted in unprecedented dialog between those who view writing as a teachable subject and those who believe creative writing, in particular, is something people either can or cannot do" (Bizzaro, "Writer's

Self-Reports" 121). Unfortunately, Bishop's attempt to align creative writing with composition studies had an unforeseen consequence, namely, Bishop's work on bringing the two fields together cemented a split between two different groups of creative writing teachers. According to Bizzaro, the split that Bishop's work solidified is represented by creative writing's evolution "in its two most supportive organizations—Conference on College Composition (CCCC) and Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP)—into one subject but with two different emphases" (119). Unfortunately, "several important figures in composition studies" (including Bishop herself), have "conflated what James Britton called 'the poetic function of language' with poetry itself" (Bizzaro, "Writer-Teacher" 416). In turn, the conflation of poetry with "the poetic function of language" had a negative impact on some of the ways that writers' self-reports are theorized, researched, and understood in the academic setting.[31]

Collectively, the conflation of poetry with "the poetic function of language" had a detrimental impact upon the emerging status of creative writing studies within the academy. In addition, the "(com)positioning" of creative writing by important scholars in composition studies had a deleterious impact on the ways that writers' self-reports are used to conduct formal research on writing in English studies. Although writers' self-reports are currently used as an important way for writers to reflect on their writing processes, the meta-cognitive writing generated from these self-reports are rarely (if ever) shared with other writers. This is unfortunate, largely because aspiring writers miss an important opportunity to see what other writers say they do whenever they sit down to

[31] For an important discussion regarding the impact of literary theory on teaching poetry writing in the academy, see Donald Hall's "Poetry and Ambition."

write. Certainly, "to *not* pay attention to writers' self-reports is to deny the contributions of many of our most important writers" (Bizzaro, "Writer's Self-Reports" 131-2).

Berlin's critique of cognitivist rhetoric, coupled with Bishop's well-intentioned (but ill-fated) attempt to merge creative writing with composition studies, have both contributed to a negative impact on researching experienced writers' self-reports. This is unfortunate because, after years of cognitive research on writing processes, there is much we still do not understand about writing (in general) and poetry writing (in particular). In "Radical to Many in the Educational Establishment," Robert Yagelski concedes, "After three decades of the process movement and what I consider to be the related emergence of critical pedagogy within composition studies, writing, as defined in schools and sanctioned by tests like the SAT, is as narrow and circumscribed as ever" (532). After decades of cognitive research on writing processes, the act of writing is still commonly understood as an "organized, formulaic, rule-governed, and relatively straightforward, if not always easy" process (Yagelski 532). Although "well-intentioned writing teachers have long debated composition's function in relation to the larger sociopolitical arena," teachers "continue to struggle with the question of purpose" in teaching writing (Yagelski 533). For Yagelski, a new investigation on writing "may have more urgency now than at any time in recent memory" (533).

In the Introduction to Sharon Crowley's *A Teacher's Introduction to Deconstruction*, W. Ross Winterowd writes, "Every English teacher acts on the basis of theory" (ix). As Winterowd points out, "the English class is guided by theories of language, literature, and pedagogy. That is, insofar as teachers choose readings and plan instruction, they are *implementing* a theory" (ix). Now this is a reassuring thought.

Teachers should build curriculum based upon theories that guide their instruction. This is especially important because the goals that teachers define for the students in their classrooms will help determine the method(s) they use to achieve them. According to Winterowd, almost all of the theories which guide writing instruction can be placed into three general categories:

> It is defensible (though hardly neat and incisive) to say that composition theories and practices can be classed as text-centered, author-centered, or transactional. The images are clear: that of pages in an open book; that of a lone writer producing text; and that of a writer on one side, a text in the middle, and a reader on the other side. (xi)

This particular conversation in the Burkean parlor is generated and reified by unresolved debates within the field of English studies. Central to Winterowd's classification of composition theories and practices are epistemological assumptions surrounding the subject-identity position(s) of writers engaged in the act of composition. For Bizzaro, "the decision to employ literary-critical methodology in evaluating student writing, poetry or otherwise, is a commitment to make changes in the classroom" (*Responding* 7). Certainly, "Any solution we offer to these problems will alter not only the tools of evaluation, but methods of pedagogy as well" (Bizzaro 7). Indeed, "pedagogical concerns in the teaching and reading of writing increasingly seem to be driven by how we locate meaning in a text" (Bizzaro 7). Simply put, what we teach filters down—and permeates through—how we teach it.

In *Fragments of Rationality: Postmodernity and the Subject of Composition*, Lester Faigley observes, "many of the conflicts within [English studies] concern larger

cultural conflicts over the question of the subject" (225). Judith Cofer, a contemporary poet, author, and creative writing instructor, echoes Faigley's sentiment when she writes, "the process of creation begins with the identification of the Subject" (12). In an essay written by Jeffrey Gray titled, "In the Name of the Subject: Some Recent Versions of the Personal," Gray sees "the Return of the Subject" not as "a matter of excluding the personal from writing [ . . . ] but of the ends to which the 'personal' is put – that is, of the claims to be made in the name of the Subject" (53). Unfortunately, there is a great deal of ambiguity in English studies over what that Subject (e.g., creative writing) is, and how It should be taught. For Faigley, the ambiguity surrounding the teaching of writing is a symptom of the postmodern age: "The diversity of American culture, the speed of cultural change, and the multiplicity of the mass media demand that we find new ways of studying the possibilities of rhetoric" (71). One way Faigley's goal might be achieved is by conducting research on poetry writing using a renewed approach to research on writers' self-reports in creative writing studies.

As Faigley rightfully observes, the "question of the subject" has already been "foregrounded within composition studies" (225). Nonetheless, Faigley's concern over "a conflation of the author as a rational subject and the autonomous individual" (225-6) suggests we need to revisit the "question of the subject" in order to see how we may extend responses to the following questions: Does reading creative writing help a student produce creative writing? Are students born with a natural propensity for creative writing? What about the nature of the creative writing assignments teachers ask their students to perform, and how can these assignments be sequenced in a way that will help students produce the best kind of creative writing they possibly can? All of these

questions are debates central to defining the field of creative writing studies, particularly the assumptions behind what it is, the writer's role in the process, and what it means to teach—or even perform—the inventive act of creative writing. However, by conducting research on experienced writers' self-reports in creative writing studies, we shall be in a better position to examine some of the ways experienced poets produce the poetry they write. In doing so, we shall also see what we might apply to the teaching of poetry writing in the twenty-first century.

**2.4 Research on Poetry Writing in Creative Writing Studies**

To date, there has been very little research on poetry writing in creative writing studies. According to Donnelly:

> [ . . . ] the lack of empirical data and investigative studies into creative writing's teaching praxes leaves much of what goes on in the creative writing classroom unexamined, untheorized. Consequently, creative writing continues to operate from a base of assumptions that is situated more on practice than on research. However, if creative writing practitioners can agree on the principle that *what* they teach in their creative writing classes filters down to *how* they teach their creative writing students, then it is possible to break this hypothesis down further to conclude that methods of pedagogy are driven by a teacher's perception of *where meaning lies* in the context of the writing process. (*Establishing Creative Writing* 19)

Perhaps Donnelly's observation answers why Graeme Harper states, "we have spoken about creative writing in one way while knowing, intuitively, humanly, accurately, that it

was another" (xv). For Harper, creative writing instructors intuitively know something is amiss in the teaching of creative writing. What exactly is wrong with the ways creative writing is being taught? Is there a problem in the ways we teach creative writing, perform creative writing, or both? Harper's indictment may also be attributed to the fact that formal research on writers' self-reports is virtually non-existent in the field of creative writing studies.

In "Research and Reflection in English Studies: The Special Case of Creative Writing," Bizzaro recognizes that some scholars "have attempted to establish [creative writing's] unique status in English studies" (300). Unfortunately, "these studies have not asserted the epistemological differences between creative writing and other disciplines in most English departments" (300). For Donnelly, this means that "creative writing continues to operate from a base of assumptions that is situated more on practice than on research" (*Establishing Creative Writing* 19). However, by testing experienced writers' self-reports in creative writing studies, we may begin to fill a noticeable void in the body of scholarship on writing research in creative writing studies. After all, until further research is conducted that attempts to capture the elusive act of invention in creative writing, particularly poetry writing, the field of creative writing studies will not come any closer to understanding some of the ways poetry writing is produced, and therefore, how poetry writing might "best" be taught. As post-process theorists in composition have demonstrated, the places authors write from may determine—and may be just as important as—the processes writers use to produce the texts they write. But before we can begin an examination on some of the ways that experienced poets produce the poetry

they write, it will be helpful if we take a look at some of the methods researchers have used to conduct research on poetry writing in creative writing studies.

Clearly, there are acute differences between the methods that creative writing studies and composition studies use to conduct research on writing. In "The Writer-Teacher in the United States: The Place of Teachers in the Community of Writers," Bizzaro points out that a "'methods of literary research' course which is most often taught by professors of literature [will] emphasize skills quite different from the research skills creative writers are most apt to employ" (412). For research in literature and literary criticism, "Rarely do we study literary periods without reading poetic and aesthetic documents written by authors to explain what they have set out to do" (Bizzaro, "Workshop" 41). Indeed, these aesthetic documents "represent self-reports that the teaching of writing, especially of creative writing, is based upon" (Bizzaro 41). Thus, "the fact that [writers' self-reports] continue to help us in creative writing suggests that creative writing is taught from a different epistemology altogether than are courses in literature or composition" ("Workshop" 41). Certainly, "The epistemology that gives rise to creative writing is based upon the primacy of the teacher's experiences as a writer or, at the very least, the primacy of other writers' experiences as writers" ("Workshop" 47). Given the assumption that poetry writing is epistemologically different than other forms of writing, where does research on poetry writing fit within the research paradigm? What are the methods that researchers use to conduct research on poetry writing in creative writing studies?

Despite a dearth of empirical research on poetry writing, there have been some noteworthy exceptions. In *Poetry as Research*, David Hanauer situates poetry writing as

"both a research question to be investigated and a research methodology that can be used to explore subsequent questions within the realm of social research" (4). Hanauer thus "develops an approach that uses poetry writing within a broader framework of qualitative research" which "aims to explore whether poetry writing can be used as a research method for the explorations of questions relating to second language learners" (3). For Hanauer, "A different direction has been enacted against the backdrop of a series of developments within qualitative health and social work research" (5).[32] Hanauer's research on poetry written by second language learners is particularly informative, not only with regard to the discoveries he makes in his research on second language writing, but especially when we consider how Hanauer offers a new direction for the use of poetry writing in quantitative and qualitative research designs.

In Dianne Donnelly's essay, "If it Ain't Broke, Don't Fix it," Donnelly outlines a survey she conducted of 174 creative writing programs in the United States, and she finds, "creative writing programs still rely on the tradition of the workshop" to accomplish their goals (3). In *Negotiating the Personal in Creative Writing,* Carl Vandermeulen confirms Donnelly's claim. In order to see how creative writing teachers were negotiating personal relationships in the creative writing classes they were teaching, Vandermeulen conducted a survey on teaching creative writing and received responses from 150 creative writing instructors in the Midwestern United States (xvii). Some of the instructors who responded to Vandermeulen submitted their syllabi to him. Thirty-five of those who responded to Vandermeulen's survey agreed to personal interviews, but only

[32] In *Poetry and the Meaning of Life*, Hanauer argues that poetry writing should be part of English literacy programs because poetry writing is a meaning-making tool that can enhance our understanding of the world we live in.

nine of the teachers who agreed to an interview actually invited Vandermeulen to observe their classes (xvii). Three-fourths of all teachers who responded to Vandermeulen said they place "much emphasis" on workshopping and critiquing student drafts (23).

According to Bizzaro, "Teachers have always been concerned about how to respond to [ . . . ] personal writing" (*Responding* 56). Bizzaro's meta-cognitive analysis on responding to student poetry sheds abundant light on the issue of how to respond to highly personal student writing. According to Bizzaro, "Text-based commentary, of course, tends to diminish the student's experience, as the tools employed in such a reading insist that meaning is expression and technique" (83-4). Using alternative reading techniques as the critical lens to read and respond to student poetry writing, Bizzaro found that student writers retained their voice, authorship, and ownership on the things they wrote, particularly when they set out to revise their work. Of particular interest for this study, Bizzaro made these discoveries when he analyzed his reactions to reading student poetry writing. By using a tape-recorder to record and play-back his own reactions to student writing, Bizzaro was able to analyze, modify, and thereby improve some of the ways he taught creative writing. In a similar vein, by researching and applying what experienced poets' say they do in their self-reports on how to write poetry, we may also be able to improve some of the ways poetry writing is currently being taught in the university setting.

In *Can It Really Be Taught?*, Kelly Ritter and Stephanie Vanderslice recognize that "the prominent scholarship in creative writing has focused on either practical lesson plans for 'how to' teach creative writing or has simply catalogued the history of creative writing as a discipline" (xiii). Indeed, D. G. Myers' *The Elephants Teach* offers an

important history on creative writing instruction in the United States. Wendy Bishop and Hans Ostrom's *Colors of A Different Horse* and Joseph Moxley's *Creative Writing in America* include essays written by experienced teachers of creative writing which explore the historical, theoretical, and pedagogical facets of teaching creative writing in America. Wendy Bishop's *Released Into Language* proposes a transactional workshop model for teaching creative writing. In her important text, Bishop discusses a number of activities for teaching creative writing at the collegiate level. Similarly, Hans Ostrom, Wendy Bishop, and Katherine Haake's *Metro: Journeys in Writing Creatively*, offer writing prompts for writers to get started on their own creative writing. Tim Mayers' *(Re)Writing Craft* is a fine example of theoretical research in creative writing. In his important text, Mayers adopts a position initially proposed by Bishop in *Released*, and he argues creative writing must align with composition studies if it is to survive as a distinct discipline in the collegiate setting.

In *Creative Writing Studies: Practice, Research, and Pedagogy*, Graeme Harper and Jeri Kroll offer a collection of essays which demonstrate the kind of research on creative writing typically conducted in creative writing studies. For example, in a contribution by Nessa O'Mahony titled, "That was the Answer: Now What was the Question?", O'Mahony outlines the research she conducted on women's lives in nineteenth century Ireland. Once O'Mahony discovered Margaret Butler's archive, "a collection of 22 letters and assorted fragments of notes and letters that were written principally by Margaret Butler" (41), O'Mahony wrote a verse novel based on the discoveries she made while reading Butler's archive. Although some critics might object and argue O'Mahony's work does not constitute "empirical" research, O'Mahony's work

is particularly important because her verse novel represents the type of research and data analysis that is generally produced from creative (e.g., literary or artistic) research methods.

According to Kroll and Harper, "advocates of action research, educational research, and arts-based research in education and the social sciences have championed new methodologies that can uncover knowledge inaccessible to quantitative methods alone" (Introduction 2). For Kroll and Harper, research in creative writing "is distinct in being primarily focused on the production of new works, and in the understanding of the processes as well as the ideas and actions that inform a project" (2). For this reason, "methods of creative writing research sometimes draw directly, and quite naturally, on notions surrounding written expression or text" (Kroll and Harper 3). Kroll and Harper thus define creative writing as "an art using words and producing artefacts made up primarily of words" (3). By analyzing expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry, and by situating a researcher within a poetry writing research design, it is possible to develop a research methodology that allows us to explore "creative writing as *a process as well as a product*" (Kroll and Harper 6, emphasis added).[33]

In "Modeling the Creative Writing Process," Marguerite MacRobert sees creative writing as a cognitive process, and she recognizes that "getting into someone's skull is not easy" (57). MacRobert begins her article with a brief review of Flower and Hayes's research on writing, and she points out, "this research was conducted in an artificial laboratory environment, and was not aimed specifically at creative writing" (56). According to MacRobert, research methods which rely on think-aloud protocols as a

[33] Banks and Banks write fictional narratives based upon discoveries made by scientists in social science research.

method of data analysis have "the opposite problem to interviews and biographies, as it tends to lean towards 'context stripping' and as such it was challenged by Berkenkotter" (59). In order to investigate "the process of creating textual worlds in a particular context" (57), MacRobert interviewed four successful, published authors in Africa about their professional, fiction-writing practices.

Researchers in creative writing studies have used a variety of approaches to conduct research on creative writing. As noted previously, some (but very little) of the research in creative writing has been positivistic, and therefore empirical.[34] Alternatively, researchers in creative writing studies generally rely on context-driven research methods, such as interviews, content analysis, and, more recently, textual production.[35] Importantly, how we conduct research on writing (e.g., how a researcher approaches research on creative writing) will have an important bearing on what a researcher collects and represents as data. By merging the production of poetic texts with the context of a writer's rhetorical situation, we may capture a fuller, more accurate representation on some of the strategies experienced poets say they use to produce the poetry they write.

As many scholars in English Studies have rightfully noted, no one has been more intimately involved with the connections between writing, teaching writing, and creative writing than Wendy Bishop. In "Writing Is/And Therapy?: Raising Questions About Writing Classrooms and Writing Program Administration," Bishop writes:

> I've often wished that I had been given more encouragement for investigating the personal, therapeutic, and affective aspects of our field.

[34] For examples of empirical research on creative writing, see Donnelly, 2010; Hanauer, 2010; and Vandermeulen, 2011.
[35] For examples of context-driven research on creative writing, see Bizzaro, 1993; MacRobert, 2013; O'Mahoney, 2008; and Wirtz, 2010, 2011.

> Daily, I find I need to know more about the least talked about and least researched areas of writing – how writing includes and celebrates the personal and how authoring, writing instruction, and program administration are thoroughly connected to our personalities. (143)

As a pioneer in exploring the connections between composition and creative writing, Bishop was particularly concerned with the polarizing roles that writing-teachers perform. In "Places to Stand: The Reflective Writer-Teacher-Writer in Composition," Bishop argues that teaching and writing are personal activities, and they are ones that can be characterized by "a need to explore the spaces between [a writer who teaches] and [a teacher who writes]" (14). In "Writer-Teacher," Bizzaro follows Bishop's lead, and he makes a compelling distinction between self-identification and self-representation. According to Bizzaro, "teachers experience solutions to the problems students confront as writers, reflect upon those experiences, and then share their insights with the larger community" (413). Bishop and Bizzaro believe we can learn a lot about writing by studying what experienced writers say they do when they sit down to write. Importantly, the kind of meta-cognitive reflections on writing Bishop calls for will necessarily impact (and hopefully improve) some of the ways instructors teach writing.

Despite a recognized need for more research on writing in English studies, particularly on poetry writing, Bishop senses "a profession-wide uneasiness regarding the connection of self to writing, and from this uneasiness springs a substitution of attention" ("Writing Is/And Therapy?" 145). Truly, "If all writing is autobiography, a life in writing must of necessity consider writing as a process of self-discovery and the writing

classroom as a site of such exploration" (Bishop 146).[36] By conducting research on experienced poets' self-reports in creative writing studies, we might improve some of the ways that instructors navigate the creative writing classroom "as a site of such exploration."

In Bizzaro's essay, "Writers Wanted: A Reconsideration of Wendy Bishop," Bizzaro claims that one of Bishop's most important contributions to English studies "was to argue for the interconnectedness of creative writing and composition studies. By doing so, Bishop insisted on the importance of studying what writers do when they write" (258). Over time, Bishop "became an advocate of ethnographic inquiry, a research method designed to give voice to writing practitioners" (258). According to Bizzaro, Bishop became an advocate of ethnographic inquiry because she believed that "the teaching of writing should reflect what writers actually do and that our research methods should permit us to collect that information by studying writers at work" (258). In *Ethnographic Writing Research*, Bishop writes that "the human mind of the [researcher] should be 'fed' data in the way that best suits it" (117-18). Unfortunately, "attacks on cognitive research, especially on the work of Linda Flower and John Hayes, were indirectly attacks on Bishop, who used that information in designing her pedagogy of writing instruction" (Bizzaro, "Writers Wanted" 263). For Bizzaro:

> [ . . . ] the point of contact between Flower and Hayes as researchers and Bishop as theorist was epistemological, all of them believing that writing instruction would improve if teachers taught inexperienced writers what experienced writers do when they write. But there were consequences for

[36] In an essay by Donald Murray, Murray argues that all writing is autobiographical.

> this change in thinking; the shift in the dominant epistemology further distanced first-year writing from creative writing and both from courses in literary study, professional writing, and even writing intensive courses in Writing across the Curriculum programs. ("Writers Wanted" 263)

According to Bizzaro, "this downfall occurred during the rise of a writer-based methodology – ethnography, an approach that proposes to study the activities of a convened culture" (263). Unfortunately, this predominant "change in thinking" had a negative impact on some of the ways scholars and researchers understand and conduct research on writers' self-reports in English Studies. Nevertheless, we need more research on writing and writing practices, particularly in creative writing studies. Importantly, Bizzaro recognizes that "reconsideration of Bishop's view of the profession may very well serve as a call for the development of new research methods in English studies, methods that find a way to study the writer at work" (266). Testing the self-reports from experienced poets in creative writing studies offers one important way we can study the things experienced writers say they do. By actually testing the strategies experienced poets say they use to produce the poetry they write, we can further illuminate the role of invention in poetry writing practices.

In an essay written by Jason Wirtz titled, "Taking a Cue from Wendy: A Qualitative Interview Analysis of Poets on Invention," Wirtz draws upon Bizzaro's scholarship and argues, "the development and application of new research methods in English Studies has the potential to further develop pedagogies of writing" (177). For Wirtz, "This is the place – the location within writing studies – that has been foundational

for my own research" (177).[37] Responding to a need for more research on poetry writing in creative writing, Wirtz conducted open-ended interviews with two practicing and professional poets. After collecting and transcribing interview data, Wirtz analyzed "pages of interview transcripts for categories that helped make sense of the information I had acquired" ("Taking a Cue from Wendy" 178). After analyzing the data he collected, Wirtz organized his findings into categories on some of the ways that successful poets and practitioners report on their writing and invention processes. Ultimately, Wirtz found:

> [ . . . ] the connection between a writer's reasons for writing and invention is that one's reasons for writing serve as the impetus behind facing the blank page again and again. Without strong reasons for writing – what writing gives back to the writer – there is no reason to begin writing, no reason to continue writing, no reason to continually invent. (184)

By capturing, analyzing, and describing what it is that other writers get back from their writing, Wirtz argues that "reasons for writing are directly connected to how they invent through writing" (184).[38] This is an important discovery, and it is one which can inform the reasons why—and the methods how we might research—the strategies that experienced poets say they use to produce the poetry that they write.

In *Negotiating the Personal in Creative Writing*, Carl Vandermeulen begins his book with a concern that, "the becoming of persons characterizes composition more than

[37] See also Wirtz, "Poets on Pedagogy." In order to see what aspects of pedagogy could be transferred to the creative writing classroom, Wirtz conducted interviews with five experienced poets on their creative writing practices.
[38] For a poetic description on a poet's advice on creative writing, see Bukowski's "So You Want To Be A Writer?"

creative writing" (x). Here we see a stark contrast between teaching creative writing and teaching composition writing. Shouldn't the teaching of creative writing be just as concerned with "the becoming of persons" as composition writing? How does attention to this concern shape approaches on teaching creative writing? Without sounding too esoteric, how can teachers access the creative regions students write from? Toward the beginning of the twentieth century, progressive educators (such as John Dewey) were interested in the ways creativity was being utilized in education classrooms. According to Bizzaro, many of these progressive educators believed "the goal of education was to use creative outlets—specifically writing [ . . . ] as a way of helping students develop in directions the teacher deems appropriate" ("Concept of Control" 272). Emig, Flower, and Hayes believed writing processes could be researched by using think-aloud protocols to analyze their observations on studying writers as they composed. Britton believed a system of categories could be developed by analyzing writing samples written by student writers over a long period of time. But since the publication of Berlin's "Rhetoric and Ideology," research on writing in English studies has taken a different turn. By chronicling the strategies experienced poets say they use when they sit down to write poetry, we can gain a more accurate representation of the strategies that experienced poets say they use to produce the poetry they write.

In *(Re)Writing Craft*, Tim Mayers references the work of Emig and writes, "Given the fact that literary study was well established by 1964 as the conceptual center of English studies, it makes sense that a pioneering theorist like Emig might turn to 'literary' writers to help develop a theory of composition" (102). Not only would it have made sense for Emig to turn to literary writers to inform her theory of composition then,

but it makes perfect sense for someone to do it again now, especially while creative writing studies is being shaped as a new discipline in the field of English. Until teachers and scholars are cognizant of the reasons why each of the disciplines exist independently of the others, those in the field of creative writing are in serious jeopardy of remaining under the dominate influences of composition. This isn't because English departments have asked some of the "elephants" to teach creative writing, but it is because research on writing processes in composition studies has left one in the middle of the room.

Before we can attempt to improve some of the ways poetry writing is being taught in the academy, we must know what it means to be actively engaged in poetry writing. Once we have a firm understanding on the strategies experienced poets use whenever they sit down to write poetry, only then shall we be ready to examine the intimate correlation between the writer as subject, the text(s) that a writer produces as the writer is writing, and the implications this research may have for teachers who are teaching—and the students who are taking—*any* course in the university setting which might require creative writing from its students.

Research on experienced writers' self-reports in creative writing studies offers one important way we can demystify much of the lore that surrounds the production and teaching of poetry writing in the academic setting. Until a study is conducted that tests what experienced poets say they do when they sit down to write poetry, many of the controversial assumptions surrounding the teaching and production of poetry writing will remain unresolved, particularly as the research pertains to the burgeoning field of creative writing studies. In addition, research on poetry writing practices will simultaneously illuminate the least known areas on this subject: namely, the deep and personal recesses

authors write from. Ultimately, and in alignment with conclusions drawn from arguments made by Bishop, Bizzaro, and Wirtz, I argue for, propose, and follow a new methodology for conducting research on how to write poetry in creative writing studies.

## 2.5 Concluding Remarks

In spite of Berlin's critique of cognitivist rhetoric, and in spite of the unforeseen consequences which derived (in part) from Bishop's unsuccessful yet well-intentioned attempt to align creative writing with composition studies, research on experienced writers' self-reports remains a viable way we can further illuminate the role of invention in creative writing, particularly as the research pertains to the poetry writing *strategies* experienced poets say they use to produce the poetry they write. A new approach to research on writing has important implications for English studies, particularly for the nascent field of creative writing studies.

When composition studies emerged as a field, it began by conducting research on writing processes. However, "Studies in composition have shifted during the past 20 years, from analyzing written texts to understanding how texts are constructed" (Greene and Higgins 117). Ever since the mid-1980s, researchers on writing in composition studies have shifted their focus away from research on writers' self-reports. Although cognitive approaches to research on writers' self-reports may be able to tell us what writers think about as they write, research methods that use protocol analysis as a method of data analysis are unable to explain the reasons *why* authors make the choices that they do. In other words, it is necessary to develop a new approach to research on writers' self-reports, one that researches writers' self-reports using an approach suited for conducting research on the practices creative writers' say they actually use. By incorporating the

methods that experienced poets say they use to conduct research on poetry writing, we will come closer to understanding some of the ways poetry writing is actually produced.

Despite an urgent plea expressed by many scholars to conduct more research on writing, research on experienced writers' self-reports is virtually non-existent in the landscape of English studies today. However, by combining a novice poet's reflections on how to write poetry with the self-reports of three expert-practitioners on poetry writing, it is possible to capture a fuller, more accurate representation on the creative writing strategies experienced poets say they use when they write poetry. Given the recursive and dialogical nature of poetry writing, I argue that research on experienced poets' self-reports on how to write poetry is particularly suited for conducting research on invention and writing in creative writing studies.

Although the research conducted thus far by scholars in creative writing studies can inform the teaching of creative writing in important ways, it is time to lay the foundation for a new approach to research on poetry writing in creative writing studies. Indeed, it is my contention that we need more research on poetry writing in creative writing studies, and this must be done before we can adequately describe the things that might happen to writers whenever they sit down to write poetry. By using a researcher-as-participant research design, it is possible to examine, first-hand, what a writer might "get back" from his or her writing. Therefore, this performance-based study intends to explore a more subjective understanding of poetry writing, and it achieves this goal by providing a complete and accurate representation of poetry writing as it is performed across a wide array of rhetorical situations by the researching-writer himself.

Clearly, researcher-as-participant-based research is not immune to criticisms based upon the claim that the data collected and produced stems from the researcher's own history and cultural *habitus*.[39] Nevertheless, this does not mean performance-based research methods cannot provide valuable insights on writing, particularly as the research pertains to invention in poetry writing. After all, who is best suited to report on invention other than the researcher/writer as the researcher/writer invents while writing? This is one of the positive benefits we can take away, not only from Flower and Hayes's research on writing, but also from Bizzaro's approach on responding to student poetry as outlined in *Responding to Student Poems.* Research on experienced poets' self-reports has the potential to "crack-open" the elusive and recursive act of invention in poetry writing, and it may prove to be vital for future research on poetry writing in creative writing studies. Once we have a firm understanding of the strategies that experienced writers say they follow whenever they sit down to write poetry, only then shall we be ready to consider the implications this research may have for teaching poetry writing in the twenty-first century.

[39] See Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

> [ . . . ] reconsideration of Bishop's view of the profession may very well serve as a call for the development of new research methods in English studies, methods that find a way to study the writer at work, in developing pedagogies of writing without giving rise to objections based on class, race, or gender.
>
> —Patrick Bizzaro, "Writers Wanted" 266

> [ . . . ] aesthetic inquiry is different from other qualitative approaches in that it does not describe another's experience but rather recreates it for the reader/observer. This reconstruction of experience is actually the practice-process-product. Therefore, the actual experience of the art work by the research recipient is the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation without the need for subsequent analysis or explanation.
>
> —David Hanauer, *Poetry as Research* 2

## 3.1 Introduction to the Methodology

In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Wayne Booth reminds us, "In life we never know anyone but ourselves by thoroughly reliable internal signs, and most of us achieve an all too partial view even of ourselves" (3). This study attempts to shed light on these signs, and it does so by conducting a participant-based study on experienced poets' self-reports in creative writing studies. By doing what expert-practitioners say they do when they sit down to write poems, we may test the strategies these experienced poets say they use to produce the poetry they write. In addition, by testing what expert-practitioners say they do when they write poetry, we may demystify some of the lore which characterizes the production and teaching of poetry writing in the academic setting. By exploring what experienced writers say they do when they write poetry, we may begin to develop new pedagogies which we might apply to the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting.

As discussed in Chapter Two, this study answers a call made by scholars in English studies to conduct more research on writing, particularly research on poetry writing. Indeed, "we are at the start of research in creative writing and must develop methods consistent with the values and emphases of [creative writing]" (Bizzaro, "Workshop" 36). In this chapter, I outline a method for conducting research on poetry writing which allows for an accurate representation of poetry writing, creative writing practices, and the methods that experienced writers say they use whenever they sit down to write poetry. Using a participant-based approach to write fifteen poems based on experienced writers' self-reports on how to write poetry, the researcher will: (1) read an experienced poet's self-report on writing poetry, (2) write a poem using a technique or strategy that expert-practitioners say they use to write poetry, and (3) argue in a reflective writer's journal whether or not the strategy used would be useful for teaching poetry writing.[40] In doing so, I hope to experience, first-hand, what we might apply to the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting. In Chapter Four I will present the results of this study, and in Chapter Five I will discuss the implications this research may have on teaching poetry writing in the academic setting.

Given the assumption that the teaching of poetry writing is epistemologically different from other forms of teaching writing, this study argues that research on poetry writing requires a suitable methodology adapted for research on creative writing in creative writing studies. In "Research and Reflection in English Studies," Bizzaro recognizes, "Academic independence for creative writing requires an assertion of its epistemological differences from other subjects in English studies" (296). Certainly, "if

[40] See Appendix A for a blank sample of the journal entry.

creative writing is an autonomous field of study, it will differ in some fundamental ways from literary and composition studies and reject some of what is taught in those classes, if not their methods of instruction themselves" (Bizzaro, "Workshop" 38). Assuming that creative writing is different from other kinds of writing, it follows that research on writing in creative writing studies requires research methodologies appropriate for research on poetry writing. In "The Writer-Teacher in the United States: The Place of Teachers in the Community of Writers," Bizzaro writes:

> Central to [these] epistemological differences [ . . . ] is what a creative writer construes as data or evidence. Those who advocate for the necessity that we assert creative writing's differences from other disciplines in English Studies have found it difficult to assert those differences because, in many graduate programs in English across America, creative writing remains absorbed not only by literary studies but now by composition studies as well. (412)

As I have demonstrated in Chapters One and Two, the way an institution understands a subject (e.g., teaching creative writing) will have an important bearing upon the ways a subject is theorized, researched, and understood. No less are the ways researchers might construct data as "evidence" in a research study. In "Workshop: An Ontological Study," Bizzaro writes, "literature and composition, like creative writing, are separate fields of inquiry which address their problems in very different environments and by use of very different data" (37). By using poetry writing as a way to test expert-practitioners' self-reports on poetry writing, we may further illuminate the role of invention in creative writing studies. Arguably, the best way to achieve this goal is by doing it oneself.

### 3.2 Researcher Positionality

In an essay by Frances Giampapa titled, "The Politics of 'Being and Becoming' a Researcher: Identity, Power, and Negotiating the Field," Giampapa explores some of the methodological turning points she experienced while conducting a critical ethnography in Canada. In her essay, Giampapa discusses "ways in which researcher identities are constructed through the social practices and discourses in which we are embedded" (132). Ultimately, Giampapa discovered that the way people positioned her within her research, in addition to the way she positioned herself, shaped not only her access to rich data sites, but also the ways she gathered and interpreted her data.

According to Giampapa, "Negotiating researcher identities across the diverse spaces of the field and the impact that this has on not only accessing field sites but also in terms of the data produced together with participants is key" (132-33). Noting that the research process "refocused [her] researcher gaze to the possibilities and challenges" she encountered, Giampapa was "able to co-construct an account of the multiple identities and experiences of the participants" (136). Art Young puts it differently when he writes, "All functions of language assist in shaping our beliefs, but poetic language especially helps us understand the now familiar dicta from physics and poetry that one cannot separate the observer from the observed, the dancer from the dance" (78). Using poetry writing as a research method, it is possible to study poetry writing as both a process and a product. Certainly, "Recognizing and casting a reflexive gaze on who we are as socially constructed beings not only focuses the lens on what we research but also on the ways in which we research" (Giampapa 133).

Giampapa's research underscores the idea that data does not grow on a positivistic bush, ripe and ready for the picking. On the contrary, Giampapa believes data is *produced with* her participants, not *collected from.* Similar to Giampapa, Jason Wirtz argues his "methodological stance views [his data] as co-constructions" ("Poets on Pedagogy" 63). For Wirtz, "the relationship between the researcher and the participant is symbiotic" rather than formally structured (63). In a qualitative research study on experienced poets' creative writing practices, Wirtz found that the flexibility of his research design allowed him to achieve "nuanced understanding rather than comprehensive explanation" ("Poets on Pedagogy" 63). Young, Giampapa, and Wirtz recognize they don't collect data from the world. Instead, they co-construct it. By adopting a symbiotic stance on the data "collected" in this study, we may simultaneously resist a transmission-based mode of banking knowledge, particularly as we "gather" (i.e., co-construct) and interpret our data.

While attempting to negotiate the generative aspect of her identity as a researcher, Giampapa references the work of Deborah Cameron, Elizabeth Frazer, Penelope Harvey, M. B. H. Rampton, and Kay Richardson, who write:

> Researchers cannot help being socially located persons. We inevitably bring our biographies and our subjectivities to every stage of the research process and this influences the questions we ask and the ways in which we try to find answers . . . the subjectivity of the observer should not be seen as a regrettable disturbance but as one element in the human interactions that comprise our object of study. (qtd. in Giampapa 133)

For Young, Giampapa, Wirtz, and Cameron et al., "our histories, social and linguistic forms of capital, and our identities position us in particular ways in relation to participants and the communities in which they are embedded" (Giampapa 133). Each of these identities will necessarily influence the methods researchers use to represent, analyze, and interpret the data they collect. Since I am interested in writing poetry based upon the poetry writing strategies experienced poets say they use when they write poetry, it will be particularly helpful if we view the data produced and analyzed in this study as data that is co-constructed.[41]

In Shaun Gallagher and Anthony Marcel's essay, "The Self in Contextualized Action," Gallagher and Marcel write, "most theorists approach the [self] in a manner that is abstract or detached from behavior and action normally embedded in pragmatically and socially contextualized situations" (5). Unfortunately, this approach "takes consciousness and the self as objects and thereby fails to capture their role in the realm of action, where they are specifically not objects" (5). Gallagher and Marcel suggest a different strategy for developing conceptual models of the self, a strategy that looks at the self in action.

According to Gallagher and Marcel, "Psychological experiments are often set up on the assumption that the test subject has a unified consciousness" (14). Early approaches to research on writing in composition studies, particularly cognitivist approaches, hinge upon an epistemological assumption that research on writing provides a linear and stable construct for writing research. In addition, researchers have generally approached research on writing as a problem-solving activity, an epistemological assumption that poetry writing likely doesn't share with other types of writing. In "Think-

[41] See Jacoby and Ochs for additional reading on co-construction.

Aloud Protocol Analysis: Beyond the Black Box," Peter Smagorinsky notes that proponents of cognitivist protocol research "questionably assume that writing is a problem-solving task, when writing may be viewed as a stream-of-consciousness activity" (4). In *Protocol Analysis: Verbal Reports as Data*, Karl Ericsson and Herbert Simon confess, "Since the time of Aristotle, thinking has been viewed as a temporal sequence of mental events. A recent review of the history of the study of thinking shows that this assumption has never been seriously questioned" (xiii). Most researchers assume "subjects have direct access to their experience," but they also assume, "the way [subjects] report on that experience is immaterial to what the experience is" (Gallagher and Marcel 14). Since "different ways of reporting have differential access to an experience," this "calls into question the existence of a unitary reflexive consciousness, or a unitary subject of experience responsible for report" (Gallagher and Marcel 15).

In their response to Flower and Hayes's work on developing a cognitive process theory, Cooper and Holzman acknowledge, "While actions resulting from cognitive processes can be observed (although such observation is itself not free of problems), the processes themselves simply cannot be" (285). However, by coupling written accounts of a writer's poetry writing with the self-reports of three expert-practitioners on poetry writing, it may be possible to "capture the pre-reflective self, which, in any particular situation, is caught up in a unity of action" (Gallagher and Marcel 20). By placing the researcher at the center of this study, we will "start closer to the level of the embedded reflective access we have to our own action and experience" (Gallagher and Marcel 26). Thus, a self-reflective study on experienced writers' self-reports on how to write poetry

will necessarily begin closer to the experience (e.g., poetry writing) the researcher intends to chronicle and analyze.

For the reasons outlined above, I have structured the research design to capture a fair and accurate representation of the creative writing practices a single writer might use as poetry writing is performed over an extended period of time. Table 1 restates the research question(s) from Chapter One and identifies the data collection methods used for each data source.

Table 1
Research Questions with Corresponding Methods and Sources

| Research Questions | Collection Methods | Data Sources |
|---|---|---|
| What are some of the methods a researcher might use to conduct research on poetry writing in creative writing studies? | Textual analysis | Research on poetry writing methodologies in creative writing studies |
| How can we test experienced poets' self-reports in creative writing studies? | Poetry writing | Fred Chappell's *Plow Naked*, Richard Hugo's *The Triggering Town*, and William Stafford's *Writing the Australian Crawl* |
| What can we learn from experienced poets' self-reports that may be applied to the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting? | Journal writing | Reflective writer's journal (e.g., the researcher's reflections for teaching creative writing based on experienced poets' self-reports) |

To be clear: this study is interested in examining three self-reports from three expert-practitioners for poetry writing strategies that may be tested for their usefulness prior to their implementation in the creative writing classroom. Although the essays contained in these published self-reports may have been written at different times, the

self-reports will be read by the researcher as three "unified" wholes. Since my project is interested in testing the poetry writing strategies distilled from the self-reports of three expert-practitioners on how to write poetry, a researcher-as-participant based research design is well-suited for investigating the strategies experienced poets say they employ when they sit down to write poetry. By testing the poetry writing strategies experienced writers say they use in a writer's journal, we may analyze these poetry writing strategies in order to see what we might apply to the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting.

### 3.3 Theoretical Framework

In "Toward a Theory of Theory for Composition Studies," James Zebroski presents "a theory of theory" that "emerges from a philosophy of internal relations" (32). According to Zebroski, a "theory of internal relations" provides a means by which we may "view research and teaching in relation" (38). For Zebroski, "Theory is not the opposite of practice," nor is it "even a supplement to practice" (39). Instead, "Theory is practice," and it is "practice of a particular kind" (39). Zebroski writes:

> Compositionists now must pursue their own kind of theory which arises from the grassroots of composition, rather than submitting to what amounts to re-colonization once again from literati. We need to resist the land rush in certain quarters of composition to appropriate postmodern Theory and convert composition as quickly as possible to what in literary studies is already outdated. How can we construct concepts that will allow us to make use of insights of postmodern Theory, but that still preserve a space for us to learn about and teach writing? (32)

Zebroski's work is important because he recognizes that theory is practice, and practice should reflect the things that people do. Zebroski reminds us that theories on teaching writing should develop from the things that writers actually do—in this case, the poetry writing strategies that experienced poets say they use to write poetry. The conclusion drawn from Zebroski's argument provides an important avenue for conducting research on poetry writing in creative writing studies. Importantly, Zebroski recognizes, "a concept is seen as coming out of an environment, a social formation with its histories, and the concept retains traces of that ecology" (34). Historically, creative writers have used writers' self-reports as a way to generate and develop the content they write. By examining what experienced poets say they do when they sit down to write poetry, we may develop new methods for teaching poetry writing that "make the workshop an activity that students can profitably participate in by employing innovative evaluation strategies" (Bizzaro, "Workshop" 42).

Certainly, "cognitivist approaches to research, which studied what experienced writers do when they write, have been rightly rejected as models of research because they are fraught with problems related to race, class, and gender" (Bizzaro, "Workshop" 42). However, using poetry writing as a research method, it is possible to conduct research on experienced writers' self-reports which circumvents criticisms based upon race, class, sex, or gender. In agreement with Bizzaro, I also believe "an entire pedagogy could be constructed for teaching creative writing based upon the reports writers have made of their own writing processes" ("Workshop" 42).

A research methodology that attempts to circumnavigate criticisms based upon objections to race, class, or gender, will require examinations on writing from a broad

range of researchers, but it will also require research on writing from a broad range of expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry. The fact that researchers cannot be separated from their own *habitus* doesn't mean we cannot (or should not) forego research on "real-world" writing practices. On the contrary, this is an important reason why we need to conduct more research on writing, particularly poetry writing. Since our cultural and socio-economic backgrounds impact some of the ways we actually live and write, it becomes necessary to examine actual writing practices, particularly as these practices are performed across a wide array of rhetorical boundaries and situations. Using poetry writing as a research method, we may further illuminate the role of invention in poetry writing. By re-examining the methods expert-practitioners' say they use when they write poetry, we may be able to improve some of the ways poetry writing is currently being taught in the university setting.

**3.4 Research Methodology**

David Hanauer begins *Poetry as Research* by stating, "There is a quiet revolution going on at the outer margins of qualitative research" (1). For Hanauer, "recent developments suggest that [artistic methods of inquiry and representation are] reaching a degree of maturity within the wider framework of qualitative research" (1). Shaun McNiff, an art-therapist and leading practitioner on arts-based research methodologies, defines arts-based research as "the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience" (qtd. in Hanauer 1). In "Expressive, Research and Reflective Poetry as Qualitative Inquiry," Richard Furman, Carol L. Langer, Christine S. Davis, Heather P. Gallardo, and Shanti Kulkami corroborate McNiff's

definition by stating, “Expressive arts researchers seek to present human phenomena in a manner that preserves its *livedness*” (302). Using poetry writing as a research methodology, “researchers are compelled to move from conceptualizing those they study as research ‘subjects’ to viewing them as co-participants (with themselves) in the research effort” (Furman et al. 302). Furman et al. extend their argument by stating:

> As a document of social phenomena, poetry can be viewed as a vehicle through which to communicate powerful and multiple ‘truths’ about the human experience. While poetry may not commonly be thought of as a source of knowledge, poems are powerful documents that possess the capacity to capture the contextual and psychological worlds of both poet and subject. (302)

According to Hanauer, there is a wide “range of disciplines such as education, psychology, counseling, expressive art therapy, social work, medicine, and nursing” where “forms of art-based research are being employed to explore disciplinary research questions” (1). Importantly, “art-based research develops through the entry into an artistic process of exploration resulting slowly over time with the production of a series of artistic products that represent the collected, personal understanding of the phenomenon under consideration” (Hanauer 2). By reading, distilling, and actually using the methods experienced poets say they use to write poetry, we can explore some of the important methods that experienced writers say they use to produce the poetry they write. In doing so, we may demystify much of the lore that has come to characterize the teaching of creative writing, particularly poetry writing. Indeed, “Poetry has the capacity to express both affect and context, or affect *in* context” (Furman et al. 303). In addition, “poetry has

the capacity to express the lived experience of the author. Poetry is personal, yet it is the goal of the poet to transform his/her personal experience into that which is universal, or in the vernacular of social research, generalizable" (Furman et al. 303). By testing the strategies experienced poets say they use to write poetry, we may experience and chronicle the lived experience of poetry writing as it unfolds across the written page. By chronicling the strategies used to produce poetry writing in a reflective writer's journal, we can more readily see what we might apply to the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting.

In *Poetry as Research,* Hanauer writes, "A distinction is generally made between using the arts in research and using artistic processes as research" (2). According to McNiff, art-based research methods "are distinguished from research activities where the arts may play a significant role but are essentially used as data for investigations that take place within academic disciplines that utilize more traditional scientific, verbal, and mathematic descriptions and analyses of phenomena" (qtd. in Hanauer 2). Thus, "It is the usage of the art process and the positioning of the experience of the artwork as a research outcome that defines the core of arts-based research" (Hanauer 2). However, there is an implicit understanding here as to what, exactly, these "artistic processes" are. In this performance-based study on poetry writing, a study that employs poetry writing as its research method, a strong distinction is made between "cognitive processes" and "artistic processes." In this research study, I intend to document and explore the creative writing strategies (e.g., artistic practices) that three experienced poets say they use often when they sit down to write poetry. By examining what experienced poets say they do when

they write poetry, we may gain a fuller, more accurate representation of the strategies that experienced writers say they use when they write poetry.

### 3.4.1 Assumptions and Delimitations

The following assumptions and delimitations have helped structure the research design used within this study:

- Poetry writing is not a stable or linear construct.
- Poetry writing is a social activity situated within a rhetorical context.
- Poetry writing is epistemologically different than other forms of writing.
- Since poetry writing is epistemologically different than other forms of writing, research on poetry writing requires different (i.e., unique) research methodologies for research on poetry writing.

In addition, the following assumptions and delimitations have helped structure the intended outcome(s) of this study:

- There is no substitute for experience.
- Poetry writing is a craft that can be taught.
- Experienced poets are skilled at writing poetry.
- It is possible to follow the strategies that experienced poets say they use to produce the poetry that they write.
- In order to see if the strategies that experienced poets say they use to write poetry would be useful for teaching poetry writing, it is necessary for a researcher to test these poetry writing strategies for their usefulness prior to their implementation in the creative writing classroom.

### 3.4.2 Research Site/Participants

Participant-based research necessarily implicates the researcher within the research design. In researcher-as-participant-based research, the method of investigation simultaneously becomes the object of inquiry. In *Poetry and Narrative as Qualitative Data: Explorations into Existential Theory*, Richard Furman conducts a reflective study on his own poetry writing. After re-reading poetry he had written earlier in his life, Furman wrote narrative reflections on his own poetry writing. Furman's purpose in conducting this study was to "contextualize [his] personal insights into broader cultural issues" (303). In a self-study of his own poetry writing, Hanauer discovered "aspects of meaning in the real world experience addressed by the poem that he had not been aware of prior to the writing itself" (*Poetry as Research* 15). In each of these instances (e.g., Furman's and Hanauer's reflections on poetry writing), poetry writing is used as part of a method which "follows from the postmodern tradition that views writing itself as a method of inquiry" (Furman 303). Precisely, the reflective nature of poetry and journal writing makes participant-based research particularly well-suited for testing the strategies that experienced poets say they use when they write poetry. By reading experienced writers' self-reports on how to write poetry, we shall simultaneously explore how some expert-practitioners produce the poetry they write. After all, who is in a better position to observe, capture, and describe the inventive processes a writer might use while writing, other than the writer/researcher as he or she actually writes?

In a research study which set out (in part) to demonstrate "a methodology for collecting and analyzing observations of experts at work," Benjamin Kuipers and Jerome Kassirer emphasize that, "a methodology of discovery appropriate to the undoubted

complexity of human knowledge requires rich data about individuals rather than easily analyzed data about a population" (365). Although the researcher hesitates to call himself an expert-practitioner on poetry writing, the researcher recognizes that context-rich data about participants can have an important bearing upon the results in a given study. For this reason, and in order to highlight the researcher's positionality outlined earlier in this chapter, the researcher has included a brief autobiographical sketch on his past experiences with poetry writing.[42] In order to minimize any factors that might have a deleterious impact upon the data produced during the study, and to keep the setting where the data is produced as naturalistic as possible, the study was conducted in the researcher's home office under normal writing conditions (see figure 2).

Fig. 2. A black and white photograph of the research site.

### 3.4.3 Data Sources and Rationale

In "'Once Upon a Time': The Use of Retrospective Accounts in Building a Theory in Composition," Greene and Higgins write, "Retrospective reports, used alone or in conjunction with other methods, have enabled researchers to build a richer understanding of the relationship among texts, situational factors, and writers' constructive processes" (117). According to Greene and Higgins, "concurrent protocol

[42] See Appendix B.

analysis and traditional text analysis may not reveal important information that retrospective accounts can provide" (117-18). Although talk-aloud protocols can offer deep insight into writers' problem-solving abilities as writers are writing, protocol analysis does not provide an accurate representation of the choices writers make as they actually write. By chronicling an experience immediately after it happens, we may circumvent some of the problems presented by reporting on events long after they have already happened. Additionally, no study has yet been conducted that seeks to chronicle moments of invention that occur while poetry writing is actually being performed. Clearly, no two writers will ever follow the same writing processes, nor follow the same writing process on different occasions. For this reason, this study does not compare or contrast the writing processes of two or more writers. Instead, this researcher-as-participant based, self-reflective study on poetry writing tests the writing strategies that three expert-practitioners' say they use to write poetry. In order to accomplish this goal, the researcher engaged in the act of writing poetry himself.

According to Greene and Higgins, retrospective reporting can "take the form of a writing diary or log. After each episode of thinking about, reading, or composing for a written task, writers create an entry, recording the date and details of their activity, keeping a written account of what was done" (116). Importantly, "This method allows researchers to collect data over a long period of time, as the task unfolds" (Greene and Higgins 116). Thus, "The form, focus, and the amount of structure in retrospective methods can vary according to the researcher's theoretical orientation and areas of interest" (Greene and Higgins 116). Given the researcher's subjective understanding of the things that experienced writers say they do when they write poetry, it is necessary to

use a data collection method which allows for the researcher's subjective interpretation of writers self-reports.

In a review of *Responding to Student Poems*, Megan Simpson recognizes that Bizzaro's work "suggests a new and interesting angle from which to read and assess poets' writings on poetics" (226). Using poetry writing as a research method, this study captures, tests, and examines the strategies that three experienced poets say they use whenever they sit down to write poetry. By reading experienced poets' self-reports on how to write poetry, one may actually do what experienced writers say they do when they write. In sharing this experience with others, we shall be in a better position to see what poetry-writing strategies might be applied to the teaching of poetry writing in the twenty-first century.

Since the purpose of this study is to determine the pedagogical usefulness of the salient strategies that three expert-practitioners say they use to write poetry, this study will incorporate observational and reflective analysis as the tools for data analysis, both during and after data collection. Table 2 illustrates how the data analysis methods correspond to the data sources gathered, analyzed, and produced from poetry writing research on experienced writers' self-reports on how to write poetry.

Table 2
Data Sources and Data Analysis Procedures

| Data Sources | Information Collected | Type of Analysis | Analysis Procedure |
|---|---|---|---|
| Experienced poets' (e.g., Chappell, Hugo, and Stafford) self-reports on poetry writing | Five (5) strategies extracted from an expert-practitioners' self-report on how to write poetry | Textual | Close reading of experienced poets' self-reports to identify five strategies that experienced poets say they use when they write poetry |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fifteen (15) poems written using strategies that experienced poets say they use to write poetry | Textual features of each poem (e.g., word count, line count, number of drafts, and time spent writing) | Quantitative | -Record date, start time and end time (time spent writing)<br>-Tally the number count on each textual feature |
| Retrospective research writer's journal | Researcher's reflections on strategies extracted from experienced poets' self-reports | Qualitative/ conventional content analysis | -Content analysis of writers' self-reports to identity themes<br>-Data analyzed for strategies we might apply to the teaching of poetry writing |

In "Naked in the Workshop," Simpson credits Bizzaro for his "call to demystify the reading and writing of poetry" (226). Additionally, Simpson commends Bizzaro for recognizing the importance of studying "'expert practitioners,' poets with national reputations who make their living by teaching [and writing about] the art they practice" (226). According to The University of Michigan Press website (press.umich.edu), "*Poets on Poetry* collects critical works by contemporary poets, gathering together the articles, interviews, and book reviews by which they have articulated the poetics of a new generation." Simpson writes:

> The Poets on Poetry volumes are similar in content and organization: each includes reminiscences of the poet's childhood and early experiences with writing, commentary on other contemporary poets and their work, opinions about poetry and poetics in general, and interviews and essays addressing a range of topics, including compositional processes. (229)

Indeed, the University of Michigan Press plays "a critical role in the teaching and learning mission of the University by applying new pedagogies to the development of instructional materials that promote college success for students" ("About - University of

Michigan Press"). Although the researcher had some familiarity with the poetry written by these three expert-practitioners, the researcher did not have any prior knowledge or contact with the self-reports (or their authors) prior to this inquiry on poetry writing. With the assistance of his advisor, and by using the *Poets on Poetry* series as one criterion for inclusion, two experienced poets—Fred Chappell and William Stafford—were selected from a wide range of expert-practitioners published in the *Poets on Poetry* series. Additionally, and in order to balance the range of published writers' self-reports used in this study, a third poet, Richard Hugo, was selected from a list of resources compiled by Wendy Bishop.[43]

By capturing and reporting on experienced writers' poetry writing strategies, and by analyzing the artifacts that get produced from these methods, I intend to shed further light on the elusive role of invention in creative writing, particularly as the act of invention is manifested in poetry writing. In this regard, the data sources produced in this project (e.g., the poems and the reflective writer's journal) are connected to the expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry by virtue of the researcher-as-participant research design. A quantitative analysis of the poems written by the researcher will provide insight on the textual features (e.g., word count, line count, number of drafts, and time spent writing) that help to characterize the final draft of each poem. However, the quantitative information reported in this study is provided solely to demonstrate the amount of effort that went into the production of each poem. Conversely, a qualitative analysis of the researcher's writer's journal provides context-driven insight on the strategies used to write poetry. By illuminating the strategies that experienced poets say

[43] For a list of informative texts on creative writing, see Appendix B in Bishop's *Released*.

they actually use to write poetry, this study has important implications for teaching poetry writing in the university setting.

### 3.4.4 Data Collection Procedures

Using a writer's journal to chronicle and test the self-reports of three experienced poets in creative writing—Fred Chappell's *Plow Naked,* Richard Hugo's *The Triggering Town,* and William Stafford's *Writing the Australian Crawl*—we may find evidence that further supports the idea that poetry writing is epistemologically different from other forms of writing. Certainly, "The epistemology that gives rise to creative writing is based upon the primacy of the teacher's experiences as a writer or, at the very least, the primacy of other writers' experiences as writers" (Bizzaro, "Workshop" 47). By doing what experienced poets' say they do when they sit down to write poetry, we may also capture the act of invention as it unfolds across the written page. Using poetry writing as a research method, we will further illuminate creative writing practices in creative writing studies. In this way, we may also be able to improve some of the ways poetry writing is currently being taught in the university setting.

After reading, re-reading, and distilling what three experienced poets (e.g., Fred Chappell, Richard Hugo, and William Stafford) say they do when they write poetry, the researcher extracted five poetry writing strategies from each poet's self-report on how to write poetry. In an effort to establish "trustworthiness" in the co-constructed data analyzed in this study, the poetry writing strategies were sent to an independent, peer-group mentor who verified that the poetry writing strategies were extracted from the three self-reports read in this study. Once the researcher received concurrence from the peer-group mentor on the strategies he extracted from the self-reports, the researcher wrote

fifteen poems using the fifteen strategies that three expert-practitioners say they use to write poetry.

Two types of data were collected (i.e., co-constructed) in this creative study on poetry writing. Indeed, the co-construction of data might be one way research in creative writing differs from research in composition, and it is a method consistent with theories on reading. The first type of data co-constructions were the poems themselves, written by the researcher using fifteen strategies he distilled from expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry. An honest attempt was made by the researcher to complete a poem for each writing session. However, the researcher makes no guarantee that each poem was written to completion. Using observational analysis, the textual features of each poem (e.g., word count, line count, number of drafts, and time spent writing) were tallied and represented for each writing session.

As soon as it was feasible for poetry writing to commence (or resume), the researcher made an honest attempt to write a poem to its completion using the expert-practitioner's advice on how to write poetry. At the end of a poetry writing session, the researcher compiled the total time spent writing poetry. In addition, the researcher tallied the number of drafts he produced in writing each poem. Once a poem was completely written (i.e., "finished"), the researcher compiled a list of the textual features (e.g. word count, line count, number of drafts, and time spent writing) that help characterize the textual features involved in the production of each "final" draft. After each of the activities for producing poetry writing was completed, the researcher sent a record of the co-constructed data to the peer group mentor for comprehensive review.

The second type of data co-constructions in this study were the researcher's reflections on poetry writing using expert-practitioner's suggestions on how to write poetry. Immediately following the production of a completed poem, a reflective journal entry was written by the researcher himself. In each journal entry, the researcher responded to the following writing prompts: (1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to, (2) reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion, and (3) argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.[44] Using conventional content analysis, the reflective writing journal was read for poetry writing strategies that might be applied to the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting.

### 3.4.5 Data Analysis Tools

The tools of any research project should derive from the research questions being asked.[45] For this reason, and to facilitate the use of a flexible research design that allowed for a deep investigation of the research question, What can we learn from experienced poets' self-reports that may be applied to the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting?, observational and conventional content analysis were the requisite tools necessary to conduct a full investigation on poetry writing strategies in creative writing studies.

In "Three Approaches to Qualitative Analysis," Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah Shannon begin their article by observing that conventional content analysis "has come into wide use in health studies," and it has a broad range of analytic approaches (1277). In addition, conventional content analysis is "a flexible method for analyzing text data"

[44] See Appendix A.
[45] See Table 2 for the research questions investigated in this study.

(1277). Hsieh and Shannon define qualitative content analysis as a method of data analysis that allows for "the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (1278). Hsieh and Shannon describe three main approaches (e.g., conventional, directed, and summative) to content analysis, and they note, "The specific type of content analysis approach chosen by a researcher varies with the theoretical and substantive interests of the researcher and the problem being studied" (1277). In order to demonstrate current applications of content analysis, Hsieh and Shannon provide three examples of situations that call for the application of each specific tool. Ultimately, the flexibility of qualitative content analysis, particularly the kind conventional content analysis calls for, is an ideal approach to studying the research question, What can we learn from experienced poets' self-reports that may be applied to the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting?

In "Analyzing Talk and Text," Anssi Perakyla and Johanna Ruusuvuori identify "methods that can be used in analyzing and interpreting tape-recorded interactions and written texts, which probably are the types of data that come closest to the idea of 'naturally occurring'" (529). Perakyla and Ruusuvuori recognize, "The difference between researcher-instigated data and naturally occurring data should [ . . . ] be understood as a continuum rather than as a dichotomy" (529). Perakyla and Ruusuvuori examine one end of this continuum, namely, current applications of tape-recorded conversations and written texts. Perakyla and Ruusuvuori discuss contemporary trends in content analysis research, and they argue there has been a recent movement away from semiotic (e.g., linguistic) research toward a more generalized focus on narrative analysis. Finally, Perakyla and Ruusuvuori discuss the benefits of using informal approaches to

content analysis, benefits that Wirtz recognizes and employs in his own qualitative research designs on invention in poetry writing.

Perakyla and Ruusuvuori focus their essay on some of the different methods used to analyze two types of naturally occurring data: talk and text. Although their section on analyzing text is especially informative, none of the examples they give in their essay are from researchers who examine their own writing. In addition, Perakyla and Ruusuvuori base their idea of conversation analysis on the grounds there must be at least two interlocutors. According to Perakyla and Ruusuvuori, "conversation analysis is a method for investigating the structure and process of social interaction between humans" (534). By modifying Perakyla and Ruusuvuori's approach to include the subjective interaction between reading texts and writing them, it is possible to address the research question, What can we learn from experienced poets' self-reports that may be applied to the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting? In an effort to establish credibility and trustworthiness in the data produced (i.e., co-constructed) over the duration of this study, an independent, peer-group mentor verified that each of the poetry writing strategies were extracted from the three self-reports that the researcher read for the study. In the section that follows, I outline the duties the peer-group mentor performed over the duration of the study.

### 3.4.6 The Peer-Group Mentor

An independent, peer-group mentor verified that each of the poetry writing strategies were extracted from one of the expert-practitioner's self-reports by independently reading a copy of the three published self-reports. After reading and distilling what three experienced poets' (e.g., Chappell, Hugo, and Stafford) say they use

to produce the poetry they write, the researcher sent fifteen strategies (five poetry writing strategies extracted from each self-report) to the peer-group mentor via e-mail for concurrence and review.

The peer-group mentor who reviewed the data in this study earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1996. In addition, the peer-group mentor earned a Ph.D. in Composition and TESOL from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 2009. Indeed, the peer-group mentor is an experienced writing instructor who has taught creative writing, playwriting, memoir writing, literature, and composition writing at the collegiate level. The researcher met the peer group mentor at a conference on creative writing, and the peer-group mentor willingly offered her assistance to member-check the co-constructed data produced in this study. Currently, the peer-group mentor is a faculty member who teaches college level writing at an accredited, four-year college in the United States.

In order to reach agreement on the strategies extracted from each of the expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry, the peer-group mentor independently read each of the expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry. As soon as the peer-group mentor finished reading an expert-practitioner's self-report on how to write poetry, the researcher sent a list of five poetry writing strategies extracted from the self-report that the peer-group mentor read. On three separate occasions, five strategies were extracted from an expert-practitioner's self-report and sent to the peer-group mentor for review. On each occasion, the researcher and the peer-group mentor agreed that each of the strategies on how to write poetry were properly extracted from each of the expert-practitioner's self-reports on how to write poetry.

After the peer group mentor verified that each of the poetry-writing strategies were extracted from one of the expert-practitioner's self-reports on how to write poetry, the researcher wrote poetry using the strategies extracted from the expert-practitioner's self-report.[46] Immediately prior to a poetry writing session, the researcher recorded the start-time the poetry writing session began. When a poem was "finished," the researcher recorded the stop-time when the poetry writing session ended. In each case, an honest attempt was made by the researcher to complete a draft of a poem using the expert-practitioner's recommended strategy on how to write poetry. In order to provide an accurate representation on the amount of time and effort that went into the production of each poem, the researcher maintained a quantitative record of the textual features that went into the production (e.g., "drafting") of each poem. After the data co-construction phase was complete, the researcher sent a complete record of the quantitative and qualitative data to the peer-group mentor who verified that the researcher did what he said he was going to do.

### 3.4.7 Ethical Considerations

In "'Once Upon a Time': The Use of Retrospective Accounts in Building Theory in Composition," Greene and Higgins identify the benefits and limitations of retrospective reporting. Greene and Higgins write, "As valuable as retrospective accounts can be in providing some insight into the cognitive and social factors motivating writers' choices and decisions, they are not, as we suggested earlier, without criticisms and drawbacks" (119). Greene and Higgins point out four concerns with retrospective reporting, namely: (1) limitations of short-term memory can have a deleterious impact on

[46] See Appendices F-H for the poetry written over the duration of this study.

retrospective data, (2) the constructive nature of working memory lends itself to hyperbole, (3) the purposes and questions behind the research project may influence participant response, and (4) reader difficulty in perceiving the need to conduct research using retrospective accounts (119-22).[47]

Readers have a right to be skeptical about the integrity of data produced from researcher-as-participant-based research designs. In performance-based research, the researcher is in a unique position, one that has the potential to manipulate the results of a study in a biased way. However, this does not give us adequate reason to reject participant-based methods for conducting research on writing, particularly for research on writers' self-reports in creative writing studies. In order to address the problems with retrospective reporting that Greene and Higgins identify, the researcher will, respectively: (1) record a journal entry immediately after each poetry writing session, (2) number each poem and each journal entry with a corresponding referent, (3) embrace the researcher's positionality by including an autobiographical sketch of the researcher's prior experiences with poetry writing[48], and (4) argue that research on experienced writers' self-reports is both beneficial and necessary for the burgeoning field of creative writing studies. Additionally, and in order to facilitate the transparency of the researcher's data gathering and data producing processes, this study used a peer-group mentor to member-check the data as it was produced over the duration of the study. Using poetry writing as a research method, coupled with a member-checked, reflective writer's journal as the method of data collection, the researcher has constructed a replicable research

[47] In "Poets on Pedagogy," Wirtz believes his dynamic involvement as a researcher allowed him to capture a more accurate representation of his data.
[48] See Appendix B.

methodology which is suitable for research on writer's self-reports in creative writing studies.

### 3.5 Concluding Remarks

In the research and scholarship on creative writing and poetry writing practices, it is necessary to conduct research on writers' self-reports in order to see what we might learn, and therefore apply, to the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting. This is precisely what Zebroski calls for when he argues that scholars must theorize from creative writing's grassroots. In addition, the research presented here may prove to be vital for creative writing studies if it is to survive as an autonomous field of study in the academy. A post-structural position on the research paradigm can inform the creative methods that instructors on creative writing might use in fundamental ways. Indeed, it has been my goal to demonstrate that we need a new approach for research on poetry writing in creative writing studies, one that is capable of exploring the choices that experienced poets make as they actually report on making them. Testing creative writers' self-reports may prove to be crucially informative—and formative—not only for the nascent field of creative writing studies, but also for any future study that employs poetry writing as part of its research design.

# CHAPTER 4

# RESULTS

> Not having an ideological agenda in regard to poetry, I have not been able to hold to abstract fixed standards. Probably I would not care to do so anyhow; each separate work of art implies its own aesthetic principles and I take the discovery and elucidation of these to be part of the job of a receptive reader. What I say about one poet in one place may be contradicted by different responses suggested by a different poet. I am not proud of my inconsistencies, but regard them merely as data.
>
> —Fred Chappell, *Plow Naked* 1

> When you start to write, you carry to the page one of two attitudes, though you may not be aware of it. One is that all music must conform to truth. The other, that all truth must conform to music.
>
> —Richard Hugo, *The Triggering Town* 3

> [ . . . ] I would rather be wholehearted and be welcome about anything I write. The correct attitude to take about anything you write is "Welcome! Welcome!" Once you get yourself into the position of feeling that something that occurs to you is unworthy, well that's tough—because that happens to be what *has* occurred to you.
>
> —William Stafford, *Writing the Australian Crawl* 117

## 4.1 Introduction to the Results

This performance-based study tests and examines three expert-practitioners' self-reports for poetry writing strategies we might apply toward the production and teaching of poetry writing in the collegiate setting: Fred Chappell's *Plow Naked*, Richard Hugo's *The Triggering Town*, and William Stafford's *Writing the Australian Crawl*. As noted previously, scholarship in post-process theories of composition have demonstrated that the writing processes writers use are necessarily different between writers and writing situations. Nonetheless, it is possible for a researcher to capture an accurate representation of the poetry writing *strategies* experienced poets say they use to produce

the poetry they write. Although creative writing processes diverge between writers, the strategies that experienced poets say they use to write poetry may be used by any given writer (at any given time) to produce poetry writing. By testing the strategies that expert-practitioners say they use when they write poetry, we may transfer this experience to others in order to see if we can improve some of the ways that poetry writing is currently being taught in the academic setting. Thus, by reading, analyzing, and testing the strategies that three expert-practitioners say they use to produce the poetry they write, we may begin to develop new pedagogies for teaching poetry writing in the university setting.

In this chapter, I provide a detailed account of the methods used to collect and co-construct the poetry data produced using fifteen poetry writing strategies that may be applied toward the teaching of poetry writing in the collegiate setting. In the chapter that follows, I discuss the implications this research may have for teaching poetry writing in the twenty-first century. Using poetry writing as a research method, it is possible to research what experienced writers say they do when they sit down to write poetry. In this way, we may also begin to improve some of the ways poetry writing is currently being taught in the university setting.

**4.2 Poetry Writing as a Research Method**

Between August 27, 2013, and December 31, 2013, the researcher in this study examined three expert-practitioners' self-reports for strategies that may be applied toward the production and teaching of poetry writing in the collegiate setting: Fred Chappell's *Plow Naked*, Richard Hugo's *The Triggering Town*, and William Stafford's *Writing the Australian Crawl*. After reading (and re-reading) an expert-practitioner's self-report on

how to write poetry, the researcher extracted five strategies from an expert-practitioner's self-report on how to write poetry. In total, fifteen strategies for producing poetry writing were extracted from three expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry.[49] The details of this method are provided in Chapter Three.

Based upon the co-constructed poetry data collected and produced in this study, the researcher argues that we can improve the teaching of poetry writing by reading, testing, and analyzing what expert-practitioners' say they do when they write poetry. Importantly, this method offers a solution to the problems Bishop identifies with writers' self-reports, namely, "there is some unison, much contradiction, and a wealth of unsubstantiated yet intuitively accurate knowledge" (*Released* 17). What's more, these self-reports, without any determination of their viability, constitute the grassroots of creative writing instruction, and they have found their way into numerous textbooks and classrooms that feature creative writing instruction. In the section that follows, I represent poetry writing research as both quantitative and qualitative data.

### 4.2.1 Poetry Writing as Quantitative Data

Drafts between poetry writing sessions were not always contiguous. In other words, poetry writing sessions were sometimes interrupted by internal and external factors beyond the researcher's control. These environmental factors necessarily shaped the poetry data being collected, produced, and co-constructed in this study. For this reason, the researcher defines a poetry writing session as "a contiguous period of time dedicated solely to the writing of poetry." In the event a poetry writing session was interrupted (voluntarily or involuntarily), the researcher recorded the time spent writing,

[49] See Appendices C-E for a detailed account of the poetry writing strategies extracted from the three self-reports analyzed in this study.

and he recorded the poem as a "draft." Table 3 provides a textual overview of the poetry data co-constructed over the duration of the study.

Table 3
Textual Overview of Poetry Written Over Length of Study

| Total Number of Poems Written | Total Word Count | Total Line Count | Total Number of Drafts Written | Total Time Poetry Writing |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | 1,517 | 277 | 43 | 12 hrs. 20 min. |

### 4.2.2 Poetry Writing as Qualitative Data

After writing poetry using an expert-practitioner's recommended strategy on how to write poetry, the researcher logged an entry into a reflective writer's journal. The writer's journal thus serves as a qualitative account (e.g., a retrospective report) on the strategies we might apply toward the teaching of poetry writing in the collegiate setting. In the reflective writer's journal, the researcher: (1) identifies the activity and/or suggestion being responded to, (2) reflects on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion, and (3) argues whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing**.** After completing the process fifteen times (once for each strategy used to produce poetry writing), the researcher chronicled a written account (e.g., a retrospective report) on the poetry writing strategies expert-practitioners say they use to produce the poetry they write. In this way, the reflective writer's journal serves as a retrospective report on some of the strategies we might apply toward the teaching of poetry writing in the collegiate setting.

Over a period of time lasting four months, the researcher read (and re-read) the reflective writer's journal for "themes" or "content areas" which might be applied to the teaching of poetry writing. A conventional, content-based analysis of the reflective writer's journal reveals three subject areas we might apply to the teaching of poetry

writing in the collegiate setting: strategies for teaching invention, strategies for developing content, and strategies for working with form. In addition, a content-based analysis of the expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry shows that instructors of poetry writing might adopt three approaches on teaching poetry writing in the university setting: Formal, euphonic, and expressive. These three approaches are grounded upon three distinct philosophies (or axiologies) which might help poetry writing instructors decide what methods to use in the poetry writing classrooms they teach. The results from a conventional, content-based analysis of the fifteen strategies extracted from three expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry are outlined below.

### 4.3 Expert-Practitioners' Self-Reports on How to Write Poetry

In lieu of reproducing the co-constructed data reported in Appendices C-E, a summary of the strategies extracted from each of the expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry are outlined in the sub-sections below. By examining expert-practitioners' self-reports for strategies on how to write poetry, and by using poetry writing as a research method, it is possible to see how we might improve the teaching of poetry writing in the collegiate setting.

#### 4.3.1 Fred Chappell's Formalism

Toward the beginning of Chappell's self-report on how to write poetry, Chappell states he has not formulated a "settled philosophy of poetry" (1). Nevertheless, Chappell proceeds to define "best poetry" as "lines with the best use of language, [lines] that most honestly engage the poet's feelings and intellect" (2). Upon analysis of Chappell's self-report, it is rather telling that Chappell defines "best poetry" as "lines with the best use of

language" (2). By prioritizing a poem's "best use of language" over a poem's ability to "honestly engage the poet's feelings and intellect" (2), Chappell positions himself as an experienced poet who emphasizes poetic form and formal content, and this characterizes Chappell as a Formalist on poetry writing.

Chappell's approach to discovering "best poetry" (in reading or writing) hinges upon an implicit belief that "the best use of language" in poetry writing is achieved by finding "new combinations of words and new arrangements of such poetic materials as rhyme, meter, caesura, and metaphor" (26-7). For Chappell, it is important for a poet to have "something to say," but equally important—if not more so—is how a poet "best" says it (26). Ultimately, Chappell prioritizes the "best use" of language over a poem's ability to "honestly engage the poet's feelings and intellect" (2), and this observation serves to distinguish Chappell from Expressivists on how to write poetry.

Although Chappell does not explicitly label himself as a Formalist, Chappell's self-report on how to write poetry positions him within a Formalistic tradition of poetry writing.[50] In an important passage on reading poetry, Chappell confesses, "For the purposes of my writing, for the purposes of my teaching of literature, [an ideal] reader does indeed exist" (39). If an "ideal" reader exists, it seems reasonable "ideal" texts exist, too. For this reason, Chappell supplants his self-report on how to write poetry with literary analysis and formal criticism on a number of experienced poets, including Donald Hall, Randall Jarrell, Carolyn Kizer, Octavio Paz, Gibbons Ruark, Louis Simpson, and he includes examples of his own poetry writing, as well.

[50] See Fulkerson's "Four Philosophies of Composition." See also Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp*.

In order to see what strategies might be applied to the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting, the researcher analyzed Fred Chappell's *Plow Naked* and extracted five strategies (e.g., activities) on how to write poetry.[51] Upon close reading of Chappell's published self-report, the following strategies (e.g., activities) were extracted from Chappell's self-report on how to write poetry:

- Activity #1 – For this activity, pick a line from a poem you have recently read. Use this line as the first line of a poem you write (26).
- Activity #2 – For this activity, "trudge" to the dictionary and write a poem using a classical trope (i.e., amphibrach, capriccio, caesura, or zeugma) you do not understand (24).
- Activity #3 – For this activity, write a poem in couplets. Next, re-write the poem into three-line stanzas or quatrains. Does the meaning of the poem change (131)?
- Activity #4 – For this activity, "scout" through some poems until you feel inspired to write a poem of your own (39).
- Activity #5 – For this activity, write a poem that does **not** "deal with disintegration, disconnection, and loneliness" (90).

In order to see if the strategies extracted from Chappell's self-report would be useful for producing poetry writing, and in order to see what strategies we might apply toward the teaching of poetry writing in the collegiate setting, the researcher wrote poetry using these five strategies extracted from Chappell's self-report on how to write poetry. Table 4 provides an overview on some of the textual features of poetry written by the

[51] See Appendix C for a detailed record on the five strategies extracted from Chappell's self-report.

researcher using five strategies (e.g., "activities") extracted from Chappell's self-report on how to write poetry.[52]

Table 4
Textual Overview of Poetry Writing Using Chappell's Self-Report

| Title of Poem (Appendix F) | Activity Used (Appendix C) | Word Count | Line Count | Drafts Written | Time Spent Writing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| "Apollo's Reign" | Chappell Activity #1 | 120 | 20 | 5 | 43 minutes |
| "Ode to Bardot" | Chappell Activity #2 | 137 | 16 | 5 | 145 minutes |
| "The Blessed Fall" | Chappell Activity #3 | 19 (couplet)<br>78 (quatrain) | 2 (couplet)<br>12 (quatrain) | 2<br>3 | 3 minutes<br>48 minutes |
| "The Capacitor" | Chappell Activity #4 | 31 | 18 | 2 | 12 minutes |
| "Pocket Change" | Chappell Activity #5 | 100 | 16 | 3 | 37 minutes |

Importantly, Chappell believes a poet should "keep scouting faithfully through the poetry books, the good old ones and the good old new ones," because "there are more things in heaven and earth than can be dreamed by the dullard, the barbarian, and the postmodern literary theorist. And not only more things, but better ones" (39). Certainly, if "better" things (e.g., poems) can be "dreamed" (e.g., written) based on reading poetry written by other poets, it seems likely a novice poet has a lot to gain from reading published poetry written by expert-practitioners in the field. Although Chappell does not specifically recommend using a line from a published poet in order to write poetry, a poet might "borrow" the first line from a published poem and use this line as a starting point

[52] See Appendix F for poetry written by the researcher using five strategies extracted from Chappell's self-report.

from which to write poetry (see Appendix C, Activity #1). Using the first line from Billy Collins' poem, "More than a Woman," the researcher wrote the following poem:

Apollo's Reign

When I woke up this morning
a single thought of you
broke my fast, it left me
hungry for more, so
instead of lying back down on
the mattress where we slept,
I stepped outside, naked, and I
watched Apollo drag his starry orb
across the morning sky. And I wondered:
"Why does the sun blot-out the
light from all the other stars?"
He shoulders through the solar system
like a pig eating slop from a trough,
yelling, "Make way!"
Still ravenous from the night before,
I plucked the sun from the sky
and consumed him whole.

Satisfied, I went back inside. But in my loneliness,
I envied the star for knowing how to share

all that he could give.

For Chappell, it is especially important for a poet to "find new approaches to old subjects" (26). Using Collins' line, "Ever since I woke up today" as a "new approach" to an "old subject," the researcher wrote "Apollo's Reign" using this strategy extracted from Chappell's self-report. Once "Apollo's Reign" was "finished," the researcher revised the first line of the poem to say something different from Collins' poem. Thus, by reading and "borrowing" lines from poetry written by other poets, it is possible for a beginning poet to "find new approaches to old subjects" (26).

Chappell believes it is necessary for poets to read and share their poetry writing with other practicing poets. In this way, Chappell believes poets can further develop and refine their craft. In a description of his own creative writing practices, Chappell confesses that Reynolds Price "would use technical terms to criticize rhythms and tropes and I would never admit that I didn't know what those terms meant" (23). In an attempt to understand what Price meant when he critiqued Chappell's writing, Chappell often "trudged to the dictionary and looked up *amphibrach*, [trudged] to the library and checked out Read and Scott" (24). In fact, there are many instances in Chappell's self-report where Chappell (just like Price) uses formal criticism to describe the poetry he critiques in his self-report. For instance, in a passage devoted to Carolyn Kizer, Chappell reprints a stanza from "Pro Femina," and he notes the last line is "a nifty example of that classical trope called 'zeugma'" (109). Although Chappell doesn't explicitly define "zeugma," he (thankfully) provides a clear example from Kizer's work: "*incense, musk,* and *blackmail*" (Chappell 109).

Using Chappell's example of "zeugma" as a starting point, one of the strategies extracted from Chappell's self-report on how to write poetry asks the respondent to "write a poem using a classical trope you do not understand" (see Appendix C, Activity #2). In an attempt to understand what "zeugma" is, and in an attempt to understand how zeugma is used in poetry writing, the researcher wrote the following line of verse: "Brigitte Bardot, Marilyn Monroe, and B-52 bomb shells." Beginning with this line, the researcher wrote the following poem:

Ode to Bardot

My wife found a black and white photograph of
a wicked French woman from the 1960s
I hid between the queen-size mattress and
box-springs of the bed where we slept.
A radiant glow on her face, mine too
when she makes her debut from the covers
drawn tightly across her framed stage.
She twirls her skirt around and a round she goes,
runs like an engine with a loose fan-belt stuck in high gear,
circles around until one end eats the other, Ouroboros.
She never gets dizzy from the tress and the spin,
never needs to loosen the corset she doesn't wear, never
takes a break from the fantastic madness of her splendor.
Brigitte Bardot, Marilyn Monroe, and B-52 bomb shells
don't ever talk back, they don't ask to come over,

never nice to let them in.

Similar to the first activity described earlier, Chappell does not specifically recommend this strategy to produce poetry writing. Nevertheless, by reading and discussing what other poets have to say about the poetry they read and write, Chappell admits he "learned a great deal, perhaps as much about literature as I ever learned from anyone" (24). For Chappell, reading poetry written by other poets offers an important way for novice poets to get ideas—and therefore develop—their poetry writing. After all, Chappell believes it is possible to recognize and identify "ideal" poetry for what It is (e.g., "best" poetry). By reading poetry written by experienced poets, we may identify formal elements of style which serve to characterize the poetry that experienced poets write. By analyzing what experienced poets have to say about their writing practices, we may learn the stylistic elements experienced poets use to discuss and describe their poetry writing.

Chappell admits he isn't sure how to respond to the question, "Does an ideal reader exist?" (39). Nevertheless, Chappell believes that reading and analyzing poetry written by experienced poets offers an important way to (1) develop ideas and/or inspiration for poetry writing and (2) help beginning poets get started on poetry writing of their own. In the fourth activity extracted from Chappell's self-report, the respondent is asked to perform the following task: "'Scout' through some poems until you feel inspired to write a poem of your own." In order to accomplish this activity, the researcher read poetry from William Blake and William Carlos Williams until he felt "inspired" to write the following:

The Capacitor

There is

a house

in Dublin

I bought

eleven

years

ago

today

I wish

to sell

each brick

and blade

I worked

and worked

until

I saw

how it

was made.

For this task, the researcher initially read sections from Blake's "Marriage of Heaven and Hell." However, due to the researcher's familiarity with Blake, he gave up on reading his *Selected Poems*, and he read poetry by Williams instead. After reading a few of Williams' poems, the researcher tried to write a poem using ideas inspired by Williams' poetry. By writing a long poem free of punctuation with short lines in a single stanza, "The Capacitor" resembles Williams' clean, flowing, and "ribbonesque" style.

Certainly, locating a "good" poem is not without its challenges. Equally difficult (if not more so) is the Herculean task of writing a "good" poem—or for that matter, defining what constitutes a "good" poem. Indeed, it is important for a poet to "find new approaches to old subjects" (26). For Chappell, one way a poet might accomplish this goal is by using "new combinations of words and new arrangements of such poetic materials as rhyme, meter, caesura, and metaphor" (26-7). By locating formal elements of style in poetry writing, students might "model" what successful poets do in the poetry they write. Once a formal style or technique is identified, then it is possible for a writer to mimic, or imitate, the forms and/or arrangements experienced poets actually use in their poetry writing.

The use of formal or stylistic elements in poetry writing (i.e., amphibrach, capriccio, caesura, or zeugma), or even the ability to discuss these elements with other poets, does not guarantee a poet will always produce "good" or "successful" poetry writing. According to Chappell, he generally has an idea of the poetry he wants to write, but whether Chappell is "actually able to write it or not is impossible to predict" (131). Nonetheless, Chappell believes, "it is possible to absorb technique without being fully aware of it, to become proficient by dint of experience rather than by intellection" (145). In fact, Chappell says he "learned to write [poetry] more or less in the same manner that [he] learned to type: by doing it so dreadfully wrong that now and then [he] would hit upon something acceptable by merest accident. Then [he] had to recognize what made [his] discovery useful, to try to repeat it and to build upon it" (14). For Chappell, "an eon of trial was followed by an infinitude of error" (14). Although creative writing processes are different between writers, the strategies experienced writers use in their creative

writing practices, particularly the use of stylistic elements in poetry writing, offers one important way novice poets can get started on (and further develop) the poetry they write. As mentioned previously, many of these techniques have already found their way into numerous textbooks and creative writing classrooms. But by actually doing what experienced poets say they do when they write poetry, we can identify some of the reasons *why* experienced poets make the choices that they do when they write.

In an interview conducted by poetry editor Melissa Brannon, Chappell emphasizes the importance of form in poetry writing, and he states, "change of form changes the material entirely" (131). For Chappell, "what seems to be kind of the same experience turns out not to be the same" (132). Since a poet must "delineate, dramatize, and heighten a simple emotion by the use of complex means," the poet "must choose a form and a manner in which to ply his [sic] blandishments upon his [sic] subject matter" (28). In this way, Chappell believes a poem's "form" necessarily determines its "meaning." By altering a poem's form, it is possible to see if a poem's "meaning" changes. Importantly, by experimenting with form and structure in poetry writing, Chappell believes it is possible to find "new combinations of words" and "new arrangements" for poetry writing (26).

In order to see if a change in poetic form altered a poem's meaning, the researcher wrote the "The Blessed Fall" as a couplet:

> Where my soul has led me, my body has obeyed,
>
> but everywhere my body's been, my spirit has betrayed!

Next, the researcher re-wrote "The Blessed Fall" into a quatrain with three stanzas:

Born from our mother's womb,
we enter in a different tomb.
Leave the safety of our nest,
when Life does part, then we rest.

Go through life and never see,
troubles lie in front of thee.
Nor do we know what stands behind,
years of strife, the daily grind.

Heed these words, they're aught but true,
time-worn secrets, we all once knew.
The dint of life, the price we pay,
hard work and trust, 'tis no other way!

Interestingly, "The Blessed Fall" was written the same day the researcher finished writing "The Capacitor" (see Appendix C, Activity #4). What makes this observation so interesting is the idea that "The Blessed Fall" may have been inadvertently influenced by reading William Blake's "Marriage of Heaven and Hell." Still, the purpose of this activity was to see whether or not an alteration of a poem's form changed its meaning. Whereas the first version of "The Blessed Fall" reads like a lament or an injunction, the second version of the poem is more optimistic, and it reads like sound advice or counsel on how to live properly. In this case, a change in the poem's form had a radical impact on the poem's meaning. Admittedly, this activity would have worked better if the researcher

re-wrote the couplet into multiple (various) forms of poetry writing. Still, it is likely the "meaning" or "content" of a poem will stay the same if nothing but a poem's form is changed. Re-writing "The Blessed Fall" into the following form has an impact on its readability, but it is unlikely the "meaning" of the poem has changed:

The Blessed Fall
Where
    my soul
has led me,
        my body has obeyed,
but everywhere
    my body's been,
        my spirit
has betrayed!

In this case, the initial form of the poem has changed, but none of the content has been altered or re-written. Arguably, it is more likely a poem's "meaning" derives from its content, not its form.

A large section (roughly two chapters) of Chappell's self-report on how to write poetry is dedicated to a theoretical exploration of poetry writing. In these sections, Chappell addresses the nature of poetry writing, and he considers what it "means" to be a poet. Early in his self-report, Chappell outlines the social responsibilities of the poet, and he says the first responsibility of the poet is to "teach by delighting" (32). However, Chappell later states, "it is the first duty of poetry to entertain" (81-2). Once a poem achieves "entertainment" status, then the poem is ready to "enlighten, ennoble, and

perform all the high-minded feats of intellectual and moral gymnastics that it ever has a yearning to perform" (82). Above all else, Chappell believes "best" poetry must "instruct" and "entertain," and we may attribute this belief to the fact, "there are certain readers" who find poetry appealing, and "it is to these readers that poets *must* address themselves" (82, emphasis added). For Chappell, poets must appeal to these "ideal" readers because "American culture, for all its self-vaunting anti-intellectualism, still does not consist entirely of pizza and rock and roll" (Chappell 82).

In his analysis of modern epic poetry (such as Crane's *The Bridge* or Eliot's *Wasteland*), Chappell's "ideal" reader re-surfaces, and we are told the poet "must find the form, the story, and the poetic idiom that will eternalize [the] conflicts and concerns that underlie and animate his [sic] own time" (83). In his analysis of epic poetry writing, Chappell clearly prioritizes poetic form over content. For Chappell, a poet must *first* "find the form" (83). A poem's "story" is important, but even more important is finding the "right" form for the poet's "blandishments" (28).

Since the "modern poet" has "rejected the traditional form and some of the traditional goals and methods of the epic poem," the "poet feels that [ . . . ] our modern age requires a different sort of object, a variation upon the ancient form" (88). Historically, "the traditional epic form took the historian's narrative and shaped it into the simple grand architecture of a plot" (90). However, "the modern epic takes the historian's narrative and, in a spirit of heated distrust, pulverizes it into a dust of separate and discrete moments" (90). For Chappell, "Whatever the subject matter of the modern epic, and whatever the ostensible and announced themes, [ . . . ] the modern epic poem will deal with disintegration, disconnection, and loneliness" (90). In order to see if all modern

poetry writing deals with these three themes (e.g., disintegration, disconnection, and loneliness), the researcher wrote a poem that does *not* deal with the themes Chappell identifies (see Appendix C, Activity #5). For this activity, the content of the poem (initially) took precedence over its form:

Pocket Change

Change is old, change is new,
so here's a tip, just for you!
Look for dates that came before,
years on coins, in your drawer:

Pennies are fifty four,
nickels add one year more.
Dimes and quarts are sixty-four,
these are the coins we watch for!

Keep this change, you'll wish you had,
gold and silver make us glad.
Coins worth more than what they say,
their value goes up each passing day.

So keep these coins, now you know,
they're sure to make your wallet grow.
Take these coins and put them away,

save them for a rainy day!

This activity could have tested Chappell's theory on epic poetry if the researcher had actually written an epic poem. Nonetheless, the purpose of this activity was to see if it is possible to write a poem that does not deal with "disintegration, disconnection, and loneliness" (90). Although "Pocket Change" does not deal with any of the aforementioned themes, there is a heavy reliance on form, and the poem follows a specific structure: AA-BB-CC, and so on. What makes this activity particularly interesting is the interplay between content and form in poetry writing. By focusing on the content of the poem, there was a simultaneous shift to an emphasis on form. In other words, by writing the poem a particular way (e.g., it rhymes), the researcher was able to circumnavigate the themes (e.g., content) Chappell identifies. Admittedly, this strategy for producing poetry writing would have been better if the strategy were modified in the following way: "Write a poem that teaches by delighting" (32). Nonetheless, the activity as it is written proved to be useful for experimenting with content and form in poetry writing.

Chappell's emphasis on reading poetry written by other poets, and Chappell's confession that "ideal" readers (and by implication, "ideal" texts) exist, serves to establish Chappell's position as a formalist in the production of poetry writing. For experienced and inexperienced poets alike, Chappell strongly recommends reading poetry written by other poets. Despite Chappell's liminal stance on "ideal" texts, Chappell's belief that "ideal" readers (sometimes) exist positions him within a New Critical, formalistic tradition of poetry writing. By identifying the stylistic elements experienced poets use in the poetry they publish and write, it is possible to develop strategies on

poetry writing which experiment with poetic form and formal elements of style. Using literary and formal elements of style to discuss, critique, and produce poetry writing, instructors of poetry writing might focus on invention, modeling, and experimentation with formal elements of style in teaching poetry writing. In this way, Chappell's *Plow Naked* offers a formalistic approach to the production and teaching of poetry writing in the collegiate setting.

### 4.3.2 Richard Hugo's Euphonicism

Hugo's self-report on how to write poetry differs significantly from Chappell's approach on poetry writing. Whereas Chappell's self-report tends to be more theoretical, Hugo's advice on how to write poetry is more pragmatic, and he offers a number of practical suggestions on how to write poetry. At the beginning of Hugo's published self-report, Hugo clearly states his position on how to write poetry. According to Hugo, "When you start to write [poetry], you carry to the page one of two attitudes, though you may not be aware of it. One is that all music must conform to truth. The other, that all truth must conform to music" (3).[53] For Hugo, the way a word sounds "is infinitely more important than what is being said" (10). Thus, when a poet sits down to write poetry, Hugo believes a poet should "use words for the sake of their sound" (5), and nothing else. Indeed, Hugo thinks it is imperative for a poet to "depend on rhythm, tonality, and the music of language to hold things together" (5). Ultimately, Hugo's insistence on the way certain words "sound" together positions Hugo as an euphonicist in the production of poetry writing.

[53] See Walter Pater's "The School of Giorgione." Hugo paraphrases Pater, who writes, "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music" (111).

In the Preface to Hugo's self-report, Hugo confesses *The Triggering Town* is "not intended as a textbook" (xi). However, Hugo's self-report on how to write poetry could easily be used as a companion text in any poetry writing classroom. Importantly, Hugo considers himself to be "a poet of process," and because of this, Hugo "unavoidably" offers his "way of writing" (xii). By offering his advice on poetry writing processes, Hugo hopes "the student will be able to develop his or her own [processes] later on" (xii). Still, Hugo is adamant that, "You'll never be a poet until you realize that everything I say today [ . . . ] is wrong" (3). For Hugo, "the most important things a poet will learn about writing are from himself [sic] in the process" (33). Like Chappell, Hugo views poetry writing as a process of self-discovery, a process of finding what "works" best for the poet.

After receiving concurrence from the peer-group mentor on five poetry writing strategies extracted from Hugo's *Triggering Town*, the researcher wrote five poems using Hugo's advice on how to write poetry.[54] The following strategies (e.g., activities) were extracted from Hugo's self-report on how to write poetry:

- Activity #6 – For this activity, write a poem in a form that belongs to you and conforms to your own sense of rhythm (4-5).
- Activity #7 – For this activity, write a poem using multisyllabic words that show "compassion, tenderness, and tranquility" (8). Alternatively, you may write a poem using monosyllabic words that "show rigidity, honesty, and toughness" (9).

[54] See Appendix D for a detailed record on the five strategies extracted from Hugo's self-report.

- Activity #8 – For this activity, "take someone you emotionally trust, a friend or a lover, to a town you like the looks of but know little about, and show your companion around the town in the poem" (13).
- Activity #9 – For this activity, use five nouns, verbs, and adjectives from three lists and write a poem using Roethke's "rules" (30).
- Activity #10 – For this activity, write and/or revise a poem you have previously written using one or more of Hugo's "rules" from Chapter Five ("Nuts and Bolts").

Table 5 highlights the textual features of poetry written by the researcher using five strategies extracted from Hugo's self-report.[55]

Table 5
Textual Overview of Poetry Writing Using Hugo's Self-Report

| Title of Poem (Appendix G) | Activity Used (Appendix D) | Word Count | Line Count | Drafts Written | Time Spent Writing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| "Office Hours" | Hugo Activity #1 | 34 | 19 | 3 | 35 minutes |
| "Red October" | Hugo Activity #2 | 77 (mono) | 15 | 3 | 55 minutes |
| | | 71 (poly) | 15 | 1 | 13 minutes |
| "Mercer County" | Hugo Activity #3 | 137 | 22 | 3 | 32 minutes |
| "Roethke's List" | Hugo Activity #4 | 71 | 18 | 1 | 23 minutes |
| "As We Lay Dying" | Hugo Activity #5 | 108 | 15 | 2 | 30 minutes |

[55] See Appendix G for poetry written by the researcher using five strategies extracted from Hugo's self-report.

In order to write poetry, Hugo believes it is necessary to "assume that the next thing you put down belongs not for reasons of logic, good sense, or narrative development, but because you put it there" (5). Although Hugo admits he can't defend it, he believes, "when [a] poem is coming on with imaginative honesty, there is some correspondence of the form to psychic rhythms in the poet" (31). Hugo equates "imaginative honesty" with "music," and he believes "imaginative honesty" takes priority over content or form: "say nothing and just make music and you'll find plenty to say" (31). In an attempt to write a poem with "imaginative honesty," the first strategy extracted from Hugo's self-report asks the respondent, "Write a poem in a form that belongs to you and conforms to your own sense of rhythm" (see Appendix D, Activity #1). Using this strategy to produce poetry writing, the researcher wrote the following poem:

Office Hours
I used to
work in an
office with
sixteen small
cubicles
occupied
by seven
syllables
cut short
whenever

a student

or teacher

stood in the

doorway and

decided

to enter

the large,

yellow

room.

Hugo's empowering strategies on how to write poetry rejects the notion of an "ideal" reader, and Hugo explicitly informs the young poet, "Never worry about the reader, what the reader can [or cannot] understand" (5). In fact, Hugo asks the novice poet to perform the following task: "When you are writing, glance over your shoulder, and you'll find there is no reader. Just you and the page. Feel lonely? Good" (5).

Unlike Chappell, Hugo does not believe "ideal" readers or "ideal" texts exist. Additionally, Hugo does *not* believe, "reading and writing have a close and important relationship" (xi). For Hugo, "a writer learns from reading possibilities of technique, ways of execution, phrasing, rhythm, tonality, pace" (xi). But beyond these learned "possibilities," Hugo is doubtful that, "by study one [can] discover and ingest some secret ingredient of literature that [will] find its way into one's own work" (xi). Certainly, "reading is important," but reading is important *only* "if it excites the imagination" (xi). For Hugo, "one learns to write [poetry] only by writing" (xi). This is an important

deviation from Chappell's formalism, and it positions Hugo's approach to poetry writing in a manner far removed from Chappell's advice on how to write poetry.

When writing, Hugo believes a poet should focus on the "sound" of language, particularly the ways that certain words "sound" together. For example, Hugo notes that "a student may love the sound of Yeats's 'Stumbling upon the blood dark track once more' and not know that the single-syllable word with a hard consonant ending is a unit of power in English" (32). According to Hugo, "that's one reason 'blood dark track' goes off like rifle shots" (32). For Hugo, the "sound" (e.g., phonetic structure) of the English language plays a pivotal role in poetry writing. Hugo believes that monosyllabic words have a tendency to "show rigidity, honesty, toughness, relentlessness, the world of harm unvarnished" (9). Conversely, "multisyllabic words have a way of softening the impact of language. With multisyllabic words we can show compassion, tenderness, and tranquility. With multisyllabic words we become more civilized" (8). Thus, in order to experiment with the "sound" of language, the researcher wrote a poem using mono- and poly-syllabic words. First, the researcher wrote a poem using monosyllabic words that "show rigidity, honesty, toughness," and "relentlessness" (9):

Red October
She stood near the door and
smoked fags while she
listened to jazz, her bathrobe
slightly open, lean against
the frame. In one hand she
held a black coffee cup, with

the other she reached for

the crown molding

stuck between the living

room and the kitchen floor.

She arched her back and

bent down, but on the trek

back up she lost a thought

in a large crack filled with

lint and dust on the floor.

Next, the researcher re-wrote “Red October” using multisyllabic words, thereby “softening the impact of language” (Hugo 8):

She stood in the doorway and

listened to Beethoven while she

smoked cigarettes, her bathrobe

slightly open. One arm held

a black coffee cup, the other

positioned loosely on her hip,

contrapposto, lean against the

frame. She arched her back and

bent down, reached for the

extension cord, but on the journey

back up she lost a thought

somewhere between a

voluminous crack filled

with lint and dust

on the floor.

Without "arguing" which version of "Red October" is better (admittedly, neither version is very "good"), Hugo believes the "sound" of language plays a pivotal role in the production of poetry writing. Thus, the way that poetry "sounds" is vitally more important than its content, or its form. For Hugo, the "sound" of a word should lead a poet from one word to the next.

Despite Hugo's conviction that "sound" is more important than poetry's content or its form, he nonetheless recognizes the importance of form in poetry writing. Although Hugo believes, "Formal verse can help the young poet locate things to say," he also believes formal verse can "obligate him [sic] to say things he [sic] wouldn't say except to fill out the form" (46-7). Hugo writes, "Some traditionalists seem to think that forms exist to be solved for their own sake, as if the poet is an engineer" (31). However, "If a poet finds himself [sic] solving the problems of a form simply for the sake of a challenge," then "he [sic] has the wrong form" (31). Nonetheless, Hugo believes "forms can be important," and he points out that Roethke "always returned to them" (31). In his self-report on how to write poetry, Hugo reprints an exercise he "borrowed" from Roethke, and Hugo admits that he (sometimes) gives the following exercise to his beginning poetry writing students:

| *Nouns* | *Verbs* | *Adjectives* |
|---|---|---|
| tamarack | to kiss | blue |
| throat | to curve | hot |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| belief | to swing | soft |
| rock | to ruin | tough |
| frog | to bite | important |
| dog | to cut | wavering |
| slag | to surprise | sharp |
| eye | to bruise | cool |
| cloud | to hug | red |
| mud | to say | leather |

Use five nouns, verbs, and adjectives from the above lists and write a poem as follows:

1. Four beats to the line (can vary)
2. Six lines to the stanza
3. Three stanzas
4. At least two internal and one external slant rhyme per stanza (full rhymes acceptable but not encouraged)
5. Maximum of two end stops per stanza
6. Clear English grammatical sentences (no tricks). All sentences must make sense.
7. The poem must be meaningless. (30)

Using the above strategy to write poetry, the researcher wrote the following poem:

Roethke's List

He stood on the

red tamarack and

waved the blue clouds
goodbye, bled the clowns
down with a mighty
sharp, important bite.

The slag in his eye
bruised his throat,
left him wavering
between a rock and
a tough belief that there
are no more surprises left.

When he fell, he
curved to the right,
hugged the mud all
through the night,
stayed til dawn and kissed
the soft, morning light.

Hugo is quick to remind us that form-based poetry may not work for some poets because the forms they use may not "belong" to them (31). Still, Hugo admits this exercise works, and he says many students end up writing "their best poem of the term" (31). This is largely due to the fact that a poet will inevitably abandon Roethke's "rules" and focus on the "sound" of language instead. During the production of this particular poem, the

researcher initially followed Roethke's rules as outlined in the exercise. However, as soon as the researcher felt like he had something to say, he abandoned the "rules" and wrote a poem which focused on the "sound" of the language instead.

In his approach on poetry writing, Hugo carries a strong conviction that, "the relation of the words to the subject must weaken and the relation of the words to the writer (you) must take on strength" (11). In other words, poets "must switch [their] allegiance from the triggering subject to the words" (12). For Hugo, a poet's familiarity with a subject can act as a hindrance, and this is largely due to the fact that, "At home, [a poet has] complicated emotional responses that defy sorting out" (12). Indeed, the strategy used to write "Roethke's List" is a successful strategy for producing poetry writing, partly because "real problems go away for a moment simply because they are ignored, and with the real problems gone the poet is free to say what he [sic] never expected and always wanted to say" (31). By following Roethke's "rules" in the above exercise, Hugo believes it is possible for a poet to move closer to a poem's "real" subject. However, the transition from a poem's "triggering town" to its real subject can be difficult because, "The poem is always in your hometown" (12). For this reason, Hugo recommends the following strategy on how to write poetry: "Take someone you emotionally trust, a friend or a lover, to a town you like the looks of but know little about, and show your companion around the town in the poem" (13). Hugo uses the term "town" symbolically, and it may (or may not) refer to an idea or an "actual" location. Using this strategy to write poetry, the researcher wrote the following poem:

Mercer County

I kissed my wife as we drove through

the winding roads of Mercer County.
Never been a stranger, always knew
when to be receptive, when to give love,
when to listen, who to speak to,
always knew when you shouldn't talk back.
The children on Butterworth Boulevard
never learned how to look both ways
when they cross the street,
down in Mercer County.
Never knew a stranger that worried
them or their folks out late at night,
card games at the grange, bets and
poker hands traded like baseball cards
the kids exchange in the town park
where all the people go, down in
Mercer County. They sing songs that
echo through the hills and the boroughs,
echoes through the break between
the rocks and the falls where
all the young lovers go,
down in Mercer County.

According to Hugo, "Our triggering subjects, like our words, come from obsessions we must submit to, whatever the social cost" (14). For Hugo, poetry writing is a process of

experimentation and discovery, and it is a process of unlocking the imagination: “Real experimentation is involved in every good poem because the poet searches for ways to unlock his [sic] imagination through trial and error” (33). Fortunately, Hugo’s self-report offers a number of useful strategies that novice poets might use to experiment and “unlock” their imagination in poetry writing.

Although Hugo recognizes his “rules” (39) for writing may not work for everyone, he nonetheless offers a number of helpful suggestions in his self-report on how to write poetry. Using one of the suggestions out of Hugo’s “Nuts and Bolts,” the researcher revised a poem he had previously written using Hugo’s “triggering town” as a strategy on how to write poetry (see Appendix D, Activity #5):

As We Lay Dying

When I listen closely I hear the
English walnuts fall from homes in
tops of trees that tower above a seasoned,
six-foot privacy fence weathered from
too much time in the sun. They drop like
pellets of hard rain in a bucket left outside
from late work in the yard, the patter of
little children’s feet running across an
unmopped linoleum floor, little seeds that
throw themselves to the Earth, commit silent
suicide, drop one by one to the ground,
*thick-thud, thick-thud, thick-thud,*

like the way we talk to one another, like

the way we don't talk, the silence broken by

these nuts that fall to the ground.

This particular poem was written using Hugo's "triggering town" as a strategy for producing poetry writing. After the poem was written, the researcher tried revising the poem according to the following advice: "End more than half your lines and more than two-thirds your sentences on words of one syllable" (39). After "[reading the] poem aloud many times" (39), there didn't seem to be anything "wrong" with the way it sounded (39).

Hugo's *Triggering Town* offers a number of useful strategies on how to write poetry which might be used in any collegiate poetry writing classroom. Whereas Chappell's self-report on poetry writing has a tendency to focus on poetic form and formal elements of style, Hugo believes it is necessary for a poet to focus on the "sound" of language instead. Although forms can be important, Hugo believes it is necessary for a poet to approach poetry writing in a way that does not consider "ideal" readers, or even the "quality" of the poet's "finished" product. By focusing on the way certain words sound together, Hugo positions himself as an euphonicist in the production and teaching of poetry writing.

### 4.3.3 William Stafford's Expressivism

Stafford's approach on poetry writing differs radically from Chappell's Formalism or Hugo's euphonicism. Whereas Chappell's self-report on how to write poetry tends to focus on poetic form and the formal elements of style, Hugo's approach to writing is centered on the way certain words "sound" together. Stafford, however, offers

a third approach to the production and teaching of poetry writing, and it is an approach that hinges upon "experiences that resonate with the [student's] self, with the being we have become amidst our apparently random encounters with this alien world" (4). For Stafford, poetry writing "can touch into life a pattern in our feelings, a pattern not ordinarily roused by events that just *happen*, because what just happens is too random to bring about sustained feelings" (4). According to Stafford, a poet's "mental events are primary, and all explanations must accommodate to them" (5). Ultimately, Stafford's belief that a poet's thoughts, feelings, and experiences are of "primary" (5) importance serves to position Stafford as an Expressivist in the production and teaching of poetry writing.

In order to see what strategies might be applied to the teaching of poetry writing in the collegiate setting,[56] the researcher extracted the following five strategies (e.g., "activities") from William Stafford's self-report on how to write poetry:

- Activity #11 – For this activity, stare out of a window with a friend until you feel inspired to write a poem based upon the things you see, think, and feel (5-6).
- Activity #12 – For this activity, wake-up early in the morning, before anyone else is stirring. During this quiet interval in the morning, write a poem about "anything that occurs to [you]" (17).
- Activity #13 – For this activity, experiment with a new form of poetry writing. To get started on this task, try writing six tercets related by their subjects (98).
- Activity #14 – For this activity, write an English version of a poem that has been translated from a different language (102).

[56] See Appendix E for a detailed record of the five strategies extracted from Stafford's self-report.

- Activity #15 – For this activity, sit down and revise a poem you have previously written, one you consider to be "finished" (105).

After the researcher received concurrence from the peer-group mentor on the poetry writing strategies extracted from Stafford's self-report, the researcher wrote poetry using Stafford's strategies on how to write poetry. Table 6 provides a textual overview of the poetry written by the researcher using five poetry writing strategies extracted from Stafford's self-report on how to write poetry.[57]

Table 6
Textual Overview of Poetry Writing Using Stafford's Self-Report

| Title of Poem (Appendix H) | Activity Used (Appendix E) | Word Count | Line Count | Drafts Written | Time Spent Writing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| "Periscope Down" | Stafford Activity #1 | 112 | 14 | 4 | 165 minutes |
| "Dog Days" | Stafford Activity #2 | 109 | 21 | 2 | 41 minutes |
| "Roman Soldiers" | Stafford Activity #3 | 163 | 18 | 3 | 35 minutes |
| "Diana's Demesne" | Stafford Activity #4 | 103 | 17 | 1 | 23 minutes |
| "Simon Says" | Stafford Activity #5 | 47 | 19 | n/a | n/a |

In his self-report on how to write poetry, Stafford views poetry writing "as an exploration, a discovery of process" (114). According to Stafford, the place where "words come from, into consciousness, baffles me. Speaking or writing, the words bounce instantaneously into their context, and I am victimized by them, rather than controlling them" (57). Stafford doesn't think we "control" poetic language. On the

[57] See Appendix H for poetry written by the researcher using five strategies extracted from Stafford's self-report.

contrary, Stafford believes poetry reading and writing controls the reader and/or writer, respectively. Thus, when a poet sits down to write poetry, a poet "does not draw on a reservoir" (17). Instead, a poet must "accept anything that occurs" (17). For Stafford, "A writer is not so much someone who has something to say as he [sic] is someone who has found a process that will bring about new things" (17). Similar to Chappell's and Hugo's approaches, Stafford sees poetry writing as a process of discovery, and it is a process which will inevitably "bring about new things" (17).

Early in his self-report on how to write poetry, Stafford compares reading a poem to "looking out a window" with a friend (5). According to Stafford, reading or writing poetry is a lot like "a series of mental incidents, not predictable, never to be fully anticipated without the experience that comes about through following the sequence onward, point by point" (5). Indeed, Stafford views poetry writing as a "mysterious" (19) and "reckless encounter with whatever comes along" (67). When reading and writing poetry, Stafford believes it is important for a poet to realize, "It is not all your own ideas, and not all the other person's ideas. You toss [ideas] back and forth against a live backboard" (6). For Stafford, poetry reading and writing is a social activity, and it will always be "richer—more would happen—than if you had been alone" (5-6). For this reason, the first strategy extracted from Stafford's self-report asks the respondent to "stare out of a window with a friend until you feel inspired to write a poem based upon the things you see, think, and feel" (see Appendix E, Activity #1). Using this strategy to write poetry, the researcher wrote the following poem:

Periscope Down

I looked out the bedroom window and

struggled to see through the half-closed blinds,
struggled to see an elderly couple hold hands and
find their way together, struggled to see
a tough group of high-school kids
cross the street to smoke cigarettes, or
tell dirty jokes behind the dumpsters near the yard.
I sat naked on the metal bedframe, sheets in the wash,
and I struggled to see my neighbor do the same,
struggled to see him watch me and say, “See, I told you so,”
struggled to see how neighbors struggle, too,
especially when they sit naked on the frame,
look through their window, and
struggle to describe what they see.

According to Stafford, “Poetry is the kind of thing you have to see from the corner of your eye” (3). Indeed, poetry writing is a lot like looking out a window: “Your thinking will connect now and then to the scene, whenever something out there strikes your attention” (5). For Stafford, it is not only imperative for a poet to describe what the poet sees, thinks, and feels, but the poet must be receptive to “whatever comes along” (17).

Indeed, receptivity is an important concept in Stafford’s approach to poetry writing. In his self-report on how to write poetry, Stafford describes his poetry writing practices, and he writes, “during the war I found myself drawn to write meandering sequences of thoughts, or spun-out patterns of words, before the stove late, or in the early morning before work and before anyone else was stirring” (10). For Stafford, this “daily

practice" established a pattern which "prevails as [his] way to write—during a quiet interval, without felt obligation to do other than find [his] way from impulse to impulse" (10). For Stafford, having a quiet interval to write poetry offers an important way to "put down something" (18). Stafford believes that following this strategy "will help the next thing come" (18). When the process of "putting things down" is allowed to continue, Stafford finds, "things will occur to [him] that were not at all in [his] mind when [he] started" (18). In this a way, a poet does not follow a pre-determined script, as if the poet always knew what he or she wanted to say. Thus, in order to see if a "quiet interval" in the morning encouraged receptivity in the researcher's poetry writing, the researcher extracted the following strategy from Stafford's self-report on how to write poetry: "During a quiet interval in the morning, write a poem about anything that occurs to you" (17). Using this strategy to write poetry, the researcher wrote the following poem:

Dog Days
Dogs don't bark as loud as
people do in the morning.
They learn tricks to
please their masters,
give paw, roll over, play dead.
They do what they want,
sometimes they listen,
sometimes they do
what they're told.
At the end of the day

they know how to be

good girls and boys.

They've learned how to wait,

they know how to hold it in, and

they never forgot how to let it all go,

tip over the trash can, jump on

the couch or onto the bed,

get under the covers where

it's warm, and sleep, sleep,

sleep where it's never best to

wake the dogs that lie.

Although Stafford doesn't explicitly say so, this strategy for producing poetry writing has two important implications. First, it is important for poets to find the time of day when they produce their "best" work. For some, this may or may not be in the early hours of the morning. Second, it is important for poets to situate themselves in an environment where they can be receptive to their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. For Stafford, it is possible that "any distraction may harm the creating" (18). In this case, the researcher woke up early and tried writing a poem, but he wasn't feeling receptive to any ideas. A neighbor's barking dog, however, provided the researcher with the impetus he needed to write the poem. After he recorded this experience, the researcher could hear his wife stirring in the bedroom, and the next line of verse followed suit.

Stafford recognizes a symbiotic relationship between form and content in poetry writing, but he prioritizes a poet's personal experiences over poetic form or content.

According to Stafford, “Form or content will be validated by the writer’s feelings and by the convergent feelings of readers, who will be caught up in the common language” (42). Stafford rejects the idea that technique consists of “a proper ‘framework’” whereby the poet “must fit [his or her] specific feelings” (98). For Stafford, *feeling* always comes first. Thus, whenever Stafford sits down to write poetry, he does not try to “fit in any forms” (98). Instead, Stafford believes poetry writing requires “a kind of stance to take toward immediate feelings and thoughts while you’re writing” (98). Ultimately, the only authority a poet ever has “builds from the [poet’s] immediate experience” (63). Thus, in order to experiment with the interplay between “form” and “feeling,” and in order to describe the researcher’s own experience while writing poetry, the third strategy extracted from Stafford’s self-report asks the respondent to “experiment with a new form of poetry writing.” In order to get started on this task, the researcher wrote a poem in six tercets:

Roman Soldiers
Father and son left their flat on
a bicycle they found, a remnant from
yesterday’s trips into an unpopulated town.

They left the village together, on a bike they found,
the man in front, the child on a seat of his own as
they peddled their way to the uneventful town.

A rock in the road a driver swerved and missed,

but the bike and the man and the child he hit,
as they traveled toward the boring town.

The driver sped on, scoffed at the man and the boy
on their way to get supplies for their pleasant
way of life away from the simple town.

The man and child wiped the dust and the dirt
off each other, left the bike in a ditch and
walked the rest of the way to the lively town.

The bike it stayed and there it lays, caught in
an undergrowth of weeds on the side of
the road which leads to the bustling town.

Although the researcher worked with a predetermined form for the poem (e.g., a tercet), the researcher experienced some difficulty locating a subject for the poem. In an attempt to facilitate Stafford's notion of "receptivity," the researcher looked around the room until he found a subject he could write about. Using a framed photograph hanging on the wall as a type of "window," the researcher described what he imagined might happen in the photograph. In this way, the researcher was able to complete this strategy on how to write poetry.

Importantly, Stafford believes poetry writing "draws from nearby things" (65). Through a process of experiential discovery, a poem eventually "becomes a found poem

amid the elements that happen to be there" (65). Indeed, "Periscope Down," "Dog Days," and "Roman Soldiers" were all written by the researcher using "real" subjects physically situated in (or near) the researcher's home environment. For Stafford, "A poem is anything said in such a way as to invite from the hearer or reader a certain kind of attention" (61). Admittedly, "This way of identifying a poem shies away from using content or form, or any neat means. It is not meter or rhyme, or any easily seen pattern, or any selected kind of content" (61). Instead, poetry is "some kind of signal to the receiver that what is going on will be a performance that merits an alertness about life right at the time of living it" (61). For Stafford, poetry is "all around us" (61). Indeed, "Not a few, but everyone, makes art" (48).

In an interview conducted by Cynthia Lofsness, Lofsness asks Stafford if he has done any translating (102). Stafford answers he has "recently been engaged in translating from the Urdu," and he tries "to make an English poem out of it" (102). Although Stafford does not expressly recommend this strategy for poetry writing, it seems likely this strategy on how to write poetry might be useful for novice poets who are not accustomed to writing poetry in English. After translating Catullus' "Hymn to Diana" from Latin into English, the researcher wrote an English version of Catullus' poem (see Appendix E, Activity #4):

Diana's Demesne
The boys and girls sing
a song of celebration to
Diana, goddess of the hunt,
patron saint to the streams

and the creeks and the ponds in
virgin fields where the fern gives
life to the rocks and the trees and
the birds in the sky. They sing
a song of praise and lamentation,
happy on the days when
the moon's belly is full,
happy on the days when
there's enough grain in the store,
happy when they know she'll be gone too,
gone like the sun when she goes down,
only to return again, renewed, ripe with
fresh grains for the store.

Stafford's expressive approach on poetry writing may not work for all students all the time. However, if student-writers are not comfortable writing poetry in English, beginning poets might use an English translation of a poem which has been written in another language, and they might use that translation as a starting point for writing poetry of their own.

Toward the end of his interview with Lofsness, Stafford is asked if he has ever gone back and worked on a poem he considered to be "finished" (105). Stafford responds with a resolute "no," and he explains, "[finished] poems always just seem to have been written by somebody else" (105). Nonetheless, Stafford concedes in the very same interview, "I don't know when a work is finished…it's always subject to revision" (105).

In a separate interview with William Heyen and Al Poulin, Heyen claims that Stafford doesn't care to revise any of the poetry he has already written (146). Stafford agrees, and he admits that "he's not an expert on those older ones anymore" (146). In order to see if a "finished" poem could be revised (e.g., improved) any further, the researcher selected what he believes to be one of his earliest, "best" poems:

Simon Says
There is a spot
on the couch
at home
where the dog
likes to sit
and pretend
that the couch
is a stamp
on God's envelope
which must be licked
and licked
like Christ on the cross.
I sit in the shadow
of his warmth.
*Good boy*.

Next, the researcher tried revising the poem for improvement:

There is a spot

on the couch

at home

where the dog

likes to sit

and pretend

that the spot

is a stamp

on God's

envelope

which must

be licked

and licked

like Christ

on the cross.

I sit in the

shadow of

his warmth.

*Good boy*.

Outside of adding three additional line breaks and changing one word from "couch" back to "spot," the researcher felt like there wasn't anything else he could add to this older, "finished" poem. The researcher made these revisions largely because there seemed to be a natural pause, or emphasis, that didn't exist in the original version. Although the changes were relatively small, it should be noted here that Stafford believes, "intention

endangers creation" (33). According to Stafford, "the accumulated results, the convenience, and the wide acceptance of literary scholarship as a way of approaching individual works create a hazard for all who would understand how art, the doing of it, comes about" (37). Thus, whenever someone (inevitably) asks Stafford, "How do you write a poem?," Stafford responds that many poets will "send forth many speculations and reasons" (32). But "No matter how fast and how far they go, it is never enough" (32).

Stafford's advice on how to write poetry diverges radically from Fred Chappell's Formalism and Richard Hugo's euphonicism. Although poetic form and the "sound" of language are important to all three of the expert-practitioners' examined in this study, Stafford's approach to poetry writing insists upon the primacy of a poet's thoughts, feelings, and personal experience as paramount to producing poetry writing. In this way, Stafford's approach on how to write poetry is one we may succinctly describe as an expressivist approach on how to write poetry.

### 4.4 Concluding Remarks

Without judging the quality of the poetry produced from this performance-based study on how to write poetry, it is important to recognize that each of the fifteen strategies used in this study proved to be useful for producing poetry writing. Equally important is the idea that poets will experience different results using the strategies outlined here. In other words, some strategies for producing poetry writing will be more effective (e.g., successful) than others. Nonetheless, each of the strategies examined in this study proved to be useful for working with invention, content, and form in poetry writing. In addition, a conventional, content-based analysis on the self-reports from three expert-practitioners on how to write poetry lends overwhelming support to the idea that

instructors of poetry writing may apply formal, euphonic, and/or expressive approaches toward the teaching of poetry writing in the academic setting. In the chapter that follows, I discuss the implications these three approaches might have on teaching poetry writing in today's collegiate setting.

# CHAPTER 5

# DISCUSSION

> As creative writers, we know we have writing processes. We may guard them, worry about them, nurture them, or wrestle with them, but the novice writer knows little about the composing issues that practitioners take for granted. Our knowledge has been gained through years of hard work, and, as teachers of creative writing, we must commit ourselves to sharing our knowledge with our students.
>
> —Wendy Bishop, *Released Into Language* 15

> The vision was important, but more important was *stepping back* from it, finding a dramatic context that would give it meaning. I learned in those hours to subject my vision to analysis and to make analysis part of the visionary process. The vision was incomplete without analysis, but without vision analysis was pointless.
>
> —Fred Chappell, *Plow Naked* 16

## 5.1 Introduction to the Discussion

Chapter Four addressed the research question, "What can we learn from experienced poets' self-reports that may be applied to the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting?" In this chapter, I discuss some implications that research on writers' self-reports might have for teaching poetry writing. In addition to the fifteen strategies extracted from three expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry, the researcher identified three axiologies we might apply toward the teaching of poetry writing: Formalism, euphonicism, and expressivism. A content-based analysis of three expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry lends overwhelming support to the idea that instructors on poetry writing might teach poetry writing from formal, euphonic, and/or expressive axiologies. In this chapter, I discuss some implications these three approaches might have on teaching poetry writing in the university setting. In addition to a discussion on the three axiological approaches we might apply toward the

teaching of poetry writing in the university setting, I also discuss some general recommendations we can make to improve poetry writing instruction. Using poetry writing as a research method to conduct research on expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry, we might be able to improve some of the ways poetry writing is currently being taught in the university setting.

### 5.2 Teaching Poetry Writing in the Twenty-first Century

Based upon the results (e.g., co-constructions) of this performance-based study on experienced writers' self-reports on how to write poetry, a number of recommendations can be made to improve some of the ways poetry writing is currently being taught in the university setting. First and foremost, instructors of poetry writing may wish to adopt expert-practitioners' self-reports as instructional materials on the teaching of poetry writing. In the poetry writing workshops I have taken in the past, none of the instructors who taught these courses used published writers' self-reports to explain the important choices that experienced writers make when they produce the poetry they write. Although published writers' self-reports should not be used as the only guide on how to write poetry in the poetry writing classroom, the insights experienced writers self-disclose on their professional writing practices can help novice poets develop and refine their poetry writing practices. Despite Hugo's conviction what "works" for him in poetry writing may not be useful for everyone, all five of the strategies extracted from Hugo's self-report on how to write poetry proved to be extremely useful to the researcher for producing poetry writing. In fact, as I have (hopefully) demonstrated in this performance-based study on poetry writing, it is possible to write poetry using all fifteen of the strategies extracted from the self-reports examined in this study. Thus, one of the ways we might improve the

teaching of poetry writing in the university setting is by asking instructors to develop a set of poetry writing strategies that might help facilitate the production of poetry writing.[58] An even better recommendation for poetry writing instructors would ask them to consider adopting expert-practitioners' self-reports as instructional texts in the poetry writing classrooms they teach. Although expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry should not be used as the only instructional materials in a poetry writing classroom, these self-reports may be used to supplement the coursework and writing instruction that typically occur in poetry writing workshops. Importantly, all three of the self-reports examined in this study contain useful information for working with invention, content, and form in poetry writing. Thus, by actually doing what expert-practitioners' self-disclose in their published self-reports on how to write poetry, we might be able to improve the workshop model in creative writing.

Second, none of the expert-practitioners examined in this study make the recommendation that novice practitioners should keep a small journal or notebook to keep a record of their ideas on poetry writing. On multiple occasions, the researcher was engaged in some other activity when he had "a good idea" or "a good line" for a poem. Too often, the researcher was unable to write poetry, largely because he didn't have the means to write down his ideas. Two instances of this moment happened while the researcher was driving his car. Asking students (and teachers, too) to keep a pen and a notebook accessible *at all times* is an important recommendation we can make for any teaching writing classroom, but especially poetry writing. In the case of the researcher's own poetry writing practices, the researcher discovered that he wrote his "best" poetry

[58] Dunning and Stafford co-authored *Getting the Knack*, a book with exercises and examples on how to write poetry.

when he felt "inspired" to write it, and this happened often after reading and thinking about published poetry that he read. Too often, this moment of poetic inspiration was fleeting, and it rarely lasted long enough to "jot down" all of his ideas. Thus, in order to produce "best" poetry writing, it is important for novice poets to write (or type) their ideas, not only when they might occur to them, but especially when they are feeling particularly receptive to a "fleeting moment" of poetic inspiration.

Obviously, teachers of poetry writing may wish to consider using all fifteen of the poetry writing strategies examined in this study. However, some instructors of poetry writing may find it more useful to consider some of the ways they might approach the teaching of poetry writing. In Richard Fulkerson's essay, "Four Philosophies of Composition," Fulkerson draws upon M. H. Abrams's four theories of literature and literary criticism, and he argues, "Abrams's four theories might also be relevant to composition" (343). Building upon an argument made by Abrams's in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, Fulkerson postulates that four distinct philosophies—the formal, the expressive, the mimetic, and the rhetorical—provide "a description of the composition process and a method of evaluating the composed product" (343). Fulkerson writes:

> [ . . . ] this four-part perspective helps give a coherent view of what goes on in composition classes. All four philosophies exist in practice. They give rise to vastly different ways of judging student writing, vastly different courses to lead students to produce such writing, vastly different textbooks and journal articles. Moreover, the perspective helps to clarify, though not to resolve, a number of the major controversies in the field,

> including the "back-to-the-basics" cry and the propriety of dialectal variations in student writing. (343-44)

Fulkerson defines what each of these four philosophies might mean for teaching composition writing, but his work may also have important implications for teaching poetry writing.

Drawing upon Abrams's conception of objective criticism, Fulkerson argues, "Adherents of formalist theories judge student work primarily by whether it shows certain internal forms," and "the most common type of formalist value theory is a grammatical one: good writing is 'correct' writing at the sentence level" (344). Thus, formal approaches on writing permit instructors to "take a pair of passages and determine which is the better embodiment of 'semantic intent'—without reference to a reader, or to the writer using them, or to the reality they reflect" (344). Fulkerson adopts Abrams's "objectivism," but he renames it "formalism." Next, Fulkerson defines expressionism, (e.g., expressivism), and he defines it as "writing that is about personal subjects" (345), and it is a philosophy which prioritizes the experience of writers' writing (343). Fulkerson retains Abrams's terminology for the expressive, and he notes a key feature of expressive philosophy includes "an interesting, credible, honest, and personal voice" in writing (345). Fulkerson keeps Abrams's terminology for a third philosophy, the mimetic, and this philosophy emphasizes a "correspondence with 'reality'" (343). According to Fulkerson, mimetic philosophy suggests "a clear connection" between "good writing and good thinking" (345). Fulkerson renames Abrams's fourth category from the "pragmatic" to the "rhetorical," and he writes, "Any theory making the reader primary and judging literature by its effect, Abrams labels pragmatic [e.g. rhetorical]"

(343). According to Fulkerson, a rhetorical philosophy assumes "good writing is writing adapted to achieve the desired effect on the desired audience. If the same verbal construct is directed to a different audience, then it may have to be evaluated differently" (346).

Both Abrams's and Fulkerson's arguments have important implications for teaching students how to write poetry. A close analysis of three expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry lends credence to the idea that instructors of poetry writing might adopt three axiological approaches on how to write poetry: Formalistic, euphonicist, and expressivist. In agreement with Fulkerson, I define formalism as an axiology which emphasizes "the internal relationships within the artifact" (343). Additionally, I define expressivism as a writing philosophy which "emphasizes the writer," but also as a philosophy which insists upon "the personal views of the artist" (343). For the dual purpose of analysis and discussion, I adopt Fulkerson's conception of rhetorical (e.g., "pragmatic") philosophy, but I rename it euphonicism in order to emphasize the euphonistic (or phonetic) component of transactional rhetoric. Thus, I define euphonicism as an axiology which emphasizes the sound of verbal constructs on readers and/or listeners within a rhetorical (e.g., situational) context.

As we have seen in each of the writer's self-reports examined in this study, Fulkerson's categories on writing has important implications for teaching poetry writing in the academic setting. As mentioned previously, instructors of poetry writing may wish to adopt formal, euphonic, or expressive approaches on teaching poetry writing. All three of these approaches on teaching poetry writing have their merits, but none of them are without their potential drawbacks or concerns. In addition, none of the axiological approaches identified here are mutually exclusive. In other words, instructors on poetry

writing may wish to use a combination of formal, euphonic and/or expressive approaches when they teach their students how to write poetry. By themselves, none of the axiological approaches identified in this chapter offer the "best" way to teach poetry writing. In this regard, it is not my intention to argue for one axiology over another. Nor do I wish to imply these are the only three axiological approaches instructors might use to teach poetry writing. Further research on experienced writers' self-reports will likely reveal there are additional axiological approaches on how to write poetry. My only claim here is the idea that these three approaches offer important frameworks for teaching students how to write poetry.

Certainly, it is incumbent upon poetry writing instructors to determine which combination of these approaches works best for the students they teach. In the sub-sections that follow, I consider how formal, euphonic, and expressive approaches might function if instructors were to adopt one of these frameworks in their poetry writing classrooms. By researching expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry, and by using poetry writing as a research method to test experienced poets' self-reports on how to write poetry, we may be able to improve some of the ways poetry writing is currently being taught in the university setting.

### 5.2.1 Formal Approaches on Teaching Poetry Writing

Instructors who use formal approaches on teaching poetry writing will focus on teaching poetic form and formal elements of style in poetry writing. In addition, formal approaches to teaching poetry writing will generally rely upon New Critical methods to critique student poetry writing. In order to facilitate the production of "best" poetry writing, formalists are most likely to "model" poetic elements of style that expert-

practitioners actually use in their published poetry writing. For this reason, students will likely be required to read poetry written by experienced (e.g., published) poets. There are a number of excellent anthologies on poetry writing, and instructors who adopt formal approaches on teaching poetry writing will likely consider an anthology on published poetry that students might read for literary models (e.g., examples) of "good" poetry writing.

Of course, poetry writing instructors are free to use whatever instructional materials they think work best for their students. My only claim here is that instructors who use poetic texts as "literary models" will fall within a formal tradition of poetry writing. For this reason, instructors who adopt formal approaches on teaching poetry writing may wish to consider adopting Fred Chappell's *Plow Naked* as a supplemental text on how to write poetry. In this regard, it may also be useful for students to read Chappell's poetry. In my own experience, there were a number of times when I was influenced by reading Chappell's self-report. One clear instance of the influence that reading poetry has on a writer happened while I wrote "Ode to Bardot." While reading Chappell's self-report, I was particularly influenced by the line, "mad fan belt." This phrase struck a resonant chord within me, and it is reflected in my own poetry writing: "[she] runs like an engine with a loose fan-belt stuck in high gear." Regardless of the literary or poetic texts that poetry writing instructors might ask their students to read, a formal approach to teaching poetry writing will likely implement "ideal" texts as literary models that represent "good" poetry writing, and these texts will likely influence the poetic texts that novice poets write.

With formalistic approaches to teaching poetry writing, instructors may (or may not) wish to read poetry out-loud to their students. Instructors who use formal approaches on teaching poetry writing may also wish to consider having their students write in a particular form or style. For instance, students might mimic the catalogue feature that Whitman or Ginsberg use in their poetry writing, or students might write poetry using other formal elements of style that they identify in the published poetry they read. Regardless of the assignments that formalistic instructors might ask their students to perform, formal approaches to teaching poetry writing will necessarily place pedagogical emphasis on teaching poetic form, modeling, and teaching formal elements of style as they relate to poetry writing.

### 5.2.2 Euphonic Approaches on Teaching Poetry Writing

Euphonic approaches on teaching poetry writing will necessarily focus on the "sound" of language, particularly the way that certain words "sound" together. Thus, euphonic approaches on teaching poetry writing will emphasize the phonetic components of a given language. This being the case, instructors who emphasize euphonic approaches on teaching poetry writing should ask their students to read poetry writing out-loud to their friends and classmates. In addition to having students read poetry out-loud, instructors who adopt euphonic approaches on teaching poetry writing may wish to consider reading poetry themselves, out-loud to their students. This might be poetry writing that the instructor, other students in the classroom, or expert-practitioners in the field have previously written and published. Regardless of *who* reads the poetry out-loud, euphonic approaches on teaching poetry writing will insist upon the primacy of the way poetry writing "sounds." For this reason, Richard Hugo's *The Triggering Town* offers an

ideal text to consider for instructors who teach from an euphonic axiology on poetry writing.

If euphonicists elect to have their students read poetry written by expert-practitioners in the field, this type of reading should always be done in the classroom (also, perhaps public readings, such as poetry-slams) where poetry can be heard out-loud. Doing so will help students develop authority as novice poets, and it will help students develop an "ear" for the sound of poetic language. Finally, reading poetry writing out-loud will provide an important opportunity for students to receive critical feedback and large-group discussion on the poetry they read and write. In addition, this method will help students pay close attention to the work that they must read aloud. Since the way poetry writing sounds is of primary importance to an euphonicist, euphonic approaches on teaching poetry writing might wish to adopt New Critical and/or Reader-response methods for reading and responding to student poetry writing.

### 5.2.3 Expressive Approaches on Teaching Poetry Writing

Expressive approaches on teaching poetry writing will insist upon the lived experience of student-writers producing poetic texts. Although poetic form, formal elements of style, and the "sound" of language may be important to all poetry writing instructors (regardless of the axiological approach they might use), instructors who teach from an expressive axiology will place primary emphasis on the student-writers' thoughts, feelings, and "real-world" experiences, particularly when students sit down to write poetry. In this regard, William Stafford's *Writing the Australian Crawl* is an important text suited for classrooms that might use expressive approaches on how to write poetry. This is an important deviation from Chappell's formalism, and Stafford's

conviction that “everyone makes art” serves to construct Stafford’s position on poetry writing as one which insists upon the primacy of a poet’s feelings and lived experience.

Since expressive approaches on teaching poetry writing insist upon the student-writer’s thoughts, feelings, and lived experiences, instructors who adopt expressive approaches on teaching poetry writing must be receptive to the poetry their students read and write. For this reason, instructors who adopt an expressive approach on teaching poetry writing may wish to avoid New Critical approaches on reading and interpreting student texts. Although Expressivists may wish to include formal or euphonic approaches in their teaching methods, such as the inclusion of modeling and/or the phonetic expression of “ideal” texts, expressive instructors on poetry writing should avoid New Critical approaches when responding to student poetry writing. Instead, expressive instructors on how to write poetry may wish to consider alternative reading and response methods, such as Reader-response. Instructors may also wish to emphasize self-evaluation using some sort of rubric designed by students. Finally, teachers who adopt an expressive approach on how to write poetry should spend class time getting to know their students on a personal level. This kind of personal interaction will help students find ideas that they might write about. In doing so, instructors may be able to find important ways they can help their students with their poetry writing.

**5.3 Future Directions**

It would be interesting to see if other people are able to use the fifteen poetry writing strategies extracted from Chappell, Hugo, and Stafford’s self-reports on how to write poetry. An investigation similar to the one I am proposing here would require numerous participants who are willing (and able) to dedicate large amounts of time to

formal research on poetry writing. In addition, it would be interesting to see how poetry writing classrooms are actually being taught in the university setting. Certainly, we need to conduct more research on poetry writing (in general) and teaching poetry writing (in particular). Empirically-driven (e.g., descriptive) research offers some important research methodologies (i.e., classroom observations, surveys, and qualitative interviews) we might use in order to see how poetry writing is being taught in the university setting. However, these methods are not suitable for conducting research on poetry writing practices in creative writing studies. Instead, performance-based (or arts-based) research methodologies are the preferred methods for conducting research on writing in creative or artistic endeavors.

Finally, there needs to be more research on expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry. After all, the research conducted here only considers published self-reports from three expert-practitioners. Certainly, there is a wide array of expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry that require additional testing. By conducting more performance-based research on experienced writers' self-reports on how to write poetry, we may come closer to understanding some of the strategies that experienced poets use to produce the poetry that they write. In turn, by testing additional self-reports, we may identify new approaches we may use to further improve the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting. By testing experienced poets' self-reports on how to write poetry, we may be able to make new recommendations for the poetry writing classroom that might further enhance the workshop model in creative writing studies.

## 5.4 Concluding Remarks

This performance-based study on poetry writing examined three expert-practitioners' self-reports—Fred Chappell's *Plow Naked*, Richard Hugo's *The Triggering Town*, and William Stafford's *Writing the Australian Crawl* —on how to write poetry. All fifteen of the poetry writing strategies extracted from three expert-practitioners' self-reports on how to write poetry proved to be useful to the researcher for working with invention, content, and form in poetry writing. In addition, a conventional, content-based analysis of three experienced poets' self-reports yields some important recommendations we might apply toward the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting. By conducting additional research on experienced writers' self-reports on how to write poetry, we may find new insights we can use to further improve the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting.

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## Appendix A

SAMPLE JOURNAL ENTRY

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

## Appendix B

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

I was born to a blue-collar family in 1974, the youngest of four brothers. I spent the earliest part of my childhood in Elgin, Illinois. When I was nine years old, my family moved to Blacksburg, Virginia, and that is the place where I have spent most of my adult life.

Since an early age, I've always enjoyed reading and writing. The first book I ever read (without any help) was *Snow*, by Roy McKie and P. D. Eastman. The second book I ever read (the words were bigger, so I needed help) was *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, by Shel Silverstein. I can plainly recall my kindergarten teacher, Ms. Johnson, sitting on the floor of my kindergarten class. We all sat in a drum-circle, catty-cornered with our legs criss-crossed. Every time Ms. Johnson finished reading one of Silverstein's poems, she would reach for her tiny drum and mimic the poet's beat.

As I grew older, my interest in reading and writing grew. My fifth grade teacher encouraged me to submit a short-story I wrote to a writing contest, and it won second place. It was published, and I'm told a copy of it exists in my elementary school library. Throughout my formal education, I continued to read and write stories outside of school. But it wasn't until high school that I began to develop a deep thirst for poetry. Upon reading "Since Feeling is First" by E. E. Cummings, I memorized the poem immediately.

Throughout my undergraduate studies, I took a number of English courses, not because I had to, but because I wanted to. Two of these courses were workshops in creative writing. In both of these courses, students were required to write two poems every week. For our final grade, we were required to submit fifteen of our "best" poems that we wrote over the course of the semester. I did well in these courses, but I've always wondered if they could have been taught differently.

After a brief (seven years) stint with the Army, I applied to graduate school for a master's degree in English. While attending graduate school, I enrolled in two more creative writing workshops. While taking one of these workshops, I submitted a chapbook to a poetry writing contest, and it won second place. Feeling confident, I submitted a different poem I wrote to a publisher in Denver, Colorado. Three weeks later, I received a letter from the editor, and the poem was accepted for publication. Finally, while finishing graduate school, I submitted yet another poem I wrote, this one to a different publisher, and this poem was also accepted for publication. By the time I finished my master's degree in American literature, I was beginning to feel like a novice poet.

Since 2010, I haven't had much time to write or publish any poetry. My interest in poetry writing, however, has not diminished. Although some readers might consider a dissertation on poetry writing to be too narcissistic as a suitable topic for research, I'm very interested in exploring the ways we might be able to improve the teaching of poetry writing in the university setting. Looking back on my own poetry writing experiences, I

can see how many instructors have taught creative writing. I can also see how I would have (sometimes) taught these courses differently.

Despite all the ambiguity surrounding the teaching and production of poetry writing in the collegiate setting, it is possible for a researcher to study the act of invention in poetry writing. One way we might accomplish this goal is by actually doing what experienced poets say they do when they sit down to write poetry. Admittedly, a project like the one I'm describing would be fun. And while we're at it, we might even be able to improve some of the ways that poetry writing is currently being taught in the academic setting.

Makes sense to me.

## Appendix C

STRATEGIES EXTRACTED FROM CHAPPELL'S SELF-REPORT

Chappell Activity #1
9/14/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

Fred Chappell defines "best poetry" as "lines with the best use of language, [lines] that most honestly engage the poet's feelings and intellect" (2). In addition, a poet must find a topic that is "imperative to write about" (16). But before a poet can find a suitable topic to write about, the poet must determine whether or not there is something important to say (26). Next, the poet must decide the best way to say it (26). Once the poet decides there is something to say, the poet "must choose a form and a manner in which to ply his [sic] blandishments upon his [sic] subject matter" (28). After that, poetry writing is "only a matter of intensive clerical labor, interrupted by desperate momentary surges of inspiration" (26).

Although Chappell "generally knows" what he wants to write, whether he is "actually able to write it or not is impossible to predict" (131). For Chappell, "the kind of attention that the inception of a poem requires is not always accessible" (27). Unfortunately, Chappell does not offer a specific strategy for accessing "the kind of attention" (27) that poetry writing requires.

For this activity, pick a line from a poem you have recently read. Use this line as the first line of a poem that you will write. When you are finished writing the poem, edit or delete the line that you borrowed from the poem you read.

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

I wrote "Apollo's Reign" using a line from Billy Collins' "More Than a Woman" (14-16). Collins' opening line of the poem, "Ever since I woke up today," attracted me because I woke up from sleeping the night before. In this case, I chose this poem because I could relate to the experience Collins was describing (e.g., waking up from sleep). My next idea for the poem also came directly from my experience. Laying in the bed where I slept, I could see an almond-sliver ray of sunlight shining through a blind, and I was anxious to get outside and see if the sun was "out." Upon stepping outside, however, a group of clouds blocked the sun. That is the precise moment I began writing this poem.

Beginning with Collins' line, inspiration for "Apollo's Reign" came rapidly. I began writing the poem at 10:19am, and the writing session lasted until 10:35am. At that time I walked away from the poem, but as soon as I stood up, I sat back down and began revising it. The second draft of this poem was written between 10:36-10:52am. Two subsequent revisions to the poem lasted three minutes each. The following day, I shared

"Apollo's Reign" with a colleague, and he recommended some minor changes to the poem. I liked his ideas, so I followed his advice. After an additional five minutes of revision, I abandoned the poem and left it as it exists now.

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

This activity is extremely useful for getting started on writing poetry of our own. When faced with the difficult task of beginning a new poem, it is helpful to "borrow" a line from a previously published poet. In doing so, a writer is not faced with the daunting pressure of facing the blank page. In this regard, taking a line from another poet can be a useful way to begin a poem, while retaining a student writer's own voice. This is due to the fact that the poem-in-progress will already have an opening, but the novice writer will inevitably take the poem in a new direction. If a creative writing instructor is confronted with the problem that a student may not know how to begin a poem, a teacher may recommend this strategy to students as a way to help them get started on writing poetry of their own.

Chappell Activity #2
9/19/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

First and foremost, Chappell is a formalist. Throughout his published self-report, Chappell uses classical tropes to describe elements of "good" poetry writing. Early in his text, Chappell describes an experience he often shared with Reynolds Price: "Sometimes [Price] would use technical terms to criticize rhythms and tropes and I would never admit that I didn't know what those terms meant" (23). For Chappell, the poet must "find new approaches to old subjects" (26). Importantly, one may accomplish this feat by finding "new combinations of words and new arrangements of such poetic materials as rhyme, meter, caesura, and metaphor" (26-27).

For this activity, write a poem using a classical trope that you do not understand (i.e., amphibrach, capriccio, caesura, or zeugma).

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

For this poem, I wanted to experiment with alliteration using a zeugma. As I was driving to Pittsburgh one evening, I saw a girl walking down the side of the road. She reminded me of the "nose art" that the United States Air Force would sometimes paint on the nose of their war planes. That is the precise moment when I thought of the line "Brigitte Bardot, Marilyn Monroe, and B-52 bomb shells." I thought the line was a good use of alliteration, while at the same time it employs zeugma. The line stuck with me throughout the evening, and the following day I decided to write a poem while exploring this formal element of poetry writing.

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

When Chappell started writing poetry, he had to learn many of the classical tropes that experienced writers use when they read and critique poetry. Identifying these elements, and experimenting with them in our own writing, offers an effective strategy to write, discuss, and analyze the poetry that writers write. According to Chappell, "it is possible to absorb technique without being fully aware of it, to become proficient by dint of experience rather than by intellection" (Chappell 145). Certainly, it is possible for poetry to be written by someone unfamiliar with the formal elements of poetic style. Nonetheless, it is important for a poet to identify the elements of style that distinguish forms of poetry writing from others. Identifying the technical terms that poets use to discuss and analyze their poetry offers an effective strategy for novice writers to experiment with form, and therefore, the processes of writing a poem.

Chappell Activity #3
9/24/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

In an interview conducted by poetry editor Melissa Brannon, Chappell states that "change of form changes the material entirely" (131). For Chappell, "what seems to be kind of the same experience turns out not to be the same" (132).

For this activity, write a poem in couplets. Next, re-write the poem into three-line stanzas or quatrains. Does the meaning of the poem change?

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

I wrote an early draft of "The Blessed Fall" while reading Blake in the 1990s. But instead of reproducing "The Blessed Fall," I re-worked an early draft of the poem into a couplet. Since I was working off an older version of the poem, the couplet didn't take very long to write (about three minutes). Next, I re-worked the couplet into a different form. I wasn't sure what form the poem would take, nor did I wish to settle on a form before I started writing the new version. Once I started writing the newer version, the poem adopted the form of a quatrain. I don't know why the poem adopted this form, but it did. It might be worth noting that the second version of this poem, just like the first version, is also a rhyming poem. I typically don't write poetry that rhymes, but in this case, I think the use of rhyme and meter in the second version is a carry-over from the first version of the poem. The second poem was written immediately after the first, and it took much longer to write.

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

The meaning of the poem between versions most certainly changed. However, I think it is worth noting that some aspects of the poem (i.e., the rhyme and the meter) stayed very much the same. Although the theme of each poem is the same, the couplet suggests that, despite our best efforts, our physical desires will leave their mark upon our "souls." Often, this conflict between spirit and matter will cause spiritual and physical harm to our livelihood. Indeed, this is the cost of experience, as Blake's poetry so poignantly demonstrates. The second version of the poem, however, turns this "cost" around and posits that, regardless of our earthly desires, we must always "work hard" and "trust each other." The first version of the poem reads like a warning, whereas the second version of the poem reads like advice.

Re-writing poems into different forms is a good way for aspiring poets to practice their craft. Admittedly, this activity might work better if the novice writer uses a poem they abandoned long-ago. In my experience, writing a new poem based off of one that was recently written is much more difficult, likely because the experience is too fresh within

the writer's memory. In this particular case, I struggled with developing newer content, but the form of the poem helped me write more and finish it.

Chappell Activity #4
9/24/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

Chappell writes, "the only trouble with my experience is that it is I who report it" (37). Indeed, a poet "should support the [community] of poets in the way that doctors so famously support the medical [community]" (37). One way that poets can support their community is by reading poetry written by other writers. After all, "A poet is expected to respond warmly, thoroughly, and accurately to the poetry he reads" (37). For this reason, Chappell recommends a poet should:

> [ . . . ] keep scouting faithfully through the poetry books, the good old ones and the good old new ones. Because there are more things in heaven and earth than can be dreamed by the dullard, the barbarian, and the postmodern literary theorist. And not only more things, but better ones. (39)

For this activity, "scout" through some poems until you feel inspired to write a poem of your own.

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

I've always been fond of William Carlos Williams' poetry, so I decided to write a poem in his style. After I abandoned reading Blake's poetry, I read Williams until I was inspired to write this poem. Williams' poetry is descriptive, clean, and directly to the point. His poetry reminds me of neatly trimmed ribbons in a girl's hair, and I wanted to write a poem that conveyed his sense of style. Long, clean, and written quickly in two drafts, this poem lacks Williams' grace, yet I believe it maintains his style.

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

I actually struggled with this activity. Initially, I elected to "scout" through some of Blake's poetry, but he is a poet whose work I am intimately familiar with. I found that my familiarity with Blake (and the fact that I had already written poetry based upon his work) interfered with my ability to write any new poetry on the subject. Certainly, Chappell is right: reading poetry written by other poets is an effective way to write poetry of our own. However, I think this activity should be modified to include reading poetry that an aspiring poet isn't already familiar with. This will broaden a writer's experience, and it will give an aspiring poet some new ideas and forms to think about. I strongly believe that in order to write something new, we must be inspired by new ideas. Once I came to this conclusion, I abandoned Blake and searched for a poet whose work I didn't already know.

Chappell Activity #5
9/21/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

Chappell writes:

> Whatever the subject matter of the modern epic, and whatever the ostensible and announced themes, three secondary themes will inevitably be articulated because of the poet's choice of structure. Whether it does so consciously or not, the modern epic poem will deal with disintegration, disconnection, and loneliness. (90)

For this activity, write a poem that does **not** "deal with disintegration, disconnection, and loneliness."

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

As far as the "modern epic" poem is concerned, I think Chappell is right: the modern epic poem hinges upon "disintegration, disconnection, and loneliness." Nonetheless, Chappell is vague as to what constitutes a "modern epic" poem. In an important passage, Chappell defines the epic poem as "an enduring object because its subject matter is enduring, its subject matter being in the long run the very culture that demanded—or caused, or evolved—its production" (82). Nonetheless, Chappell makes an important distinction between poetry and epic poetry: "Poetry, and especially epic poetry, is supposed to be a more durable stuff than pizza; whether it can ever be as entertaining is a doubtful point" (82). For Chappell, "A culture chronicles itself" (80), and the poet is a chronicler of this phenomenon (81).

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

Although I find "Pocket Change" to be a mildly entertaining poem, I certainly don't consider it to be an "epic" poem. Unfortunately, a "modern epic" (i.e., *The Bridge*) is beyond the scope of research presented here. In the future, I wouldn't mind turning "The Blessed Fall" into an epic poem, but this is a lofty and ambitious goal. Still, I think it's important for some people to realize that not all poetry deals with "disintegration, disconnection, and loneliness." Although it may not be possible to write an epic poem that doesn't deal with these themes, it is certainly possible to write "ordinary" poetry that deals with integration, connection, and happiness. Arguably, "Pocket Change" may not deal with these themes, but I've written "happy" poems elsewhere, and I'm certain it can be done. At the end of the day, this exercise demonstrates that not all poetry is concerned with death and dissolution.

## Appendix D

STRATEGIES EXTRACTED FROM HUGO'S SELF-REPORT

Hugo Activity #1
10/14-15/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

Early in his self-report, Hugo states, "When you start to write, you carry to the page one of two attitudes, though you may not be aware of it. One is that all music must conform to truth. The other, that all truth must conform to music" (3). For Hugo, poetry is best when it conforms to a poet's own sense of rhythm (4). Thus, the way a word sounds "is infinitely more important than what is being said" (10). Later in his self-report, Hugo writes, "Formal verse can help the young poet locate things to say but [formal verse] can also obligate him to say things he wouldn't say except to fill out the form" (46-7). More often than not, rigid adherence to form often causes poets to write things they wouldn't normally write. Although Hugo says he can't defend it, Hugo believes "when [a] poem is coming on with imaginative honesty, there is some correspondence of the form to psychic rhythms in the poet" (31). Noting that Roethke returned to forms when he "felt himself going dry" (31), Hugo is quick to remind us that form-based poetry may not work for some poets because the forms they use may not "belong" to them. Ultimately, when a poet writes poetry, a poet should "use words for the sake of their sound" (5).

For this activity, write a poem in a form that belongs to you and conforms to your own sense of rhythm.

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

I wrote "Office Hours " in my office during one of my scheduled office hours. Inspiration for this poem came from two instructors that were whispering to each other while I was in the room. Since I was interested in trying to discern what my colleagues were saying, I couldn't stay focused on the task at hand. Instead, I elected to write a poem about the experience. I struggled with writing this poem, mostly because I wasn't in the "right" mood when I wrote it. In addition, and maybe because I wasn't in the right mood, I felt like the poem lacked a sense of rhythm. For this reason, I abandoned the idea of writing a poem in free-verse (my preferred form). Instead, I elected to develop a format that "belonged" to me. Each line of this poem consists of three syllables, with the exception of lines 9, 17, 18, and 19. In this case, the form of the poem definitely preceded—and helped determine—its content. Toward the end of the poem, I couldn't find any words (e.g., content) that maintained the form, so I changed the form instead.

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

Hugo is correct when he writes, “Formal verse can help the young poet locate things to say but [formal verse] can also obligate him to say things he wouldn’t say except to fill out the form” (46-7). When I had trouble writing this particular poem, I abandoned my focus on content and I focused on the form of the poem instead. I made this decision consciously when I realized that the first three lines of the poem could be broken into lines that consisted of three syllables. I adhered to the form, and the use of the word “small” following the word “sixteen” is a clear example of this case (line 4). This strategy allowed me to finish the poem, but I think it prevented me from expressing what I truly wanted to say. The poem doesn’t make much sense, and it is not very clear as to what, exactly, the subject is about. Nonetheless, Hugo’s strategy (e.g., filling out form vs. filling out content) seemed to work, and this technique “can help the young poet locate things to say.” After writing this poem, I continued to reflect on my “mood” and my feelings at the time when I wrote it. As mentioned earlier in this activity, I didn’t feel like I was in the right “mood” to write poetry on this particular occasion. This being the case, I think it is important for a poet to be in a particular mindset whenever the poet sits down to write poetry. If the poet is not in this “mindset,” an adherence to form over content can help the poet finish a poem that he or she has already started.

Hugo Activity #2
10/22/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

According to Hugo, "multisyllabic words have a way of softening the impact of language. With multisyllabic words we can show compassion, tenderness, and tranquility. With multisyllabic words we become more civilized" (8). Conversely, monosyllabic words "show rigidity, honesty, toughness, relentlessness, the world of harm unvarnished" (9).

For this activity, write a poem that shows "compassion, tenderness, and tranquility" using multisyllabic words. Alternatively, you may write a poem using monosyllabic words that "show rigidity, honesty, and toughness."

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

I struggled with this activity. Before writing this poem, I composed two lists of words. One list of consisted of monosyllabic words, whereas the other list consisted of polysyllabic words. After I compiled the two lists, I selected one of the lists and I tried writing a poem using the words from the list I composed. After I "finished" the monosyllabic draft, I tried writing a different version of the poem using polysyllabic words. I'm not satisfied with either version of the poem, for at least three reasons. First, I wasn't feeling inspired to write this poem. Second, I kept getting interrupted as I was trying to write. Finally, I wasn't following a particular form while writing this poem, and this strategy seemed to work on previous occasions.

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

Although I tend to agree with Hugo when he says that monosyllabic words "show rigidity, honesty, toughness, relentlessness, the world of harm unvarnished" (9), I think it is possible to write a poem that accomplishes the same goal with polysyllabic words. Unfortunately, I don't think this particular poem illustrates Hugo's point. For this activity, I feel like I had too much control over the language (e.g., words) that I used in this poem. Although this activity might work for some students, I only used a few words from the list I compiled, and the rest of the poem went in its own direction. The "direction" the poem went was clearly influenced by the words that I started with. In addition, I was not writing about a "real" or "concrete" experience. Although it is not necessary to write poetry from real experiences, I've found that it often helps. In addition, it is important to let a poem "decide" which sounds should follow next. Ultimately, and in line with Hugo, the "sound" of a word is likely more important than a word's actual meaning. In this regard, the number of syllables a word has may not be as important as the way that these individual syllables sound.

Hugo Activity #3
10/23-24/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

When writing poetry, Hugo believes that "the relation of the words to the subject must weaken and the relation of the words to the writer (you) must take on strength" (11). In other words, poets "must switch [their] allegiance from the triggering subject to the words" (12). While writing poetry, our familiarity with a subject can act as a hindrance, and this is due to the fact that, "At home [ . . . ] you have complicated emotional responses that defy sorting out" (12). For Hugo, it is necessary for a poet to move away from the triggering subject of a poem, but this is difficult because a "poem is always in your hometown" (12). One of the ways that a poet might move away from a poem's "trigger" is by actually going to "a town you've lived in all your life. You must take emotional possession of the town and so the town must be one that, for personal reasons I can't understand, you feel is your own town" (12).

For this activity, "take someone you emotionally trust, a friend or a lover, to a town you like the looks of but know little about, and show your companion around the town in the poem" (13).

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

I got the idea for "Mercer County" while I was driving through West Virginia with my wife. We passed a road sign for "Butterworth Boulevard," and I liked the sound of the words. I imagined an unpopulated town, one with little car traffic. Because I was driving, I asked my wife to write the following: "The children on Butterworth Boulevard never learned how to look both ways when they crossed the street." A week later, I wrote "Mercer County" based on this note I asked my wife to write.

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

This seems to be an effective strategy for writing poetry. My "trigger" for this poem was a road sign that I liked the sound of. I seem to get off the "real" subject early in the poem, but it eventually returns to a description of the activities that the townspeople do in this "fictional" town. Although I've never been to Mercer County, the place reminded me of my own hometown. Instead of writing a poem based on my hometown, a place where I likely have too much emotional attachment, it was much easier to imagine a town similar to my own and write a poem based upon this projection.

One additional thing that I noticed about completing this activity: I was inspired to write a note about the town and save it for later. Although Hugo doesn't recommend doing this, I think it is important for poets to quickly jot down lines that they might use in the poetry that they write. Most writers that I know keep a writing journal, I have one of my own

that I've carried around for years. I believe that anyone who writes poetry on a regular basis keeps a writing journal. If they don't, I believe they should, and this is a recommendation that should be applied to the teaching of creative writing.

Hugo Activity #4
10/24/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

In Chapter Four of Hugo's published self-report, Hugo outlines an exercise that Roethke required his students to perform on their final exam (29-31). According to Hugo, Roethke would assign demanding exercises, especially when "poems were coming in void of rhythm" (30). Hugo adopted this exercise for his own classes because he found that, "While the student is concentrating on the problems of [this] exercise, the real problems go away for a moment simply because they are ignored, and with the real problems gone the poet is free to say what he [sic] never expected and always wanted to say" (31).

For this activity:

> Use five nouns, verbs, and adjectives from the [below] lists and write a poem as follows:
>
> 8. Four beats to the line (can vary)
> 9. Six lines to the stanza
> 10. Three stanzas
> 11. At least two internal and one external slant rhyme per stanza (full rhymes acceptable but not encouraged)
> 12. Maximum of two end stops per stanza
> 13. Clear English grammatical sentences (no tricks). All sentences must make sense.
> 14. The poem must be meaningless.
>
> | *Nouns* | *Verbs* | *Adjectives* |
> |---|---|---|
> | tamarack | to kiss | blue |
> | throat | to curve | hot |
> | belief | to swing | soft |
> | rock | to ruin | tough |
> | frog | to bite | important |
> | dog | to cut | wavering |
> | slag | to surprise | sharp |
> | eye | to bruise | cool |
> | cloud | to hug | red |
> | mud | to say | leather (30) |

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

Initially, I was intimidated by this exercise. But once I wrote the first line of "Roethke's List," the rest of the poem came naturally. At the risk of sounding naive, I was

intimidated by this poem because I wasn't confident about the elements that the exercise required. For instance, I knew what a stanza was, but I wasn't exactly sure I knew what an "internal slant rhyme" was. Nor was I completely certain I knew how to explain the difference between "beats" and "meter." I did some quick "research" on-line, and I have a deeper understanding of the stylistic terms that poets use, and why they use them. Although this poem may not contain all of the elements that the exercise requires, I have a much better understanding of the stylistic terms that experienced poets use to describe the poetry that they write. In addition, I was emotionally detached from writing this particular poem. Instead, I was focused on following the instructions from the exercise, and this helped me complete the poem in a single draft.

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

This exercise is extremely useful for the teaching of creative writing, particularly for novice poets unfamiliar with formal elements of poetry writing. My knowledge on formal elements of style is lacking, but this exercise forced me to figure out what some of these formal elements mean. Once I gained a clearer understanding of what, exactly, was required from this exercise, I expanded my understanding on many formal elements of style. Hugo writes, "The point of this exercise will probably be clear to poets" (30). Indeed, poets need to know how to converse with other poets on the poetry that they write. In addition, this exercise required a strong focus on ensuring that the rules were strictly followed. This will necessarily make a poet emotionally detached from the poem, and this "emotional detachment" allows a poet to prioritize the form of a poem over its meaning or content. As Hugo notes earlier in his self-report, personal emotions can complicate the successful completion of a poem. By focusing on the formal elements of style, the "feeling" of a poem will stem naturally from its content.

Hugo Activity #5
10/24/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

Hugo begins his self-report by recognizing, "You'll never be a poet until you realize that everything I say [ . . . ] is wrong. It may be right for me, but it is wrong for you" (3). Since Hugo is "a poet of process" (xii), he realizes that the strategies that work for him may not work for all students. Nonetheless, "by offering [his] way of writing," he hopes that "the student will be able to develop his or her own [poetry writing process] later on" (xii). Although Hugo "once believed that by study one could discover and ingest some secret ingredient of literature that would later find its way into one's own work," he has since "come to believe that one learns to write only by writing" (xi). For Hugo, "when you are writing you must assume that the next thing you put down belongs not for reasons of logic, good sense, or narrative development, but because you put it there" (5).

For this activity, write and/or revise a poem you have previously written using one or more of Hugo's "rules" from Chapter Five ("Nuts and Bolts").

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

Hugo provides a number of "rules" for writing poetry in Chapter Five of his published self-report. Surprisingly, I found that many of these rules I have already incorporated into my own poetry writing processes. For this activity, I chose to revise "As We Lay Dying" using the following rule: "End more than half your lines and more than two-thirds your sentences on words of one syllable" (39). I didn't know that I already followed this particular rule, and after revisiting the poem I didn't make any additional changes to it.

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

As a poet of process, Hugo recognizes that poets have different writing processes. Nonetheless, many of Hugo's "rules" offer helpful advice for writing poetry. For instance, Hugo suggests that a poet should "Read your poem aloud many times. If you don't enjoy it every time, something may be wrong" (39). Hugo does not presume to know what "may be wrong" about a particular poem. Nonetheless, his suggestions for writing and/or revising poetry would seem to apply to all poets, regardless of the writing processes they may (or may not) follow.

## Appendix E

STRATEGIES EXTRACTED FROM STAFFORD'S SELF-REPORT

Stafford Activity #1
10/27/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

Early in his self-report, Stafford writes:

> You could look at reading a poem this way: if you are thinking and there is a window nearby, you may look out—far. Your thinking will connect now and then to the scene, whenever something out there strikes your attention. Or, even more aptly, you might have a friend with you, and you would interchange, offer beginnings, slanted ideas, linked progressions. There would be a series of mental incidents, not predictable, never to be fully anticipated without the experience that comes about through following the sequence onward, point by point. Your experience would be richer—more would happen—than if you had been alone. (5-6)

Later, Stafford describes his "writing position" as "lying on the couch by the front window—[looking] out" (63). For Stafford, "Poetry is the kind of thing you have to see from the corner of your eye" (3). Indeed, poetry writing is "like a very faint star. If you look straight at it you can't see it, but if you look a little to one side it is there" (3).

For this activity, stare out of a window with a friend until you feel inspired to write a poem based upon the things you see, think, and feel.

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

I wrote "Periscope Down" with my feet propped up on the coffee table, sitting on the couch in the living room. I looked out the living-room window and basically recorded what I saw. Once I started writing the poem, I liked its potential. Four drafts later, I wrote a poem that I'm very pleased with. I worked patiently on this poem, and I left it feeling satisfied.

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

This is a good exercise. The poem comes from what the poet sees, not what the poet feels. This might also help explain why it is important for a creative writer to take detailed notes on a place that s/he observes first-hand. In describing this place, however, the poet's feelings are reflected in the experience. This is a lot like Hugo's "triggering town." By describing what a poet sees, and by placing this scene in a poem, the poet is

able to integrate “feeling” with an experience that is separate from what the poet actually “feels.” Somewhere during this expressive writing process, poetry seems to emerge. This activity comes highly recommended for the teaching of creative writing.

Stafford Activity #2
10/29/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

Stafford writes, "while in camp during the war I found myself drawn to write meandering sequences of thoughts, or spun-out patterns of words, before the stove late, or in the early morning before work and before anyone else was stirring" (10). For Stafford, this "daily practice" established a pattern that "prevails as my way to write—during a quiet interval, without felt obligation to do other than find my way from impulse to impulse" (10). Stafford thus believes that receptivity is an important aspect of poetry writing: "When I write, I like to have an interval before me when I am not likely to be interrupted" (17). Being a poet of process (17-20), Stafford believes that poetry writing is a "mysterious" (19) and "reckless encounter with whatever comes along" (67). According to Stafford, this process works best in "the early morning, before others are awake" (17).

For this activity, wake-up early in the morning, before anyone else is stirring. During this quiet interval in the morning, write a poem about "anything that occurs to [you]" (17).

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

Maybe I'm not a "morning person," but this activity didn't work very well for me. I woke up early and tried writing a poem, but my thoughts weren't very clear, and I didn't feel inspired to write this poem. I sat on the couch and I couldn't think of anything to write, but that's when I heard a dog barking next door. The dog's bark was hushed, almost as if the dog was being polite and didn't want to disturb anyone that might be sleeping. I chuckled at the thought of a dog with manners, and that's when I decided to write this poem.

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

Stafford offers an effective strategy for teaching creative writing, for a number of reasons. First, Stafford recognizes that poetry writing "draws from nearby things" (65). For Stafford, writing a poem is a lot like starting a car on ice. We might be able to start the engine, but getting the car to move in the right direction is a different kind of challenge. In addition, Stafford reminds us that "an intentional person is too effective to be a good guide in the tentative activity of creating" (33). Indeed, intention has the potential to endanger creation (33). Furthermore, writing poetry is a lot like swimming: "Just as the swimmer does not have a succession of handholds hidden in the water, but instead simply sweeps that yielding medium and finds it hurrying him [sic] along, so the writer passes his attention through what is at hand" (26). According to Stafford, "We must forgive ourselves and each other much," for there are no "right moves" (27). After all, "most of what I write, like most of what I say in casual conversation, will not amount

to much" (19). For Stafford, poets aren't "special" people, and poems are not "special" things: "Not a few, but everyone, makes art" (48).

Stafford Activity #3
10/31/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

According to Stafford:

> Writing or reading, a poem goes by sequential parts, accumulating its effect (or frittering it away) by its internal trends. Starting with anything, the pattern begins; the little thread leads onward. If the writer is masterful and ambitious, the string may very well break; and the result may be a document on a well-chosen topic, but it will not be a developed poem. If the reader is masterful and ambitious, the interpretation may be eloquent, but if it commands the materials on the page it may very well distort and impose rather than discover. (42-3)

Stafford views poetry writing "as an exploration, a discovery of process" (114). For Stafford, the place where "words come from, into consciousness, baffles me. Speaking or writing, the words bounce instantaneously into their context, and I am victimized by them, rather than controlling them" (57). In other words, we don't control language—it controls us. Earlier, Stafford writes, "Form or content will be validated by the writer's feelings and by the convergent feelings of readers, who will be caught up in the common language" (42). Although Stafford recognizes a symbiotic relationship between the form and the content of a poem, he places emphasis on a poet's feelings at a particular moment in time, as a poet is actually writing. Stafford rejects the idea that "there is a proper 'framework'" whereby the poet "must fit [his or her] specific feelings" (98). When Stafford writes, he does not try to "fit in any forms" (98). Instead, poetry writing requires "a kind of stance to take toward immediate feelings and thoughts while you're writing" (98). Ultimately, the only authority a poet has "builds from the immediate experience" (63).

For this activity, experiment with a new form of poetry. To get started on this task, try writing six tercets related by their subjects.

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

I sat in my home office and tried to think about a subject I could write a poem about. I had a form for the poem, but I didn't have a subject. As I thought about a subject, I kept staring at a black and white photograph hanging on the wall. It is a picture of a man and a young child riding a bicycle down the middle of a country road. In the middle of the road there is a large rock, and on the back of the bicycle there is a baguette lying in a basket. I couldn't take my eyes off of the photograph, and that is when I decided it would be a good subject for this poem.

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

Experimenting with a new form of poetry is an effective way to write a poem. Once a poet has a form, a poem often "writes itself." I did a similar activity with Hugo a few weeks ago, but I noticed something different while completing this activity. I'm amazed at the way this poem is a reaction to my immediate surroundings. Although the form of the poem (e.g., the tercet) gave the poem structure, I drew upon my environment to find an adequate subject. I like the portrait that is hanging in my office, and since I couldn't think of anything else to write about, the portrait offered a good subject for the poem. Initially, I didn't feel inspired to write this poem, but the portrait hanging in my office gave me the inspiration I needed to write this poem (see also Chappell).

Stafford Activity #4
11/5/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

In an interview with Cynthia Lofsness, Stafford is asked if he has done any translating (102). Responding to Lofsness, Stafford answers that he has "recently been engaged in translating from the Urdu," and he tries "to make an English poem out of it" (102).

For this activity, write an English version of a poem that has been translated from a different language.

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

I've got a bilingual edition of Neruda's poetry on a bookshelf at home. At first, I was going to write an English poem based upon a Spanish translation of Neruda's poetry. However, I thought this activity might be more effective if I picked a language I know how to translate. In addition, I thought this activity would be more effective if I didn't have an English translation already provided. Since I don't know how to speak Spanish, I chose a language that I know how to work with. My Latin is a little rusty, but I felt like this strategy would be more effective if I used a language I know how to translate. Fortunately, I've got a book of Latin poetry at home, and it doesn't include any English translations. For this reason, I selected the first poem from Catullus (a Roman poet) that I found in the text.

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

I think this could be a very effective strategy for writing poetry in a creative writing class, for the following reasons. Instead of focusing on form, the act of translation forces a poet to focus on a poem's content (e.g., "meaning"). The act of translation allows poets to "play" with language in ways they likely have not attempted before. In addition, this strategy is particularly useful for students that aren't accustomed to writing poetry in English. Obviously, this activity has numerous applications for multilingual language learners experimenting with poetry written in English.

Stafford Activity #5
11/5/2013

**(1) Identify the activity and/or suggestion being responded to.**

Toward the end of his interview with Lofsness, Stafford is asked if he has ever gone back and worked on a poem that he considered "finished" (105). Stafford responds with a resolute "no," and he explains that "[finished] poems always just seem to have been written by somebody else" (105). Nonetheless, Stafford admits in the same interview that "I don't know when a work is finished…it's always subject to revision" (105). In a separate interview with William Heyen and Al Poulin, Heyen claims that Stafford doesn't care to revise older poems he has written (146). Stafford agrees, and he concedes that "he's not an expert on those older ones anymore" (146).

For this activity, sit down and revise a poem you have previously written, one you consider to be "finished."

**(2) Reflect on the experience of writing a poem based upon the expert-practitioner's suggestion.**

I wrote this poem in the spring of 2008, and I submitted the poem to a poetry contest. It won second place. It is one of my favorite poems I've written, and I've always felt like there wasn't anything else I could add to it. For this reason, I tried to revise this particular poem, one that I consider to be "finished." When I wrote this poem, I was sitting next to my dog on the couch, and he wouldn't stop licking a particular spot on the couch. This was one of the most irritating aspects of owning this dog, and it was a big "pet peeve" of mine. It didn't matter if I tried to clean the spot he was licking, the dog would always sit in the same spot and lick the same region (incessantly) until the couch was wet with his saliva.

**(3) Argue whether or not the strategy followed would be useful for teaching poetry writing.**

For the most part, I think Stafford is right. It's difficult to revise a poem that a poet considers to be "finished." Nonetheless, I made some minor revisions to this poem when I typed it into the appendix. However, the changes I made to the poem were strictly formal. In other words, I didn't feel like I needed to change or add to the poem's content. Nonetheless, I changed one word and I rearranged the poem differently by putting three line breaks in places where they weren't previously.

## Appendix F

POETRY WRITING BASED ON CHAPPELL'S SELF-REPORT

Chappell Activity #1
9/14/2013

"Apollo's Reign"

When I woke up this morning
a single thought of you
broke my fast, it left me
hungry for more, so
instead of lying back down on
the mattress where we slept,
I stepped outside, naked, and I
watched Apollo drag his starry orb
across the morning sky. And I wondered:
"Why does the sun blot-out the
light from all the other stars?"
He shoulders through the solar system
like a pig eating slop from a trough,
yelling, "Make way!"
Still ravenous from the night before,
I plucked the sun from the sky
and consumed him whole.

Satisfied, I went back inside. But in my loneliness,
I envied the star for knowing how to share
all that he could give.

Chappell Activity #2
9/19/2013

"Ode to Bardot"

My wife found a black and white photograph of
a wicked French woman from the 1960s
I hid between the queen-size mattress and
box-springs of the bed where we slept.
A radiant glow on her face, mine too
when she makes her debut from the covers
drawn tightly across her framed stage.
She twirls her skirt around and a round she goes,
runs like an engine with a loose fan-belt stuck in high gear,
circles around until one end eats the other, Ouroboros.
She never gets dizzy from the tress and the spin,
never needs to loosen the corset she doesn't wear, never
takes a break from the fantastic madness of her splendor.

Brigitte Bardot, Marilyn Monroe, and B-52 bomb shells
don't ever talk back, they don't ask to come over,
never nice to let them in.

Chappell Activity #3
9/24/2013

"The Blessed Fall"
—as a couplet

Where my soul has led me, my body has obeyed,
but everywhere my body's been, my spirit has betrayed!

"The Blessed Fall"
—as a quatrain

Born from our mother's womb,
we enter in a different tomb.
Leave the safety of our nest,
when Life does part, then we rest.

Go through life and never see,
troubles lie in front of thee.
Nor do we know what stands behind,
years of strife, the daily grind.

Heed these words, they're aught but true,
time-worn secrets, we all once knew.
The dint of life, the price we pay,
hard work and trust, 'tis no other way!

Chappell Activity #4
9/24/2013

"The Capacitor"

There is
a house
in Dublin
I bought
eleven
years
ago
today
I wish
to sell
each brick
and blade
I worked
and worked
until
I saw
how it
was made.

Chappell Activity #5
9/24/2013

“Pocket Change”

Change is old, change is new,
so here’s a tip, just for you!
Look for dates that came before,
years on coins, in your drawer:

> Pennies are fifty four,
> nickels add one year more.
> Dimes and quarts are sixty-four,
> these are the coins we watch for!

Keep this change, you’ll wish you had,
gold and silver make us glad.
Coins worth more than what they say,
their value goes up each passing day.

So keep these coins, now you know,
they're sure to make your money grow.
Take these coins and put them away,
save them for a rainy day!

## Appendix G

POETRY WRITING BASED ON HUGO'S SELF-REPORT

Hugo Activity #1
10/14-15/2013

"Office Hours"

I used to
work in an
office with
sixteen small
cubicles
occupied
by seven
syllables
cut short
whenever
a student
or teacher
stood in the
doorway and
decided
to enter
the large,
yellow
room.

Hugo Activity #2
10/22/2013

"Red October"
—with monosyllabic words

She stood in the door and
smoked fags while she
listened to jazz, her bathrobe
slightly open, lean against
the frame. In one hand she
held a black coffee cup, with
the other she reached for
the crown molding
stuck between the living
room and the kitchen floor.
She arched her back and
bent down, but on the trek
back up she lost a thought
in a large crack filled with
lint and dust on the floor.

"Red October"
—with polysyllabic words

She stood in the doorway and
listened to Beethoven while she
smoked cigarettes, her bathrobe
slightly open. One arm held
a black coffee cup, the other
positioned loosely on her hip,
contrapposto, lean against the
frame. She arched her back and
bent down, reached for the
extension cord, but on the journey
back up she lost a thought
somewhere between a
voluminous crack filled
with lint and dust
on the floor.

Hugo Activity #3
10/23-24/2013

"Mercer County"

I kissed my wife as we drove through
the winding roads of Mercer County.
Never been a stranger, always knew
when to be receptive, when to give love,
when to listen, who to speak to,
always knew when you shouldn't talk back.
The children on Butterworth Boulevard
never learned how to look both ways
when they cross the street,
down in Mercer County.
Never knew a stranger that worried
them or their folks out late at night,
card games at the grange, bets and
poker hands traded like baseball cards
the kids exchange in the town park
where all the people go, down in
Mercer County. They sing songs that
echo through the hills and the boroughs,
echoes through the break between
the rocks and the falls where
all the young lovers go,
down in Mercer County.
.

Hugo Activity #4
10/24/2013

"Roethke's List"

He stood on the
red tamarack and
waved the blue clouds
goodbye, bled the clowns
down with a mighty
sharp, important bite.

The slag in his eye
bruised his throat,
left him wavering
between a rock and
a tough belief that there
are no more surprises left.

When he fell, he
curved to the right,
hugged the mud all
through the night,
stayed til dawn and kissed
the soft, morning light.

Hugo Activity #5
10/24/2013

"As We Lay Dying"

When I listen closely I hear the
English walnuts fall from homes in
tops of trees that tower above a seasoned,
six-foot privacy fence weathered from
too much time in the sun. They drop like
pellets of hard rain in a bucket left outside
from late work in the yard, the patter of
little childrens' feet running across an
unmopped linoleum floor, little seeds that
throw themselves to the Earth, commit silent
suicide, drop one by one to the ground,
*thick-thud*, *thick-thud*, *thick-thud*,
like the way we talk to one another, like
the way we don't talk, the silence broken by
these nuts that fall to the ground.

## Appendix H

POETRY WRITING BASED ON STAFFORD'S SELF-REPORT

Stafford Activity #1
10/27/2013

"Periscope Down"

I looked out the bedroom window and
struggled to see through the half-closed blinds,
struggled to see an elderly couple hold hands and
find their way together, struggled to see
a tough group of high-school kids
cross the street to smoke cigarettes or
tell dirty jokes behind the dumpsters near the yard.
I sat naked on the metal bedframe, sheets in the wash,
and I struggled to see my neighbor do the same,
struggled to see him watch me and say, "See, I told you so,"
struggled to see how neighbors struggle, too,
especially when they sit naked on the frame,
look through their window, and
struggle to describe what they see.

Stafford Activity #2
10/29/2013

"Dog Days"

Dogs don't bark as loud as
people do in the morning.
They learn tricks to
please their masters,
give paw, roll over, play dead.
They do what they want,
sometimes they listen,
sometimes they do
what they're told.
At the end of the day
they know how to be
good girls and boys.
They've learned how to wait,
they know how to hold it in, and
they never forgot how to let it all go,
tip over the trash can, jump on
the couch or onto the bed,
get under the covers where
it's warm, and sleep, sleep,
sleep where it's never best to
wake the dogs that lie.

Stafford Activity #3
10/31/2013

"Roman Soldiers"

Father and son left their flat on
a bicycle they found, a remnant from
yesterday's trips into an unpopulated town.

They left the village together, on a bike they found,
the man in front, the child on a seat of his own as
they peddled their way to the uneventful town.

A rock in the road a driver swerved and missed,
but the bike and the man and the child he hit,
as they traveled toward the boring town.

The driver sped on, scoffed at the man and the boy
on their way to get supplies for their pleasant
way of life away from the simple town.

The man and child wiped the dust and the dirt
off each other, left the bike in a ditch and
walked the rest of the way to the lively town.

The bike it stayed and there it lays, caught in
an undergrowth of weeds on the side of
the road which leads to the bustling town.

Stafford Activity #4
11/5/2013

"Hymnus Dianae"
—Catullus, reprinted from Carr and Wedeck's *Latin Poetry*, 1940, p. 199.

Diānae sumus in fidē
puellae et puerī integrī:
Diānam puerī integrī
puellaeque canāmus.

Ō Lātōnia, maximī
magna prōgeniēs Jovis,
quam māter prope Dēliam
dēposīvit olīvam,

montium domina ut forēs
silvārumque virentium
saltuumque reconditōrum
amniumque sonantum.

Tū cursū, dea, mēnstruō
mētiēns iter annuum,
rūstica agricolae bonīs
tēcta frūgibus explēs.

Sīs quōcumque tibi placet
sāncta nōmine, Rōmulīque,
antīquē ut solita es, bona
sospitēs opè gentem.

"Diana's Demesne"

The boys and girls sing
a song of celebration to
Diana, goddess of the hunt,
patron saint to the streams
and the creeks and the ponds in
virgin fields where the fern gives
life to the rocks and the trees and
the birds in the sky. They sing
a song of praise and lamentation,
happy on the days when
the moon's belly is full,
happy on the days when
there's enough grain in the store,

happy when they know she’ll be gone too,
gone like the sun when she goes down,
only to return again, renewed, ripe with
fresh grains for the store.

Stafford Activity #5
11/5/2013

"Simon Says"

There is a spot
on the couch
at home
where the dog
likes to sit
and pretend
that the spot
is a stamp
on God's
envelope
which must
be licked
and licked
like Christ
on the cross.
I sit in the
shadow of
his warmth.
*Good boy*.