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ARISTOTLE, THE SUBLIME, AND QUANTUM RHETORIC: NEW APPROACHES TO
UNDERSTANDING THE FICTION WRITING PROCESS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania

May 2015

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Aristotle, the Sublime, and Quantum Rhetoric: New Approaches to Understanding the Fiction Writing Process traces the effects of classical rhetoric and the sublime on the lore of fiction writing and then offers an alternative approach to that model. One element of fiction writing lore I discuss is the pervasive belief that part of creative writing can be taught while part cannot. I argue craft is part of what is believed teachable, and I claim that that belief originated with Aristotle's *Poetics*. Then I argue that though it is deemed that part of creative writing cannot be taught it is actually too early to make such an assertion because what cannot be taught is not defined thoroughly enough. How can something be deemed teachable or unteachable without a clear definition of what *it* is? By employing Longinus' *On the Sublime*, in tandem with the work of Kant, Burke, and Alison, I argue sublimity might be one element within what is considered unteachable in fiction writing. Finally, I offer an alternative to this paradigm, an interdisciplinary pedagogical approach that fosters student self-reflection over product-focused teachable/unteachable methods. Dr. Patrick Bizzaro and I call the approach Quantum Rhetoric, which I define for my purposes as the application of quantum mechanics to the uses of language, which in this case is the process of writing fiction.

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When you research and write something for three years the amount of influences to which you owe your gratitude are innumerable. Words on the page secure a thought in time, at least for a moment. Yet, only now am I recording in writing those who I intend to thank, meaning I have likely forgotten many that merit my appreciation. I hope this blanket thank you will appease those individuals—if you know my name and I know yours and you have impacted my life in ways that shaped this work, thank you.

Despite those I've forgotten, I remember some.

First I'd like to thank my dissertation readers, Dr. Chauna Craig and Dr. Resa Crane Bizzaro, who have guided me with a firm and steady hand until I produced a product the three of us were proud to put our names on. I will forever be indebted to the two of you for your guidance and contribution to my growth as a writer and scholar. And don't hesitate to cash a little of that debt in. I'm good for it.

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Finally, my biggest thanks goes to my wife, Angel. Three years ago she read an essay I wrote for a class, an essay about Aristotle's effect on creative writing handbooks. At that time I was a week from submitting a dissertation proposal on the uses of visual rhetoric in the composition classroom. She read the essay and said, in her always gentle demeanor, "Why in the hell aren't you writing your dissertation about this? That's why you started the program in the first place." She was right. I never looked back. Thanks, babe.

We did it.

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CHAPTER 1

CREATIVE WRITING STUDIES AND WHAT'S AT STAKE

"We are at a critical state in the evolution of thought in creative writing."

(Patrick Bizzaro)

Introduction

This dissertation contributes to the nascent field of Creative Writing Studies (CWS) by employing rhetorical and textual analysis to creative writing handbooks and writers' self-reports to accomplish three goals: 1) study the current belief that part of creative writing is teachable, 2) study the belief that part of creative writing cannot be taught, and 3) to provide a third option to this paradigm. After conducting this research I've come to three conclusions: 1) what is often deemed teachable in CWS is defined as craft. Plot is one of the most commonly discussed elements of craft in the handbooks and self-reports I consulted, meaning plot is considered teachable. Though plot is considered teachable, my research suggests the history and definition of plot is not entirely understood. I discuss this in detail in Chapter Two; 2) the part of creative writing believed unteachable is undefined. I argue that not knowing what something is makes it difficult to argue whether or not that something can be taught. I address this gap in the research by applying the sublime to fiction writing, positing that the sublime might be part of what is unteachable in CWS; 3) there should be a third model available to writers and teachers of writing, a model not focused on what's teachable and not, a model not so involved with the final product as the first two models are. The third option, outlined in Chapter Four, uses quantum mechanics as a lens to study writers' writing process in an attempt to learn more about what they do as a writer, helping them grow their craft. Finally, because of the ends to which I employ

rhetorical and textual analysis within the field of CWS, this research is also an example of what Tim Mayers recently coined craft criticism.

Various scholars concur that these research methods are and will continue to be essential to furthering understanding within the field of CWS.¹ In fact, much of the research being done to further develop the field is rhetorical and/or textual in nature. For example, in “Research and Reflection in English Studies: The Special Case of Creative Writing” Patrick Bizzaro rhetorically argues that understanding the historical research employed by creative writers and then exploring how that research might be implemented into creative writing pedagogy might be one way to further develop what he calls “‘the *new* creative writing,’ whatever that is and will be” [original emphasis] (309). Bizzaro proceeds to apply his rhetorical analysis to the paradigm of the writing workshop model prominent in many creative writing classrooms. What is garnered from Bizzaro’s work is an example of 1) the kind of rhetorical research at the forefront of scholarship in CWS and 2) an example of how such research might affect the traditional elements of creative writing pedagogy and lore prominent in the discipline at this time. With that said, my personal explication for using rhetorical research and textual analysis and why my uses of them constitute craft criticism will be made clear in the “Methodology” portion of this chapter. However, before moving deeper into my methodology, I’d like to discuss what I’m presenting, how I’m presenting it, and why.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The current chapter establishes the importance of this research to the discipline of CWS. This chapter establishes the foundation for chapters two through four. In this chapter I define some of the terminology I’ve already used,

¹ Some work discussing the importance of approaching CWS with various research methodologies are Donnelly’s *Establishing Creative Writing Studies as an Academic Discipline*, Dawson’s *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*, and Graeme Harper’s *On Creative Writing and Teaching Creative Writing*.

such as Creative Writing Studies, rhetorical research, and textual analysis. I also discuss important points of contention within CWS, such as how to define craft and whether or not creative writing can be taught at all. The general consensus on whether or not creative writing can be taught is that part of it can be and part cannot. The part believed unteachable is often referred to in handbooks and writers' self-reports as *something else*. For clarity's sake, I'm going to refer to this something else as, simply, the unteachable elements. The contention in CWS on whether or not creative writing can be taught (a rather important contention) is theoretical in nature yet certainly able, I believe, to affect how creative writing gets taught. Though I will be theorizing at times during my analysis, I do wish to make clear that in this dissertation I do not weigh in on the argument of whether or not creative writing can be taught, though I do suggest through this research that it doesn't hurt to try and investigate such a question.² Instead, I take a closer look at what the research in CWS tends to suggest can and cannot be taught, which is typically defined as craft and *something else*. Though I don't wish to argue one way or the other, I do want to better define *what* it is that's being argued about and to offer new evidence to be considered when asking such a question.

Chapter Two is a historical analysis of how plot is discussed within two important sources of CWS, handbooks and writer's self-reports.³ This historical analysis and the theoretical

² For a contemporary discussion of whether or not creative writing can be taught, see Kelly Ritter's and Stephanie Vanderslice's *Can it Really Be Taught: Resisting Lore in Creative Writing Pedagogy*.

³ A historical analysis of even a simple word like plot might reveal a new truth about the paradigms of a discipline. For a good example of how such research has contributed to more established disciplines, like composition studies, consult Byron Hawk's *A Counter-History of Composition*. In it, Hawk cogently argues that since the 1980s the misrecognition of the word revitalism has helped to bolster an incorrect interpretation of traditional understandings of the term invention. In "One Simple Word: From Creative Writing to Creative Writing Studies," Tim Mayer's notes that Hawk's contribution provided "much more nuanced and productive ways to

analysis that follows are in demand in CWS. Mayers concludes, “The theoretical substrand of historical creative writing studies is probably less well developed at the moment . . . but there is nonetheless much important work to be done. The major task of this substrand of creative writing studies will be to place the past in a different light” (“One Simple Word” 222). Historical work like that employed here has been successfully executed in other disciplines. For example, in “Toward a Theory of Theory in Composition Studies,” James Zebroski employs a historical, slightly comparative analysis between literary theory and composition theory in an attempt to establish the implications of what he calls an *ecology of practices* within English studies. Like Zebroski, I use a historical analysis to study the possible relationships of Aristotle and Longinus to the lore of fiction writing. As with Zebroski’s work, this dissertation “demands a study of history if we are to begin to understand how Relations develop, but also how they function” (42).⁴ Such an approach “integrates an understanding of a large number of practices, and the communities which attend to them, into a tolerant, but not eclectic theory” (Zebroski 43-44).

The theorizing of plot as an element of craft within the genre of fiction writing is a point where theory and practice come together to make praxis. Plot is just one element of craft, but it is an element so prevalent in handbooks that I feel an analysis of its application in fiction writing is important. However, in this research I attempt to show some ways this point of praxis might be misunderstood. I feel it important to explore these levels. Like Dianne Donnelly, Sharon Crowley, Susan Miller, Robert Connors, and many others, I too believe it is important to understand the theoretical and historical practices of what we teach because “Theory is not the opposite site of practice; theory is not even a supplement to practice. Theory is practice, a

think about how texts are generated, especially at their earliest stages. As important as such a project is for composition studies, it is equally important for creative writing studies” (224).

⁴ In his essay, Zebroski uses a capital R when discussing big relations and a lower case r for smaller relations.

practice of a particular kind and practice is always theoretical” (Zabroski 39). I believe such a statement is true even if what’s being taught or practiced is something as minute as plot within fiction writing. Therefore, in Chapter Two I attempt to showcase two points: 1) craft is believed teachable in CWS and a primary element of craft is plot, and 2) CWS’s historical understanding of plot is underdeveloped. What I believe to be the problem in these points is that a hard line has been drawn defining what is teachable and not teachable despite an underdeveloped understanding of what exactly is being discussed. I believe a discipline can only deem something teachable or unteachable after it has defined just what that something is and where that something might have come from; therefore, Chapter Two acknowledges CWS’ approval that craft is teachable, that a key element of craft is plot, but that the history and, therefore, understanding of what plot is underdeveloped.

To historically analyze the way plot is discussed in CWS, I look at two sources integral to the past, present, and future definitions of plot within the genre of fiction writing. Those sources are handbooks and writers’ self-reports. By handbooks I mean books on the instruction of how to write creatively. Nearly every handbook used in this dissertation has moved beyond a first edition, alluding to their possible popularity within the discipline of CWS. It stands to reason that handbooks on a particular subject are predominantly purchased and used by teachers and practitioners of that subject. In this case, the handbooks are being used mostly by creative writers and teachers of creative writing. Furthermore, the handbooks discussed here span a time period of over forty years, providing insights on their popularity from decade to decade as well as a textual history of how plot has been discussed from the past to the present. It should be noted I use the term handbooks loosely and will attempt to justify why I do so in this chapter. For now,

however, I wish to note that by handbooks I mean what's sometimes referred to as how-to-books.

The self-reports I consult in this dissertation are sometimes written in book format and other times spoken in interview format. Such sources sometimes struggle to find accreditation in empirical research, but in CWS such work is prized and goes by the name of *critical creative writing*.⁵ Critical creative writing is such a new element of CWS that the very first book attempting to define it in its entirety, Michelene Wandor's *Critical-Creative Writing: Readings and Resources*, will not be published until December 17, 2015. Finally, some sources cited in Chapter Two, like John Gardner's *The Art of Fiction*, Kit Reed's *Mastering Fiction*, and Stephen King's *On Writing*, are, I argue, an amalgam between a how-to-book and a writer's self-report. These sources combine the accounts of how writers do their jobs with a process and style meant to teach others how to write, meaning the authors pay attention to details that can be studied and learned. These details tend to be called craft in CWS, which I will discuss momentarily. A detailed analysis of why studying handbooks and writers' self-reports is important to CWS is explained in the introduction to Chapter Two, entitled "Why Question Textbooks?"

Unlike plot, which is believed to be teachable, there is *something else* to the process of writing fiction. Most believe this something else is inherent in individuals, something they're

⁵ Critical creative writing is a definition I have not yet witnessed in the research on CWS published in the United States. In the United States, there is division between the critical and creative processes, and it's evident in the titles of such handbooks as Amanda Boulter's *Writing Fiction: Creative and Critical Approaches* and Vincent R. Ruggiero's *The Art of Thinking: A Guide to Critical and Creative Thought*. Critical creative writing dissolves the disparity between the creative and the critical because it is a progeny of a much different discipline of CWS found in the UK and Australia, one that does not understand the division between the critical and the creative. The discipline of CWS shared between both countries is sometimes referred to as the CWS of Australasia. For a definition of critical creative writing consult Rob Pope's "Critical Creative Rewriting" and Michelene Wandor's *The Author is Not Dead, Merely Somewhere Else: Creative Writing Reconceived*.

born with. Sometimes this something else is abstractly referred to as genius, and other times it is referred to, more pragmatically, as the drive, passion, or inspiration, to write. Regardless, most scholars, writers, and theorists of creative writing are at odds over whether or not non-skill based writing expertise can be taught. Again, I do not argue one way or the other whether or not non-skill based writing expertise can be taught. This argument extends back at least to Plato and Aristotle and is beyond the scope or intent of this dissertation. However, whether or not creative writing can be taught, and, if so, what parts can and cannot be, are principle concerns in CWS right now. How the answers to these questions evolve might determine the fate of CWS more than anything else being discussed currently. That is why Chapter Three of this dissertation is an attempt to define one element of what this something else might be. This something else that cannot be taught is nebulous. If CWS is to determine whether or not this something else can be taught, its parts must be defined.

In Chapter Three I argue that one element of fiction writing that might be considered not able to be taught is how a writer successfully communicates with a reader through a piece of fiction. In Chapter Three I take the position that the writing and reading of fiction is a communicable phenomenon that occurs between writers and readers. In addition, I assert that in moments of viable communication between writers and readers, fiction can be successful. Craft or skill-based approaches argue that if particular formulas are accomplished then writing is likely to succeed. In Chapter Three, I propose that successful communication between writers and readers occurs through sublimity. My proposition is the result of a historical analysis of sublimity, starting with Longinus and moving through the works of Edmund Burke, Emmanuel Kant, and Archibald Alison. With this historical analysis, I posit that there is an important relationship between “good” fiction writing and the sublime and that this relationship is not

recognized by either CWS or studies on sublimity. I explain why this neglect has occurred and argue that both CWS and studies on the sublime can enrich the definitions of their disciplines by considering their relationship to each other. What I have suggested here, which is bolstered by much of the literature on creative writing, is that creative writing is divided into two parts.⁶ By taking a historical approach to very particular elements of this division in chapters two and three, I hope to add new insights to the overall understanding of this division within CWS. It seems to me that this division is too understudied at this time to be treated as an axiom within a new discipline; therefore, I intend to further define what X and Y might be when arguing that X can be taught and Y cannot.

In Chapter Four I provide an alternative approach to the teachable/unteachable model. The teachable/unteachable model I've discussed here focuses on either qualities of writing that can be taught and are then visible in a final product—climax, character change, a beginning, middle, and end plot line structure—or qualities of writing only produced by individuals that have a gift they were born with, a gift that cannot be taught. This bifurcation, I feel, might stifle writers. In the first model, writers and their processes are overshadowed by the final product. In fact, their very writing processes might be stifled by the first model. If writers set out to write within a particular formula, they may never venture beyond that formula to grow or develop in different ways. The second model, where the qualities of a good writer and thus good writing are unteachable, might stifle writers because it praises those that appear to have a “gift” for writing while suggesting those that do not have the gift can never have it. Moreover, neither model is concerned with an individual writer's growth. Neither model provides an opportunity for writers to learn about themselves as writers, learn about their individual writing processes, or even to

⁶ For a current discussion on the subject, consult chapter 10 in Graeme Harper's *Inside Creative Writing: Interviews with Contemporary Writers*.

develop individual writing practices and processes; the first model is interested in the product, and in the second model only the processes of those with the “gift” actually matter.

The alternative I provide in Chapter Four is called Quantum Rhetoric.⁷ I define Quantum Rhetoric as the application of the principles and theories of quantum mechanics to the use of language. In the case of this dissertation, I’ve confined Quantum Rhetoric to the process of writing fiction. Quantum Rhetoric, as I discuss in detail in Chapter Four, provides a third option to students of creative writing, an option that prizes the experimentation and exploration of individual, student writing processes by providing those students a lens through which to see their work and how they write it in completely new ways. In the quantum rhetorical classroom, the final product only matters in so much that when compared to past drafts it might teach writers something new about how they write. In the quantum rhetorical classroom, there is no such thing as the “gift” of writing. There is only self-discovery. Quantum Rhetoric is by no means better or worse than the two models I’ve discussed here. It is, however, vastly different, which I feel only adds to the student and teacher experiences when teaching and writing within the creative writing classroom. In addition to discussing how Quantum Rhetoric might work within the creative writing classroom, I built a class around the concept, a class I call Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction. Finally, in order to illuminate how the process of Quantum Rhetoric might

⁷ Other scholars have explored the intersections of rhetoric and creative writing. Perhaps one of the most recognized is Wayne C. Booth’s contribution in *Rhetoric of Fiction*. Booth’s text is a brilliant contribution to understanding some possible rhetorical strategies used by creative writers in their work. Booth employs literary criticism to study tropes and other repeated practices inherent in published fiction and writers’ commentaries on the practice of writing creatively. For example, in Part I of his book, Booth discusses point of view (POV) in detail, summarizing that whichever POV a writer picks is not as important to how the POV is utilized. He grounds his theories through a textual analysis of fictional works. In Part II of his book, Booth discusses voice and does so by tracing how it has been used in literature. In Part III, Booth discusses narration, the importance of the unreliable narrator, and relies partly on the work of Henry James to do so. Booth’s work is a vital text for exploring the intersections of criticism/rhetoric/and creative writing.

affect the fiction writing process, I detail my process of writing a piece of fiction through the quantum-rhetorical lens. My example is not meant to be the exemplar for using Quantum Rhetoric with fiction writing but rather just my account of how I approached employing it and how that process affected my writing process.

Finally, Chapter Five is a reflection on this research. I discuss opportunities for future research and further development. Before moving into chapters two through four, it is important for me to elaborate, in detail, some of what I've discussed already.

In the remainder of this chapter, I explain what CWS is and why this dissertation is important to it. In addition, I solidify my reasoning for both analyzing plot historically within creative writing handbooks and writers' self-reports and for providing a historical analysis of the relationship between fiction writing and sublime studies. Finally, to conclude this chapter, I will discuss my methodological approaches to my research, which are rhetorical and textual analysis and craft criticism. The first questions to address are what is CWS and how does my work contribute to it?

What Is CWS and How Does This Work Contribute To It?

Mary Swander, Anna Leahy, and Mary Cantrell write, "Creative writing in the U.S. was established in the twenties at The University of Iowa, with the first Master's thesis approved by the university in 1931 and the first poetry thesis published by Paul Engle in 1932" (12).⁸ Despite the early inclusion of a creative writing degree program, Swander, Leahy, and Cantrell note, "The inclusion of creative writing in academe in the U.S. is a relatively recent phenomenon. As

⁸ There are accounts of creative writing germinating within university curricula well before the 1930s. Such accounts are discussed in Dawson's *Creative Writing and the New Humanities* and D.G. Myers *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing since 1880*. However, it is the general consensus that creative writing was not part of the academy until a degree could be conferred in its name, and that first happened in the 1930s at The University of Iowa.

late as 1965, few four-year colleges had resident writers, much less an emphasis in creative writing” (11). Despite the early lack of representation, there was a continued growth in creative writing within the academy. Swander, Leahy, and Cantrell do specify that in 1976 “Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont, was one of the first institutions to offer a high-profile but low-residency graduate MFA program in creative writing” (13). In this particular excerpt, Swander, Leahy, and Cantrell use the phrase creative writing instead of CWS. Though all three writers also refer to CWS in their works, it’s important to note the difference between terminologies.

I side with Donnelly, who claims, “Creative writing and Creative Writing Studies are two different enterprises” (2). Dawson, in *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*, informs us that the term creative writing “operates as a synonym for literature; for published works of fiction, poetry and drama. It is also the name given to a subject or course of study in which students produce writing which is generally considered ‘creative’; that is, writing in the aforementioned literary genres” (21). CWS, on the other hand, not only includes the elements Dawson discusses, but also it includes an analysis, reflection, and pedagogical understanding of all the aforementioned definitions within the scope of the academy. Specifically, Katharine Haake distinguishes creative writing from CWS by arguing that CWS ““seek[s] to move us beyond our preoccupation with the writer or the text to the role of creative writing as an academic discipline inside a profession that includes, but is not limited to, the production and teaching of imaginative writing”” (qtd. in Mayers, “One Simple Word” 218).

In short, CWS is not just product- or process-focused. Instead, CWS analyzes both product and process, all while exploring their relationship to institutional and interdisciplinary ends. Willey Maley argues that “Creative writing is a developing area of academic activity, like deconstruction and post-colonialism, which threatens or promises, depending on one’s

perspective, to transform the privileged space of teaching and learning” (90). Maley uses the term creative writing and not CWS. It’s not clear why he does so, but because he’s discussing creative writing as an institutionally salient subject (maybe movement), a subject that can change how teaching and learning are done in the academy, I think it safe to say he’s referring to what is now being dubbed CWS. Maley is discussing something more than a written product or the study of a written product, which, as Dawson stated earlier, comprises much of the meaning behind the phrase creative writing. Maley is discussing creative writing with a larger function, a function surmised by Donnelly when she writes that CWS “not only supports but welcomes intellectual analyses that may reveal new theories. Such insights into the ways creative writers read, write, and respond” (2). What I believe becomes clear by juxtaposing these statements is that there is an ambiguity in the terminology used when discussing just what’s happening with creative writing within the university right now. In short, the scholars and writers dedicated to understanding creative writing’s role within the university is at such an early stage of development there isn’t even a common language established to discuss it. Creative writing/CWS is, as many attest, at a point of contention within the university. Maley’s work, cited here, seems to suggest this tension is new. However, Dawson asserts that creative writing “emerged as a discipline in American universities out of a struggle between scholars and critics in the early part of the twentieth century, a struggle which saw the reformation of English Studies from largely historical and linguistic research into literature, to the teaching and practice of the criticism of literary works” (*Creative Writing* 48). Like many disciplines within the arts and humanities, CWS is in a unique moment. Some might argue that all of the humanities are in a moment of crisis.⁹ I’m a bit more optimistic (perhaps foolishly so), believing that the

⁹ For a thorough account of such an argument, consult Bill Readings’ *The University in Ruins*.

humanities are in a moment of change, a moment where something great can develop. The ideological movement of creative writing to CWS might be one of many great developments occurring within the arts and humanities.

It's not a stretch to perceive the changes happening in CWS as positive. Swander, Leahy, and Cantrell write: "Creative writing as a distinct academic field—one with dedicated courses, and programs with professors whose scholarship is entirely or primarily original creative work, and with professional journals and books devoted to reflections upon the field—is relatively new but has been rapidly expanding in the US, the UK, and elsewhere" (11). With the global expansion of a new discipline comes much opportunity. In *Inside Creative Writing: Interviews with Contemporary Writers*, Graeme Harper writes, "There is great potential here [in CWS] for new human knowledge—if something is looked at anew there is a chance, perhaps, even a very good chance, that something will be discovered, some new insight will be explored and enjoyed" (6). But surrounding this great opportunity is a responsibility to make certain that as CWS develops it does so in the most reflective, informed, and fair ways. That is why a dissertation like this one is a necessary contribution to the field of CWS.

Donnelly notes that CWS is at a pivotal moment as a "a course of study, a 'discipline' that is unaware of the histories and theories that inform its practice . . . In fact, some have charged creative writing 'as the most untheorized, and in that respect, anachronistic area in the entire constellation of English studies'" (1). To bolster her statement, Donnelly cites Wendy Bishop, highlighting that in the nineties Bishop argued, "Creative writing teachers know little of the theory that informed their pedagogies and, as such, they could not voice the tenets behind their classroom practices because they lack reference" (17). Donnelly has reservations whether or not the new discipline of CWS has come much further, claiming "that [creative writing]

teachers often fail to recognize the theories that underpin their practices or they resist altering the routine of their teaching instruction” (3). By taking a more critical look at the influence of rhetoric and the sublime’s on what constitutes the divide within CWS, this dissertation is a direct attempt to assuage Donnelly’s concern.

As stated, a point of distress in CWS is whether or not it can be taught. The reply tends to be divided two ways—craft and skills can be taught and most else cannot. By providing a historical analysis of plot, which I argue later is perhaps the most discussed element of craft in handbooks on creative writing, I foster an awareness of the history of a rhetorical device and its usage in CWS. What is more, I do the same by taking a historical look at sublimity’s potential relationship to how successful fiction works on a level most deem to be unteachable. My analysis in Chapter Three is an attempt to answer Donnelly’s and Dawson’s calls to action. It is an attempt to illustrate how creative writing is shifting to CWS studies, which, I hope, further dissolves the stigma that creative writing is the most untheorized and anachronistic area in all of English Studies. Before, maybe creative writing was both untheorized and anachronistic, but, as it burgeons into the new field of CWS, it cannot be.

There are many ways for those in CWS to become more reflective and cognizant of their practices. Scholar/teachers such as Donnelly, Dawson, and Harper often cite one way CWS can grow into a reputable discipline. All three seem to agree that experts in CWS must be more historically grounded in what they do. Donnelly notes, “Because creative writing practitioners are not well-informed regarding the history that informs their practices, it makes sense that there would be challenges to theorizing the principles that underpin their practices” (5). I have experienced such challenges in this dissertation, especially in chapters two and three. For example, in Chapter Two I provide a history of plot and explain its relationship to fiction through

the medium of creative writing handbooks and writers' self-reports. What I discuss in that chapter suggests but does not (and cannot) assert that the shrouded and misinformed history of plot within CWS might create the potential for an abuse of power or inequality in the classroom. Because I could find no studies analyzing the relationship of creative writing handbooks to the kinds of teaching creative writing teachers execute in the classroom, my suggestions as to how handbooks might be affecting teaching are speculation. With that said, there is research in CWS with which we could begin to question the effects of creative writing handbooks on the teaching of creative writing. In an article advocating the need to employ principles of critical pedagogy to introductory creative writing classes (as has been done for years in first year-writing classes within Composition Studies), Bizzaro notes that "codes of power," including but not limited to terminologies used to define writing practices, such as voice or style, or the specification of genres that define student writing, such as spoken word or haiku, are, without a doubt, "elements as chapter titles in many of our creative writing textbooks" ("Mutuality" 15). Because of research like Bizzaro's, which argues that handbooks sometimes house codes of power, I doubt that as CWS continues its development as an academic discipline handbooks will go unanalyzed much longer. With that in mind, this chapter is, as Donnelly notes above, a challenge in theorizing the potential principles that underpin practices in CWS. However, I am not the first to speculate how disciplinary handbooks might affect the teaching inside a classroom. Robert Connors, whose work I'll consult more closely in the start of Chapter Two, wrote three polemical articles covering the same topic, only he did so in the field of composition studies.

Chapter Three is another place within the dissertation where I struggled to theorize the principles that might underpin practices in CWS. As mentioned, Chapter Three considers what might be included in the broad definition of what cannot be taught in creative writing. I suggest

one element that might be included in this broad definition is the communication that occurs between the writer and reader through the medium of fiction. Chapter Three suggests sublimity might be at the heart of successful communication between writer and reader. Nothing like what I say in Chapter Three has been proposed in either CWS or studies on the sublime. I take a historical approach to explore an uncharted relationship between the two fields, a relationship that I feel enriches both disciplines. In short, chapters two and three are examples of the challenges Donnelly refers to when trying to create new ways of thinking within a still-undefined discipline. Donnelly stresses the importance of knowing the history of creative writing when arguing that “Teacher training should assuredly include topics and/or courses in the history of creative writing,” and that such “an awareness of historical approaches should lay the groundwork for important research studies that influence how we practice, how we teach our students, and where meaning lies in the classroom” (16). I believe the word historical can have many applications. For example, some historical work on creative writing as an academic discipline already exists, Joe Moxley’s *Creative Writing in America: Theory and Pedagogy* among them. Moxley’s book is an institutional account of how creative writing was being taught in the United States at the time he published his work, but I believe there are other historical ways to consider the practices of CWS, such as focusing not just on what we teach but the history behind it (Chapter Two) or the history of what we say we cannot teach and why we might assert such a statement (Chapter Three). As mentioned, when attempting to find a study that analyzed creative writing handbooks’ influence on creative writing pedagogy, I found nothing. After searching with a series of reference librarians at my home institution, we found nothing still.

Like Robert Conner's work from decades prior, Chapter Two of this dissertation might lead another (maybe me when this endeavor is complete) to perform such a study, meaning Chapter Two might, as Donnelly suggests happens with an awareness of historical approaches within a discipline, "lay the groundwork for important research studies that influence how we practice, how we teach our students and where meaning lies in the classroom" (16). Fortunately, the research in CWS suggests there is a growing unease with many of the un-assayed axioms of CWS, especially those that keep the discipline from defining itself and from reflecting critically on the pedagogical practices that constitute it. Bizzaro's "Research in Reflection in English Studies: The Special Case of Creative Writing," cited earlier, is one very recent example of scholarship arguing that reflective practice in CWS is necessary for its advancement as a discipline. This dissertation is a direct response to scholarship cited thus far; it is an amalgam of the arguments made by experts in the field of CWS with the objective of advancing them further.

One axiom of CWS studies that Donnelly might suggest stymies the developmental understanding of CWS is the workshop model.¹⁰ Donnelly argues that "Because creative writing has often been defined by its writing workshop model, some in the field wonder if there is a substantial discipline from which to draw data on its teaching theories and practices" (16). Such questions are creating unrest. Katherine Coles notes, "Though most [within CWS] pay little attention to trends in pedagogy many if not most writers teaching creative writing in higher education in the United States feel deeply uneasy with the old-fashioned workshop, even as they cling to its conventions" (8). I can't answer Donnelly's question, and I'm not sure what the best way is to further develop the workshop model, but this dissertation is a potential remedy to both discussions, as it might help guide others in CWS in developing research from which data can be

¹⁰ For a full discussion of the workshop model within CWS consult Donnelly's *Does the Writing Workshop Still Work?*

drawn, research far more inclusive to CWS than what happens or doesn't happen in the workshop model. For example, Chapter Two of this dissertation illustrates, I believe, the need for those in CWS to take a closer look at creative writing handbooks in whatever ways they feel necessary. Such research might provide evidence of other pedagogical implications for CWS.

Finally, I feel that this dissertation is in line with where CWS is going. Many practitioners and teachers of creative writing are beginning to look at what they do in a larger context.¹¹ Dawson's work in CWS models what I intend to do here, which is to "approach CW not as practice (creativity), or as a synonym for literature, but as a discipline: a body of knowledge and a set of educational techniques for imparting this knowledge" (*Creative Writing* 2). A more catholic approach to thinking about creative writing is imperative for the success of CWS. However, history shows that the emergence of a new discipline is often the result of a preexisting crisis. The history of English studies is gravid with such turmoil, as represented in its shift from rhetoric to writing, writing to literature, and, finally, literature to theory. Dawson defines such crises as "a breakdown of consensus regarding the goals of research and teaching in a discipline, when an object of study can no longer be taken for granted" (*Creative Writing* 122). As both Donnelly and Coles purport above, in CWS such a crisis is at hand. With that said, the question of how CWS should proceed must be approached carefully because there is a burgeoning student interest in the subject, along with a "growing sense of professional awareness amongst teachers" (Dawson, *Creative Writing* 1). Dawson notes that "Creative Writing has increasingly and inevitably become the subject of research interests, as academics draw upon current literary and cultural theory to develop new pedagogical methods, and to examine the role

¹¹ For a detailed account of practitioners and practitioner research within writing studies, particularly composition studies, consult Stephan North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*.

of Creative Writing in the contemporary humanities” (*Creative Writing* 1). Because of the interest and growth in CWS, Dawson provides a number of calls to action for those looking to advance the discipline. Two calls to action I attempt to answer with this research are the need for those in CWS to “ask what constitutes knowledge in CW” and to know “what position of literary authority . . . the writer [can] assume in the academy, not as an artistic practitioner, but as an intellectual” (Dawson, *Creative Writing* 6). The entire premise of this dissertation is to work towards answering what constitutes knowledge in CWS. This research considers the pervasive notion that part of creative writing can be taught while part cannot, and it asks what is it that can and cannot be taught and why that might be. Chapter Two shows how Aristotelian notions of plot in Greek tragedy have been manipulated, renamed, and reapplied by pivotal writers and scholars in literary studies, leaving plot (despite its somewhat obfuscated history) a powerful tenet of successful fiction writing, a tenet that is believed can be taught. Similarly, Chapter Three discusses sublimity, a quality of writing that I argue is important to good fiction because it allows for unique communication between the writer and the reader through the written work. However, as Longinus noted over two-thousand years ago, the two primary elements of sublimity cannot be taught. In Chapter Three I explore part of the history on sublimity and its possible relationship to fiction writing, helping to define what it is that constitutes knowledge in CWS, especially in regards to what might be meant by the unteachable in creative writing. Finally, in Chapter Four I provide a student-centered approach to fiction writing that transcends the teachable/unteachable model in hopes to advance thought in creative writing studies.

What I’ve attempted to do in this section of Chapter One is to define CWS, reveal the state that it is in right now, and explain how this research contributes. This dissertation is a direct response to the requests, concerns, and foresights of the eminent scholars in the field right now.

Donnelly assures that “In order for creative writing to advance as an academic discipline in its own right, it must undergo an inquiry into its field, much like composition studies did in the middle to late 20th century” (78). One such advancement in composition studies was made by Connors when he took a close look at the historical, social, theoretical, and institutional underpinnings of composition handbooks and how those underpinnings might affect teaching in the composition classroom. Connors’ studies inspired the motivation for Chapter Two of this dissertation. Akin to Donnelly’s desire for further inquiry into CWS, Dawson warns that “It is no longer possible for Creative Writing to maintain its romantic ideal of a garret in the ivory tower, a community of writers made possible by the patronage of the university. And it is not sufficient to define Creative Writing pedagogy as the passing down of a guild craft from established practitioners to a new generation of writers” (*Creative Writing* 78). Research like this dissertation, which questions the understanding of even the most rooted traditions (Chapter Two) of a discipline, while also attempting to add a whole new contribution to those preexisting traditions (Chapters Three and Four), goes against conventional understandings and, therefore, might meet resistance. But these changes should not be viewed as bellicose or destructive. As Mayers notes in “Figuring the Future: Lore and/in Creative Writing”: “Challenges to the conventional wisdom—[are] not always meant to discredit it, but perhaps sometimes to complicate or enrich it” (5). This dissertation is an attempt to complicate the ways teachers and writers think about the product, process, and teaching of creative writing. However, my intent at complicating matters is only to enrich the discipline of CWS. I would now like to shift my focus from CWS on an institutional scale to the question of whether or not creative writing can be taught. I’ll say again that I don’t intend to argue for either side, but it is important to a reader of this dissertation to know a little about the discussion and how my research contributes to it.

Can It Be Taught: Craft, Something Else, and This Dissertation

A serious point of contention in CWS right now is whether or not creative writing can be taught. Though I don't take a stance on the topic in this dissertation, I do believe asking this question and questions like it might be some of the most important inquiry occurring in the discipline. In short, there cannot be a discipline in the academy if that discipline cannot be taught. That is why in this dissertation I take a closer look at what is believed can and cannot be taught.

Mayers avers that many argue "Writing ability is fundamentally a matter of individual psychology or selfhood, something certain individuals are born with while others are not" (qtd. in Donnelly 45). Here, Mayers notes the ubiquitous belief that writing cannot be taught. Despite the eminence of such belief, Willey Maley writes, "In fact, that question—'can creative writing be taught?'—is something of a tautology, because creative writing can only be taught. It can only ever be taught, because 'creative writing' is the name given to writing courses at Universities and Colleges. It's an academic invention and a relatively recent one" (85). To bolster his assertion, Maley cites the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "'Creative writing' is a term first used in the United States to denote a 'course of study'" (85). Despite such definitions, others argue, as Donald Hall does in "Poetry and Ambition," for the abolition of creative writing degrees within the university because of the programs' proclivity to generate students who write like their teachers. Though Hall's concern was voiced nearly thirty-one years ago, it's evident the argument of whether or not creative writing can or should be taught is still prevalent. As is the case in this research, in *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*, Dawson takes a historical look at why it might be believed that creative writing cannot be taught. Dawson suggests the belief has a long history. He consults the words and works of Henry James, Walter Besant, and William Wordsworth to make

his argument. Taking a “Kantian line” of thought, Henry James argued that novelists cannot disclose the “manner” in which they write (qtd. in Dawson 10). Five years after James’ proclamation, in 1899, in *The Pen and the Book*, Walter Besant wrote, ““One thing is for certain that without the gift, it [writing] cannot be taught”” (qtd. in Dawson, *Creative Writing* 10). Finally, citing “The Prelude” as his foundation, Dawson argues that, like James and Besant, Wordsworth “opposed nature to the academy as the best teacher of the poet,” meaning “the university is a place of learning” and “nature” the source of “imagination,” making it unteachable (*Creative Writing* 14). What Dawson reveals here is that the question of whether or not creative writing can be taught develops “when formal attempts to teach writing begin at the end of the nineteenth century,” making the question one of “practical concern rather than philosophical” (*Creative Writing* 10). Furthermore, what is also important to note about this series of citations is that James, Besant, and Wordsworth all claim that the manner, gift, or nature of writing cannot be taught. It’s possible, and I believe Dawson is arguing, that such beliefs by such important literary figures are responsible for it being assumed that part of creative writing cannot be taught. But it’s clear by the different language used by all three figures—manner, gift, and nature—that what cannot be taught is not explicitly clear, which is why in Chapter Three I’ve attempted to specify and define one element that has yet to be associated with the part of creative writing that cannot be taught, and that element is communication between the writer and the reader through a piece of fiction by means of the sublime.

The sublime is important to consider when defining what cannot be taught in creative writing because Longinus stated that great writing is sublime but that the two most important tenets of sublimity cannot be taught but are inborn. William Tremblay appears to agree with Longinus by suggesting there is a set of inner skills which he calls ““inner work”” that is

“elusive, difficult, highly individual, and probably inimitable” (qtd. in Harper, *Inside* 134). This inner work might be what Robert Pinsky calls “knowledge of art: writerly knowledge, which is not always what professional scholars in universities understand or honor” (qtd. in Harper, *Inside* 133). This knowledge, Pinsky claims, is a result of copious amounts of reading. Both Tremblay and Pinsky appear to agree that there is something either not teachable in creative writing or not being taught in creative writing, an aspect of writing that poet Galway Kinnell might call deeper than personality.¹² This sentiment is shared by poet Mary Oliver, who, Mayers notes, “begins a recent book, ‘everyone knows that poets are born and not made in school . . . This book is about the things that can be learned. It is about matters of craft’” (qtd. in Mayers, “Figuring the Future,” 3). Continuing his argument, Mayers cites an article in *College English*, where Ron McFarland states, “I once ascertained five essentials of a serious writer: desire, drive, talent, vision, and craft . . . only craft can be taught” (qtd. in Mayers, “Figuring the Future” 3). These citations, and the countless others just like them but not cited here, are integral to the belief that craft is the part of creative writing that can be taught. However, not everyone agrees with the pervasive belief that only part of creative writing can be taught. Some view the entirety of creative writing as a learning process, period.

John Gardner, a prolific writer and often-cited expert on fiction writing, argues that “no writer who has kept himself innocent of education has ever produced art” (10). Here, Gardner partially describes the need for writers to understand what they do by being immersed in the subject of writing by reading, writing, and discussing writing. But Gardner is also discussing formal education. He claims that even the bad teacher still teaches a very important lesson about what and how to write and what and how not to (10). Esteemed American novelist and poet

¹² For a full explication of what Kinnell means by deeper than personality, consult the article “‘Deeper than Personality’: A Conversation with Gallway Kinnell.”

Charles Baxter asserts there is ““a kind of knowledge that can be acquired about writing,”” but that it ““cannot be learned solely from books”” (qtd. in Harper, *Inside* 128). Baxter’s answer suggests that the learning of creative writing requires some kind of action, possibly a doing other than reading, possibly conversation, maybe even formal education. Both Gardner and Baxter posit that there is a learning process to creative writing, and that process, at least in their eyes, takes more than an individual reading and writing in complete isolation. Both writers seem to suggest that part of learning how to write requires other people, possibly because creative writing requires knowledge, and knowledge finds solidarity in numbers. Harper reasons:

If creative writing occupies a space as a site of knowledge—and it is surely impossible to suggest that some form of knowledge is not acquired and accessed through creative writing—then it stands to reason that academe can investigate the nature, approach and dimensions of this site of knowledge, and contribute to the application and understanding of it [original emphasis]. (*Teaching Creative Writing* 161)

Fiction writer T.C. Boyle notes that “In our parent’s generations there was the idea of the proletarian writer. You didn’t go to any fancy-ass college, you didn’t discuss stuff. You went out and you lived, worked in the steel factory and wrote a novel. I don’t think that happens anymore. Everybody goes to college and they get as smart as they can” (35). To solidify his argument, Boyle insists, “Almost every writer in my generation went to a writing program, or taught in one. The academy has sort of preserved us as a viable subject . . . Writing in this generation has moved into the academic arena and that’s a good thing” (28-29). The selections cited here, though not exhaustive, do, I believe, account for the major discussion of whether or not creative writing can be taught in the university. This cacophony of thought might appear to be a prelude to or sign of immanent failure. But CWS is not the first discipline to be challenged as to whether

or not it could be taught. Dawson points out that, in 1913, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch argued that ““Some doubt does lurk in the public mind if, after all, English literature can, in any ordinary sense, be taught”” (qtd. in Dawson, *Creative Writing* 6). One hundred years later there is no shortage of English programs housing literary tracks of study, suggesting that, on the whole, most find literature teachable. It’s quite possible CWS is in the same situation today as literary studies were one-hundred years ago.

This section of Chapter One was meant to showcase, in brief, what might be the biggest discussion in CWS right now, whether or not it can be taught. Again, Dawson situates the birth of this argument to polemical figures like James, Besant, and Wordsworth. My research, however, attempts to extend this discussion further by tracing it back to Aristotle’s *Poetics* and Longinus’ *On the Sublime*, possibly articulating a new concern worth considering when asserting that creative writing cannot be taught. I would now like to move from the discussion of whether or not creative writing can be taught to the element that many say can be taught, craft. To understand how Chapter Two contributes to the discussion of craft and its likelihood of being teachable, it’s necessary to be familiar with the way craft is discussed in CWS and how I’m situating my work within that discussion.

What Is Craft, Exactly?

In 2003, the founders of the Gotham Writers’ Workshop compiled their years of teaching and writing and developed it into a practical guide on how to write. In their preface, the founders of the workshop write: “Simply put, we believe anyone can write, we believe writing is a craft that can be taught. True, talent cannot be taught, only nurtured, but the craft of writing can be taught. We’re devoted to teaching craft in a way that is so clear, direct, and applicable that our students begin growing as writers during their very first class” [original emphasis] (Fligelman

and Grace V). Like some of the earlier citations, Jeff Fligelman and David Grace attest that craft within creative writing can be taught, and it is easily distinguishable from the parts that cannot be. Furthermore, such an analysis suggests that craft is easily defined. However, much contemporary scholarship on creative writing argues otherwise. In “Figuring the Future: Lore and/in Creative Writing,” Mayers notes that craft might be “the most pervasive and ill-defined term within the lore of creative writing” (9). Craft is, Mayers argues, “as entangled as that wisdom is in other concepts such as creativity, genius, and imagination” (“Figuring the Future” 9). If one is to take Mayers’ words to heart, then it seems difficult to ascertain whether or not craft can be taught, for how can something undefined be taught? Mayers posits, “Craft is the faint gray area of overlap between genius and rhetoric. One cannot be taught to be a genius, but one can learn to imitate some of the techniques in which geniuses are expert” (“Figuring the Future” 3). Mayers avers that this version of craft “needs to be seriously reconsidered” (“Figuring the Future” 3). I believe Mayers feels this way because craft is so versatile, though it is often posited as a solidified concept that is quite teachable. However, taking just a brief look at ways different writers and teachers of writing define the word suggests craft is every bit as complicated as the unteachable elements of creative writing.

Harper defines craft as “a description of the skill-based activities in this art of creative writing” (*Inside* 127). Similarly, in his book, *The Modern Library Writer’s Workshop: A Guide to the Craft of Fiction*, Stephan Koch states, craft “is an effort to assemble and integrate what I believe amounts to something like a consensus among writers about the basics of the craft” (IX). Koch includes things like style, believable character development, and revision as some of the basics of craft. Though Harper’s and Koch’s definitions relate, the ambiguity of the term craft already becomes evident. Both writers suggest craft is skill-based, but what all can be included

as skill-based activities? What, exactly, does it mean when Koch labels style as an element of craft? Style, I feel, is an indistinct word, a descriptor I might use when trying to explain the difference between the work of John Updike and Raymond Carver or a word I might use when trying to compare Raymond Carver and Ernest Hemingway. With that said, for me, style is not as much an imitable skill as it is a unique quality of one's writing. I think writers spend their lifetimes developing their style. I'm not sure style, in all its variance, can be surmised in a chapter of a book as Koch does it. But, then again, that might depend on how one defines style.

Similar to Koch, Gardner defines craft as a set of skills or "techniques" that must become, as they are to the "pianist," second nature (9). Gardner continues by suggesting professional schooling tends to be the general path to master technique, though he does admit others claim otherwise. Gardner cites Hemingway as an advocate of the unschooled writer, though he notes Hemingway was under the tutelage of "two of the finest teachers then living, Sherwood Anderson and Gertrude Stein" (9). Ursula K. Le Guin adds some unique considerations to her definition of craft, including the sound of writing, how to use repetition, pronouns, verbs, and point of view. Interestingly, like Gardner, Le Guin believes once we as writers become "keenly and clearly aware of the elements of our craft, we can use and practice them until—the point of all the practice—we don't have to think about them consciously at all, because they have become skills" (xi). Both Gardner and Le Guin suggest that craft is a set of skills, but, in order for craft to work best for one's writing, it must become not only something used by the writer, but, more importantly, it must become the method with which the writer writes.

When making the distinction that the successful implementation of craft occurs when it is infused into the writing process, one might have grounds to argue that the difference between

John Updike and Raymond Carver is craft, primarily the element of style. Regardless of one's take on the differences between Updike and Carver, what I hope to elucidate is the imprecise definition of craft in CWS. This imprecision, I feel, facilitates the need for the kind of research I do in Chapter Two. Because craft is often defined as a set of teachable writing skills, I feel its components, the parts that many argue constitute it, are under analyzed. Harper details the need to investigate further the definitions within CWS. When discussing craft, Harper notes, "The creative writer engages in, and constructs alongside their creative practice, an active critical understanding of a specific kind. This critical understanding is in part based on a development of a craft, a set of skills that are practical, applied, pragmatic; the creative writer learns what works, and employs this learning. But this is far from the end of things" ("Research" 161). Harper argues that craft, a set of skills used by a writer, absorbs a dominant share of the attention in CWS. However, as I hope my research will suggest, there is, at best, a muddled definition of craft. In short, craft is a very big term. Harper warns that surmising the knowledge of creative writing as only a set of skills or craft "seems a narrow way of describing the knowledge creative writers use, knowledge they have, knowledge they acquire, or even knowledge they provide for others through their work" (*Inside* 125). What is more, to allow craft to account for what is teachable within a discipline without a deeper understanding of how craft is defined is, I feel, problematic. If elements like plot are going to be considered part of the teachable craft within CWS, then plot should be as understood as the equation of π in mathematics or the Punnett square in biology. Now that I've contextualized my research within the discipline of CWS, I would like to move to the methodologies used to compile my research. As I mentioned at the start of this chapter, three methodologies underpin this research—rhetorical analysis, textual analysis, and craft criticism.

Rhetorical Analysis

In *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image, and Sound*, Martin W. Bauer and George Gaskill discuss the origin and path of rhetorical analysis and make a case for the importance of rhetorical research to the construction of knowledge. Bauer and Gaskill note, “Traditionally, rhetorical analysis critiqued oral discussion,” but now that many of those discourses are recorded in writing, “rhetorical analysts have chosen documentary sources as well as oral ones on which to use their methods” (209). Sources like handbooks on a particular subject or the written arguments of theoretical concepts, such as the sublime, are two kinds of documentary sources. As I noted at the start of this chapter, rhetorical analysis sometimes meets resistance from empiricists, but Bauer and Gaskill remind us that “The goal of rhetoric is never to be ‘scientific’, or to be able to categorize persuasion for all times and all places” (211). Likewise, when discussing the inadequacies I see in how plot is discussed in creative writing handbooks, and how those inadequacies might negatively affect the teaching of creative writing, I do not mean to suggest that the negative effects plague all or even most creative writing classrooms or teachers. I have no desire to indict teachers for the strategies they use. I don’t employ the kind of research here to make such assertions. I only wish to note the possibility that creative writing handbooks might affect the teaching of creative writing. In fact, it is the ability to discuss possibility and not probability or fact that makes rhetorical analysis a good methodology for this dissertation. Bauer and Gaskill claim, “The power of rhetorical analysis is its immediacy, its ability to talk about the particular and the possible, not the universal and probable” (211). With that said, because of the ubiquity in the way plot is described in handbooks, and the ubiquity of the belief that craft can be taught and other elements of writing cannot, I believe my observations lean more towards probable than possible, but they’re in no way universal.

Another reason I employ rhetorical analysis in this dissertation is because rhetorical analysis is a discursive act used to critique discursive acts. Bauer and Gaskill attest, “By its very nature, rhetorical analysis is a discursive act: it is creating arguments about arguments” (218). I consider both the construction of handbooks on creative writing and discussions on sublimity to be arguments constructed to convince an audience. More specifically, I consider the history of sublimity, what it is, how it has changed, its effect on general aesthetics, and what it might be in the future to be argumentative. Similarly, handbooks, as both Robert Connors and Dawson have shown (and which I’ll discuss in Chapter Two), can assume ideological slants that establish arguments about how certain things are to be done. Finally, because this dissertation is a discursive analysis of discursive acts, it is interpretive. Some might use the word speculative in place of interpretive, but my stance on knowledge making, and the stance of many within the field of CWS, is that interpretive acts of understanding are every bit as important as empirical ones.¹³ As a case in point, many know Aristotle argued the earth was the center of our solar system and that, centuries later, Copernicus corrected this assertion by proving the sun was the center of the solar system. However, fewer know that Copernicus’s math, the way he proved his theories, was actually used to prove the theories of Ptolemy, who deduced the sun was the center of the solar system before Copernicus did. Unfortunately, Ptolemy, in the *Almagest*, could only describe the orbit of the planets within the solar system but couldn’t cohesively explain it mathematically. Regardless, without Ptolemy’s speculation or, what I consider to be, his interpretation of how planets actually orbit within our solar system, it might have been centuries later before what is considered the truth was discovered. This brief cosmological aside is meant

¹³ For an interesting account of the many successful advancements that have occurred from people thinking theoretically outside of scientific paradigms, consult Paul Feyerabend’s *Against Method*.

to show the importance of interpretive research to the advancement of knowledge because “rhetorical analysis is an interpretive act . . . [it] makes no such claims to universal truths, and therefore measures its success and failures on whether it has addressed and even persuaded the identified audience in its real time and place” (Bauer and Gaskill 218-219). Because of its interpretive capacities, the need for rhetorical analysis is not only warranted in CWS but, more importantly, it is in demand.

The final reason rhetorical analysis is appropriate for this dissertation is because of my specific focus. I concentrate on one argument within the discipline of CWS—whether or not it can be taught—but then hone in on two particular considerations of the arguments—craft and how it can be taught and the other unteachable elements. From there I narrow my focus even further, addressing only plot as a device of craft, and sublimity as something possibly belonging to the unteachable element of fiction writing. These distinctions are important because in rhetorical analysis “One pays attention to the particular and not general. Such rhetorical analysis will examine the movement and influence of a single text, perhaps” (Bauer and Gaskill 219). In my case, I examine a single device associated with craft (plot) and a single concept that might be associated with the unteachable in CWS (sublimity). Though I can’t generalize and say my arguments account for every teaching and learning occasion within CWS, “Good rhetorical analyses frequently do not hesitate to make normative proclamations. These may be in the form of suggestions about how the discourse being analyzed failed to persuade an audience . . . [or] they may be in the form of prescriptions about how other forms of persuasion could avoid particular pitfalls . . . [or they might critique] persuasive devices used” (Bauer and Gaskill 219). This dissertation is both an attempt to make certain that pitfalls of the past are avoided in the

future of CWS and an analysis of persuasive devices used in the discipline, both of which, I believe, establish the necessity of rhetorical analysis in this research.

Textual Analysis as Research

This dissertation both historically investigates how plot is discussed in creative writing handbooks and by writers and studies the possible relationship of the sublime to fiction writing. In both cases I'm tracing thoughts on plot and sublimity through centuries, noting how their definitions and roles evolve from one generation to the next. This dissertation considers both topics in regards to sociocultural influence. More specifically, because I discuss how integral figures' opinions within particular historical instances shaped the patterns of thought concerning plot and sublimity, this dissertation is a kind of cultural criticism as defined by Catherine Belsey. Defining this dissertation as cultural criticism creates a demand for textual analysis as a research method. Belsey surmises, "Textual analysis is indispensable to research in cultural criticism, where cultural criticism includes English, cultural history, and cultural studies, as well as any other discipline that focuses on texts, or seeks to understand the inscription of culture in its artifacts" (157). CWS focuses on texts, at least part of the time. Here, Belsey hints at texts being cultural artifacts, which I believe them to be, even handbooks on creative writing, perhaps especially handbooks on creative writing. Because I approach handbooks and texts on sublimity as cultural artifacts, textual analysis becomes a methodology necessary to this research. Textual analysis presupposes that a text "reproduces or reiterates meanings, which always come from outside, and are not at the artist's disposal, any more than they are at ours" (Belsey 164). By considering texts as cultural artifacts, as is done in textual analysis, textbooks in CWS might allude to dominant ideological paradigms within the academy responsible for dictating how writing is defined. What is more, I believe handbooks, like art, are "always citational" (Belsey

164). That means I view handbooks as cultural artifacts created for the sole purpose of establishing a set of criteria or a record of how a skill, craft, or art is executed at a particular point in time. Handbooks appear to point to a history of doing; they are a historical record of something and how that something is done properly within a culture's purview.

An additional reason textual analysis is especially useful to this research is because this research is an attempt to make statements about the state of CWS that have not been articulated before. However, I'm not creating a whole new line of thinking. Instead, I'm relying entirely on discourses well into their maturity. Because I'm utilizing textual analysis as a research method not making an entirely new statement is permitted. Belsey argues that textual analysis does not have to be "original" as if "springing fully armed from the head of the researcher without reference to any previous account" (160). Though I critique the history of plot within creative writing in ways I haven't seen done yet, and though I attempt to demonstrate a relationship between studies on the sublime and CWS that neither side has yet made, I couldn't do so without the array of work already published in those areas. My reliance on the works of so many others makes textual research a useful method for this dissertation. In fact, Belsey proposes textual analysis "is much more likely to involve assembling ideas that have not been brought together in quite that way before" (160). Chapter Three is a prime example of research that brings preexisting discussions together in new ways.

With that said, not only am I relying heavily on work already done in CWS and sublime studies, but my work, like all work, is historically bound. Textual analysis embraces the fact that "Any specific textual analysis is made at a particular historical moment and from within a specific culture. In that sense, the analysis is not exhaustive: it does not embrace all the possible readings past and future. At the same time, it is able to be new" (Belsey 166). I feel this

distinction is important to make, especially when considering Chapter Three of this dissertation. In Chapter Three I attempt to say something new about sublimity, which is an inexhaustible topic. A mentor once told me it would take ten years to begin to understand the theories of someone like Immanuel Kant. Despite this likelihood, Kant and his theory of sublimity is centric to Chapter Three. Though I've attempted to produce an honest representation of sublimity, it is not exhaustive. I could not exhaust the topic of the sublime in a single dissertation chapter. This kind of occlusion may not be admissible in many instances, but such risks are acceptable in textual analysis.

Finally, Belsey notes that textual analysis sometimes meets resistance from scholars and researchers who favor more traditional methods with a more developed history. However, Belsey also believes such a standard is a "tyranny" bolstered by the "critical institutions" which exert "a stranglehold on what is admissible as interpretation" (161). Broadening the definition of interpretation within the methodology of textual analysis allows interpretation to include "the effect of a relation between a reader and a text . . . defining how it can legitimately be read and the range of its possible interpretations" (Belsey 163). CWS is in its early stages. Not allowing a research methodology like textual analysis to consider the many possible interpretations of the multiple texts that constitute a new discipline could be detrimental to that discipline's development. One final note about textual analysis that is especially important for Chapter Two is Belsey's claim that the "contribution" of textual research might be "quite small, a piece of the jigsaw. But research is expected to make a difference to the standard account of the topic, whatever that topic might be" (160). As a case in point, one might argue that my focus on plot in Chapter Two is, really, only a small contribution to the overall consideration of craft in CWS, and they're right. However, though my account in Chapter Two might be small, it most certainly

has the potential to make a difference to the standard account of how plot is discussed in CWS, in turn possibly affecting how craft itself is defined. From here I will now address my final research methodology, craft criticism.

Craft Criticism

In his book, *(Re) Writing Craft: Composition, Creative Writing, and the Future of English Studies*, Mayers states, “Craft criticism is held together in the loosest sense by the tendency to challenge or question the institutionalized conventional wisdom of creative writing” (47). This dissertation is a tangible challenge to the institutionalized conventions of fiction writing; it is a progeny of serious reflection “based upon not only a concept of craft but also an interrogation of the prevailing definitions of craft” (Mayers 65). Furthermore, this dissertation segues nicely with the agenda of craft criticism because true craft criticism “arises from and responds to historical and material contexts” (Mayers 48). Because this dissertation studies the possible historical influences of Aristotle and Longinus on the lore of fiction writing (historical context), and because it does so by analyzing creative writing handbooks and other textual sources on the subject (material context), it is, by definition, craft criticism—“Craft criticism is engaged theorizing about creative production—theorizing that arises from and is responsive to the social, political, economic, and institutional contexts for creative writing” (Mayers 46). With that said, craft criticism provides different lenses through which to look when theorizing about how political, economic, and institutional influences affect the production of creative writing in the classroom.

Mayers suggests that craft critics “tend to fall into four basic categories—process, genre, authorship, and institutionality” (*(Re) Writing* 47). This dissertation critiques and comments on all four categories. However, Mayer’s discussion on institutionality is most central here. Mayers

remarks, “Questions of *institutionality* focus on how the teaching of writing (and reading) is institutionalized within creative writing programs at colleges and universities. Usually critics addressing questions of institutionality examine the effects of the academy on the general enterprise of poetry and fiction writing” [original emphasis] (*Re Writing* 47-48). This dissertation is an examination of how the academy might be affecting the ways fiction is taught in classrooms by assuming that, in some instances, handbooks on creative writing are being used in them. Moreover, this dissertation suggests such uses of handbooks might be problematic because, as Donnelly, Connors, and Dawson have shown, there is a lack of historical understanding concerning the production and uses of handbooks and how they affect the teaching of their subjects, especially in CWS.

In this chapter I have attempted to explain the need for my research within the field of CWS by defining what the discipline is, explaining its current state, and relating my research to both respectively. Furthermore, I have provided an explanation of my research methodologies and how they apply to my research as well as how they are justified within the field of CWS. From here I will move into Chapter Two, which will open with a specific explanation as to why analyzing handbooks in CWS is important (I’ve only glossed over it to this point), and then I will move into my analysis of plot within creative writing handbooks and writers’ self-reports in order to discuss what is believed teachable in CWS. In Chapter Three I will discuss the sublime and its relationship to the writing and reading of fiction, which, I argue, might be included in the part of CWS believed unteachable. In Chapter Four, I provide a third option to the teachable and unteachable models, which derives from Bizzaro’s *Quantum Rhetoric*. Finally, in Chapter Five I discuss what more can be done with my research to further the growth of CWS.

CHAPTER 2¹⁴

CRAFT AND PLOT—THAT WHICH CAN BE TAUGHT

*“We have already decided that Aristotle is wrong,
and now we must face the consequences
of disagreeing with him”* (E. M. Forster).

Introduction

In this chapter I use rhetorical and textual analysis to provide a historical analysis of how plot is discussed within two important sources of CWS, handbooks and writer’s self-reports. Handbooks on creative writing are especially important to this chapter because handbooks have long influenced how we teach writing. The work of Robert Connors, which I discuss momentarily, is just one example that analyzes ways writing handbooks have informed the pedagogical theories used in writing studies. Like Donnelly, Susan Crowley, Susan Miller, Robert Connors, and many others, I too believe it is important to understand the theoretical and historical histories of what we teach because “Theory is not the opposite site of practice; theory is not even a supplement to practice. Theory is practice, a practice of a particular kind and practice is always theoretical” (Zabroski 39). I believe such a statement is true even if what’s being taught or practiced is something as minute as plot within fiction writing. Therefore, in this chapter I attempt to showcase two points: 1) craft is believed teachable in CWS and a primary element of craft is plot, and 2) CWS’s historical understanding of plot is underdeveloped. Because plot is essential to most discussions of craft and because of the underdeveloped understanding of plot within the lore of CWS, a focus on plot is imperative to this research. What

¹⁴ Portions of this chapter have appeared in the article “Tragedy, Plot, Fiction: a Study of Sameness and How You May Have Been Duped,” published in *New Writing: the International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing* 11.1 (2013): 13-24. Print.

I believe to be the problem in these points is that a hard line has been drawn defining what is teachable and not teachable despite an underdeveloped understanding of what exactly is being discussed. I believe a discipline can only deem something teachable or unteachable after they've defined just what that something is and where that something might have come from; therefore, Chapter Two acknowledges CWS' approval that craft is teachable, that a key element of craft is plot, but that the history and therefore understanding of plot is underdeveloped.

To historically analyze the way plot is discussed in CWS, I look at two sources integral to the past, present, and future definitions of plot within the genre of fiction writing. Those sources are handbooks and writers' self-reports.¹⁵ The self-reports are sometimes written in book format and other times spoken in interview format. Nearly every handbook used in this dissertation has moved beyond a first edition, alluding to their possible popularity within the discipline of CWS. It stands to reason that handbooks on a particular subject are predominantly purchased and used by teachers and practitioners of that subject. In this case, the handbooks are being used by mostly creative writers and teachers of creative writing. Furthermore, the handbooks discussed here span a time period of over forty years, providing insights on their popularity from decade to decade as well as a textual history of how plot has been discussed from the past to the present. It should be noted, I use the term handbooks somewhat loosely. By handbooks I mean what's sometimes referred to as how-to-books. As mentioned, the other sources consulted in Chapter Two are writers' self-reports. Such sources sometimes struggle to find accreditation in empirical

¹⁵ Some of the handbooks currently cited in this chapter are *Short Story Writing*, *The Creative Writer's Handbook: What to Write, How to Write It, How to Sell It*, *Aspects of the Novel*, *The Handbook of Creative Writing*, *On Writing Short Stories*, *Narrative Design: Working with Imagination, Craft, and Form*, *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers*, *Write Away: One Novelist's Approach to Fiction and the Writing Life* and, *Steering the Craft: Exercises and Discussion on Story Writing for the Lone Navigator or the Mutinous Crew*. For a full list of handbooks used, please consult Appendix B.

research, but in CWS such work is prized and goes by the name of *critical creative writing*. Critical creative writing is such a new element of CWS that the very first book attempting to define it in its entirety, Michelene Weandor's *Critical-Creative Writing: Readings and Resources*, will not be published until December 17, 2015. Finally, some sources cited in Chapter Two, like John Gardner's *The Art of Fiction*, Kit Reed's *Mastering Fiction*, and Stephen King's *On Writing* are, I argue, an amalgam between a how-to-book and a writer's self-report. These sources combine the accounts of how writers do their jobs with a process and style meant to teach others how to write, meaning the authors pay attention to details that can be studied and learned. These details tend to be called craft in CWS. I will now explain why it is so important to analyze textbooks on the subject of creative writing.

Why Question Textbooks?

In this chapter I take a close look at the assumptions and implications behind the history of plot and its representation within creative writing handbooks. Creative writing handbooks account for much of the lore within CWS. However, there is a lack of reflection on the relationships of creative writing handbooks to how creative writing is taught. This dearth of understanding results from a lack of reflection on the history and nature of creative writing handbooks themselves. Scholars like Dawson and Mimi Thebo are among the first to analyze creative writing handbooks as cultural artifacts; they are among the first to try and explain where the need for such handbooks arose and what that might mean in regards to CWS. Like Dawson, Thebo, and others in this chapter, I, too, take a historical look at creative writing handbooks. But instead of considering them in their entirety, I study them to examine perhaps the most discussed element of fiction within those handbooks—plot. Though I focus on plot, plot is but one of many examples worth considering. This chapter is a contribution that has not yet been made to

discussions like those already generated by scholars like Dawson and Thebo. I hope that such a contribution will serve as a model for discussions of other elements of fiction and how they have come to be teachable subjects.

Dawson notes the importance of creative writing handbooks to the general understanding of CWS when noting, “For much of its history, formal reflection on Creative Writing has been largely restricted to writing handbooks which recast the evaluative and taxonomic language of craft and technique, backed up by dilettantish musing on the creative process and the question of whether writing can be taught” (“The Future” 78). Ralph Waldo Emerson warns that one in the formation of current knowledge, such as a scholar in a specialized field, “must not be ‘a mere thinker’ or a ‘bookworm.’ He must not ‘set out from accepted dogmas’ because ‘the books of an older period will not fit these’” (qtd. in Bizzaro, “The Writer-Teacher” 408). When discussing Emerson’s pragmatics, the new world, and their relationship to the development of new ways of thinking (such as those in CWS), Bizzaro informs “us that those whose judgments we might use in lieu of making our own have no experience with transcendent insight of the sort only possible, uniquely imaginable, in the new world” (“The Writer-Teacher” 408). Applying Emerson’s and Bizzaro’s discussion to handbooks, it becomes possible to argue that the judgments of accepted dogmas are what constitutes a handbook, meaning that to consult handbooks more than to experiment with new approaches can, at least in the opinion of these two men, thwart the growth of a new discipline like that of CWS. Emerson’s and Bizzaro’s counsel fructifies in Dawson’s research, where he argues that handbooks were the start of a “nascent critical movement designed not only to analyze and define the short story as a distinct genre in its own right, but to canonize it as a distinctly American genre, as a form of writing which Americans excelled at because it developed out of conditions of American life” (*Creative Writing* 61). As a case in

point, Dawson cites the work of Brander Matthews, a preeminent scholar from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, whose work I address in detail later in this chapter. The influence of the college classroom on the creation of creative writing handbooks was paramount. The first noteworthy textbook on the short story was Charles R. Barrett's *Short Story Writing*, a text comprised of "rules and principles" meant to assist the novice writer at all stages of the writing process (Dawson, *Creative Writing* 62). Though he considered a slew of fictional pieces and individual discussions on the topic, Barret claimed his greatest influence was Dr. E.H. Lewis' "'The Art of the Short Story,' a class he constructed in 1896 at the University of Chicago" (Dawson, *Creative Writing* 62). This passage represents the relationship of the college creative writing classroom to the genesis of creative writing handbooks. Such an association might seem trite at first because it stands to reason that handbooks made for teaching would be made with the classroom in mind, yet, despite such an observation, there is still no analysis on whether or not handbooks on creative writing affect how creative writing gets taught. Furthermore, the observation cited here considers only the relationship of how creative writing classes might have contributed to the formation of creative writing handbooks and how those handbooks might be affecting classrooms in their application. Creative writing handbooks have a broader genesis than just that of the classroom.

In his article, "Just Do It: Creative Writing Exercises and the Ideology of American Handbooks," Steve Westbrook argues that creative writing handbooks maintain a socio-economic, ideological imperative established by those in charge. Westbrook "claims creative writing handbooks produced in the USA tend to radically restrict students' activity" (146). To bolster his argument Westbrook consults the work of Louis Althusser, arguing that handbooks function "as mechanisms of both the American creative writing industry and larger ISA"

(147).¹⁶ Westbrook goes on to say that the exercises found in most handbooks “produce something akin to what Sharon Crowley has called, within the discipline of composition-rhetoric, ‘docile’ subjects—figures who, having learned passivity, do not threaten the current distribution of power within either the immediate industry or the larger state but, rather, preserve the status quo” (147). The results of Westbrook’s work argues that “Guidelines for exercises [within creative writing handbooks] serve not only as formal restraints aimed to assist students’ processes of invention and experimentation, but also as behavioral restrictions that actively discourage students from defining their purposes as politically motivated and using their writing as a means of cultural activism or intervention” (141). There is little research explaining just how the principles espoused in creative writing handbooks transfer over to the day-to-day activities of a creative writing classroom, if they do at all. However, Andrew Levy’s work suggests one way such principles are espoused in the creative writing classroom is through the workshop model.

Making an argument similar to Westbrook’s, Andrew Levy claims there is a codified scientific method to good fiction writing which results from what has and has not been marketable in the publishing industry, which, as Westbrook argues, makes the qualifications of good writing a socio-economic endeavor more than anything else. Levy believes the codification

¹⁶ Louis Althusser is a high-French Marxist most known for his theories on Ideological and Repressive state apparatuses (a reformulation and further exegesis of Marx’s State Apparatus) and Interpolation.

Important to Westbrook’s work and, thus, this work is Althusser’s notion of the Ideological State Apparatus, which is any apparatus that governs people (in both private and public sphere because to Althusser there was no private sphere) primarily by ideology and secondarily by force; whereas, the Repressive State Apparatus functions primarily through force and secondarily through ideology.

The university is an example of an Ideological State Apparatus and the Military a Repressive State Apparatus. For a full definition of Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) and Repressive State Apparatus (RSA), consult Althusser’s essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.”

of such edicts is enforced by the traditional writing workshop often found in creative writing classrooms. Levy argues, “The origins of the Creative Writing workshop can be found in the explosion of handbooks on short story writing at the end of the nineteenth century which codified and popularized the most seminal axioms of creative writing pedagogy” (qtd. in Dawson, *Creative Writing* 60). Levy notes that these handbooks strived to provide “the mastery of a guild craft” and not “rhetorical principles” (qtd. in Dawson, *Creative Writing* 60). These axioms reflected the criteria established by magazines which “were the main outlets for short fiction” (qtd. in Dawson, *Creative Writing* 60). These handbooks, Levy states, solidified the first “‘scientific’ analysis of works which had been published,” which excluded more writing practices and processes than it included (qtd. in Dawson, *Creative Writing* 60). Levy’s contribution is one of few in CWS, which is why Michelene Wandor states that in the traditional workshop model “‘untheorized (or at best, very under-theorized) principles of ‘criticism’ are translated into by turns brutal and patronizing exchanges” which deny creative writing’s “‘relationship to its own histories, which are those embedded in the history of English’” (qtd. in Thebo 42). Westbrook, Levy, and Wandor discuss a largely untheorized, unhistoricized relationship between handbooks and CWS, but all agree there is a kind of *normativization* resulting from their use. Dirk de Geest and An Goris argue that handbooks, especially those explaining the process of writing romances, are normative and confining, so much so they argue that exploring the constraints of normativization of handbooks might be useful (84). Dawson discusses such normativization, dividing the teaching of traditional creative writing into “four institutional trajectories . . . *creative self-expression, literacy, craft, and reading from the inside*” [original emphasis] (*Creative Writing* 49). The institutional trajectory of craft is central to this chapter.

In this chapter I take a close look at the assumptions and implications behind the history of plot and its representation within creative writing handbooks. I choose to analyze plot because it is an element of craft cited in nearly every handbook used for this dissertation. In fact, plot is not just cited textually but in several cases has an entire chapter dedicated to it. In fact, research suggests plot is pervasive, showing up in nearly all forms of storytelling. For example, in *The Creative Writer's Handbook: What to Write, How to Write It, How to Sell It*, Isabelle Ziegler claims plot exists in most of our creative forms of communication. To validate, Ziegler traces the many adaptations of plot found in such disparate creative modes as the novel and T.V. drama, and the short story and screen play. When considering E. M. Forster's definition of plot—one of the most pervasive and the one acknowledged by Ziegler—, which is that plot is “a narrative of events, with the emphasis falling on causality,” it becomes evident why plot is germane to most forms of creative expression (60). At the heart of screen plays, movies, novels, and even much of journalism is a story. The plot is more than the time-sequence unfolding of events; it is the time-sequence unfolding of events that, as Forster asserts, makes us ask ““why?”” (60). In short, the consensus is that plot is the reason why a story is a story, whether it's being told on screen or in a book. There are callings for such research in CWS. Donnelly notes:

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 context of the writing process [original emphasis]. (17-18)

Without using empiricism to prove it—given the terms of my investigation I find it unnecessary to do so—I do believe there is likelihood that some creative writing handbooks make their way to creative writing classrooms.¹⁷ In the tradition of other influential scholarship in both composition and creative writing studies, this dissertation rhetorically and historically analyzes creative writing handbooks with the belief that they are under analyzed and that such a lack of analysis might lead to poor teaching practices in the creative writing classroom. Like Connors, Claude Hurlbert’s analysis in “A Place in Which to Stand” is an example from the field of composition studies where a lack of reflection on the uses of textbooks and the effects of their production creates a disservice for students. For Hurlbert, composition textbooks’ “gross generalities of process and instruction mystify and keep us from grappling with the complexities of composing our students’ needs and lives in the classroom” (353). Hurlbert feels this way because he believes handbooks represent “a professor’s dream of the perfect student performing the perfect writing process and producing the perfect essay” (353). In short, the fallacious relationship between students’ realities and the textbooks meant to represent them is divisive to teachers’ ultimate goal of educating each student in a classroom equally. Non-empirical studies on handbooks’ relationships to teaching appear common in composition studies. Furthermore, the work produced by Connors and Hurlbert encourages teachers to question the textbooks they use despite not being empirical in nature. In short, through their studies Connors and Hurlbert

¹⁷ Such non-empirical assertions concerning the effects of handbooks on classroom practices are common in writing studies. The examples I’ve cited thus far are not empirical studies but have, nonetheless, contributed to this and other research in CWS. Moreover, in the field of composition studies, Robert Connors, from between the years of 1983-1986, wrote three polemical, non-empirical articles arguing that socio-economic influences created the need for handbooks in composition studies and that those handbooks led to a non-inclusive, rule-governed model of writing in the composition classroom. Those articles are “Handbooks: History of a Genre,” “Mechanical Correctness as a Focus in Composition Instruction,” and “Textbooks and the Evolution of the Discipline.”

bring awareness to potential models affecting the teaching of writing. Chapter Two of this dissertation sets out to accomplish the same goal.

Not being aware of the models one adopts to teach can lead to what Donnelly calls model confusion.¹⁸ Discussing the work of Sharon Crowley, Donnelly notes such confusion might “bewilder” or “mislead” students (21). Bishop supports both Donnelly and Crowley, claiming that the over application of a model not adequately reflected on and understood can lead to “restrictive” classroom conditions (qtd. in Donnelly 21). This chapter proceeds on the notion that the historical and theoretical nature of creative writing handbooks is understudied. Donnelly notes, “Because writers do not know their history, they miss opportunities to address the theoretical rationale of their history, they miss the opportunities to address the theoretical rationale of their practices in their classroom” (17). Such missed opportunities can be detrimental to teaching because “not knowing the implications of our practices limits the direction of our teaching strategies, our course design and our students’ ability to broaden their knowledge and reading/writing skills” (Donnelly 20). If, as was the case in Connors’ research, handbooks do delimit the teaching and learning opportunities in creative writing classrooms, then research like that done in this chapter is of great importance to the further development of CWS.

It is vital to note there are important discussions occurring in CWS concerning the state of creative writing handbooks and their role on the teaching of creative writing. Furthermore, it is important to note that not only did such discussions originate in more established disciplines like composition studies, but also such discussions were integral in making composition studies an established discipline in the first place. I note this correlation not to make one discipline

¹⁸ Donnelly’s use of Crowley’s model confusion appears, at least to me, to be very similar to, if not that same as, the pedagogical instance of modal confusion as defined by Richard Fulkerson in his article “The Four Philosophies of Composition.” However, Donnelly and Crowley use model confusion, so my usage of it here is done to stay true to their work.

beholden to another but to suggest that such research might be integral to the development of writing disciplines in general, securing the need for research like that found in this chapter. Furthermore, it seems to me there is no right or wrong approach to addressing the issues I've outlined. Due to the dearth of information on CWS there is just as much need for textual and rhetorical analysis as there is need for qualitative or quantitative analysis. This chapter is a direct response to the need for more attuned discussion on creative writing handbooks and their potential effect on CWS. I will now continue to my analysis of plot within creative writing handbooks and writers' self-reports.

Aristotle

It's arguable that Aristotle's definition of plot has influenced notions of storytelling more than any other concept or premise. In *The Creative Writer's Handbook: What to Write, How to Write It, How to Sell It*, Ziegler claims plot exists in most of our creative forms of communication. To validate, Ziegler traces the many adaptations of plot found in such disparate creative modes as the novel and T.V. drama, and the short story and screen play. When considering Forster's definition of plot—one of the most pervasive and the one acknowledged by Ziegler—which is that plot is “a narrative of events, with the emphasis falling on causality,” it becomes evident why plot is germane to most forms of creative expression (60). At the heart of screen plays, movies, novels, and even much of journalism is a story. The plot is more than the time-sequence unfolding of events; it is the time-sequence unfolding of events that, as Forster asserts, makes us ask ““why?”” (60). In short, the consensus is that plot is the reason why a story is a story, whether it's being told on screen or in a book.

Ziegler suggests that though there are a couple of different kinds of plots spread amongst the creative modes mentioned, they all rely on the Aristotelian model. Like Ziegler, William

Pedan also acknowledges there is more than one kind of plot. He attributes them to Aristotle and calls them the *classic narrative method* [my emphasis] (21). Pedan then explains what differentiates the classical narrative method from other kinds of plots. The points he emphasizes are those that I discuss later in this chapter, so I'll refrain from doing so now, but I want to emphasize that both Ziegler and Pedan define plot broadly. Conversely, this chapter is a nuanced analysis of how plot is defined in the lore of fiction writing, with a particular focus on short fiction. Though I don't want to delve too deeply into the concept of lore in creative writing, I wish to note that I mean lore as Stephanie Vanderslice defines it, meaning that lore is "part of the basic assumptions" within a culture, and in regards to creative writing, lore is "all but invisible to those who teach and write in the world it scaffolds" (XVII). To achieve this undertaking I scoured handbooks on fiction writing. These handbooks were written by men and women and cover a span of more than forty years. Peppered in with the handbooks are references to interviews and writer self-reports. The lesson learned from this research is that without Aristotle there might be no fiction as we understand it, and it's even less likely that there would be short fiction as we define it today. The second lesson garnered from this research is that, though some of the writers cited here do acknowledge Aristotle's influence on the lore of plot within short fiction theory, most do not. What is more, those that do discuss Aristotle's role do so on a surface level. I have yet to find a point-by-point, detailed analysis of how Aristotle has affected the short story and all of its "parts," the novel, or creative writing in general. Such an endeavor would take more than one book, which is why, in this chapter, I've chosen to discuss only how Aristotle's *Poetics* has impacted the way that plot is defined within creative writing handbooks. With that said, an exploration into other classic texts, or even a further understanding of how the

Poetics might affect other aspects of fiction writing, would only enrich the understanding of CWS further, making them both worthy avenues of study.

Before one can distinguish how the *Poetics* has defined the short story, he or she must become familiar with Aristotle's definition of plot and tragedy. Sometimes Aristotle talks about plot and tragedy as if they are different, but mostly, he addresses them as if they are the same. For example, Aristotle states, "Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality" (12). A few pages later, Aristotle writes, "The plot, being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole, the structured union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed" (15). The focus here is twofold. First, Aristotle states both tragedy and plot are imitations of action, which suggests they have the same function and not that one functions as a device within the other. Second, Aristotle claims both plot and tragedy imitate only one action and be whole in construction. This interchangeability between terms is repeated again when Aristotle writes: tragedy "cannot imitate several lines of actions carried at one and the same time" (42), suggesting that a successful tragedy focuses on either one or a minimal number of actions. Yet, the page before that, Aristotle states, plot "should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete with a beginning, a middle, and an end" (41). When considering the passages cited here, it's arguable that for Aristotle plot and tragedy were nearly synonymous. I believe and attempt to represent that notions of plot within creative writing handbooks have their roots in Aristotle's work.

It becomes clear that, for Aristotle, the boundaries between plot and tragedy are nebulous. However, today writers and literary scholars *know* the differences between tragedy and other modes of drama, and they certainly know the differences between tragedy and short fiction, or at

least they think they do. Aristotle uses plot to define tragedy. Today, many creative writing handbooks use plot as a way to define fiction, especially short fiction. The problem is the definition of plot hasn't really changed in 2,300 years. Aristotle's definition for the dramatic mode of tragedy is the same one used to distinguish plot in many creative writing handbooks, and most people don't know it. With that said, when citing Aristotle's work, I use tragedy and plot synonymously to talk about plot and fiction as it is currently defined.

One of the most basic Aristotelian principles of plot is that it has "a beginning, a middle, and an end" (41). In fact, this principle is such an axiom of storytelling that at first it seems silly to question it; of course a story has a beginning, middle, and end. What else could it be comprised of? Yet, with a bit of sarcasm, Francine Prose quips, "In their efforts to define the formal qualities of the short story form, critics are often driven back to involve basic Aristotelian principles (short stories, we hear, have a beginning, a middle, and an end)" (112). Prose's cynicism derives not only from the traditional belief that there is a beginning, middle, and end to the short story, but, more importantly, her cynicism arises because it is through this tripartite distinction that the Aristotelian formula fructifies. At first this three-part division appears broad and rather innocuous; however, this division influences even the minutest elements of the short story. Nothing is untouched by this principle.

Alice LaPlante bolsters Prose's commentary and shows the problematic nature of the three-way division of plot. LaPlante states, "Many people base their definitions of a story on Aristotle's admonition that it must have a beginning, middle, and end. This is generally assumed to mean that a story follows the three-part shape of conflict, crisis, and resolution" (97). Aligning with LaPlante, John Singleton claims, "Even in matters of form and style we cannot escape our cultural moorings. Many writers and commentators argue that there is a basic pattern to the short

story, a kind of universal shape. A story, it is argued, evolves through a number of stages sometimes described passively as—beginning, middle, and end; sometimes more dynamically as—situation, complication, crisis/dilemma, resolution” (104). Janet Burroway caustically agrees when she writes, “Fortunately, the necessary features of the short story form are fewer than those of a face. They are *conflict*, *crisis*, and *resolution*” (39). This emphasis is particularly important because it was cited from Burroway’s *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, which is the “most widely used creative writing text in America” (*Burroway*). Despite Burroway’s disposition towards the traditional definition of plot, she avers, “no technique” in her book on fiction writing escaped “a conflict, a crisis, and a resolution” model (53). In *The College Handbook of Creative Writing*, Robert DeMaria states, “A good plot usually has the following elements: *conflict*, *suspense*, *development*, *resolution*” (68). And, finally, as a case in point, Ziegler notes, “The structural advancement of a piece of writing is provided by the conflict as it is stated or implied in the beginning and rises in a series of crises to the climax and resolution” (76).

The several citations, spanning more than thirty years, shows the pervasiveness of the beginning, middle, end/conflict, crisis, resolution model. I believe this model originated with Aristotle when he claimed “Every tragedy falls into two parts—Complication and Unraveling or Dénouement” (31). Now, at first the math doesn’t add up. There is a three part structure—beginning, middle, and end—and only two major parts to a tragedy—complication and unraveling or dénouement. However, Aristotle defines the complication and unraveling very broadly. Aristotle states that the complication is “all that extends from the beginning of the action to the part which marks the turning-point to good or bad fortune” (31). To clarify just what I mean, DeMaria’s use of the terms “suspense” and “development” can be easily situated within Aristotle’s broad definition of complication. If the complication is everything that exists

from the beginning of the tragedy or plot to its turning point, then suspense and development could certainly reside therein.

Saying that something has a beginning, middle, and end is not the same as saying it must have a conflict, crisis, and resolution. A beginning, middle, and end system is *confining*, but the conflict, crisis, resolution system is *defining*. Yet, in fiction writing (as with Aristotle's definition of tragedy and plot) both systems have become one and the same. So how did these differing models become synonymous? This is a bigger question than can be answered in a single chapter. There is no doubt a delicate relationship between the *Poetics*, the history of drama, and their relationship to short fiction. However, perhaps the most cogent explanation comes from Aristotle's effect on Gustav Freytag's technique of the drama, which is the most prominent plot technique in nearly all of writing, especially the short story. LaPlante claims one can find the Freytag diagram "in just about every book on fiction" (99). Making a similar claim, Martin Bell surmises, "There are many structures for a narrative, but the most common, familiar, and conventional of these is the linear design . . . Furthermore, all linear designs bear some relationship to what is known as a Freytag triangle" (27). Both LaPlante and Bell acknowledge the influence of Freytag on fiction writing.

Freytag

Freytag describes his diagram as a pyramid. The temporal method and language he uses to explain how his diagram functions should be familiar to most fiction writers. The pyramid, Freytag states, "rises from the *introduction* with the entrance of the exciting forces to the *climax*, and falls from here to the *catastrophe*" (115). Here, Freytag follows, pretty precisely, the beginning, middle, end/conflict, crisis, resolution model. Freytag continues: "Between these three parts lie the (the parts of) *rise* and *fall*. Each of these five parts may consist of a single

scene, or a succession of connected scenes, but the climax is usually composed of one chief scene” (115). Freytag flushes out Aristotle’s model using words that are staple to talking about short fiction today. Words like rise, fall, and climax are ubiquitous in fiction writing.

To review: Aristotle claims plot is “the first and most important thing in a Tragedy” (14), and a good plot (and thus a good tragedy) must have a “beginning, a middle, and an end” (41). I believe these notions are now tenets of good fiction writing, especially short fiction, because of Aristotle’s influence on thinkers like Freytag. Though Freytag’s triangle adds a more detailed explanation to what Aristotle might have meant by terms like complication and dénouement, Freytag did not create a new perspective. In fact, Freytag’s triangle, and the new language associated with it, further solidified that which Aristotle already claimed. Freytag did so by prioritizing the importance of the climax and its need to be elevated above all other occurrences. Freytag states that the climax is “almost always the crowning point of a great, amplified scene, enclosed by the smaller connecting scenes of the rising, and of the falling action” (128). The importance assigned to the climax is central to defining good short fiction, which I’ll clarify further in a moment. But Freytag’s focus on climax was, really, just an expanded version of Aristotle’s focus, but it doesn’t appear that way at first because Aristotle never used the word climax. However, substituting it into Aristotle’s equation of the great tragedy is fairly easy, I believe.

The climax is pivotal to Aristotle’s definition of a successful tragedy (and therefore plot) because the climax is the very moment that the tragedy becomes either simple or complex, and that conversion hinges on one element that is fundamental to fiction writing—a change in the central character that is accompanied by “Reversal, or by Recognition, or by both” (Aristotle 18). The reversal is where “the action veers round to its opposite,” while the recognition is “a change

from ignorance to knowledge” (Aristotle 19). This dramatic moment occurs in what Aristotle calls the complication, and by complication Aristotle means “all that extends from the beginning of the action to the part which marks the turning-point from good to bad fortune” (31). When the reversal or recognition occurs at the moment of complication, then one has a complex plot, which is superior to a simple plot. Norman Friedman echoes such sentiment in *Form and Meaning in Fiction* when he dedicates an entire chapter to “defining the form of plot[,]” but doing so by limiting himself “largely to actions which involve a change and hence are dynamic, as well as generally to those which are unified, complete, satisfying, and reflexive” (79). It’s likely Friedman favors Aristotle’s complex plot over others because Aristotle decried its superiority, claiming that “A perfect tragedy should, as we have seen, be arranged not on the simple but on the complex plan” (21). To restate, the complex plot line is superior to others, and it is a result of a recognition or change occurring at the moment of complication, which, because of Freytag, we now call the climax. This understanding is crucial because the importance of the reversal or recognition has led to two of the most “important” principles of short fiction writing—the epiphany and the differentiation between flat and round characters.

Joyce

James Joyce was one of the biggest proponents of the epiphany in fiction writing. Burroway suggests that Joyce “recorded both in his notebooks and in his stories, moments of what he called *Epiphany*” [original emphasis] (47). As a case in point, author Tom Bailey attributes the importance of epiphany to Joyce. Bailey writes, “James Joyce took the word epiphany from Christian doctrine . . . and coined it for literary purposes to make the moment in a story at which something is shown that had not been known before” (50-51). In a harangue about the thirteen most detestable elements of the contemporary short story, Lee Abbot asseverates that

one of the three detestable forms of epiphany belongs to “Saint James (Joyce)” (137). Like Bailey, Abbot acknowledges Joyce’s effect on contemporary fiction writing. Both Bailey’s and Abbot’s observations are astute. Joyce did take the word epiphany and make a kind of fictional neologism of it, and it is dominant in the lore of CWS. What’s missing from both accounts, however, is that the focus of character recognition and change predated Joyce by thousands of years. Furthermore, without Aristotle’s influence, Joyce may not have advocated for such a change in the first place.

While associating the importance of the epiphany with Joyce, Burroway also notes the probable influence of Aristotle on Joyce’s sentiment: “In the *Poetics*, the first extensive work of extant Western literary criticism, Aristotle referred to the crises action of a tragedy as a *peripetia*, or reversal of the protagonist’s fortunes” (46). Continuing, Burroway advocates that “Aristotle specified that this reversal came about because of *hamartia*[,]” which “more recent critics have defined and translated . . . much more narrowly as a ‘mistake in identity’ whereby the reversal comes about in a ‘recognition’” [original emphasis] (46). LaPlante, too, acknowledges Aristotle’s role in defining the need for character change that is so prevalent to fiction writing. LaPlante writes, “The notion that *reversal* (as Aristotle called it) or change is a requirement of a piece of fiction is a prevalent one. That is, a character must not only realize some truth that was previously obscured to him or her, but also he or she must act upon it” [original emphasis] (104). LaPlante continues by stating, the “notion that a change must occur in a character is commonly viewed as ‘required’ by many teachers and students of writing alike” (97). Burroway and LaPlante attest to the dominant influence of the epiphany on fiction writing while also demarcating its more classical roots—a maneuver missing from much of the lore on short fiction writing.

When discussing the regard for epiphany in fiction writing, LaPlante states, “We can find many fine stories that possess literary epiphanies. But to view that as the *only* way to bring a story to fruition is to paint yourself into a very tight creative corner indeed” [original emphasis] (103). LaPlante’s observation attests to the powerful influence of the epiphany paradigm in fiction writing. In agreement, Prose claims, “The understandable longing to keep things tidy and nice and neat also lends many critics and teachers to put the ‘epiphany’—the burst of understanding, self-knowledge, or knowledge about the world that may occur to a character at some crucial point in the story—at the highest peak of the EKG graph, like the cherry on a sundae” (116). Prose continues by stating, “Some even insist that this sort of mini-enlightenment is necessary for the short story—is, in fact, a hallmark and *sin qua non* of the form” [my emphasis] (116). Like LaPlante, Prose gives voice to the pervasiveness of epiphany’s role in not only fiction writing but especially in short fiction writing. Furthermore, aligning with LaPlante, again, Prose takes an acerbic stance towards the important focus on the epiphany in fiction writing by arguing that “To claim that every short story should include a moment of epiphany is like insisting that every talented, marvelous dog jump through the same narrow hoop” (117). Unfortunately, though, like Bailey and Abbott, Prose highlights Joyce’s work as the progenitor of such thought. It becomes clear that if Prose, a stunning writer and foremost thinker within the genre of fiction and short fiction writing, can unintentionally attribute the role of character change to the *wrong* person, then the role of character change is an under researched tradition within the lore of short fiction writing. This lack of understanding is especially problematic because of the power that character change has within a piece of fiction, especially short fiction.

I believe a character’s shift is one of the most focused on elements within a plot, thus, being one of the most important elements of a story because it both assigns the kind of story that

has been written, and it separates one character from another. Aristotle believes, “Plots are either Simple or Complex” (18). The simple plot is one where “the change of fortune takes place without Reversal of the Situation and without Recognition . . . [while] a Complex action is one in which the change is accompanied by such Reversal, or by Recognition, or by both” (18). Aristotle finishes by stating, “These last two should arise from the internal structure of the plot, so that what follows should be the necessary or probable result of the preceding action” (18). Keeping to the tradition of the West, Aristotle distinguishes plot as a binary structure—the simple and the complex. This binary is not inherently problematic, except—also continuing to keep with the tradition of the West—one part of the binary is preferred over the other: “A perfect tragedy [or plot] should, as we have seen, be arranged not on the simple but on the complex plan” (Aristotle 21). It might be that because Aristotle favors the complex plan for plot, we, too, favor the complex plan in fiction writing, and this preference is most apparent in the importance we put on character change, how that change differentiates characters, and how that change adds overall unity to the fictional work.

E. M. Forster

The effects of Aristotle’s character change are most apparent in fiction lore through the division between primary and secondary characters, also known as flat and round characters. This division in character types is ubiquitous in handbooks on fiction writing. The biggest proponent (besides Aristotle) of the division of character types is propagated through Forster’s *Aspects of the Novel*. Numerous fiction writers and short fiction theorists attribute the distinction between flat and round characters to Forster and not Aristotle.

Forster states, “We may divide characters into flat and round” (46). Furthermore, Forster believes flat characters are “constructed round a single idea or quality” (47). When characters

have more than one quality or idea about them, then they begin to “curve towards the round” (Forster 47). Though Forster notes the necessity of flat characters, he claims, “Flat people are not in themselves as big achievements as the round ones” (50). This sentiment is seconded by Robert DeMaria when he states, “Some characters are superficial or two-dimensional; other characters are three-dimensional and more fully created” (51). Continuing, DeMaria believes flat characters “have very little depth and are often stereotypes” (51), which coincides nicely with Forster’s belief that flat characters are “caricatures,” suggesting there are formulas or “types” associated with them (46-47). Bailey makes a similar distinction in character types by using the terminology primary and secondary characters, where “*Primary* characters are usually made to carry the brunt of meaning in a story and so must necessarily be complex enough to have any realization the story might offer,” while “a secondary character might necessarily be less developed” [original emphasis] (28). Bailey uses the words “complex” and “realization,” as Aristotle does when discussing the role of character recognition and change within the complex plot line. Finally, in line with the others regarding the important distinction between flat and round characters, Elizabeth George claims that great characters live on in literature and the minds of literary readers because “they have grown and changed during the course of the story” (6). Furthermore, George asserts that strong “characters learn something from unfolding events, and the reader learns something, too, as a character is revealed slowly by the writer, who peels away a layer at a time” (6). George’s rhetoric emphasizes the importance of character change to the overall development within a successful piece of fiction, which, as noted earlier, is a tenet of Aristotle’s complex, and thus most successful, plot/tragedy.

It is through a juxtaposing of all of these writers that one can see the intricacies of character within fiction writing. Aristotle first said there are two types of characters, and what

differentiates one from the other is the ability to change. In more modern times, the two types of characters have been called flat and round or primary or secondary, and, regardless of the terminology used, change still differentiates one character type from the other. Aristotle deemed character change an imperative quality of a good plot/tragedy, and figures like Joyce reified Aristotle's emphasis in fiction by associating change with the divine and calling it epiphany. Finally, the structures of plot mentioned thus far—the beginning, middle, and end arrangement; the rising action, climax, and denouement arrangement; and the need for character change and realization—combine to make the final Aristotelian element of plot I wish to discuss—the unity of effect or the single view.

Poe

In the beginning of this chapter, while discussing the beginning, middle, and end arrangement for plot, and the need for there to be a rising action, climax, and dénouement within that arrangement, I believe it clear that the discussion of plot is one centered more on structural aesthetics than anything else. But then I discuss character in detail, possibly appearing as if I've moved from broad, structural elements of plot and into something a bit more specific, yet I haven't actually done so because the focus on character is, really, only a focus on how character affects plot. The epiphany happens to the characters, but the epiphany is a plot device that determines whether or not a plot/tragedy/short story is complex or simple. In a successful tragedy/plot, Aristotle states, "The beginning and the end must be capable of being brought within a single view" (42), and this single view arises when the beginning and end reach their apogee at the climax, or what Aristotle calls the complication/unraveling, mentioned earlier. The unity Aristotle discusses has little to do with the characters themselves—"Unity of plot does not, as some persons think, consist in the Unity of the hero" (Aristotle 15). Instead, the unity is an

aesthetic rendering of what makes a good tragedy/plot/short story; it is the rendering of a formula. There are two points that I find particularly troublesome about this observation. First, the detailed focus on plot and the unity of a single view, relegates characters to the role of plot devices. For brevity's sake, I'm refraining from further elaboration here, but there are a number of interesting sources that take Aristotle to task on this assumption¹⁹, one being Kit Reed's *Mastering Fiction*, and another being much of what Virginia Woolf and other modernists discuss in their self-reports about the fiction writing process. The second troublesome observation is that Aristotle's definition is a formula that might have become pervasive because it appears to have been adopted by, and therefore misleadingly attributed to, one of the masters of short fiction—Edgar Allan Poe.

In *The Short Story: The Reality of Artifice*, Charles May suggests, “Poe's critical comments on form in the 1830s are largely responsible for the birth of the short story as a unique genre” (108). One such comment covers Poe's definition of plot: “Poe uses the word ‘plot’ in an 1841 review as synonymous with what he means by ‘unity’” which Poe believed derived from an “overall pattern or design” (May 109). In *Edgar Allan Poe: A Study of Short Fiction*, May explains how Poe's unity hinges on the notion of a single effect. May suggests, “By single effect, Poe does not mean a simple sensational effect, but rather what Aristotle means . . . the point when mythos or story is transformed into theme or overall pattern” (69). Here, I believe May refers to Aristotle's notion that “a well-constructed plot” should be “single in its issue” (41). Like Aristotle, what was important to Poe was “aesthetic motivation, not realistic motivation” (May 70). May recognizes a link between Aristotle and the work of Poe; however, May's work focuses more on how Poe affected the short story and not on how Aristotle might have affected Poe. That

¹⁹ A few writers who challenge Aristotle's relegation of character to plot are Francine Prose, Alice LaPlante, William Faulkner, and Lee Abbot.

work has yet to be done as far as I'm aware, and I'm only scratching the surface of it here, which leads me to my primary worry concerning the single effect—it is nebulous yet also defined as the number one feeling a reader experiences when finishing a quality piece of fiction.

Concerning the single effect, Prose asserts, “Few readers could explain exactly what ‘a single effect’ is, or what precisely the ‘one thing’ is that our favorite story is telling us so intensely” (113). William Pedan suggests the single effect makes a short story a piece of art. Pedan believes Poe “conceived of the short story as a work of art, as a vehicle for commentary on the human situation, and as a medium of entertainment in which the basic fiction elements of character, incident, setting, and motivating idea are closely or inseparably blended” (7). Aligning with Pedan, Prose suggests a story is “a work of art that feels utterly complete and in which every sentence and phrase contributes to the whole” (111). Most importantly, Prose claims “The sense of the artistic whole, this assurance that nothing has been left out and that nothing extraneous has been included, is part of what distinguishes the short story from other pieces of writing with which it shares outward characteristics” (117). Burroway recapitulates the importance of the artistic whole or single effect by claiming that a short story “may recount only one central action and one major change or effect in the life of the central character or characters . . . a short story strives for a single emotional impact and imparts a single understanding” (52). I agree with Prose that defining the *true* single effect of a great story is a difficult, maybe impossible, task. I think the difficulty in describing a great piece of fiction is what makes it great to begin with, and I believe others feel this way, too. Despite the sentiment that the single effect is hard to nail down, it is explicitly represented in a number of fiction writing handbooks as a formula. Aristotle believes the single effect results from a beginning, middle, and end, accompanied by a complication, unraveling, and dénouement. The three-part structure appears

whole when the beginning and end (or the complication and dénouement) are bridged at the climax or unraveling. If done properly, then the story should have a feeling of unity. It should have that special something that a reader cannot explain. Yet, as I hope I've represented here, this can be considered a stifling formula that might be well past its time for questioning.

Despite my concerns, these conventions govern how most fiction writing gets done and how it is read. Moreover, the model's prevalence in the literature and textbooks on the subject suggests it might be integral in the teaching of fiction writing too. However, I don't believe most readers would know what to do if they didn't see most of these conventions in the fiction they read. As Alan Pasco suggests, when readers read they "achieve sufficient agreement to maintain communication within the surrounding contexts of composition and consumption" (115), meaning reading is an understanding of the conventions that exist between the reader and the text. Pasco assures, "—However unconsciously—readers look for what they know" (117). With that said, I think the tenets discussed here are good ones to consider when revising a piece of fiction. And that doesn't mean one needs to follow them all, but one should be aware of them because, whether the author knows it or not, readers will be looking for these conventions when they read. Where I believe these conventions become problematic is when they are forced during the writing process.

Like LaPlante, I too believe "Conventions can be useful . . . but too many beginning writers translate them into hard-core rules that *must* be followed" [original emphasis] (106). Writing formulas are well received to some degree because they're teachable. Bell argues that such formulas were adopted by the Iowa Writer's Workshop, which became the workshop model for "95 percent of all workshops in academia" (9). Furthermore, these workshops were "all about the mechanics of plot" and "are nothing if not craft-driven" (Bell 9). However, these rules can be

particularly stifling for writers just starting out. Stringent rules might make young writers believe there is a formula they can master to become good fiction writers, even though writers like DeMarinis will tell you “There is no magic formula that will make hard work, commitment, inspiration, taste, and good luck unnecessary” (qtd. in LaPlant 107). Furthermore, the risk of strict adherence to a fiction writing model might lead one “to forget that the story is supposed to be a living organism” (Bell 9). Anyone writing fiction for even a short period of time likely learns quickly that there is more to writing it than a formula; “There’s something else operating at the inception, something which needs to operate all the way through the period of composition, something that is much, much harder to talk about than craft” (Bell 9). This *something else* is tough to discern. Nobody really knows what it is. It doesn’t fit nicely into textbooks or creative writing pedagogy, and that’s all the more reason to start working with it.

The last point I’d like to touch on in this chapter concerns the relationship between theory of the short story and the university, and to do that I want to provide a bit of historical information concerning Poe’s notion of the single effect, discussed earlier. I’ve shown how prominent Poe’s theory is in the discussion surrounding plot and fiction. The distinguishable qualities of this theory have many asserting that the short story is a Nineteenth-Century phenomenon, heavily influenced—if not entirely started—by Edgar Allan Poe. There is some truth to this. But Poe did not achieve his influence alone. He achieved it because his words were adopted and espoused by handbooks on fiction writing, handbooks often written within the academy by people who didn’t write fiction. Perhaps the most notable, early adaptation of Poe’s theory was put forth by Brander Matthews in his book *The Philosophy of the Short Story*.

Brander Matthews

Matthews is heralded as being the first person to argue that the short story was its own genre. Matthews writes: the “Short story is in reality a *genre*, a separate kind, a genus by itself” [original emphasis] (77). Matthews argues, “In the history of literature the Short story was developed long before the Novel” (74). In fact, Matthews claims that “From Chaucer and Boccaccio we must spring across the centuries until we come to Hawthorne and Poe almost without finding another name that insists upon enrolment [sic]. In these five hundred years there were great novelists not a few, but there was no great writer of short stories” (75-76). Matthews’ ideas were paramount at the time, so much so they assure that his work still shows up in recent printed anthologies, such as May’s *The New Short Story Theories*. Matthews’ text was the first to define the short story as its own genre and to provide a list of principles that separated it from other kinds of writing. However, when reading over Matthews’ work it’s easy to recognize Poe’s influence. To say that Matthews borrowed from Poe would be putting it lightly.

Matthews argues, “A true Short-story differs from the Novel chiefly in its essential unity of impression . . . A Short-story has unity as a Novel cannot have it” (15). Despite his effect on the theory of the short story, Matthews was actually recognized as a distinguished theorist of drama studies, which might be why he somewhat misleadingly directs the history of the single effect to French classic drama. Matthews writes: “The Short-Story fulfills the three false unities of the French classic drama: it shows one action, in one place, on one day. A Short-story deals with a single character, a single event, a single emotion, or the series of emotions called forth by a single situation” (16). What is important to note here is that Matthews doesn’t mention Poe or Aristotle. Though what he says about French classic drama is true, it is apparent from what I’ve cited already that Aristotle asserted the exact same thing for Greek tragedy, well over a thousand

years before the time of French classic drama; therefore, a piece of fictional history is skewed or entirely lost. I find this misunderstanding problematic because it suggests that Greek tragedy, French classic drama, and short fiction are made of the same qualities. If the three genres of art are so similar, what might creative writers and teachers of creative writing learn about their practices if they looked at all three as interdependent and not as separate genres? If, in fact, all three genres of art thrive with the same central premise, what makes them different at all? Why are they their own genres? Though there is nothing wrong with multiple genres sharing qualities, it is uncommon in a writing discipline to have those relationships so under analyzed. For example, in composition studies there is an understanding of how the Greek's oral tradition affected the structure of written language and how that structure still affects the writing being produced in classrooms today. Compositionists have used their historical understanding of their discipline to develop new ways of producing, thinking about, and teaching writing. I believe a similar kind of attention needs to be paid to the history of what defines creative writing. For example, if what separates fiction from poetry is plot, then fiction writers, teachers, and books on the subject should have a clear history of what plot is, meaning a working knowledge of where plot comes from, what it affords the genre, of fiction writing and how it hinders the genre, if at all.

In continuing to establish the credos of what makes a short story what it is, Matthews avers, "One might also say that a Short-story is nothing if it has no plot" (32). By plot, Matthews assures he means a "plan" over a "complication" or "elaboration," which is slightly different than the Aristotelian model, especially in regards to the complication (32). With that said, by plan, Matthews means "an idea logically developed by one possessing the sense of form and the gift of style," which is, he assures, what "we all look for in the Short-story" (31). At first, this

passage may not seem as if it resonates with Poe's work, but it is. In regards to the short story, Matthews suggests, "Whatever its form, it should have symmetry of design" (71). Matthews believes symmetry of design, which results from a successful plot, will create a unity of effect, which, as we now know, has its roots with Aristotle and then Poe. Matthews does credit Poe for some of his beliefs, but many of them are posited as his own, which means educators teach them as the work of Matthews, losing that association with Poe, and, inevitably, Aristotle.

Why put Matthews in here at all? I think what he achieved and the influence he's made highlights the very impetus of this work. There is a delicate relationship between the definition of short fiction writing and the university, where the tenets of short fiction writing are promulgated, in part, through textbooks on the subject. Plot is likely the most emphasized element of fiction writing, both short and long, yet the major tenets of plot come from a doctrine about tragedy, a doctrine about the dramatic arts. Brander Matthews, a renowned English professor and expert in drama studies, helped popularize Poe's—and in turn Aristotle's—definition of plot, which dominates how plot is defined in today's books on fiction writing. Matthews was not a dramatist or creative writer. He was an English professor, yet his work, highly affected by Poe—a prolific writer—has set the standard for plot in fiction writing even today. This relationship might seem messy, but it's not. It's the beauty of creating knowledge: Greek philosophy, short fiction writing, literary theory and scholarship, all coming together in my attempt to understand how fiction functions and what it means to our species. The problematic part is, I believe, that the history of fiction writing practices as conveyed in handbooks on the subject is too under analyzed. Short fiction did not just appear out of thin air. There was a history of writing and thinking that influenced Poe and others. In turn, Poe and others have now influenced the university, and the university is influencing all of us. Now, in

many ways creative writing is morphing into an academic discipline called CWS, and both scholars and writers have at their disposal an arsenal of resources—physical, intellectual, collegial—to develop new understandings of how fiction writing is written, read, and taught. Such a privileged position might assure that creative writing as discipline, art, and mode of expression doesn't just survive the Twenty-First Century but explodes exponentially instead.

CHAPTER 3

THE SUBLIME—THAT WHICH CANNOT BE TAUGHT

“There is no measuring stick by which to measure the sublime.

There is no scale of comparison; there is simply that which is sublime and that which is not.”

(James Rasmussen)

“There is no contemporary thought of art and its end which does not, in one manner, or another, pay tribute to the sublime.”

(Jean-Luc Nancy)

“The sublime is the concentration, the start of the starting that weighs in speech against death.”

(Michael DeGuy)

Introduction

This chapter discusses the influence of Longinus and the sublime on the lore of fiction writing in an attempt to define what might be unteachable in creative writing. I argue that one element of fiction writing that might be considered not able to be taught is how a writer successfully communicates with a reader through a piece of fiction. In Chapter Three I take the position that the writing and reading of fiction is a communicable phenomenon that occurs between writers and readers. I propose that successful communication between writers and readers occurs through sublimity. My proposition is the result of a historical analysis of sublimity, starting with Longinus and moving through the works of Edmund Burke, Emmanuel Kant, and Archibald Alison. With this historical analysis, I posit that there is an important relationship between “good” fiction writing and the sublime, and that this relationship is not recognized by either CWS or studies on sublimity. I explain why this lack of association has

occurred and argue that both CWS and studies on the sublime can enrich the definitions of their disciplines by considering their relationship to each other.

There is a noticeable shift in writing style within the pages to come. In Chapter One I grounded the approach to my research somewhat methodically and, I hope, explicitly. In Chapter Two I attempted to explain how Aristotle affects the lore of fiction writing by revealing the pervasiveness of his theories in handbooks on the subject. Both chapters, though informative, employed a nuts-and-bolts approach to implementing research and ideas to bolster an argument. In those chapters I adopted a stance or theory, but the chapters themselves were not *theoretical*. This chapter is. I call it theoretical because I'm attempting a whole new way of thinking in the fields of creative writing and sublime studies. At this point in time, the theory I've arrived at may not be replicable or even provable through qualitative or quantitative research. Right now, the ideas discussed in this chapter, though novel in their own right, are still just ideas; therefore, I consider this chapter theoretical.

In an attempt to humanize the endeavor of writing creatively, this chapter takes a look at one potential communicable phenomenon between a writer and reader of fiction—the sublime—and posits that such moments of communication, these human moments, might be categorized as the stuff that cannot be taught. Furthermore, by attempting to define an element that might be categorized as unteachable, I'm providing a consideration worthy of attention when constructing a creative writing pedagogy. When focusing on how writers and readers communicate through fiction, teachers and students have more opportunity to invest their energies on the process of writing and not just the product, which many current creative writing pedagogies are currently focused on, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Four.

As mentioned, part of creative writing is believed to be teachable while part of it is not. As I specified in Chapter One, most of what is considered unteachable in creative writing exists without definitive definitions. What can be taught is often called craft and includes but is not limited to style, point of view, grammar, mechanics, and voice. Most importantly for this dissertation, plot, greatly influenced by Aristotle's *Poetics*, is nearly always included as an element of craft that can be taught. What cannot be taught is simply something else, or what I refer to as the unteachables. These unteachables are not nearly as defined as craft. As CWS grows, more ways of thinking about creative writing will develop. It's unlikely that CWS will remain as product-centered or formulaic as it has been. Teachers and writers within CWS will research many other elements of the creative writing process.²⁰ This chapter is one contribution to that research.

One way the definition of creative writing can expand within CWS is to no longer look at the act of writing creatively as just art. With the assessment and understanding of successful creative writing generally falling on a final product, aesthetics and art take precedence in defining creative writing. What is a poem? What is a short story? What is the difference between a novel, novelette, short story, short-short, sudden fiction, flash fiction—these distinctions, at least at this point in time, are largely considerations of length, content, and aesthetics. Not only is the novel longer than the short-short, but, in regards to content, one must write a short-short differently than a novel; there are different expectations from one genre to the other, and they are as much about aesthetics and art as they are about length. There is nothing wrong with these considerations, but, when they are the only way of defining what creative writers do when they

²⁰ A prime example of what some other considerations within CWS might look like can be studied in Harper's *Teaching Creative Writing*, where each chapter is a different consideration, spanning everything from children's literature to critical-creative rewriting.

write, the only way of defining the entire process of fiction writing from beginning to end, it seems confining and misinformed.

A new consideration to entertain is that creative writing is communication. One might argue that when a piece of creative writing is enjoyed by a reader it successfully communicates something to that reader. It might be that the piece of writing in question is simply presenting the formula the reader expects. I believe that to be true in many cases, especially in most genre fiction. Chapter Two addresses this assertion. However, there might be more to a reader being enamored with a piece of fiction than a formula. I believe writers and avid readers would agree with this, and that's why there is part of fiction writing many say cannot be taught. We don't know how to teach something that's not the formula, not yet. In this chapter I posit that viable communication between writer and reader is one way some fiction writing reaches its full potential. One instance of viable communication, I feel, is exhibited in the communicable phenomenon of the sublime. I will explain just what I mean in detail throughout this chapter, but before doing so I want to further elaborate the importance of stepping away from creative writing as a product-centered consideration and instead considering it a form of communication.

Harper notes, "Creative writing is both art *and* communication between people" [original emphasis] (*Inside* 4). Harper elaborates by stating, "So often discussions on creative writing have stopped at questions of 'how to' and failed to engage with it as a human practice involving far more than skills" (*Inside* 126). Harper claims that most practicing writers and teachers of writers "have considered Creative Writing entirely in relation to its products, not to its actions" (*On Creative Writing* IX). The products considered tend to be identified as "literature, film, or otherwise" (Harper, *Inside* 1). However, Harper notes that "Creative writing does not begin with these works: creative writing does not begin where it ends" (*Inside* 1). Such an observation

suggests there has been a myopic understanding of creative writing, which is why more informed, inclusive scholarship, like that presented in this chapter, is pertinent to the field of CWS right now. In fact, one might argue that such work is a necessity; without it, CWS may never fully evolve into its true potential as an academic discipline. This sentiment is not mine alone. David McFadden notes, “It is time to move beyond the limitation of terminologies that fragment and separate our appreciation of creative actions, and consider the ‘behaviors of making’ that practitioners share” (qtd. in Harper, *Inside* 127). This chapter focuses on the behaviors of making McFadden alludes to. This chapter discusses a potential moment in the genesis and reception of fiction; it is about the “making,” the reception, and the behaviors behind it.

As I’ve highlighted in Chapter Two, numerous books on craft have been written, but absent from those handbooks is “the broader context of writerly knowledge” (Harper, *Inside* 125). Despite that these books are often referred to as “‘how to books;’” they only cover a part of what creative writing is (Harper, *Inside* 125). The part included is vital, no doubt, but, as Harper suggests, “Our investigation doesn’t stop here” (*Inside* 125). The potential of creative writing being considered a communicable phenomenon and what that might mean to how we think of, write, or teach the subject of creative writing provides the opportunity for creative writing teachers to extend their understanding of the subject itself. Such a consideration broadens what might be considered as part of the creative writing process. As Harper notes, “Creative writers spend much of their time in moments, and in modes of perception, memory, and (sometimes wild!) speculation. Without such activities creative writing wouldn’t occur. Yet the ability to approach these moments, *post-event*, or to discuss these through the evidence available in the public realm, is relatively low” [original emphasis] (Harper, *Inside* 2-3). For example, writers’

self-reports are commonly used to discuss the writing process. Though many writers provide explicit direction on craft-related topics within their reports, many struggle to discuss explicitly non-craft related direction. The difficulty in not being able to articulate this other part of the creative writing process might be a result of it not often being studied regularly in group settings, like those of writing classrooms. This chapter is an attempt to discuss an element of the creative writing process that is not focused solely on the finished product. Discussing the role of sublimity in the creation and reception of a fictional work can be included in the other activities Harper refers to, activities vital to the production of creative works but rarely analyzed, studied, or questioned.

The final point about this chapter that I wish to discuss is the importance of considering the work of other disciplines when attempting to define aspects of CWS. In this chapter I hinge heavily on sublime studies, an area rarely associated with fiction writing. There are countless publications on sublimity and art or sublimity and poetry, but the work done on sublimity and fiction writing is scarce. Some might argue that the unrecognized relationship between fiction writing and sublimity is reason enough not to exert energy comparing the two. If studying sublimity within fiction could be as fruitful as studying sublimity within poetry, wouldn't someone have established, in a similarly dominant way, that relationship by now? My answer to that is maybe but not necessarily because fiction writing is much younger than poetry and has been studied for a far shorter time (especially the novel and short story). Furthermore, since CWS is young, I believe there are ample opportunities for discovery. Most importantly, though, there is an all-inclusive mentality to CWS that invites research of all areas because writers are influenced in so many different ways, and those ways must be considered and studied. If something (no matter what) affects the process of writing creatively, it must be available for

study within CWS. As a case in point, Harper argues because many fields can influence and inform a writer, a writer might explore the “epistemological and ontological positions adopted by those fields as a way of entering their sites of knowledge” (“Research” 165). One such excursion for creative writers and teachers of creative writing might be into sublime studies, which I’ve done in this chapter. Harper continues by noting that “Creative writing research also often involves books or some other evidence of a writer’s practice, but also books in relation to the foundations of knowledge in a vast range of fields, fields that might at any point be of use to the creative writer” (“Research” 162). If I might write anecdotally a moment, I can say that I have been reading work on cosmology, relativity, and singularity, and I cannot begin to describe how what I’m learning is affecting my fiction and poetry. For example, there will be a poem or story or both that come out of the fundamentals of Einstein’s theory of relativity, especially in the ways the orbits of planets are promulgated by the warping of space.²¹ When trying to understand orbits of planets I quickly recognized a relationship between them and the ways people seem to affect the world around them with their orbits. The people in our lives affect our space. They oftentimes act to change our paths. I found creative writing in the cosmos or the cosmos in creative writing. Either way, all of it is part of my creative writing process right now. If such relationships were to be researched, what might be garnered for CWS? I’m not sure, but I feel that’s no reason not to explore or ask questions about it. Harper states, “Creative writing research also often involves books or some other evidence of a writer’s practice, but also books in relation to the foundations of knowledge in a vast range of fields, fields that might at any point be of use to the creative writer” (“Research” 162). One distinction is necessary when considering almost

²¹ Perhaps the best example I can provide of how excursions into other disciplines can benefit a creative writer is to note that this interest in cosmology, which happened nearly a year before chapter four of this dissertation was written, is what lead me into quantum mechanics, which I drew from when working to expand Bizzaro’s Quantum Rhetoric in chapter four.

anything as potential material for researching within CWS: “Creative writing research that is not based in the writing arts but in fields that inform the creative writer in other ways is not the same as research in those particular informing fields: yet it draws on those fields” (Harper, “Research” 163). In this chapter I draw on sublime studies to illuminate a new way of considering the writing and reading of fiction.

Sublimity and the Writing and Reading of Fiction: The Communicable Phenomenon

In Chapter Two I tried to illustrate that Aristotle’s work lends itself to formulaic representations. Furthermore, in that chapter I posit a theory pertaining to the influence of Aristotle’s work, and I represent my argument concerning that theory in a formulaic way. This chapter discusses the influence of Longinus and the sublime on the lore of fiction writing. Unlike Aristotle, Longinus and the sublime do not lend themselves comfortably to formulas. The three epigraphs opening this chapter tell of the richness, depth, and obscurity of the sublime. When approaching the subject and the thinkers behind it, one pursues a nebulous concept currently and maybe forever undefined. Still, I’m not deterred from trying.

I begin my discussion positing that Longinus and the sublime are necessary to consider when assaying the lore of fiction writing. From there, I provide a brief history of the sublime, including the influences of three chief figures: Longinus, Emmanuel Kant, and Archibald Alison. Because of my personal experience of working within sublime studies I feel it necessary to provide a brief history of the sublime. At one level, such a synopsis contextualizes the topic and how I’m electing to situate it. More importantly, though, I encountered a dilemma when I began in-depth analysis for this chapter. When beginning my research, I thought Longinus *invented* the sublime; therefore, I believed I would work predominantly with his text. I recognized immediately this is not true. The sublime is expansive, maybe impossible. Because I was

ignorant of the sublime and its nuanced, pivotal history and endless depth when starting my research, I want to help readers, like me, understand better the topic of the sublime; therefore, I feel a brief historical overview pertinent.

Finally, after historicizing the sublime, I discuss Longinus and the Longinian sublime, followed by Kant and the Kantian sublime, and, finally, Alison and the concept of the sublime and associative psychology. Most importantly, within these three sections I posit an entirely new theory in sublime studies, a theory that links Longinus, Kant, and Alison by relating their theories to the practice of writing and reading fiction. I believe that fiction writing, reading, and the communication that occurs as a result can be the praxis of the sublime in reality as we understand it—a praxis that to this point seems not to exist. Furthermore, I posit the sublime as one rhetorician’s definition of what might be unteachable in creative writing. With that said, the sublime, while fundamental to this research, is not the focus; the focus is the *relationship* of sublimity to fiction writing in respects to CWS.

Why the Sublime?

In this chapter I discuss the sublime inter-subjectively, taking it from the ego-centric views of Burke, Kant, and Alison and, instead, making it a culturally-shared, communicable phenomenon, an undertaking Jane Forsey avers has “almost no mention in the literature” of the sublime experience (387). The sublime, as Forsey notes, tends to describe an experience of feelings either “intentional” and “object-regarding” or “nonintentional” and not able to “be theorized at all” (387). Forsey posits a formidable consideration for my study, and as the history of the sublime stands in its current state, she’s probably correct in her accusations. Yet this chapter is my attempt to answer her call. I proffer a version of the sublime that is not either or; it is not either an intentional, object-regarding experience or a nonintentional one—it is both. What

is more, I posit a definition of the sublime that is Longinian in nature, meaning it's an experience that "takes place within social space, however defined" (De Bolla 56), while also arguing it does so through the processes of the Kantian and Alisonian sublimines. These sublimines are believed to be found in the mental faculties of individuals only and not in objects themselves. It is for this reason that I focus primarily on Kant instead of Burke, whose "analysis leaves ample room for psychological and even a physiological investigation of the origin of aesthetic experience" but doing so by holding that "sublimity in some way depends on qualities residing in the object" (Monk 27). However, despite my focus on the importance of mental faculties to the making of sublimity, I take my analysis a step further and argue that the sublime is a social phenomenon (Longinus) that occurs when the sublimines of two disparate faculties (Kant and Alison) find union in a medium. In this case the medium is fiction. What this means is that this chapter attempts to ground a point of praxis for the sublime in a way that has not yet been done. It combines theories on the sublime that have, to this point, been unsullied by one another. Further, this chapter suggests the sublime experience both belongs to either one person or many, and is a phenomenon of communication in all cases. Additionally, I argue that while the text may be imbued with sublimity it is not the source of the sublime. The source of sublimity is communication that occurs between the writer and reader of fiction.

The Sublime: a Snippet of History

The sublime is a sprawling discourse on aesthetics and beauty, its origins predating but not popularized until the eighteenth century. De Bolla notes that "A few thousand works on the topic of aesthetics were published during the course of the [eighteenth] century" (28). These works have discussed the sublime extrinsically, intrinsically, and psychologically. As Forsey distinguishes, countless objects have become subject to sublime studies. Through the works of

Addison we have “‘a vast uncultivated desert,’ ‘huge heaps of mountains’”; through Burke, “‘serpents and poisonous animals of all kinds’”; and Lyotard, “‘art and literature’” (382). In short, nearly anything can be an origin of sublimity, yet the definition did not start so variegated.

Samuel Monk notes that at the end of the seventeenth century the word sublime was used “as an adjective, signifying physical or metaphorical height, and the lofty or sublime style continued purely in the relation of rhetoric. The substantive *sublime* in its aesthetic connotation had not yet come into use” [original emphasis] (20). Monk argues Boileau’s translation was the first to bring aesthetic concepts to the sublime when, in his preface to his edition of Longinus’ work, he discussed it differently than it had been discussed before. Boileau’s translation made its way to England by way of France and became “the turning point of Longinus’s reputation” in both countries (21). Monk’s assertion is bolstered by many, including W. P. Albrecht, who claims, “The sublime did not become well known in England until after 1674, when Boileau published his translation of Longinus’s *Peri Hupsous*” (2). Boileau created a rift in sublime thought with his translation. The sublime was no longer just rhetorical methodology or a kind of greatness attributed to divinity. Instead, sublimity became not only rhetorical but also pathetic.

Monk suggests, “The difference between the rhetorical sublime and the pathetic sublime of the early eighteenth-century theorists is largely that in the one emotions have a practical value, to persuade against the will and the reason of the audience, and the other they are regarded as the source of aesthetic pleasure” (84). This bifurcation in sublime thought led to three works instrumental in sublime theory from the end of the eighteenth century to today. De Bolla suggests these three works were published between 1757 and 1763 and are “Burke’s *Enquiry*, Gerard’s *Essay on Taste*, and Kame’s *Elements of Criticism*” (13). Furthermore, De Bolla argues these thinkers expanded the aesthetic principles of the sublime to psychology (13). This

transition resulted from how sublimity was defined. Where in the seventeenth century and before, the sublime had been discussed rhetorically or religiously, it was now being used to describe “such emotions as awe, reverence, admiration, astonishment, and terror” (Albrecht 2). An especially strong relationship developed between sublimity and terror. Mary Arensburg attributes this association to Burke and his role in being one of the first to link the sublime “with emotions of displeasure” (4). Through Burke, emotions of displeasure became centric to the sublime, driving sublimity closer to mental faculties and psychology than it had ever been before.

Burke’s association between fear and sublimity was not, however, solely responsible for the psychological turn in the discourse on sublimity. Through Burke (and eventually Kant) the sublime began harboring notions of fear, which situated the sublime within individual psyches. In similar fashion, Scottish philosophers writing on the sublime also lured the discourse into the realm of psychology, but they did so not only by internalizing it on an individual level but also by linking those individual, psychological associations to an individual’s lifetime of associations and experiences, a term referred to as associative psychology. Rachel Zuckert notes this division in sublime thought during the eighteenth century by specifying that instead of being concerned with the role of fear, frustration, and inadequacy within the sublime, the Scottish philosophers were concerned “with a logically prior question, namely, whether (or how) the sublime can be understood as a single, unified aesthetic category, a definite type of response to a specifiable class of objects” (65). For the Scottish philosophers, the answer to whether or not the sublime was a unified aesthetic category is a resounding no. Instead of advocating the sublime as a unified aesthetic category, the Scottish philosophers suggest it is “a pluralist and open-minded associative account” (Zuckert 74). This associative account suggests “Our experience of the

sublime is fundamentally active, brought about by our power of imagination” (Zuckert 69); however, unlike Kant’s notion of imagination within the context of the sublime, the associative account argues the imagination finds its resources in a panoply of life experiences. This shift in sublime thought was pivotal.

The work of the Scottish philosophers made human faculty central to sublimity, a maneuver arguably best showcased in Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*. Most important for my research, the Scottish philosophers broadened the scope of what can be deemed the genesis of sublimity. Zuckert notes, “Unlike much of the tradition, these thinkers tend to take art objects to be equally or more sublime than natural objects” (69). De Bolla, too, notes this alteration in eighteenth century aesthetic thought. He claims there was a shift that moved aesthetics from the “ethico-rhetorical” to “empirical psychology” (33). What De Bolla suggests is that sublimity’s experience and source extended from only external objects to the “interior workings of the human mind through recourse to a vocabulary of the passions, sentiment, or imagination” (33). This shift from individual responses to external objects to the interior workings of the human mind is a shift most paramount to my research.

Kant’s third critique, an integral text in aesthetic studies, clearly articulates the influence of the interior shift of the sublime. Many thinkers have addressed the sublime since Kant. However, it is Kant’s moment in time that is most important to this work. Burke and the Scottish philosophers provide varying definitions of the sublime. Shortly thereafter those definitions were molded by Kant into a sublime indebted to both Burke and the Scottish philosophers. At this juncture, the sublime becomes a representable phenomenon when analyzed under the auspices of writing and reading fiction.

However, despite this observation, which will be explicated soon, there is a problem, and that problem is the absence of Longinus. Without Longinus, there might be no contemporary sublime as we understand it, yet the contemporary sublime has burgeoned with little reference to his work. The goal of this chapter is to provide a new consideration within CWS as to one way fiction writing might be successfully produced and received. But because I'm dealing with writing and more than aesthetics I will not neglect Longinus's role. I feel Longinus deserves to be incorporated into any discussion of the sublime, especially one that links it to the practices of reading and writing fiction. In order to understand the influence of Longinus on the sublime one must know not only how instrumental his work was but also why it fell from favor.

Why Longinus?

Monk believes Longinus is the “patron saint of much that is unclassical and unneoclassical, and eventually of much that is romantic, in eighteenth century England” (15). As shown in the brief history section of this chapter, the eighteenth century was, perhaps, the most pivotal moment in all of sublime studies, so what Monk's quote suggests is that Longinus's work was instrumental in distinguishing taste during a time when taste was first being defined. Ironically, Mats Malm notes that Longinus is hardly considered in the discussion and history of the sublime, despite his work being instrumental in the development of rhetoric and especially on the “impact of art on its audience” (1). When considering these statements it is hard to understand how Longinus's work could be ignored. But Longinus and his work have a peculiar, somewhat unsubstantiated history. Heath attests there are many “formidable obstacles” when working with Longinus's work (16). For example, we don't know for certain who the author actually is. The manuscript, *On Great Writing or Peri Hupsous*, is written in response to Caecilius, an individual that, Heath notes, has no history in the records at this point in time (16).

Furthermore, we have only “35 percent” of the manuscript, “six lacunae of varying sizes,” and “scores of damages and erroneous translations” (Heath 16). Despite the difficulties in working with erroneous and missing material, Longinus and *On Great Writing* did have a moment in the limelight, but it wasn’t until the seventeenth century, and even the history of the text’s influence both then and now is complicated.

The neglect Longinus’s work has experienced since the late eighteenth century is akin to the neglect it experienced before its slow recognition in the seventeenth century. Before the seventeenth century there was hardly any mention of Longinus anywhere in the world. Then translations of *On Great Writing* began to appear in several countries outside of England. Monk notes the first translation showed up in Basel in 1554, another in Venice in 1555, while the last edition of the sixteenth century was published in Geneva (18). Though other parts of the world were interested in the work of Longinus, England wasn’t until Boileau’s translation in 1674 (Monk 18). *On Great Writing* became a staple rhetorical text for rhetoricians in England at that point.

As mentioned previously, Boileau’s translation (primarily his introduction) added an aesthetic element to considerations of the sublime, and that element launched *On Great Writing* from obscurity to prevalence within English culture. Despite Longinus’s brief popularity, Monk notes the speculation concerning Longinus’s treatise “grew more and more purely aesthetic, and, so far as the sublime is concerned, Longinus’s influence decreased as the century drew to a close” (25). I find this derivation in aesthetic thought problematic for studies on sublimity and creative writing. Longinus states, “Only by means of art can we perceive the fact that certain literary effects are due to sheer inborn talent” (5). On one level this quote suggests that great writers might be born instead of made, which might have propagated, at least to some degree, the

belief that some elements of creative writing cannot be taught. Alternately, this quote suggests that art is centric to understanding sublimity and its origins as representative of the workings of the mind. Yet somehow, the more the discussion on the sublime moved to aesthetics—the study of beauty, nature, and the human psyche—the more Longinus’s *On Great Writing* was deemed irrelevant so that now we have a long history of sublime studies that have failed to look at the art of fiction writing. Likewise, those invested in understanding the art of fiction writing have failed to look at the development of the sublime. When using the term fiction writing, I’m referring to fiction in the most commonly accepted genres, such as the short story and novel. Though it might be interesting to apply my research to other fiction-esque work like epic poetry, I’m really discussing fiction as it is traditionally understood. Finally, when positing the information as I have it here, it might seem odd that Longinus and his possible effects on the aesthetics of fiction writing have gone un-assayed for so long. But there are reasons.

Because so much of *On Great Writing* is deemed rhetoric, much of it is thought superfluous when discussing the sublime. But this belief is misdirected. Though much of *On Great Writing* is rhetorical in nature, meaning the treatise specifies certain actions a rhetor (writer or speaker) can execute to properly persuade, the treatise is just as much about, what O’ Gorman calls, “*beyond persuasion*” [original emphasis] (73). I side with O’ Gorman’s assertion, for Longinus tells us “Great writing does not persuade; it takes the reader out of himself . . . To be convinced is usually within our control whereas amazement is the result of an irresistible force beyond the control of any audience” (4). It is essential to note that Longinus states persuasion is within *our* control, meaning within the control of the rhetor or speaker or writer and the audience. However, amazement—or sublimity—is beyond control, is beyond predictable methods of creation or reception. Sublimity is persuasion beyond itself. In discussing the

difference between Longinian persuasion and sublimity, Heath writes, “Longinus distinguished persuasion, which generally depends on the listener, from sublimity, the effects of which, ‘exerting irresistible power and force, have the upper hand over every listener’” (21-22). Longinus believes that great writing, sublime writing, amazes even the writer. In his treatise, Longinus dissolves the long history of hierarchal structure within rhetorical persuasion. The moment of sublimity in great writing is a moment of fantastical communication between human beings and not a moment of one person convincing another that he or she is correct. O’ Gorman suggests, “The relationship between nature and *hypsois* [height or greatness] in Longinus is not hierarchical. Rather, the relationship is reciprocal” [original emphasis] (79). In this instance, O’ Gorman discusses nature as it tends to be defined. He’s talking about trees, mountains, and the like. But “nature” is defined in many ways within sublime studies (Later, I will discuss “nature” within fiction writing and how that nature shapes sublime moments). But the point to be garnered here is one often neglected—Longinus’s sublime has its source in reciprocity between a creator of something and an audience. This reciprocity is communicative. It is from this distinction that I draw my premises that sublimity can occur between the writer and reader of fiction, and, when it does, it is a communicable phenomenon. However, because this communication is a phenomenon that has not been studied and, therefore, has no teachable formula, it might belong to the category of fictional elements that cannot be taught, though, as I posit in the following pages, its presence might be important to defining successful fiction and, therefore, should be studied.

Whether it be humans’ interaction with nature as it tends to be defined, human nature as defined by the Scottish philosophers, or the human interaction with nature within a fictional text, as I’ll discuss later, a kind of communication and understanding between two entities creates

sublimity. This reciprocal action is what separates *On Great Writing* from the purely rhetorical treatises that came before it. *On Great Writing* is a doctrine of how sublimity results from a perfect moment of artistic communication. In regards to sublimity, there is no need to persuade for right or wrong or better or worse. In the sublime moment there is only experience. During the sublime moment, persuasion becomes transcendental, in that persuasion moves beyond itself and into a moment of pure, unfettered experience.

Though Monk does not say that *On Great Writing* is a treatise that leads persuasion beyond itself, he does note an often ignored element of textual and authorial intent. Monk states, “Longinus came into favor because he could fill a need; he alone of the ancients could be used to support the idea of ‘the liberty of writing’” (27). *On Great Writing* is about how great writing gets done. Anyone who writes realizes writing is part talent—whatever that means—and part adhering to conventions that an audience will understand. This fundamental division establishes the premise of *On Great Writing* and, ironically, also appears to define the nature of creative writing in general; the conventions can be taught and the other parts cannot. Longinus’s work is bifurcated, one part genius and one part rhetoric; one part abstraction, one part formula. Longinus discusses mostly the formula behind great writing, which might be why so much of *On Great Writing* is not included in sublime studies. But this omission is a mistake. As O’ Gorman notes, though one portion of *On Great Writing* is about the “orderly way” of writing well, the other portion is about the greatness within “the faculty” of a “subject” (74). What this means is that even before Alison or Kant, Longinus suggests the most potent element of sublimity is inherent between individuals; it is in the mind of the maker and the receiver. In short, the sublime is a phenomenon of communication. Though Burke, Alison, and Kant greatly enlarged the definition of the sublime (and thankfully so) they were not the first to make it a cognitive

function. In truth, if Longinus is the progenitor of sublimity then it appears as if the sublime has *always* been a cognitive function. Longinus' work suggests just this.

Longinus cites five sources responsible for great writing, where "all five presuppose the power of expression without which there is no good writing at all" (10).²² Longinus then extrapolates just what he means by power of expression. He believes the first two sources of sublimity, "vigor of mental conception" and "strong and inspired emotion" are "for the most part innate dispositions" (10). The first two sources of sublimity are the most vital and fall under the category of high-mindedness. High-mindedness is inherently found in certain individuals. Without high-mindedness sublimity cannot be created. However, just because one has the innate ability to imbue writing with sublimity doesn't mean it will happen. Though Longinus claims high-mindedness is the primary source of greatness, and that it is inborn and not acquired, he asserts, "We must nevertheless educate the mind of greatness as far as possible and impregnate it" (11). Continuing, Longinus notes, "Great qualities are too precarious when left to themselves . . . they need the bridle as well as the spur" (5). It is Longinus's belief that greatness still needs direction, which, undoubtedly, led him to spend most of his treatise arguing for the importance of rhetorical means to subliminal ends. Those rhetorical sources of sublimity are: "the fashioning of figures," "nobility of diction," and "dignified and distinguished word arrangement" all of which are honed through "artistic training" (10). Most of Longinus's treatise was devoted to these rhetorical sources because he felt "Natural talent, though generally a law unto itself in passionate and distinguished passages, is not usually random or altogether devoid of method" (5).

²² The five figures are "vigor of mental conception", "strong and inspired emotion", "the fashioning of figures", "nobility of diction", and "dignified and distinguished word arrangement" all of which are honed through "artistic training" (Longinus 10).

Unfortunately, it is this methodical aspect that contributes to Longinus's exclusion from discussions on the sublime.

Until recently, those who theorize the sublime discussed *On Great Writing* very little. However, that didn't stop romantics like Wordsworth and Coleridge from embodying the sublime in their poetry. Likewise, there have been literary books and articles written on the effects of the sublime on poetry and fiction, but there has been little, if any, work done on how sublimity might affect the process of writing within those areas. In short, the discussion of the sublime's relationship to creative writing has been product-focused. The discussion of the sublime has not transcended the written work to include the writer; therefore, writers and teachers of fiction have published little, if at all, about how the sublime might be involved in their writing processes. Despite this gap, I find an important relationship to Longinus, sublime thought, and the phenomenon that sometimes occurs between a writer and his or her fiction and the experience a reader has while reading it. Fiction writers, like all artists, work within the realms of style and aesthetics. Monk suggests that when we discuss the style of the sublime we discuss rhetoric, but when we discuss "sublimity" we discuss "aesthetics" (12). Aesthetics and, therefore, sublimity are centric to great fiction writing, so how can we rightfully continue developing creative writing studies without considering the impact of the sublime on fiction? Because Aristotle has been at the forefront of creative writing pedagogy, both knowingly and unknowingly, it seems safe to argue rhetoric has a strong tradition in the history of fiction writing. But there is something more to writing than just rhetoric, and part of that something else might be sublimity.

Finally, CWS, sublime studies, and the work of Longinus are all at interesting stages of their development. There is a need for all three parties involved to contemplate a chapter like this

one. Over the past four hundred years the prominence of the sublime has ebbed and flowed. In 2007, Forsey asserted, the sublime has received “a great deal of attention in the last decade or so” (381). Forsey’s assertion appears to still hold strong. A handful of sources cited here discuss the Longinian sublime, one within the last year even. At first it might appear that novel discussion of the Longinian sublime in this current day would be hard to come by. Yet, as O’ Gorman states:

Peri Hupsous [translated as on height or on great writing] has not received substantial treatment by scholars of rhetoric—no analyses in books that move significantly beyond a summary of its arguments, no articles devoted wholly to it. Its minimal treatment, relatively speaking, indicates that the treatise has not been considered a major one in the history, or histories, of rhetoric. (72)

What exists here are two discussions that voice an important concern when considering Longinus and thoughts on the sublime. Forsey’s statement was made in 2007 while O’ Gorman’s was made in 2009. What the comparison of these statements suggests is that discussion on the sublime is current and active but does not include the work of Longinus. I find this observation alarming because the sublime, like any other discourse burgeoning over time, constitutes a history of disparate thoughts in dialogue with one another, meaning earlier thoughts do, by default, affect the later. Longinus’s occlusion is problematic when weighing the words of Monk, who states that, though the methods of nineteenth century sublime theorist differ from Longinus, “Almost all their ideas [and arguably those that came before] can be traced back to *Peri Hupsous*” (85). What this suggests is that thoughts on the sublime are developing without a full consideration of their origins. This gap is a problem of sublime studies within the fields of aesthetics and rhetoric. However, I find the bridge between Longinus and the other philosophers

neglecting him present in the communicative phenomenon that can occur between a fiction writer when writing and the reader when reading, which I describe in more detail in this chapter. By considering theories like this one, all parties involved can further enrich the understanding and definitions held dear to them in their respective disciplines. I'm confident that fiction writing within the academy would benefit from understanding better the notions of sublimity. I believe sublime studies could cultivate their understandings further if they applied what they know to the process of reading and writing fiction. Finally, I think all parties would be a bit savvier if we attempted to understand how Longinus may or may not have influenced the definition of the sublime—a definition that seems to affect so much.

Kant

It is with Kant that I begin to support textually my theory on sublimity within fiction writing. Though this discussion will now mostly move from Longinus to Kant, it should not be forgotten that without Longinus's emphasis on the importance of one's mental faculties in producing and consuming sublimity, Kant would have had to begin his definition from a much different perspective, which, I believe, would have produced a much different Kantian sublime altogether. With that said, Kant is one of the first philosophers to delve deeply into the functions of sublimity within the human psyche. Kant stretches the sublime further than Longinus and his predecessor, Edmund Burke, who felt sublimity was predicated on external objects and not as much on mental faculty. Though Kant was not the first to associate mental faculties with sublimity—there was Longinus and Alison, too, for example—he provided a detailed account of how sublimity functions within the mind, an account that still has scholars debating today. Before Kant, especially in the works of Burke, there was a focus on the influence of nature to invoke sublimity. This trend was no doubt started by Longinus, who, in his treatise, claims

sublimity hits like a thunderbolt (4). Furthermore, when discussing amplification (one of many figures long associated with great writing), Longinus compares it to a “sea” in the expansiveness it creates (20). Finally, Longinus places the ability to create sublimity first and foremost in the graces of human nature (4). There is no shortage of allusions and parallels to the natural world in Longinus’s work when defining the sublime. These associations carried over into the work of Burke, were positioned somewhat differently by the Scottish philosophers, and then were almost entirely redefined by Kant.

Kant’s deviation from the standard discussion on the sublime is evident when he claims the sublime is a result of our “intuitions” of nature “by which there is produced in us a purposiveness quite independent of nature” (84). Already, Kant creates a dissonance in the general discussion of the sublime by suggesting that our natural instinct is to assert our unnaturalness. Kant continues by arguing that we seek the sublime within “ourselves and in our attitude of thought, which introduces sublimity into the representation of nature” (84). With the exception of some work by the Scottish philosophers, nature was thought to invoke the sublime; it *made us feel sublimity* with its own qualities. Kant situates the sublime within us and our capacity to represent nature. Kant claims that the sublime occurs “only indirectly” as an “exercise of the imagination” (83). Continuing, Kant argues, “The *sublime* consists merely on the *relation* by which the sensible in the representation of nature is judged available for possible supersensible use” [original emphasis] (107). There is kind of movement inherent in Kant’s language here, a movement that leads to a conversion of the natural world, a movement where individuals evaluate the representation of nature in which they find themselves and then latch on to those elements that appear sensible. They then use these sensible elements to satisfy supersensible ends. This movement to the supersensible, Kant argues, is “a *movement* of the

mind bound up with judging the object” [original emphasis] (85). However, the judgment is not one evaluating whether or not the object is good or bad. Instead, the supersensible is a cognitive moment when we no longer “*know*” nature but only “*think*” of it “as its presentation” [original emphasis] (108). This “aesthetical appreciation strains the imagination to its utmost bounds” (Kant 108). It is during this supersensible movement that I begin to understand the praxis of sublimity in the process of reading and writing fiction.

It is Kant’s understanding of the sublime relationship between an individual and nature that I see reproduced in the sublime moments of reading and writing fiction. To begin articulating my theory, I need to define what I mean when I say nature in the Kantian sense. I concur with Kant in that I don’t believe sublimity resides in objects but rather in our interactions, interpretations of, and associations with them. For example, when writing, writers produce “nature” in that they reproduce their version of human nature; while reading, readers interpret and then relate or do not relate to that nature. I’ll get into a detailed analysis of how this happens by discussing Kant’s notions of the mathematical and dynamical sublime and Alison’s use of associative psychology, but first I want to discuss how I’m approaching this relationship to sublimity and the communicative process between the writer and reader of fiction.

If, when writing, a writer produces a work not related to human nature there would be no way to interpret it.²³ Even the most abstract science fiction or fantasy is interpreted through a decoding process that parallels it with the natural world the reader understands, even though that understanding does not have to be the same from reader to reader. This is why someone can read a novel like *A Clockwork Orange*, which blends made-up words and British slang into a new language and unfamiliar world, and feasibly interpret it, even though the text resists translation at

²³ Consult Wolfgang Iser’s *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*.

the start. What is more, finding common ground between what we read and our understanding of the natural world is how spectacular fiction, like the work of Kurt Vonnegut or J.R.R. Tolkien, can find such a popular following.

A more specific example is one of my own. Last summer I read Brandon Sanderson's *Allomancer Trilogy*. When describing the trilogy to a literature colleague of mine, he found it pretty banal. At first I described just the premise of the books. I explained there is a special class of people who can eat different metals and then cast magical spells contingent on the properties of those metals. Sanderson calls these characters allomancers, and they are a rare breed within the population. When consuming different metals they gain functions like night vision, flight, and even the ability to shape time. To my friend and many others these books are childish, but because I knew I was dealing with a friend deep in the throes of a literature and critical theory doctoral program, I then explained to him the social structure of the community within the novel. He was sold. Anyone with even a basic understanding of Marxism can locate a richly developed and thought out correlation between Marxist thought and the world Sanderson creates. It is this connection that allowed my friend to find value in a book he otherwise did not. Though I don't believe my colleague would, as a reader, find a moment of sublimity anywhere in the trilogy (and I'll explain why later) he was able, even without reading, to find value in stories he originally dismissed. His embrace was reliant on him understanding the nature of story in relation to his own understanding of nature. When the two natures connected then there was an interest. A similar experience occurs during a sublime moment of writing and reading fiction, though it's much more intense than simply embracing an idea.

My first premise on the representation of the sublime in the writing and reading of fiction is that a sublime moment arises from cognitive failure. This failure is the result of a misfire of

mental faculties and is a moment Kant describes in detail. Rasmussen informs us that to Kant, “The cognitive faculties involved in the experience of the sublime are not imagination and understanding . . . but rather imagination and reason, and these faculties do *not* experience . . . a harmony that witnesses to us of the object’s purposiveness for our power of judgments, but rather the experience of disharmony, a mismatch” (158). To Kant, imagination and reason are in constant conflict except during moments of sublimity. These sublime moments are a failure in our mental faculties to do what they’re supposed to do.

The imagination in the Kantian sense is a mental faculty that attempts to grasp and create infinity. As Patricia Matthews states, the “Imagination attempts to comprehend even the infinite in a single intuition, although this is impossible” (170). In conflict with imagination is reason, which constructs the world with parameters and boundaries. In our day-to-day lives, reason trumps imagination. That is not to say that imagination is not important or that it is even the lesser faculty. Reason trumps imagination because most of what we do from one hour to the next requires reason more than imagination. But the moment of sublimity in the Kantian sense is a moment when this division breaks down. Let me explain how this works in regards to writing and reading fiction.

The fiction writer has the opportunity to write from infinity. The world, characters, plot, details, smells—everything written is first drawn from infinity. While the reader has a book—infinity within a cover—writers have themselves. Of course, they have the history of everything they’ve ever read or learned or seen, but most importantly they have all they’ve never read or learned or seen. But the boundaries begin with the first word; after that, writing is all about boundaries, about whittling a story from infinity. Those of us who write regularly know some writing goes much easier than others. For example, a few months ago I finished my first novel.

At points, the writing process was painstakingly turgid, and at other times I forced myself away (to work on my dissertation, for example), having lost track of time and place. Because of my busy schedule, I often wrote in high-traffic, public spaces, and, I admit, it was hard to get into my writing sometimes because of it. But in those moments where I was completely lost in the world I was creating, I believe I was writing in a sublime moment as Kant defines it.

When I sat down to write my book, I was aware I was writing. I was aware that I was on the first floor of the library, surrounded by people, drinking my first cup of coffee of the day. I was aware that I would be periodically pulled away from my writing when students met me to talk about their projects. Sometimes I wrote the entire time with such an awareness of everything. In those moments, every line developed slowly. At those junctures, the faculty of reason grounded me in time and space. It was clear to me the story I was writing was imaginary and the world around me was real. Sometimes, though, I forgot where I was, and I was in the world I was creating, so much so that once, when I was disturbed by a student coming to meet me, I actually jumped, scaring her worse than she scared me. She said she had stood next to me a moment, but when I didn't notice her she thought she'd get my attention. At that time the fictional world was the real world, at least to my brain. At that moment, my reason failed and was taken over by imagination. However, when writing, the fictional world has parameters, no matter how imaginative it might seem. There is a plot line, scenes, and, if nothing else, at least one character. As Matthews suggests, the imagination in the Kantian sense, which is the imagination I'm discussing in this example of mental lapse, is a mental faculty that attempts to grasp infinity. It attempts to function within the realm of boundlessness, able to create anything and everything. So how, when my fictional world has boundaries, can I use my imagination to create that world? I can't. Then comes the next question: if I'm not using imagination to

construct my fictional world then I must be using reason, but how can reason—the empirical faculty used to situate us within reality—be used to create a fictional world? From my perspective, the answer is that it cannot. This is the sublime moment in writing fiction, the moment, Kant argues, that “pleases immediately through its opposition to the interest of sense” (107). It is the moment when reason fails to keep the writer fully within reality. At this juncture, imagination takes over but with the help of reason.

The imaginary world becomes the “real” world, and reason situates the writer and his or her understanding of nature within that realm. At this point imagination fails to do what it’s supposed to do. It grasps and creates within boundaries. Reason also fails and creates boundaries within the realm of fiction. This is a moment when cognitive faculties function against the interests of sense. It is a sublime moment because it is a moment that cannot be found “outside itself, but merely in itself . . . a magnitude that is like itself alone . . . but only in our ideas” (Kant 88). This moment of sublimity is one Makkreel deems a “free play between faculties” which “indicates that the imagination is no longer directly controlled by the understanding [reason], although the rules of the understanding remain in effect” (307). During these sublime moments of writing I am in my chair only physically. I am in the world I create, and, as Rudolf Makkreel states concerning Kant’s notion of sublimity, it is in this moment that imagination institutes “a ‘regress’ which annihilates the condition of time” (303). Because of the annihilation of time and place, and because reason and imagination are in harmony, meaning they are creating together when they shouldn’t, this is a moment of sublimity within the creation of fiction, a moment neither recognized nor researched by fiction writers, teachers, or theorists of the sublime.

As stated, the moment of sublimity within the reading and writing of fiction occurs as a result of cognitive failure. The failure occurs between the faculties of imagination and reason.

However, in the instances of reading and writing creative writing, I believe this failure is a positive one. The pleasurable outcome in the sublime moment is an outcome where disparate faculties blend together to create a heightened experience not created when functioning separately. Makkreel states, “The sublime points to the possibility of an overall integration of our faculties of mind” (312). This Kantian view of the relationship between reason and imagination “provide[s] important clues for relating aesthetic consciousness to the overall economy of our powers” (Makkreel 303). Concerning the economy of our powers afforded us through the sublime, Melissa Merritt argues, “A sublime state of mind is one in which we take pleasure in the failure of sensible representation, because this failure enables us to appreciate the power of reason to conceive of what can never be met with the senses, or rendered in sensible representation” (39). In the Kantian sense, it is not practical for reason to represent fiction, nor is it practical for imagination to create within the confines of rationality. However, the blend of reason and imagination, or the sublime moments, allow a writer to implement the strengths of pure imagination with the precision and clarity of reason. Above, I’ve outlined how sublimity occurs in the mind of a writer, but now I want to provide a more detailed account via Kant’s notion of the dynamically sublime.

The Dynamical Sublime

Kant mentions two kinds of sublimities in his treatise on sublimity: the dynamical sublime and the mathematical sublime. Referring to Kant’s summaries, Arensburg surmises the dynamical sublime is one “in which the mind is seemingly terrorized by its own contemplation of an external source,” while the mathematical sublime is one which represents the “inability of the mind to encompass infinitude” (14). I have some reservations concerning Arensburg’s definition, as I do of all definitions confining sublimity to fear and discomfort. As I’ve already

mentioned, I, like the Scottish philosophers, believe fear and discomfort to be two of *many* possible emotional responses to sublimity. Sublimity is far richer than only a few emotions. But the idea that the mind struggles, develops interests in, or contemplates an external force during dynamical sublimity is an accurate parallel to what I believe happens to writers of fiction during a dynamically sublime moment. Moreover, Arensburg's distinction of the mathematical sublime as a moment where the mind is unable to encompass infinity is, to me, relational to writers' struggles with infinity when generating a brand new piece of fiction.

Forsey claims the dynamical sublime is about a "dual movement of the mind—from a sense of our cognitive limitations to the transcendence of them" (384). Of course, this dual movement of the mind is the movement mentioned earlier, a movement in the opposition of the interest of sense. It is dual because the movement 1) employs the faculties used to make "sense" of the world (imagination and reason) 2) by putting them in conflict with each other. This movement is against the interest of sense because this conflict should create senseless disharmony, but it doesn't. Kant describes the dynamical sublime as that moment of fear one experiences when faced with something beyond calculation, like a hurricane approaching the coast. The storm is as big as the eye can see, but the mind knows it is much bigger. The storm is, in the mind's conception, an infinite power. We can only speculate to the size of the storm, and because the speculation is not an accurate measurement, we fail to grasp and thus be greater than the storm itself. We are inferior to the storm in both physical power and mental conception.

According to Matthews, "In the dynamically sublime nature is represented as a source of fear, although we are not actually afraid of it. We think of ourselves as physical, phenomenal beings, we realize we are powerless in the face of certain natural phenomenon" (174). To Kant, individuals taking in, say, the view of an incoming hurricane feel cripplingly inadequate but for

only as long as it takes them to realize they can protect themselves from such travails. Then they feel empowered or superior to the natural force. A visual example of what Matthews and Kant describe is inherent in Joseph Turner's painting, *Snow Storm: Hannibal and His Army Crossing the Alps*, found in Appendix C. The painting represents one of the greatest military achievements from the Second Punic War. The painting represents what is now known as a victory, though the initial interpretation of the painting might suggest otherwise. Turner's work is a prime example of the sublime in painting because it represents the immensity of the world and how daunting it can be. Yet, as history has shown, mankind was successful in such circumstances, which aligns perfectly with Kant's notion of the dynamical sublime. Matthews writes:

As supersensible beings independent of physical nature, we resist great physical power, and this *resistance* is a measure of our superiority above nature. The original displeasure with a fearful object awakens a positive feeling based on superiority of the supersensible to sensible nature. But the feeling associated with this side of ourselves is only maintained insofar as we continually realize our power through our independence from the fearful object. [original emphasis] (174)

Continuing, Matthews states, "The feeling of the dynamically sublime is a function of reason and imagination being in a state in which our supersensible rational nature is superior to our sensible nature" (174). It is not sensible to think you're superior to a hurricane, but our supersensible nature—we are superior because we can flee or build or hide—becomes more important than our sensible one—that hurricane will kill me. The recognition of the supersensible as superior to the sensible is a key distinction to note because when writers experience sublimity I believe they do so in just this manner, which I'll specify in a moment. But the other equally important distinction

made by both Kant and Matthews is that nature is a force which we rationalize in an attempt to understand, grasp, and prove superior to the force itself. It is during this course of rationalization that we create the entirety of sublimity; it is an object of our making.

Forsey claims, “The myriad natural phenomena [inherent in the dynamical sublime] provide the occasions for our experience but the real sublime is us” (384). This is because sublimity is a result of cognitive failure between reason and imagination. Matthews suggests there are some claims made by Kant where he associates the feeling of the sublime “with the harmony of accord of imagination and reason” (174). But Matthews problematizes this rationale. I find her problematizing fair, and I feel I have a possible answer. Matthews suggests the problem with the harmonization of reason and imagination being the source of the sublime is that “It is unclear how this relationship is absolutely great, except in a derivative sense” (175). I believe Matthews’ issue here is that the source of the sublime is so often thought to come from a physical source that she wants to know how the imagination and reason can construct sublimity when it requires a physical object to incite it. In short, if the sublime is manufactured in the brain alone then we should just be able to feel sublime all the time, maybe randomly. But nearly all of the literature on the subject—even the literature that says sublimity comes from the human mind—still assigns that sublimity a derivative source, most of them in nature. However, the author’s role in writing fiction, which unfolds in the same manner as the dynamical sublime, requires no physical derivative and is purely a mental construct, both answering Matthews’ question and providing a new layer to understanding fiction, sublimity, and their relationship to one another.

The Writer and the Dynamical Sublime

When writers write they start within infinity.²⁴ In a sense, writers are very much like the person staring out at the hurricane on the horizon. They stare into their own mental horizon, knowing that it is greater than their conception of it, but unlike the hurricane, the mental horizon is not real. It is truly infinite. Writers must confront the fact that they have no boundaries to contain what they might write about. The dynamical sublime occurs from the inability of the brain to employ imagination in a way that allows it to grasp, in all ways possible, the size, force and boundaries of something. When the brain is unable to employ imagination to this end, it employs reason to help stabilize understanding. But the hurricane, as we know, is not limitless. It has a total circumference. The imagination does not.

There are a number of ways writers can navigate the sprawling expanse of their imagination. One can ruminate while staring out of the window and see what ideas or thoughts surface. Writers might take notes or sketch plot lines or talk to themselves or others about ideas. I list these means of navigation because I've done them all myself. However, none of these methods were sublime moments. The dynamically sublime moment happens for writers when, while writing, they unintentionally begin to take control over their expansive imagination. A step by step juxtaposition between the fiction writer and the hurricane watcher helps to elucidate this point.

The watchers of the hurricane feel the dynamically sublime when their understanding of themselves shifts from an inferior subject position to a superior one. When fiction writers write a story or novel they, too, are in an inferior position. In short, I can say fiction writing can be a

²⁴ By infinity I mean that writers can create anything they are capable of imagining. Of course, their imagination is limited by their life experiences, memories, and their understanding of the world as they see it, so it may not be infinity, as in the concept of the boundaries of space, but it is infinity of the mind, where each mind is free to create anything that it is able to.

daunting task. There are many possible outcomes at the start of a fictional piece, especially a longer one such as a novel. The watchers of the hurricane rationalize their superiority to their surroundings by employing the imagination to create a supersensible reality over the sensible one, and reason follows and constructs the parameters of the imaginative rationalization, though it shouldn't. Writers working within fictional infinitude experience the dynamically sublime when they rationalize a supersensible reality over a sensible one. Fiction is not real. It might seem redundant stating this, but during a dynamically sublime moment the brain of the fiction writer forgets this. Imagination is boundless. The fictional world is boundless.

In the Kantian sense of imagination and reason, one should never be able to be “inside” a piece of fiction whether they're writing or reading it. It is against the will of imagination to have fiction—which is fake or imaginative—that also has boundaries, methods, or formulas. What is more, it is against reason to create fiction because fiction is not real; therefore, it is imaginary and boundless. But when writers get lost in their writing, they move into their imaginations and impress structure upon their imaginations with reason, a process that, in the Kantian sense (a widely accepted one) is not supposed to happen. Writers experience the dynamically sublime at this point. They structure boundaries within infinite space, creating a supersensible rationalization over a sensible one, and that rationalization results from the cognitive failure between imagination and reason. When the person watching the hurricane experiences dynamical sublimity they have a euphoric feeling of superiority and power. When the writer experiences dynamical sublimity he/she *becomes* powerful. The person watching the hurricane responds to a situation and weathers the storm. The writer's process isn't just a response to a situation but, rather, it creates one. When writers create in ways that bring imagination and reason into harmony, they create a fictional world of pure imagination organized and realized through

reason. That world takes precedent over the real world where the writer might be sitting at a desk or in a library. Mental faculties are confused and improperly harmonizing; reality becomes skewed, inverted, and until that writer stops and the faculties recalibrate, he/she experiences the dynamical sublime.

The Mathematical Sublime

As mentioned, Kant broke the sublime into two parts: the dynamical sublime and mathematical sublime. The process Kant uses to distinguish between the sublimes is verisimilar to what I believe to be the sublime moments for readers and writers of fiction. Kant's explication of how reason and imagination harmonize during dynamically sublime moments is akin to those faculties' harmonization when a writer experiences sublimity while writing. However, Kant's explication of how reason and imagination harmonize during the mathematically sublime moments is best reflected when a reader of fiction experiences sublimity. Matthews assures us, however, that "Kant's notion of the mathematically sublime is notoriously difficult" (170). I second this opinion, but in the following pages I attempt to clarify just what Kant is getting at by elucidating some of the key points of his theory.

Kant distinguishes two activities as a source of measuring the mathematical sublime. These activities are apprehension and comprehension. Makkreel surmises, "Apprehension can use the fundamental measure as a unit to generate a numerical sequence" (304). Fundamental measures are measurements like inches, yards, feet, and kilograms. For example, a yard is a fundamental measurement comprised of three feet or thirty-six inches. This descending quantity of fundamental measurements is a numerical sequence used to apprehend the concept of a yard. But the yard, too, is a fundamental measure and can be used in a numerical sequence to define other concepts like a football field. One way to apprehend the concept of football field is to

understand its size in relation to all other sports fields. A football field is one-hundred yards or three-hundred and sixty feet or 4,320 inches. Once my little brother asked me how tall is the arch in St. Louis, Missouri. When telling him it was 630 feet he asked, “How tall is that?” Then I told him, “Well, about as tall as if you stand two football fields on top of each other.” Then he got it. He was able to apprehend the size of the arch by a numerical sequence he understood to be a football field, never mind that he didn’t think of the arch in inches or even feet. He didn’t have to think of the arch in this way because there was another, larger, more adequate unit of measure—the football field itself.

So how does using inches, feet, and football fields relate to the sublime moment a reader experiences when reading? A story, short or long, is a magnitude composed of parts that must be taken in piece by piece to apprehend the whole. No story is grasped all at one time. Discussing the mathematical sublime, Makkreel states, “Apprehension can be described as a process that advances or progresses, so that to apprehend magnitude is to grasp it part by part in a temporal succession. The comprehension of a magnitude involves the more difficult task of grasping or judging it as a whole” (305). The story itself has magnitudes on many levels. Let’s say the story in question is actually a novel. The reader knows the novel is a certain amount of pages, and the amount of those pages is determined by how many words are in the book, and the amount of space those words take up is determined by the amount of letters they have. What is more, in many cases the size of the book can be measured by the fundamental measurements of centimeters and/or inches. The book will most likely be rectangular and of a certain numerical weight. All of these are a means to apprehend the *size* of a book.

However, apprehending the physical size of something is only one way to determine magnitude in the Kantian sense of the sublime. Malcom Budd suggests, “Kant’s account of the

mathematically sublime is based on a distinction between two ways of estimating or judging an object's size—an aesthetic or a mathematical estimation of magnitude" (122). I can explain the mathematical magnitude of the arch to my little brother, but explaining the aesthetic magnitude can be tough. I could try, but would he get it? Furthermore, I described the mathematical magnitude of a book, but anyone who has been sucked into a good novel knows there's another kind of magnitude, but it is not present in every book that we read. That magnitude is an aesthetic one. But understanding the *aesthetic magnitude* of a book is a difficult task. I might find one book the most engrossing thing I've read, and someone else may not be able to finish it. This is because aesthetic magnitude is not finite or universally understood like the measurements of an inch or a foot. Instead, aesthetic magnitude, at least in regards to reading fiction, is a unique blending of comprehending the past, present, and future which then gets amalgamated into a single experience.

Makkreel argues, "All imaginative reproduction would be in vain if we did not consciously recognize that what is reproduced in the present is identical with what was apprehended in the past" (306). Let me convert this process of imaginative reproduction to that of reading. When we read, we move from one word to another, stringing together sentences and then paragraphs and then pages. The minute we move from one word to another we leave a word behind. We read it, interpret it, and leave it. This creates a past. Interestingly, though, it is the apprehension of this past that constructs the present and the future as we read. I understand the present situation in the text only because I add it to the past I've accumulated. The greater our past during reading, the greater our present understanding of the reading and the richer the future of the text becomes.

The Reader and the Mathematical Sublime

Sometimes when we read a book, the process moves painfully slowly. We are aware that we are moving from word to word and page to page. Other times, though, the words and pages blend together into a rich, complex experience. Siding with Kant, Makkreel explains that the comprehension of a whole through its parts without a recognition of those parts is a dynamically sublime moment. Makkreel writes, “As we proceed numerically [page by page, character by character, and event by event] we can also construct more encompassing units of measure, as in a scale where 10 or even 100 units may be comprehended as one” (304). Kant calls this moment of comprehension *comprehensio aesthetica*. This moment “allows us to move from a simple fundamental measure to a more encompassing measure” (Makkreel 304). Kant describes this moment as akin to seeing a pyramid. From a distance, the pyramid is a solid triangular shape, but as you near it, you see it is comprised of blocks stacked on top of each other. Finally, if you walk all the way to the pyramid and stand close enough to touch it, all you can see are a few surrounding blocks. Converting this analogy to the reading of a text in regards to aesthetic comprehension, when we read a riveting story or novel we take it in a word at a time, piece by piece, just like the person looking at the pyramid from a distance. However, also like the person looking at the pyramid from a distance, we don’t realize we are taking in the story a piece at a time. When we read a piece of writing and are aware of its parts, it can feel as if we’re slugging through it. It can feel like work. In these instances we are not in a moment of the mathematically sublime; we are simply reading. In short, we are not obtaining an aesthetic comprehension of any kind as defined by Kant. Imagination and reason are functioning separately. Makkreel notes, “In aesthetic comprehension, the imagination unites a sequence of apprehended representations in one intuition without the mediation of concepts of understanding” (306). An important

distinction to make in this passage is the relationship between imagination and the notion of a single intuition because it is this relationship that breeds the mathematically sublime.

A cognitive failure between reason and imagination invokes both the dynamically and mathematically sublime. The moment of sublimity occurs for the reader of fiction when “the imagination’s capacity to intuit a series of units as one simultaneous whole reaches a limit, aesthetic comprehension encounters the immeasurable and the feeling of the sublime” (Makkreel 304). Cognitive failure occurs in the same manner as it does in the dynamically sublime. In the Kantian sense, the goal of the imagination is to create from infinity and boundlessness while the goal of reason is to organize with parameters of structure. Aesthetic comprehension and sublimity occur for the reader of fiction when these mental faculties fail to remain independent of one another. For example, I’ve never been one to get lost in textbooks, even if I’m interested in the material. As a case in point, I can read a textbook on cultural anthropology and be quite interested in it, but I will not get lost in the text like I do when reading the work of Loren Eiseley, a paleoanthropologist who writes within the non-fiction and sometimes even creative non-fiction genres. There is something about the text book that always reminds me that it is a textbook. I consider concepts and link those concepts to objects and ideas outside of the textbook but never get lost in the narrative, which means I never co-create or build an imaginative world with the text. The text book leads me along, gives me information, and I take it. The textbook gives me its numerical parts, and it is my awareness of them (jarring headings, bold-faced words that lead me by the hand, oftentimes lifeless prose) that contributes to my inability to use imagination. However, the textbook is comprised of the same “pieces” as a short story or a novel, and those pieces are words and ideas spread across pages. Yet, textbooks tend to lack story, which, for me, invokes the need to co-create a world with the fiction that I read.

I don't mean to suggest, however, that where there is character, plot, and action there is sublimity. I've read many books that had all three fictional elements, but I never reached a sublime moment while reading them, so the question arises: how, exactly, is the cognitive failure induced? How is it that we as readers begin to co-create a world with the fiction that we read? I think the simple answer is that we believe. Yet a more nuanced approach to how this belief might be established can be found in Eric Voegelin's notion of participatory consciousness. When speaking about symbols, such as writing or works of art, Voegelin states, "The symbols do not refer to structures in the external world but to the existential movement in the *metaxy* from which they mysteriously emerge as the exegesis of the movement in intelligibly expressive language. Their meaning can be said to be understood only if they have evoked in the listener or reader the corresponding movement of participatory consciousness" [original emphasis] (344). As Charles Embry notes, Voegelin invokes Plato's *Symposium* when discussing *metaxy*, which is defined as "the spatio-metaphorical place where human consciousnesses exist" (Embry 51). In those sublime moments when the writer or reader of fiction become immersed in the act of writing or reading they have moved into a state of participatory consciousness. I argue that "Since the symbols [of writing] emerge in consequences of a movement in the consciousness of a human being as creator (in participation with the mysterious It-reality), they can only be 'understood' if they elicit a 'corresponding' movement of participation in a reader's own participatory consciousness" (Embry 52). However, because each individual offers his or her own, unique consciousness, what one finds convincing another may not. Our own sublime moments are inherent in us, drawn out by the text. This is why sublimity is different from person to person, and it is this personal element of sublimity that I believe joins two lines of sublime thought

otherwise believed to be disparate—the work of Kant and the work of the Scottish philosophers, who found their definition of sublimity in the roots of associative psychology.

Alison, Associative Psychology, and the Sublime

One of the defining qualities of Scottish philosophers' thoughts on sublimity is that the sublime is both deeply entrenched in the mental psyche of an individual and is not dependent on material objects. Kant, too, believed sublimity existed within one's mind and not within an object, but Kant does specify the importance of physical objects in invoking sublimity, which is exemplified by his use of the hurricane in the dynamical sublime and the pyramid in the mathematical sublime. Moreover, like Longinus, Kant often alludes to large objects like storm systems and pyramids as the means of subliminal invocation. In associative psychological notions of the sublime, sublimity can be induced by anything; it merely depends on a particular set of associations in an individual's life. In short, a mountain can incite sublimity as easily as a stranger's perfume.

Stuart Jauss explains that associative psychology understands that the “associative network maps of *any* two individuals would be very different from one another, exhibiting both differences in associations and differences in ‘association strength’ influenced by, among other things, how frequently, how recently, and under what circumstances ideas have occurred together in a subject's mind” [original emphasis] (418). One of the biggest proponents of blending associative psychology and notions of sublimity was Archibald Alison. Albrecht notes:

Archibald Alison has been credited with subjectivizing the sublime . . . By giving a broader sanction to association, Alison opens the way to the *sublime of vision*, which demands a much greater contribution from the mind than the visible sublime requires. Alison ascribes aesthetic pleasure entirely to the process of association. Thus the

immediately visible, while necessary to initiate this process, becomes subordinate to the range of mental activity it stimulates. [original emphasis] (69)

As Albrecht suggests, Alison's work propelled the sublime from a simple feeling, like fear, as it was in the work of Burke and Kant, to an all-encompassing experience, including but not limited to touch, smell, sight, and sound. As noted, Kant did attribute the origin of the sublime to imagination, but Kant's experience was centered on physical objects and emotional responses. In Alison's interpretation of the sublime, sublimity is contingent on sights, sounds, and smells—anything that might create a train of associated thoughts. It is the combination of those thoughts that are the source of sublimity. Albrecht argues that in Alison's notion of the sublime, "The imagination gains its power over the measurements of time and space as trains of associated ideas fuse imagery with both thought and feeling" (10). This transition in sublime thought situates "sublime pleasure in the imagination process itself, rather than in any equivalent to physical magnitude that it may create" (Albrecht 10). Sublimity, in Alison's case, becomes "visionary" and not just visual, suggesting the sublime "derives its power from what goes on in the mind," making sublimity "psychological and internal, not physical and external" (10). It is this shift from the physical world to a train of associated recollections that not only shifts sublimity to the human psyche but also puts it in direct relationship with human nature.

Sublime studies have always used nature as a source of sublimity. Longinus did it first, associating sublimity with thunder and the physical size of the natural world. The tradition of the close relationship of physical nature to sublimity was echoed by Burke and then again by Kant, especially in his discussion of the dynamically sublime. Alison extends sublimity from the physical nature of mountains and storms to a different kind of nature—*human nature*. Though none of the sources I consulted associate Alison's notions of sublimity to human nature, I believe

the relationship a puissant one. The Alisonian model hinges on the belief that sublimity arises from a unique ordering of mental associations that come from one's lived experiences. These associations are comprised of all an individual knows, thinks, and feels about life, even if he/she doesn't cognitively realize it. I feel these associations must be imbued with human nature as one perceives it. The association of human nature and sublimity is, I believe, one reason why certain books sometimes appeal to certain people. The kind of writing and authors I tend to revisit are those that proffer the most instances of sublimity. For example, I find the novels of Cormac McCarthy and short fiction of Ray Bradbury generative of the sublime, meaning sublimity, as defined here, is subjective. Interestingly, these two writers are quite different in nature. Though I have no scientific evidence as to why two fundamentally dissimilar kinds of writing both provoke sublimity in me as a reader, I can say that for me description is an important element. McCarthy describes people and the world in ways familiar to me, and that doesn't matter whether or not he's writing about the American southwest (*Blood Meridian*, *All the Pretty Horses*, *The Crossing*) or the world during the post apocalypse (*The Road*). On the other hand, Bradbury tends to write about worlds and people as I've never experienced them, but his description, for one reason or another, draws me in. Sometimes I'm lost in the description because I'm trying to piece it together to better understand an unfamiliar place or character, and other times I'm enraptured by the description because it is poetic beyond most "poetry" I've ever read. These authors' styles and texts relate to the world and the human condition as I understand it to be on both conscious and subconscious levels. With that said, I want to make two clarifications: 1) I do not mean to suggest that human nature *is* a string of psychological associations (though it might be true) but rather that human nature is *present* in those strings of psychological association responsible for sublimity in the Alisonian model; and 2) though I

applaud Alison for making sublimity more human and versatile, he was not the first to associate sublimity with human nature. Instead, Alison was the first to bring human nature back to the sublime after Longinus did it originally. As mentioned earlier, Longinus believes that without an innate ability to create sublimity through one's own natural greatness one cannot create sublimity. In short, the sublime has always been about human nature, and as sublime studies developed, the role of human nature was ignored. What followed was a focus of sublimity on physical objects observed. However, Alison brings human nature back to sublimity in a far more variegated and illuminated manner than Longinus posited it originally. This connection between Alison, human nature, and Longinus is important because it is the link connecting not only Longinus, Alison, and Kant, but also it is the link I use to apply the sublime to what might be included as part of the unteachable elements of fiction writing.

Human nature is a complicated concept. This truth does not change when considering Alison's definition of nature, which, because of how it's defined, must include human nature. Alison argues that nature and all of its wonders constantly surround us, but it is only "in particular moments that we are sensible of their power" (5). When discussing nature, Alison includes not only the physical world but everything—nature in all of its "wonders." Because Alison does not relegate nature to the physical world, it seems logical that his definition of nature would also include the practices and behaviors of human beings; they surround us. One such practice Alison discusses in regards to sublimity, a practice ignored by both Burke and Kant, is the practice of language and communication. Alison makes the human phenomenon of language an aspect of nature. Alison writes, "Language [and thus writing] gives to every individual who employs it the possession of all the analogies which so many ages have observed, between material Qualities, and Qualities capable of producing Emotion [sic]" (132). Language, here, is a

natural process of understanding the material world. Rasmussen, while discussing Alison's work, makes a similar assertion, arguing, "We *want* nature to be a cipher, a language that can be learned" [original emphasis] (161). Rasmussen contends, "The beauties of nature are *chiffreschrift*, a code that presumably (though not necessarily) can be deciphered" (161). Blending Alison and Rasmussen together establishes a basis for a unique argument that expands the definition of the sublime in regards to how an individual experiences sublimity and what induces it. In Alison's model, nature is everything a person interacts with. This includes language and its derivative, writing. In Alison's opinion, it is only one's interaction with nature (and not just the magnitude of material objects) that inspires and creates sublimity. Sometimes this interaction with nature (or writing) provokes a series of cognitive associations where "imagination gains its power over the measurements of time and space as trains of associated ideas fuse imagery with both thought and feeling" (Albrecht 10). This is the moment when Alison's notion of sublimity transcends previous thought. However, for me, it is also where it breaks down.

According to Alison, nature is all that surrounds us. Since language and writing are all around us, they, too, are a part of nature—human nature. Alison also believes it is only our interaction with nature (language/writing) and not nature itself that leads to sublimity; therefore, writing can lead to sublimity if one interacts with it. Following Alison's notions of the sublime, writing can only lead to sublimity by provoking the human imagination to take over and link associated ideas from life. These ideas might be pulled from either the conscious or subconscious. If what Alison says is true, then when a sublime moment occurred during reading we would probably stop and drool on our book, choosing to run through our own chains of cognitive associations instead of reading the text. But this doesn't happen. Instead, we read

faster, more intently; we lose interest in our *real* present and, instead, build both a present and future within the world of the text. Alison suggests we self-create. I believe we co-create. Reading, as Frank Smith asserts, “is creative and constructive, not passive and reactive” (27). I do think Alisonian sublimity occurs while reading, but I think it does so because of the cognitive failure Kant discusses. However, Kant’s work begs a question too—why does one willingly pursue cognitive failure? Kant’s explanation bridges the gap in Alison’s work, and Alison’s work bridges the gap for Kant. We pursue cognitive failure in moments of sublimity because of what is signified by our interactions. Alison writes:

The constant connection we discover between the sign and the thing signified, between the material quality [the book or story] and the quality productive of Emotion [our response to the material quality], renders at last the one expressive to us of the other [human nature in the text represents human nature as we understand it], and very often disposes us to attribute the sign [story or book], that effect which is produced only by the quality signified [human nature]. (127-8)

One pursues sublimity because it allows one to both experience and co-create human nature, even if the creation is fallacious. Smith argues that “thinking—including reading . . . is our theory of the world in action” (qtd. in Smith 27). In the Alisonian model, one reads, experiences familiar notions of human nature, employs his or her imagination, gets lost within the fictional world while doing so, and then uses reason to rationally construct a fictional world mistaken for human nature. This moment when the reader blends reason and imagination to create a fictional world is a moment Smith would likely call the “*consequence* of reading” (27). Smith defines reading as “thought stimulated and directed by written language”; therefore, Smith’s consequence of reading is one’s “concurrent or subsequent reflection” on one’s theory of the

world in action, and that theory is being guided by the written word (27). Smith's work is one contemporary explanation to how the Alisonian model might work, and it reminds us that writing creates a kind of communicative phenomenon.

Sublimity is pertinent to understanding the communicative phenomenon that happens between writers and readers of fiction. I think writers and readers forget sometimes that they are communicating through a cultural artifact. In creative writing classrooms world-wide, teachers explain how this communication works. A writer asks readers to spend part of their lives believing in fiction, and readers promise if the writing is done adequately then they will. For some, good writing is what was discussed in Chapter Two, meaning good writing is a formula that achieves certain objectives. I believe that in CWS this definition of good writing accounts for what can be taught, which is usually defined as craft. I think there's truth to this statement, but a lot of it is hollow. Good fiction writing does something else, too, and I think understanding the sublime can help us begin to see what that something else might be. Readers have been conditioned for nearly three-thousand years to find a formula in the fiction they read. A better understanding of the methods and history of this formula, coupled with a nuanced conception of sublimity's effect on the reading and writing of fiction, can create a whole new area for teachers of creative writing to delve into while expanding the discipline of CWS.

I take a big risk with my assertions. Longinus, Aristotle, and the sublime all have a richer history than I could master by age thirty. But I'm not afraid to take risks if all of us can learn and grow from them. That is the point of risk taking and the failure that sometimes results. I have taken the first step in regards to considering the relationship between sublimity and fiction writing as one element that might be classified as that which cannot be taught in CWS. As I've noted in the previous pages, those in the field of CWS are taking similar steps and risks and

calling for others to do the same.²⁵ I hope those revolutionizing the discipline of CWS right now will assist me. I hope they will assay my ideas and develop them further. With that said, one of my biggest concerns in much of the academic writing I read is the proclamation of a problem without an attempt at a remedy. In the following chapter I provide a third option to the craft-based, product-centered first model and the “unteachable” polemic of the second model. The third model I propose isn’t really a model as much as it is an approach that values writer self-discovery over the written product or the concern of whether or not good writing can be taught. It’s an approach that is simply concerned with aiding writers to learn more about their writing processes so that they might learn about their individualized craft and how they define themselves through the work they produce. Chapter Four is an attempt to provide a truly innovative and interdisciplinary answer to what I’ve posited in the previous pages, an answer I hope, with the help of others in the discipline, will aid in elevating CWS to new heights.

²⁵ Those that advocate for a deeper understanding of the entire process of creative writing are Bishop, Bizzaro (who started his work on the subject more than thirty years ago), Donnelly, Harper, Mayers, and Dawson to name just a few.

CHAPTER 4
QUANTUM RHETORIC

“It is probably true quite generally that in the history of human thinking the most fruitful developments frequently take place at those points where two different lines of thought meet.”

(Werner Heisenberg)

“I want to stand glassy-eyed before my students and interpret Percy Shelley’s Prometheus Unbound from a physicist’s perspective and Feynman’s The Meaning of It All from a poet’s.”

(Patrick Bizzaro)

Introduction

In this chapter I provide an alternative approach to the teachable/unteachable model. The teachable/unteachable model I’ve discussed to this point focuses on either qualities of writing that can be taught and are then visible in a final product—climax, character change, a beginning, middle, and end plot line structure—or qualities of writing only produced by individuals that have a gift they were born with, a gift that cannot be taught. Neither model is concerned with an individual writer’s growth. Neither model provides an opportunity for writers to learn about themselves as writers, learn about their individual writing processes, or even to develop individual writing practices and processes; the first model is interested in the product, and in the second model only the processes of those with the “gift” actually matter. Quantum Rhetoric, as I discuss in detail in Chapter Four, provides a third option to students of creative writing, an option that prizes the experimentation and exploration of individual, student writing processes by providing those students a lens through which to see their work and how they write it in completely new ways.

Quantum Rhetoric and This Dissertation

In this chapter I offer a new rhetoric for CWS, one that is not focused on the product of writing or whether or not creative writing can be taught. Bizzaro calls this new rhetoric *Quantum Rhetoric*. Bizzaro states that quantum rhetoric is a set of “rhetorical skills useful in describing new discoveries in all disciplines but only currently taught in creative writing classes” (“Toward” 10). “This rhetoric,” Bizzaro believes, “satisfies in many ways the need for innovative approaches to expressing results from observations that produce new knowledge, knowledge never before described” (“Toward” 14). Bizzaro allies the process of Quantum Rhetoric with the “techniques of poetry” (“Toward” 17), defining those techniques not as poetry itself but instead as the poetic mode as defined by Art Young *vis á vis* James Britton’s “poetic function of language” (“Toward” 7). Bizzaro’s analysis leads to an intriguing insight that suggests that rhetoric and poetry might have more in common than first meets the eye. As a case in point, Bizzaro argues that the relationship between rhetoric and poetry has “existed unacknowledged and undefined” since perhaps “the age of Romanticism” (“Towards” 17-18) and is expressed through Quantum Rhetoric (“Toward” 20). Bizzaro concludes the final pages of his essay with a pivotal question: “How do we teach poets as well as professionals in various fields to employ Quantum Rhetoric? This,” he argues, “is our current predicament” (“Towards” 18). In an attempt to answer this very important question, in this chapter I extend Quantum Rhetoric to the realm of fiction writing and CWS. Bizzaro has established a strong argument for how both poets and scientists have used Quantum Rhetoric to create new forms of knowledge and to explain the seemingly unexplainable. In short, Bizzaro claims, “It might be fair to say that each discipline in its cutting edge requires a certain kind of imagining . . .” (“Toward” 15), but what about a discipline where the act of imagining *is* a large part of the discipline itself, such as

CWS? What new knowledge or seemingly unexplainable phenomena can practitioners and teachers of fiction writing discover when applying Quantum Rhetoric to how they create, teach, and assess fiction?

In the process of attempting to answer these questions, I approach Quantum Rhetoric in a different way than Bizzaro. My approach in no way clashes with Bizzaro's but instead adds an additional layer to the definition, thought, and possibilities for Quantum Rhetoric. As mentioned, Bizzaro relates the poetic mode to Quantum Rhetoric, suggesting that when writers use the poetic mode to explain the unexplainable they are using the art of poetry to understand the most elementary parts of something in order to grasp the whole, very much like what occurs in quantum physics. Just one of several examples Bizzaro cites is the work of Ernesto Cardenal, who wrote about "the rebellion in Nicaragua by using the language of physicists to connect early revolution to universal verities" ("Our Work" 17). Bizzaro codifies just what he means when he avers, "Poems make language work at least as hard as scientific documents do" (17). My analysis steps away from poetry, suggesting that poetry is just one method to employ Quantum Rhetoric. My analysis applies quantum mechanics more directly to the process of fiction writing. Such examples are made explicit when I discuss the new kinds of knowledge that might be ascertained when applying principles of quantum mechanics to the process of writing fiction. One example of employing quantum mechanics to the process of writing fiction is my mixing of quantum entanglement (which I describe in more detail later in this chapter) with traditional character generation in fiction writing. In short, I apply quantum mechanics more explicitly to the fiction writing process than Bizzaro does, and I do so using the tenets of quantum mechanics not as a science but as a rhetorical lens with which to view the process of writing. Bizzaro notes that Aristotle claims rhetoric is a faculty, which, Bizzaro believes, as I do, makes rhetoric a way

of thinking even before it's a discipline of study ("Our Work" 16). I believe this way of thinking about rhetoric can aid in its alliance with other ways of thinking, such as thinking about the world at a quantum level. Finally, I feel that my addition of fiction to the definition and function of Quantum Rhetoric, already established by Bizzaro, adds to its richness, depth, and possibility.

I attempt to accomplish three tasks in this chapter. First, I wish to provide a brief definition of Quantum Rhetoric and how I intend to use it. From there, I will establish the importance of associating quantum mechanics with fiction through Quantum Rhetoric by accomplishing the following: 1) citing physicists on the subject; 2) showcasing some of the literary theories already exploring quantum mechanics' effect on fiction writing; and 3) exploring the pervasive use of creative writing in other disciplines, especially the sciences. When reviewing these three points, I believe it becomes apparent that physics, quantum mechanics, and other sciences are experimenting with fiction in various ways, but the relationship is not reciprocal. The process of fiction writing is integral to many other disciplines, which I'll illustrate in the pages to come; however, the effect of other disciplines on the fiction writer seems to be less explored, though I believe the effects are there. For example, poetry has been treated as more easily discussed in relation to composition studies, possibly because compositionists like Bizzaro, Bishop, and David Starkey, who worked to shape past and current thought in compositions studies, did so by folding in methods and thought surrounding poetry writing. I view my rhetorical research as an early attempt to make similar strides with fiction writing. By applying Quantum Rhetoric to the practices of creative writing (in this case fiction writing) those in CWS might be able to create new forms of knowledge and define currently undefined phenomena within its practices. What might we learn if we apply Quantum Rhetoric

to writers' writing processes? What might we learn about that area thought to be unteachable in CWS if we view CWS through the lens of Quantum Rhetoric?

After building a foundational need for Quantum Rhetoric in CWS, I explain, in detail, how Quantum Rhetoric might be used in the creation and teaching of fiction. The object of doing so is to provide a third model to the two options I've discussed already. I believe a third model can provide new approaches to how to write and teach creative writing. There are a couple of reasons why I believe a third option is warranted. First, the "teach what's only teachable model" favors the product. The emphasis of students' success is located in their ability to follow a formula. As mentioned, writing within a prescribed formula can stifle the writing process. Formulas tend to be prescriptive and don't allow for much experimentation during the writing process. Quantum Rhetoric makes the process of writing just as important as completing a final product. Second, in the "part of creative writing is not teachable model" parts of the creative writing process are intentionally ignored. It's possible that what is excluded from consideration are those parts of the writing process that are not quantifiable in a final product but that are still quite important to writing creatively. Quantum Rhetoric provides an opportunity for these other writing practices to be observed. Finally, it stands to reason that if Quantum Rhetoric can provide new insights to the process of writing creatively then it can also provide new insights to how creative writing can be taught, for the larger the process is the more that can be considered for teaching. Because I haven't taught creative writing and because Quantum Rhetoric is still being defined (there's not a single article published on Quantum Rhetoric and fiction as is being discussed here) my examples are mostly theoretical, hypothetical, and speculative. However, with my approach to the objectives and benefits of rhetorical research, as outlined in Chapter One, and considering Bizzaro's, Donnelly's, Harper's, and Dawson's declarations that such

theoretical, hypothetical, and speculative research is imperative to the development of CWS (noted in chapters two and three), I feel a chapter like this one could be a significant contribution to the discipline.

What is Quantum Rhetoric?

Quantum Rhetoric, as I define it, is the application of quantum mechanics to the processes of using language. In the case of this research, the use of language being considered is the process of writing and teaching creative writing. The goal behind Quantum Rhetoric is to do with it for CWS what quantum mechanics did for physics. Quantum mechanics was a new theory created to address problems being observed within the paradigm of classical physics, such as the apparent teleportation of light particles through solid objects or the seemingly random release of radiation from black bodies. When these problems were discovered, our entire understanding of existence had to be reconsidered, even the most elementary properties we thought to be facts of life. Similarly, in the prior chapters, I've attempted to note what I find to be problems in CWS, especially the principal distinction between the teachable and unteachable in the lore of creative writing and my assertion that such beliefs might have their origin in the roots of classical rhetoric. Quantum mechanics has shown that while Newtonian physics, Euclidian and non-Euclidian geometries, and Einstein's Theory of Relativity are quite helpful in understanding life as we experience it—life on a large scale—they are mostly defunct at explaining life on the small scale. Interestingly, though, life at the small scale is responsible for life at the large scale, though physicists struggle to understand the connection. Quantum mechanics breaks down and resists the scientific paradigms of our times while also aiding in their evolution. Likewise, to this point I've discussed some of the paradigms I believe to be inherent in the lore of fiction writing. As is the case with Newtonian physics, I don't believe these paradigms should be eliminated. Our

tradition is built on them. They're necessary. However, the current discussion of CWS, as portrayed here, suggests these paradigms are conflicting, or at least at a moment of crisis, with the evolution of the discipline. Though I know teaching and writing occur outside of the paradigms I've discussed (a recent discussion with fiction writer and professor Chauna Craig about some of the fiction writing exercises she uses in her classes attests to this), I believe these paradigms are still deeply rooted in the discussions and handbooks on the subject, which I've attempted to illustrate in Chapter Two, especially. This realization leads me to believe that if the mentioned paradigms are solvent in the discussion and literature on creative writing, they must be recapitulated, to some degree, in the classroom. What this means to me is that we need a new perspective in CWS, one that fosters a renewed understanding of our most basic practices. This understanding, like that of quantum mechanics, is not meant to destroy the paradigms that define what we do as writers and teachers, but rather it is an understanding meant to enrich what we do and help our understanding evolve with our discipline.

In the pages to come, I use theories of quantum mechanics as lenses through which to view the phenomenon of fiction writing. I refer to fiction writing as a phenomenon because a Quantum Rhetorical approach studies the entire process of fiction writing as if it were an event being observed. From quantum mechanics, I borrow the theories of *quantum entanglement*, *the observer effect*, and *Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle* to provide alternative ways to consider character development and what that might offer teachers of fiction writing. An example of how one might approach employing the mentioned principles of quantum mechanics is demonstrated in the syllabus found in Appendix A.

The Scientists

In 1959, scientist and novelist C.P. Snow made an assertion that is still discussed today.²⁶ During the first portion of his Rede Lecture, Snow bemoans the reality that the entirety of “Western society” is “split into two polar groups”: literary intellectuals and scientists (4). This binary troubles Snow because, he states, “By training I was a scientist. By vocation I was a writer. That was all” (1). Because of his experience, Snow was able to permeate both sides of the polarization. His illustrious career is a testament to his success in doing so. However, Snow argues that most writers and scientists aren’t as fortunate; they don’t operate in both modes of creative production. Snow maintains that “this polarization is a sheer loss to us all. It is at the same time practical and intellectual and creative loss” (12). Snow concludes, “It is bizarre how very little of twentieth-century science has been assimilated into twentieth-century art” (17). Snow highlights a problem between the study of science and art, a problem of sharing modes and methods of knowing, a problem still present today.

There have recently been calls to action by both writers and physicists to blend their respective expertise to see what they might learn from each other. One such example is an interview between Princeton professor and theoretical physicist Nima Arkana-Hamed and renowned fiction writer Ian McEwan. McEwan claims that “We overvalue the arts in relation to the sciences” (“Ian”). McEwan believes this gulf between the arts and sciences exists because “That old two-culture matter is still with us” (“Ian”). The first mention of the two-culture matter was Snow’s from half a century earlier, yet, as McEwan distinguishes, it still lingers. McEwan argues that it is still possible to be a “flourishing public intellectual” with an ignorance of the

²⁶ C.P. Snow had a breadth of expertise. He was a physical chemist, novelist, politician, and lecturer at Christ’s College, Cambridge. Snow became especially well known when he stated his disdain for the division between the sciences and humanities, which he believed was ruining education on a global level.

sciences, but that this is changing (“Ian”). McEwan reasons there is a kind of relevancy to the way science is changing the understanding of the world around us, a relevancy that will be recapitulated and integral to the success of present and future art. Interestingly, Arkana-Hamed believes the gulf between the arts and the sciences “is one of language” (“Ian”). Writers speak in traditional language, while scientists communicate with the language of mathematics. Combining the two modes of communication has proven difficult since the advent of quantum mechanics, where phenomena are observed with no words to describe them. Werner Heisenberg notes, “If one wishes to speak about the atomic particles themselves one must either use the mathematical scheme as the only supplement to natural language or one must combine it with a language that makes use of modified logic or of no well-defined logic at all” (*Philosophy* 160). This course of action between scientific understanding and language is inevitable because scientific understanding shapes the ways individuals see the world, and the way the world is perceived affects the language used to describe it (Heisenberg, *Philosophy* 147). Likewise, though, language also affects the way the world is perceived. Heisenberg notes that this relationship has given birth to words like “‘energy,’ ‘electricity,’ [and] ‘entropy’” (*Philosophy* 147). These words, Heisenberg argues, “may be called a natural extension of ordinary language adapted to the added fields of scientific knowledge” (*Philosophy* 147). This ability of language to extend into a field where communication occurs mathematically is why Heisenberg stresses the importance of poets’ roles in helping the world understand and develop a new world view after the advent of quantum mechanics. Heisenberg argues that poets don’t necessarily follow a “logical analysis of language” which sometimes “can make language less suitable for its purpose” (*Philosophy* 144). It’s this more limber use of language and communication that artists and writers use that some scientists believe will help to bridge the two-culture gap.

The need to bridge this gap between science and art is all the more reason to define a new rhetorical approach that integrates principles of quantum mechanics and the arts, an approach like that of Quantum Rhetoric. Doing so might lead to cutting edge discoveries in both fields. The desire to bridge this gap attempts to use writing in the ways Marilyn Cooper, a compositionist, suggested we should all of the way back in 1986, when she wrote “The Ecology of Writing.” Though Cooper discusses the ways writing is used in composition studies, I don’t feel it a stretch to exhume her idea from nearly thirty years ago and apply it to the discussions taking place in CWS right now. Among the many insights Cooper might offer my discussion, what I hope is revealed is that similar discussions and resolutions have already occurred in other areas of writing, and that those discussions were pivotal in the current definition of those disciplines. In her essay, Cooper argues that at that point in time writing was largely viewed as an individualized endeavor, a relationship, challenge, and success or failure between writer and product. Despite the many great discoveries that surfaced from studying the processes of writers, Cooper suggests that viewing writing as an isolationist practice removes it from the many contexts it relates to (183). Cooper reminds us, “Writing is one of the activities by which we locate ourselves in the enmeshed systems that make up the social world. It is not simply a way of thinking but more fundamentally a way of acting” (195). In short, writing, and the ideas integral to its development, are “always continuations, as they arise within and modify particular fields of discourse” (Cooper 188). Cooper’s work, a precursor to Berlin’s hallmark text *Rhetoric and Reality*, aided a discussion that revolutionized the way writing is taught, discussed, and written in college classrooms. Though there are various opinions on the social epistemic paradigm that resulted from such writing, one cannot refute the influence the social epistemic paradigm has had on composition studies. For example, an area of study like eco-composition would be hard to

develop with only the cognitive or expressivist paradigms to pull from. Employing Quantum Rhetoric in the creative writing classroom aids creative writers in situating their identity, process, product, and, perhaps, their entire way of thinking about writing within a context much larger than themselves, their classrooms, and even the paradigms of their particular genres. Cooper believes that viewing writing in an ecological manner forces writers and their writing to be constantly sensitive to the contexts in which writing is produced and received. Being aware of the possible relationships between quantum mechanics, the world, and creative writing is one context or relationship that creative writers and teachers of creative writing have not been overly sensitive to. Quantum Rhetoric is a first attempt at such familiarization.

Physicists like Heisenberg and Wolfgang Pauli discuss, in somewhat abstract methods, the way the languages of the arts and sciences might come together. Samuel Kinch notes, “In *Physics and Philosophy*, Heisenberg elaborates on the relationship between art and science; he does not argue that scientific principles are arbitrarily created, but that art is necessarily produced by the ‘interplay’ between the artist and ‘the spirit of time,’ which he believes is ‘probably as objective as any fact in natural science’” (*Modern* 74). In short, the work of the writer or artist is to interact with a world understood by scientific principles, but in order for those principles to be explained clearly they must be converted to language. Pauli believes, “all of the difficulties of quantum theory” will be found, or at least articulated, where experiment and mathematical formulas meet at a philosophical moment that can only be conducted, explained, and understood with and through language (qtd. in Heisenberg, *Beyond* 209-210). In some cases common language accounts for scientific phenomenon. However, trying to explain the many-worlds theory within quantum mechanics can prove difficult when using common language, but when extending the concepts of the theory to art, a more clearly articulated example can be created.

For example, I was able to better understand the many-worlds theory when I experienced it through the characters of Audrey Niffenegger's *The Time Traveler's Wife* or when I visually experienced it through the films *Another Earth* and *Cloud Atlas*. A very brief definition of the many worlds theory is the belief that all options in any situation actually occur, even though we experience only one. The characters in *The Time Traveler's Wife*, *Another Earth*, and *Cloud Atlas* all experience the alternate lives that exist despite their choosing or remembering only a single event. Reading and watching the mentioned novel and films, coupled with the complicated, written explication of the many-worlds theory, helped me understand and *experience* an interesting line of thought within the field of quantum mechanics, an understanding that proved difficult to apprehend through language alone. In short, art, film, and writing can aid in defining the seemingly unexplainable in quantum mechanics by both using language we understand and by allowing us to experience the lives of men and women, like ourselves, who are subject to these unexplainable phenomena. "Language is," as Heisenberg notes, "a net spread out between people, a net in which our thoughts and knowledge are inextricably enmeshed" (*Beyond* 138). If, as in Niffenegger's case, science can affect writing, then I think it might be time to ask, can science affect the writer or the writing process.

Though brief, this section of the chapter is meant to introduce the reader to important figures in physics, such as Heisenberg and Pauli and to highlight their interests in extending what they do to the arts. The list of physicists consulted here is in no way exhaustive. There are many physicists who attest to the importance of blending the more empirical language of mathematics with the more creative language of the arts. Such physicists include but are not limited to John Polkinghorn, Nick Herbert, Gary Zukav, Fritjof Capra, and others. With that said, there are some physicists, like Steven Weinberg, who are a bit more conservative with how they apply quantum

mechanics to other disciplines and modes of thinking. Regardless, I believe there are enough physicists calling for experimentation between language, arts, and the sciences that creative writers and teachers of creative writing might find fruitful discoveries in the blending of the three. One way to see what might come from blending language, arts, and science is to consider how quantum mechanics has affected fiction writing and the ways experts in literary studies view and discuss that fiction. In short, quantum mechanics has had paramount effects on fiction as a written product as well as how it's studied, interpreted, and taught. I'll add that the fiction I'm discussing transcends the general moniker of science fiction; the fiction I'm alluding to is written with an informed understanding of quantum mechanics, thus the fiction is more specialized and less speculative. Such work is often referred to as *physics fiction* and *quantum fiction*. With specialized fields of literary studies burgeoning as a result of how fiction is being altered by quantum mechanics, I find it wise to at least consider applying elements of quantum mechanics to the writers and the processes used to produce written work. In the following section, I argue that the growth of new literary analyses informed by quantum mechanics merits a further understanding of the possible effects that quantum mechanics might have on how creative writers write and how teachers of creative writing teach. Quantum Rhetoric is the first step in achieving this goal.

Quantum Mechanics and Other Disciplines

One reason why it might be worth exploring the effects of quantum physics on creative writers' processes and how those writers are taught is because of its pervasive application in related disciplines such as composition and literary studies.²⁷ For example, in 1974 Therese

²⁷ Considering composition, literary studies, and creative writing as related disciplines may not sit well with some, I realize. However, in my experience with all three disciplines, and with learning and knowledge making in general, I experience more similarities than differences

Dykeman attempted to show an interesting parallel between rhetoric and the principles of physics. Dykeman argued that the primary concerns of physics, those being “space, matter, time, and motion,” are directly related to the foundational topics of rhetoric, those being “description . . . exposition . . . narration . . . [and] argument” (382). Whether or not one agrees with Dykeman, her research illustrates an attempt by a rhetorician to explore the possible relationships between physics and rhetoric, arguing that “rhetoric is not a vague and arbitrary subject but rather a powerful discipline” (387). Dykeman is making an attempt to extend the definitions and understanding of her discipline with another. Such attempts have hardly been made in CWS.

Literary studies has created, perhaps, the most refined understanding of how quantum physics is shaping a discipline not belonging to the sciences. Sean Kinch notes, “Literary critics have also begun to adapt the intellectual tools of quantum mechanics to the analysis and interpretation of literature; in fact, so many critics are using new physical theories in criticism that we should now assess the utility and value of using quantum mechanics as a critical model for studying fiction” (289). Here, Kinch notes that literary critics are training themselves in quantum mechanics to better understand the subject matter of the literature they’ve been trained to study. With that said, I feel while Kinch and others argue for a critical model of literary study where the chief principles are derived from quantum mechanics, the writers that provide the content analyzed by that model are proceeding without considering the effects of quantum mechanics on what they do. Other types of literary analysis, like that of New Criticism, have been closely aligned not only with interpreting the written product but also with studying the process of writing it. I believe it wise that writers do the same with the effects of quantum

between what some deem separate. Mayer’s *(Re) Writing Craft: Composition, Creative Writing, and the Future of English Studies* is a recent example of where the relationship between the “different” writing disciplines is discussed in length.

mechanics on the whole of the creative writing process. A step in this direction is to develop a new rhetoric which blends the sciences and creative writing in a way that allows practitioners of both to examine what they do in new ways. What makes Quantum Rhetoric unique, I think, is that it isn't an approach to writing that is an outgrowth of literary studies, which can't be said about past theories, like New Criticism. Instead, Quantum Rhetoric is a scientifically informed lens writers can use to look at the fundamental elements of what they do in new ways. If new literary studies based on the principles of quantum mechanics are being created (such as physics fiction), and degrees might be conferred in their name, meaning these studies might promulgate through universities and affect how literature is taught and understood, then the writers writing that literature should consider whether or not it's important to study quantum physics, too, and discover ways it might affect how and what they write and how they teach and assess that writing.

In order to understand just how instrumental quantum mechanics is becoming in the way some literature is studied, I want to highlight a small part of the discussion taking place between key figures whose work, in cases like those of Kathryn Hales, span multiple disciplines. Dennis Bohnenkamp states, "If one accepts that there are some areas of similarity in the theoretical models projected by scientific theories and in created fictional worlds, then perhaps it is not too improbable to suggest that the laws governing one area, the ones most thoroughly codified (in the case of physics), might illuminate the other less systematized field, in this case, literature" (qtd. in Kinch, "Critical" 290). In an attempt to formulate a more systematized understanding of literature where quantum mechanics is inherent, Bohnenkamp coined the genre *Physics Fiction*, which he argues "announces itself with overt references to 'the mythology of relativity and quantum mechanics'" (qtd. in Kinch, "Critical" 291). Kinch bolsters Bohnenkamp's arguments

by suggesting “Literary criticism should follow the lead of modern physics by emphasizing the critic’s role in constructing the rhetorical outcome, which qualifies its truth claims” (“Critical” 292). I think what both Bohnenkamp and Kinch suggest are wise and fruitful endeavors.

However, I hope that such analysis and critique doesn’t cease, as it often seems to when studying writing, with the product. Allowing only the literature to be studied in the most cutting edge ways, while ignoring the process of how the literature might have been created, establishes a paradox akin to the one already inherent in quantum mechanics—the paradox of the observer effect. I won’t attempt to define the observer effect in full here but will discuss it so that the connection I’m making is cogent.

In quantum mechanics, the observer effect is the paradox where nothing can be said to have actually happened unless it can be observed; however, in quantum mechanics, the act of observation alters the event being observed. As a case in point, take Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle. Though Heisenberg wasn’t the first to note that light was a wave made up of particles, he was the first to note that when studying light one cannot study it as both a wave and a particle. If one studies light as a particle, one can only study the nature of that particle but not its movement through space and time. Furthermore, studying the particle itself alters, in some way, the path of that light beam. Likewise, if one studies light as a wave, one can study its movement through space and time but cannot study what happens to it at the particle level as the beam moves through space and time. What this means is that at an atomic level only part of an event can be observed, and that observation always excludes portions of and alters the event itself. In short, we can never really know the truth of what’s happening.

Now let me relate the observer effect and Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle to what I see happening with quantum mechanics and fiction writing. Kinch notes, “Critics such as Susan

Strehle and Kathrine Hayles have used quantum theory as a tool for understanding unconventional modern fiction. According to them, twentieth-century physics and fiction have developed parallel perspectives on reality; indeed, many critics believe that the two fields have become so similar that concepts from physics can help us understand the form and content of modern fiction” (“Critical” 290). Moreover, “Strehle, Hayles, and Bohnenkamp, among others, argue that literary criticism needs to adopt a new terminology to make sense of texts that fall under Bohnenkamp’s rubric of ‘Physics Fiction’” (Kinch, “Critical” 291). Derivations of such thoughts have led to genres like “‘new poetics’” or Strehle’s “‘actualistic fiction [,]’ . . . [which is] based on Heisenberg’s distinction between the actual and the real” (Kinch, “Critical 290-91). Moving forward, let’s pretend for a moment that the entire process of writing a story, from conception to reader-reception, was equivalent to the light wave. At this point in time (as when a physicist studies light), only part of the writing process is being observed in relationship to quantum mechanics, while the rest of the process is being neglected. However, the portion being neglected (as is the case when studying light), could most certainly be affecting the part being studied. For example, Johnathan Lethem’s novel *As She Climbed Across the Table* is considered quantum fiction. However, his novel *Motherless Brooklyn*, for which he won the National Book Critics Circle Award, is something of a detective novel. It might be interesting, even to Lethem himself, to study whether or not his writing practices differed when writing *As She Climbed across the Table* and *Motherless Brooklyn*. If there were changes, no matter how small, it’s plausible they resulted from his working with quantum mechanics. If he or others are able to study the differences in their creative process when working with quantum mechanics, what might they be able to pass on to other writers who might want to write within these established genres of physics and quantum fiction? What might those writers be able to pass on about

character development or plot? If Letham's *As She Climbed across the Table* is studied as quantum fiction while *Motherless Brooklyn* is studied and taught as detective noir, yet the similarities and differences in the process of writing are both ignored, then only part of the entire writing process is being paid attention to, which means only part of the process is being understood and further developed for teaching others.

To conclude my comparison between fiction and light waves, I note that literary critics are like physicists studying a light wave, where the fiction is the phenomenon they're studying. More specifically, when physicists study a light wave, they either study the wave in its entirety or they study it a particle at a time. Likewise, literary critics can study the entirety of a literary movement, say postmodernism, or they can study a particular particle, such as Don Dillilo's novel *White Noise*. Right now, literary critics are reading pieces of fiction, seeing a relationship between them, other pieces of fiction, and quantum mechanics, and they're calling it quantum fiction or physics fiction. In short, their definition is defining one kind of writing being done and the scope of its influence, and they're doing so by reviewing only the product, the story or novel already written. But we know that to understand writing one must study more than the finished product. Despite the shortcomings of some of their research, Linda Flower and John Hayes debunked the idea that writing could be taught and assessed by product alone. Fiction writers, and all they do from conception to reception, are part of the fiction too. In my light wave/fiction analogy, writers and what they do are a part of the light wave. Think of the actions of fiction writers, from conception to completion, being the particles of a piece of fiction, while the readers observe the entire piece of writing from the outside. Both writers and the critics can only look at the entirety of the writing phenomenon from their respective positions. However, unlike a light wave, which cannot yet be observed and studied in its entirety, I believe creative writing can be.

If writers use a lens like Quantum Rhetoric to study what they do and combine that knowledge with what literary critics are discovering when applying their expertise to finished products, a richer understanding of the complete writing phenomenon could transpire.

Finally, I wish to conclude this section on quantum mechanics' role in literary studies as well as the importance of that role in establishing a need for Quantum Rhetoric in CWS with an observation from Kinch, who surmises, "Critics should acknowledge that applying quantum mechanics to fiction is a metaphorical exercise that reveals at least as much about the critics as about the literary texts" ("Critical" 292). It stands to reason, then, if what Kinch says is true, that applying quantum mechanics through the lens of Quantum Rhetoric might reveal as much about the writers and their processes as it does the writing itself.

Creative Writing and Other Disciplines

To this point I've given a brief definition of Quantum Rhetoric and vouched for its potential importance to CWS by citing established physicists and fiction writer's opinions on the subject. From there I moved to arguing for the importance of Quantum Rhetoric to CWS by showing how quantum mechanics has been adopted by both fiction writers and the critics that interpret their work. My final step in assuring the importance of considering quantum mechanics to CWS is to show how the sciences are using what's done in creative writing classrooms to enrich the learning experiences of their students.

Many science teachers use methods of creative writing to help students learn difficult content and to make the teaching and learning experience more rewarding, which I'll discuss shortly. However, the practice is not reciprocated. Literary studies has no qualms with using science to enrich its discipline, and the sciences have no qualms with using creative writing practices to help students learn, yet the same thing is not happening in the creative writing

classroom, and if it is, then the results are not being published enough to be very accessible to people, like me, who might be looking for them. There is some work on the subject, such as Melissa Hendricks' article on scientist and writer David Linden or John Maeda's article from *Scientific American*, which discuss the similarities of scientists, artists, and writing. However, there seems to be little to nothing on how science is or can be used in the creative writing classroom, and that's despite there being articles like the ones mentioned here attesting to the strange if not intriguing relationship between scientists and artists. In this chapter I will show to what effect creative writing practices are being used in some science classrooms. Doing so shows the important work creative writing is doing for scientists and teachers of science. Furthermore, I don't believe that the sciences are the only discipline that can evolve when CWS and the sciences meet. If science teachers can be better teachers by using creative writing in their classrooms then the same could hold true for teachers of creative writing. One way to explore such possibilities is through Quantum Rhetoric.

William Schmidt notes that "In a 1955 speech to the National Academy of Sciences, Richard Feynman said, 'Is no one inspired by our present picture of the universe? This value of science remains unsung by singers: you are reduced to hearing not a song or poem, but an evening lecture about it'" (90). Here, Schmidt is acknowledging Feynman's (a renowned physicist) observation that the wonders of the universe, dispelled through quantum mechanics, are not celebrated through one of our culture's most prized mediums, the arts. Schmidt uses Feynman's observation as reasoning for drastically altering the general physics courses at Meredith College where he teaches. Schmidt notes, "A major goal for the general physics courses at Meredith College is to have students demonstrate a robust conceptual understanding of physics" (90). Schmidt proposes that utilizing poetry in the general physics classes is one way

to make classes more robust. His work suggests that using poetry encourages students' understanding of the complicated material. A number of examples come to mind when considering ways poetry has been recorded helping students to better understand complicated material. An individual example on a small scale is the use of Bizzaro's chapbook "Violence" in a sociology class at Syracuse University. On a much larger scale, Art Young found poetry instrumental in helping students university wide to learn more about their respective disciplines, which he recounts in his essay "Poetry Across the Curriculum: Four Disciplinary Perspectives." Accounts like Bizzaro's and Young's bolster Schmidt's avowal that using poetry in his classes makes those classes more interesting for both teacher and student. Finally, writing poetry in a general physics class, Schmidt argues, helps students understand themselves and their place within the natural world.

In Schmidt's example, the material his students studied was beyond their scope at first. To further develop their knowledge of the subject, students took their elementary understanding of physics and used it as the source for the poetry they wrote. The switching of modes forced students to look at the abstruse material in ways unique to them. Schmidt calls what he teaches "poetry", as does David Hanauer, who discusses similar methods of teaching in his book *Poetry and the Meaning of Life*. However, defining such approaches as poetry could become problematic if those approaches were studied by other poets or literary critics who specialize in poetry. That's not to suggest the exercises Schmidt and Hanauer use are not poetry. They very well may be, but for many experts and writers, the definition of poetry is nebulous. For example, it might be difficult for even Schmidt and Hanauer to explain how, say, the work of William Carlos Williams, Maria Sabina, and African-American toasts can all be generically defined as poetry. It might be more accurate to argue that what Schmidt and Hanauer do in their classes is

to employ the poetic function of language, as defined by Art Young. An example of just what I mean can be found in Bizzaro's and John Baker's "The Poetic and the Personal: Toward a Pedagogy of Social Equity in English Language Learning," where both writers argue for the benefit of considering genre as a way to teach ELL and ESL classes more democratically. Bizzaro and Baker suggest that genres from CWS are already being used to great effect in ELL and ESL classrooms, and they cite Hanauer's work as a case in point. The authors highlight poetry writing as the genre Hanauer uses. It's important to note the authors call the genre *poetry writing* and not just poetry. I believe poetry writing allies more with the poetic function of language than it does with poetry with a capital P. The poetic function of language might explain why teachers like Schmidt and Hanauer have such success with poetry in their non-creative writing classrooms.

Young believes "Teachers can integrate poetic writing assignments with other reading and writing assignments to make a coherent unit on a particular subject" (94). Doing so means "individuals attempt to relate new knowledge to their value system" (Young 78). Similarly, Young also suggests this creative mode of writing allows others to relate themselves to the process of their work, as Schmidt reported years later in his own research. Teachers employ methods of creative writing to establish a new reflective method of understanding in their respective disciplines. It might be a good time for those of us in CWS, myself included, to ask, if our very methods are being used by other disciplines as a way for teachers and students to be more reflective in regards to what they do, then what are the reflective methods we use to help us better understand what we do, how we do it, and how we teach it? In the sciences, science teachers aren't only using science to understand science; they're using the poetic mode and fiction too, which I'll discuss in a moment, but what are poets using to create new

understandings of what they do? Certainly if science doesn't only use physics to help students better understand physics then maybe poets or fiction writers need something more than poetry or fiction to understand all that's involved in what they do. Asking questions like this might aid those in CWS in discovering something new about their practices. "New Knowledge," Young asserts, "always confronts an individual's value system. The knowledge might be *dismissed* as inaccurate or irrelevant . . . *assimilated* and radically alter an individual's value system by challenging and changing its assumptions at the core . . . and be *accommodated* as enriching or refining the individual's value system" [original emphasis] (81). Schmidt bolsters Young by arguing, "Most likely the greatest educational benefit of the poetry is how it changes student perspectives on physics into something that can be personalized and internalized as a window into the world" (92). Because of some of the entrenched traditions I highlighted in chapters two and three, traditions contingent upon value systems, I believe some approaches that allow writers to view what they do in completely new ways, ways that might bring into question the individual value system of the writer, could be useful to the advancement of CWS. If teachers in the sciences aren't afraid to take such risks with methods of creative writing, maybe creative writing shouldn't be afraid of trying such risks with methods of the sciences, methods like that of quantum mechanics.

Because arguing for the use of creative writing in the sciences isn't the scope of this research, I've only included a couple of examples of it being done. However, the practice is common enough. Educators, like Karen Lockney, have been integral in blending creative writing with science, history, and geography, which she details in her essay "Creativity Across the Curriculum: Creative Writing beyond English." Similarly, Ann Osbourn worked with other colleagues at the John Innes Center to form The Science, Art, and Writing (SAW) initiative,

which is a cross curricular writing initiative that bridges the arts and the sciences. SAW is an innovative approach to blending science and art, something more commonly done in the UK than in the US.

Though much of the research I was able to locate discussed the use of poetic writing in the sciences, fiction is being used as well, which I want to discuss with a single example I found quite interesting, John Killingbeck's *Plant Notes*. When teaching field botany and taxonomy, Killingbeck requires undergraduates to memorize hundreds of different kinds of plant species. Years ago, in an attempt to help students remember the vast array of information they were studying, he urged his students to write creatively about their learning process. For example, oftentimes Killingbeck and his students would go to locations to study plant species they discussed in class. He would ask students to talk about the material they studied but to put the material within the scope of a story. These stories would include events that happened before, during, or even after studying the plants. For example, a student whose objective is to remember a kind of lily might start the story with how her morning began at home, the fight she and her roommate had before class, the conversation she had with her friend as the class took a bus ride to the location, the tweet she posted when another student fell in the woods, and then, of course, information on the lily. This written example befits the classification of narrative or creative nonfiction. However, "novellas, poems, [and] song lyrics . . ." were created by students as well (Killingbeck 26). This eclectic mix of creative writing aids students in developing a full context for the material being studied. When tested, Killingbeck's students are not only able to think of the word lily and the definition of it, which they wrote on the back of an index card. In addition, the students can think about the creative pieces they constructed to understand the lily. In this

instance, the thing being studied (the lily) is contextualized in broader, more important, ways, giving it a greater relevance in students' lives.

At first, Killingbeck would take the best stories of the class and publish them in a yearly anthology. However, so many students took to the idea of being represented in the anthology that Killingbeck decided to make the creative writing process central to his classes. Killingbeck notes that one day he heard a student actually say, “‘Forget the highest grade in the class, I made it into *Plant Notes*” (27). Now, every student in Killingbeck's botany classes writes a book about what they learn throughout the semester. Killingbeck's example, again, represents how a science teacher uses the elements of creative writing to help students better understand the difficult nature of the material he teaches. Furthermore, as his work represents, the creative writing element is favored by the students themselves. I find this revelation both fascinating and pleasing. However, it also makes me wonder if those of us in CWS are missing something because we don't have a reflective or informative practice that stems from another discipline. The creative freedoms writers have are sometimes rare affordances in other disciplines, but, as Killingbeck shows, such affordances can truly enhance the learning experience for students. But how do students in CWS, where creative freedom is at the center of the discipline, aid them in reflecting on their learning in unique ways? I don't have all of the answers to this (and there is surely more than one), but I do have one idea I think might be fruitful and that is to look at writing, the process of its creation, and the way that it's taught through a lens informed by quantum mechanics, which I've labeled Quantum Rhetoric. I believe this approach is a good place to start thinking about the process of creative writing in unique ways because quantum mechanics has, for over one-hundred years, shaped the ways people see and understand the world, and that world is depicted in creative writing. No writer writes from anything other than

his or her experience, which has always been a worldly one. One need not know about quantum mechanics to have one's world or writing affected by it. If one is writing on a computer then one is likely interacting with the laws of quantum mechanics because computer technology, fiber optics, and the like are all influenced in varying ways by the principles of quantum mechanics.

To this point in the chapter I have established a rationale for Quantum Rhetoric in CWS. Quantum mechanics has and continues to alter the literary landscape around us. There are specialized areas of literary study that analyze literature and poetry related to quantum mechanics in particular ways. Furthermore, there are writers that establish their art with an awareness of such paradigms. This association would mean, then, that creative writing is affected by quantum mechanics. In addition, teachers in the sciences are borrowing some of the qualities that make creative writing what it is and using those qualities to be better teachers. The research I've conducted suggests that despite the relationship between quantum mechanics and creative writing or creative writing and the sciences, CWS either isn't aware or isn't interested in acknowledging the relationship between the two fields. As my research has illustrated in the prior chapters, there are many in CWS who feel that for the discipline to evolve, new theories must surface. Bridging quantum mechanics and creative writing together through Quantum Rhetoric is a step in creating a theory that might help CWS evolve into new terrain.

I believe there are benefits to associating elements of quantum mechanics to CWS. Doing so can give writers and teachers fresh perspectives on old concepts, which might allow them to write and teach differently. In the remainder of the chapter, I intend to accomplish two tasks. First, I'm going to create a sample syllabus that showcases select elements of quantum mechanics. A section of this chapter will be dedicated to defining an approach to and context of the syllabus. I will explain the goals and objectives of the class and relate how its structure might

be applied within a creative writing curriculum at a four-year university. The sample syllabus can be found in Appendix A. The second objective I intend to accomplish is to illustrate two concepts of quantum mechanics and how they might be used to analyze old paradigms of creative writing in new ways. I will begin by discussing how writers and teachers might think differently about central characters in fiction if they were to look at their existence as bound to the world around them like particles caught in quantum entanglement. The second approach I use applies the notions of the observer effect and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle to the process of writing and revising fiction. Within the scope of the syllabus, the two phenomena discussed will make up a very small part of the overall example, but the two examples will be indicative of the possibilities available to teachers and students if they were to consider employing Quantum Rhetoric in their creative writing classrooms. Finally, to add some physical examples to the theory I'm discussing, I provide some fiction I've written while viewing and thinking about the writing process through the lens of Quantum Rhetoric. This fiction is meant to provide a physical representation of the exercises I discuss. Because I cannot be truly objective while analyzing my own creative writing, I place the stories in the appendix. This allows the stories to be visually accessible if the reader would like to view them as examples but does not position the stories in a way where the cogency of the argument is contingent on them.

Quantum Rhetoric in the Creative Writing Classroom

Now that I've attempted to establish an argument for the need to consider quantum mechanics in the creative writing classroom, I will explain how such a class might be situated in a creative writing program at a university. After that I will discuss how the class might be organized, meaning I will discuss possible primary themes, readings, and approaches. Finally, to

aid my discussion and to provide a full breadth of understanding, I've included a detailed syllabus in Appendix A and a writing sample in Appendix B.

Where Does Quantum Rhetoric Fit in a University Curriculum? One way to think about a quantum rhetorical creative writing classroom within the overall design of a particular creative writing program is to think about the class as a capstone requirement for all creative writing students, such as English 484 at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, where I'm completing my degree. One way I'm envisioning the use of Quantum Rhetoric is as a way for writers to learn about the minutiae of their writing practices and processes. In order for this class to work, I believe students need to be comfortable with writing in their respective genres; therefore, situating the class at the end of students' undergraduate education gives them a multitude of previous classes and writing experiences as a foundation for reflective practice. Moreover, because I envision using Quantum Rhetoric as a rhetorical device writers use to reflect on their processes, it is important that writers have a body of work they can apply the rhetorical lens to. I provide examples of just how students might apply Quantum Rhetoric to past work as a way to learn something new about their own writing processes in the section of this chapter entitled quantum entanglement and fictional characters. Finally, I'd like to offer a brief caveat before continuing my discussion. Throughout this chapter, I discuss one approach to using Quantum Rhetoric in a creative writing classroom. I want to stress that my discussion is only one approach and is by no means meant to be the only or even best approach. It is, however, the first approach of its kind to the best of my knowledge, an approach that discusses how Quantum Rhetoric might be used in a fiction writing class. There is no doubt that everything I propose for a fiction writing class structured around the framework of Quantum Rhetoric can be replicated in any creative writing or composition classes. For the sake of this research, though, I do discuss only how

Quantum Rhetoric might be employed as a rhetorical lens that students can apply to their fiction writing experiences (both process and product) in an attempt to learn something new about how they write. This class shall be called Quantum Process—Fiction.

What Does the Class Look Like? Now that the class itself has been situated within a curriculum, I want to narrow the discussion just a bit and begin talking about the arrangement of the class itself. Here is a quick overview of the class construction, which I will then elaborate on accordingly. The class is divided into two phases: the first phase is reading and the second phase is left to the student to either choose between writing a new piece or revising a past one.

First, I provide an overview of how the reading focus of the class is constructed. The primary goal of the class I've created is reflective practice.²⁸ The course I'm envisioning acts more as what Schön would define as a reflective practicum than a course where I teach creative writing to students. During the reading phase of the class, reflection occurs within the confines of important Aristotelian themes of fiction writing, including character and plot. There are a number of traditional reading assignments associated with each element. By traditional I mean that these readings have been anthologized several times over as foundational texts in understanding the theory of fiction writing. Because of their pervasive publication, I believe these reading assignments are integral to understanding the current definitions of the terms. For example, as part of the traditional readings found within the category of character, students read

²⁸ Reflective practice is a pervasive term spanning an array of disciplines. There are several books written on the subject of reflective practice, meaning thorough coverage of the topic in this dissertation would not only require several pages but also be unnecessary since the objective of this chapter is to display how quantum mechanics might be put to use in a creative writing classroom and not how reflective practice might be used with Quantum Rhetoric. However, if you wish to learn more about reflective practice, one might start with Dewey's *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process*, Argyris's and Schön's *Organization Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective*, and Donald Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*.

Forster's "Flat and Round Characters." After the traditional readings are completed, a reading assignment is pulled from the field of quantum mechanics. For example, after students read the traditional readings over how characters are defined and created in fiction, they will read excerpted work discussing quantum entanglement.²⁹ However, because reflection is the crux of the class, the reflective process does not occur only at the end of each theme. Students write in journals daily. At the end of each themed section, that daily journaling becomes a record of students' thoughts and ideas, a record they can reference when moving to the second focus of the class, that being writing or revision. A more developed explication of phase one is explained in the section of this chapter entitled Phase One.

After students develop an understanding of the traditional ways of thinking about the major themes of fiction writing, and after they have read, discussed, and reflected on some possible relationships of quantum mechanics to those traditional ways of thinking about fiction, they advance to the next phase of the class—reflection through writing or revising. A brief overview of what phase two looks like is that students take what they've learned throughout the semester and either write a whole new piece of fiction, accompanied by a detailed reflection of how quantum mechanics affected their writing process and/or product, or they radically or critically revise something they've already written. The details of phase two are explained in the section of this chapter entitled Phase Two.

Phase One: Character and Plot. Phase one of the course is divided into two themes: character and plot. In this example, I've organized the class around what I believe to be the most commonly discussed elements of craft in the handbooks and writer self-reports that I researched.

²⁹ In the section of this chapter entitled quantum entanglement and characters, I discuss one way teachers and students might begin analyzing the possible relationships between quantum entanglement and traditional methods of producing characters in fiction. I only wish to provide a brief outline of the class layout at this time.

However, there is no reason why someone else couldn't explore these elements more specifically by covering tenets of conflict, setting, or dialogue. Because this research is a starting point, I begin broadly with character and plot. Theme one, character, consists of four readings. Three readings are part of the traditional canon of fiction theory, while the fourth reading is one traditional concept from quantum mechanics. The first theme opens with Aristotle's *Poetics*, with a primary focus on chapters ten, eleven, and thirteen. As I've explained in great detail in Chapter Two, Aristotle may have played an integral role in the understanding of the relationship between characters and plot as defined in fiction. Aristotle was the first to divide plot into a higher and lower order, where the higher order plot was deemed so if it contained a change and recognition expressed through the circumstance or actions of characters. In Aristotle's arrangement, character is secondary to plot. This commonly accepted notion is one students should be exposed to so that they can negotiate their opinions on the subject. Next, after reading the three chapters in *Poetics*, students are assigned a reflective writing exercise where they are asked to write and record their thoughts about what Aristotle claims one side of an index card. This exercise can be either guided or a free write. Finally, one or more classes are used to discuss student's observations.

The second text in the first theme is Forster's "Flat and Round Characters." In Chapter Two, I argue that Forster's distinction between flat and round characters might have its roots in the Aristotle's differentiation between the simple and complex plotline. Placing Forster and Aristotle side by side not only informs students of two critical perspectives of character in fiction that they should probably be aware of before exiting with a degree in creative writing, but also putting both thinkers side by side allows for students to reflect on 1) how they see the texts relating to each other, 2) how fiction is written in their own reading experiences, and 3) ways the

students themselves write their own fiction. After reading Forster's essay, journaling on it, and spending at least one class discussing student reflections, the class will move to the next reading assignment.

The third traditional reading assignment in the first theme is Woolf's "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown." The reason for assigning Woolf's essay after the others is because it is an early attempt of a writer discussing characters as independent from plot. In fact, some of what Woolf avers advocates that stories are about characters and not about either plots or the ideas writers try to convey. Woolf's thought marks a momentous shift in the mode of character generation which began en masse with the modernist writers. After reading Woolf's essay and doing reflective journaling, at least one class is spent discussing the students' observations. When I first read these essays and thought about them in unison, I was able to make some unique observations about how I generate characters in my fiction and about how I learned to do so. Furthermore, I began thinking about alternative ways I might generate characters in my own work. In short, reading this series of essays led me to new insights about myself as a writer. I want to create that same kind of opportunity for students. Of course, there's no way of knowing for certain it will happen, but I imagine those three texts will generate interesting discussion at the least. After reflective journaling and at least one class discussing Woolf's reading, the class moves to the fourth and final reading.

The fourth reading in the first theme is the reading that integrates quantum mechanics into the discussion. By reading the selected essays, students learn the most pervasive ways of distinguishing character in fiction, which are that characters are either subject to the plot or that characters are free of the plot and are the center of the story, sometimes generating the entire story itself. I provide a detailed analysis of this perspective in the section of this chapter entitled

Quantum Entanglement and Fictional Characters. For now it is only important to mention that this binary within how characters are generated is common within the lore of creative writing. However, there is a similarity between the binaries, and that similarity is that regardless of which approach one subscribes to, one's focus is on the individual character. In one instance the focus is on how plot affects character, and in the other instance the focus is on how character affects plot. Either way, the character's importance is exhibited through his or her relationship with the story.

The fourth reading, which can be any combination of work that aids students in understanding quantum entanglement, brings a new possibility into the picture. I provide a detailed explanation as to how integrating quantum entanglement into the traditional discussion on character development in fiction writing might help students further develop their writing practices and processes in the section of this chapter entitled Quantum Entanglement and Fictional Characters. For now, I would just like to note that an understanding of quantum entanglement can change the ways students understand the relationships of their characters to the fictional worlds they inhabit. As a way to get students familiar with quantum entanglement I will have them watch two informative videos on the subject: "Quantum Entanglement: The Weirdness of Quantum Mechanics," distributed through *The Science Channel*, and "The Illusion of Distance and Free Particles: Quantum Entanglement," distributed through *PBS*. As usual, the students write reflectively about their experiences watching the films through the journal writing assignments. Then, at least one class period is spent discussing students' observations.

Because I've never taught this material in a live setting, I realize I can't be certain of the difficulty students might have integrating quantum entanglement into their understanding of writing fiction; therefore, though it's not represented in the syllabus I've presented in Appendix

A, I've created an addition that might be included in the structure of the course if it appears students are struggling with relating quantum entanglement to writing fiction. If students appear to be struggling with the material, instead of proceeding in the manner the syllabus suggests, one might at this point in phase one provide students with fictional work already incorporating quantum entanglement. There are a number of books that can be chosen. For example, some of the more recognized novels are Audrey Niffenegger's *The Time Traveler's Wife*, Jean-Philippe Toussaint's *Running Away*, or Hannu Rajaniemi's *The Quantum Thief*, and Paul Asters' *Moon Palace*. At this point in phase one, I would assign the novel over the course of a week, unless the novel were longer, like Niffenegger's. Then a couple of weeks might be necessary. During the week or more of reading, students write a reflective journal entry for each day of class. These reflections can be open or guided, though it might be wise to encourage students to think about how they see quantum entanglement functioning in the novels they're reading and what their observations might suggest about their own work or processes. Finally, after a week or more of discussing students' thoughts on quantum entanglement's relationship to fiction writing, the class moves to the second theme in phase one, the theme of plot in fiction writing. Whether or not one prefers to follow the approach outlined in the syllabus in Appendix A or to integrate the fictional work, the second theme proceeds in the same way as the first theme. There is a handful of traditional readings on plot (as specified in the syllabus in Appendix A) followed by a traditional concept or theory from quantum mechanics. After the themes of character and plot have been covered, the class moves to phase two, the phase on either writing or critically/radically revising their work. I would now like to move from the overview of phase one and provide an overview of phase two: writing and critical-creative/radical revision.

Phase Two: Writing, Critical-Creative Rewriting, and Radical Revision. Phase two has three themes: writing, critical-creative rewriting, and radical revision. However, unlike phase two, only two themes, critical-creative rewriting and radical revision, have assigned readings. The reason for this is because, as stated before, the goal of this course is reflective practice. It's possible that students will have never heard of either critical-creative rewriting or radical revision; therefore, reading assignments, writing assignments, and discussion take place that is meant to familiarize students with those concepts. Moreover, because the class is a senior capstone class, it is assumed that students already have ample experience writing within their genres. That is not to say that those students have nothing more to learn about writing. I'm only suggesting that the praxis of applying unfamiliar revising or rewriting processes to students' already familiar writing practices is the emphasis in phase II, meaning there is no reading, discussion, or writing on the practice of writing itself. But because writing a whole new piece of work is a possible final writing project for the course, I feel that mentioning writing as one element of phase II (as opposed to making it just about revision and rewriting) is important as well. I will now provide a brief overview of critical-creative rewriting and radical revision and how they are used in the classroom.

The first piece of writing students read is Rob Pope's essay "Critical-Creative Rewriting." However, because critical-creative rewriting is not commonplace in the creative writing pedagogies of the United States, I think it necessary to define, briefly, what critical creative rewriting is and why I've chosen it for Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction.

At the start of his essay, Pope asks, "Why *critical-creative*" [original emphasis] (130). Pope argues:

The answer is simple: because in education, especially self-conscious “higher education,” evidence of critical understanding is as important as a demonstration of creative capacity. Whatever you may do with writing “outside the academy,” within it you have to *show that you know* what you’re doing, or at least make some informed and plausible gestures. It’s like doing maths: you have to show the workings not just the results. In short, you have to be *critical* as well as *creative*. Of course, all mature courses in Creative Writing require some evidence of “process,” too. But unless this is supported by a work-log and a full record of research and reading as well as reflection (as in a comprehensive portfolio), the critical element is often perfunctory: a dutiful bolt-on attached after the event. [original emphasis] (130)

Here, Pope suggests that understanding how one creates work is just as important as the work itself. In order for students to begin developing a working knowledge of their processes, Pope encourages students to start with their own work. Pope claims that “With critical-creative rewriting the emphasis is different [from the traditional approaches to teaching creative writing] from the start. Research into and comparison with the text you are rewriting (what I call the ‘base text’) are foundational and integral—not optional or secondary—elements of the process” (131). Pope’s endorsement of critical reflection through rewriting is not only the crux of phase two, but it is also the goal of the class.

Pope is careful to use the phrase “base text” to discuss the body of work students consider when critically rewriting. The phrase base texts suggests that students’ work is more than a rough draft or completed manuscript. Instead, it situates student work, even finished work, as the foundation for something new, something different. Pope’s approach encourages students to

view their fiction as not only a product either adhering or not adhering to established genre conventions but also as a generative foundation (base) they can use to learn more about their processes. Approaching their work as a base for something else affords students the opportunity to partake in what Pope calls textual intervention, which is “the more or less deliberate challenging and changing of a text so as to put it off balance: to put it in a fresh direction or develop it in an alternative dimension—to de- and re-center, de- and re-construct it” (132). Employing quantum rhetoric in the creative writing class room provides multiple approaches to aiding students in critical-creative rewriting and textual intervention. I demonstrate what textual intervention might look like in the classroom in the section of this chapter entitled Quantum Entanglement and Fictional Characters. Applying quantum entanglement to a body of already completed work might allow for an array of textual interventions from students in a classroom. A prime example of what might happen to young writers if they approach their already completed writing in new ways is explained in Craig Nova’s explanation of how and why he radically revises his work. Citing the work of F. R. Leavis and Robert Graves, Nova argues that writing is about discovery. He concludes his article by saying, “It is all a mystery . . . [,] but yet I think a book is waiting there, in the darkness, another *Gatsby*, and all it needs is to be written down. The question is, how to find it?” (Fassler). Nova finds his way through the darkness with radical revision and experimentation to already-completed prose. Finally, Pope’s perspective of already-completed student work as a foundation for further growth is at the heart of what the class Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction is all about.

Now that I’ve explained why Pope’s “Critical-Creative Rewriting” is a part of the course, I will briefly explain how it is situated in the class. Just like the readings in phase one, students are assigned Pope’s essay at the end of class and are expected to have it read by the start of the

following class. Moreover, in addition to completing the reading assignment, students are asked to complete a journal writing assignment discussing the reading as well. Again, as is the case in phase one, the journal writing assignments can be a guided or free writing activity. After the reading and journal writing assignments are assigned, the following class is spent discussing the reading and students' thoughts. After discussing Pope's reading and the students' thoughts, we move to the next reading, Bishop's essay "Contracts, Radical Revision, Portfolios, and the Risks of Writing."

In her essay, Bishop establishes a precedent for risk-free experimentation in the writing classroom. As one of her key methods of experimentation, Bishop employs an approach to teaching writing that she calls radical revision. To radically revise, Bishop, with the aid of her students, devised a series of approaches available to radically alter or change preexisting pieces of writing. Some examples she discusses have students break "boundaries of textual space, language play . . . interweave texts, use other media, create bumper stickers, or compose collaboratively" ("Contracts"). Bishop believes that writing a radical revision paper can "teach a great deal of what can be taught about technical elements of style" ("Contracts"). Bishop suggests that making revision fundamental to the class structure (especially one like Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction, where reflection is the primary emphasis) provides the opportunity to transfer "what one has learned as an expert writer by allowing students to gain control over their own, evolving texts" ("Contracts"). Bishop's argument suggests that texts, even finished ones, are alive and always capable of evolving, a belief that blends nicely with a class geared towards aiding students to *evolve* their writing in such a way that it teaches them something about their own writing processes. Finally, as with the prior instances, Bishop's work is assigned one class

and expected to be completed with an accompanying journal writing assignment the following. At that time the class will discuss each other's observations.

To summarize, I envision Quantum Rhetoric could be used in the writing classroom in myriad ways. The design that I've noted here is one meant for the fiction class Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction. This class is meant to be a senior capstone class where students employ principles of quantum mechanics to their oeuvre in an attempt to learn something new about how they write. The sample class depicted here is divided into two phases, where the first phase is arranged so that students ruminate on how quantum rhetoric might be blended with some traditional thoughts concerning fiction and plot. The second phase fosters an understanding of ways students might begin to envision reworking their material by introducing them to the methods of critical-creative rewriting and radical revision.

Moving forward, the following section is a more detailed analysis of the specific contributions Quantum Rhetoric offers some of the more traditional approaches to teaching and writing fiction. I start by discussing Quantum Rhetoric very specifically by discussing only how quantum entanglement might affect some paradigms of the creative writing classroom. First, I discuss what opportunities quantum entanglement offers some of the more accepted paradigms of character generation. From there I apply the discussion to my own writing to show how using quantum entanglement affected my own processes of creating characters in fiction. Then, I discuss what quantum entanglement offers CWS by couching it within the major creative writing pedagogies as defined by Michele Cross. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a description of how one might assess and grade writing done in the Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction classroom.

Quantum Entanglement and Fictional Characters. Applying quantum mechanics to some of the popular ways character generation is discussed in fiction writing is one way to integrate

Quantum Rhetoric into the process and teaching of creative writing. Walter Lewin, astrophysicist at MIT, avers that quantum entanglement is the “most absurd” theory in quantum mechanics (qtd. in Nova). In short, nobody really knows how it works, but it does, at least at this point in time. Though I don’t want to make defining quantum entanglement my goal in this section, a fundamental understanding of how it works might aid writers and teachers of writing to conceptualize a different approach to how fictional characters are generated. A basic explanation of quantum entanglement is that when two or more particles interact, their wave functions become entangled to the degree that when the properties of one particle are disturbed it affects the properties of the other particle, regardless of space or time.³⁰ For example, let’s say there are two people and they take two particles, force them into contact, and then place those particles in separate boxes. Then, person one takes box one to another room, while person two remains stationary with box two. When person one opens box one and observes or alters the particle inside, person two will immediately notice that the particle in box two is also affected. This effect is not hindered by space or time. Most shocking, perhaps, is that the change from one particle to the next happens faster than the speed of light, which is our fastest means of measurement in the larger world where we live our day-to-day lives. Similar experiments have been conducted where particles were hundreds of miles apart. When one particle was disturbed the other was immediately affected, despite there being no conceivable connection between the two particles except that they had made contact once before.

What if we viewed characters in our stories as particles? Surely, there are many ways one can think about how to develop characters in fiction writing. With that said, there are two

³⁰ For an easy-to-understand illustration of quantum entanglement, watch The Science Channel’s “Quantum Entanglement-The Weirdness of Quantum Mechanics,” found on YouTube. For a more thorough but complex explanation, watch Stanford University’s “Lecture 1, Quantum Entanglements, Part 1,” also located on YouTube.

popular ways writers discuss developing characters. One of those ways is to develop characters with a specific attention to detail (knowing everything about them) or by adhering to a formula like the one discussed in Chapter Two. Conversely, another accepted way of constructing characters in fiction writing is actually an anti-construction. Instead of filling characters out by plotting or with a formula, the writer lets characters develop themselves through the course of writing. Many established writers, some of them teachers, have spoken at length regarding these two modes of character production. I cite some of them directly in Chapter Two, so I'll refrain from doing so here.

Designing a fictional formula for character generation is a norm in fiction writing. Because I covered thoroughly the importance and effect of formula on fictional characters in Chapter Two, I only wish to revisit the discussion at the moment. I argue that most teachers agree that when it comes to creative writing, craft can be taught. One of the most prominently recognized elements of craft in fiction writing is plot. Our current understanding of plot as it tends to be described in most textbooks originated with Aristotle's *Poetics*. In the Aristotelian version of plot, characters come secondary to events. In short, plot happens to characters. I believe this tradition made its way through history and affected the writings of novelist and playwright Gustav Freytag, whose plot triangle is, perhaps, the most pervasive and easily accessible model of plot available to writers and teachers. I also feel by what I discovered through my research that Aristotle affected the tradition of Edgar Allan Poe and his notion of unity of effect, James Joyce's epiphany, and Forster's notion of flat and round characters. Personally, I find it difficult for any of these theories to exist in their current form without the influence of Aristotle. When combined, these writers, and others like them, prescribe a formula for not only writing a story or novel but also for generating characters. For example, in this

paradigm there are two kinds of characters, flat and round. The two kinds of character are determined by whether or not they have a life altering change or realization (which I define in Chapter Two as an “epiphany” in Joycean terms and a “reversal of recognition” in Aristotelian terms). This change or realization happens at the plot’s climax. Aristotle assures that in order for a plot to be strong, the central character must have a reversal of recognition or change at the point of conflict within the plot. If the character makes that change or has that recognition then Forster would call that character round and if not then flat. In this paradigm, plot is the most important element of the story, and the characters are important only in their relationship to the planned and plotted story line. This paradigm has been represented in numerous works, including that of William Foster-Harris, who believes that the only time character appears separate from plot is when readers impress something on the character they’re reading about. However, the true situation of the character in a book is one contingent on plot. In short, characters are only autonomous when the reader imagines it so (Foster-Harris 54). What Foster-Harris means here is that the unique connection a reader makes with characters, which moves beyond the parameters of the story, is reader-induced and not a natural quality of the characters themselves. This example is one popular way of viewing character generation in fiction writing. Moreover, this example fits into the craft category of creative writing and is deemed teachable.

Another popular way of viewing the generation of characters in fiction writing is by letting them generate themselves. Because I haven’t discussed this aspect of character development previously, I want to go into a bit more detail about what I mean. Woolf was an early advocate of character sovereignty and was the first to differentiate between “real” characters and “lifelike” characters (27). Woolf suggests that real characters, who are oftentimes the device through which readers see the many subjects of human experience, are memorable,

powerful, and important to literature (27). However, the purpose of real characters is to display the point of the novel; they are like a projector projecting slides onto a screen. Though the slides may change, the projector's role is always the same. Lifelike characters, on the other hand, birth the text itself. Woolf argues that when books are written with real characters at their core, those books are constructed as a device to explain some part of the outside world, and the real character is the medium through which that description occurs. Conversely, lifelike characters are the story. They are the sole concern of all of the writing in which they find themselves. Even now, in order to discuss Woolf's claims, I must use a far more liberating language. My language suggests lifelike characters are free, mobile, and centric to existence. I have to talk about them as if they're alive, which is exactly what Woolf wants others to understand. She wants writers to begin seeing characters as a reason for writing instead of seeing characters as a device to explain how much a family makes or how oppressing an arranged marriage can be. Woolf argues many books have been written about topics like arranged marriages; therefore, those books were more about society or culture and less about people or characters. She asserts that this lifelike character needs to be freed. She calls this character Mrs. Brown.³¹ Woolf avers that writers must "come down off their plinths and pedestals and describe beautifully if possible, truthfully at any rate, our Mrs. Brown . . . [, for] the things she says and the things she does and her eyes and her nose and her speech and her silence have an overwhelming fascination, for she is, of course, the spirit we live by, life itself" (33). Here, Woolf propounds that characters are the point of life itself, and that life itself appears to be what fiction can offer a reader if that fiction has lifelike characters.

³¹ One could easily argue, I think, that Woolf's essay, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," is a pointed piece of feminist writing, which I'm excluding from this particular discussion, though I think it's important to know.

Woolf's sentiments were expressed by other modernist writers as well. For example, William Faulkner states, "With me there is always a point in the book where the characters themselves rise up and take charge and finish the job" (qtd. in Stein). Like Woolf, Faulkner suggests fictional characters take on a life of their own. I've experienced the same many times when writing fiction. I've had characters that were never thought of originally work their way into my stories. Then those stories became about these new characters and not the characters I thought the stories were about at the start. What makes such events interesting is that I don't know these new characters or how they might affect the story. I learn as we go along.

Joyce Carol Oates shares a similar experience in her interview with Robert Phillips. When asked who she envisions as an audience when she writes, Oates claims that audience isn't an important concern because "In general writing writes itself—I mean a character determines his or her 'voice' and I must follow along" (Phillips 76). Writer Kit Reed makes a similar assertion when she claims, "Some writers like to stand outside a story and make decisions: I'll put in one of these and two of these and a couple of those. I do not believe this is the way the best fiction makes itself. As a writer, I need to discover my fiction from the inside, moving inside my character for as long as the story is happening, letting them move out to create the story" (23). In short, Reed asserts that the outside approach isn't what she believes best for fiction to *write itself*. Again, it's important to note here that Reed discusses the best way for fiction to write itself and not the best way fiction is written. To writers like Woolf, Oates, and Reed, writing is something that grows out of characters and sometimes, maybe even oftentimes, on its own. Though not exhaustive, I believe this discussion of the prominent types of characters is sufficient. I believe quantum mechanics, specifically quantum entanglement, provides a third option for character development.

Thinking about characters as quantum-entangled particles provides an interesting way of viewing the roles of characters in fiction. In the author-governed version of character generation, characters are devices used to authors' ends. In the character-governed version, characters develop to their own ends. However, in either scenario central characters are developed with themselves as the focus. In the first scenario the writers want to know how central characters can function for themselves, and in the second scenario authors want to know how central characters come to life on their own terms. Both scenarios are focused on primary characters, excluding other possibilities. But in the quantum world, and, I would argue, in yours and mine, nothing develops free of influence; however, in the way I interpret the two character models explained here, the current way of bringing primary characters into fiction is focused solely on those primary characters. In the first model, the concern is, "How can I get this character to accomplish X?" In the second model the concern is, "Who is this character and what is this story about?"

Aside from both models being focused primarily on a single character, another concern I have is that both models can be difficult to write within. For example, I find it nearly impossible to write fiction in the Aristotelian model, though I can use it as an editing device. For me, the Aristotelian model strips the organic process from my writing. I think more about plot points than I do about generating characters within a world. This discomfort extends to both short and long fiction. In fact, it wasn't until I stopped focusing on the formula discussed in Chapter Two that I published my first short story. With that said, the story does follow large parts of the formula, but the story was written freely and then edited with some Aristotelian principles in mind. Perhaps the most interesting point to my experience is that I can recount it for you. I can tell you what worked for me and what didn't. I can tell you what I had to do within the confines of the current paradigm to grow as a writer myself. This is the kind of reflection I wish I had

been taught earlier. This ability to reflect on writing process is the kind of opportunity I want to create for creative writing students.

As stifling as the first model is for me when trying to write fiction, I found the second model equally impossible at times. For example, when writing short fiction, I find myself writing more comfortably when letting characters make themselves and the worlds they inhabit, in short, following the second model. However, I found it nearly impossible to write an 84,000 word novel that way. In addition to the completed novel, I have failed to finish two other novels, one nearing 60,000 words. I wasn't able to finish these books because the characters stopped making the story. At first, I thought it was because the stories were not plotted enough, so I re-plotted and tried again. The storyline became hackneyed and not worth writing let alone reading. The characters weren't giving me the world, and they weren't interested in the one I created for them. It wasn't until my third attempt that I was able to finish a full manuscript. A large part of the remedy occurred because I began viewing my characters more like entangled particles than individual people. I learned that focusing on individual characters, while making them unique and significant, also made their worlds very small. With the concept of the *quantum entangled characters* I can, probably, go back to the 60,000 word manuscript and complete it.

I believe writers can use the notions of quantum entanglement to write and revise the relationships between characters in their work. Doing so not only changes the characters but also sometimes greatly affects the progression of the story itself. To this point I have used quantum entanglement to both create work from scratch and to revise work already completed. I now wish to discuss how I've created fiction with quantum entanglement in mind.

Following the long tradition of writer self-reports, commonly used when discussing the process of creative writing, the following section of this research is my account of how I used

Quantum Rhetoric in my own writing. The story I discuss here was a result of my research in quantum entanglement and was written with the sole purpose of experimenting with my own theories for this dissertation. Moreover, my experience is not meant to be an exemplar for others; rather it is meant to provide an example of how one *might* envision employing quantum entanglement in their own writing. In short, this reflection is an example of what can come from the reflective practice done in a class like Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction. What I want to present by discussing my work is an explanation of my process, especially of how the thoughts of quantum entanglement motivated me to write differently than I had to that point. The important experience I have to share about employing a Quantum Rhetorical lens in order to see characters as quantum entangled isn't that the writing is somehow unlike anything that has ever been written, but rather that doing so allowed *me* to write fiction like *I* had never written it before. Though I have written a fair amount of fiction using both the author-generated and character-generated models, and have had success with both (and still do), this third option challenged me in new ways, bringing my writing into a state I hadn't experienced. In short, I learned a little more about myself, my writing, and my characters.

Quantum Entanglement and the Process of Writing Fiction. “Ancillary Things” was my first attempt to write a piece of short fiction where the characters were written as quantum entangled. What this meant for me is that I actually created a central character not by thinking about him/her individually but by thinking about other characters and how their actions might create the identity of someone else. I began “Ancillary Things” with more characters but learned quickly that trying to use one character to create another was difficult. All I knew about the start of the story is that there would be a dying mother (Gerty). I could see her in the dark corner of an old home. If I had approached this story in my traditional way, I would have started with the

dying mother. The story would've been about her, perhaps her past and how she ended up there, why she was dying, seemingly alone, in a dark corner of an old home. Instead, I asked myself, what kinds of people, situations, or circumstances might she create being a dying mother in a dark corner? That's when the central character (who remains unnamed in the story because he was made by others and not by himself) came to life.

The first lesson I learned while trying to write a story employing Quantum Rhetoric through quantum entanglement was that it was difficult. It was uncomfortable. Typically when I write, I depict the world and experiences through the characters, shifting how I see, talk, and think about things as I move from one character to the other. But in this scenario I was forced to consider how one character's worldview and actions might shape the world view and actions of others. This consideration led to my second lesson, which was how to make a central character out of everybody else but the central character. I believe if one were to read the story and then be asked who the main character is, most would choose the husband. The story is told in his voice. It is his opinion the reader gets. He has most of the action in the story. The reader sees the world according to him. But the truth is, his character was what was left after I considered the other characters. It was only after Gerty determined she had a child, that it was a daughter, and that Gerty didn't want her to marry, that Madge's character (Gerty's daughter) came into view. I needed to know what kind of woman Madge would be if subjected to a woman like Gerty all of her life. How might she act? How might she feel about the world? After Madge developed herself and it became clear that she would abide by her mother's wishes, only then did the husband come into view. He was what was left after the other two characters were created. The creation of the husband's character occurred outside of the two-part model dominant in fiction writing. One could argue most or all of the plot was created before he was, which is in stark

contrast to the first model, which supports that plot happens to characters. Similarly, the plot didn't come from him being created, which is an alternative to the second model, which supports the notion that the entirety of the story is created out of the character itself. What this means is that a story that started out as an image of an old woman dying in a dark corner of a room became a story about how the way a deceased mother instilled in her daughter a perspective of marriage that dashed any hope of the unnamed husband finding solace in marriage, a solace he clearly wants and probably even needs.

This brief discussion of the story "Ancillary Things" is an explanation of how I consciously attempted to write a short story with the notions of quantum entanglement in mind. In short, it is an account of my attempt at using Quantum Rhetoric in my own writing. This example is meant to either aid someone else wishing to experiment with Quantum Rhetoric in their own writing or to discuss how Quantum Rhetoric might be employed when writing a short story. My discussion of how I used Quantum Rhetoric in writing "Ancillary Things" is one example of how Quantum Rhetoric can affect the process of writing fiction. Now I will discuss ways quantum entanglement might enhance the teaching of creative writing.

Quantum Entanglement and Teaching Fiction. As I stated earlier, because I have not yet had the privilege to teach creative writing myself, my discussion on how to employ Quantum Rhetoric in the creative writing classroom is missing the very important element of personal experience. Though I haven't had the opportunity to experiment with how Quantum Rhetoric works in creative writing classrooms, I can couch my thoughts, research, and knowledge within the preexisting traditions of teaching creative writing that I *have* participated in and argue how Quantum Rhetoric might be situated within those traditions.

Michelle Cross highlights four popular pedagogies commonly used in university creative writing classrooms. Though these four approaches to teaching, thinking, and learning about creative writing are not the only ones available, if what she says is true, they are commonplace. I would like to situate Quantum Rhetoric within the framework of these common pedagogies to show what affordances such a consideration might proffer writers and teachers of writing. The first pedagogy Cross discusses is literary pedagogy. Literary pedagogy “focuses on schooling students in what are seen as the basic elements of the ‘craft’ of literature” (68). Cross claims literary pedagogy is often broken into genres with their own specialized criteria, such as fiction and poetry. Cross argues, “In fiction, the canonical elements of study usually consist of plot, character, setting, conflict, dialogue, point-of-view, and occasionally the more vague and esoteric categories of ‘voice’ and ‘theme’” (68). In Chapter Two of this dissertation, I provide a detailed analysis of plot and where I believe some of its origins have come from. Though I’ve only taken two fiction writing courses, and both were as an undergraduate, I can say both classes were taught within Cross’s definition of literary pedagogy. Much of what was taught in those classes, whether or not that teaching came from the professor or the students, centered on writers’ command of principles like making certain there was a beginning, middle, and end to a short story; making certain that there was a central character that had a recognition or change; and making sure the plot contained a rising action, climax, and dénouement.

Literary Pedagogy

As I’ve noted more than once, I find literary pedagogy fruitful in some ways, especially editing, while finding it entirely stifling as a generative model. The primary reason I find literary pedagogy problematic to generating creative writing is because it is too heavily product-focused. The approach treats a piece of fiction as if it were a set of puzzle pieces that if placed in the

proper ways will always make a successful story. Now, there is some truth to the notion that in many cases a story needs to feel whole or complete. This understanding is Unity of Effect, which I discuss in Chapter Two and attribute to Aristotle but claim was not popularized until Poe wrote about it in his benchmark essay “Philosophy of Composition.” But even if this notion were correct, that these tenets of fiction writing must be present and executed in a particular way for a piece of fiction to be successful, the approach is still limited to only the product. It stands to reason that when teaching creative writing not all classes can be set in the literary pedagogy model because the piece of fiction written only exhibits a very small part of the entire writing process, a process that should be the focus of at least some creative writing classrooms. Harper speaks to this paradox by noting, “The paradox of focusing on end results when creative writers spent (and spend) the majority of their time on the practice itself and very little of their time on the finality of the practice weighted attention toward the smaller part of their lives and made the larger part of their lives invisible to almost everyone but themselves” (8). In the case of literary pedagogy, Quantum Rhetoric offers students and teachers of creative writing an alternative that focuses on writers’ practices.

In the case of using quantum entanglement when generating characters, students are afforded an opportunity to experiment with their rational approaches to character creation. Take my failures to write two novels as an example. My novels stopped because I made characters, decided who among them would be the central characters, what events would happen to them that would make them central characters, and what the rising action, climax, and dénouement of the plot would be. Sadly, I got to the end of the list well before the books were finished. Then, I found myself trying to make up events that didn’t fit the plot or the characters. In my instance, the traditional approaches didn’t work for me. However, experimenting with quantum

entanglement in my short fiction has created a way for me to circumnavigate my past understanding of how to write fiction so that I might grow and keep writing, despite my inability at times to work within the more common paradigms of fiction writing. As for other students, they might learn something entirely different about their writing processes than I did about mine. The point is to make certain the opportunity to work outside of traditional approaches is available, especially if those approaches are stifling the writing process somehow. Again, that's not to suggest that their traditional approaches were wrong or that they should cease doing them. Considering characters as quantum entangled, and attempting to create them in the ways I did (or in the ways the particular writers see as relational to their understanding of quantum entanglement) only expands one's knowledge of how one creates characters. It provides an alternative to their norm, which is that central characters are produced by a plot line or that a plot line comes out of a central character. Perhaps most importantly, I would guess that many students would approach such a process differently, meaning the way I envisioned executing quantum entanglement in my story might be starkly different than someone else. A classroom of eight or ten students sharing their methods of how they employed quantum entanglement with each other (with no emphasis on their execution being right or wrong or done well or not done well) might provide a wellspring of new practice for everyone involved. If nothing else, at least students might be enlightened and exposed to new ways of "seeing" the practice of writing creatively. What's more, because the practice is so individualized, it's likely the teacher will be exposed to a multitude of ways characters can be generated over the course of their time teaching, a multitude of ways characters can be related or affect one another. Imagine the kind of non-esoteric feedback creative writing teachers might construct concerning the relationship of characters in a story if they have a running list of the many approaches they encountered over the

years. Instead of thinking to themselves, *this is what established author A tends to do*, or *this is what I would do* or *this is what I think or notice or believe or feel*, teachers can say, “Once a student did X or Y with acknowledged success.” Such a statement simply relays a writing experience, an experience that originally came from a student and not the teacher. What is more, one might argue that these students’ accounts become a kind of new writers’ self-report, one that is focused on writerly experience regardless of the writer’s renown. Such an approach might redefine writer’s self-reports and how they’re used. As a student myself, I often feel more empowered when I see fellow students do something impressive because I feel that if they can do it I can too. It’s hard to feel that way sometimes when you see or hear something astounding from a writer and teacher who has been doing both longer than you’ve been alive. That, at times, is daunting. Quantum Rhetoric can provide an alternative to the product-focused approach of literary pedagogy. Moreover, Quantum Rhetoric, as I’ve discussed it here, can empower students, make them more central to the process and evaluation that occurs in a creative writing classroom, and can foster a more democratic way for teachers to talk with students about their writing.

Commercial Pedagogy

A second model Cross discusses is commercial pedagogy. Cross notes, “Commercial pedagogy focuses on literary texts in the context of a market-driven public culture. It implicitly conceives of creative writing as a vocation and of the writer as professional laborer engaging in economic activity in an industry, more so than pursuing a path of artistic or spiritual self-discovery” (69). Cross cites a bevy of technical guides advocating writing as a vocation and writer as laborer, arguing that “Commercial creative writing pedagogy is still in demand” (69). As with the literary pedagogy, I believe commercial pedagogy can have a very useful place in a

creative writing classroom. In fact, a fruitful endeavor for future research might be to analyze the relationship, if any, between literary pedagogy and commercial pedagogy. The research I've conducted suggests there is some intersection between the two. It's possible that literary pedagogy and commercial pedagogy are a single category that should be called something else. In this discussion, however, the relationship I see between the two is that commercial pedagogy distances writers even further from understanding their creative writing processes than literary pedagogy. For example, in the instance of the literary pedagogy model, writers are like quilters for hire. Let's say a group of quilters are hired to make quilts, just like a writer might be asked to write a piece of fictional magic realism. The quilters may shape a product from the material they choose. The quilts can be different colors or use different fabric or more or less batting, but if the quilters are hired to make quilts, quilts they will make. Likewise, a fiction writer studying magic realism might write a short story, flash fiction, novella, or novel, but regardless, their writing will adhere in various ways to the standards of the accepted exemplars of magic realism. In the commercial pedagogy, the writers are akin workers on an assembly line. Not only are they creating the same product, but they're doing so with the exact same material. Book titles like *Make Twenty Thousand Dollars a Year Writing: No Matter Where You Live* and *Writing the Breakout Novel*, draw writers' attention to everything but the actual act of writing itself. The act of writing becomes a conscious effort to appease an invoked, commercialized audience represented by statistical monetary figures of sale. Like many writers, I too would like to make a living writing books, so I don't at all condemn those who write with that purpose or sources that aid those writers in understanding how to do so. However, I believe such a concern is one that should surface after much writing has been done. I believe commercial pedagogy is a great way

to approach the revision of nearly-finished products, products written the way writers want them to be but that still need to account for the many audiences they will be exposed to.

As is the case with literary creative writing pedagogy, Quantum Rhetoric personalizes the writing experience in ways that allow writers to grow and develop in their own unique ways. In the case of applying quantum entanglement to character creation in fiction writing, writers' individualized character-generating processes are the focal point of learning, not an economically-based statistical audience. If one is trying to sell a final product, understanding that audience is important. I'd say it is important that writers know their markets. However, I feel that in creative writing classrooms, especially non-graduate classrooms, students need to learn about themselves as writers before learning how to market their work. Literary creative writing pedagogy prizes the product and a canonized aesthetic, while commercial creative writing pedagogy prizes the market. On the other hand, Quantum Rhetoric prizes writers by aiding them in discovering the nuances of how they write.

Holistic Pedagogy

A third creative writing pedagogy Cross discusses is holistic pedagogy. Cross writes, "Holistic creative writing pedagogy focuses on engendering a writing experience that contributes to the discovery, development, and healing of the writer's spiritual and emotional *self*, first and foremost" [original emphasis] (70). Cross suggests this type of writing has become more prevalent due to the "self-help and new-age spirituality movements and markets of the 1990s and early 2000s" (70-71). Unlike the literary or commercial creative writing pedagogies, holistic creative writing pedagogy focuses on how writers feel. However, the holistic approach is neither concerned with reflecting on the individualized processes that get words on to the page, nor is it concerned with the individualized processes that stop the words from getting on the page. I

believe there is certainly value to writers understanding the emotional or spiritual impacts of their writing on themselves and others. And though it would take my current discussion off focus, I believe developing and following the train of thought that holistic pedagogy, even more than the previously mentioned creative writing pedagogies, can be blended with notions of quantum mechanics might be useful. There are two reasons I feel this way. One is that holistic pedagogy is concerned with writers and not products; therefore, Quantum Rhetoric employed in a way that aids writers in understanding their individual writing processes might blend nicely with a pre-existing creative writing pedagogy already focusing on writers. The second reason I believe holistic pedagogy might blend well with Quantum Rhetoric is because there is an entire area of quantum mechanics, presided over by physicists like Fritjof Capra and Gary Zukav, who draw striking parallels between quantum physics and “oriental mysticism” focused on spirituality, oneself, and the surrounding world. It might be interesting to see what conclusions might surface from a class set up on the holistic paradigm but using Capra’s *The Tao of Physics* or Zukav’s *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* as the text that informs student thinking. In the scope of this dissertation, however, I wish for Quantum Rhetoric to be associated with the holistic creative writing pedagogy only in its use of quantum entanglement. Though holistic creative writing pedagogy focuses on writers and not products, quantum rhetoric, especially through the use of quantum entanglement, focuses on process. Employing quantum entanglement as just one way of using Quantum Rhetoric in the creative writing classroom not only draws creative writing pedagogy away from the product-focused approaches of the literary and commercial creative writing pedagogies, but also it draws a writer’s focus to their individualized methods of developing character in a story. This focus on individualized choices and actions is also missing

from the Cross's holistic creative writing pedagogy, where the writer's emotions and feelings are the focal point.

Iconic Pedagogy

The final creative writing pedagogy Cross discusses is iconic pedagogy, which she argues, "focuses on no one particular goal or outcome for the writer's education; instead its defining feature is its mode of delivery: the author" (72). Iconic pedagogy can be taken from interviews, how-to-books, lectures, and any other methods used by "usually famous" authors to define for another writer what they do when they write and how they do it (Cross 72). In iconic pedagogy, the words and practices of already-established authors are the example. Cross explains established authors as influencing students in two ways, directly and indirectly influence, where direct influence results from "explicit directives" and indirect influence involves "the student writer learning by example" (72). To clarify just what I mean, consider, for a moment, a writer's self-report. A writer's self-report, generated by a writer to tell other writers how to write successfully, is example of explicit influence. An explicit example is the second half of Stephen King's *On Writing*. Conversely, a writer's self-report generated in such a way that the writer is sharing his or her experiences with writing but not necessarily in a way meant to *teach* one how to write is an example of indirect influence. For example, less established writers might read interviews with more established writers who discuss their writing habits. I would argue the first half of Stephen King's *On Writing*, which covers how he became a writer, is an example of indirect influence. I learned a lot about the necessity of rejection and hard work in relation to writing from King's narrative, but he was just sharing his experience with his reader and not prescribing best practices, as he does in the second part of *On Writing*. Finally, writers' self-reports have been a focal point in writing studies for decades. Hawthorne's and Poe's self-reports

were among some of the first printed in the United States. Due to the pervasiveness of self-reports like those written by Hawthorne, Poe, and countless others, writer's self-reports have been the crux of much scholarship within both CWS and composition studies; the work of Bizzaro and Bishop are just two examples. Even now, scholarship on the nature and efficacy of writer's self-reports is still a concern. Jason Long's dissertation, "The Road Not Taken: A Writer's Approach to Research on Poetry Writing in Creative Writing Studies," is just one example of scholarship focused on the ways writer's self-reports might be utilized in the creative writing classroom.

So what might Quantum Rhetoric offer the creative writing classroom that iconic creative writing pedagogy does not? Again, as with the previous three examples, I believe Quantum Rhetoric fosters an opportunity for creative writers to learn about their individualized methods of production in ways iconic creative writing pedagogy does not. Iconic creative writing pedagogy is, perhaps, the most distancing for students. Its focus is always on other writers and not the students in the classroom. However, I think there are some interesting opportunities for reflective practice when using iconic creative writing pedagogy. Because iconic pedagogy can be used as a way for writers to learn about the practices of other writers, the class can be designed in ways that encourage students to apply their observations to their own writing practices. Doing so might aid writers in discovering something new about how they write. This process is similar to the process when employing Quantum Rhetoric, especially when using quantum entanglement with characters. The big difference is that iconic creative writing pedagogy begins with the other writer and his or her processes, products, and experience. In fact, I would argue it heralds the more established writer over the less established one. Personally, I put many writers who I think great on pedestals by default. I study their work and read their interviews. Basically, I aggrandize

them on my own. I think many artists do; therefore, I can see how a pedagogy focused on aggrandizing the work of others might also be unnecessary, especially to writers more serious about their careers as artists. I wager most writers who are serious about their writing already read others' works, appraise it, and compare it to what they themselves produce. Due to what I deem to be a natural propensity for writers to study the work of other writers on their own time, I believe students' efforts in upper-division creative writing classes at the undergraduate level or creative writing classes at the graduate level might feel unrewarding in the iconic pedagogy classroom. On the other hand, because writing is a practice that never really stops developing, a focus on individual student writers and their practices should remain a constant focus in the creative writing classroom. In the case of quantum entanglement, students have the potential to develop characters differently from one fictional work to the next, meaning those writers' practices have the potential to evolve many times over, whereas an iconic approach, which prizes the processes of other writers instead of students' writing processes, might be more limiting in aiding students to develop or learn something new about how they write. Moving forward, I want to make clear, again, that the creative writing pedagogies and approaches I've discussed are in no way bad pedagogies. I'm not even suggesting they be changed, but as with any approach (including Quantum Rhetoric), pedagogies have boundaries, and I believe those boundaries can be transcended through the use of Quantum Rhetoric in the creative writing classroom.

To this point I've argued for the importance of Quantum Rhetoric to CWS by both demonstrating ways the practices of creative writing are already comingled with the sciences and by representing dialogues and work from experts in both fields who advocate for such a relationship. From there, I discuss four dominant creative writing pedagogies—literary, commercial, holistic, and iconic—and situate Quantum Rhetoric, especially the notion of

quantum entangled characters, within the contexts of these pedagogies. An important question still remains—how does one assess the writing done in a class constructed with Quantum Rhetoric in mind?

Grading/Assessing in Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction. Because so much of Quantum Rhetoric is still undefined, there are, at present, any number of ways one might assess or grade the student writing generated in class. Because revision, rewriting, and reflection are centric to the course I've created here, I want to discuss how I would go about grading and assessing students in a class where revision, reflection, and rewriting are all integrally structured into the framework of the course.

The model of grading and assessment I've arranged for Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction is heavily informed by Bishop's response-workshop-with-portfolios structure. Bishop assures this structure creates a "writing-intensive-zone" that "mimic[s] a practicing writer's schedule" ("Contracts"). Bishop offers her model because, she asserts, "Those in creative writing have generally done less work exploring and analyzing teaching practices and have been more accepting of a traditional, authoritative model of instruction posited on a novice-student and master-teacher dynamic" ("Contracts"). In short, Bishop notes, "Generally creative writing instruction has not focused on how evaluation discourages *and* encourages student writers' entry into revision" [original emphasis] ("Contracts"). Bishop counters the standard model by developing a class that is for a better part of the semester geared towards responding to student writing that has been written and discovered through a kind of "controlled exploration" that allows "students to gain control over their own, evolving texts" ("Contracts"). A class like Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction, which begins by considering the oeuvre of students' work to be

base texts for yet-to-be-written texts and undiscovered practices, blends nicely with Bishop's risk-free opportunity for experimentation.

The first part of Bishop's semester is spent aiding students to shape various kinds of writing and invention exercises. The work generated is shared with fellow students and the teacher, but no grade of any kind is given ("Contracts"). Response is key to Bishop's class dynamic, and it's important that that response comes from both teachers and students. In Bishop's model, students develop various pieces of writing, both formal and informal, so that they have a body of work to select from when compiling a graded portfolio at the end of the semester. Throughout the semester this body of work is often revised, peer-reviewed, or radically revised. All of the formative writing is done free from the pressures of grading. Finally, in Bishop's model, students select the pieces they wish to submit in the final portfolio, which is submitted for a grade. Accompanying those submissions is a contract that students draft for the teacher explaining the assignments they chose for the portfolio and why. Similarly, in the Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction course, I've arranged for the first half of the class to be spent creating an evaluation free zone for students to experiment with writing. However, students are not asked to write essays that might be selected for a final portfolio. Instead, the focus during the first half of the semester is to generate writing and discussion relating to new ways of thinking about the creative writing process of each individual student. That is the objective of the journal writing assignments. Though the approach is slightly different than Bishop's, it still evokes the main component of her classroom dynamic, which is to create a space where thought and writing can evolve free of the pressures of evaluation and grading. Because the content of the journal writing assignment is not graded (only a completion grade is given), and because the discussion surrounding the journal writing assignments is student-centered and student-generated, there is a

no-risk opportunity for students to experiment with their understanding of the fiction writing process.

As mentioned, the grade for Bishop's class is a result of how well students meet the demands of the contractual agreements spelled out in their final portfolio. The grade distribution in the Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction classroom results from attendance, journal writing assignments, a five to seven minute presentation where students explain their final project, and one of three choices: a newly-minted piece of fiction, accompanied by an account of how students used what they learned in class to approach their writing processes in new ways; a revised piece of fiction, accompanied by an account of how students used what they learned to revise their original manuscript; and, lastly, as is the case in Bishop's classroom dynamic, students may create a proposal for a project other than the ones offered.

When grading the assignments described above, I would encourage teachers to develop a rubric where the grading criteria are devised through the primary trait scoring model. In brief, primary trait scoring is a grading method where the teacher and students develop a set of grading criteria together, assuring that both teachers and students have equal say in the goals of individual projects.³² The primary traits can be used to construct a rubric. Because all three final assignment options are a reflection on writing or revising process, a single rubric would likely be applicable to all three assignments.

In this chapter I've defined quantum rhetoric and argued for its importance in the creative writing classroom by discussing the already existing relationship between writing, science, and quantum mechanics. I've cited experts in the fields of physics and creative writing who argue for

³² For a fuller explanation of the primary trait scoring, consult Norbert Elliot's *On a Scale: A Social History of Writing Assessment in America*, and Bizzaro's, "Evaluating Student Poetry Writing: A Primary Trait Scoring Model."

the need for the arts and sciences to be experimented with together. What is more, I've explained how Quantum Rhetoric can enrich the existing paradigms of creative writing on both a macro and micro level. On the large scale, I've relayed the benefits of Quantum Rhetoric to common pedagogical approaches to teaching creative writing as argued by Michele Cross. On the micro level, I've explained what Quantum Rhetoric affords a fiction class when discussing concepts like character development, which is staple subject matter in many fiction writing courses and handbooks. Finally, in an attempt to create a point of praxis within my theory, and to provide a means of replicability, I've created a syllabus, found in Appendix A, which can be used as a base for writing teachers wishing to experiment with Quantum Rhetoric in their creative writing classrooms. Furthermore, in an attempt to exemplify the possibilities of the quantum entanglement section of the class, I've provided a piece of sample fiction, found in Appendix B, which was written using quantum entanglement. Moving forward, I just wish to note once more that this discussion of Quantum Rhetoric as a theoretical lens through which to analyze and experiment with various kinds of writing is one of a kind. What I've proposed here is a foundational approach at best. I anticipate if others experiment with Quantum Rhetoric in their creative writing classrooms, they will find vastly different approaches to using it. This chapter is meant to set a foundation and not a precedent for the possibilities of enriching the teaching of creative writing.

CHAPTER 5

MOVING FORWARD

I wish to conclude this dissertation in the same way that I opened it, by noting the unique situation CWS is in and by emphasizing the importance this research has to that situation. In *The Future of Creative Writing Studies* Harper discusses where he believes CWS “*should travel . . . could travel . . . [and] most likely will travel*” [original emphasis] (60). During this discussion, Harper covers several topics, including but not limited to the effects of technology’s ability to unite various methods of creative writing on a global scale, the rising growth and acceptance of and access to informal methods of creative writing, and the growing interest in funders, like the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), to fund research projects where creative writing is involved, despite the hardships the humanities are experiencing in the U.S. and abroad (*Future* 60-65). Harper’s discussion of CWS’s possible future both represents the need for the kind of research done in this dissertation and also reveals the many perspectives that are missing.

This dissertation aids in developing a fuller understanding of CWS by bringing to light some of its more obscured history and by attempting to develop a new line of thinking within that history. As a case in point, creative writing is divided into elements that are teachable and elements that are not. The teachable elements are often referred to as craft while the unteachable elements are largely undefined. Though I don’t have the answer to the question of whether or not creative writing is teachable, I do feel it’s too early to ask that question. Much of the lore of creative writing is still too under studied to determine whether or not that lore is teachable. For example, it’s easy to find fiction writers and teachers that attest to Aristotle’s effect on contemporary ways of thinking about plot in fiction. However, what is not common is a deeper analysis, like the one done in Chapter Two of this dissertation. My research suggests the

common model for plot did not arrive to us directly from Aristotle but was further developed, refined, and defined through drama, other writers, and literary studies. Moreover, little has been done on a large scale to analyze how this model actually affects the process of writing. As Harper notes in several of his works, contemporary teaching of creative writing, on the large scale (for there are and always have been individual teachers who do not push the paradigm all of the time), has begun at the end of the writing process. Plot is a major point of discussion in the handbooks I consulted for my research. Many of those sources posit plot as defined, even though I've shown in this research that there are elements to plot that are not entirely understood. This misconception is, I believe, a result of plot being discussed only in regards to how it is represented in the final product. It seems odd to me that so many in CWS are comfortable with the current understanding of plot, yet in another writing discipline, like composition studies, there appears to be more nuanced understandings of the many writing principles taught to students. For example, in composition studies there is no shortage of books and articles on the many elements comprising of what composition teachers and writers do. There are countless sources on the different modes of writing, their association with Aristotle, how his model advanced through and was altered by the university, and how those models hinder or aid the actual writing process of students in a composition classroom. So much of what is done in composition studies is better understood than what is done in CWS. In composition studies there is more research than can probably be read in a lifetime defining the differences between grammar and syntax, local and global writing concerns, the origin and hindrances of the five paragraph essay, the parts of a paragraph, the difference between an expository essay and an argumentative essay; but in CWS many are content with saying that half of what we do probably isn't teachable, regardless of whether or not those unteachable things have yet to be defined.

Despite this observation, I side with Harper in believing that it's likely there will continue to be a growing interest in all that might be involved in the creative writing process and not just how to arrive at a product that looks like or functions like the other products that came before it (*Future* 65-69). The deeper analysis of plot in Chapter Two is my attempt to advance a line of thought within CWS. Not only do I want to draw attention to what I view as a problem (the underdeveloped understanding of a major tenet of fiction writing, a tenet thought teachable), but I also want to make a contribution to remedying that problem. Chapter Two is but one attempt.

It's clear in my research that I'm disconcerted over the lack of understanding surrounding the unteachable in CWS. Not only is a part of the creative writing process being called unteachable, but also that same body of information, whatever it is, is largely undefined. Personally, I find this problematic. CWS is in a position within the academy where its growth might go a number of ways, some good, some bad, and many probably still unimagined. The general consensus of whether or not creative writing can be taught, or to what capacity it can be taught, might play a large role in how CWS is (or whether or not it continues to be) situated within the university. I believe it behooves the discipline to try and understand what this other half is, what it is comprised of, and why it is or isn't teachable. I want to bring attention to this problem. However, I don't want to mention a problem and leave it at that. That is why in Chapter Three I not only posit the problem but attempt an answer by defining just a part of what might be meant by the unteachable in creative writing. Chapter Three begs the following questions: 1) is the sublime part of what makes creative writing successful, 2) is the sublime part of the unteachable in creative writing, 3) and, finally, if the sublime is part of the unteachable elements within the lore of creative writing, how might it function in the process of writing itself? I believe the sublime is oftentimes present for both writers and readers of fiction when they are

immersed in the writing and reading that they are doing in such a way that their cognitive awareness of the present is greatly altered or entirely dissolved. The question remains, can this phenomenon be taught? The answer is still unknown. Personally, I don't know that it can be. I don't know that I could teach students to feel sublimity when they write in the same ways that I *sometimes* do. I can't always invoke it myself, but I do have practices and aids I use that oftentimes help. But what I do believe can be done is the construction of classes geared towards answering questions like the ones I raise in Chapter Three. The emphasis of these classes would be on individual writer's processes and not just the final product.

Finally, I wrote Chapter Four to lay the foundation for a theory and class that both transcends the teach-only-what's-teachable model and aids to move the discussion in CWS to questions other than can creative writing be taught or does the workshop still work. Quantum Rhetoric and the class created for it, Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction, herald observation of experience over material objects or common practices. In fact, Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction isn't even concerned with fiction writing in the traditional sense. Instead, it's concerned with fiction writers and their understanding of where their fiction comes from. It's about fiction writers learning more about themselves and their work through noting individualized phenomena arrived at through a common stimulus (quantum mechanics) than it is learning what short stories are and how they are written. Harper notes, "Creative writing is a vibrant combination of human creativity and human critical understanding; it is a physical set of actions we undertake but it is also a series and variety of artifacts (or evidence) of those actions . . ." (*Future* 14). Furthermore, Harper asserts that formal creative writing (the kind found in higher education, for example) has focused much of its energy on the artifacts of creative writing rather than the actions surrounding their production (*Future* 57-58). I agree with Harper and add that I believe even less time has

been spent on devising methods that assure individual students learn about their own writing processes. I believe one of the strongest testimonies to what I suggest is the prominence of writers' self-reports. I find writers' self-reports important tools of learning, but how often in a creative writing classroom are the writing processes, habits, or rituals of the students analyzed, questioned, tested, or discussed to the extent that those of established writers are? My research, cited through this dissertation (especially Cross's work), suggests not often.

Combined, I feel the four chapters of this dissertation provide an opportunity for discussions in CWS to grow beyond familiar discussions while also still contributing to them. For example, Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction, because it is focused on student process and not product, might generate new discussions on student agency and how to develop that into creative writing course curricula. Furthermore, a body of research written outside of common paradigms of creative writing would be developed as a byproduct of the Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction class. This data could be compared to creative writing done in classes structured under the more common paradigms and then studied to see what affordances or hindrances each approach might foster.

Despite the many opportunities I think my research brings to CWS, there are a number of avenues still unexplored. For example, the Aristotelian model appears to be prominent in short fiction (typically between 1,000 and 8,000 words), but what about flash fiction? Moreover, some claim flash fiction is a result of publishing moving online. Does the flash fiction published online utilize or deviate more from using traditional paradigms than flash fiction published in print? Similarly, if there are differences, what might that mean about how one teaches a course in flash fiction? With the interconnectivity provided by the internet and social media, one could take this dissertation and attempt to see if the creative writing methods I discuss here are present in the

current fiction writing found in, say, Africa. If there are differences between the American and African fiction models, what might we learn from one another about how to teach fiction?

These questions, and the formidable answers that might surface because of them, are just the beginning of what I believe research can bring to the field of CWS. While CWS continues its early development, research within the field might generate as many questions as it provides answers. But I believe with the state CWS is in right now, and the way that it is growing and intersecting on a global level, we must ask questions. I feel that the greatest risk we can take is to not ask questions. And somewhere amongst all of the questions, there must be an attempt at answers. In *Something Old, Something New: The Study of the Effects of Rhetoric on the Lore and Practice of Fiction Writing*, I've attempted to do just this: ask tough questions and provide tough answers, all in the hopes of advancing the discipline of CWS.

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---. *The Crossing*. New York: Knopf, 1994. Print.

---. *The Road*. New York: Vintage, 2006. Print.

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Appendix A

English 321 001: Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction

Random University

Fall 2014, T/R, 1:25-2:15, Room: English 1

Instructor: Mitch James

Office Location: 321

Email: me@random.edu

Phone: 123-456-7899

Office Hours: M, W, F 12pm-1pm & 3:30pm 4:30pm

Welcome to Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction

Quantum Rhetoric—Fiction is a capstone class meant to guide you in learning more about your writing practices and processes through a rhetorical lens informed by quantum mechanics. In this class you will be introduced to common perspectives of fiction writing, spanning ancient Greece to the present. After becoming familiar with the discussions surrounding your discipline, you will then be introduced to discussions surrounding another, quantum mechanics. You will apply notions of quantum mechanics to generally accepted notions of fiction writing to discover what you might learn about yourself as a writer.

Required Course Texts and Materials

There are three required texts for this course. The first is *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*. The second is Aristotle's *Poetics*. The third is a course pack that can be picked up from Course Packs are Us.

Project Descriptions and Grade Distribution

There are 100 total points for this class. The total is divided four ways: 1) Journal writing assignments, 2) Attendance, 3) Final writing assignment/revision, 4) Presentation. Each assignment is worth a total of 25 points. The breakdown for grading is as follows:

100-90 A

89-80 B

79-70 C

69-60 D

59-0 F

Journal Writing Assignments

Most class meetings I ask that you respond in writing to class readings and discussions. Sometimes these writing assignments will be open, meaning you can approach the material how you want, and sometimes they will be guided, meaning I will ask for you to demonstrate certain things in your writing. All you must do to earn credit for the journal writing assignment is to fill one side of it out in full. There are a total of 10 Journal writing assignments, worth 2.5 points apiece.

Attendance

Because so much of the class is built on student discussion and not lecture, it is imperative that you attend class regularly. To not do so is a disservice to not only your own education but also your peers' education. You can miss two classes without penalty. That's one week. Ten points will be deducted for each absence after the second. You will be lowered a letter grade for each absence after your fifth.

Final Writing/Revising Assignment

¼ of your grade will come from a final writing assignment where you either create a new piece of fiction informed by quantum mechanics or radically revise/creatively-critically rewrite a past piece. Finally, if you have an idea for a final project not accounted for here, you can meet with me to discuss its potential to meet your final project requirements. A detailed explanation of the

writing assignments will be covered in class closer to when they're assigned. A detailed explanation of assignment expectations and grading can be found below.

Presentation

You will be responsible for sharing your writing experience with the class in a 5-7 min presentation. This presentation is worth 25 points.

Tentative Class Schedule

PHASE ONE

Theme I: Character

AUGUST

26—Introductions. Discussion of syllabus and class process.

Work

- Read from Aristotle's *Poetics* chapters X, XI, XIII.
- Journal writing assignment response to reading.

28—Discussion on reading and Journal writing assignments.³³

Work

³³ I'm using the term discussion broadly here so that one considering using this approach in one's class might approach it in the way one deems best. One approach I might use, especially on a Tuesday/ Thursday class arrangement, where there is more time per class period than those that meet three times a week, is to bring in a few examples of how plot is discussed in different handbooks, how-to-books, or writers self-reports and have the students review them and discuss their thoughts in small groups. Then the class can join together for a full discussion, one that I might open with, "How does the advice of these experts relate to how you view the construction of plot in how you write? Do they relate to what Aristotle had to say? Why or why not. How does what you wrote in your Journal writing assignments relate or not relate to what you've read today?"

- Read E. M. Forster’s “Flat and Round Characters” from *Essentials*.
- Journal writing assignment response to reading.

SEPTEMBER

2—Discussion on reading and Journal writing assignments.

Work

- Read Woolf’s “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” from *Essentials*.
- Journal writing assignment response to reading.

4—Discussion on reading and Journal writing assignments.

Work

- Watch both “Quantum Entanglement: The Weirdness of Quantum Mechanics,” and “The Illusion of Distance and Free Particles: Quantum Entanglement,” produced by *The Science Channel* and *PBS* respectively. Both videos can be watched for free on YouTube.
- Journal writing assignment response to reading.

9—Discussion on videos and Journal writing assignments.

Work

- Multi-Genre project.³⁴

11—Group work on multi-genre project.

Work

- Prepare multi-genre project for presentation in class

16—Presentation of multi-genre projects

Work

³⁴ Here, I would ask that students use some other “artistic” genre to attempt to explain or understand quantum entanglement. For example, students might create a poster, draw a picture, write a poem, or write a song. We would then spend one class with students sharing their products, feedback, and thoughts so that students receive an array of feedback from their peers. This exercise can be done as a class or in small groups. Finally, the following class meeting will be spent with each student sharing with the class their project and what they learned while completing it.

- Write a 2.5-5 page response to the videos and multi-genre project. Your response should be either one possible approach you might take to a new story considering the traditional perspective of character and what you've learned about quantum entanglement, or your response should be an approach to revising a piece you've previously written while considering the reading and presentations.³⁵

18—Group work on response

Work

- Revise response and prepare a final copy for submission.
- Read from Aristotle's *Poetics* chapters VII-XIII (Yes, review chapter XIII again while considering the discussion of plot and the past discussion of character).
- Journal writing assignment response to reading.

Theme II: Plot

23—Discussion on reading and Journal writing assignments.

Work

- Read Freytag's excerpt from *Freytag's Technique of the Drama*, found in the course pack.
- Journal writing assignment response to reading.

25—Discussion on reading and Journal writing assignments.

Work

- Read Reed's excerpt from *Mastering Fiction*, found in the course pack.
- Journal writing assignment response to reading.

30—Discussion on reading and Journal writing assignments.

Work

- Read Zukav's excerpt from *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, found in the Course Pack.
- Journal writing assignment response to reading.

OCTOBER

³⁵ I would make certain to leave ample time to discuss this particular assignment before the end of class. Also, I would write my own reflection for each category and present them to the students as examples.

2—Discussion on reading and Journal writing assignments.

Work

- Multi-genre project.

7—Group work on multi-genre project.

Work

- Prepare multi-genre project for class presentation.

9—Presentation of multi-genre projects.

Work

- Write a 2.5-5 page response to the readings and multi-genre project. Your response should be either one possible approach you might take to a new story considering the traditional perspective of plot and what you've learned from the reading and presentations, or your response should be an approach to revising a piece you've previously written while considering the readings and presentations.

PHASE II

Critical-Creative Rewriting and Radical Revision

14—Introduction to Phase II

Work

- Read Rob Pope's "Critical-Creative Rewriting," found in the Course Pack.
- Journal writing assignment response to reading.

16—Discussion on Journal writing assignments and reading.

Work

- Read Bishop's "Contracts, Radical Revision, Portfolios, and the Risks of Writing," found in the Course Pack.
- Journal writing assignment response to reading.
- Bring a piece of writing to exchange with a peer.

21—Discussion on Journal writing assignments and reading. Peer writing exchange.

Work

- Read peer's work and prepare a one page approach to how you're considering either radically revising or critically-creatively rewriting it.

23—Class revision/rewrite time.

Work

- Continue revision/rewrites.

28—Class revision/rewrite time.

Work

- Continue revision/rewrites.

30—Class discussion on revision/rewriting experiences.

NOVEMBER

4-13—Individual writing.³⁶

Work

- Write!!!

18—Schedule 20 minute meetings with me to review your manuscript.

Work

- Revise and keep writing!!!

20—Scheduled 20 minute meetings with me to review your manuscript.

Work

- Revise and keep writing!!!

³⁶ During this time, students will be either writing a new piece of fiction or revising a past piece of fiction on their own time during these four class meetings. Student's revising a past manuscript must include a 5-7 page reflection along with the manuscript when submitting them for a grade at the end of the semester. I would be available to meet by appointment in place of the classes to discuss their work any stage during the process.

DECEMBER

2—Peer-review.

Work

- Make changes to manuscript.

4—Peer-review.

Work

- Make changes to manuscript.

9—Class reading or presentation of work.

Work

- Finish manuscript.
- Submit final portfolio.

11—Class reading or presentation of work.

Have a great break!!!

Appendix B

Handbooks

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- Burroway, Janet. *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*. New York: Harper Collins, 1992. Print.
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- Forster, E. M. *Aspect of the Novel*. London: Edward Arnold, 1974. Print.
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- George, Elizabeth. *Write Away: One Novelist's Approach to Fiction and the Writing Life*. New York: Harper Collins, 2004. Print.
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- Koch, Stephan. *The Modern Library Writer's Workshop: A Guide to the Craft of Fiction*. New York: Modern Library, 2003. Print.
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Appendix C

Snow Storm: Hannibal Crossing the Alps

