

Introduction. A Fifty-Year Trajectory of Creative Nonfiction

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How might we understand the past and promise of creative nonfiction in contemporary writing classes? We've gathered sixteen authors, editors, and teachers to explore facets of a question that's more intricate and important than it may initially seem. Many explain how they developed as writers themselves, and several note the influence of a prominent figure in American writing, Richard Lloyd-Jones, chair of the University of Iowa English department at a pivotal time, as well as chair of the Conference on College Composition and president of the National Council of Teachers of English. We'll say more shortly about Jix (as he was popularly known). Nonfiction's large landscape includes the personal essay and memoir, of course, but also literary journalism, forms of nature writing, profiles, travel, and place writing, lyric essays, and swaths of story-driven advocacy and cultural analysis. This vast terrain is inflected—and often impelled—by a creative sensibility, designed to provide enjoyment as well as deliver information, ideas, or arguments. The magazine *Creative Nonfiction* maps this landscape as “true stories, well told” (to cite just one definition among many, some of which are offered throughout the essays in this collection), which may be simplistic and problematic but which underscores the aesthetic/artful dimension of works whose style and craft matter as much as its content.

We ask about the place of creative nonfiction in the context of broad disagreements about the nature and purpose of writing in academic settings. As we'll explain—and as the essays in this book illustrate—one area of contention has been the role of “creative” writing versus “expository” or “academic.” In the past few decades, creative writing (historically, mostly fiction and poetry) has been assigned mainly to elective courses, with required courses having a more “practical” purpose. But that purpose is debated. Is it to foster personal growth and engagement? to learn writing conventions valued in the academy? to acquire rhetorical skills for argument? to develop critical faculties? Robert Connors documented how, ever since composition started becoming a formal college subject in the 1870s, writing courses have been driven as much by convenience and tradition as by research and reflection. Even engaged teachers, those guided more by scholarship than by casual expedience, disagree about the content of required writing, as illustrated by volumes like *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* (Tate).

In any case, there's mostly been a boundary between creative writing and composition, the former claiming the fictional/imaginative/aesthetic, the latter holding truthful/purposive/rhetorical. The increasing visibility of academic creative nonfiction in recent decades has scuffed this division. Lee Gutkind claims to have coined the term in the early 1990s, though he discovered it no more than Columbus discovered America. After all, creative nonfiction has manifested for centuries, in early essays by Montaigne and Addison and Steele; in place writings like Mary Russell Mitford's *Our Village* or Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*; in travel writings like Su Shi's daytrip essays, Mark Twain's *Roughing It*, or Rebecca Solnit's *A Book of Migrations: Some Passages in Ireland*; in essayists like Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, Christa Wolf, Victoria Ocampo, Gabriela Mistral, James Baldwin, Joan Didion, Audre Lorde, and June Jordan; in the literary journalism of John McPhee and Susan Orlean; and on and on. Lynn Bloom documented how personal essays were circulated and canonized through first-year writing textbook anthologies throughout the 20th century, with Orwell, E.B. White, and Didion being the most frequently represented. Clearly, creative nonfiction has long been present in required writing courses, although some of its more belletristic expressions have occluded since the 1980s and 1990s, even as creative writing programs grew happy to claim this enterprise. Doug has explored that key transitional period in essays including "Who Owns Creative Nonfiction?" and "The Place of Creative Writing in Composition Studies." In this volume, Bruce Ballenger narrates with both analytic and deeply personal skill what's at stake in departments where custody of creative nonfiction becomes contested in creative writing's divorce from English departments.

For the most part, creative nonfiction appeared in 20th century composition as examples of narration or description, two of the four modes of discourse (the others being exposition and argument), in a long-discredited (if convenient) pedagogy steeped in a reductive notion of the mind operating through distinct faculties. That pedagogy taught fundamental cognitive operations by having students emulate prose models, with the idea that these operations would transfer to other writing situations. E.B. White's much-anthologized "Once More to the Lake" was used to teach narrative and descriptive technique rather than, say, how a writer might invest memory and plain experience with literary interest, for reasons meaningful to the writer.

Those practices, with their implications for creative nonfiction, are evident as early as 1902 in Charles Sears Baldwin's *A College Manual of Rhetoric*. Baldwin divided "prose composition" into "logical composition (persuasion and exposition)" (vii) and "literary composition (narration and description)" (ix), devoting three chapters to each. His key (and perhaps controversial) assertion was that what he called "literary composition" was, in fact, part of rhetoric, a location claimed a century earlier by Hugh Blair's *Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Baldwin framed the distinction in terms of Thomas De Quincey's "literature of knowledge and literature of power," a basis that Ross Winterrowd would elaborate in his 1986 book about the essay genre, *The Rhetoric of the Other Literature*. The idea that creative

nonfiction might have persuasive and critical force is one to which we'll return in the last section of this introduction, where we'll provide three additional reasons for teaching creative nonfiction.

It's striking, then, to see creative nonfiction largely disappear from the field of rhetoric/composition and required writing courses starting in the late 1980s, with a modest resurgence of late. The reasons are complex. The most mundane is simply curricular space. As research and theory have amply demonstrated the complex situatedness of writing, especially through genre, activity theory, and the intricacies of audience in rhetorical situations, not all types and tasks can win teaching attention. Genres like the personal essay and memoir were rendered especially vulnerable by political critiques in the 1990s, through influential attacks on aesthetics and poetics. For example, James Berlin's work amplified ideological critiques of what too-glibly got called "expressivism"; many people faulted first-person writing and genres like the personal essay as Romantically simplistic, classist, and indulgent, wasting vital time that should be spent in more important writing activity: important both politically (in Berlin's views) and personally. Students are better served, the argument went, by understanding and practicing various traditions of academic discourse or learning how to analyze and emulate various practical genres. In an iconic debate, preserved in 1995 *College English* articles, Peter Elbow and David Bartholomae exchanged positions, the former calling for general, open writing practices, the latter calling for practice joining academic conversations and conventions (Elbow, Bartholomae). Bartholomae's ideas ultimately won out, at least by the scorecard of what writing journals mainly published and writing conferences mainly featured: rhetoric and argument, academic discourses, and cultural analysis. There were prominent exceptions, of course. A 2001 symposium on "The Politics of the Personal" explored "our excitement as well as frustrations" about personal narratives, generally supporting those practices but analyzing "uncritical celebration" (Brandt et. al, 41–42). In 2003, Doug guest-edited a special issue of *College English* on Creative Nonfiction, which included essays by Wendy Bishop, Lynn Bloom, Bronwyn Williams, Robert Root, and Harriet Malinowitz (Special).

Creative nonfiction authors appeared as CCCC presenters through the 1980s. However, their presence dwindled through the 1990s, with only sporadic panels about the essay and literary journalism occurring since then. Rhet-comp scholars did give narrative, essayistic talks and their essayistic articles were published by the profession's journals, but those writers tended largely to be already well-established in the field, figures like Lynn Bloom or Nancy Sommers, whose 2010 CCCC panel with Kathleen Blake Yancey and Doug Hesse later won the Donald Murray Prize for creative nonfiction. A group of teacher/writers started hosting a CCCC workshop on writing nonfiction in the 1990s, an annual event continuing to the present, now under the aegis of the Creative Nonfiction Special Interest Group, which continues to organize the Murray Prize. Creative nonfiction continues to sprinkle the CCCC program each year. In the main, however, composition studies' forfeit of creative nonfiction was creative writing's gain, fueling

courses, programs, and degrees, undergraduate to MFA. First-year writing programs, once home to belletristic genres as well as to more “practical” ones, moved much of creative nonfiction’s furniture to the curb.

By the 2020s, three traditions dominate most required writing curricula. The first teaches writing conventions that are deemed important in future courses: the get-them-ready curriculum. Its light version postulates a generic kind of academic discourse, generally thesis and support, with some kinds of library-based research and attention to citation and documentation styles; its heavy version attends to the different types of academic discourse, manifested in genres, styles, epistemologies, and so on; this version aspires to build analytic skills to figure out conventions required in different disciplines. A second dominant curricular tradition is argument, a focus on convincing readers to adopt beliefs or actions. While the site of argument is sometimes the academy, more often it’s the public sphere, where student rhetors learn to apply strategies (generally evidence-driven logical appeals, after Aristotle, Toulmin, or Rogers) to popular arguments, in courses perhaps organized around statis theory, perhaps around genres or topics. The third dominant tradition is organized primarily around topics or themes: food or food security, sustainability or climate, homelessness, or popular culture (horror movies, hip hop or hipster culture, reality television, etc.) and so on. In terms of writing, such courses are variously justified, sometimes as a light academic discourse version, sometimes as popular discourse, and sometimes as simply epistemic, a pedagogy of engagement, grounded in write-to-learn principles for first-year composition.

Required and Nonrequired Writing

Beyond these current traditions are a complex of assumptions about the nature of college writing and its function. Consider four dichotomous views of instruction that have variously waxed and waned, waned and waxed over those years. First: “Writing is a basic skill that every student should acquire by college—or at least in a first-year college course” versus “Writing is a complex art that can be mastered by relatively few, usually by virtue of their innate talent and intense dedication.” Or second: “Students should learn writing as a practical tool for transacting the worlds of school and work” versus “Students should learn writing as a means of personal expression and civic participation.” Or third: “Some writing (the kind most importantly taught in schools) is highly conventional and learned by practicing strict rules, forms, and models” versus “Other writing (the kind that authors do) is complexly creative and learned through apprenticeship among other aspiring authors.” Or fourth: “There are fundamental characteristics of all writing situations, types, and genres, and learning some basic strategies will transfer widely” versus “Writing is so varied and context-specific, both in production and features, that beyond a surprisingly low level, basic strategies are fairly useless.”

There’s some truth—and plenty of oversimplifying—in these dichotomies, of course, owing to the casual way we use the complex term “writing.” When

Newsweek's Merrill Sheils in 1975 infamously explained “Why Johnny Can’t Write,” he neglected to distinguish whether Johnny (or Jenny or Jaunita) was failing as student, journalist, accountant, poet, attorney, screenwriter, or grammarian. In the decades since, a fertile growth of research and knowledge has made clear that writing is variously “good” for variously different audiences, purposes, and genres. Mapping the dappled landscape of writing onto a curriculum, let alone a course or two, is complicated by the ascendancy of higher education as an individual economic good rather than a social good, no less as an experience for intellectual, ethical, or spiritual growth.

What does it mean for some genres of writing (and their purposes and epistemologies) to find academic sponsorship in elective or major courses, while others, more instrumental or practical, are required for all? What assumptions about the nature of writing underlie these relegations? About how students should experience and understand it? About writing’s role in lives beyond work and school?

It’s tempting to answer such questions with “It depends,” forfeit everything to fracture, and just let writing get sorted among fiefdoms and their sponsors. But the writers in this volume offer a different path. They prize identities for students that are grounded in possibility and connection, not limit and separation. Writing is a technical art, yes, but also a liberal art. It’s an instrument for getting things done, of course, but also an instrument for reshaping the world and the writer within it, for readers who sometimes want surprise and innovation as much as they want predictability and information. Writing teachers are

the ones at the center who reach to all other disciplines and to all other people. We synthesize knowledge and unite people. By our force, we draw from the wisdom of other disciplines and in making it ours, transform it by combining it in new ways. The instrument of language which we play . . . opens the secret places and weds the separate selves. (49)

Writing these lines some forty years ago was Richard Lloyd-Jones, known widely as Jix, whose influences inform this volume. Jix championed and embodied a view of writing that remains vitally resonant. Writing is a skill, surely—but not only a skill. Lloyd-Jones’s view suffused writing cultures at The University of Iowa, where he taught more than 40 years, and his view circulated across the national landscape of writing instruction, pre-K through grad school, through his leadership roles in the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC).

Jix, Creative Nonfiction, and Iowa, 1970-2000

Between 1970 and 2000, The University of Iowa English department sponsored an expansive view of writing where teachers and students traveled, largely without passport, between literature and writing, between “creative” writing and “other”

writing, variously nonfiction, expository, or rhetorical. There was a fundamental belief that language was worth intensively studying and practicing across the whole sweep of English. Iowa provides an interesting case study because, at a time when nonfiction writing at most colleges was reductively relegated to first-year composition, there it was taken as a matter of interest and importance, part of the whole palette, arguments to personal essays, reports to poems to novels. We won't claim that the Iowa English department was unique during this period, let alone "responsible" for nonfiction's rise. We're simply explaining how the department, as part of a capacious view of writing, sponsored nonfiction, to use Deborah Brandt's technical term for how certain institutions and individuals sponsor various literate practices.

By 1974, Iowa was offering over thirty writing courses, from various workshops in fiction, poetry, playwriting, and translation to multiple courses in expository writing, science writing, writing for social action, and others. Five additional courses in nonfiction prose included *The Tradition of the Essay*, *The Art of the Essay*, and a *Survey of Non-Fiction Prose* (University, *General* 1974–76). This count doesn't include general education rhetoric courses, offered in a separate program shared by English and Communication. The extensive curriculum illustrated the department's affirmation that "The broad purpose of the major in English is to provide a program of humane learning focused on the study of language and literature and the discipline of writing" (61). Twenty years later, Iowa offered over 40 courses in writing. Among significant changes was a shift in nomenclature, with expository (a common term to contrast with "creative writing" from the mid-20th century) being replaced by nonfiction. More telling were delineations of nonfiction. By 1994, Iowa offered both *Essay Writing Workshop* and *Nonfiction Writing Workshop*, both *Forms of the Essay* and *Forms of Nonfiction*—and introductory and advanced levels of each (University, *General* 1994–96, 127).

Marking this curricular expansion was the nation's first English department graduate degree in nonfiction writing, initiated in 1976 as the Master of Arts with Emphasis in Expository Writing (shorthanded as the M.A.W.), a degree that twenty years later became an M.F.A. in Nonfiction. As the degree changed, so did its nature and spirit. At its formation, the M.A.W. emphasized "the theory, analysis, practice and teaching of expository writing. It is designed to meet the needs of students who wish to become teachers or critics of expository writing, students who wish to become professional writers, or students who have no specific career objectives but still wish to improve their writing" (University, *General* 1976–78, 59). Students wrote a thesis that was "an extended piece of expository writing." With its transformation to M.F.A. in Nonfiction in 1996, the degree was then characterized as "broadly devoted to literary nonfiction, with special opportunities for work in essay and prose. It is designed primarily for persons who wish to become nonfiction writers but also may be appropriate for those who wish to teach." The M.F.A. thesis was now defined as "a single extended piece of nonfiction, a collection of shorter nonfiction pieces, or a collection of essays" all "expected to be of publishable quality" (University, *General* 1996–98, 133.)

The 2022 Iowa catalog lists seven learning outcomes for the M.F.A., following recent contemporary trends in higher education that every course and degree program must specify learning outcomes. Those for the Iowa M.F.A. in Nonfiction include understanding “forms such as the essay, lyric essay, memoir, journalism, and experimental writing,” practicing a range of narrative strategies and styles, and understanding “the practical aspects of a writer’s professional life” (University, “English”).

The Iowa nonfiction M.A./M.F.A. emerged from a rich landscape for writing, in an English department long known through the famous Iowa Writers Workshop, founded in 1936. (Iowa had been accepting creative Ph.D. dissertations since 1922.) We emphasize that the Nonfiction Writing Program and the Writers Workshop are deliberately separate entities; whether the workshop, either at Iowa or elsewhere, is a healthy, let alone ideal, place to incubate one’s craft, especially for writers of color, is quite another matter, as writers like Felicia Rose Chavez or Lan Samantha Chang have compellingly illustrated (Neary).

Our broader point is that during the 20th century, Iowa took writing seriously in all its manifestations, including creative nonfiction and most prominently the essay. Whether this wide embrace was unique across the U.S., we won’t venture, but the record of Iowa English supports claims in general catalogs going back to 1976 that “For the past 50 years, the University of Iowa has been a national leader in virtually all areas of the teaching of writing . . . [and] also a leader in the area of nonfiction writing and rhetorical theory” (University, *General 1996–98*, 133).

In this context, we introduce a prominent figure in the centrality of writing at Iowa and in the US: Richard Lloyd-Jones. Obviously, it’s unreasonable to claim that Jix was a singular force for creative nonfiction; vital contributions and energies came from many people. But during much of that time he served as chair of the English Department and Director of the School of Letters. Recognition for Jix’s contribution to nonfiction at Iowa is embodied in the Lloyd-Jones Institute for Outreach, a program whereby M.F.A. students offer free master classes in writing across the state of Iowa, with more recent forays around the country. This broad interest in writing and developing writers is characteristic of Jix’s career as scholar, teacher, and servant.

With Iowa colleagues Richard Braddock and Lowell Schoer, Jix had authored the landmark 1963 study, *Research in Written Composition*. Iowa developed one of the first Ph.D.s in rhetoric and composition, and in the late 1970s its faculty had organized and hosted an influential National Endowment for the Humanities Institute that brought writing program directors from around the country to Iowa City. *Time* magazine described the Institute at length, explaining that “In some ways, Iowa is the nerve center of writing reform” and quoting Jix and his colleague David Hamilton, whose essay about that experience appears in this book (“Letter to Jix”). Even required first-year rhetoric courses were inflected by a spirit of writing as exploration, creation, and craft, with large numbers of those courses taught by graduate students who had come to study writing not only from famous authors in the Workshop but also from writers and scholars

of writing such as Carl Klaus, Susan Lohafer, Carol de St. Victor, Paul Diehl, Lou Kelly, Cleo Martin, and Brooks Landon.

Nationally, Jix chaired CCCC, the nation's largest and oldest professional association of college and university writing teachers, which awarded him its first Exemplar Award, for lifetime achievement. Later, Jix was elected president of NCTE, then a 75,000-member organization of K–16 teachers. His contributions extended to schools nationally but also intensively in the state of Iowa. He helped Jim Davis create the Iowa Writing Project, which supported teachers across the state in three-week workshops, emphasizing them as writers. The IWP, similar in concept to the Bay Area/National Writing Project, focused on pedagogy and scholarship part of the time but also provided time for teachers to write (Jensen 10). Through all his professional work, classroom to department to campus to profession, Jix advocated a broad view of writing as an activity alternatively practical and aesthetic, intensely important for the social good, deeply humanizing. He taught and valued technical writing for engineers, even as he sometimes hired famous poets to teach them, as he explains in an essay we've reprinted at the end of this volume. He wrote policy statements and contributed to public arguments, most famously drafting the controversial *Students' Right to Their Own Language* with Geneva Smitherman (Jensen 27–28), even as he also wrote poems and letters, personal essays, and memoirs, calling on others to do the same. Several writers in this volume explain Jix's contributions. His longtime colleague Carl Klaus provides a view of the man and his accomplishments. Robert Root describes Jix's influences growing out of *Research on Written Composition*, including on creative nonfiction. Kathleen Blake Yancey characterizes his larger national contributions to writing and English studies. Tom Fate and Margaret Finders take us directly into Jix's classrooms. Jocelyne Bartkevicius traces how she extends a teaching approach from a course on style he taught to her own course, *Studies in Contemporary Nonfiction*.

Why Nonfiction Now

We live in the age of data analytics, when algorithms trace trends among inputs and extracts, shaping decisions and investments. Among products that programmers are creating—and marketers aspiring to sell—are ones devoted to writing. For example, by 2010, companies like Narrative Science (since acquired by Salesforce and absorbed into Tableau) were marketing AI tools that touted “writing human stories at machine speeds,” with the further promise that “our technology application requires no human authoring or editing” (Narrative). Traditional media like *The Washington Post* have used bot applications like Heliograf to produce routine stories about such events as elections or high school football games “to successfully automate the creation of articles based [on] compiling data in templates” that judges found “eloquently written and backed” (WashPostPR). The internet is full of AI writing tools: Jasper, SEO, Ai Writing, Rytr, to name just a few, with Chat GPT exploding on the scene in late 2022. Across a series of articles since 2019, *The New*

Yorker has examined the writing prowess of AI text generators like GPT-3. These apps appeal to some hope to get writing out of the way, sparing people for activities more important or interesting than turning information into prose.

But we also live in a renewed age of makers and artisans, where craft finds value in process, not only product, from the imperfect tries of home brewers to the polished creations of expert vintners. In *The Revenge of Analog*, David Sax documents a renewed interest in everything from vinyl records to print books, from board games to film. We've seen cooking acquire prominence as a leisure activity, even entertainment, beyond a necessary evil to be overcome via the frozen dinner aisle. Even old-fashioned scrapbooking has had a renaissance. Perhaps these maker movements are just fashionable dabbling, status-marking ways of spending time—or perhaps they mark a desire to participate more fully in efforts that require agency and human ingenuity. Our digital age may be influencing how we shape and share personal essays, as Ned Stuckey-French explores in his piece, but these emerged technological practices are enhancing, not effacing, the impulse to write.

The essays in this book present a view of writing that is neither luddite nor romantic. There are surely useful kinds of writing that conform to highly conventionalized, routine forms, writing that prizes transparency and efficiency. These kinds are worth teaching, and it's worth exploring how technologies might facilitate drafting them. But other subject matters, ideas, and experiences resist convenient codification. They require—and reward—authorial curiosity and presence, inviting writers to analyze, synthesize, interpret, and render with insight and craft, in modes variously narrative and essayistic. Such engagements make deep and serious writers who experience writing not only as something that has to be done and endured but as something that also gets to be done and pursued, creating artifacts that others read not only out of obligation but out of desire. This is the province of creative nonfiction. In their content and style, all these essays exemplify writing as rewarding exploration and craft. This volume includes several examples, among them these two: John Price weaves his daily routine with musings of archaeological knowledge, including such knowledge as embodied in first-generation teachers of nonfiction. And Kerry Reilly explores both the reward and challenge—even the discomfort and confusion—of writing about others, implicating oneself in so doing.

Creative nonfiction needs little promotion or help, including within the academy, where its courses and programs are supported by a host of craft books, anthologies, and guides, including those by Brenda Miller, Phillip Gerard, Becky Bradway and Doug Hesse, and Robert Root, to name but a sliver of the array. The scholarly literature is extensive, from early collections like *Essays on the Essay* (Butrym) and *Literary Nonfiction: Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy* (Anderson) to 2022 *Edinburgh Companion to the Essay* (Aquilina). Literary magazines include nonfiction, and many of them focus on it solely, most venerably *Fourth Genre* (of which Laura was editor) but also *Hippocampus*, *River Teeth*, *Brevity*, *Under the Gum Tree*, *Creative Nonfiction*, and so on. Our slick magazines (*The New Yorker*, *Atlantic*, *Harper's*) publish it to larger readerships, and essays appear regularly as columns

and features of national newspapers. Consider, for example, *The New York Times*' long-running Modern Love column. All these tributaries support a burgeoning industry of annual Best American nonfiction series (Travel Writing, Science and Nature Writing, Food Writing, Sports Writing, Spiritual Writing), starting with the *Best American Essays*, now in its fourth decade. Several writers in this volume regularly contribute essays to that literature, including recent books by Ned Stuckey French, John Price, Tom Fate, and essays by Jocelyn Bartkevicius.

We call for something in addition to all this activity: recognition for creative nonfiction's importance to writing studies, which should embrace anew a tradition it recently abjured. We're not insisting on a spot of priority or pre-eminence. But a more complete house of writing and writing courses should welcome creative nonfiction's staircases and living rooms, kitchens and parlors, its genres not simply shelved as curios and bric-a-brac. Such a house might take its architecture from Richard Lloyd-Jones's work at Iowa and in the national neighborhoods of English. Beyond welcoming the dimension of writing as a liberal art, one essentially human and humanizing, we offer four reasons why the citizens of not only AWP but also CCCC should teach and write creative nonfiction as part of their broad practice.

First, it offers alternative rhetorical approaches in an historical moment when traditional logocentric strategies are falling short. While thesis plus evidence may remain compelling in the well-regulated discourses of academic disciplines, it's sadly clear that facts alone have less purchase in public discourses, where ideologies frame, filter, and fracture reasons and reasoning. In contrast, locating information in narrative approaches, placing ideas in and against experience and observation with the force of ethos and the logic of entailment, at least garners attention. Corporations have understood the need to tell stories (sometimes cynically or badly, mind you), embedding products, services, and profit motives in trajectories that unfold from character and context, from human agency. Literary journalism and personal essays place ideas and observations in the lived experience of character and craft rather than a frontal propositional assault readily dismissed as ideology. Readers can be engaged by elements of the telling, and if the craft is good, they'll at least engage views they may ultimately reject.

Second, there is important identity work being done in writing studies, efforts especially valuing diversity and inclusivity. Creative nonfiction well suits this goal, given how it makes central and visible an author's narrative lens and consciousness.

The field has recognized that knowledge, rather than being objectively produced with implications immutable to all, is often situated. Different histories, experiences, and contexts shape the meaning of meaning. We invite often-silent or suppressed voices to write themselves in. Of course, creative nonfiction can be as prone as other writing pedagogies (notably, those historically in first-year writing) to work against including multiple voices. Felicia Rose Chavez's important book *The Anti-Racist Writing Works: How to Decolonize the Creative Classroom* has vital perspectives for the nonfiction classroom as well as the poetry or fiction classroom,

recommending practices that all writing teachers should adapt. Even as creative nonfiction's ethos seeks to value, amplify, and complicate identities, not suppress them, its teachers must recognize the continued presence and practice of long exclusionary legacies. With that important caveat, we note that at one level, a current motivation in teaching writing is expansive: build larger and nuanced knowledges inclusive of race, class, gender, ability, among other identities. At another level, the motivation is epistemological. Significance and meaning come through the interpretive lenses of lived experience and individual formation, burnished by membership in various communities. This idea already has correlatives in composition studies. For example, the common practice of asking students to write literacy narratives has them tell and analyze their experiences as readers and writers, usually in relation to others or to scholarship on schooling, home life, and literacy development. A second connection comes through autoethnography, the increasingly popular research methodology that shares much with personal essays. In fact, in using reflection to narrate experience, connecting it to wider cultural formations and belief, autoethnography might be understood as reframing the long tradition of the essay under a new disciplinary guise. Third, one tradition of writing-to-learn, a now 40-year mainstay of writing across the curriculum, draws on James Britton's conception of expressive discourse as writers making sense of things for themselves, perhaps independent from but often prior to sharing that knowledge with others. Primary is finding how to integrate new knowledge and concepts with one's own experience. Writing to learn also underpins some invention practices, encouraging writers first to draft in terms that make sense to themselves, and only later to revise to accommodate readers' needs and expectations. At that juncture of revising toward other readers, the creative nonfiction choice would turn toward making an interesting artifact, one that carries the writer's voice and trace rather than effacing it by disciplinary convention.

That choice raises a third broad value of creative nonfiction for composition studies practice and pedagogy: the challenge and reward of creating writing that people aren't compelled to read but rather choose to. The challenge is cognitive, rhetorical, and aesthetic: how to render experience and insight in ways interesting not only to the writers and people close to them (which is hardly a trivial reason) but also to a wider readership. The charge that creative nonfiction is impractical compared to academic discourse or civic argument might be true in the sense of it not meeting preexisting exigencies. But in addition to the important kinds of writing that wait for a turn in a decorous Burkean parlor, to cite a well-used metaphor, there's an important place for writing that introduces new threads, writing that's acceptable not because it makes a sanctioned move within an established discursive channel, but because the skilled performance of a writerly sensibility makes new subject matters interesting through craft. Alternatively, perhaps creative nonfiction is just another type of parlor, a vast gallery of smaller salons in which authorial presence, story, and style might render interesting and worthy a host of topics, events, and experiences.

Several essays in this volume explore carefully and reflectively complex matters of teaching. Nancy DeJoy and Rachel Faldet each illustrate how and, as importantly, why and with what effect one might bring creative nonfiction to the center of college required writing courses. Nicole Wallack argues for that same attention in high school writing instruction, even against active calls for “practical” transferrable skills. Jenny Spinner explores and theorizes the implications of age for writing nonfiction, critiquing assumptions that the essay is a middle-aged or old genre by explaining why the genre matters for young writers, too. Doug provides a history of one such foray, a high-profile but short-lived set of national creative nonfiction contests for high school and undergraduate writers, co-sponsored by NCTE and a prominent aspect of an ambitious National Day on Writing. Laura narrates her own experiences as an early reader and student of nonfiction, which informed all her later experiences as writer, teacher, and ultimately editor of nonfiction, reflecting on the ways in which the influence of the University of Iowa under Jix’s leadership shaped her understanding of how to engage writers in teaching and in editing one of the first journals dedicated to various forms of creative nonfiction.

Our point is that writing studies—composition as well as creative—benefits from fully engaging the many manifestations of writing, with creative nonfiction as a centrally valuable component. That’s the example and enduring message of Jix Lloyd-Jones, who sought in his own teaching, curricular designs, and national leadership to foster deep facility with and appreciation for writing as an activity valuable not only for what it could do instrumentally (after all, Jix was molded first as a teacher of technical writing) but also what it could do liberally, through a broad writing sensibility. Jix offered one more example, imperative, and license: Teachers themselves should be writers. Teacher writing is inevitable through syllabi, student comments, reports, and the rest of workaday text-making. Beyond that, of course, are pieces for scholarly publication. But there are writing spaces yet beyond these, writing where teachers put their own lives and insights at the center, pursuing interests beyond the disciplinary and academic. You’ll see much of this in the pieces that follow. These essays are variously historical and reflective, philosophical and political, mapping classroom possibilities and writing lives. Some authors explore their own practices, suggesting teaching implications. Others reflect more explicitly on students. All embody in style and voice a focus on the full arts of written language, their authors owing at least an increment of their practice, whether directly or obliquely, to the contributions of Richard Lloyd-Jones.

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