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The necessary blend of narrative and technology in composition: Identity crisis embraced

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The Necessary Blend of Narrative and Technology in Composition:

Identity Crisis Embraced

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

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Dedication

To my mother, who is always the first person to read my work, and my grandfather, who would have wanted to be the second.

Acknowledgments

It is important for me to thank my thesis committee, Dr. Michael Moghtader, Dr. Scott S. Lunsford and Dr. Traci Zimmerman, who all helped me create a thesis that I was happy to claim as my own. A special thanks is in order to Dr. Zimmerman, who was always very willing to offer me her time, and who was kind enough to always look happy to see me whenever I just “dropped in.” Others deserve mention here, but two stand out. First, Wendy Bishop deserves attention as both my muse and guide through the trickier aspects of rhetoric and composition theory as it relates to the creative. She left far too early and I came into the game far too late for any chance conversation, but I value the personal understanding we have in our text. Perhaps most important, however, I have to thank my parents who knew the right thing to say over the phone at just the right moment. They always do.

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Abstract

Wendy Bishop's work, "Suddenly Sexy: Creative Writing Rear-ends Composition," is focused on the necessity of flexible relationships between first-year composition professors and creative nonfiction writers for the improvement of composition pedagogy. This emphasis on collaboration and merging is even more important now due to the personal relationships and self-awareness established in online writing environments. In addition to the exploration of confused definitions in expressivist theory and the negotiation that Bishop puts forth in her work, this thesis focuses on the new influences of online writing environments on writing culture. Through the process of research and narrative, Bishop's ideals and goals from 2003 are compared to the composition pedagogy and experiences of a graduate student instructor of composition in James Madison University's Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication Program in 2011. With the help of communication theory by Barbara Warnick and Carolyn Miller, a modern viewpoint clarifies. It is necessary at this point to perform another round of research that is focused on theorists who emphasize the pedagogical attributes of teaching creative nonfiction and technology in first-year composition.

Section I: The Identity Crisis of Disciplinary Division

GWRTC 103 is a workshop and conference-based writing course that emphasizes the process of constructing focused, logical, coherent, and well-supported essays. The students will employ research and formal documentation to produce writing stylistically appropriate to its audience, purpose, and occasion. The course also places emphasis on editing for clarity and control of conventions. Instruction in writing and research includes critical analysis of primary and secondary sources through a series of reading and writing assignments. Students are prepared to use reading and writing in their personal, academic, and civic lives.

As a first time graduate student instructor of composition, I came into my composition class with the room full of students expecting literary analysis and grammatical studies. I was young—probably painfully so—since I had yet to train myself to try heels, attempt a hairstyle other than a ponytail, and find that tone of voice instructors require. To my students, I imagine I made education youthful and perhaps even cool, but in truth, I was incredibly unsure. To hide this sense of insecurity, in my very first lecture, I smiled with my arms broad and said, “This is not an English class.” For those students who had hated the English courses of high school, it was a relief. I could see the tenseness of their shoulders drop. For me, this statement was a mistake. Suddenly, I had established my own pedagogical identity based on the academic discipline of my department. It felt right at the time—a decision to finally put aside the English department that had given me a short-lived identity, and move on to a new identity crisis of my own. Indeed, it seemed that I was moving into the unchartered.

Then something changed. Five months later, class started again in the typical rounds semesters always make, but this time I was reluctant to make the same blanket statement that I made in my very first semester of teaching. The identity of my course and purpose of my role seemed to have changed. The reasoning for this discrepancy in my teaching is, of course, complicated.

For the second semester in a row, I'm teaching a first-year college class entitled GWRTC 103, also known as Critical Reading and Writing. Unlike other universities where rhetoric and composition is housed in the English department, our organization is uniquely housed in the Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication program (WRTC). My course is divided by the expectations of general education requirements, writing and composition divisions, rhetorical theory and technical communication. It is also the only writing course required for all incoming James Madison University (JMU) students, except for a small handful who transfer in with the credits and another small handful that pass the test to skip over the class.

To further complicate the process, I, like most of my fellow graduate students, have gone through life dabbling in writing and creating. At heart, I am a creative writer, though I have also had the roles of an editor, a public relations contributor, a magazine writer and designer, and a whole score of other things that I have somehow managed to fit into the ink of a résumé. My unique experiences have fashioned what I value most in a writing course; similarly, each of my colleagues is unique in her own experiences. Many of my colleagues have an understanding of composition that has greater depth and diversity than mine. In general, our differences and unusual viewpoints create a great, postmodern frustration regarding what should be taught, and what should matter in our composition courses.

For graduate students just starting out, any sense of departmental argumentation or even indecisiveness seems to leave the whole system shaky. Even the course description of the class (stated above) sounds like a hostile negotiation. For example, the inclusion of both the workshop and the conference in GWRTC 103 is an issue since most instructors typically choose one or the other in their class design. Others believe the definitions are blurry: Does a group conference count as a small workshop? By including both the conference and the workshop in the course description, the writers of the description were attempting to leave the choice between conferences and workshops up to interpretation in order to satisfy all teacher-types. In addition, the concept that the course needs to connect to the students' personal, academic and civic lives is daunting in its breadth, and perhaps wrought with a little too much expectation. Again, the fact that all three emphases are included in the description reveals the negotiation behind this small piece of literature. Rather than valuing a specific composition viewpoint, the writers of this statement chose to include these three variations of composition theory together. When I wrote my first syllabus, I translated this course description into careful encouragement for me to figure out the balance between the academic, personal and civic in my course.

To be clear: Independence in course design is not a bad thing. Individuality is necessary and each instructor is inherently, psychologically, behaviorally, and sometimes stubbornly, individual. Furthermore, graduate students in my department did receive guidance to discover their pedagogical individuality in a support group-like style, an experience that is immeasurably helpful. Yet, how easy it could be if the course itself had its own identity, such as one that follows closely to the traditional focus on research and devotion to logic, or a rhetoric department's emphasis on persuasion. In general, it feels as

though graduate students in my situation without an established pedagogical identity to claim must then build their own identity, so to speak, from the ground up.

Composition and rhetorical theorists, however, make building an identity extremely difficult because composition theory is commonly based upon the disciplinary divisions academicians know so very, very well. The best example I can give is my recent struggle with allowing my students to use first-person in their research papers, a task that seems at a glance to be simple, even trivial. In truth, however, I had always been taught to avoid “I” entirely, the logic being that my viewpoint was important if only treated in the same distant manner as my research sources. Academia’s great belief in the logical as hierarchical over the personal caused me to insist upon avoidance of first-person narrative during the very semester in which I thought I could break away from the traditional English expectations.

I have since tried to shift my thinking on this issue. I try to support Deborah H. Holdstein and David Bleich’s call for recognition of these traditional rules and what they mean for students. The authors note, “...matters of writing pedagogy are closely related to matters of writing conventions in the humanities” (2). Therefore, by encouraging students to avoid first-person, I am, like many other composition instructors, laying down rules that will further the academy’s neglect of the personal and the pathos that can draw a college student into writing itself. No matter how many conversations I have with my students regarding when to use “I” and why we use “I,” it is more likely to be that incessant rule, rather than the class discussion, that will later emerge in a student’s writing.

My support of first-person is especially pertinent when my students page through their textbooks. Of the 30 readings in the text we used this past year, 23 use first-person in to relate the reader to a series of socially focused studies. If the textbook presents research with first-person, then I question conforming student papers to old academic expectations.

To catch our students' attention, the text incorporates the very thing many academic discourses reject.

Perhaps more disturbing is the fact that, despite the obvious first-person narratives used throughout our text, my students do not ask why they cannot involve themselves in the writing by using first-person narrative in their own research papers. Because they never ask “why?” it seems as if the students will never really acknowledge the freedom inherent within writing itself; they will never recognize that great potential writers have to first know the rules and then break those rules at appropriate times. Their acquiescence could reveal two aspects of their education—the students may be in absolute agreement with the rules of the system as espoused by other courses and by high school composition, or how my required general education writing course assignments mean little more than the grade that they receive. What students do not understand, and what many instructors choose to overlook is the fact that many of these rules that we uphold, the avoidance of “I” being one of many, are driven not just by tradition, but by institutional division as well. My education in composition pedagogy taught me to be comfortable with the personal, as did my creative exploration of poetry writing. Classes that focused on literature or technical communication claimed the “I” proved bias and an untrustworthy tone. First-person is, therefore, oddly enough, a hot topic.

In order to chip away at my insecurities and perhaps my frustrations with such division, I went in search of a middle ground: a theory-based viewpoint that encourages the inclusion of the student's personal voice in addition to academic research. Peter Elbow, someone I came to admire as I explored the incorporation of my creative writing focus into composition, came closest to my reaction. Elbow first notes the overwhelming influence of academic discourse in the composition class. He claims, “(academic) Discourse carries

power” (135), and then notes that despite the power of the academic, “...life is long and college is short ” (136). In “Freshman Composition and Creative Writing: Another Gap to Bridge,” Fred D. White is more intense in his explanation as he calls for a similar emphasis on the student writer rather than the academic discourse umbrella: “I cannot think of a greater service than helping students to concentrate on themselves as individuals committed to ideas—to being writers in exactly that sense. Without commitment the notion of authentic voice ossifies into yet another ‘step’ in the freshman composition catechism” (4). In other words, what truly matters to a student is not whether or not her writing will be accepted into an academic journal, but whether or not her individuality can show through a memo, an email or a journal entry. When academic discourse becomes the focus of composition, then are we, in the big scheme of an individual student’s writing potential, truly being as pragmatic as we claim?

The outcome of this small piece of research allowed me to recognize two major issues within my department and within composition theory in general. First, departmental conversation, like that which produced the course description of GWRTC 103, is tricky and often tentative; the situation in which this conversation occurs is often a departmental meeting that can feel threatening even when the situation is designed to avoid such negativity. This makes conversation feel uncomfortable and unwanted. Second, conversation via theory and publications rarely sounds like a conversation at all, but more of a series of declarations within each author’s own sense of disciplinary borders.

These issues are evident in programs and universities across the board. Michael Moghtader notes a similar effect in his English doctoral program in which graduate students interested in composition do not receive the same treatment as those who follow disciplinary boundaries. He writes:

If, however, English doctoral students could begin to see in their educational experiences the opportunities and encouragement to wrestle with the tensions that inform English studies work, they could begin to cultivate new professional subjectivities. In order to do so, graduate students will need to resist the pressure to conform to preexisting disciplinary subject positions and will need to challenge them with alternatives. This will entail thinking more imaginatively about the linkages among the various experiences they undergo during the process of professional subject formation. (369)

The idea of challenging graduate students with alternatives is truly the kind of tagline I have been looking for—the idea that the many alternatives graduate students have in our program is a positive influence, an empowering one, one that has the potential to allow the student to become a self-confident teacher. But why does the availability of alternatives work for me? Why is it that I came into teaching already choosing sides? Perhaps it is because of the conversations that failed to help me, when a professor looked down on the “touchy-feely” side of writing, or when another professor devalued the academic viewpoint as useful for only a minority of the student population. Still another claimed that creative writing is above the average freshman student’s capabilities. The intensity of these conversations is still part of disciplinary divisions even if those divisions were supposed to have vanished when so many theories were pushed into one program.

The linkages that Moghtader mentions are very important to me because I do not fall within one of the sections of our department. I enjoy the rhetorical aspect of language analysis, the practical quality of information design and web coding, the teaching theory of composition, and above all, the creative necessity of voice and craft in all writing. Thus, in my school years and in my professional employments I have merged these concepts

together. My instinctual reaction is to recognize such linkages and thus make my foci pertinent. The majority of theory-based publications a graduate student comes across are devoutly focused on division. In the two years of my Master's program, I have been in search of an author who can merge my interests in the creative, professional and academic into composition pedagogy, perhaps someone who was not looking for a fight, and someone looking to make linkages as well.

A professor recommended Wendy Bishop's work to me because I seemed to focus on creative writing as a support for identity within community. Through this encouragement, I found the piece that filled the hole: Bishop's article, "Suddenly Sexy: Creative Nonfiction Rear-ends Composition."¹ In this piece, Bishop presents an example of how to capture what matters in a composition course—including the student's empowerment, the necessity of creativity and where disciplinary lines should begin to fade. For me, this article was a diving board into the frustrations and successes that is composition pedagogy theory—the points that we salivate over.

Bishop moves through "Suddenly Sexy" establishing the necessity for faith in the potential of the student, in the voice of the writer and the value of narrative. While valuing the self-reflective qualities of personal writing, she calls for those in academia to question the institutionalization of the writing course, or "the degree to which we have been socialized into the institutions we serve" ("Suddenly Sexy" 270). This statement, among many others, encouraged me to take "Suddenly Sexy" and explore the ways in which the departmental relationships and expectations have caused theory-focused conversations to lose flexibility and meaning as terms become confusing, thought processes become narrowed, and

¹ To maintain brevity, Bishop's article will from this point on be referred to as "Suddenly Sexy."

disciplinary separations further cause composition theorists to struggle to have effective conversations if they manage to make conversation at all.

This is where Bishop comes into my life as a guide to departmental negotiation, understanding and flexibility. In addition to my exploration of her work, it is my goal to pinpoint the places at which Bishop too must recognize where she must drop her own disciplinary boundaries. In the process of producing a thesis on this subject I hoped that the exploration of Bishop's work and my mindset would help me to discover what ultimately changed my pedagogical viewpoint from my first semester of teaching to my second. Above all, it is necessary for this piece to consider the problem at hand: How should composition theorists (and graduate student instructors of composition) reflect upon and even reconsider their viewpoints on disciplinary separations?

In order to even ask this question, I must first expand upon the definitions that reflect the confusing discourse of composition theory. I have chosen to focus on "expressivism," "creative nonfiction" and "narrative," all of which are deeply rooted in Wendy Bishop's intentions in "Suddenly Sexy" and in my own pedagogical choices over the last year.

Section II: The Muddying of Terms

I originally assumed that my work was that of an idealistic expressivist. In my experience, expressive theory connects composition to personal experience and written expression. This initial understanding of expressivism, however, did not support the depth of the study itself. Expressivism, a seemingly simplistic sect of composition, is far from definable. The muddiness of the term acts as evidence of the disorganization and frustration within composition theory. Consistently distracted by its own identity crisis, the expressive has been tackling its own issues of identity and critique for years.

In “Suddenly Sexy,” Bishop makes strong points when she notes the issues that expressivism contends with. She emphasizes the fear of new genres, the elitist view of literature, the unnecessary belief that literary writing is separate from student writing, and the overall lack of “belief-oriented composition pedagogy” for expressivist instructors (“Suddenly Sexy 268). These conflicts are evident throughout Bishop’s work, just as they are evident in the minute details of syllabus design. The instructor who seems to support everything—writing as therapy, literature studies, research and personal narrative—simultaneously seems to support nothing at all. This conflict includes smaller and less obvious issues, such as the struggle of narrative voice as a classroom tool and the odd departmental inclusion of creative writing.

To make sense of this situation I must first define, or at least attempt to define, the terms that matter the most in this situation. The best window into the confusion and inconsistency of composition theory is an exploration of working terms. In this section, as carefully and diligently as possible, I will focus on the theoretical definitions of “expressive” theory, “creative nonfiction,” and “narrative”.

Expressivism

First, let's begin with expressivism, a complicated and important sect of composition pedagogy. In "Expressive Pedagogy: Practice/Theory, Theory/Practice," Christopher Burnham defines expressivist pedagogy as very dependent upon the empowerment of the individual. He notes,

"Expressivist pedagogy employs free writing, journal keeping, reflective writing, and small-group dialogic collaborative response to foster a writer's aesthetic, cognitive, and moral development. Expressivist pedagogy encourages, even insists upon, a sense of writer presence even in research-based writing" (19).

He further notes the complicated relationship between theory and practice in expressive studies—"Practice is often based in intuition or convention and precedes theorizing" (21).

The emergence of this form of thought is difficult to pin down. In "Politics and Ordinary Language, A Defense of Expressivist Rhetorics," Thomas O'Donnell attempts to point out the historical movement of expressivism through the works of Ken Macrorie, Donald Murray and Peter Elbow as a reaction to the passionless traditionalism that enveloped composition theory (438). In this light, expressivism began as both a connection of the writer's voice to personal identity and perhaps even a rebellious option in which the writer could take a chance and break the rules.

Burnham's description of the critiques of expressivism is focused on the division as "untheorized and ideologically debased form" (28). In addition, he emphasizes that "...expressivism's concern with the individual and authentic voice directs the students away from social and political problems..." (28). The reaction to such critique, Burnham notes, is evident in recent attempts to form theoretical basis and social awareness through feminism and multicultural identity (29).

Burnham establishes a great outline of the conflicts among expressivists. These issues typically deal with the following:

- the pedagogical and personal distraction of individualized viewpoints
- the lack of theory for expressive work
- and the strong argument against the use of expressive theory

Bishop emphasizes these same issues in “Suddenly Sexy” in her own way. Her focus on the value of structured assignments supports process-oriented and class-involved writing processes rather than the voice-dependent “authentic” assignments similar to creative writing workshops—assignments that overly-emphasize the individual in composition (“Suddenly Sexy” 270). The lack of theory is represented in her general call to action. According to Bishop, the need for “a proactive, belief-oriented composition pedagogy” can be assisted by those willing to gather their expertise and develop pedagogical theory (“Suddenly Sexy” 268, 269). Finally, Bishop wards off the critiques against expressivists by simply accepting expressivist study as composition’s goal. At no point does she ever question the right of the student to express herself. After all, for Bishop, this is writing’s goal.

Bishop fully supports Burnham’s description of the writer’s expressivist presence in her command for others to support such empowerment in the student writer through creative nonfiction (“Suddenly Sexy” 269). What’s interesting here is that though Bishop is fully focused on the expressive viewpoint, she completely avoids the label in general. The omission of the term “expressive” foreshadows a difficult concept for me to understand: How is it that even one of the most commanding expressive theorists chooses to avoid the label both for herself and her theories?

To further study this odd conflict, consider that issue with individuality among expressivists as a distraction from a unified form of expressive theory. “Expressivist” acts as a label for those composition instructors who value the personal perspective that is often associated with creative writing. The capacity in which they do so, however, is not consistent from class to class. Fulkerson questions the common definition of the expressive course when he notes the differences between the intentions of expressivist instructors:

Some expressive teachers are interested in helping students mature and become more self-aware, more reflective. Others are interested in writing as healing or therapy. Some are most interested in creative self-expression. Some have students choose their own topics; others have concerns they want students to address. And another sort of expressivism involves asking students to write the classic personal essay. (665)

While he reveals the disciplinary focus as an odd combination of divisions — Can’t one use creative self expression as a form of therapy? — Fulkerson does manage to point out the confusion of the very term that composition instructors build pedagogies and personal philosophies upon.

If individuality is the expressivist mantra, then little cooperation or unity can be expected from those who consider themselves to be naturally expressive. In the same sense, then, the expressivist instructor will expect individuality from the student. There are arguments as to the positive and negative effects of being so very individualistic, perhaps even narcissistic.

This is where the value of the “personal” is derived—a belief in the student’s necessity of establishing personal voice and identity within expressive-based writing. Much like Fulkerson’s emphasis on the great breadth of expressive study, one could also note the

great breadth of what it means to render personal writing. For example, in “The Social Construction of Expressivist Pedagogy,” Karen Surman Paley defines expressive pedagogy as that which embraces narrative with the incorporation of “I” (181). Expressivist writing then embraces both first-person accounts and narrative story lines that focus on the personal experiences of the writer. However, Wendell Harris notes in “Reflections on the Peculiar Status of the Personal Essay,” how the personal is arguably applicable to any piece written by an author, not just that which directly uses first-person (934). While Bishop argues against Harris’s statements, his argument does make an important point regarding the specificity and broadness associated with the “personal” expression in expressivist writing. It seems that even if the expressive group was reeling to prove itself in theoretical establishment, the inability to come to agreement on something as simple as the personal is a glaring issue.

O’Donnell offers my preferred approach in which the “personal” that expressivism offers is not defined as narrowly as Paley’s “I,” and does not have as consistent an identity as Harris wants to pin down. Rather, the personal is an innate relationship of individual viewpoint to the “conditions of language and its users,” with O’Donnell’s specific examples revolving around politics and policy (432).

Again, we have an insistence of that personal writing form, but the definition that is so directly related to expressive work does not actually pull the individual away from society, but instead studies the immersion and evolution of the individual within it. This is what I want my expressive theory to embrace: the self-awareness and personal control that allows the writer to honestly view herself within her environment. So few theorists, however, define their version of expressive theory in this manner that I originally wondered if my version is somehow inconsistent or perhaps if my theories do not belong within the expressive realm at all. I am lucky to have discovered Paley and O’Donnell, in addition to Elbow, who all

seem to connect my viewpoint to what it is I hope I can cultivate in my classroom and what I personally define expressive pedagogy to be.

Despite the usefulness of my research in pursuing my own pedagogy, it became clear in this process that expressive theory has fewer publications and authors than other forms. Herein lies the problem with the lack of theory, as Burnham and O'Donnell point out. In my experience, if you consider yourself to be an expressivist, then you are immediately considered to be a fan of Peter Elbow's work. This does not necessarily apply however, as evident in the fact that while Bishop regularly cites Elbow throughout her work, Paley does not show the same open support of Elbow. In fact, Paley spends much of the text in "The Social Construction of 'Expressivist' Pedagogy" questioning the assumption that expressivism has an individualistic mentality that almost intentionally alienates the writer from the social world. In Paley's view, this assumption is directly related to Elbow's independence-driven view of writing. Instead she calls for a clarification of theory and recognition of the intense influence of culture and social awareness in expressive thought.

The concept that every expressivist must fully embrace Elbow seems to be an assumption of what expressive theory entails. In regards to this assumption, O'Donnell notes:

Because expressivists seemed uninterested in forging their own theory of knowledge, others rushed in to do it for them—theorists who were not at all sympathetic to expressivist aims and methods. The critiques that have resulted from these enterprises are, in my view, critiques of *something*, but not critiques of expressivism, as I understand it. (425)

The unfortunate, postmodern philosophy of the statement reflects my own view of expressive, as well as Bishop's and Paley's very different frustrations. It is evident that when you dive into the definition of the expressive, inconsistencies are everywhere.

Thus, from all of the influences evident in Paley's, O'Donnell's and Bishop's work, such as the confusion of what is actually "personal," the overwhelming value of the individual and the new theory that argues against it, one can hope that expressivism is currently defined by its confusion, but it will soon be defined by its evolution— that hope that both Bishop and Paley give to the theory form.

Consistent, public self-reflection is, ultimately, the way to solve the final issue with expressive theory in composition studies. In her work, "Rhetorical Studies, Communications, and Composition Studies: Disparate or Overlapping Discourse Communities?" Ann Beaufort states, "to add further doubt about the validity of composition studies as a viable discipline, it often is equated to one of its emphases— expressivism—by the outside of the discourse community..." (236). Subtle and unexplained jabs like this one are comparable to the reaction to any theory form that is distinctly young and unorganized. O'Donnell notes that such claims really have no basis or no specific detail to attribute the problem to (424). Indeed, even if Beaufort were to clarify her claim, what she claims expressive is would probably be very different from what occurs in an expressive course. The naysayers are as confused, if not more so, than the very practitioners of expressive theory.

Despite these arguments, as Paley calls for a truce and Bishop calls for understanding, the group of composition expressivists grows with the increasing number of MFA graduates who now teach composition. Bishop pays special attention to this fact because of the lack of attention given to craft. She notes, "This lack is being addressed by

the increasing number of MFA-credentialed teachers of first-year writing...These teachers are part of a generation that has been required to mix practice with theory and that feels encouraged to write in more than one genre” (“Suddenly Sexy” 264). In other words, that consistent expressive hint in pedagogical choices will not simply vanish.

Thus, I am left with the hope that though the expressivist label seems to be more confused than applicable to any single theory, as Fulkerson points out, perhaps the potential of new MFA and creative writing professors moving into composition will help to build a sense of unity in the current expressive view. It is also my hope that what Paley claims in her work is true: this seeming indecisiveness of identity is also a sign of flexibility (197).

Regardless of my hopes, and regardless of the scrambling calls of action from Paley and Bishop, the indecisiveness of expressive theory ultimately hurts the reputation and dependability of expressivists in the eyes of composition theorists outside of the discourse community. This further distresses those idealistic students, such as myself, who are moving into the field. As I take in the definitions of expressivism, the far-reaching emphases on “I,” individuality, culture and craft, there is a point at which I question the terminology. At what point is a term completely overturned by someone looking to change the viewpoints of critics? When should we leave the term “expressivism” in the dust for the very sake of p.r.? I did not discover that I was an expressivist, but I was told that my theories seemed to support it, and yet I find that my practicality, my view of academia as a necessary evil, and my consistent return to the writer’s self awareness *within* culture have all made me somewhat separate, somewhat of an alien within the work of my own group of theorists.

Creative Nonfiction

While expressivism was scary in its indecisive theory, creative nonfiction was an exciting addition to my own syllabus. I found that my students could truly enjoy that first personal narrative, and this made me wish to connect their academic prospects to their personal ones. The fact that few people understood what I meant when I referenced “creative nonfiction,” and few understood what it could mean to be both creative and (possibly) truthful, made it hard for me to justify the topic itself. Bishop describes creative nonfiction to be “the fourth genre” (“Suddenly Sexy” 259) or a sexier term than “personal writing” (“Suddenly Sexy” 272). She comes to equate the definition with that of the literary essay, eventually evolving it into the “artistic personal essay” (“Suddenly Sexy” 261). These issues cause two major problems with accepting creative nonfiction into expressivist pedagogy:

- Creative nonfiction’s definition itself seems too blurry and often inconsistent
- This blurriness allows those who wish to divide creative nonfiction between departments to do so

For example, through a progression of logic within his own thought process and the works of others, including Thoreau and F. Scott Fitzgerald, Brett Lott comes to the conclusion that while creative nonfiction is nearly impossible to define, the genre does allow the writer to record life itself, to find order in life, to proclaim the self as the explorer of life, and to question the difference of wisdom and folly, among others (3). Finally, Lott makes an important umbrella statement: according to Lott, nonfiction is “our responsibility to answer to and for our lives” (5). As broad as this is, of course Lott’s statement makes sense, particularly in terms of the use of creative nonfiction within first year composition courses. Self-awareness is a common doctrine of both Bishop and Elbow, one that encourages the

first-year composition student to come to a mature recognition of the self and how writing can present the personal.

While Lott's definition makes sense, others seem more confident in their descriptions. Take, for example, "Variations on a Theme of Putting Nonfiction in Its Place," in which Robert L. Root defines creative nonfiction in four ways, three of which suit my purposes here. The first is the creative writing version of creative nonfiction, or the recording of "...observed, perceived or recollected experience" (290). Root's second definition notes creative nonfiction in terms of literary genres, including "...the personal essay, the memoir, narrative reportage, and expressive critical writing" (290). Bishop's own article would fall into one of these categories. Finally, the third definition is in direct reference to composition: "...the expressive, transactional and poetic prose texts generated by students in college composition courses" (290). In general, the issue that Root points out with his versions of the creative nonfiction definition is that the composition version of the genre and the creative writing version of the genre do not overlap. Further studies need to explore whether or not composition and creative nonfiction theory can actually coincide in practice.

Despite the need for more theory and research, creative nonfiction seems to directly (almost indignantly) cross the boundary lines of academic disciplinary divisions. There are numerous examples of how the genre may be claimed as one form but questioned in it simultaneously. Perhaps it is easiest to pay attention to the differing names for creative nonfiction. "Literary nonfiction" is the more traditional name, which Phillip Lopate, in "Curiouser and Curiouser: The Practice of Nonfiction Today," seems to prefer. He suggests this since noncreative nonfiction would be difficult to come by, though he also questions the philosophy and pretentiousness of claiming your own work as "literary" rather than

“creative” (3). The name “New Journalism” seems to crop up more often than not in literary theory that discusses current creative nonfiction. A smaller division within creative nonfiction, according to David L. Eason, this form of journalism was established in the 1960’s and 70’s, when reporters were applying literary techniques to journalistic stories (Eason 55). None of the sources that I used to establish these different names and expand upon their meanings touched on the role of creative nonfiction (or any of its counterparts) in composition pedagogy. It seems that from the perspective of most people who study creative nonfiction forms and historical literature, composition is far from their focus.

One must confess, it seems that Bishop is truly going out on a ledge by requesting composition and creative writing combine. Granted, with the expressivist dependency on the personal and New Journalism’s acceptance of the personal displayed back-to-back as I have done here, it seems that these genres could be ideologically comparable. The problem, perhaps, is that just as Bishop avoids using the expressive label, she also avoids expanding on her concept of creative nonfiction. Specificity, as we’ve seen with past troubles in the establishment of expressivist theory, is truly key in communicating to pedagogy experts outside of the discourse community. Thus, because Bishop leaves creative nonfiction so vague, she seems to make the same mistakes as previous theorists.

Regardless of this flaw in “Suddenly Sexy,” Bishop’s point matches the point Fred D. White notes the value of “creative writing” skills in other genres. He presents an important point:

Yes, “creative writing,” in the old sense, has been overemphasized; yes, it has been used almost rebelliously to counteract what had been perceived as an excessively pragmatic approach to first-year composition. But we must not allow the misuse of an idea to blind us to the intrinsic worth of an idea (3).

White is not directly referencing creative nonfiction, but his reference to creative writing genres as the rebellious form worth considering seems to apply to creative nonfiction perfectly. After all, creative nonfiction provides the composition instructor with a sound genre that's well-respected and seems to directly walk the line between artistic and practical, just as expressive seems to walk the same line within composition theory.

The issue, however, is that if composition can claim creative nonfiction, others might become frustrated with the genre's movement into seemingly elementary areas of academic pedagogy. Bishop's consistent reference to avoiding elitism applies here as well. Consider Root's definition of creative nonfiction in which composition's definition of creative nonfiction is separated from the literary definition (290). Then consider how Ann Beaufort instantly questioned the academic standing of composition because of its closeness to expressive theories (236). Some may find that creative nonfiction applicability to multiple academic disciplines, including traditional English studies, communication, and mass media (for New Journalism, in particular) should not also include lowly composition studies.

I have yet to really tackle creative nonfiction in my own class, perhaps because it seems too difficult to explain to my students that writing is innately creative. In addition, we typically have that common lesson about bias and truth, in which I always ask if truth is possible in any written form. Even as we touch on the issues affiliated with creative nonfiction, the process of including it in the curriculum gets some eyebrow raises, some questions regarding the fact that so few academics can really define "creative nonfiction" themselves. In the end, when I stand in front of my students, I wrack my brain for a way to transition their thought process from "the personal" to the definition of "creative nonfiction." For me, the genre's resources and theory is severely lacking for students at the composition level. Thus, I revert to explaining to my students that everything we create is

somehow based upon a story. For me— and perhaps this weakness of mine will change with experience—the narrative is simply an easier genre to explain. This leads me to my next definition.

Narrative

Despite my claim that narrative is somehow easy to explain, I made the mistake in my second semester of teaching to explain narrative in an awful and confusing fashion: “We even see our life events as plotlines, so why should your research paper be any different? When you explore your sources, why should your words not entertain?” I simply couldn’t explain my way of that one, and of course it became even more difficult when I got the research paper that sounded far too “poetic” for its own good. Initially, I couldn’t even explain how to clean it up, make it professional and make it personal simultaneously once I realized that this whole narrative mess was my fault.

Thus, unlike creative nonfiction, which typically needs clarification, the term “narrative” is very clear and obvious to students. Of course, their view of the narrative genre typically includes defined storylines and characters, all of which are somehow reminiscent of a short fiction piece they read in high school. Of course, there is far more to it than that, beginning first with the definition of narrative itself.

When you ask one of my students what narrative means, you will inevitably receive the response, “a story,” which, of course, does not manage to clarify the issue. A story requires the progression of a plotline or procession of events, perhaps some characters with the inevitable conflict, a beginning, and an end. Textbooks take this simplicity one step further: Consider Heather Sellers’s text on creative writing narratives in which she divides the story into its necessary pieces. These pieces include the bits, or the “tiny moments,

always images, that show us who people in your piece really are and what they are doing” (281). “Bits” are gathered together to make “beats,” the structural elements that influence the storyline, and “beats” create scenes (Sellers 281-285). In this case, the story is a compilation of steps toward a final endpoint, or the conclusion.

The trick here is to recognize that the term goes further: In “From Narrative Representation to Narrative Use: Towards Limits of Definition,” David Rudrum notes “...one could argue, however, that narrative is indeed involved in every piece of communication that moves through a process of events,” though he later adds on the necessity of “narratology,” or the special details that “the structural interrelation between the various parts of the narrative whole,” and then further questions the broad capacity of this definition as it does not note the original intentions of the writer (199-201).

Narratology, however, from Mieke Bal’s perspective in “The Point of Narratology,” can be difficult to theoretically justify—Bal notes how narratology cannot define narrative as something that fits the text; less traditional, academic and known texts are repressed by this belief (730). Bal notes: “Instead, narrative must be considered a discursive mode which affects semiotic objects in variable degrees” (730). The “variable degrees” part is what is important here—if one were to state that narrative, as a discursive mode, only applies to one concrete form without any variance, then the forms that narrative can theoretically take-on will be greatly narrowed. Others support this need for flexibility within the term as well—a sign that theory itself needs to loosen its hold on the concrete concepts of a definition.

James Phelan, for example, emphasizes the necessity of recognizing the author’s original intent, like Rudrum, and poses a viewpoint similar to Bal’s focus on the variable degrees of narrative. In Phelan’s emphasis on the “rhetorical dimension,” he establishes the importance of the author’s purpose and, in particular, how the author’s purpose influences

the narrative or lyrical quality of the piece (8, 31). Ultimately, for Phelan, the value of the author's argument is dependent on the judgment of the viewer (33). With this detail, he is taking the label of "narrative" and establishing its definition based on the audience's reaction, a very different concept than the concrete narrative story our students are accustomed to. If narrative is on a sliding scale that is both dependent on the author's purpose and the audience's understanding, then the label of narrative itself is problematic. It is all relative to the time, culture and purpose of the written piece.

For example, on the opposite side of the spectrum of variance, Bishop, is focused on how narrative is studied in academia, in particular, the ways in which we divide it between disciplines. Bishop sees the divisions as: "Exposition and argument were left to us, not narrative and description, which were ceded to creative writing" ("Suddenly Sexy" 265). Others reflect on similar separation, including Shirley Geok-lin Lim in "The Strangeness of Creative Writing: An Institutional Query." She notes how the rendering of narrative writing is not valued in English departments, while research methods are (154). Peter Elbow agrees—he notes the lack of English courses that actually render written experience for the student in general (137). It seems that despite such flexibility and variance within the term, "narrative" is still sequestered from certain academic studies.

We are now in a situation comparable to that of creative nonfiction in which we are left with a slightly blurry mess that is up for grabs among departments, but what is different for narrative is the fact that the process of narrative creation comes so naturally to human consciousness. It is possible to theorize about narrative's structural components or academic belonging, but there is an issue in doing so:

- Is it possible to abstain from writing narratives if we actually think in narrative formats?

This issue is largely in reference to the fact that narrative does not seem to have the same barriers that disciplines wish to give it. With creative nonfiction, of course, the experts in the field typically work within the literary critique side of the English department or the creative writing side, and sometimes journalism departments make a claim as well. While narrative seems to run a similar track, the process of producing narrative itself is not as controllable as a specified genre like creative nonfiction. Instead, we typically communicate in story forms, thereby allowing the narrative to transgress from one paper to the next, from one scientific lab report to a memo or shared joke. Jerome Bruner states it fantastically in “Life As Narrative,” in which he explains, “We seem to have no other way of describing ‘lived time’ save in the form of narrative” (692). It would make sense then that, when we reflect on life we create autobiographies, when we reflect on a day we speak in narrative forms, and perhaps when we visualize our world and experiences, every process is a narrative in itself.

If this is the case, then narrative isn’t solely applicable to Bal’s narratology background or Bishop’s departmental claims. Instead, narrative is dependent on the cultural situation in which it is presented and thus academic foci cannot blanket everything that falls within the realm of “the story.” Arguments focused on controlling the narrative voice are baseless as long as that narrative is appropriate to its audience and situation.

At a recent MLA conference, however, I experienced the argument against narrative in academic scholarship in which the cons of the process were introduced to the crowd. In the speaker’s case, he viewed combined scholarship and narrative as a disaster for them both. Neither genre, he said, could improve or flex its potential with the other hanging over it. It bewildered me to see such blatant separation between the story and the academic, as though one does not deserve the other. Based on the many versions of the narrative

definition that I have found, including “bits and scenes” and Phelan’s understanding of far more complicated theoretical attributes of written narrative, it seems that it would be silly to try to tack down narrative storytelling as separate from academic scholarship.

Bishop would reply to this MLA presentation by stating that narrative serves as a connection to the audience. In this light, research’s dependence on the author’s ethos should be balanced by the pathos of the writer-audience relationship. Bishop’s viewpoint is apparently a unique one, in which personal narrative can influence and support an academic argument. The speaker at the MLA conference was fishing for an innate sense of separation that is simply, according to Bishop, unnecessary.

Bishop believes that through the process of personal narrative, the composition student would have a greater chance to connect to a topic. Bishop refers to this as “writable experience” (“Suddenly Sexy” 270). In the same vein, White mentions “intensity of involvement” (5). Passion and personal connection to narrative reveal the prospect of creating and reading narrative forms. Statements like Bishop’s reveal the potential of narrative forms, particularly when students use them to self-reflect. Such exercises give students the potential to be aware of their own lives, their own work and the creations of others, but to do so, they need to be able to understand narrative in its new and traditional forms and to produce narrative as well.

I am going to pause now on narrative—the definition itself flows into complicated theories of the narrator’s role, the rhetorical influences and the necessity of it in popular culture. Rather, I want to look back on my introduction to the narrative definition in which I had difficulty ascertaining how to describe it to my students. In much of my research, I have come across several statements from multiple authors who claim that there is not enough expressive theory to fully explain how to apply narrative within composition courses. Again,

it is obvious that there is simply not enough theory in this discourse community that can justify expressive logic within composition. Narrative mingles in both creative nonfiction and expressivism. There is one detail that makes these two different concepts familiar to each other and ultimately what allows Bishop to make the leaps in “Suddenly Sexy”:
narrative is inescapable.

* * *

What can one take from a section that is entirely meant to emphasize the confusion of terms? For me now, it is disconcerting to even use “expressivist,” “creative nonfiction” or “narrative” in conversation because of that interior voice that wonders if what’s being vocalized is even clear. Take, for example, the confusing negativity toward prospects of expressivism (prospects that may not exist), or the many titles and terms that are used to separate creative nonfiction from other genres, or the theoretical definition of narrative as an indefinable cultural force. All of these details lead to a web of theory, pieces both new and old, sometimes revolutionary and sometimes repetitive. This web of theory also reveals the confusing relationships between theorists who disagree or add to each other’s work.

For me, this environment was bewildering. Because I see myself deeply involved in all of these issues, and because I see myself teaching the prospects of all three terms, it is difficult to know how to clarify these words for myself. This is where you’ll find the point of these definitions and the reasoning for forcing such confusion on a reader. What I needed at the point when I entered the scene of composition theory was a guide—a piece of theory or advice that can clear away the confusion to point out what it is that matters in this collection of voices. I found such a guide in Bishop’s work.

Section III: Bishop's Prowess

In this section I want to take Bishop's piece, "Suddenly Sexy" and pick it apart in order to convey what it is that makes her work seem so understanding, cooperative, even kind. At some point, it is time to move on from the confusion of definitions and conflicting theory and move toward a sense of pedagogical security. When we look at the terms that composition and rhetoric studies have slowly morphed, muddied and even bastardized, the best option for peace of mind is to find a guide within the collection of research in the discipline. In the past I have called Bishop's work "My Point of Clarity," and by this, I meant the piece of literature that can balance the arguments of multiple disciplines, issues and genre arguments and gently approach conflict with a practical and good-natured viewpoint.

An individual must find this kind of inspirational, supportive piece on her own because ultimately interior confusion is personalized, and so too is the solution. In my situation, for a graduate student instructor of composition scrambling to solidify her viewpoints and justify her teaching philosophy, Bishop's work acts as a sort of reassuring muse as she promotes the sharing of genres, welcomes colleagues from across departmental divides, and does it with political prowess.

I was initially surprised that the "Suddenly Sexy" piece seemed to capture me more than Bishop's other work in which she presents similar calls for change. Bishop has, after all, a history of exploring how shifts in education theory have affected personal writing in composition. Even more than just research on disciplinary shifts, however, Bishop's published articles and anthologies produce a consistent call for change. For evidence of this, just consider her titles: "Learning Our Own Ways to Situate Composition and Feminist Studies in the English Department"; and *Colors of a Different Horse: Rethinking Creative Writing*

and Pedagogy. Each hints or demands something new, something to reconsider, something that imperfect theorists and instructors have left behind.

Stylistically, the voice Bishop offers in "Suddenly Sexy" is comparably meeker than many of these previous pieces. For example, consider, "Places to Stand: The Reflective Writer-Teacher-Writer in Composition," in which Bishop takes on a much more heated tone as she draws forth the conflict of the expressive identity:

In fact, I argue that key-expressivists (so called, not self-labeled) are frequently cast as convenient straw-men, as now-aging, no longer compositionally hip, and therefore slightly embarrassing advocates of a 1960's touchy-feely pedagogy from which professionals in composition are currently trained to distance themselves. ("Places to Stand" 10)

She seems more confident here than in "Suddenly Sexy," and her final conclusion in which she questions labeling others seems comparably bold; herein lies the mystery as to her avoidance of the label expressive, yet total support of the theory's values ("Suddenly Sexy" 29).

Likewise, I could have been captivated by her work on teaching the creative as available in *Colors of A Different Horse* or in "Teaching Undergraduate Creative Writing: Myths, Mentors and Metaphors," in which Bishop discusses the myths that include the unteachable quality of creative writing, creative writing student's negative views of literary readings and the successful collaboration of writing workshops (84). Here, she actually takes on the identity of the creative writer, the very association she avoids with her department narrative in "Suddenly Sexy." Indeed, my interests seem to be far more connected to the process of teaching the creative and the biting language of Bishop's previous work.

So, the question is, why did this one bring me comfort— why “Suddenly Sexy”? What drove me to value Bishop’s work was her tone, her no nonsense language, and her general embrace of personal writing reflection in multiple genre. “Suddenly Sexy,” however, breaks Bishop’s mold through her family-focused narrative and the tone entwining her personality and her theory. Bishop’s process here demonstrates the very points that she values in her composition theories—and I’ve come to recognize that the dual effect of explanation and example makes this piece attractive, effective and memorable.

She starts with a personal story, or hook. In the beginning of the article, the reader is given a window into Bishop’s daughter’s unfortunate period of chronic car wrecks. The events leave Bishop hoping for some kind of self-reflection in her daughter’s life, recognition of mistakes (“Suddenly Sexy” 257-259). Her link between hoping her daughter can mature into self-awareness and “the potential for making provocative connections between the writing, teaching and learning of creative nonfiction” immediately provides the reader with an example of Bishop’s focus (“Suddenly Sexy” 259). Bishop strives to make a connection between her necessary patience with her daughter’s immaturity and how college composition courses typically view the immaturity of students. In “Suddenly Sexy,” Bishop calls for writing teachers to value the students’ personal evolution rather than demanding maturity from the inexperienced. By calling for support and flexibility, Bishop begins her piece with a maternal tone that continues throughout.

She performs this task with a great sense of control. Bishop uses her calm optimism to communicate her belief that creative nonfiction is the key to the composition department’s own identity issue: “...we have not yet found a systematic way to institute a proactive, belief-oriented composition pedagogy, something that paying attention to the value and potential of creative nonfiction might help us do” (“Suddenly Sexy” 268). This

concept is illustrated in another narrative, this one focused on the genre-fear her department exhibited when a graduate student sought to incorporate creative nonfiction into his pedagogy (“Suddenly Sexy” 259-260). Using these two events in her life as a leaping point, Bishop focuses on two major concepts: the unnecessary close-mindedness of writing instructors and writing departments, and the ways creative nonfiction can heal this issue by utilizing self reflection in a research-friendly genre, or a genre that is, “a valuable speculative instrument” (“Suddenly Sexy” 269).

Bishop joins the ranks of Elbow and White when she calls for the importance of the nonfiction essay in life itself: “I argue that we all need to essay our lives. In doing so, we never arrive at the end of things but agree to linger thoughtfully, painfully ecstatically, along the way, in the company of others, in the agency of our words” (“Suddenly Sexy” 267). In Bishop’s eyes, the individual should be valued, the academic should not be too distant, but not too overwhelming either, and the student writer should be allowed to creep in with an individualized voice—something difficult to support, difficult to define, and even harder to coax out of the student drawn to rules and expectations of writing genres.

In order to promote her belief in the personal essay through the creative nonfiction genre, Bishop uses that sense of motherly encouragement to emphasize the importance of understanding among faculty in differing specializations, in particular those who focus on composition studies and those who study creative writing. The joining of the two and the acceptance of creative nonfiction into first-year composition curricula would, according to Bishop, cultivate a new energy within composition departments, a sense of camaraderie, and perhaps a new evolution of pedagogical theory that promotes the personal. To emphasize these points, Bishop uses hopeful language and bright description in a manner that might breed optimism rather than division. She calls for, “new, fused pedagogies, ones that include

rhetoric, composition, creative writing and literature as partners in instruction” (“Suddenly Sexy” 273).

Her optimism and encouragement, though very personal, is also very calculated. In this sense, Bishop is careful in her inclusion of instructors and writing theorists from multiple departments. She is careful to avoid any word choice that might alienate a reader and she even avoids the terms that have caused disagreement in the past. From the beginning of “Suddenly Sexy,” she does not use the term “expressive” except in a quote from another source. Bishop purposefully does not even advertise her own support of expressivism in this piece, though she does consistently draw on the keywords that expressivists use. For example, her social-expressivism shines through as she seeks to incite conversation related to the socially aware: “How do we teach the pleasures of essay writing and the civic possibilities of prose literature?” (“Suddenly Sexy” 271). Perhaps her lack of labeling harks back to her previous publication that disavowed the use of such labels for others, but Bishop never tries to invent a term that might group the composition theorists and creative writers into one entity. From one standpoint, this may seem out of touch with the label-happy quality of rhetoric and composition theories, but for me it is a relief that Bishop purposefully avoids marking her territory.

As Bishop avoids labels, she also leaps back and forth between the inclusion of her viewpoint through the expression of first-person narration, or “I”, and then the reference to the generic third person of “we.” In this situation, “we” is an interesting article to use, because Bishop never defines whom she is including with herself. It is necessary to assume, of course, that “we” is in reference to her and her readers: those who regularly read *College English*. Simultaneously, there is a sense that her “we” will exclude those who do not have Bishop’s background. After all, her initial usage of “we” is in reference to her family

members, and then her department, and then finally to writing teachers in general. The generalization of the writing teacher's viewpoint is the difficult part to tackle since, according to Bishop, her sources, and even my experience, there are very few (if any) viewpoints on which writing teachers all agree.

Alienation of the creative writer seems to be an unavoidable side effect of Bishop's work since she seems to primarily represent a composition standpoint. Though she has a history of creative writing, the department Bishop describes in her narrative is primarily one of rhetoric and composition. Thus, her reference to writing teachers might seem to leave out those who teach writing with an MFA background. She notes:

...but I point out that the continued fears of chaos and confusion expressed by writing teachers and critics of personal writing in (required) writing courses suggest the degree to which we have been socialized into the institutions we serve. We need to ask ourselves how complicit we are, and want to be, in creating the academy's 'good citizen.'" ("Suddenly Sexy" 270)

She makes little or no reference here to how creative writers might feel as they make this switch, or their possible elitist views of creative genres being used at a first-year college level. She also avoids discussing the composition side of the uncomfortable details, the worries of merging disciplinary funds or alienating certain faculty members who have an established form of teaching. By not dividing out the different fears of different specializations, she avoids emphasizing such division; for some readers, this tactic may hurt her effort to establish a final point. Her departmental concerns are vague and somewhat undefined, leaving the reader to decide whom she is including and excluding.

Thus, there is a hole in her construction of the "we" article as Bishop naturally focuses her narrative on her own department in order to relate the issue to her experiences.

Despite this, it seems as though a reader could pass over this audience exclusion entirely. Bishop's sense of belonging, that invitation to expand upon theory and academic discussion, does not accept departmental division. Her calls for "fresh possibilities" ("Suddenly Sexy" 269), "energy" ("Suddenly Sexy" 273), "belief-based instruction" ("Suddenly Sexy" 268), and "cooperation" ("Suddenly Sexy" 269) allow one to overlook the vague side of her argument.

Of course, her attempt to walk a line of audience acceptance runs the risk of watering down her points. Bishop manages to control an overly-optimistic tone by drawing in publications and viewpoints with which she does not agree. This is particularly evident when she disagrees with Wendell Harris's definition of what creative nonfiction is *not* rather than what it *is*, and when she notes Erika Lindeman's assumption that students are on too lowly a level to produce literature ("Suddenly Sexy" 261-262). At the same time, Bishop does not emphasize conflict at any length. Harris's inadequate definition is left without further explanation or a stronger replacement definition, and in her rebuttal to Lindeman, Bishop references her own previously published piece for further information on the disagreement between them. Her publication she references is entitled "When All Writing is Creative and Student Writing is Literature." In this article, Bishop mentions her personal experience with students exploring and, above all, valuing other genres of writing. There is meat to this topic, as Bishop herself notes in her earlier work: "Further, I've seen that my students have the same ability to perform well in many types of writing—many genres—if they choose and therefore value those forms" and she follows up with the declaration, "And these writers have strong feelings about their work because they are involved with it; they take risks, but also they take writing seriously" ("Suddenly Sexy" 197). Bishop's audience in "Suddenly Sexy" could use some of this background on this issue, something more than just a reference

to a distant publication. Yet, she doesn't introduce anything that might seem excessively opinionated. Bishop simply moves on.

A similar format occurs later when Bishop argues against Harris's elitist view of writing as high-art. Bishop addresses the issue by casting it aside: "I'm not railing against this anymore—that does as much use as arguing for buckling up a seat belt— but I am pointing out that the elitist position always undercuts our work and undermines our ability to create belief-based instruction" ("Suddenly Sexy" 268). She avoids the argument entirely as though she herself is simply worn through with the issues undermining departmental cooperation.

Evidently, this article is not the arena for argumentation—that is obviously not Bishop's intention— though her persuasive side is apparent. She seems to attempt a gentle urging in the hopes that the creative and composition elite will join forces. If one wishes to value heavier argumentation, Bishop's sources provide that sense of intense opinion regarding such division. Candace Spigelman, for example, in "Argument and Evidence in the Case of the Personal," hotly emphasizes the minority support that expressive teaching can foster (66). She takes on the viewpoint that expressivism doesn't just profess emotion, but can also "operate at sophisticated level of argument" (71). Bishop quite possibly agrees with this statement as a whole, but her focus in this publication is not to delve into the argumentation aspects of narrative, or even into the points at which the expressive is undervalued. Indeed, that topic is a new can of worms. Instead, Bishop leaps over Spigelman's argumentative side and tells her readers that they, like Spigelman, should give more attention to the personal genre ("Suddenly Sexy" 269).

A similar relationship occurs when Bishop references Pat C. Hoy's work in which he emphasizes academic divisions as "lines in the sand" (358). Hoy's beautiful, expressive writing emphasizes the capacity of writers to restructure identities by recreating themselves.

Essays, according to Hoy, “lead us in the direction of truth” (358). Bishop uses Hoy to her advantage to emphasize genre sharing and open minds, and perhaps to sample an extreme counterpart to her own restricted writing. Hoy’s use of terms like “battle lines” does not have that same sense of controlled optimism that Bishop’s puts forth (353). In a sense, both Spigelman and Hoy provide viewpoints that support Bishop’s views, but often do so with a far more warlike and confrontational mentality. This contributes to Bishop’s article’s refreshing and surprising qualities: Bishop isn’t out for the blood that her fellow expressivists desire, even as she agrees with them.

Perhaps more important, and more interesting, is Bishop’s attention to questioning Wendell Harris’s work. His opinion derives the most emphatic response from Bishop as she demands flexibility, understanding, and practicality, and seems to disagree with most of Harris’s views of composition pedagogy. The clearest example is in Bishop’s response to Harris’s negativity toward structured assignments. Bishop notes, “I disagree. I believe in instruction” (“Suddenly Sexy” 270). Despite Bishop’s obvious, fervent reaction to Harris, she preserves her tone, avoids accusatory reaction and maintains her stance on the necessity of faith: “That we don’t see authors as authors says more about us as teachers, I believe, than it says about students as thinkers” (“Suddenly Sexy” 268). She establishes the concept that, without supportive and understanding instructors, then composition can never overcome its own identity crisis. If the instructor does not believe in the positive outcomes of the course, then how is the student supposed to discover the subject in a positive light? If a department is full of instructors who are unwilling to communicate and cooperate, then how will that department ever gather in a resounding agreement?

Bishop is attempting to inspire writing teachers to get on board with the concept of creative nonfiction and to simply stop fighting the progression of acceptance. She is

attempting to point out the position that composition could be in if only war-like mentality and divisive philosophy did not overpower cooperation and “cross-fertilization” of disciplines. This is that metaphorical connection between her daughter’s car wrecks and the possible wreck of merging the creative nonfiction genre with composition pedagogy. By including a narrative about her daughter and a narrative about a departmental argument over the inclusion of creative nonfiction in a graduate student’s work, Bishop is finding value in experiences both personal and academic and emphasizing their equivalent weight. By avoiding accusations and embracing optimistic terms, and even incorporating her narrative in her research, Bishop’s language is keeping her from the ruts in which her colleagues are entrenched.

Ultimately, by explaining her view of blending of disciplines and performing a written example of such a blend of research and creative nonfiction, Bishop manages to convince the struggling graduate student. Even as I question my teaching, I come across Bishop’s encouragement: “We don’t have to go very far to believe—to find the potential in student writing that is there, as yet unactivated—if we rethink our attitudes, expecting to find the familiar profound...” (“Suddenly Sexy” 268), and “We must understand that ‘creative’ is already in the composition classroom” (“Suddenly Sexy” 273). Nevertheless, even with her strong theoretical references, her narrative connection one that resonates with me even during the moments when my teaching is the most frustrating, when I wonder whether or not student writing can truly reach that point of not just producing narrative, but producing self-reflective narrative with value for the student.

Indeed, Bishop takes on her maternal role here for a much larger population than just her daughter. Her encouragement for cooperation and openness in departmental relations is reminiscent of her emphasis on the personal evolution in a writer’s life. She

seems to reach out beyond just her daughter, her reader, or even her department. Even the ways in which she incorporates “narrative” and “creative nonfiction” terms leave the concepts open to the public—for her, the fogginess of their definitions are only proof that work needs to be done. Bishop avoids over-emphasizing the faults of composition, the issues that need consistent attention, and the weighty influence of academia, but instead hones in on the potential of composition programs to actually mature. Though she does not use the term “expressivist,” the reader knows that in Bishop’s eyes there is more to being expressive than bickering over the term.

As I read Bishop for this thesis, yet again, I knew that her guidance, the point of clarity that I so valued, could only go so far. As a guide into the world of expressivist theory and composition conversation, she took on a role that could be bested by no other. But with the passing of time, even a work like “Suddenly Sexy” cannot keep up with changes in culture, writing environment and technology. My composition students in 2011 are very different from Bishop’s composition students in 2003.

Section IV: What Bishop's Missing

Perhaps the greatest difference between my classroom and Bishop's classroom would be my dependency on online writing forms and culture. This distinction is evident in her theory as well. Despite the support that Bishop establishes in favor of creative nonfiction, she dances around any influences in technological media forms, or online outlets for expression. She only mentions it briefly in her value of the essay:

I also value the flexibility of the essay in all its permutations and respect its ability to absorb a variety of political and artistic commitments. Such an ability should also meet the needs of classroom authors who inhabit environments where imagination is often mediated by technology. ("Suddenly Sexy" 268)

In this statement, she is vague in her reference to technology. By avoiding the complicated concepts of technical communication, Bishop leaves this part of her essay wide open. It is important for new generations of theorists (those involved across the writing spectrum, from the creative to the technological) to then take Bishop's article and examine its application to our online writing environment. We must ask: Is her voice still pertinent? Can we claim her work is timeless even in an age of new media?

Before one can answer these questions, however, there is a significant amount of explanation needed in terms of the online writing environment. It has changed our communication forms significantly. Of course, it is necessary to recognize, when considering Bishop's piece, not just what she left out of her article, but what hadn't happened yet in the publication year of "Suddenly Sexy." Since 2003, the writing environment has changed drastically for the academic and nonacademic in technological innovation.

With the massive changes that have occurred since the social acceptance of online communication, terms have evolved to explain the onslaught of such change in our environment. Communication theory, which involves “new media” and “interactivity” play crucial roles. I can make an attempt at defining “new media” and “interactivity,” but the product will be no better than the work of expert theorists. Instead, I will depend on Carolyn Miller’s belief that interactivity is the act of engaging both the author and user in a new media form as she states in *Digital Storytelling* (54). For “new media,” I will use Barbara Warnick’s section in *Critical Literacy in a Digital Era* in which she defines the term as communication technology that is increasingly transparent (10-11).

In addition, it is necessary to note Johndan Johnson-Eilola’s addition to the field of communication theory in *Datacloud*. In particular, Johnson-Eilola notes the technological environment that our students are immersed in, the evolution of such an environment and the necessary evolutionary maturation of the user in the “cloud.” He comments on how the shifts in the environment can truly evolve without us recognizing the change as users add to the collection of information and the available data overwhelms (8). Though the environment has changed, Johnson-Eilola’s rearticulation theory asserts that we never destroy our communication forms, but we reinvent them in other roles (10). In our current environment we are reinventing our communication forms and changing the processes in which we create conversations.

Answers can be found in Johnson-Eilola, Miller and Warnick’s discipline: Technical communication theorists note how the writer’s environment demands evolution from the writer and user. Warnick calls for critical literacy as students are introduced to persuasions in a transparent environment, or in other words, an environment whose collaborative influences, corporate leanings and political biases, both subtle and extreme, are not

recognizable to an uneducated user. The “nature, content and effects of new media” are simply hard to pick out (“Critical Literacy” 10).

In this unpredictable online writing environment, there are four specific aspects of communication culture that Bishop would find necessary in the study of composition theory:

- The digitization of narrative media in the online writing environment,
- The immersive quality of such media,
- The technological environment’s influence on personal philosophy, individuality, and narrative empowerment, and
- The importance of online identity.

First, the digitization of written communication has changed how students view their sense of individuality and social involvement. My logic here is spurred by the rise of the digital narrative, a form of narrative that leaves behind traditional aspects of linearity and organization for the interactivity of what many call “new media.”

Consider first the publications outlets that have changed, from book to newspaper publications. While book corporations struggle through economic hardships, digital Ebook readers flourish and online access provides the “book” files. Newspapers are slowly shifting to online formats, while struggling to maintain tangible circulation. In 2010, Joseph Plambeck of *The New York Times* announced the 9% decrease in newspaper circulation since the previous year. Indeed, the press has changed perhaps most of all as online news is becoming more and more dependable, while corporate news is considered biased. In *Rhetoric Online*, Warnick outlines the new philosophy of democratized news efforts from users rather than affiliated reporters (61-63). In general, traditional media is going through a massive and rapid evolution.

New media, on the other hand, typically casts a shadow over the old. Blogging, for example, is still on the rise, as it has been since the late 1990's. According to Diane Schiano, Bonnie Nardi, Michelle Gumbrecht and Luke Swartz in "Blogging by The Rest of Us," most attention is given to the politically active blogs, though individuals now commonly start their own for small audiences. A regularly updated blog site then acts as an active newsletter of the creator's life, hobbies and interests (1143-1146). Blogging offers an interesting outlet for communication. The form acts as personal, niche-oriented written communication that is freely published and open to response.

In the realm of technological innovations, the invention and spread of Facebook, a form of communication that many first-year students use regularly, has a much more significant impact on college student communication than blogging, news production, or publications. Originally created in 2004, a year after the publication of Bishop's article, Facebook is a massive social networking trend that has caught on, according to Alexei Oreskovic of Reuters, with a half a billion users and a near 800 million dollars in revenue in 2009. Facebook itself has not changed the culture of written communication. Rather, the public acceptance and the massive revenue of the network encourage usage and even reproduction of the network in public and private spheres. Therefore, not only is Facebook not just a passing fad, but one can assume that other industries and communication outlets will take full advantage of similar communication innovation.

In terms of the college writing environment, it is necessary for us to ask the obvious question: What do tools like online news access, web publications and Facebook mean for our students and how they communicate their thoughts? One can assume that almost every single student goes online daily, particularly when they are going to college courses, keeping up with their email and checking their Facebook pages like all of my students currently do. If

this is the case, then students are enjoying incredible individuality, daily chances to express themselves online, total immersion in narrative driven environments both textual and visual, and they are being influenced by the accessibility and the constant availability of these tools.

More research is being conducted on how these tools are changing the user's mindset. Hypertext, for example, has changed the pattern of how a plotline is constructed. Suddenly the audience member is encouraged to move away from the role of the "reader" to the active "user." The process of moving through a narrative then is no longer under the control of the author, but associated with the user's choices. Other online media have taken this concept of the user's choice to a new level. For example, user empowerment is evident in the deep immersion of online play associated with gaming: the player chooses the character, follows the dramatic interactivity of other users and fulfills the creator's design for end goals. Miller notes, "Plot points do not necessarily follow each other in fixed sequence, and even when interactive works do include a central storyline, players or users can weave a varied path through the material, interacting with it in a highly fluid manner" (14). In this media, the user is immersed in a controlled, pre-established environment (Miller, 244-256). The narrative is here, but reinvented, and thus the reader (now user) reinvents herself.

This reinvention of the self and the consistent access to online communication, however, does not encourage restraint, which leads to my second point: The immersive quality of such media masks its influences on the user, often leaving many users, or audience members, gullible in a persuasive atmosphere (Warnick, "Critical Literacy" 6-8). If a user cannot establish who has control over the information on a website, then the information is incredibly capable of influencing the user. The user is commonly overwhelmed by hidden persuasion, but on the positive side, the user can openly respond. The most notable example I have come across is the attention Warnick gives to news sites with stories published by the

users (“Rhetoric Online” 59-67). Sites that encourage user input offer opportunities for a rearticulated form of the editorial board, and comment options allow for open judgment.

Indeed, students need to be able to recognize the tools and communication possibilities in online environments—where interaction is essential and beneficial, and where immersion can be harmful and overly persuasive. Writing then, in this environment, is further complicated. Where is a truthful identity necessary? Where should the student be careful when wording her statements? Who is watching and who is aware? Further democratization of the online publication process will, undoubtedly, open up this media further and encourage even more involvement on the college freshman’s end.

This brings us to my third point: The college composition student is entirely engrossed in these technologies, allowing the technological environment to shift personal philosophy, individuality, and narrative empowerment. The effect has even become commonplace in news stories. In particular, the recent organizations of Middle East protests, according to Chris Taylor of CNN in “Why Not Call It a Facebook Revolution?,” were organized via online communications such as Facebook. Political activism, or activism of any form, can then move out from just personal expression to social awareness, something Bishop and Paley would greatly appreciate.

Finally, we come to the fourth point: With interactivity, the student is not just taking in the digital environment, but interacting with it. The presentation of the writer then is pertinent as online identity is not as solid as the author’s photograph on the sleeves of print publications. How we present ourselves online is incredibly important and often blurry to the writer. Personality and individuality require a certain unique quality of “voice” comparable to that expected in creative writing departments. Suddenly individuality is not a narcissistic generational movement, but a necessary alternative to being drowned in the

crowd. Indeed, the very concepts of identity empowerment that expressivists value applies to those students looking to appropriately present themselves online.

In a nutshell, these four separate points all become one: The online tools at our students' disposal can be used in successful communication with others as long as the student recognizes the new influences within the online writing environment. When Warnick talks about critical literacy, she establishes that the student should learn not just the ways necessary to analyze online formats, but also how to write within them. The question is then, how do we go about this necessary incorporation of narrative and self-awareness in online forms?

In terms of Bishop's work, the fact that this transparent medium offers interactivity for the user means that students, academics and professionals use online tools to present themselves both inside and outside of their careers. A strong online identity then is suddenly that much trickier as online audiences are harder to define. Indeed, one can argue that the terms "creative nonfiction," and "narrative" are intrinsic to the presentation of online identities. If we see our lives in story form as Jerome Bruner claims, then it will only be natural for online communication to take on the same narrative structure (692).

These values are sounding familiar. It is important to note here how expressive theory has the option to enter the playing field of online writing, and indeed many composition programs have caught the hint. Composition theory, however, has difficulty catching up to the trend. Quantitative studies are necessary, though they require time, data, funding and researchers familiar with both composition and communication theory. In addition, traditional academic publication processes slow down technological studies to the point that they are almost out-of-date by the time they reach an audience. Meanwhile, the student is taking advantage of new technology forms years before communication and

composition theorists can analyze them. The sluggish reaction of academia is keeping expressivists from considering technological shifts within their own theories.

This is perhaps the biggest shame of all, yet the gaps in Bishop's work give us the opportunity to reevaluate expressivist views of technology. Bishop didn't have the chance in "Suddenly Sexy" to recognize the incoming influence of technological advancements, nor how her view of blending disciplinary lines, and embracing the personal might apply to this genre. Here is the chance for a graduate student composition instructor like myself to take the technological environment in which my culture is immersed and compare the demands of it to the pedagogical rewards of introducing creative nonfiction theory in composition. This is what I hope to successfully reveal in my next sections: The technological environment has such breadth and cultural influence and Bishop's work is so inclusive and flexible, technological shifts can also apply to the position Bishop takes in "Suddenly Sexy."

Section V: A Rearticulation of Identity

If you look back on my original issue, that scene in my composition classroom in which I realized that I now hesitate to choose a departmental distinctiveness, you will recognize that my original acceptance of a narrowed academic identity does not fall within Bishop's beliefs. At some point, I shifted gears— somewhere between my writing and rhetoric course and my online rhetoric course. The change produced a terrible sense of insecurity because I couldn't relate my course to any single pedagogical philosophy. There were too many details to consider, too many overlaps of my own writing interests. I might have had a pedagogical identity crisis, this is true, and such a crisis can be disconcerting, even disheartening when semesters continue and pedagogy must be applied despite the instructor's discomfort. But the process of overcoming such crisis is the acceptance of change, the belief that evolution can make an instructor more capable.

In addition, it seems that the identity crisis I experienced is not mine alone. One of the most important aspects of Bishop's purpose in "Suddenly Sexy" is established in the statement, "heart-based versus head-based essays" (263). Bishop's own writing in "Suddenly Sexy," in which she merges her personal experiences with her academic views, reveals the ridiculousness of academia's choice to separate personal and academic forms. Overlap is necessary, indeed natural. Bishop supports this in her recognition of the divisions that form a personality:

Trying to work toward emotional, spiritual, familial, intellectual, professional, political and the big ETC. of truths is not just part of it, but is the process of writing, of composing nonfiction. It is the golden mean, too, of a version of academic life that many of us might choose. ("Suddenly Sexy" 265)

Now, look beyond my pedagogical crisis to the larger picture. I would argue that the balance of simultaneous interests in Bishop's philosophy of academic life is applicable to the necessary changes traditional academia needs to tackle. In addition, I would argue that a similar acceptance of balance needs to exist in the online identity a user creates. In online writing, so much is at hand, so much is accessible; relationships, hobbies, interests and new identities can be created when the user takes advantage of the tools in the online environment. The identity crisis has been recreated, not just for me, not just for academicians, but also for all online users. As in my crisis, acceptance and balance needs to be established so that online writers can match their digital identities to their real-life personalities.

For academicians, then, theory needs to evolve as well. Consider again Johnson-Eilola's view of rearticulation, a recycling of communication forms into new products (10). Bishop has her own version in "Suddenly Sexy" in which she asks her reader, "...what does it mean to see it (creative nonfiction) anew?" (259). In this section, I want to ask the same question, but eight years later. Though Bishop's article of 2003 is out-of-date, I wish to begin the process of rearticulating her work and relate "Suddenly Sexy" to this modern environment. I now revert back to my questions: Is her voice still pertinent? Can we claim her work is timeless even in an age of new media? Through my research and my exploration of where Bishop's work and technical communication overlap, I have come to establish the following points that emphasize the current value of Bishop's voice:

First, the value of student writing is still pertinent. Bishop mentions the necessary trust in student writing as a worthwhile genre: "First we must believe they can write. Fiction. Fact. Personal. Scholarly. The Works" ("Suddenly Sexy" 269). This view may be even more important now given that, regardless of the style, form or content of their work, the online

environment allows students the opportunity to write about their social and even academic experiences. Trends like this bolster the written form, and encourage online versions of the self-expression, which Elbow thirsts to see from his students. In many ways, it may seem as though these conversational online forms further differentiate the student's work from the academic, and yet, online student writing in the right context can be seen by more people and can have a greater influence on users than niche-oriented academic text. In addition, Bishop points out how English academics, "neglect to mention how often they also compose within a range of nonfiction genres" ("Suddenly Sexy" 264). The instructors' personal social networking and online communication should be included in this statement. Many academicians experiment with online writing forms just like their students. It is, therefore, possible that new media can give all forms of writing more potential to reach an audience in an all-access environment.

Second, despite the great potential of online writing to reach hundreds, the necessity of the writer's self-reflection still applies. For example, Facebook itself is not concrete, and friends can leave the site or conversations can be deleted from view. This environment reveals how writerly maturation is difficult to recognize since a record of communication is not obvious to the user. Take this concept broader then, and consider the mass use of emails, blogs, online forums, chat programs on Gmail and Facebook, and you'll note that without any sense of paper trail, new communication does not allow a consistent chance for self-reflection for the writer. Even if a student writes expansive documents and online conversation to her friends and respective family members, the prospect of looking back on these writings is huge and overwhelming. Thus, pedagogies still need to influence students to recognize their writings' maturation since our newest tools don't necessarily encourage users to do so.

At the same time, however, the process of online writing itself is endless. Just as Bishop refers to self-reflective work as ongoing and continuous (“Suddenly Sexy” 267), online work has a very similar effect. A website can be shifted and edited. A blog can continue without an end. The necessity of finding value in the seemingly endless composition is necessary even in the digital environment, perhaps even more so.

Third, the student, writer and academician’s evolutions beyond isolation remain pertinent. At one point toward the end of “Suddenly Sexy” Bishop notes, “To move beyond isolation is the writer’s constant goal” (267). For first-year composition students, her statement reconciles the fact that their work is worthy of reading by peers and professors alike. For academicians, it means that their theory should not be bound within their intellectual niche, nor should it be as dependent on the academic as it has been. A wider audience can be available. Online this is true as well, and almost taken to the extreme. The audience is empowered through comments, blog page references, and links, which all cause online writing to be shared across communication outlets and throughout communities. Most of all, however, the audience is often unpredictable and isolation can go in waves. The greatest challenge for the writer to face is the understanding of how far she is willing to go to get attention from the online mob. Recognition of the writing environment is another prospect of teaching control and self-awareness.

Considered Bishop’s work in parallel with the online writing environment, these comparisons reveal how in-tune Bishop was with the process of writing as both a tool and a form of expression, her understanding of writing forms in both the academic and nonacademic and its potential in cultural evolution.

Together, we can better ask,

How else might it be?

(Bishop 273)

* * *

Bishop's work is pertinent. I can see this clearly now through the examples of online expression, potential of creative nonfiction forms online, and the move to leave isolation behind. Above all, her focus on cooperation as stated in the text above, still applies. As students, writers and academicians evolve with the cultural shifts of online writing, the academic disciplines need to ban together to support the modern student, and modern theory, and to find a role within the new communication environment.

Isolation is academia's greatest folly. If there is one thing I hope to establish in this piece it is that disciplinary divisions hinder that necessary evolution that both Bishop and the online writing environment call for. Therapeutic-expressive writing does not need to step away from the civic. Rhetorical theory does not need to be unhinged from the details of the writing process. The academic does not need to stand on a pedestal above all of this conflict. Ultimately, all of these niches within differing disciplinary foci will join each other in the digitization of texts. The expressive, the rhetorical and even the literary will all be placed on the same level.

With this unpredictable future stretching out before the composition department, I am driven to ask more questions. How can other disciplinary interests merge with composition theory to further explore the online writing environment? In what ways are our students using online tools to express themselves in formats that academia has yet to record? How can we train ourselves to accept this environment as an academic tool that can speed up publications and create unique relationships between other academic institutions and

departments? Perhaps, most important of all, how can we continue to rearticulate Wendy Bishop's sense of optimistic cooperation in our pedagogical aspirations?

I am secure in the knowledge that researchers and instructors in other institutions have found or are seeking answers to the questions that I have. Indeed, now that I have established my viewpoint of Bishop's work, it is time to seek out the work of others, their findings and theories that expand upon my curiosities here. This is the next step to relating my identity crisis with the similar experiences and struggles of others.

* * *

To encourage students to meet themselves in their writing is to teach generously, to open up options, to begin discussions, to allow the old to interact with the new.

(Bishop 273)

* * *

To take my research to that next step and to make "Suddenly Sexy" more relatable to myself and my research, I hoped that somehow I would manage to meet Bishop in order to at least hear her speak, perhaps even explain my viewpoint and talk about my theories in relation to hers. What a bold hope it was, and evidently an impossible one. In November of 2003, Bishop died of leukemia ("A Line For Wendy"). In 2010, when I first came across her work, I was excited to have a theorist that I could warm up to, and Bishop's motherly tone and optimism were perfect. I didn't realize that I was too late to hear her speak until I stumbled across her obituary.

In an article dedicated to Bishop's memory entitled "A Line for Wendy," Hans Ostram wrote a short comment: "Wendy and I collaborated accidentally on purpose for a

long time; with her it was always about the work, not the ego; she loved ideas, creativity, language; she made our profession more intellectually generous; she's alive in what she wrote, in those she taught" (583). Ostram uses the term "generous" here just as Wendy did in her statement above, which is an interesting concept to consider. The reflection of that term hints at the idealistic concept that perhaps Bishop did not just expound upon her principles, but acted on them as well. She shows this same trait in her use of creative nonfiction in the academic piece of "Suddenly Sexy." Bishop proved that they could be successfully intellectually combined. Her publications then were not just talk or baseless hope, but the translation of words into action.

Another example of honesty: In 2002, Sonja Bagby interviewed Bishop for *Kairos*, the online academic journal. Here Bishop reveals her separation from technological trends; however, she eventually manages to come across as flexible and open, even willing to change. She notes:

Well, I'm certain my writing center background makes me willing to try these changing possibilities because I believe learner and learning method should be suited to each other, should be individualized as much as possible. That means I'll be a continuous learner in a continuously changing learning environment. Tiring sometimes, but enlivening at many others (at more times or I wouldn't be able to do it).

From her point of view, her role as a life-long student was the very evolution that she asks for in "Suddenly Sexy." The potential to consistently learn, reevaluate, self-reflect and change is Bishop's idea of the lifelong journey and another concept that she emulated in her lifetime and her work. Graduate students should recognize this value early in their careers. The spread and use of "Suddenly Sexy" among graduate students will encourage the process

of transitioning the old from the new, the practice of relating Bishop's work to the idealism of new instructors, and the evolution of old academic rules into new technological environments. I hope that with the rearticulation of Bishop's theory a sense of her honesty will travel with it. In my own evolution between my first semester teaching and my second semester teaching, I read Bishop's work. Through the self-analysis associated with this thesis, I've realized that Bishop's work is what changed my self-reflection—the newfound honesty I had with myself that proved how indeed I cannot say that I am separate from English studies. My past is evident in how I teach, in how I write. For example, my insistence on the "I" rule was indeed part of my identity as a more traditional English student. That identity is evolving into something else.

Now that I am attempting to be honest with myself, to recognize my interests as they span over academic disciplines and to break the molds of class syllabi, I hope that I can be honest in my final conclusion here. Composition theorists, as they continue to look into the merging of disciplines, need to look back on the old and recycle what matters most, but also recognize what needs to be left behind. This paper began in confusion, the potential of pedagogy to terrify graduate student instructors, and the focus on the perplexity of terms that cannot make pedagogical choices any easier to make. The confusion did not disappear, but rather, I came to terms with it, accepted it, embraced the idea that the only way to understand my own evolution is to keep track of it through the chaos. But in the end, for students, academicians and departments alike, boundaries only truly exist if we allow them to stand in the way of our evolution.

I believe that Bishop would agree.

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