



Razzle-dazzle and Razz-ma-tazz: A Report into Creative Writing in a Taipei University

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This paper reviews and examines the results of a Creative Writing class conducted at National Taipei University of Business. The goal in this research is to examine student response to creative writing methods and ideas, to review their output for actual creativity, and to measure the advancement of their writing skills. This skill can be of great use to young students, as creative writing “can be an education in the craft of writing in a larger sense” (Morley 1). Creative Writing is for the most part an unusual course in Taiwanese academia, where there is often a focus on the “practical” and “vocational.” Because of their closeted and rote upbringing in Taiwanese schools, my students reacted in very positive ways to this course. In their leap into this creative activity, they endeavor to improve their output and writing skills, which of course is the bottom line for any writing teacher. In sum, the paper reveals that creative writing is a rich study for students in Taiwan that strengthens their productivity, develops self-confidence, and improves skills they will be able to use in their future.

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Introduction

This paper reviews and examines the results of a Creative Writing class conducted at National Taipei University of Business (NTUB) in spring 2016. Technically this was a “composition” course, but after consultation with students we decided to take a Creative Writing approach during the semester. I had introduced creative writing ideas to them in the prior semester (highlighted by our look at Graphic Novels, one of the heights of creative writing in the world today), and after a classroom vote, we decided to continue this approach in the following semester. Though there are significant differences between ordinary academic writing (the usual “composition”) and creative writing, there are also similarities in terms of composition proper, narrative exposition, a measure of argument, and essential embodiment aims such as subject, audience and purpose (and indeed, creativity proper, which can make it’s way into the best academic writing). Thus, I know that students felt they were learning useful writing skills during this class.

My hope in this research is to examine student response to Creative Writing methods and ideas, to review their output for actual creativity, and to measure the advancement of their writing skills. This skill can be of great use to young students, as creative writing “can be an education in the craft of writing in a larger sense” (Morley, *Cambridge Companion* 1). This is an ideal way of viewing this practice—awareness of writing as an inspired faculty, and we find that all writers “are at best, *creative* writers” (Morley, *Cambridge Companion* 1, emphasis in original). On a more personal note, one accomplished writer told me that in creative writing, “The idea begins in your mind’s imagination, travels to your heart for its insight, then down your arm to your fingers that can only obey” (author Patricia Linder, personal communication with the author, 22 January 2015). Here again we see the joy of this endeavor, and going even further, “The art of writing is the art of discovering what you believe” (Gustave Flaubert). It is inspirational advice like this that makes the art of creative writing so enjoyable.

Creative Writing is for the most part an unusual course in Taiwanese academia, an often-antiquated system that does not generally welcome or see as helpful free-form and innovative thinking and methodologies. There is always a focus on the “practical” and “vocational” in universities in Taiwan, and any more alternative, let alone creative, approach in classes are allowed by few professors. I am different, and in fact I try to introduce creative and inventive approaches in virtually all of my classes. A creative writing class is ideal for me, not only because I think it is an excellent skill to teach students, but also because I have had extensive experience in just this kind of writing since I was a youth. I have published poetry, short stories, a book-length memoir, and indeed, as noted above, even when I compose ostensibly academic papers and texts, I



introduce brushes of creativity into my writing. Most important, I believe this is simply a valuable skill to convey to students, and that in spite of (actually “because of”) their closeted and rote upbringing in Taiwanese schools, they react in very positive ways. Students really spring to life when given the opportunity to compose creative works—from poetry, to songwriting, to memoir, to children’s writing, to stories, to travel writing and literary journalism, to plays and scripts, to graphic composition and online works (something like novel writing is of course beyond the scope of a one-semester class). In their leap into this creative activity, they endeavor to improve their output and writing skills, which of course is the bottom line for any writing teacher.

How to measure improvement in writing is viewed in different ways, perhaps at the highest level by way of either direct evaluation of student work by teachers (also called structured performance sample assessments), or indirect evaluation of student knowledge by way of tests. I will adhere to the first method, a holistic approach, which is a common writing evaluation method. As P.B. Diedrich writes:

As a test of writing ability, no test is as convincing to teachers of English, to teachers in other departments, to prospective employers, and to the public as [evaluation of] actual samples of each student's writing... whenever we want to find out whether young people can swim, we have them jump into a pool and swim. (1)

Jump in and learn to swim, yes, this has long been the acid test for learning writing, and to a large extent that is the method I will employ in this paper (the holistic method noted above, to be discussed below). Additionally, however, in this course I also used other analytical methods, such as before-and-after measurement, the use of a writing rubric (Appendix 1), student consultation, reference to certain U.S. national standards of written communication, in-class speakers (I invited three speakers to the course, including American writer Jerome Keating, Taipei poet Cai Ren-wei [蔡仁偉] and another Taipei poet, Yin-ka [印卡], who spoke at our Creative Writing conference in June 2016 [more on this below]). Toward the end of the class, I distributed a post-class questionnaire for students (Appendix 2).

Teaching writing can be complex in manifold ways. In terms of creativity, proper, Scott, Leritz, and Mumford identified four approaches to creative training (though there are a number of others): cognitive approaches, personality approaches, motivational approaches and social interactional approaches (362). My own approaches probably mirror these, with a focus on



cognitive development, individual personality and how creativity can impact this, the idea of energetic motivation, and an overall community approach to learning.

One online writing assessment guide, sponsored by Annenberg Learner, recommends first mapping “To What End” you want your class and teaching to proceed toward. In other words, what are your objectives? At a first level, this guide asks whether you have certain objectives such as fostering critical thinking, facilitating the acquisition of life-long learning skills, preparing students to function in an information economy, or developing problem-solving strategies. At the highest level I can say that I pursue all of these aims, at least in a general sense. Critical thinking can come from the process of creative writing as students ask and answer about what their goals are and what they hope to achieve in their writing. Life-long learning skills come naturally enough from any writing instruction. Functioning in an information economy also stems from such skills, and this is often particularly honed by certain projects in a class like this (such as online creative writing projects, which I have experience in). And in the same ways, students are facing and solving many different analytical and intellectual problems in work like this. The Annenberg guide goes on to ask what is the teacher’s role in class. My own role is to teach and share my best skills and experience with students, to guide them in their work, to be a mentor of sorts when possible. In addition to this higher position, I try to be an equal with students, and listen to their suggestions about content and aims, and consult with them frankly and openly. From here I can see my own areas of responsibility, and compare and contrast them to my students’ responsibilities. A final point is to look at shortcomings and unmet needs in this discipline, some of which I have indicated above, in terms of overall failings of education in Taiwan.

After this introduction, the Annenberg guide asks by what means you will accomplish your aims. My means are straightforward enough: The use of *The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing* and *The Cambridge Companion to Creative Writing* as texts, in-class discussion and writing (free writing and exercises), readings at various levels and ensuing analysis of structure and content (“reading as a writer,” as Morley writes [*Cambridge Companion* 1]), and actual projects in the creative writing areas listed above. In sum you could say I employ a holistic, active-learning approach, with much interaction and collaborative work.² And indeed, on this note I recently read a paper on the idea

² *The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing* and *The Cambridge Companion to Creative Writing* have chapters covering long fiction, drama, poetry, new media, class design, community writing, publishing and non-fiction/literary journalism. The writing in these books tends toward the



of domain specificity (in essence the opposite of holism) in creative thinking by John Baer, in which he argues this conception “makes sense” (176). I may differ slightly here, and instead believe a more holistic method is called for. In a word, I am not of the belief that “underlying creative thinking must be specific to rather narrowly defined content domains” (173). This is not to say that my own teaching approach is not varied and/or conglomerate, attempting to develop essentially specific skills in divergent ways (which in fact accords with Baer’s research).

Breland lists eight different methods used for evaluation and scoring writing assignments. I will not examine each here, and simply say that my basic approach is the holistic approach, focusing on the “prominence of certain features important to...writing” (Breland 3-4). Grading like this approaches from an elevated, rather than an atomistic/mechanical view, looking at structure, design, style, content, form, voice, imagery, characterization, organization and development, with the audience in mind (“pleasing” an audience, as it were). One source writes of 1) responding as an audience member to student writing, 2) providing guidance for substantive thought, 3) being specific, 4) encouraging skills improvement and 5) providing a positive environment (Boye 2). These are all foci I attend to. In a word, given the fact that we are focused on creativity, there is less a focus on argument, topical coherence and logic, per se, in work like this.

I think I have always been a holistic teacher, as this introduction indicates, and I believe this is a valuable and credible analytical approach to evaluating student writing. Though in all of the above we see a lot of complexity in approaching a class like this, I have tried to confront and answer these intricacies for students.

I should say that I am the only teacher who actively participated in this project, and there are some who say that this can introduce error or a “reliability” problem. I can’t really answer this other than to say that I was the only teacher giving scores to my students, and the class was approached in this typically standard fashion (with occasional peer evaluation within the student group, and as noted, the contributions of writers from outside). I am confident enough that I can do this well, give students good guidance, and on the whole I would say my students agree with this. Though there may be given limitations to this approach, it is of course a standard in classrooms worldwide, and few would openly criticize or dismiss it (considering in this respect the

abstract, and a measure of re-calibration is needed by teachers to make the material appropriate for students, particularly second-language students as in my case. As well, they include numerous in-class exercises and writing games.



skills that a teacher possesses; I have already indicated that I have writing skills in a number of areas and have been a professional writer for almost 30 years; in this respect, I have the necessary skills to convey to students; yes there are ups and downs during evaluations of student work, and nothing is perfect, but overall, my ability to provide students with valuable guidance is sound).

As a final note, simply evaluating “creative writing” can be a great challenge—because what counts as creativity? I have pondered this question, and although I seem to have felt that I was indeed being creative in this or that writing in my life, at the same time I have interrogated this feeling and wondered whether I truly was being so. In a word, I have sometimes wondered whether *any* writing is “creative” in the sense we usually think. Although I normally think of *painters* and *sculptors* as inherently creative, what makes a piece of writing genuinely creative? It’s all just writing, just “words on the page,” I have sometimes thought. Why is one sentence more creative than another? (“It was a dark and stormy night...”). Along these lines, some have asked whether creative writing can be taught at all. Louis Menand raises this question in his “Show and Tell” in *The New Yorker*, and skeptically inquires about “the premise on which the whole enterprise is based: that creative writing is something that can be taught” (Menand). On the other hand, Sternberg says “One *can* teach students to think more creatively...” (93 emphasis added). I will leave this question to the reader, although in spite of what I have said, I do sense that a given creativity is often at work with writers, and, along with Sternberg, it *can be taught*.

Looking at writing creativity, we might evaluate factors like diction, and that might indicate a given creativity—though again, which of following words is genuinely creative: fast, swift, rapid, speedy, brisk, or hasty? Sentence structure might also swerve in this direction, but just the same it’s hard to make the judgment. If a person writes a one-word sentence—“Wow!” “Yes.” “Maybe”—is that somehow “creative”? What about some who labor over a 120-word sentence, with intricate structure? (I’ve done exactly this in my own writing.) The famed opening sentence from the original *Star Trek* television series—“To boldly go where no man has gone before” has been called both brilliantly creative structure, and just bad grammar (it’s a split infinitive). The use of inventive metaphors, symbols, motifs and literary tropes may register as true creativity, and alongside this we view students’ use of characterization, point of view, plot, setting and dialogue as artistic elements. Whether pre-existing genres are creative or not, as compared to more experimental forms, is another open question. Often we simply look at whether someone is writing “real” creative writing, such as poetry, stories or plays (the “core” of creative writing as one of my creative writing books put it). But even here there is a range from the good to the bad, from the creative to the mundane, and sorting through this is a challenge, and subject to the same questions



of how and whether we can actually gauge creativity. (And as well, this would seem to exclude those who are doing many other varieties of writing, which seems unfair.) Then there is the pressure on a teacher to make any judgment at all. Many students would feel aggrieved if they received a 75 on their creative piece, while another received a 90 (this assuming we give grades at all in a creative writing class, and I can see how often we would not). Ultimately, there are so many possible factors to consider, and such a thin line of judgment at play, that the task can be daunting. We do the best we can, ultimately with the aim of encouraging students, building confidence, establishing trust, and maintaining credibility!

In addition to assessment as being discussed here, there are conceptions of grading papers based on “emotionally sensitive matters,” that are “individual and subjective,” as well as the “personal dimension” in writing (*Cambridge Introduction* 85), as opposed to strictly literary criteria and/or critical/fault finding means. I did attempt to view my student’s work in this way, as much as possible. Yes I still handed out quantitative grades for work done in class, but I tried not to be overly-rigid.

In terms of all of the above, my aim in this course was not my usual aim in classes—to be “tough” (a sort of “tough love”), highly disciplined, and intensely focused. Creativity classes call for a more open-ended, somewhat relaxed, and even fun approach. Evaluating student work in this class, I did not want to have an iron rod in hand, and I instead handled the work with kid gloves, always trying to encourage, rather than sternly appraise. I am sure this was the most appropriate method, and largely appreciated by students.

With the above introduction, I now turn to my analysis of “Creative Writing” in spring 2016, taught to 22 students in the Applied Foreign Languages department at NTUB. Though some of these students have other foci in this business university, in sum they are all very focused on language study, and consider themselves in effect, “English students.” Outside of an occasional brush with Chinese, I teach entirely in English, and my students respond very favorably to this and have no trouble understanding.

Background and Theory

Readers may be asking: Why creative writing in Taiwan? Isn’t standard “composition” what every Taiwanese student will need as they begin their educational path? While I do not disagree that composition study and training are good ideas for students, and to be sure Taiwanese students will have to engage in just this type of writing, I have found that in Taiwan, as often as not, students are veritably swallowed up by dry, pragmatic, essentially ordinary studies of hardheaded, realistic



topics—including “composition”—that allow little in the way of imagination and/or creativity. Composition may not be quite so commonplace (to repeat, it *can be* creative), but taught in dull, lifeless ways, it is not much more than this. A creative writing class can be a doorway into a new and thrilling world of inventive engagement for students. That’s not something that happens every day in education, and as I found this semester, it’s an entry that students very much like and crave.

But to answer the question “why?” I will borrow from the gaming theory of Jane McGonigal, a game designer and researcher who currently serves as Director of Game Research & Development at the Institute for the Future in Palo Alto California. McGonigal has come up with a theory of gaming which she claims may go so far as to save the world, but which more pragmatically may simply enable people to work more productively, channeling positive energy into their lives, education and careers. McGonigal is a game specialist and lover, and we might ask whether there is any similarity here with creative writing. And there may just be. For we find that at the highest levels games are simply fun—and we could say the same of creative writing. To be sure, at its best, when we are writing creatively we are having fun, playing a game in a way. Like a good game, we immerse ourselves in creative writing, simply because it is such an enjoyable activity. As Morley writes, “we can think of the page as...a space in which to play”(Cambridge Introduction 1).

Games also include much decision-making, also true of writing creatively as we plan and execute works. There are often many motives and goals that are swirling in our mind when planning and designing a creative work. “Writing consists of a multitude of individual decisions, massive and complex control of language in depth and considerable personal responsibility, “ writes Kennedy (210). Take as an example my memoir, *Something Super: Living, Learning and Teaching in Taiwan* (Lynx Publishing 2013). This book is at once a book-length memoir, a series of connected stories, it has dashes of poetry, a dose of argumentative writing, some travel writing in a literary journalism framework, passages of communication from other people, and a network of my writings from various publications, assembled into a collage structure. All of this combines into a work that is at once fiction and non-fiction, a true creative writing methodology. We see here the many decisions I was faced with as I wrote this book, and my balancing act as I brought it to realization.

One examination of gaming comments on how games can enable players to gain self-confidence and provide “the opportunity to develop social skills, competences and disposition to learn” (Wikipedia). In sum, we can see that as a “game” creative writing can have a lot to offer students.



As far as McGonigal's theory, it has four basic concepts, which I will rework into my understanding of creative writing. First, creative writing affords an excited energy in its production. Any creative writer will tell you of this, of the exhilaration of creating imaginative works. Again, this hardly needs more explanation, and I am sure all readers know exactly of what I speak of. Additionally, creative writing enables a joyful fertility and formulation (we will find that all of these points revolve around pleasure and happiness in creative writing). The pleasure of planning and executing a creative work of any kind makes for many hours of pure mindful enjoyment, and watching the creative work come into fruition is not only pure pleasure, but also provides a rich intellectual playground to sport on. Another aspect to look at is the social aspect of creative writing (which is also true of many games), when done in concert with others. This does not always take place of course, and to be sure a lot of creative writing is a sole activity (in this case we are involved in a sort of solitaire game). But on the other hand, collaborative projects are very possible, and when these are taking place a rich social network can develop, giving interactive opportunities. In another sense, we may find that we are engaged competitively when writing, trying to be the best, to win the game. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, and it can encourage one to do one's best, develop self-confidence and improve social skills as noted above. Finally, creative writing allows for a view onto literary creation in which writers craft (sometimes at least) truly bold, fanciful, fantastic, visionary imaginative works. This is truly where writers can gain feelings of accomplishment—they see their works as epic (the word is McGonigal's), grand, ambitious, great. One can well imagine how this must make a student feel.

To sum up what I experienced in this class, I refer to the *Torrance Test of Creative Thinking* by Dr. Ellis Paul Torrance (1915-2003). This well-known test measures the following areas, and I warrant readers will find exactly the same in the following works by my students: fluency; flexibility of response; relevancy; originality; expressiveness; storytelling; synthesis; visualization; elaboration; and detail (from "Gifted Education" and "Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking").

We can see from the above that creative writing has a lot to offer students. Now I will look at what students and I found and engaged in in our course in spring 2016.

Creative Writing in NTUB

To begin, let me say that this class was conducted in a seminar, workshop format, allowing for free-form activity, discussion, and lively interaction among group members. However, it is true that seminar teaching in creative writing classes has come under some scrutiny. It has been found that some seminars have not yielded best results, and students did not feel the confidence and trust



that is necessary for good production. Students may feel excessive pressure in workshops, whether from teachers, who often emerge as central figures in seminar classrooms, “looking down” on students from high roosts as experts in the field, creating doubt and even fear; or peers, who may offer over-cooked criticism and negativity (comparatively rare, but possible). Ultimately, I think that worry about workshops and seminars comes from those that were *conducted badly*, thereby creating adverse feelings and not generating the right measure of faith and belief among students. My aims were certainly to avoid this, and to conduct a class that was essentially free-form, infused with optimism and energy. Additionally, a workshop environment must be “manifestly safe,” and bring “levels of intimacy with which [students] are comfortable” (Kennedy 204). Our writing “voices are hugely important to our identities,” Kennedy continues, and “When a workshop works, you learn. When a workshop works, you leave it with faith in the efficacy of your craft, and yourself as its practitioner....” (207, 214). I believe I was successful in crafting a writer’s workshop in these lofty terms, with the cooperation of my students. In this sense, seminars and workshops are ideal methods for teaching creative writing, with a surplus of positive energy, generosity and constructive engagement.

Early Exercises

We began our course on day one with a creative writing exercise, which served as the “before” in my before-and-after analysis. I chose a simple exercise that asked students to create a definition for a word that they do not know, choosing unusual words such as agastopia, bibble and cabotage. This led to output such as:

1. Kakorrhaphiophobia: fear of long words.
2. Jentacular: something periodic or hovering.
3. Cabotage: a condition that makes people rage after eating cabbage.
4. Bible: solemn but joyful
5. Impignorate: describing something ignored or unnoted.

The actual definitions of the above words are:

1. Abnormal fear of failure or defeat.
2. Of or pertaining to breakfast.



3. The transport of goods or passengers between two places in the same country by a transport operator from another country.
4. To eat or drink noisily.
5. To pledge, pawn, or mortgage.)

In addition I used an early creative writing exercise from *Cambridge Creative Writing*, in which students were asked to consider “outer story” (the who, what, where, and when of the story) in their effort to begin a short story. They constructed the introduction of a story, and then planned to finish it out in sections.

Early on, several students told me they were “not creative” in their efforts. To have been asked to be creative was unusual for them, never something that had been expected of them by teachers. During the course of the class I often had to encourage them, and try to get them to embrace the joy of realizing their creativity. I reminded them that “creativity is in large part a decision that anyone can make...” (Sternberg 97), and although we often choose not to make this decision, the opening is always before us. Yet further, students can find that “creativity is relevant...when one is solving problems on the job and in daily life” (something of the vocational, we might say; Sternberg and Lubart 3). Ultimately, and readers will find great pleasure in this I assure them, in the following we will see just how successful and creative my students were.

From here we began to utilize the textbooks, looking at the various chapters on genre, creativity and composition, writing drama, multimedia, speculative fiction, “life” writing, translation, memoir, and poetry. During this study we applied the in-text writing exercises and games, several of which I will present below. I hoped to engage in reading in the class, which is strongly recommended in the Cambridge texts. I have to admit, however, that students underperformed here, and did not engage in the readings (Hemingway, Chopin, Cunningham, Oates, Dickens, and other major writers) as well I would have liked. Just to get them on board, I was impelled to give them one analysis assignment by having them read and then write a comment on creative elements in Updike’s famed short story, “A&P.” I later related this work to the chapter “Composition and creative writing” in *The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing*.

Note here that some of the creative writing we analyzed in class was in fact my own writing. I have published creative writings of various sorts—stories, poetry and multimedia (and this to say nothing of the journalism and academic publishing I have been involved in) for many years. In the class we examined some of my poetry, several of my “short shorts” (a favorite genre of mine), and also my multimedia work, which was comprised of two principal pieces—*musica subterranea*, a



multimedia new journalism assignment I completed at Boston University, which received notable attention from various readers and online forums when it was first published in 1997—and *San Francisco Journal*, an online poetry cycle self-published in 2003. I have engaged in this approach, with students analyzing my work, for many years, and in general have found that students enjoy and appreciate this. In a sense it puts me a step closer to them, and puts us on the “same page” as creative writers. This did not distract them from the many major works we also examined.

The class proceeded in this way, and during the various phases, I always took a low-pressure approach to the work. My aim was always a relaxed environment—“Stress is a well-known creativity killer,” as the well-known psychologist Robert Epstein has said (Novotney). Using such an approach, students could exercise their skills and gradually see their way into creative writing as art and science. There were no true breakthroughs during the class, and you would not expect such major developments (then again, however, there were some notable pieces produced by students). What I wanted and expected was measured, steady progress, and I saw exactly this. With the readings, the textbook work, in-class exercises, films, speakers, discussion, and the occasional more formal assignment, we aimed for stable progress, and we saw this. Rather than “assignments” given to students that I graded at home, most of our work revolved around in-class exercises. In this way, rather than pressure the students, I wanted to give them the chance to explore their creative impulses, put them to work in easygoing ways, and from there begin to plan their final project—the most important focus of the class. Those assignments that I did score I at home were graded according to my Creative Writing Rubric, which included numerous factors and functions, but which I generally reduced to the four most important: Content, Development, Organization and Language usage. I labeled these on each paper, and gave a score in each category (I concentrated on the first three, as language usage was at times a bit dodgy, and I often reduced my comment to “language needs work”).

Additional activities included watching films (drama, from major 20th century plays), classroom speaking and discussion, analyzing student work, drama reading and performance, and also in-class speaking from professional creative writers. One speaker during the class, Jerome Keating, an American writer in Taipei, gave an excellent presentation that discussed his own work, and directed students toward knowing “why” they want to write, and facets of their own personalities that direct them this way. 蔡仁偉 (Cai Ren-wei) spoke in a very appealing way in Chinese on his own creative methods, his creation of poetry, and the value of creative writing for



students and in life. Thanks to the Taipei city Department of Cultural Affairs for arranging Mr. Cai.

Speculative Fiction

The first formal assignment in class was an exercise in speculative fiction, based on an exercise in “Genre and Speculative Fiction” in *The Cambridge Companion to Creative Writing*. Speculative fiction comprises the genres of horror, fantasy and science fiction. In some senses, in terms of creativity, work like this demonstrates how “creative people seek opposition; that is, they decide to think in ways that countervail how others think” (Sternberg 89). Students were asked to write a short countervailing sketch, and here I was treated to a surprise when I read their work. I found that unlike what they claimed, they could indeed be creative, and overall I felt the students performed well above the curve. Observe one example below, and I am sure you will agree. This student wrote of darkness and loss...

Couldn't remember since when, I've lost my sleep for a long time. It's does not mean that I can't fall asleep, in fact, after a long day, I can get asleep easily. But once asleep, I always go into a really, really dark place. It can't be described as a place, There's no ground, no wall, no ceiling, there's nothing to make it a room, or a place. I go in pure darkness. Every night after by body falls asleep, I am still away in the darkness, roaming along finding the way out; but I never find it and wake up in the morning exhaustedly. Day after day, the pattern never changes, and I become more and more languished. Now, again, I'm in the darkness again, roaming and finding. However, the darkness seems darker today. Somehow I get a thought that I have to go out this day or there's no going back. I start to walk, faster and faster, I start to run as fast as I can. “Run...get out of here...” my mind says. But I can't get the direction. I even don' know what I'm stepping on and where to go. The darkness seems darker. I run, so fast, as fast as I can, because I know it, I have to get out of here, I just know it. The air is much thinner, gradually I lose my breath. All of sudden, “There's nowhere you can go.” Here it comes, the real darkness.

A second horror tale tells of a menacing dream...

There is a secret deep in my mind. Occasionally, I dreamed the same dream. In the dream, I stood behind a woman. Another woman sat in front of her. No. I should say that that



woman was tied to the chair. I could clearly see the fear coming from her eyes. In the next moment, the woman who stood started fiercely tearing out great wisps of another woman's hair. With the falling of the hair, the tied woman constantly struggled and her face turned more and more distorted with pain. After watching this horrible sight, stunned? Feared? Disgusted? All of a sudden, the standing woman slowly turned her face toward me. Then, I wake up....I wake my husband. "What's wrong?" "No, nothing," I replied. He then gently caresses my hair to tell me sleeping and murmurs, "Your hair is so silky." I smile. Yeah...there is a woman deep in my mind.

Tell me these do not pack punch! Several of these assignments unfolded in similarly eerie ways, and I got a strong feeling that these students liked the idea of *horror*. This, I was sure, might well augur strange and eerie things later in the class...

Drama and the Dialogic

Not long after this we launched into our study of drama. The idea behind drama as interaction, performance, relation and dialog was a rich, fertile area for study. Students enjoyed the opportunity to construct dialogic relationships and also the basic idea of creating scene by way of stage directions. Creating scripts and dialogs in scenic environments gives students a real chance to explore personality, psychology, character development, and voice. Drama can provide students with meaningful purpose, and they became motivated to communicate through emotional identification with characters and their issues. When we describe a situation or a person's behavior as "dramatic," we generally mean that it is intense, stimulating, striking, or vibrant. The works of drama studied in the classroom share such elements. For example, if you are reading or watching a play, feelings of tension and expectation arise as you speculate about what will occur between the characters. Will Oedipus determine that he was the one who caused the plague by killing his father and committing adultery with his mother? Will Hamlet successfully redress his father's murder? Will the down-on-their-luck realtors in *Glengarry Glen Ross* ethically and/or reasonably find their way through their pressing predicaments?

The following simple exercise created a truly "dialogic" interaction among characters, in which students were asked to create a discourse with a back-and-forth collaboration requiring repeated language across characters as they interface and exchange their hopes, plans, ideas and synergy. This created a script that seems to reverse itself into new meaning and deep communicative praxis.



This exercise led to gems like the following, written by Sean Lin and Amber Lin (italics added to show the interface and effect):

Prince: I came all the way here *to win the princess's heart.*

Dragon: *To win the princess's heart* you must kill me *first.*

Prince: *First*, I don't kill living creatures.

Second—who is *this?*

Dragon: *This is* the keeper of the tower. *The fatal dragon.*

Prince: *The fatal dragon!*?! Oh no, I'm outta *here!*

Dragon: *Here* you are—the exit.

Boy: Did you make a *decision* yet?

Girl: *Decision* about what?

Boy: About *our marriage* honey.

Girl: *Our marriage?* We are just five years old and have known each other a week.

My goodness, I must tell my *parents.*

Boy: *Your parents?* Don' worry. I have told them and *they* have *agreed* to our marriage.

Girl: *They agreed?* We are just kids! I don't want to live with you forever!

In another in-class assignment Sean Lin wrote this revealing monologic look at emotion:

I want to shout. So loud, the world can here.

I want to cry. For all the pain I'm suffering.

I want to hide. In the dark where I am free.

I want to kill myself. So the agony can finally end.

I am nobody, I live for no reason, and I keep no hope.

If only I was his real daughter....

Maybe he would stop.

I remember when the sky was still blue. The beauty of nature always made me feel happy.

I was always happy when I saw the blue sky.

I am always happy wen I see the blue sky.

Sun is shining, birds are singing, and the people are smiling. The park is as usual beautiful. Green grass, gluing kites, and playful puppies make the scene even more enjoyable.



Another dialog by Mica Zhong was just as inspiring:

Man: Do you believe in god?

Woman: Oh I think not. I believe in myself.

Man: But you are only a human.

Woman: You're right, but what do you mean?

Man: All humans will feel upset, angry, scared, and greedy. Humans tend to lose their selves.

God is a direction. How can you believe in yourself instead of a god?

Woman: I believe in myself because I am a human. Your statements are true; however, humans will feel happy, generous, pitying too. We are truly alive. We don't need to pretend ourselves to be a god or a wonderful person.

Man: You're right.

Woman: We are imperfect people who live in an imperfect world.

The above examples were culled from in-class exercises performed around the mid-term, and I noted at that time that students engaged in these exercises enthusiastically. And I also noted a true improvement in their imaginative work, and that they were emerging from their "I can't do it" hollows, and beginning to find their creative voices. Things were looking good (though it was still a long way to the final project).

A second drama exercise served as the mid-term. Students were asked to write a 20-line dramatic dialog, with a short stage direction as introduction. The results continued in a promising vein, with students producing more fully realized scripts. Students were getting a deeper taste of the psychology of characters, and the development of intimate themes in this exercise. Some students even aimed to develop these into their final projects. A work by Fenny Chen shows the depth and detail that they brought to the discourse, as two sisters discussed a most sensitive issue:

Orianna: Sorry Rebecca...there is still no news.

Rebecca: Orianna, I'm innocent. It's not me. Someone framed me!

Orianna: Rebecca, calm down. Of course I know you didn't do it. But..."

Rebecca: Richard is my boyfriend. He is the one who I have promised to marry. It's such a ridiculous that I would kill a person I love!

Orianna: Yeah, I know. I can totally understand how absurd it can be. However, the thing just happened. Neither I nor you can genuinely prove you aren't the murderer.

Another by Albert Tung offered an amusing view of Poly the polar bear consulting with an arctic tern. Here again we see the creative spark emerging in students:

Arctic tern: The world in the north is a wonderful place, the bluest sky and enormous icebergs which you can't even see the end.

Poly: That sounds amazing; all I can do is run from this corner to another one. I'm tired of this place.

Arctic tern: Hold your horses, I'm not finished yet.

Poly: Okay.

Arctic tern: Although the world is a wonderful place, there is a disappointing side of it.

Poly: How come?

Arctic tern: Um...In fact, you are a very lucky polar bear. Many of your kind have died of starving and drowning.

Poly: What? Why?

Arctic tern: You may think that it is unbelievable, but it is indeed the truth.

Poly: Then...What has caused this?

Arctic tern: The evil humans! They are selfish and irresponsible...

And a dialog by Celia Ramita offered a touching view of young love:

Helen: Take this, I made it for you. Your favorite cookies and a goodbye gift.

James: Wow, thank you, I really appreciate that. And I have something for you as well.

Helen: A music box?

James: Yes, I named it nightingale. Listen to when you are home.

Helen: I will.

James: Anyway, I have to go now, the train is about to depart. And if you miss me, just open that box.

Helen: I will miss you.

James: I will come to find you someday.

Helen: You promise?

James: I promise.



Above I mentioned three major dramatic works and the idea of reading and performing dramatic works in class. In our class we did not examine major dramatic works extensively, other than films we watched (such as Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and excerpts from Miller's *Death of a Salesman*). We did read short excerpts from plays, and we performed one play together, an excerpt from *Katrin's Present* by John van Druein. This was fun and a good exercise in basic drama realization, exhibiting dramatic performance art and a sort of "participatory theatre." (Sean Lin was voted "Best Actor" in the play.) In all this there is a given creative dialogue at work, which is that between the *realistic* in drama—and as often as note drama attempts to be genuinely realistic, evincing characters in real-life situations—and the aesthetic and/or imagined—that which is unreal and imaginary. There is some theory surrounding this idea, what counts and real or not in creative thinking, and to what extent creative writers access that which is authentic, versus that which is imagined. Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky (1896-1934) considered this, and in Gunilla Lindqvist's "Vygotsky's Theory of Creativity" she examines this idea. Vygotsky considered how "When the artist creates his art, he gives realistic material an aesthetic form, which touches upon the emotions of the readers and makes them interpret the work of art and bring it to life by using their imagination" (Lindqvist 248). Consider this in this terms of what I have said about the real and the unreal in drama. In what we have seen in my student's work, I think Vygotsky's ideas come to light, in that, often, "realistic material" is given an aesthetic form, and we as readers in turn "interpret the work of art and bring it to life by using [our] imagination." This is in essence the joy of these processes of creation, giving rise to a "dynamic relation between consciousness and the world" (also a Vygotsky idea; Lindqvist 250).

Poetry and Translation

We continued in this way throughout the semester, completing in-class exercises, and avoiding longer more formalized "assignments," homework and the like. Toward the end of the class we embarked on the study of poetry. To be sure this is a most challenging area of creative writing. More musical and rhythmic than other styles of writing, highly focused on word play and structure, poetry challenges writers to truly be "artists," and yet more, to discover self (recall Flaubert, above). Poetry revolves around "units of your time" in life, and these "operate with the rhythm of language, the beat of your species and of *you*" (*Cambridge Introduction* 197). Poetry as music and rhythm reaches deep into our lives, and "The heartbeat of your mother heard by you in her womb; then the nursery rhyme, the children's song, the rhythmical poems and speech of childhood—all these lodged in your memory because of their rhythms" (*Cambridge Introduction* 197). We can thus



see that much is at work here, and the demands of accessing what is so intimate and particular will be challenging.

Virtually all of my students said they were in no way poets, and rarely if ever even tried. This is probably understandable, for poetry is not the most common undertaking of college students, and it is to be sure a high-level, demanding and ambitious enterprise. Thus, even when my students handed in their poems, they were less than 100% confident about their output. Well, in any case, my students did make an effort to produce, and they were successful in certain ways.

We began with some simple exercises. An early drill asked students to restructure an existing poem into a newly-lined poem of their choice. I selected the following from Sharon Olds's "Sex Without Love":

How do they come to the
come to the come to the God come to the
still waters, and not love
the one who came there with them

This exercise led Albert Tung to restructure the poem into this tiny nugget, with nicely repeated phrases highlighting a single phrase:

How do they
come to the come to the come to the
God
come to the
still waters,
and not love
the one who came there
with them

Future exercises included rephrasing prose into poetry, creating kennings and using them in poems (a kenning is a compound noun that employs figurative language in place of a more concrete single-word noun, such as the well-known "whale road" for "sea"), writing haikus (a favorite activity of mine), reorganizing end and beginning rhyme, using anaphora (repetition), writing list poems, and limericks.



An early exercise yielded the following piece by Mickey Hong, done as an exercise asking students to write kennings in poetry (which might be seen in Hong's "life," "story," and "author"). This poem was also roughly an attempt at creating a three-line Haiku, which can be seen in the second stanza. Here too we see vitality and a story, an author at once telling and being told:

I am life,
An endless story, with a happy ending
I am the author

Oh my dear old friend:
Do you remember the time
We spent together?

Another brief piece was a limerick exercise. Limericks are of course simple poems, not reaching the heights of really great works, but they can provide an amusing aside exercising rhyme, rhythm and word-play in useful ways. One student belted out the following comical piece:

I walked into the front of the bar
The bartender said, "Hey there, you're a star!"
I drank down a brew
And then I had two
And then I went down on the fl'ar.

More elaborate submissions arrived later when students handed in their first formal poetry assignments, which asked them to compose a poem, proper, in Chinese or English, with translations. A key point is raised here. That is, when I "assigned" my class to write this poem, I gave them three weeks to complete the task—longer than the average assignment in a college course—but it nevertheless highlights one important point: When does *any* poem have a "deadline"? I recognized this in my class, and that I could not expect students to just produce outstanding poetry within three weeks time. But then, I had to give *some* assignment, and this was the one I gave.

Another important point is also raised, for there can be more to poetry by way of the art and science of translation—an art and science that is "carried on in dialogue with other writing...which



we *think towards* whether formally or as a kind of characterizing presence” (*Cambridge Companion* 119, emphasis in original). Translation, in a word, is a lot more than just repeating or rewriting what has already been written. Translation, “texts *in process*” (*Cambridge Companion*, 121), opens us into varied world contextualities and languages transgressing and interrogating one another—and what comes out on the other side is forever a surprise. If you wonder about this, review a number of translations of say, Homer’s *The Iliad* over the last centuries, and view the various decisions made about how to better and best reinvent this work. Having a sense of what’s being conveyed in literature, any literature, “opens up a world of creative alternatives” and can “throw your own literary tradition into sharper relief” (*Cambridge Companion* 118). This can help us “focus creative choices, especially those to do with register and form” (*Cambridge Companion* 118). Given that I allowed students to compose their poems in Chinese, their native language, and then translate them into English, the translation function was continually being practiced in our class. Let’s take a look at a few examples. In the following we will again see the creative spark emerging, and unsurprisingly to my mind, students producing creative, sincere, and at times visionary work.

An early submission from Will Wang, “Ember,” while not exactly “high level” at only four lines, shows that students were focusing in the right directions:

Not yet to light up the fire.
Yet to extinguish.
Exhale all the warmth.
Before our passion runs out.

There is a touch of dynamism in this work, with oppositions across the fire and its extinguishing, simply exhaled warmth and greater passion—all at once emerging and “running out.”

Sean Lin’s “Reminiscence” caught my eye immediately. The poem features a sophisticated rhyme structure that opens with a balanced A-B-C-C-B-A form, bracketed in the first and last lines by “A picture of old days” / “And that’s all it says.” This then breaks down into a free rhyme, capturing the poem’s open-ended and nostalgic conclusion with its “shared child dreams,” and look back at “the kids we once were.” I like the phrasing “makes years of days” and the way it is echoed by “thousands of nights” in lines three and four:

A picture of old days,



It shows yellow a little slightly;
Makes years of days compressed into a frame;
Takes thousands of nights tasting the same;
Yet holds the memories so brightly.
And that's all it says.

Not even a goldfish brain can forget.
The shared child dreams we had,
The hide-and-seek we played,
The treehouse we built,
And the kids.
The kids we once were.

Lin's Chinese version of the poem is worth looking at (fluent Chinese speakers will appreciate his artistry). Exercise your Chinese here (everybody is studying the language nowadays after all), and compare this translation to Lin's English, above.

念舊

一本舊時的相簿，
把泛黃表現的有些弱；
把數年的白天縮成相框；
把數千個黑夜用於品嚐；
也把回憶鮮明地保留。
一切由它來敘述。

即使金魚的腦袋也無法忘記
我們有過的童年的夢想、
我們玩過的躲貓貓、
我們蓋的樹屋、
那些孩子。



我們曾經扮演過的孩子。

A second poem was written by Mickey Hong. She expresses a break in a relationship and the importance of words in any affiliation. Her word play with “whenever, wherever but however” is effective, and suggests in an oblique way a sort of constancy (by way of the repetition) and also catawampus, with the three words seeming to diagonally interject with one another. This essentially unsophisticated language (“oh, whatever”) implies an inchoate relation that is doomed to failure.

At the beginning
There are many messages between you and me
The words in the messages sound very sweet
Whenever, wherever
But however
Words in the messages become less and less
So do the messages
At the end
They are disappeared
Word, message, and you
And you
Disappear.

A final poem by Celia Ramita revisited themes she had suggested in earlier work: solitude, loneliness, and isolation. The work is somewhat simplistic, but its simplicity conveys feelings of separateness and near-despair in compelling ways. Her “few days few months” and “year gone by” hark to Sean Lin’s “years of days.”

I saw you
In this perpetual darkness
For every moment that we have been through
I wish you were here
Standing beside me
Side by side



Few Days

Few months

And finally a year gone by

And here I am

Still standing all alone.

Life Writing and New Journalism

Our class concluded with a look at “life writing,” that is, travel writing, family writing, and memoir, much written within the genre of new journalism. To be sure these cross-overs of fiction and non-fiction are interesting, with their combination of facts, details, truth and experience on the one hand, and fictional and literary technique, genuine immersion, narrative and creative impulse on the other. Called a “supergenre” by Morley (*Cambridge Introduction 177*), in these works we are truthful and objective, but we move beyond these bounds and speak in a personal voice, “revealing the meanings you attach to...circumstances rather than arguing the point” (Bly in *Cambridge Introduction 177*). These works—long a favorite of mine, as a one-time practicing journalist—function by “placing the author at the center of the story, channeling a character’s thoughts...and exploding traditional narrative forms” (Boynton in Blais, *Nieman Reports*). I only assigned my students one project in this genre, a brief writing on a family member. I was hoping to get some interesting responses that looked into the backgrounds of grandparents, their lives, stories and history in Taiwan, but it did not quite work out this way. One piece, however, caught my eye. In this work Fenny Chen executed a very creative take on three Spanish words, *madre*, *padre*, and *hermano* (mother, father, brother). Using these words as starting points, she wrote, in English, a delightful reflective piece on what these family members meant to her. My only response was that she might have entitled the work *Familia* (rather than “Family”), and that writing the brief introduction to the work *in Spanish* might have been a nice way to set it all off (of course many readers of the work would not be able to understand this, but that is acceptable given the content of the piece itself, and indicates how everyone should always be attempting to tackle reading in foreign languages; I myself speak Spanish with a reasonable degree of fluency, and currently teach the language at NTUB). If this omission is a slight drawback, it does not take away from the overall feeling of the writing, which is quite powerful. After a brief introduction, Fenny wrote using the three Spanish words, shaping the writing itself in a graphic sense to indicate exactly who she was talking about:

“Poverty,” you said. That was the word of your childhood

“Adapt,” you described. Fortunately, you were energetic enough to chase and change.

“Devote,” you claimed. As the saying goes, “No pain, no gain.”

“Restart,” you suggested. After undergoing those toughest days, you bobbed up, accepted, and went on.

“Enjoy,” you smiled. Keep working hard, but cherish every moment we are together.

Many words are hard to express the gratitude I have

At first, we were strangers. You came into my life out of the blue. Reached out your hands and accepted me.

Did all the things in the role you played.

Raised me, taught me, and accompanied me. Then, time fade away.

Eventually, I realized the efforts you had made. Appreciated your endless love.

Hold both of your small hands. Welcome you to be our new family member.

Eagerly expect you to grow up and play with me day after day.

Remember those old days, you regarded me as a leader and followed me everywhere.

Miss our silly quarrels and childish fights sometimes.

Although we once hated each other, we also loved each other simultaneously.

Needless to say, we experienced the hard time and shared the happiness altogether.

Our bond is tight, isn't it?

We continued, until later in the second half when students began to plan their final projects. Before I turn to these finals, as a last classroom action I distributed a questionnaire to students asking about their responses and recommendations for the class. Three of the questions asked for a numeric entry. From 1 (worst) to 5 (best). I asked students whether they enjoyed creative writing, whether they enjoyed the class, and whether they found they had learned useful skills during this course. All three questions yielded an average of 4, a respectable norm. In terms of enjoying creative writing, four is a fairly high score, given that students had earlier stated that they were not fully engaged with the process. Nevertheless, they expressed that they enjoyed children's stories, travel writing, memoir, poetry and drama. “I really enjoy composing shorter fiction,” wrote one student. “It can consist of my experiences, the stories I've heard, and words I want to say.” In



terms of what they had learned, students said that the class was challenging and enjoyable. One student wrote that he could “really write something from myself, and [enjoy] the feeling of creating my own works.” One student gave a nice accolade by writing “During the whole semester, this was the only course I looked forward to.” Another said the course “pushed us harder to write in English, [and this will be] helpful to us when we enter work.” One said that “the class was educationally useful and also fun.” In sum, most students were satisfied with the course, but some suggested more group interaction would help (this was a deficiency in the class), as would additional reading, a tad less abstraction (which I have noted was true of the two texts in class), and additional outside speakers (although I invited three during the course).

On the penultimate day of the class and into the final class, final projects were handed in, and I began selection of works to be featured in a Creative Writing conference the class organized—no doubt the first creative writing conference ever held in Taiwan. Entitled *Razzle Dazzle and Razz-ma-tazz: Creative Writing in NTUB*, to this conference I now turn.

Razzle-dazzle and Razz-ma-tazz: The Creative Writing Conference

The students and I planned all phases of the conference. Early in the semester I was sending out notices to schools around Taiwan (none replied), and as the date drew nearer, students arranged the conference, designed a promotional poster, and prepared for the day itself. The conference was held in NTUB’s best conference room, a very nice new facility. Ultimately our conference attracted some attention from outside the school, and Saraliza Elida Anzaldúa, a poet and sometimes-philosopher studying literature at National Taiwan University, joined. I selected four students from our class to present, and I too created a project. Best of all, I arranged for Yin-ka (印卡), a professional poet, to serve as the keynote speaker (thanks again to the Taipei Department of Cultural Affairs).

As the day unfolded, students and I made all arrangements in the conference room, with refreshments, and a conference theme backdrop. Guests arrived, the technical details were settled, and I met the keynote speaker at the front. All was set.

The conference began with Yin-ka’s address. Speaking in Chinese, he spoke of creativity in life, the writer as reader, planning in creative writing, and how it had impacted his own output of poetry, with examples from his work. (My Chinese skills are somewhat less than perfect, and I had to work hard to keep up with Yin-ka’s presentation.)



The first speaker was Ms. Anzaldua. She discussed her conception of “Creative Origins,” and how creativity has been perceived over the ages from instantiations of bliss, demonic and/or heavenly possession, rationality, passion, and as a force of the mind, particularly the role of melancholy in creative output, which Anzaldua believed was probably a primary factor in imaginative work. Creativity is a force from mysterious origins, and in various cultures and eras, creativity has been characterized multifariously. Anzaldua provided samples of her own work to support her ideas.

In the following we can view these final projects as the “after” in my “before and after” examination in this class. Readers will see, briefly, just how far students had come.

Sean Lin and Chocolate Huang combined to talk about their poetry. Sean had created a varietal work, with diary entries, pseudo-advertising, a short story, poetry, a dialog, haiku, and letters. One of his poems brilliantly used a graphic element with the text seeming to “buzz” as you read it. Chocolate’s “Ten Poems combined ten short poems, examining conceptions of letting go, ideals, birth, the road ahead, and pretenses in love. Her “Let Go” presented a positive message for everyone:

You are the light
But I want to give you a sun
When you are tired
You can close your eyes
Let it shine

Next was Ellen Lin’s “Pumped Up Kicks by Foster the People,” which featured a rap-like song with vengeful, aggressive lyrics by Mark Foster and his American band Foster the People, combined with diary entries by Ellen that spoke on the same rage against being bullied, and wanting to kill they bully-ers. “I’ve waited for a long time. / Yeah the sleight of my hand is now a quick-pull trigger,” wrote Foster, and Li answered with “What have I done? / I tried to ask for help, but all the others kids were just laughing at me. / Those mean idiots gotta taste my bullets.”

The last presentation paired the author of this paper and Amber Lin, with their examination, “Graphic Storytelling.” Lin discussed her hand-drawn storybook, “Tell You a Secret,” a children’s work telling of a pig gaining weight, and Pendery presented his graphic story, “Something Super: How I Learned Chinese in Taiwan,” created with artist Roxy Dai. This work is an abbreviated chapter from Pendery’s *Something Super: Living, Learning and Teaching in Taiwan* published in 2013.



“Graphic storytelling is a new phase in world literature, and we have created graphic stories, to convey narratives by combining words and images into a unified visual narrative,” said Pendery. The conference concluded with photos and refreshments (Appendix 3).

Conclusion

I found my Creative Writing class and conference to be a true treat, a great asset for students (and myself), and I am sure that we all enjoyed ourselves tremendously. Creative writing is a deep well of inspiration and exciting possibility for students, and this was shown clearly during this course and conference. Work like this enables us to break free of the drudgery of ordinary life and habits, and enter new worlds of inspiration, imagination and inventiveness. Taiwan is unique in that this is exactly the kind of inspirational outlet badly needed by students, yet it is almost completely denied to them in college. In a word, creativity is one of the most important things that students can access in their schooling. My hope is that I have offered my students exactly this, and that they will endeavor to bring creativity into their lives every day hereafter. “Others have seen what is and asked why,” said Pablo Picasso. “I have seen what could be and asked why not?” Or as one student, Mike Xiao, put it in his final project, “Fake it. And do it until you become it. / I know, make a choice, in need, but hard indeed. / I am who I am. I am what I am. / The world is big. And my dream is big.” Thoughts like these may lead to great imagined futures.

Acknowledgments and Conflicts of Interest

I am an independent scholar and teacher working in Taipei, Taiwan. This paper was produced solely by me, and there are no additional acknowledgments to make. This paper presents no conflict of interest in cultural, political or scholarly ways. No human or animal rights have been abused in any way in the creation of this paper.



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Appendix 1: Creative Writing Rubric

Meaning/Content: the extent to which the assignment exhibits sound understanding/interpretation/analysis				
Story Structure	Establishes strong plot/setting/character /pt. of view	Establishes plot/setting/character/pt. of view	Some elements of story structure	Few/no story structure elements present
Character	Develops complex characters	Develops characters through dialogue, narration and action	Some character development	Characters are not developed
Image	Maximal use of significant details	significant details	Minimal use of significant details	No use of significant details
Voice	Maximal use of images to make the voice appealing	Several use of images to make the voice appealing	Minimal use of images to make the voice appealing	No use of images to make the voice appealing
Development: the extent to which ideas are elaborated, using specific and relevant evidence				
Ideas	Develops ideas clearly and fully; uses a wide range of relevant details	Develops ideas clearly; uses relevant details	Develops ideas briefly; uses some detail	Uses incomplete or undeveloped details
Story	Maximal use of narrative	Improved use of narrative	Some use of narrative	Minimal use of narrative

Organization: the extent to which the assignment exhibits direction, shape, and coherence				
Design Organization	Maintains a clear focus; exhibits a logical, coherent structure	Maintains a clear focus; exhibits a logical sequence of ideas through appropriate transitions	Establishes but does not always maintain an appropriate focus; some inconsistencies in sequence of ideas	Lacks an appropriate focus, but suggests some organization
Language Use: the extent to which the assignment reveals an awareness of audience and purpose				
Description	Creative, concrete language;	Assignment uses concrete language, literary devices and sensory detail	Some use of concrete language, literary devices, and sensory detail in assignment	Little use of concrete language, literary devices or sensory detail in assignment
Word Choice	Uses sophisticated vocabulary	Effective word choices	Some effective word choices	Few effective word choices
Sentence Variety	Well-varied sentence structure	Good sentence structure and variety	Occasional use of sentence variety	Little sentence variety
Conventions: the extent to which the assignments exhibits conventional grammar/spelling/word usage				
Grammar/Punctuation	Smooth, error-free grammar	Mostly correct grammar; errors do not interfere	Errors occasionally interfere	Grammatical errors are awkward and interfere



Spelling and Word Usage			
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Appendix 2: Post-class Questionnaire

1. Do you enjoy writing as a creative process?

Not at all	Not much	Neutral	Somewhat	Greatly
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2. If you enjoy creative writing, what genres and forms do you enjoy most: poetry, travel writing and journalism, longer fiction, shorter fiction, multimedia, children’s stories, memoir/personal reflection, drama.

3. What are your strengths and/or weaknesses when you approach creative writing? What are the challenges of this kind of writing?

4. How much did you enjoy this class?

Not at all	Did not much enjoy	Neutral	Somewhat enjoyed	Greatly enjoyed
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5. Do you feel you learned useful writing skills?

Not at all	Not much	Neutral	Somewhat	A great deal
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6. What did you hope to get out of this class?



7. What do you feel you did get out of this class, in terms of your own improvement in writing and in approach to university education? Consider whether the class was fun, exciting, challenging, educationally useful, etc.

8. What did you like or not like most about the class?

9. How could this class be improved?

Appendix 3: Razzle-dazzle and Razz-ma-tazz: NTUB Creative Writing Conference, 2016.



Yin-ka (印卡)



Sean Lin and Chocolate Huang



Ellen Li



Saraliza Elida Anzaldua



The entire speaking group