AUDIENCE MATTERS:
EXPLORING AUDIENCE IN UNDERGRADUATE CREATIVE WRITING

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A Dissertation
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This study explores undergraduate creative writing instruction with regard to the complex issue of audience in the three areas that converge in the creative writing classroom: rhetoric and writing theory, literary theory, and creative writing pedagogy.

After an overview of the project in Chapter One, Chapter Two reviews scholarship specific to creative writing pedagogy. The core of the study, Chapter Three explores the theoretical approaches to audience from both rhetorical theory and literary theory and creates a theoretical lens in which to examine audience in undergraduate creative writing. Chapter Four shows the methodological approach and the data analysis methods used in a pilot study of undergraduate creative writing syllabi and textbooks. Included in this chapter is a table listing terms that suggest audience developed from the theory built in Chapter Three. This table informs the pilot study.

Chapter Five provides the results of the pilot study, offering evidence of how audience manifests itself within twenty-seven syllabi and twenty-four currently used creative writing textbooks. By tabulating the references to audience and analyzing their contexts, I offer a look into how the reader is considered in undergraduate creative writing instruction. The distinct and interesting patterns that emerged are explained in Chapter Six. Besides revealing the ways and contexts in which audience surfaces in the teaching of creative writing, I offer suggestions on how this important concern to writers can be more
transparent. This chapter uncovers the ways in which audience functions—or perhaps can function—within the creative writing classroom.

Given that some creative writing instructors are admittedly apprehensive about having a theoretical foundation for their instruction, this dissertation argues that taking on the single issue of audience may create a more critical approach to student writing, and may create avenues to examine other important writerly matters within introductory creative writing classes.
I dedicate this work to my father, Kent Peters
and my father-in-law, Frank Joseph Cucciarrre.
I wish that both of you were still around so I could make you call me “Dr. Cucciarrre.”
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My doctoral degree, culminating in this dissertation, took a very long time. Given that I had many life-changing events occur during the degree’s completion, graduating feels much more enormous and satisfying then if I had finished within the original time frame. Writing this page feels very, very good.

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CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF DISSERTATION

This dissertation lays the foundation for a practical approach to audience in the undergraduate creative writing classroom, a place where literary theory, rhetorical theory, and creative writing meet. Building on the significance of audience to rhetorical theory and composition pedagogy as well as on its importance within literary theory, the dissertation investigates the role of audience in creative writing pedagogy. After the scholarship review of Chapter Two, Chapter Three develops broad theoretical perspectives on audience in rhetorical and literary studies and in describing creative writing pedagogy. Chapter Four explains the methodology of the pilot study that applies the ideas from Chapter Three. Chapter Five then presents results of that pilot study, seeking evidence of audience emphasis in instructional materials and textbooks used in undergraduate creative writing classes. Finally, Chapter Six uses the results of the pilot study as a context for observations and recommendations about how audience can be used more extensively in undergraduate creative writing instruction.

Besides offering an overview of the entire project, this first chapter outlines the dissertation’s approach to audience. Following the explanation of purpose, this chapter defines audience from three textual approaches: creative writing, rhetoric and composition, and literary theory. The contributions to the field surface throughout the dissertation, but are summarized later in this chapter. Last, to aid the audience of this dissertation, a summary of the organization of this study concludes this introductory chapter. Still, the study begins by fleshing out a useful background that examines the pedagogy of creative writing and the questions that propel this dissertation.
**Grounding Creative Writing Pedagogy**

The creative writing classroom is a unique conflation of writing instruction and literary theory. That statement, grounded in my studies and personal experience, is a core assumption of this dissertation. This study explores the extent to which audience is a concern of creative writing instruction comparable with the importance of audience for text production in rhetorical theory and composition instruction, as well as its role in text interpretation in literary theory. As the dissertation shows, creative writing does not treat audience as explicitly as either literary theory or rhetorical and composition theory do. This indifference to a critical look at audience is not surprising since, according to David Richter, there is a tension between these three areas of study that generates discourse and promotes self-examination among faculty practice. Richter contends this epistemic discourse is the “talk we talk when a consensus breaks down, when we begin to disagree about fundamental principles and to argue about which principles are truly fundamental [...] for in a state of theory people ask us to define or clarify our terms and start contesting those definitions and categories” (9). This dissertation enters this conversation by attempting to define the functions of audience in creative writing pedagogy while satisfying the three different disciplinary voices. Approaching audience this way allows the dissertation to thoroughly examine how this fundamental issue connects writing theory and literary theory with creative writing instruction and shows how audience manifests itself as an exigent part of the creative writing curriculum.

Creative writing curriculum itself is the subject of a rich and sometimes contentious conversation in contemporary creative writing scholarship. Some scholars trace the history of writing instruction, identifying periods when composition, creative writing, and literature
became separate entities (Myers; Berry; Adams; Scholes “Rise”). Some theorists call for more or alternative training of creative writing teachers (Starkey; Bishop “Crossing”; Bishop “Afterword” 292-94); some highlight the important relationship between creative writing and composition (Starkey 252-53; Bishop “Crossing”; Bishop “Afterword” 292-94) and still others examine the efficacy of the workshop model for creative writing instruction (Myers; Starkey; Bly; Haake). It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to address all of these ongoing debates about creative writing; each will only be discussed to the degree they are relevant to audience and only in order to provide a model for a more focused and constructive dialogue.

By exploring one specific area of writing instruction that—as my teaching and studying of composition and creative writing shows—is at work in all writing classrooms, the dissertation identifies and explores three concerns: the methods in which the writing concern of audience is already at work in the creative writing classroom, the justification for teaching audience, and the implications of teaching it. Audience is in some way present (explicitly or implicitly) in any act of writing. This study concentrates on the way audience is considered in the undergraduate creative classroom. Two questions that frame the research are:

1. In which ways do theories concerning audience emerge in the undergraduate creative writing classroom?

2. How might these theories be practiced and incorporated into the pedagogy of creative writing?

The research reveals the various ways audience can be considered, defined, approached, and taught in the undergraduate creative writing classroom, followed by the implications of
those findings. My method involves exploring audience in terms of the three areas of study present in the creative writing classroom—creative writing, college writing instruction, and literary theory—in order to create shared definitions and approaches, and then determine strategies for teaching audience to undergraduate creative writers.

Jay Parini’s essay, “Literary Theory and the Writer,” helps justify the three elements of my theoretical framework by suggesting that the area of rhetoric provides a useful keystone between writing and theory. Parini states that “this junction—rhetoric—[is] where literary theory and creative writing should and can meet.” Parini identifies rhetoric as the epistemic arena where “the most productive ways of ‘making’ language, of creating meaning and eliciting responses” is explored (130). This dissertation couples Parini’s conceptualization with existing scholarship on audience in the field of composition and literary theory. Specifically, within the field of composition and rhetoric, this study draws upon the work of seminal scholars whose work on audience is often cited.

The final discipline that informs this dissertation is literary theory. The scholarship in narrative and poetic theory is especially relevant to the creative writing classroom because it invites a blending of the areas of both text production (writing) with text consumption (criticism). “Creative writing was devised as an explicit solution to an explicit problem,” D.G. Myers insists in his history of the field, *The Elephants Teach*: “It was an effort to integrate literary knowledge with literary practice. And it was initiated at a specific time and place to combat a specific disintegration in the study of literature” (13). Myers’ chronicle of creative writing instruction illustrates the uneasy relationship between creative writing and other areas of literature (from composition to criticism). By noting creative writing’s literary roots, and highlighting issues of teaching creative writing by teaching reading and writing as
a reader (Myers 158), Myers’ and Parini’s ideas support examining audience and its function in the creative writing classroom through rhetorical and literary theory.

In order to focus the study, this dissertation creates boundaries in two specific ways: identifying the terms used to refer to audience, and the scholars and theorists studied. Scholars of writing believe that audience is invested in every aspect and choice in writing, from titles, opening lines, and language issues to word choice, dialogue, and literary devices, but limiting this dissertation’s definition of audience in terms of writing theory is necessary in order to focus the research. The theory built in Chapter Three establishes a list of terms that suggest the reader, audience, “other,” or additional terms that in someway point to another contributor of meaning. This list may not be inclusive of all references to audience, but it allows a starting point in which to study the issue of audience. More important, however, in order to create some scope in which to choose the scholars who inform and establish the terms, the dissertation is underscored by one central element that delimits the inquiry: pedagogy. Investigating audience in terms of how it is taught in the undergraduate creative writing classrooms allows a more focused look at this important writing issue.

Similarly, this dissertation further restricts itself to those creative writers who teach and discuss teaching. Creative writers who write about writing undoubtedly influence practicing writers and those who teach writing. From Shakespeare’s soliloquies and prologues to Canonical authors and poets, such as James Joyce and T.S. Eliot, many writers discuss or identify audience. More contemporary poets, such as Philip Larkin, Frank O’Connor and Billy Collins, and writers such as Toni Morrison also refer to audience in essays, interviews, and even within texts with such as references to “Dear Reader,” or in experimental writing such as Italo Calvino’s If on a winter’s night a traveler. Teasing ideas
about audience out of a broad range of literary works and the theories that guide those works (an intriguing project, and one for future research) goes far beyond this dissertation’s exploration of the terms and manifestations of audience in the undergraduate creative writing classroom. Therefore, the reach of this project is limited to those creative writers, composition theorists, and literary theorists who, in some way, speak to how institutions teach literature consumption and production. Certainly, the pedagogy of creative writers is influenced by aesthetic theories of what constitutes “good” writing, but in order to define the perimeter of my inquiry, the focus is solely on theorists whose ideas incorporate and influence pedagogical philosophies. The argument here is that the creative writing classroom experience is an important juncture in the undergraduate curriculum where students can explore texts holistically from within production of the text and by critiquing the textual product. Therefore, theories of audience are buttressed by ideas of how to teach audience. Examining this writing issue through both writing and literary theory galvanizes the unique opportunity that creative writing classes offer undergraduate students. By looking through these disciplinary lenses, audience in creative writing is examined functionally, exploring how the writing and reading of texts intersect to create a unique and important pedagogical occasion.

To show how the theory might be applied to the undergraduate creative writing classroom, I conducted a small pilot study which applies the terms and theories defined in Chapter Three to the conventional texts of these classrooms. By revealing how the issue of audience functions, the dissertation compares theory with practice and uncovers both strengths and opportunities in the pedagogy. The result is a look at the textual patterns of
pedagogy regarding audience and the writing or literary theory that justifies it, thus supporting the critical analysis of audience by both teachers and students of creative writing.

**Process: Approach to Studying Audience**

Approaching this issue on three fronts is an unbalanced process. Due to the volume of scholarship and the attention given to audience within rhetorical and composition theory, this area is the most substantial of the three in the study. I do not, however, intend to treat composition theory as a model discipline to which creative writing teachers should aspire. I use this body of theory, instead, as one part of the theoretical framework that serves to explore how the issue of audience functions in the production of creative writing.

Within rhetoric and composition theory, the dissertation focuses on several overlapping approaches to examining audience. It considers the intellectual roots of the ideas and corresponding scholarship engendered by these approaches. The focus is on the work of Lloyd Bitzer and his essay “The Rhetorical Situation”; Linda Flower’s work in writer- and reader-based prose; Kenneth Burke’s idea of audience identification; Walter Ong’s essay, “A Writer’s Audience, Always a Fiction”; and Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford’s “Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked.” These authors present the approaches that play a central role to any dialogue about audience in composition, and thus also in creative writing.

This dissertation also draws on literary theory—defined here as the areas of narrative and poetic theory—to approach the issue of audience. In approaching audience in terms of literary consumption, the focus is on several influential scholars: Robert Scholes, Wayne Booth, Marjorie Perloff, and Stanley Fish. These scholars all ground themselves in the
examination of texts (poetic or narrative) and consider the production of these types of texts. They also underscore the connections between the investigation of written texts, authorial purpose, and consideration of audience. All three of these areas of textual study inform textual production. Whether in the specific essays chosen as part of this present examination, or in other aspects of their scholarship, these literary theorists also have a strong interest in pedagogy. Considering the role of audience in creative writing instruction, Scholes, Booth, Perloff, and Fish provide rich alternatives to composition theorists.

One of the interesting discoveries in this study is the way in which composition theorists overlap in their conclusions with literary theorists and, indeed, with the seminal scholars they cite to support their scholarship. Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Mikhail Bakhtin, Chaim Perelman, and others surface in both the composition and literary areas of this study. This finding reinforces the unique way in which literary and composition theory are important in the pedagogy of undergraduate creative writing.

**Purpose: Pedagogical Rationale**

This section helps justify the importance of the issue of audience and the boundaries created in the study. Given that English departments are home to literary studies, writing, and creative writing programs, it seems natural to approach audience as an issue inextricable from textual study. In “A Fortunate Fall,” Robert Scholes advocates approaching literature through “three aspects of textuality: how to situate a text (history), how to compose one (production), and how to read one (consumption).” Knowing the boundary issues between these three aspects, Scholes envisions the amalgamation as a way to “change English from a field to a discipline” (“Fortunate” 112-13). Supported by Scholes’s recommendation, this
dissertation tackles the literary, writerly issue of audience through three pedagogical methods: literary theory, creative writing, and rhetoric and composition.

In using the terms “production” and “consumption” in ways that echo a Marxist cultural perspective, it is clear that this theoretical stance percolates throughout the dissertation. As a thread that emerged in the research, this dichotomy of producing and consuming texts resonates in the theorists studied and adds another tacit complication of defining audience in the undergraduate creative writing curriculum. Unlike the graduate creative writing class where students are groomed for professional writing careers, undergraduates are only beginning to understand how the reader, audience, or consumer might affect their writing. A comprehensive examination of Marxist theory and how it pertains to this unique creative writing classroom is an interesting undercurrent to this research. It opens areas of scholarship that the scope of this dissertation will not allow, but it certainly points to new research possibilities.

Lynn Bloom, who has published in many arenas of English (including composition, literature and creative writing), is one who also echoes this cultural perspective. She says to “be a producer as well as a consumer of texts enables—no obliges—the writer to understand works of literature from the inside out” (Bloom “Textual” 80). Her essay, “Textual Terror, Textual Power,” argues that it is important for literature students to experiment in creative writing, yet the argument works in both directions, reader as writer and writer as reader. Regardless of the area in which they begin, occupying either position requires students to consider audience and “become invested in their own writing, and in the writing of their peers.” And then “when the students have begun to understand what they’ve done,” Bloom discovers, “textural terror gives way to a sense of textual power” (“Textual” 81). Wendy
Bishop, who always advocates allowing the creative aspect of writing to enable the writer, furthers Bloom’s ideas and situates them within the writing classroom. She says, “any act of composing is creative if you move from assigned writing to invested writing, that is, if you view a subject or a project as your own” (Bishop Acts 108). Taking both Bloom and Bishop into consideration indicates the importance that the empowering of the writer has to allow the next intellectual moment in writing: identification with an audience. This idea also resonates when we bear in mind the issue of writer- versus reader-based prose, and when we consider, as Robert Brooke does in Writing and Sense of Self: Identity Negotiation in Writing Workshops, the unique circumstances of identity building within the undergraduate creative writing classroom.

Whether it is identity or identifying with one’s reader, the concept of audience, along with the issues that surround it, identifies the many connections among creative writing and composition and rhetoric. “Writers can only benefit from an enhanced understanding of rhetorical issues, which nestle at the living center of their craft,” writes Jay Parini in his essay about creative writing and theory (130). In examining rhetoric, he collapses the boundaries between composition and creative writing. The framework of this dissertation’s research is buttressed with the idea that “critics alert to the demands of narrative (a critical essay is, after all, nothing more than the ‘story’ of a reading) will find themselves once again in possession of that amazing thing: a real audience” (Parini 130). The decision to focus this study of undergraduate creative writing instruction on one important aspect of writing and teaching follows the recommendation of another scholar. Hans Ostrom, who has published many texts and essays on creative writing pedagogy, contends in the introduction to a collection of essays about the pedagogy of creative writing, “If taking on theory […] seems
too daunting or too monolithic a task [...] perhaps reconceptualizing only one area of pedagogy will seem more productive and practical to many” (Colors xix). Following that method, the dissertation’s focus on audience might foster useful insights into how creative writing is taught to undergraduates, while also allowing for other arenas within creative writing pedagogy to be studied. Ostrom goes on to suggest that “Theory can result in new creative products, in honorable teaching practices, in classroom events that electrify pedagogy, in intellectual refurbishment” (xix). Perhaps it is not surprising that David Richter’s earlier-mentioned notion of how debate within the English department builds theory is parallel to Ostrom’s idea that theory will cultivate new and fresh methods in teaching. The discussion of audience in the creative writing classroom will, I hope, suggest new ideas in teaching.

Audience, of course, does not exhaust the many approaches to writing instruction, and this dissertation does not assume that it can cover all of the issues of audience within literary theory. But by focusing on this one area, this study provides useful insights into creative writing pedagogy, drawing from its similarities to and differences from composition pedagogy as well as considering theoretical elements of narrative and poetic theory. The research also clarifies the pedagogy of audience already extant within creative writing texts, revealing the ties between writing pedagogy and textual theory, and, I believe, pointing to areas of productive change. Audience, as a singular issue, also serves as a valuable topic for studying creative writing pedagogy because audience is closely associated with other writing issues, such as collaboration, revision, discourse communities, peer consultation, and writing’s position in academia. And within literary theory, exploring audience uncovers links to the role of author, reader response theory, and issues of postmodernism. Examining
the extant scholarship of these related issues offers evidence that suggests even more matters that complicate and enrich audience within the creative writing classroom.

The research limits its examination of audience to lower level college creative writing classes; this specific writing community is unique. Norman Foerster—considered the main architect of The Iowa Writers’ Workshop—opposed undergraduate creative writing classes (Bishop, *Colors* 66). In probably the most notable of instances, Foerster shifted the emphasis in undergraduate study from literary history to literary criticism. In as early as 1931, he believed that the undergraduate curriculum should be a foundation for further professional study in belles lettres or “imaginative writing” as he called it (Wilbers 43-9), not as a rudimentary version of the graduate workshop. Foerster believed that undergraduate education, in general, had differing curricular goals than graduate work. Nevertheless, the graduate writers’ workshop still serves as a model for lower level creative writing classes.

Although Foerster raised the issue decades ago, applicability of graduate pedagogy to undergraduate students is more acute today when the number of undergraduate creative writing classes and programs is growing and there is an increase in non-majors taking these classes (Light 257). The workshop method, of teaching creative writing is still a pedagogical issue, and as shown by Bishop, Ostrom, Katharine Haake, and Carol Bly, not all undergraduate creative writing uses this method especially when one considers the varying degrees available to undergraduate writers: Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A) or Bachelor of Arts with a creative writing concentration (B.A.). Regardless, Wendy Bishop sees teachers of undergraduate creative writers as more responsible for what they are doing in the classroom, thus the urgency to reconsider this practice makes this research vital ("Afterword" 292-94).
Furthermore, Foerster and Bishop state that the undergraduate writing student is vulnerable to the competing methods of writing instruction. Richter adds that the “entering student is a bystander to a conversation [...] and he or she needs to know what the options are and what is at stake” (11). Here, Richter is alluding to those enduring historical tensions in English departments mentioned earlier, but his words also apply to writing instruction. Just as instructors of literature cannot “presume that each student can, with practice” settle on one interpretation of a text (11), writing teachers, whether of creative, expository, or argumentative writing, cannot assume that student writers are able to consider all possible reader interpretations of their own texts. This idea is particularly germane to the immediate audience of the undergraduate writers’ workshop. Workshops cannot presume that all writers are perspicacious readers that have a catalog of literary suggestions at their disposal. Undergraduate writers are seldom armed with such tools.

Another unique quality of the undergraduate creative writing class is in the students’ motivation to enroll (Freisinger; Moxley; Minot). Joseph Moxley’s book, *Creative Writing in America*, and Kevin Stein in “What Are We Up To?” suggest that the motives are diverse, yet instructors must respect every student’s objectives. Moxley believes that students sign up to cultivate their imaginations or improve their writing; less frequently do they see the class as one step toward becoming a professional writer (xii). Stein offers a more jaded view: “Some merely want the credit hours or seek a way to avoid a General Education course which they assume will be more demanding. Others are curious to see if they’ll show skills they didn’t know they possessed” and then there are the others who fully commit themselves to the task of writing (4). But Stein believes that the curricular goals of creative writing classes transcend the obvious. Students heighten their awareness to “their own emotional
and intellectual lives,” humanity, language, culture, and “become more attentive—to themselves, to their friends or enemies, to the world that surrounds them” (Stein 4-6). The teacher’s curricular goals of the undergraduate creative writing class are also unique (indeed, if they are defined at all). There is sparse research on lower level creative writing classes, especially when one considers the increase in BFA programs across the country. From 1999 to 2004, American universities added seventeen new BA/BFA degrees in writing to their programs. Undergraduates could also earn a minor, emphasis or concentration in creative writing at 18 more American institutions in 2004 than they could in 1999 (Fenza “About”). Courses at this level are more akin to the first-year and intermediate writing classes, about which compositionists have abundant research.

As James Britton et al. show in *The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18)*, young writers fundamentally need to move beyond what he calls “expressive writing” to gain a sense of audience. This kind of writing allows students to write through their ideas and emotions, and writing teachers oftentimes use journals for this stage. Although Britton’s research focused on 11 to 18 year old students, the early undergraduate writing courses are a similar juncture for students in terms of how they build their identities. The small, more intimate writing classes are where identity and meaning-making, and the tasks of each, manifest. And just as Lev Vygotsky first noted, as a student grows intellectually, that internal manifestation turns outward to the conceptualization of an external audience.

**Audience Defined:**

**Rhetoric & Composition, Literary Theory and Creative Writing**

As a background for studying undergraduate creative writing instruction and its impact on students, this section sketches the broad role of audience in all writing instruction,
including creative writing, and then previews relevant theories of audience developed more fully in Chapter Three.

**Rhetoric & Composition and Audience**

In composition, audience is considered during group brainstorming, the workshop, peer revision, and conferencing. These collaborative occasions not only emphasize process pedagogy and interaction but they also resituate acts of critical thinking and dialogue to rigorously examine the written text. Resituating their writing for an outside reader is frequently a very difficult task for beginning writers, but it may be the first step in thinking critically about the interaction of reader (or audience) and text. Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff consider the movement from solitary to collaborative writing in their well-known text *A Community of Writers: a Workshop Course in Writing*. They argue that expressive or private writing is an important element in a writer’s development. As this dissertation examines Elbow’s arguments later, Elbow does not eschew consideration of audience, rather he delays it considerably for the beginning writer. In a similar ilk, there are theories that place the realm of ideas outside of the solitary student. These theories maintain that generating ideas, revising, and rethinking are oftentimes more successful when done with others. Still, it is important to the foundation of this dissertation to acknowledge both the romantic idea of the solitary writer and the idea that writing is private, because those components are vital to how audience surfaces in the undergraduate creative writing classroom. Kenneth Bruffee complicates the expressivists’ ideas to show that collaboration, from the outset of the stages of writing, is vital. His ideas on collaborative learning in “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation of Mankind’” enable us to reconfigure
audience and its implications on collaboration in the creative writing classroom. Bruffee’s idea of “collaboration as learning” offers a new conception of what is or could be learned in the undergraduate creative writing classroom and, specifically, what the pedagogy does or can do to ensure that learning.

The issue of collaboration engenders the importance of audience within creative writing. In “Collaborative Pedagogy,” Rebecca Moore Howard, citing John Clifford, again reminds us that the quixotic ideal of solitary author is not easy to quell: “‘traditional humanism’ clings to the ‘sanctity of literary ownership’ [which] poses a barrier to collaborative pedagogy” (55). Karen Burke LeFevre also examines the issue of manifest collaboration in her book, *Invention as a Social Act*. Although she concentrates on the ancient rhetorical canon of invention, LeFevre examines similar issues of audience and the social nature of writing in ideas, such as the myth of the private, solitary author; the writer as internal audience; collaboration; the social nature of language; and social structuralism. By exploring audience in the creative writing workshop with regards to LeFevre’s ideas and other issues regarding collaboration and audience, this dissertation further “contest[s] the notion of the solitary, autonomous author” (Howard 55), or at least offers justification for teachers of creative writing to examine the many complexities of collaboration and audience with their students.

Collaboration and its relationship with audience within the writing act also concern the nature of language itself: language needs response. James Moffett writes in *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* that the “fact that one writes by oneself does not at all diminish the need for response, since one writes for others. Even when one purports to be writing for oneself—for pure self-expression, if there is such a thing—one cannot escape the ultimately
social implications inherent in any use of language.” Moffett believes that the “will” to elicit particular reactions from the audience is “the motor that drives the whole process” (191).

This specific idea of audience’s relationship to collaboration is further reinforced by Richard Gebhardt in “Teamwork and Feedback: Broadening the Base of Collaborative Writing.” He refers specifically to composition, but his ideas apply to the creative writing class, too. Gebhardt emphasizes the importance of audience and collaboration in the form of reaction and feedback and indicates that feedback is an essential aspect of effective writing. He writes, “[a] sense of audience is impossible unless a writer has had experience with how audiences have responded to different approaches in the past. Peer influence is nothing without feedback that indicates whether peers approve or disapprove” (Gebhardt 69).

Feedback in terms of endorsement or rejection is central to the writing workshop; and oftentimes it gets personal. Aware of the emotional consequences of collaboration in the writing classroom, Gebhardt says, at least in the teaching of composition, that “teachers advocating collaborative writing usually turn away from the arena of emotions toward the intellectual material and the skills students can learn from group feedback” (70). Regardless of whether or not writing teachers should disregard personal emotion in the composition classroom, the “arena of emotions” is not so easily ignored in the creative writing workshop due to the sometimes very personal subjects writers explore. Whether beneficial or harmful, the emotional responses within the creative writing classroom take on extraordinary weight.

The movement away from the idea of the solitary writer, writer-based or expressive writing is essential to the teaching of writing, but with writing that is creative, the personal stakes seem much higher. And, as stated, undergraduates are not necessarily equipped with the literary criteria that enable them to respond objectively to the work as literature. Therefore,
the awareness of audience and teaching that awareness in the undergraduate creative writing classroom is crucial to the writer and reader.

Audience is also linked to other arenas of writing that inform this dissertation’s research. Revision, another satellite of audience, is significant to writing instruction as revision is typically executed with audience in mind. Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford explore an example of revision’s complex relationship to audience and the author’s control of the text in their article “Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy.” They believe revision efforts aim at creating a desired reader for the text, as well as clarifying the writing for an assumed audience. Ede and Lunsford, however, say that audience thus invoked “distorts the processes of writing and reading by overemphasizing the power of the writer and undervaluing that of the reader” (165). In other words, invoking audience places all parts of the writing and reading process in the control of the writer. This issue is further complicated in the creative writing classroom where beginning creative writers sometimes use “creative license” as rationale for whatever textual decisions they make; they suggest that if readers do not understand it is their problem, not that of the writer.

Compositionists would argue that the issue of revision cannot be extracted from real audience, especially in a creative writer’s first or second collegiate class, and both teachers and students of writing should execute critical reflection of audience because, clearly, it has considerable and complicated importance in the stages of writing.
**Literary Theory and Audience**

While creative writing pedagogy draws on many ideas developed by compositionists, it also reflects ideas from literary studies since creative writing has evolved from departments emphasizing literature. From Victorian fiction’s “gentle reader” to Bertold Brecht’s audience alienation and defamiliarization, audience is an important consideration by both writers of literature and those who study literature. In literary theory, audience is considered in terms of several broad arenas: the ideal reader, the reader’s participation in the making of meaning, the role of the author, and the world outside of the text. With these varying arenas, one thing is clear: audience is a ubiquitous literary issue.

David Richter, in the introduction to the second edition of *Falling into Theory: Conflicting Views on Reading Literature*, considers if readers can transform themselves to the “‘ideal audience’ of the text” (6). He suggests that the reader has a responsibility to the writer and has to become the imagined audience and read texts in the way that the writer expects. But the assumption here is that the writer imagined the ideal reader. Is there ever a real audience if the writer is imagining one and the reader has to imagine occupying that imagined audience? Clearly, this is a complicated issue and one that offers many opportunities for critical engagement. Certainly, Robert Scholes, in many of his texts, supports the engagement of students in thinking about how they occupy the two sides of literature: writing and reading “as [a way] of maintaining their necessary connection to the culture around them” (115-16). Audience, in its many forms—reader, readers, or outside culture—is a core element of Scholes’s reading and writing relationship. Envisioning, occupying, and connecting to the outside are three of the ways audience functions in the writing classroom. Scholes confirms that the examination of audience is significant when
thinking critically about any literature. Naturally, if Scholes encourages these twin activities of writing and reading, inhabiting the roles of reader and writer merit equal space in the creative writing classroom.

Literary theorist Peter Rabinowitz also supports the time devoted to audience in the writing classroom. In “Actual Reader and Authorial Reader,” he makes clear distinctions about audience similar to Ede and Lunsford’s “Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked.” Rabinowitz says that writers can never accurately define their audience, so the “actual reader” becomes a “hypothetical audience” which he calls “the authorial audience” (ital Rabinowitz). The distinction comes when the author makes “assumptions about the readers’ beliefs, knowledge, and familiarity with conventions. As a result, authors are forced to guess; they design their books rhetorically” (Rabinowitz 258). Teachers of creative writing, if we accept Rabinowitz’s ideas, would be negligent to ignore or gloss over the importance of audience, especially if this imagined “authorial audience” is “clearly tied to authorial intention” (259). Rabinowitz explores this idea from the reader’s perspective, as in the reader reading as the author intended, but the writer is dually culpable in the creation of audience here, and to ignore that fact when writing would undermine the assumption about the purpose of writing: to be read. The debate here lies in how a text should be read and what a text should mean: as the author intended or as the reader interprets, or some other version of consumption (Rabinowitz 263). Regardless of the answer, Rabinowitz illustrates, like many other literary theorists, that audience is a vital readerly issue and thus reinforces it as a central writerly issue.
Creative Writing and Audience

The scholarship review of Chapter Two illustrates that audience is not a frequent topic within pedagogical theory in creative writing. In order to define audience within the creative writing framework, this study draws upon the literary and rhetoric and composition theorists who point to audience matters of creative writing. The audience of an undergraduate creative writer might be the professor or the professor and class or perhaps an imagined wider audience through publication; regardless, the research explores if and in what ways creative writers reflect on their audiences. To complicate matters further, audience takes on a special kind of significance in the creative writing classroom since creative writing, to many, is deemed more “personal” than the academic writing associated with the composition classroom.

How can teachers of creative writing effectively move this type of writing from private to public? Several composition theorists have taken up this issue. Consider James Britton’s idea that expressivist (or personal) writing is the basis for the three categories of writing functions that he defines. Students need to move beyond “personal” expression that is not intended for an audience to be able to write in the form of what he calls the “transactional” or “poetic,” his other two categories (Britton 15). As is often the case in composition, students are required to look past themselves to recognize their audience. In creative writing, writers are often encouraged to look inward and draw ideas from themselves, echoing an amateur writer’s habit of what Linda Flower calls Writer-Based prose, “whose meaning is still to an important degree in the writer’s head” (30). This kind of egocentric writing in undergraduate creative writing is most likely expected, unlike in the composition classroom where it is often seen as remedial. Beginning creative writing students oftentimes need to
move past the first, exclusively personal memory in order to tap into stronger imaginative
writing. Flower says the “culprit here is often the unstated psychological subject” (30) in
composition, but in the creative writing classroom, the psychological subject is usually
where the first stories or poems emerge, and might rather be the threshold of creative
writing.

A writer’s move beyond the autonomous audience functions as another imaginative
act. Writers have other audiences to imagine. Walter Ong echoes Wayne Booth when he
suggests that writers have to “fictionalize” readers in the same way they create characters in
their poetry or prose (9-11). Here, Ong suggests, is where the notion of audience takes on
yet another complication within the creative writing classroom: the many genres of creative
writing. The generic term of “creative writing” is comprised not only of poetry, prose, and
drama but also the multiple genres within each. Prose writing, for instance, might include
mystery, science fiction, or creative nonfiction; poetry, and its many types, considers form at
the heart of meaning. By considering the range of readers of creative writing, Douglas Parks
in “The Meanings of ‘Audience’” describes that the two ways writers can conceive of
audience—imagined and actual—problematicizes the concept even more. He articulates that
contemporary writing, and the genres therein, offers ideas about the typical reader of those
genres, making the multiple ideas of audience infinitely more complex. There are the “actual
people external to a text, the audience whom the writer must accommodate” and then there
is “the text itself and the audience implied there, a set of suggested or evoked attitudes,
interests, reactions, conditions of knowledge which may or may not fit with the qualities of
actual readers” (Parks 160). In other words, although Parks is not speaking directly about
genre, we can assume that creative writing has not only a real audience addressed (which
can be multiple), but the text itself also creates audience by the conventional idea of the chosen genre’s reader. Therefore, beginning writers must conceptualize, or at least consider, audience in the creative writing classroom not only outside of themselves, but also inside of the text.

The many considerations of audience within the act of writing have to begin with several abstract shifts as discussed above, but we should also consider the creative writer’s more literal shift from autonomous audience to the actual audience of the classroom, those fellow students who will read the text first. The most basic definition of workshop suggests interaction and collaboration with an audience to rework a text, in terms of clarity, word-choice, and, perhaps, grammar. The student of creative writing may not see this type of collaboration as the free exchange and brainstorming of ideas. The writer may even consider himself or herself as the sole audience and feel intense ownership of the text. Perhaps this feeling is a sub-stage between writer-based prose and reader-based prose. Many undergraduate writers are proprietary, and imaginative ideas seem to be more guarded than expository or research ideas. Writers secure their creative thoughts closely, perhaps still another remnant of the Romantic era’s writer-in-the-garret model.

**Contributions to the Fields**

The dissertation, then, researches the ways audience bears upon the pedagogy of undergraduate creative writing classes. By highlighting this central aspect of composition pedagogy and integrating notions from literary theory, we may better understand how writing theory may bridge “all text making and text interpreting” and the arbitrary distinctions between literature, composition and creative writing, as Hans Ostrom suggests
(Bishop, *Colors* xi). More important, the research helps to define and classify a pedagogy already underway in the growing number of undergraduate creative writing classrooms (Myers 166-67; Adams 96; Fenza “About”).

Isolating this pedagogy regarding audience might direct the field to identify other areas of study. Because the work done in creative writing pedagogy has not focused on the specific issue of audience, the available scholarship is used as a backdrop to the theoretical ideas the dissertation engenders. Doing so creates a framework for the three ways that this study might contribute to the field. First, the research reveals and defines the important elements regarding audience within the act of writing. It focuses on those theories that are most widely held in the field of composition, as it explores the critical analysis of audience through literary theory by fleshing out the topics literary critics consider about audience in text production. Second, the research synthesizes those theories in order to create a basis in which to examine audience within the undergraduate creative writing classroom. Third, the ideas are tested in a small pilot study, applying the terms to the texts garnered from online syllabi and a limited number of current introductory creative writing textbooks. Explicitly or implicitly, audience is present within this writing classroom; by building a theoretical foundation for the examination of audience, the dissertation identifies the possibilities and importance of audience and the fundamental role it plays in learning to write.

Despite the extensive bibliography that covers how composition theory can aid the pedagogy of creative writing, I could find no research that specifically explores the area of audience and certainly nothing that approaches a writerly issue from both text production (writing theory) and text consumption (literary theory). As the central approach to this dissertation, this void within the scholarship of creative writing pedagogy is what this
dissertation attempts to fulfill. Both writing and literary theory are important to the creative writing classroom; examining audience from these two areas allows a synthesis of the two disciplinary influences of the creative writing classroom. Although the dissertation focuses on audience, a clear implication of the research is that there might be other writer or reader issues to explore. Indeed, identifying new connections between creative writing pedagogy, theory in rhetoric and composition, and issues in textual study will likely encourage further elucidation of creative writing pedagogy.

**Organization of Chapters**

In Chapter Two is the review of scholarship that is specific to creative writing pedagogy, that is, the theoretical scholarly work on the nature of this pedagogy and the texts that in some way speak to or about pedagogy or teaching creative writing. The chapter explains the process of collecting the scholarship and the rationale for the categories developed: creative writing pedagogy (history, practice, and theory), writers on the teaching of writing, creative writing as advanced composition, and reflections of creative writers on writing.

Chapter Three is the core theory-building chapter of the dissertation because it reveals the theoretical approaches to audience from both writing and literary theory, and creates a theoretical lens in which to explore audience in undergraduate creative writing. Toward the end of the chapter, the ways the writing and literary theoretical approaches parallel, intertwine, and resist one another are illustrated. The chapter concludes with a list of terminology assembled from literary theory and writing theory, which serves as a beginning list in order to discover how audience emerges in the undergraduate creative
writing classroom. This particular area of the dissertation also encourages the field of English to recognize how a writing issue such as audience promotes an intradepartmental approach within the undergraduate creative writing class.

Chapter Four shows the methodological approach to this topic, giving a thorough explanation of how the theory built in Chapter Three informs the small pilot study conducted. The chapter explains the theoretical grounding of the approach: a hermeneutic study of text and the way in which the investigation uses both quantitative data and qualitative examination to reveal interesting results. In explaining the methodology, the undercurrent of other theories that inform the study are also fleshed out in order to show that, even though implicit, there are additional overtones to the way in which the study is conducted. The chapter then gives a detailed explanation of the data collection and concludes with the parameters and limitations to the research.

Chapter Five provides the results of the pilot study, offering evidence of how audience manifests itself within the syllabi and creative writing textbooks of a small sampling of contemporary creative writing classes in higher education. Universities offer a wide range of creative writing classes and workshops to undergraduates, but the sampling of classes throughout the United States gives the reader a general idea of the textual representations of audience within undergraduate classroom creative writing. Throughout the pilot study are conclusions about the importance of examining audience, and the chapter expands on these conclusions by revealing how these classroom applications of audience fortify the theories of audience set forth by both literary and writing theorists. Showing the complicated relationship among disciplines gives further indication that the critical examination of audience is of fundamental importance in writing creatively.
Chapter Six offers some conclusions and more general implications of the theories proposed with possible avenues for further study. It also illustrates the significant contribution that both composition and literary theory can offer the pedagogy of creative writing. As well, the teaching implications of an audience-rich pedagogy are considered, including topics such as audience awareness and examination. This chapter uncovers the ways in which audience functions—or perhaps can function—within a workshop setting, while considering issues such as collaboration, revision, close reading, authorial role, authority, and the bigger issue of creative writing’s place in the academy. The chapter and dissertation conclude by suggesting the many new areas that the research illuminates and the possibility of numerous avenues of future inquiry in conceptualizing and understanding the role of audience.
CHAPTER TWO: SCHOLARSHIP OF CREATIVE WRITING PEDAGOGY

Categorizing current research on the teaching of creative writing is difficult. There is no clear taxonomy of the scholarship; much of the scholarly texts begin with when and how creative writing began in the university. The texts look at the teaching of creative writing’s long history and speculate why there is not more written on the pedagogy. Those who critically examine the teaching of creative writing note the dearth of available pedagogical theory (Bishop, Ostrom, Starkey, et al.) and acknowledge how the history of academic creative writing affects the amount of scholarship and manner in which creative writing is perceived and taught. For many, the perception includes the romantic ideal of the solitary writer and ideas that writing cannot be taught, a notion supported by many writers who are teachers (Hugo, O’Connor, Turner, Stegner). The perception is also born out of and reinforced by the lifestyles of writers of literature such as Emerson, Coleridge and Wordsworth (LeFevre 12, 17), which is an orientation quite different from the predominant view in composition and literary theory that writing is social (LeFevre, Bruffee, Ede and Lunsford et al.). Recognizing how the myth of the lonely, inspired writer informs scholarship on the teaching of creative writing is important for this dissertation, which emphasizes how audience (people besides the writer) figure into writing and creative writing instruction.

Despite the lack of clear categories, the work of such scholars as Wendy Bishop, Hans Ostrom, and Katherine Haake shows, in the last decade, increasing attention to creative writing pedagogy. Except for Hans Ostrom’s call for focusing on one area of writing at a time, research that explicitly explores a specific writing aspect, such as audience in the creative writing classroom, is not available. This dissertation concentrates on this
individual issue. As this chapter makes clear, attention to audience is not as frequent in the scholarship of creative writing as it is in composition or literary studies. Within books and articles on creative writing, few authors address audience—or other aspects of creative writing pedagogy—explicitly. One reason for this may be that the traditions that define writing teachers originate in the public lore of writing and that enduring romantic idea of the solitary, inspired writer. To concede that classes in creative writing are constructed from a pedagogy of writing would challenge the notion of born writers who work in solitude and admit that a latent pedagogy already exists. Scholarship devoted to this pedagogy is the focus on the rest of this chapter.

**Four Emphases in the Scholarship of Creative Writing Pedagogy**

There are four general emphases that surfaced through examining current scholarship on the teaching of creative writing. The first and fundamental category of this review of scholarship is Creative Writing Pedagogy, a label created here for texts that deal explicitly with creative writing instruction and which has two main emphases, History and Theory/Practice.

A second category is Writers Who Teach. This broad section discusses texts that reveal the habits and methods of creative writers who teach, some of whom may have little or no pedagogical training, yet still write about learning to write. This section reflects the limitations of this dissertation; it indicates the way in which the parameters of considering creative writers who consider audience are drawn. In limiting the category to writers who have written about their teaching of writing, the review of scholarship can more accurately
illustrate if and how those who teach creative writing at the institutional level consider and instruct in the theoretical idea of audience.

The third category is named because, for the most part, creative writing is an advanced writing class taken after the pre-requisite composition is completed. Creative Writing as Advanced Composition, is more akin to the scholarship of composition and views the teaching of creative writing in the context of other undergraduate writing instruction as a subsequent step for undergraduates after the first year composition sequence. Within this section of the chapter, the distinctions between composition and creative writing get murky. With the aim of defining clearer boundaries, the exploration of how the idea of audience, in terms of all writing areas, is explained and further investigated beyond the first sequence of collegiate writing.

Besides these three emphases of scholarship review, there is a fourth: creative writing textbooks, which will be treated in Chapter Five. Although there are not a great deal of general, introductory creative writing textbooks for the college level, the dissertation only examines those texts that are required reading for the sample of undergraduate classes that are researched here, and a collection of the more recently published texts.

**Creative Writing Pedagogy**

As explained above, this category of scholarship is an area that is approached by many with some skepticism because, as the review of this scholarship shows, some are unwilling to label the teaching of creative writing as having a pedagogy. Likewise, there are many theories of what constitutes strong creative writing that are part how an instructor teaches, but there are no notable pedagogical applications of these theories. Furthermore,
other theoretical backdrops such as romantic or formal theory that influence instructors and arguably suggest audience did not surface in the literature review. Therefore, the books reviewed are not all openly discussing the pedagogy of creative writing, but they all in some way define its history and explore the theory that exists For purposes of discussion here, scholarly work on creative writing pedagogy can be broken down into two subcategories: history and theory with its application to practice. While the boundaries of these categories are blurry, as so much of the theory and practice of creative writing stems from its history in the academy, the parameters are distinguished below.

**History**

John Brereton, David Russell, and Katherine Adams, in their work focusing on the general histories of writing, include sections on how creative writing evolved into what it is today. These histories document the way writing is balkanized within the English department, and they are important to the background of this dissertation because the histories explain and, in some ways, justify why systematic approaches to the pedagogy of creative writing are sometimes marginalized. D. G. Myers and his book, *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880*, and Stephen Wilbers’ *The Iowa Writers’ Workshop: Origins, Emergence, & Growth* are representative of those who explore the particular history of creative writing and its evolution in the academy.

*The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925*, John Brereton’s book, notes that in the early 1900s rhetoric morphed into what some deem pejoratively as “composition.” What early twentieth-century teachers might call the devolution of rhetoric was, in part, caused by the growth of higher education and, thus, the
push for first-year writing instruction, fostering composition’s reputation as simply a tool of
communication and a remedial rite of passage for freshmen (Brereton 5-11). He contends
that to “argue that rhetoric was not a science” and yet not an art, “was to consign it to
training, to an introductory level of college, to pedagogy” (Brereton 10). Brereton illustrates
one impetus for creative writing to oppose connection to composition and writing theory.
Taking the art out of writing belittled the creative aspects of the craft; eschewing art meant
discounting inspiration. Furthermore, exploring writing theory and pedagogy suggested that
there might be a way to learn to write creatively. Accepting and practicing theory
marginalized the creative writing teachers who had and could point to a pedagogy for their
classes.

David Russell reveals in *Writing in the Academic Disciplines: A Curricular History*
that this type of anti-pedagogical stance continued during the Progressive Education
movement of the 1920s. Those who believed that writing was strictly self-expression, or the
expressivists who held this stance, “insisted that authentic writing must come out of ‘no
formal course of study, no planned list of topics arranged in serial order’” (Russell 208).
Akin to the literary romanticism movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,
Russell illustrates how this “neoromantic” idea of creativity and writing advanced the idea
that writing was a “mysterious response to individual experience” and the goal of teaching
writing was to create a classroom where those responses were awakened (207-08).

This kind of Deweyan emphasis on self-expression re-emerged in composition
studies in the 1980’s expressivist movement with texts such as Peter Elbow’s *Writing
Without Teachers* and a continuing interest in student-centered instruction (Adams 72-3;
Russell 207-08). By contrast, creative writing instruction continued, grounded in the
workshop and the idea that a published writer, the master, should teach talented students, or the apprentices, to write. Some argue that this continuing model, however, has the potential to trivialize creative writing instruction because it assumes that a writer who has published is innately qualified to teach. Naturally, this assumption is not always the case, illustrated by this dissertation’s emphasis on the importance of writing pedagogy. Moreover, the model has the consequence of marginalizing colleagues within the English department and their years of schooling in theory. According to Katherine Adams’s *A History of Professional Writing Instruction*, the model further trivializes creative writing instruction and was reinforced not only by colleagues in the English department, but also by “students who did not expect rigorous instruction” (78-79). Informality and a belief that creative writing and the academy were incompatible became endemic, and those scholars who emphasized teaching over their own poetry or fiction were rare (Adams 89-94). During higher education’s growth spurt after World War II, the mentor/apprentice model of the writing workshop spread. The idea that writing cannot be taught took hold (Adams 96-7), undermining the notion that a pedagogy of creative writing could even exist.

The graduate-level Iowa Writers’ Workshop reinforced this anti-pedagogical workshop model. Although some might argue that the writers’ workshop is itself a type of pedagogy, the method might be defined less as a way to teach creative writing and more as a way to uncover or root out writing talent, thus obviating the most basic definition of teaching. Pedagogy and creativity seemed removed from one another. Often seen as the birthplace of creative writing in the university, the Iowa Workshop was not immune to the wrangling between scholars and writers. Stephen Wilbers, in his history of the program, writes that the Workshop’s main architect, Norman Foerster, believed that practicing writers
were the best teachers of writing, but he also believed that students should have a solid literary grounding before expecting to write creatively. He advocated that undergraduates have less specialization in creative writing craft and more immersion in literature and critical writing (Wilbers 71-3). Foerster’s vision of the Iowa Workshop considered critical examination of creative writing as a necessary element of the workshop. If we apply this idea, as Foerster did to the undergraduate creative writing workshop, the mentor/apprentice model is superseded by more spirited grounding in, what might be argued as, literary theory and critical reflection on writing—thus mandating a solid pedagogy.

Besides revealing that Foerster’s blueprint of the workshop required a sturdy knowledge of literature, in his history Wilber hints that the emergence of the workshop model raises an issue that directly relates to audience. The workshop itself takes on its own rhetorical identity, usually born from the writing teacher. Bearing in mind that this controlled identity could be considered a type of pedagogy, it is necessary to review the way in which the term “pedagogy” is used in this dissertation. Pedagogy is a conscious and reflective practice of the art of teaching rather than simply the way a class functions. As illustrated by Wilbers, the class, as an audience, develops its own ethos by defining what is important in a poem or story and what writerly crafts are imperative to strong writing. This identity is sometimes determined early in the workshop and may become inflexible and, perhaps, stifling to the participating writers (Wilbers 128-32). Lacking knowledge of critical theory and its possibilities, student writers are at the mercy of the workshop’s rigid criteria and to the workshop as a singular audience.

Unlike Wilbers’ focused look at one seminal program, D.G. Myers, in *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880*, takes a broader view of the history of creative writing
in America. He argues that the debate within creative writing seeks to explain “how creative writing now operates, but not why,” and he offers a narrative that starts from creative writing’s university naissance (Myers ital 3). What is especially illuminating about Myers’ history is that it chronicles English departments’ splintering into distinct areas: scholarship, social practices, and what he calls “constructivism.” These areas both define and limit contemporary English departments. Myers contests James Berlin’s conclusions in the influential composition text, *Rhetoric and Reality*. Berlin contends that the history of writing education “has been shaped by instruction in literature and, correspondingly, the ways in which approaches to literary interpretation have been affected by methods of teaching the production of rhetorical texts” (1). Myers, however, sees the relationship differently. He considers the “rhetoric” or “production” and the “poetic” or “interpretation” of texts as more of a “continuous loop of activity.” The two can only be seen as “distinct mental actions” after they have been executed simultaneously and there is a “concrete experience” of production and interpretation (Myers 9). In other words, Myers neither makes the distinction between production and interpretation, nor considers creative writing to be rhetoric or have any roots in rhetorical study. Myers says that even the term “creative writing” did not emerge until the nineteenth century (13). He maintains that creative writing grew from the tradition of learning literature by writing literature; his book laments that creative writing has now become something else (167-68). Given that he focuses his book on graduate writing programs, we can assume that Myers would argue even more fervently to turn creative writing degrees (especially undergraduate) from a professional endeavor (mostly producing teachers of creative writing) into one with goals that are more literary.
Berlin’s bifurcation of a text’s production and interpretation and Myer’s assertion that writing emerges from a fusion of the two are important to the theoretical grounding of this dissertation. Examining audience in the creative writing classroom through rhetorical and literary theory acknowledges Berlin’s distinction of the two; but just as important is Myers’ recognition that production and interpretation rely on one another and that this dependence is evident in teaching creative writing.

R.M. Berry in “Theory, Creative Writing and the Impertinence of History” writes that the distinction between production and interpretation now manifested as the split between creative writing and critical theory is due to “premodernist assumptions of creative writing and the postmodernist assumptions of theory; two diametrically opposed views of textual production” (67). Berry believes that this regretful opposition is due to the commodification of American literature and the “incompatibility of humanist values with mass marketing” (68). In his critique, Berry is, in essence, talking about audience. He is negotiating the audiences of the academy, which include scholars and students, with the audience of those who write books, the companies that publish books and the people who buy them. Berry believes that creative writing in the academy chooses to ignore “the past on which its authority and practice were based,” namely the audience that interprets literature. The academy seems to be “Treating the writer’s language as unoccupied territory […] suppress[ing] its own otherness” (72). Having identified Berry’s ideas in terms of audience clarifies the path uncovering and supporting critical examination of audience within creative writing.

Berry bases his claims on the increasing number of creative writing programs within the academy and the “more direct influence than any other part of the American academy on
the nonacademic production, distribution, and consumption of literature” (57). Like Berry, Myers credits creative writing for being “one of the primary engines driving the expansion” of American universities after World War II. Especially during the 1960s, creative writing was a more democratic, art-for-art’s sake pursuit, and as student financial aid at American universities grew, creative writing programs grew as well (Myers 4-7; 165-66). But Myers admits that the growth seemed to be primarily in the size of the program, in terms of class offerings and sections, and not directly related to the number of students enrolled.

The data provided in the first chapter showing the increase in BFA programs across the U.S. evince this programmatic growth. But D.W. Fenza, Executive Director of the Association of Writers and Writing Program, and editor-in-chief of its publication, *The Writer’s Chronicle*, compiled the information and offers a cautionary note. He writes in the September 2004 article, “Brave New World: Aliteracy in America,” that based on the NEA’s report, *Reading at Risk*, the program growth is misleading. Although slightly more people seem to be engaging in creative writing, he found a significant drop in those taking creative writing classes (Fenza 25).

This distinction is important because much of the scholarship written on creative writing pedagogy functions under the presumption that the population of creative writers is growing in the academy. But the findings show that although the number of programs, and the programs themselves may be growing, they are growing in their output of writers who teach rather than in class enrollment or, in the case of these typically smaller classes, the number of class sections. Perhaps the call for further research in pedagogy and theory within creative writing is linked to the output of teachers rather than to the need to be accountable to undergraduate students, as Wendy Bishop has suggested. The broader context of this
scholarship is the so-called literacy crisis: fewer English majors, fewer readers of literature (Fenza “Brave” 24), and the fervent hope that creative writing might save the discipline (Myers 148, 166-68).

Therefore, keeping in mind the output of creative writing teachers and the hope that creative writing in the academy might increase the number of English majors, the importance of examining the history, theory, and theory’s application to practice gains significance. A collection of representative essays regarding the history of creative writing and pedagogy collected by Wendy Bishop and Hans Ostrom, *Colors of a Different Horse: Rethinking Creative Writing Theory and Pedagogy*, does just that. This collection spans the range of areas within this field. Some contributors to this collection suggest revising the pedagogy and new theoretical options, such as applying feminist or cultural studies to writing; others consider creative writing within the current millennium, and others suggest alternatives to the workshop. Teachers of creative writing contributed to the book, and although many refer to the enduring legacy of creative writing’s history, most offer new theoretical and practical approaches to creative writing.

**Theory and Its Application to Practice**

The scholarship within this category of creative writing pedagogy seeks to rethink creative writing at the university level. The majority of scholars cited here occupy the multiple roles of creative writer, writing theorist, and teacher. Furthermore, authors such as Wendy Bishop, Hans Ostrom and Katharine Haake acknowledge their seemingly competing loyalties among their roles, but look to synthesize creative writing and rhetorical theory in order to develop pedagogy. As mentioned earlier, few of the scholars ignore the traditions
born out of creative writing’s history, and many cite composition theory to justify inventing new paradigms of university creative writing.

Wendy Bishop’s book, *Released Into Language: Options for Teaching Creative Writing*, proposes alternatives for class design, lessons and sequencing. Her premise is that since we are all users of language we all have the capacity and potential to write creatively. The first part of her book is dedicated to forming the theoretical foundations of her work. Here she cites history, process theory, and expressivist theory, while also acknowledging the practical realities of what writers do and think. The beginning of her book also recognizes the fiscal importance of creative writing in the academy and how it translates into the goals of creative writing programs. What makes this book unique and arguably important to creative writing pedagogy is that it systematically offers background and justification for the praxis Bishop conceives.

In *What Our Speech Disrupts: Feminism and Creative Writing Studies*, Katharine Haake adopts a similar approach to that of Bishop, but Haake occupies a decidedly cultural position by looking at creative writing pedagogy through a feminist lens. Like many other books that bridge creative writing and scholarship, Haake’s text does not offer what might be typically considered a distant, academic voice. In an apparent effort to achieve intimacy, the writing is characterized by a narrative and nonlinear style, possibly a way in which to set herself apart from conventional academic discourse and speak to writing teachers who consider themselves writers before they are writing teachers.

Both Bishop and Haake offer critiques that are sensitive to the animosity and marginalization of creative writing within English departments although they acknowledge the apprehension that creative writing sometimes exhibits in accepting scholarship. Carol
Bly, in her book *Beyond the Writers’ Workshop: New Ways to Write Creative Nonfiction*, is much more strident in her evaluation of the present state of how we teach writing. From the first page, audience is an issue underpinning her critique. Bly provides several points of attack in regards to creative writers; two suggest audience. “The cultural deprivation of thousands of Americans” is one of her overarching themes, and the other that pertains to audience is that the “mission of present-day writers […] is very different from the mission of student writers half a century ago” (Bly 4) in terms of what they are doing and for whom they are doing it. In other words, Bly reveals her call for elitist writers to write for elite audiences.

In the first criticism, Bly suggests that this broad “cultural deprivation” is engulfing not only writing students, but also their teachers and the general public audience. In the second charge, she refers to the idea that students who enter writing classes who are “interested in publishing for mass-market audience—those, for example, who want to write romances or best-selling novels—are not nearly so discontented with present-day courses and texts […] as are those people who want to write literature” (3). Bly says that current writing classes satisfy and produce writers who want wide popularity. Those who are more culturally sophisticated, or “literary minded,” are those that are most disappointed with current writing workshops. Those who chose to write like Danielle Steele are content, while those who want to write like James Joyce are not. Thus, making writing and the choice of genre a moral issue resonates through her book; one can hear echoes of Matthew Arnold and his beliefs that high culture and poetry must civilize society. And even though Bly hardly mentions audience openly as a writing issue, elitist ideas regarding the general public and
what writing can do to improve their cultural deprivation cannot be overlooked as a rhetorical issue.

Bly’s ideas about audience are bound to her ideas about writing for “the market.” To her, they are one in the same. She cites Peter Elbow and problematically aligns his ideas about audience with hers. She says that Elbow thought “if the soul is thinking audience, audience, audience it cannot at the same time be inquiring of itself, kindly but firmly, ‘What are we doing here?’” (Bly 20). Bly clearly believes that thinking about audience and writing well are incompatible. “I commend,” she writes, “Elbow’s classical defense of aiming for truth, letting profit leach away if it will” (20).

Bly’s vitriol about audience is so discriminatory, she is worth quoting in full:

Here is a way to keep from feeling whacked one way, then the other way, now by the market-wise advisors, now by the holy-ground advisors—he first saying anyone is a fool who doesn’t identify his or her market and then write for it, and the second saying that the very process of identifying a market and writing for it shuts down the best sites of your brain: figure that you are a person with a meaningful outlook and a certain taste in literary work. Your proper audience is others like yourself. If you write for yourself, you are writing for them. (274)

Bly estimates that in a city of seven million there are possibly 400,000 people who “have your [the literary writer’s] tastes […] we must write for them.” She suggests that only “cunning or greed” will make a writer choose the market over the 400,000 who are smart enough to appreciate the good, audience-unaware, writing of the authors Bly seeks to support (275).
Although one could argue that in Bly’s exhortation on how writers should essentially ignore their audience, she, in actuality, confronts the issue of audience head-on. In other words, Bly is acknowledging this rhetorical element of writing even though she ridicules any attempt to write for a perceived audience. Bly generalizes that one need not ever look outside of one’s self to write. This dissertation’s research looks at audience more theoretically and reveals how audience can be an important consideration, whether the writer thinks about the self, the reader and the text, or a more general audience. Bly’s presumption is that when a writer considers audience, the writer is jeopardizing his or her craft.

Another scholar who addresses the example of the theory and practice of creative writing pedagogy takes a more pragmatic approach to audience without absolute indictments. Alan Ziegler’s *The Writing Workshop Vol. 1.* claims to be a book for any writing level and discusses issues of audience awareness in such areas of diction, grammar, and dialect. In reviewing these issues, Ziegler introduces students to contemporary poetry and the more colloquial and accessible language used therein. The implications of this introduction encourage more reading of poetry and gives license to writers to use their own diction (Ziegler 48-50). He speaks directly about audience in his chapter on revision: “Every piece of writing contains an implied ‘contract’ between the writer and reader,” and the “writer promises to deliver some literary goods: when all is written, something must be accomplished” (Ziegler 83). Ziegler puts this idea in the context of genre and what the conventions of the genre guarantee the reader. Thus, in revision, the writer must “see if there are any unfulfilled promises” (83-4), a clearly rhetorical concept.

Looking to a different audience, Patrick Bizzaro’s book, *Responding to Student Poems: Applications of Critical Theory,* is directed at teachers and instructors of creative
writing, offering a theoretical foundation to the practices he suggests. Bizzaro reinforces his ideas for pedagogy similarly to the objective of this dissertation: as theoretical suggestion in support of a pedagogical basis for the teaching of creative writing. Bizzaro argues that teachers of creative writing must employ the same criteria to student writing as they do to anthologized poetry; “[t]o do otherwise is to employ a pedagogy that is both confusing and illogical […] A student may receive mixed messages about what teachers value as meaning-making in a text” (Responding xvii). He adroitly makes a case for integrating the acts of writing with reading and the craft associated with each (Bizzaro Responding xviii). Bizzaro quotes Joseph Moxley and advocates for what he calls an “interdisciplinary approach”: the blending of “creative writing, literature, criticism, and composition” (qtd. in Bizzaro Responding xix). Much like Robert E. Brooke in Writing and Sense of Self: Identity Negotiation in Writing Workshops, Bizzaro offers teachers of creative writing many new ways to envision their classroom, and, more important, themselves within that classroom. Like Brooke, Bizzaro suggests more reflection on teaching practices, and the students benefit from those practices. He believes that instructors must look at the classroom as a diverse, living audience who react and respond in varied ways.

The term “audience” is largely unstated, but it is a strong undercurrent throughout Bizzaro’s book. Indeed, he complicates the notion by suggesting that all members of the class consider themselves as the audience of the texts they read. He encourages creative writing teachers to take critical looks at themselves, thereby fostering that same critical eye in their students. His work offers four ways of reading both literary and student texts. He does not elevate any one method over the others, but he stresses that teachers present the multiple ways readers and writers can enter and read texts. Whether it is through New
Criticism, reader-response, deconstructionism, or a feminist view, Bizzaro recommends that if students begin to understand the varied approaches, they can better “negotiate their identities as writers and readers” (*Responding* 161) and see their distinct yet dual roles. Clearly, this type of negotiation echoes the same issues of addressing and occupying different audiences; and it evokes similar ideas of the critical shifts from writer-based, self-expressive writing to reader-based, rhetorical writing.

Bizzaro, like many who write on creative writing pedagogy, acknowledges the apprehension of creative writing teachers to embrace the language of literary theory and pedagogy. They “do not want to demystify the process of making a poem […] Rather, they do not trust the language of pedagogy; the use of ‘methods’ or ‘procedures’ in helping students write poems might seem to many practicing poets as contradictory at best and dishonest at worst” (Bizzaro *Responding* xvi). But he argues that if we are using the methods of critical theory we should name them (Bizzaro *Responding* 10-11), if not only to illustrate to students the varying approaches, but to show that teachers have to negotiate them too.

Besides books like Bizzaro’s who reconceive creative writing pedagogy, scholarly articles remind us of the correlation between composition and creative writing as well. Four such articles, each published in a major refereed journal, are Ted Lardner’s “Locating the Boundaries of Composition and Creative Writing” and Mary Ann Cain’s “Problematizing Formalism: A Double-Cross of Genre Boundaries,” both published in *College Composition and Communication*, as well as Wendy Bishop’s “Suddenly Sexy: Creative Nonfiction Rear-ends Composition”, and Patrick Bizzaro’s “Research and Reflection in English Studies: The Special Case of Creative Writing,” both from *College English*. As useful as such articles are
in understanding creative writing’s relationship to composition, they do not satisfactorily consider how specific aspects of one area might inform the other. Furthermore, none matches any aspect of writing instruction with how literary theory also informs the shared aspects of these two areas as this dissertation does in its analysis. These authors do, however, remind us again that the boundaries of English instruction are permeable.

Besides the articles, several dissertations produced in the last few years have also tackled the issue of creative writing instruction. All of these dissertations begin with similar positions: dissatisfaction with current undergraduate workshop methods and the questionable institutional and general public perception distinguishing academic or rhetorical writing from creative or poetic writing. Claiming that this bifurcation has led to tense and territorial English departments, dissertations written by Elizabeth Hatmaker, Buddy Young, and Stephen Westbrook in some ways all grapple with how literary theory and rhetoric and composition might reassess the institutional position of creative writing with the pedagogical practices within creative writing.

**Writers Who Teach**

Books and articles in the category “Writers Who Teach” are plentiful, and with the increasing number of writers in the academy, the volume of such work comes as no surprise. The founding of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) in 1967 illustrates the increase of writers who teach at the university level. The association’s increasing membership results from AWP’s effort to include “living practitioners of the art of making literature” within English departments of higher education institutes (Fenza “About”). Similar to the AWP’s monthly publication, *The Writer's Chronicle*, the texts consist of
various topics from writers who teach, offering insight into what writers are telling their students about craft and habit. Issues such as revision and collaboration surface in these books, and these particular writing issues relate directly to audience. The texts tell us that revision, for instance, not only sharpens language, but also clarifies ideas for audiences. Collaboration, in its very nature, suggests working with an audience, but audience is not always mentioned overtly in these types of texts. Given the number of texts, the most prudent approach was choosing several representative samples that are written by notable authors who seem to consider teaching as important as their own writing. Limiting the examples of works in this category is necessary, but these best illustrate if and how audience is considered in the creative writing classroom. This wide category of writing teachers who talk about teaching writing is best parsed into several subcategories of the broad category of teaching writing: Reflections, Instructions, and Philosophies.

**Reflections on Teaching Writing**

Alberta Turner’s edited collection of workshop poems and teaching poets’ reaction to and critique of those poems is *Poets Teaching: The Creative Process*. This book is representative of texts that interview teachers who teach within the academy and who contemplate the workshop method of creative writing. The book provides some insight in determining the significance that teachers of creative writing (who are also practicing poets) place on audience. Of the infrequent times that audience is suggested, the references are usually about allowing the reader to understand the private subject of the poem and trusting readers’ ability to empathize with the poet or subject. The other implication of audience in this text pertains to the act of reading poetry. Teaching students to become the best readers
of their work is nearly universal among the authors within Turner’s collection. Perhaps most striking, however, is the habit of these authors to create a distance from the given criticism by referring to themselves in the collective. Phrasing such as, “we cannot follow the poet’s movement between lines,” is a typical response that avoids owning up to the criticism as the teacher’s own. These teachers of creative writing also emphasize this distance by referring to “a reader,” who is said to be reacting to the content, thereby creating a generic audience. In one instance, the poet/teacher refers to “the Reader” with a capital R, placing the audience as an essential concern, one that garners respect, to the writer.

More overtly referring to the importance of audience, Donald Murray, one of the most notable and often cited writing teachers in discourse on creative writing instruction, refers to audience specifically. In Expecting the Unexpected: Teaching Myself—and Others—to Read and Write, Murray’s collection of articles about writing and the teaching of writing, there are direct references to audience in two areas; the first is a preface to an article about how writers rehearse. Murray writes that when he was afraid of the reader, “[t]he reader will find me out. The reader will expose my ignorance.” He continues that this exposure “happened but not enough to worry about it. Instead the reader, no matter how authoritatively I wrote, no matter how much I used voice and rhetoric to impress and exclude, the reader read the meaning the reader needed to hear.” By rehearsing the role of the reader within writing, he accepted the position of the audience and “began to write texts…that were designed to let the reader in” (Murray Expecting 54).

The other instance where Murray explicitly discusses audience is in his chapter on process. He says that he writes with a “tiny audience of intimates whose respect I need and with whom I am learning.” Envisioning a wider audience is not possible for him, “I really
can’t see that vague, distant audience who will not see the work until I am two or three projects down the road anyway” (Murray Expecting 209). His first audience is his group of writing friends not only because he can conceive them, but also because they are immediate.

Another prominent writer/teacher is Wallace Stegner, who has written a great deal about what it means to be a writer who teaches at a university. His books, On the Teaching of Creative Writing, On Teaching and Writing Fiction, Teaching the Short Story, and The Writer in America offer many of his thoughts about reconciling the occupations of writing and teaching. In The Writer in America, Stegner discusses the trend of writers finding homes in the university. Besides considering the work of writing while teaching, he repeats the obligatory questions of writers who teach: Can writers be taught? He says, “It is absurd to wonder whether writers are born or made. They are both born and made. Sometimes born writers are made wrong by the wrong teachers” (Stegner Writer 61). Clearly, he venerates the roll of writing teachers, saying that it is their job to get students to integrate “their experience and their book knowledge into workable patterns of belief and conduct” (Stegner Writer 58), but Stegner also supports the idea of an integrated discipline in that “of all courses in the English Department those in creative writing may exercise the most intensive, though not necessarily the most explicit, synthesizing force” (Writer 58-9). Stegner suggests that creative writing is the discipline that most fully integrates other disciplines within the English department.

Unsurprisingly, Stegner believes in the importance of creative writing within the English department, and he also suggests, more broadly, that the writer find a place in current culture and literary tradition. This suggestion can be seen as an implicit move toward audience, but this idea of placing oneself within the tradition of literature resonates the
Arnoldian idea of art. Stegner writes that the “teacher’s job is a very clear one, really. It is to cling to, preserve and try to spread the old notion of literature as a high art, worthy of its practitioner’s best […] It is to promote the conception of writing in which fine craftsmanship is its own reward” (*Writer* 63-4). This sentiment echoes Carol Bly’s idea that writers should propagate literature as high culture. Stegner’s and Bly’s view that creative writing teachers should teach writers a sense of duty in writing to shape what they see as deteriorating notions of what makes for good literature in the public eye is limiting but still an acknowledgment of audience.

In two other works by Stegner, *Teaching the Short Story* and *On Teaching and Writing Fiction*, he is even more candid about the importance of audience as he takes a more didactic tone than in *The Writer in America*. Indeed, in *On Teaching*, Stegner has a chapter entitled “The Writer’s Audience,” in which he contends that writers cannot know who comprises their audience, they can only make general assumptions. Besides the physical distance between the writer and reader, there is also the barrier that language creates (Stegner *On Teaching* 83-6). He concedes that the “writer is a man [sic] in search of an audience just as surely as he is a man in search of form […] the reader himself is a sort of discovery, and often a pleasant one.” Stegner believes that the “meeting of a writer and reader is an intimate act, and it properly takes place in private,” (*On Teaching* 91). This notion of the intimacy between writer and perceived reader reinforces the private and solitary occasion of writing and reading. Stegner suggests that the idea of “the other,” whether it is the audience when writing or the author when reading, is present when engaging with text. The idea of “other” is critically important in examining literary theory’s notions of audience and the way text mediates the relationship between writer and reader.
In Stegner’s short book, *Teaching the Short Story*, audience resurfaces frequently because Stegner’s idea of the short story is that it can more easily hold a reader’s attention than a novel. Stegner admits in the opening page that “Not even the most mob-despising and disengaged writer writes only for himself, only for expression.” But he continues by suggesting that those who write to a *particular* audience are “the most commercial and debased of writers.” “What generally happens,” Stegner says, “is that a serious writer writes to please himself and some other vaguely-conceived individual whom Frank O’Connor refers to as the Man in the Armchair—somebody at once intimate and casual and by definition single, alone, who can follow and understand and appreciate what he is saying” (*Teaching* 1). Reinforcing writing as a high art, as Stegner says earlier, requires the writer to have a fuzzy idea of who is reading the work, and he thinks that the writer should help shape the reader’s literary sensibility. Naturally, Stegner sees a literary sensibility as quite discriminating. Once a writer panders to a market, the writing ceases, according to Stegner’s definition, to be literature.

Given that the works in this category consider audience in terms of how the author is exposed to it, the texts essentially objectify the reader or audience. These books on writing consider audience very differently than the way this dissertation defines it, but the important issue here is how these texts are representative of the way creative writing teachers and their students narrowly conceive of audience. Both composition theory and literary theory define audience much more abstractly and broadly, as the subsequent chapter will illustrate: they offer alternative theories by which a student can negotiate rhetorical issues when writing creatively. In other words, this dissertation seeks to show the possibilities of audience when
we allow writing teachers considerations, like Stegner’s idea of audience, to intersect with audience as perceived by composition and literary theory.

**Instructions for Teaching Writing**

Another set of texts takes the ideas offered by writers such as Stegner and Murray and applies them for use by individuals who are teaching, leading workshops, or learning to write on their own. These texts straddle the realms of writers on teaching writing and instruction manuals. A number of these books cater to the allure of the practice of writing creatively, again that romantic ideal of the solitary writer; these books try to promote the essence and mystery of creativity. One recent book that fits into this rather nebulous category is Pat Schneider’s *Writing Alone and with Others*. Her explicit target audience for this book includes writers, teachers and those interested in creating writing groups or workshops. This book, although it could be considered pedagogical, is really geared toward the general population; it is a book one might find in a local bookstore. It avoids technical jargon but still speculates upon some important and weighty writerly issues such as audience and the public-versus-private issues, of serious writing. Like so many of the writing books that pertain to both university and personal creative writing, Schneider’s explores issues of audience by way of a narrative style. Her references to audience include sections on the “other,” entitled “Someone Else” and the “Internal Critics.” These seemingly casual references to audience lay the foundation for her exploration into the issues of genre, revision, and, as the name of her book implies, the importance of creating a writing network. Indeed, this book, and others like it, considers the emotional comfort and importance of a
physical audience, but unlike Schneider, these other books do not view audience as a critical issue of writing.

With that distinction in mind, the references Schneider makes to audience are not ingenuous; they do not fully consider audience in the way set forth by this dissertation, as a critical element in the conception and practice of writing. Her ideas do point to theoretical concepts akin to those of compositionists, but not to the realm of literary theorists. Her allusions to audience and the support that audience offers in the workshop method are unique aspects of the composition idea of expressivist writing.

Peter Elbow, who wrote the forward to Schneider’s book, has his own books that apply to this category. *Everyone Can Write*, *Writing Without Teachers*, and *Writing with Power* address composition and creative writing for a non-academic audience. In their most reductive form, his books advocate writing to uncover thinking, writing that is free of any type of self-editing. But even though Elbow is the champion of freewriting and all its mysteries, he does not deny the importance of audience. The first sentence of chapter one in *Writing with Power* indicates the significance of this writerly issue in terms of audience for this particular group. He writes, “I direct this book to a very broad audience. I am not trying to tailor my words to beginning or advanced writers in particular, or to students, novelists, professional people, pleasure writers, or poets […] yet in truth I feel my audience is very specific” (Elbow *Writing Power* 6). Elbow devotes entire chapters on audience in two of his books, and his popular *Writing Without Teachers* is essentially about trying to avoid envisioning the teacher as sole audience. In fact, he says that “the teacherless class […] can only function as group processes […] and are completely undermined if one tries to function
solo” (*Writing Without* xxvii). Groups and collaboration are practices that underpin his writing philosophies; thus, audience and others are essential to his writing epistemology.

One cannot, however, mention Elbow in this context without mentioning his essay, “Closing My Eyes as I Speak: An Argument for Ignoring Audience.” This essay contends that ideas for writing need room to manifest themselves in the text. Elbow argues that constant audience awareness inhibits writers, and that closing one’s eyes to the reader oftentimes “can lead to better writing […] writer-based prose can be better than reader-based prose” (“Closing” 53). Ignoring audience, he says, can help produce writing that is more lucid because the writer is not constrained by the needs of the readers. Although Elbow’s essay is better known by rhetoricians and compositionists, he does provide literary examples. Elbow cites authors Virginia Woolfe and Herman Melville to reinforce his claims, making his argument germane to all sorts of writing. Most important to this dissertation is the multiple ways in which Elbow conceives of audience. He examines audience in terms of self and other, teacher and workshop, social and personal, public and private, in accurate and faulty ideas of audience, and his thorough consideration of potential audiences. He encourages teachers of writing to occupy and examine with their students how audience affects writing.

**Philosophies about Teaching Writing**

This next grouping of texts is somewhat distinct from the texts discussed above. Even though many of these works contain chapters or sections on the teaching of creative writing, the writer’s musings are less about pedagogy and more about the “idea” of teaching creative writing. The sections contain anecdotes of classes, reinforcing and accepting the
difficulty of revision, and more general issues, such as suggestions for developing good writing habits.

One writer and teacher, Donald Murray, is prolific in writing about writing. His books are representative of many of the books in this category: those that discuss writing as they edify writing. Oftentimes, Murray blurs the divide between composition and creative writing; since he teaches both, his books and essays speak to all forms of writing and the teaching of writing. In his book, *Learning by Teaching: Selected Articles on Writing and Teaching*, Murray has an essay titled “Teaching the Other Self: The Writer’s First Reader.” This essay explains the importance of cultivating the writer to be his or her own first reader; Murray calls this person “the other self,” quoting Vladimir Nabokov to explain, “I think the audience an artist imagines, when he imagines that sort of thing, is a room filled with people wearing his own mask” (qtd. in *Learning* 165). Murray considers the other self to be a unique position because the writer, or “other self,” reads pieces of what is written, knows all of what is written, and considers what is not yet written. It is the responsibility of the “teacher not only to teach the other self but recruit the other self to assist in the teaching of writing” (Murray *Learning* 168). Resonating Robert Brooke’s ideas of negotiating identity in the writing classroom and “help[ing] younger writers discover their own purposes for writing by providing space, time and encouragement for their own learning” (Brooke 1), Murray’s belief of cultivating a writer’s sense of the self as first audience introduces the notion of moving outside of the self to read one’s own writing. This movement not only begins the critical step and complexity of audience awareness, it also emphasizes the need for writers to become strong readers of text. Although Murray envisions the other self as becoming the writer’s teacher, the strategy creates a sense that the writing is meant to
communicate to another even if that other is initially the other self. As a result, while considering the other as teacher, the writer becomes his or her own critic, honing the writing to best satisfy the reader.

Another text, Richard Hugo’s *The Triggering Town: Lectures and Essays on Poetry and Writing*, is a collection of essays addressing writing instruction for anyone who wants to write. He provides detailed instructions of how to write creatively, but these instructions percolate with contradicting advice not to listen to instructions. Hugo says that those who teach writing are only teaching the habits and strategies that work for them. He refers to audience, like many writers do, as “the reader.” Hugo advises

> Never worry about the reader, what the reader can understand. When you are writing, glance over your shoulder, and you’ll find there is no reader. Just you and the page. Feel lonely? Good. Assuming you can write clear English sentences, give up all worry about communication. If you want to communicate, use the telephone. (5)

He then challenges his directive by saying “YOU HEAR [sic] make extreme statements like ‘don’t communicate’ and ‘there is no reader.’ While these statements are meant as said, I presume when I make them that you *can* communicate […] I caution against communication because once language exists only to convey information, it is dying” (Hugo 11). The relationship that the writer has to language is at the center of Hugo’s ideas of the private poet versus the public one (14). Hugo considers the best poets to be the private ones, those whose words mean something uniquely to the poet; “the strange way the poet emotionally possesses his vocabulary—is one of the mysteries and preservative forces of the art” (14). Emily Dickinson is a good example of a private poet, while Walt Whitman might illustrate a
public poet who was successful, yet Hugo advises “always be ahead of the reader, nimble, skillful enough to stay ahead, to be entertaining so his didacticism doesn’t set up resistances” (14). Hugo seems to treat the reader as a necessary intruder; some readers are perceptive to the private poets, but Hugo intimates that the poet is and should always be honest with his or her language first, unconcerned with the outside meaning, and always more intelligent than the reader. This sort of deliberate ignorance of audience indicates the complex relationship that the craft of creative writing has with audience. Hugo illustrates the struggle of all writers to embrace ideas and language and take both as their own, while they also acknowledge and eschew audience. Although Hugo says writers should rebuke the constraints that audience creates while writing, the act itself of avoiding audience, like Elbow suggests, affects writing.

A collection of interviews with writers, *Finding the Words: Conversations with Writers Who Teach* by Nancy Bunge, offers still more insight into the role audience plays in writing and the teaching of writing through interviews with a variety of writers. This book presents more examples of what writers believe about audience, and these beliefs come in the form of discussion into genre, writing for money, accessibility, gentility, standards of university creative writing, focus on the self versus focus on the universal, loneliness in writing, and writing communities. Although the term “audience” is not always explicit in this collection of interviews, clearly it underpins much of the discussion in terms of the way this dissertation defines audience.

Certainly if one asks any creative writer, he or she will have something to say about audience. Those ideas not only affect the author’s work (either subconsciously or deliberately), but the beliefs affect others who write and those who teach writing. The
sampling above is limited by necessity and clearly does not exhaust writers’, famous or obscure, considerations of audience. These works are representative of how writers’ beliefs in audience manifest themselves when the same writers talk about their teaching.

**Creative Writing as Advanced Composition**

The scholarship within this category is, again, in need of definition in order to create the boundaries in which the texts are chosen. Since this review of scholarship distinguishes between books concerning the general act of writing and the teaching of writing and those works that are specifically for or about creative writing, establishing the difference while combining composition and creative writing produces yet another complication. Given that the dissimilarity between composition and creative writing is arguable, it seems hypocritical that the bifurcation is featured here, but in order to focus the study on creative writing pedagogy, it is necessary to review those works that are particular to creative writing as a pedagogical subject. More important, this dissertation concentrates on those authors and texts that are most likely to be read by creative writing teachers at the university level. The distinction presumes that the works of scholars in the area of rhetoric and writing are not those typically used by creative writing teachers in their classrooms, and thus they are not reviewed here. Although rhetoric and writing research informs this dissertation, and the scholarship supports the findings, it is my contention that it cannot be considered part of the scholarship of creative writing pedagogy.

Still, this category can be considered akin to composition pedagogy, but the available scholarship in this grouping digs deeper into many areas of writing, such as style, cultural issues, and matters of language and authority—all of which are matters of audience, and all
of which are issues within creative writing. Indeed, creative writing may be considered part of the realm of advanced composition, but what is clear in books such as Gary A. Olson’s and Julie Drew’s collection, *Landmark Essays on Advanced Composition*, is that the more advanced writing becomes, the more audience plays a central role.

Like so many other college courses, advanced composition has become specialized, yet some classes that are considered “advanced” are oftentimes simply classes that extend beyond first year composition. If students elect to enroll, creative writing usually requires the completion of composition; naturally, we can assume that it falls under the general heading of advanced composition. But this kind of thinking reduces the term “advanced” into a simple synonym for “beyond.” Unfortunately, the early guidelines of advanced composition according to the National Council of Teachers of English’s Conference on College Composition and Communication define it as just that (Hogan 7). Although this sort of sequencing might be a characteristic of creative writing classes at the university level, there are many ways that the adjective “advanced” might describe a writing class (Olson 4). In the same way that Hans Ostrom suggests that creative writing pedagogies focus on one writing issue at a time, students that are in advanced composition might also emphasize one writing issue.

For instance, Helen Rothschild Ewald stresses audience within the advanced composition classroom. In her essay, “What We Could Tell Advanced Student Writers About Audience,” Ewald considers reading theory. She takes a broad interdisciplinary look at audience, grappling with the many issues of how readers interact with texts. Another essay, Felecia Mitchell’s “Balancing Individual Projects and Collaborative Learning in an Advanced Writing Class,” looks at audience in terms of collaboration and community
writing projects, including the cultural and social issues writers must consider. Although she assigns projects that are research-oriented, she concludes that encouraging writers to find a purpose for their writing often makes them realize that their writing is inquiry rather than exposition. Consequently, they present that inquiry or writing to learn in the same fashion to their reading audience.

Another difficulty of reviewing the scholarship of creative writing as advanced composition is the multiple definitions of both terms, *advanced* and *composition*. Depending on whether advanced writing is divided—academic, expository and creative—looking at audience becomes even more complicated. Defining these divisions affects the way we approach them. In its very nature, rhetoric (here used as a synonym for composition), by definition, actively involves audience. If all writing is rhetorical (meant to persuade or meant for an audience), creative writing, and the way many writers define it, becomes considerably more complex. What advanced composition might suggest resonates with the idea of moving out of the self as audience (or writer-based prose) into occupying multiple audiences (or reader-based prose), or the idea of moving out of the garret and into the classroom. The importance of this category to this dissertation indicates that audience is an important and advanced writing issue, one that requires more attention in advanced pedagogical sequencing.

Another edited collection, *Teaching Advanced Composition: Why and How*, offers both theoretical grounding for defining advanced composition and chapter-long examples of courses that are considered advanced. In the essay, “What Is Advanced About Advanced Composition?: A Theory of Expertise in Writing,” Michael Carter contends that advanced composition is specialization in writing born out of the writing situation, defined as the
occasion, environment and audience of a writing act. And perhaps more analogous to creative writing, Mary Fuller’s essay, “Teaching Style in Advanced Composition Classes” defines advanced composition in a way similar to how creative writers look at their craft. She offers advanced composition as a way to closely examine syntax choices, raising writers’ awareness of prose style. Fuller writes that audience often dictates choices in style, and writers “begin to develop stylistic strategies and techniques to accommodate their growing sense of the conventional language of the genre or discipline for which they write” (120). Like Carter, Fuller sees the situation and audience as fundamental to advanced writing. Therefore, in considering creative writing as advanced writing, audience is a necessary consideration.

Conclusion

The effect of audience within the creative writing classroom is clearly woven into much of the current scholarship on writing, and the scholarship of creative writing pedagogy in particular occupies important and varied space within this discourse of writing at the university level. Through research of its history, its influences, and its methods, the current scholarly work does not, however, approach writing in a way that combines the fields that naturally affect the creative writing classroom: writing theory and literary theory. Nor does it advance the idea that creative writing contains explicit and essential rhetorical elements. This dissertation occupies that open area where these fields of thought converge with one unifying writerly element: audience.

The following chapter explains the theoretical framework that actually creates and then supports the methodology used in the research. Since the scholarship that already exists
regarding creative writing pedagogy does not always foreground the importance of audience, even though it implicates it, Chapter Three reveals theoretical assumptions of audience in terms of the fields of composition theory and literary theory, illustrating how the theories parallel and resist one another. By examining theories of audience from the discipline of composition theory and the area of literary theory, the dissertation can then move into if and how they surface in texts and textbooks in the pilot study. In exploring how composition and literary theory correspond or oppose each other, the areas of intersection and unity surface to illustrate how undergraduate creative writing might critically examine audience to enhance and strengthen its oftentimes nebulous curricular goals.
CHAPTER THREE: THEORIES OF AUDIENCE

The field of rhetoric is an ideal area in which literature and creative writing can meet. As shown in Chapter Two, creative writing was originally a way for students to more thoroughly understand literature, making the connection between writing and reading. Chapter Three, this dissertation’s core chapter, reveals the theoretical overlap of rhetoric and literature, and thus illustrates how the critical examination of audience is useful for creative writing pedagogy. Showing how various literary theorists explore audience scaffolds the examination of audience within the texts of undergraduate creative writing classrooms as explored in Chapter Five’s pilot study. By delineating the theoretical views of audience within rhetorical and literary theory, placing them next to one another and then applying them to particular undergraduate classroom texts, teachers in all fields dealing with texts might see the pedagogical potential of investigating audience with undergraduates.

Beyond the Composition Classroom

The composition and rhetorical theorists who ground this portion of the dissertation are well-known in the field of composition. Although these theorists work and write primarily for this particular discipline, their theories can extend to any writing class. There is considerable scholarship on audience in the field of rhetoric and writing, but what makes these particular scholars appropriate for this dissertation is how they offer varying and enriching ideas about how we might look at audience in terms of undergraduate creative writing classes.
Rhetoric, Writing, and Audience

Examining several specific areas of audience provides a rich grounding in the rhetorical issues. The first is represented by Lloyd Bitzer and the resulting responses by Richard Vatz, Scott Consigny, and Richard Young. After that we examine Walter Ong’s specific ideas regarding writing to an audience, which are followed Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, who theorize specifically for pedagogical purposes. Linda Flower represents the cognitive approach to audience, while Kenneth Burke provides a bridge into the next section: theories of literature and audience.

In the 1968 article, “The Rhetorical Situation,” Lloyd Bitzer expands common conceptions of audience to what he calls the “rhetorical situation.” Throughout his essay, he focuses on rhetorical speeches and oral deliveries, but writing theorists have applied his work to writing situations as well. Although he grounds his discussion in rhetorical speech and immediate audience, he suggests that rhetorical situations occur in many settings and with many types of discourse (Bitzer 218). Bitzer extends the idea of audience to every uttered exchange, and notes that a rhetorical situation can exist without discourse (or text), and, moreover, “the situation […] calls the discourse into existence” (Bitzer 218). In other words, to Bitzer, all speech is “rhetorical because it is a response to a situation of a certain kind.” Furthermore, all rhetoric “comes into existence for the sake of something beyond itself” and is, therefore, practical and persuasive (Bitzer 219).

In applying Bitzer to the creative writing classroom, the situational context works on several levels: the immediate situation of the assignment, the text’s situation within the classroom, and the imagined situation of the anticipated audience who will read the text later. In further explicating the rhetorical situation, Bitzer concludes that the rhetorical
“situation controls the rhetorical response” (220). The relevance of Bitzer’s idea to the undergraduate creative writing classroom is that students are in a unique situation with other young writers, in a unique classroom, and all writing for a specific academic purpose.

Bitzer identifies three elements of the rhetorical situation: exigence, audience, and constraints (220). These three concepts are fundamental to understanding how any text is conceived. The first element, exigence, is the necessity of the oral or written response motivated by outside forces. The second element is audience, who, according to Bitzer, are those “capable of being influenced” (221) by the speaker or writer. Bitzer’s third element, constraints, is the situational and arguably personal feelings and attitudes brought in by both the speaker/writer and the audience.

Exigence, for the purpose of the writing classroom, can be translated into the motivation or requirement to write. This particular exigence is the curriculum and due dates of the assignments within that curriculum. Because due dates and curriculum have the potential to be modified through discourse between teachers and students, Bitzer would consider them rhetorical. But the limitation of the term or semester normally cannot be changed through student, teacher or class discourse, and is therefore not rhetorical. The exigence is “marked by urgency” yet the urgency is determined by the perception of the rhetor (writer) and audience (Bitzer 221).

Bitzer acknowledges that the second element of the rhetorical situation, audience, is unique to poetic discourse. He makes the distinction that an audience of poetic discourse is not the same as an audience of rhetorical discourse because “the rhetorical audience must be capable of serving as mediator of the change which the discourse functions to produce” (Bitzer 222). An audience takes part in the “aesthetic” of the work, but the work itself does
not “[require] an audience” (221-22). In other words, poetic discourse does not require the audience to act; the audience is not required to implement the discourse. Bitzer’s issue of change and the capacity for the rhetorical situation to alter discourse, I believe, does indeed apply to poetic or creative discourse in the unique setting of the creative writing workshop. The audience of the creative writing workshop or classroom is encouraged to suggest ways in which to revise the poetry or prose produced. Thus, the audience of a creative writing classroom’s poetic discourse has the power to influence and enact change in the text.

The third part of the rhetorical situation that Bitzer sets forth, constraints, demonstrates that creative writing, especially when produced in the college classroom, is both situated and alterable. Bitzer explains, “sources of constraint include beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives and the like” (222). Those sources, then, are manifested through both the audience and the rhetor. Clearly, these types of constraints are present in the creative writing classroom and often the beliefs and attitudes are created within, strictly for, and because of the particular classroom. Interests and motives might vary from student to student, but matters such as grades and credit hours are examples of unifying catalysts in the way Bitzer defines sources of constraint. Bitzer’s list of constraints also includes documents; the documents of the creative writing classroom, of course, are significant to this research, and the scrutiny of the course documents are guided or constrained by my interpretation of how literary theory and rhetorical theory consider audience.

Given this interpretation of Bitzer’s ideas, his notion of the rhetorical situation and its three elements, exigence, audience, and constraints are not necessarily applicable to a general concept of creative writing, but they are applicable to the creative writing classroom.
As shown, all three of his requirements for any rhetorical situation are noticeably present in the creative writing classroom. The requirements also emerge in the various stages of a creative text, namely, during initial composition, revision, and presentation. Still, in his essay, Bitzer says that writing produced for purely imaginative situations is not rhetorical. He emphasizes that even if the writing contains obvious rhetorical strategies, such as “ethical and emotional appeals, and stylistics patterns,” it is not rhetorical because it is not “a response to the kind of situation which is rhetorical” (Bitzer 223). Distinct from Bitzer’s definition, the creative writing classroom, is, in fact, a rhetorical situation in terms of the ability for the text to be revised as a result of the audience’s, whether the instructor’s or other students’, feedback within the workshop.

The assertion that the creative writing classroom is indeed a rhetorical situation is complicated when Bitzer proposes another stipulation: that in order to be considered a rhetorical situation the circumstances must be real. He says, “Real situations are to be distinguished from sophistic ones in which, for example, a contrived exigence is asserted to be real” (Bitzer 223). Clearly, Bitzer would argue that the creative writing classroom is contrived by the teacher’s curriculum and the university’s requirements. While the graduate creative writing workshop is an artificial situation meant to parallel an actual audience willing to pay for fiction or poetry, the undergraduate creative writing class is not constructing the same type of simulation. Based on curricular goals that, as discussed in Chapter One are not well defined, and motivations of undergraduate creative writing students, the situation becomes both real and rhetorical—real writing occasions for real but perhaps indeterminate learning outcomes.
Additionally, the undergraduate creative writing situation fulfills another of Bitzer’s requirements: it is organized. In this classroom, the relationships between “the audiences, constraints, and exigence” is clear, although the classroom and its many layers of rhetorical situations cannot fulfill Bitzer’s stipulation that the relationships be “easy” (Bitzer 224). According to Bitzer, if the situation’s circumstances are complicated, such as numerous, competing, or unstable exigencies, the rhetorical situation is weakened (224). Notwithstanding the instructor’s organization of the classroom curriculum, an undergraduate creative writer does have many exigencies and many audiences that both challenge and affect one another.

Scholars have challenged Bitzer’s conceptualization of the rhetorical situation. In “The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation,” Richard Vatz questions Bitzer’s treatise. Vatz’s main criticism is in Bitzer’s assertion that a rhetorical situation’s meaning is objective and located in the event itself (Vatz 155). Vatz reminds us of the human subjectivity of events and their meanings, and he questions the way in which Bitzer defines contexts of situations. Vatz says contexts are inexhaustible and the exigencies subjective. Additionally, the rhetors choose what is communicated to the audience, and then only can use language, which is intrinsically insufficient to characterize a real situation (156-57). Furthermore, once the rhetor’s choices of what and how the information is communicated, the audience naturally then creates its own individual meaning in defining that language. Vatz places the burden of the rhetorical situation directly on the rhetor because the rhetor creates the situation; thus, “rhetoric is a cause not an effect of meaning. It is antecedent, not subsequent, to a situation’s impact” (160-61).
When applied to the undergraduate creative writing classroom, Vatz’s ideas complicate Bitzer. If we think like Blitzer that the workshop setting is an event and that each particular workshop creates its own identity, then Vatz suggests that the student writer controls the rhetorical event by what he or she decides to write. Furthermore, Vatz might argue that each week the workshop will change in subjectivity and exigencies—perhaps changing because of the last workshop. The other way in which to apply Vatz to the undergraduate creative writing classroom is to teach his ideas to students. If writers understand or at least acknowledge their audience’s varying subjectivities, then their attention to language and meaning may be piqued.

Scott Consigny’s and Richard Young’s “Rhetoric and Its Situations” responds to Vatz and Bitzer. Consigny and Young synthesize the Bitzer and Vatz positions, suggesting that neither the situation nor the rhetor is saddled with full responsibility for the rhetorical situation. The “rhetor discloses issues and brings them to resolution by interacting with the situation, revealing and working through the phenomena, selecting appropriate material and arranging it into a coherent form”; consequently, it is the audience’s onus to interpret and unify (Consigny and Young 179). Consigny and Young are interested in the interaction between the constraints of the situation and the way in which the rhetor manages those limitations (179). They expand the ancient Greek idea of topii, or topics, to both “the instrument with which the rhetor thinks and the realm in and about which he thinks” (ital Consigny and Young 182).

This reading of the rhetorical situation is especially germane to the undergraduate creative writing classroom because Consigny and Young give responsibility to the rhetor (or writer) who must have the ability to adapt to many situations and subjects while also
carefully judging the situation and extemporaneously adjusting to it (181-82) whether it be the workshop itself, or the other potential audiences of the student’s writing. Given an emphasis on the writer, fostering this awareness in undergraduate creative writing students provides for audience awareness and the writer’s ability to adapt to classroom or other situational possibilities.

Unlike Bitzer, Vatz, and Consigny and Young, Walter Ong takes up the issue of audience in the specific terms of written communication in his essay “The Writer’s Audience Is Always a Fiction.” As the title suggests, Ong explains how writers fictionalize their audience. The audience of writers is always delayed, and Ong notes an important distinction: “a writer addresses readers—only, he does not quite ‘address’ them either: he writes to or for them” (10-11). Ong distinguishes between the collective idea of an orator’s audience and the dissimilarity of “readers,” who “do not form collectivity, acting here and now on one another and on the speaker as members of an audience do” (11). He recognizes the difference between the abstract term, “readership” of a writer, and the immediate and concrete “audience” of a speaker.

Ong’s position is particularly interesting when he suggests that the audience of a text has as much responsibility in fictionalizing itself as does the writer fictionalizing his or her audience (12). Ong believes that the “reader has to play the role in which the author has cast him […] how to conform […] to the projections of the writers they read, or at least how to operate in terms of these projections” (12). Ong considers this requirement of reading as part of literacy knowledge because the roles are not defined explicitly for readers. He believes that readers are already armed with certain knowledge of literary conventions, genres, and expectations; therefore, when reading a text, they understand some their responsibilities in
fulfilling the reading of the text. Like Vatz, Ong acknowledges the subjectivity of the reader, but Ong believes that the author writes assuming that the literate reader has some sense of literary customs and is willing to occupy the role in accordance with these limitations.

Continuing to shift from the audience’s responsibility for the reader to the writer’s responsibility of the audience, Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford’s essay, “Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy,” speaks directly to how students consider audience when writing. They present the writing teacher a third choice in deciding whether to emphasize or ignore audience in the writing classroom. Much like Consigny and Young, Ede and Lunsford offer a synthesis concerning audience in which the audience addressed “refers to those actual or real-life people who read a discourse” and the audience invoked to “the audience called up or imagined by the writer” (156). They note shortcomings of a limited view of audience. Ede and Lunsford also add on a new, important member to the audience: the writer. By recognizing that the writer is in a sense the first audience then even the “reading” of prewriting and the invention that occurs before pen is put to paper takes on important implications. Proposing a continuous exchange of understanding between writer and reader, and language as a stylistic, value-rife mediator (Ede and Lunsford 158-59), Ede and Lunsford quote Anthony Petrosky in emphasizing that “reading, responding, and composing are aspects of understanding, and theories that attempt to account for them outside of their interaction with each other run the risk of building reductive models of human understanding” (Ede and Lunsford 160).

Ede and Lunsford go on to challenge Ong’s theories on the fictionalized audience, considering them overly reductive and artificially discriminating between a speaker’s
audience and a writer’s audience. The possibilities of audience are complex in any rhetorical act, but Ede and Lunsford assert that Ong’s theories are mainly about fictional narrative, which operate under a competing set of conventions. Quoting Walter Minot, Ede and Lunsford make an important point, “In regarding a work of fiction or poetry, a reader is far more willing to suspend his [sic] beliefs and values than in a rhetorical work” (Ede and Lunsford 162). Given that Ede and Lunsford are composition theorists, they recognize that the audience, who has to also fictionalize and act its part, must also “recognize in themselves [sic]” (163) the epideictic strategies that the rhetor outlines. These strategies—whether rhetorical or adhering to genre convention—illustrate the exigence of multiple and complicated possibilities and limitations that the writer places on the reader and those that the reader places on the writer. The “fluid, shifting role” of audience is the interplay between “the creativity of the writer with the different, but equally important, creativity of the reader” (Ede and Lunsford 168-69).

Ede and Lunsford multiply the complexities of the roles of writer and reader by highlighting the varied adaptations each may occupy. Linda Flower posits a distinctive cognitive model that differs from Ede and Lunsford because it highlights the mental steps a writer must fulfill in order to make sense to an audience. Her article, “Writer-Based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing,” focuses on the cognitive movement from expressing and thinking for oneself to the ability of “transform[ing] it in certain complex but describable ways for the needs of a reader” (19). Flower’s ideas focus on the writer’s capacity to navigate narrative issues for reader clarity. Allowing more responsibility to be placed on the writer and noting the internal dialogue of the writer during all stages of writing echoes Ede and Lunsford’s idea that the writer of a text is its first reader; but Flower
advances the idea that “purpose” emerges from the writer’s “process,” and this transfer is a sophisticated cognitive stage for language users (20). One of many cognitive stages is structuring discourse as a narrative, which is “often a substitute for analytic thinking […] and obscures the more important logical and hierarchical relations between ideas” and an audience who expects “a streamlined logical analysis” (26). Narratives oftentimes create areas of details unnecessary to the story, and in terms of the creative writing classroom, Flower’s idea that a writer’s “fascination with facts” provides no rhetorical structure for the reader, no logical order that points to purpose (26-7) is directly applicable to a writer’s audience awareness. Still, since narrative structure is linear and logical for the writer, it may also be reasonable for the reader, and, Flower argues, may be the most productive way for a writer to think through, organize, and reconcile ideas that are not fully understood (27-8). Flower’s main point is that Writer-Based prose is both useful and logical for the writer, but in the transformation to Reader-Based prose, the text must modify its abstraction and, thus, become independent of the writer.

When looking at the writerly issue of audience, Kenneth Burke can help in the transition from rhetorical to literary theory. Burke’s rhetoric includes the poetic; thus his ideas provide a natural transition from rhetorical theory to the next category of this dissertation: literary theory. Below I discuss three key works of Burke: *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, and *Language as Symbolic Action*. All three of these books approach literature and language rhetorically.

Burke believes that readers are integral to understanding literature; therefore, rhetoric and its applications are best suited to understand literature. Most germane to this study are two of Burke’s more noted theories: identification and terministic screens. Each of these
theories requires language and audience, and thus, each is important to any writing class which uses language for an audience. Defining Burke’s theories helps to clarify further the intersection of writing theory and literary theory, reinforcing the importance of audience within the creative writing classroom. Another way his analysis supports the ideas in this study is by his frequent use of literary examples to illustrate his rhetorical theories. Given that creative writing can be considered the drafting stages of literature, Burke would most likely apply similar qualities to creative writing as he does to literature.

Burke’s complicated and overlapping ideas engender discussion of audience throughout each of his works. In order to best understand Burke for this study, explaining his useful ideas by showing the nature of literature’s rhetorical infusion helps clarify their application here. Also, looking at Burke’s theories in terms of both the creative writing workshop itself, and as applied to potential pedagogical approaches, helps in understanding how his theories function in this particular writing situation.

In his book *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, he categorizes literature as rhetorical or persuasive because “[c]ritical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose. They are not merely answers, they are *strategic* answers, *stylized* answers [his italics]” (Burke *Philosophy* 1). Burke believes that when we use language or symbols, the choice we make in conveying that language suggests that we are contributing to an act of effect upon on audience (*Philosophy* 8-18). Literature relies on “associational clusters” that become the motivation for the written work (Burke *Philosophy* 20). Burke understands that these motives or situations are not likely to be the same for every member of an audience (*Philosophy* 22-23). For example, throughout this book, he maintains that the often-used literary technique of synecdoche, using part of something to
represent the whole, in terms of understanding literature is inherently flawed. It is problematic not only because to understand literature is to create relationships within the work to produce meaning (Burke *Philosophy* 20-7), but also because “the ideal of a purely ‘neutral’ vocabulary, free of emotional weightings, attempts to make a totality out of a fragment, ‘till that which suits a part infects the whole’” (Burke *Philosophy* 138). As Burke reveals the perceived differences between the semantic meaning of words and their seemingly oppositional poetic meanings, he illustrates that if poetic meanings are laden with “emotional values” or “attitudes,” then the semantic meanings are not (Burke *Philosophy* 143). But if we look at language this way, we are committing a “synecdochic fallacy” because of Burke’s belief that all language is imbued with emotional value (Burke *Philosophy* 142-44). Furthermore, even if the writer or speaker believes that the language is free of any emotional or moral value, then certainly the audience will perceive the language through their own emotional or moral values (Burke *Philosophy* 164-6).

In this work, Burke’s reverence of audience perception is clear; language “does not reside in its ‘usefulness’ and promise (though that is certainly a part of it) but in its *style* as morals, as petition, in the *quality* of the petition, not in the *success* of the petition.” He continues, saying in language “everything does serve—but preparations must not usurp the guise of fulfillments” (ital Burke *Philosophy* 167). Burke’s view of language challenges a writer’s and reader’s beliefs in the integrity of language to mean what he or she intends or understands. Given that Burke is approaching literature as a literary theorist rather than a writer, creative writers might still benefit from understanding Burke’s position. Burke believes that by appreciating what poetics does for the writer (in terms of purpose, situation,
and biography), the audience might better understand what the text does for other audiences (Philosophy 73).

In his book, A Rhetoric of Motives, Burke explains his idea of identification. In defining this term, Burke expands the definition of rhetoric, “by showing how a rhetorical motive is often present where it is not usually recognized, or thought to belong” (Rhetoric of Motives xiii). Aligning identification with the rhetorical term “persuasion” complicates and broadens the occurrence of identifying with text (Burke Rhetoric of Motives xiv). Burke explains that identification happens when two perceptions occupy the same space at the same time, unique yet contingent upon one another (Rhetoric of Motives 21-22). These unique yet contingent occurrences apply not only to the writer and reader, but also to the parsing of the text itself. Burke says that the “fact that an activity is capable of reduction to intrinsic, autonomous principles does not argue that it is free from identification with other orders of motivation extrinsic to it.” Each must “consider from the standpoint of the specialized activity alone.” These definitions are what Burke considers “the principle of Rhetorical identification” (Rhetoric of Motives 27). This idea of parts of a whole expands Burke’s ideas about synecdochic fallacy. Again, Burke emphasizes that dismantling literature into parts cannot fully represent the whole work, and, likewise, the act of dismantling itself requires rhetorical activity, thus changing the audience’s identification with the text. When readers identify with a text, they are identifying with form and in that the reader will “grasp the trend of the form, [as] it invites participation regardless of the subject matter.” Borrowing from Aristotle’s idea of “commonplaces,” Burke asserts that there are literary techniques of form that have “‘universal’ appeal” (Rhetoric of Motives 57-8). In his understanding of identification, Burke also notes how audience changes in what he
calls, “applied art.” Still leaning on ancient rhetoricians and notions of timeliness, Burke understands that for literature, especially literature that is lasting or canonized, propinquity produces exigency (Burke *Rhetoric of Motives* 61-64). Language is “continually born anew” and is created as a means of “inducing cooperation” (Burke *Rhetoric of Motives* 43).

Burke even explains how identification might work if the writer considers himself or herself as the sole audience. Burke says a “man can be his own audience, insofar as he, even in his secret thoughts, cultivates certain ideas or images for the effect he hopes they may have upon him.” Reminding us that rhetoric is both social and moral, the writer still writes in the language outside of himself, “[o]nly those voices from without are effective which can speak in the language of a voice within” (Burke *Rhetoric of Motives* 38-9). Throughout this text, Burke moves between rhetoric (practical) to poetic (literary). He provides an example of the close relationship between persuasive speech acts to poetic acts in terms of the language we use to describe each. He illustrates the similarities between how a writer moves an audience to a decision or action in a rhetorical sense, and how many describe poems as “moving” (Burke *Rhetoric of Motives* 65).

Proceeding from Burke’s ideas of identification, his book, *Language as Symbolic Action*, introduces “terministic screens.” By remembering that Burke sees language as “dramatistic,” that is, as an act rather than some sort of accurate definition, we can understand better that he believes all language is in some way “suasive” (*Language* 44-45). Burke says “Even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality [his italics]” (*Language* 45). To Burke, choice in language necessarily filters itself through the writer’s terministic screen, and thus it is read through the reader’s
terministic screen. Users of language cannot avoid these screens “since we can’t say anything without the use of terms,” or without the use of words (Burke *Language* 50). Each filtering of these words is an act in which meaning is created solely by the one who acts upon the language, whether choosing it or understanding it. He concedes that the act of naming the understanding of language as terministic screening is, in itself, filtering it through a screen, but Burke assigns this web of understanding as a unique quality of the human animal. One can see it as fracturing any understanding we might have of one another, or as some sort of unification of our human condition (Burke *Language* 52-3, 57). But, in regards to poetry and, perhaps, creative writing, Burke makes the unification for meaning more urgent: “For even as the poet works with particulars, he brings to them the unification of an attitude. Otherwise his work itself would fall apart […] Any poetic attitude […] has a kind of summarizing wholeness,” thus, it functions differently than scientific language because it is “not reducible” (Burke *Language* 57-8). As he said in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, synecdoche in poetry inherently erodes authorial meaning. Likewise, Burke would argue that an audience’s relationship to language might be considered immediate, but language and text function in multiple layers and waves of experience and “[t]o mistake this vast tangle of ideas for immediate experience is much more fallacious than to accept a dream as an immediate experience. For a dream really is an immediate experience, but the information that we receive about today’s events through the world most decidedly is not” (*Language* 48).

Considering how Burke’s theories complicate and enrich the study of audience within an undergraduate creative writing class, we are shown that the experience of reading is particularly unique for every reader in every situation. If we accept this idea, then does
recognition of audience by the writer have any bearing on the experience of reading? Does awareness of the uncontrollable reading experience aid the writer in decisions regarding composition or language? Perhaps unanswerable, the question, when applied to an undergraduate creative writing class, is less immediate. Because these classes function as exercises in critical thinking, introductions to the complicated issues of text, experience, and language production and consumption, the awareness of the complications and importance of audience for this level of writer is likely more important than what that awareness can control.

**Literary Theory and Audience**

Kenneth Burke provides an important segue from writing into reading of texts, but the movement into how literary theory treats the idea of audience reveals how natural the shift is and how seamlessly the ideas feed into one another.

Given that composition theory exalts audience as an important writerly concern, the shift into literary theory and audience moves the creative writing classroom’s sense of audience from how text is produced to how text is consumed. This idea underpins Robert Scholes’s book, *Textual Power: Literary Theory and the Teaching of English*, and its relevance to this dissertation is manifold. Scholes begins by making distinctions within the English department similar to those made in earlier chapters of this dissertation. The relationship between the production of writing, creative writing and composition, and consumption of writing, reading and interpretation, are filtered through how the texts are classified by what he calls the English department (Scholes 7), and what is extended here to mean audience. Scholes centers his ideas in an examination of pedagogy, further solidifying
his theories’ relevance to this dissertation; all of Scholes claims are a critique of how we teach English.

To begin, we center on the idea of the mutability of text, where Scholes sets forth that since “human beings are constituted different in different cultural situations, then the varieties of literature must be seen as temporal rather than eternal,” and we cannot have “faith in the universal wisdom of [...] authors” (Textual 13). Although Scholes is posturing on how we teach literary criticism, the idea of audience is present within his historicizing and theorizing in each chapter. Scholes asserts that English departments “must stop ‘teaching literature’ and start ‘studying texts’” (Textual 16), again echoing the importance of considering audience critically within the undergraduate creative writing classroom. In other words, inherent in Scholes’s situating of texts is the idea that cultural situations change, audiences change. Accordingly, students who write should understand the time and circumstances in which they are writing and the potential moments in which future audiences might read their work.

Scholes’s ideas of textuality, the definitions of audience, language, and texts conflate into one mass of meaning when situating them together for this study. Given that Scholes’s ideas are only salient when thought of in terms of audience or readers of text, then maybe this approach is not overly assumptive. Scholes is critiquing the teaching of literature, but making the leap to creative writing instruction is not difficult. He says that teachers “must help [students] to see that every poem, play and story is a text related to others, both verbal pre-texts and social sub-texts, and all manner of post-texts including their own response, whether in speech, writing, or action. The response to a text is itself always a text” (Scholes Textual 20). Clearly, Scholes’s idea is pertinent to the texts within creative writing: made up
of those texts that are written and the responses or verbal suggestions of improvement to those texts. In making this assumption, I am merely changing what those texts are.

How can we avoid applying Scholes’s idea of the three elements, literary study, reading, and interpretation and criticism to creative writing? The difference between a class on literature and a class on creative writing is the texts read. Audience intercedes in all of Scholes’s three elements because the audience is what is doing the “producing.” He says that in “reading we produce text within text; in interpreting we produce text upon text; and in criticizing we produce text against text” (Scholes Textual 24). Some might say that the application of Scholes’s ideas suggest that creative writers need to have a solid grounding of interpretive skills in order to understand texts, but do they need those skills in order to write texts? I believe they do, especially as undergraduate writers who are still negotiating language and text and the way both function for readers. Scholes even speaks of criticism as “collective judgment,” suggesting groupings of certain audiences or cultures of which both the story or poem “depends upon and modifies” (Textual 33-5), echoing the idea that creative writing classes actually create their own cultures of criticism, taking on an identity solely unique to the class itself.

As a literary theorist, Robert Scholes engenders the compulsory and multiple complications placed upon texts from various audiences. While the application of Scholes’s ideas of audience in terms of an undergraduate creative writing class indicates the important function that readers have, Wayne Booth confronts the issue of fiction’s effect on the audience by studying the rhetorical nature of the genre of fiction. In his book, The Rhetoric of Fiction, he states in his Preface to the First Edition that his “subject is the technique of non-didactic fiction, viewed as the art of communicating with readers—the rhetorical
resources available to the writer of epic, novel, or short story as he tries, consciously or unconsciously, to impose his fictional world upon the reader.” Booth believes that “the ostensibly dramatic move is still rhetorical; it is dictated by the effort to help the reader grasp the work” (xiii). He admits that in his book he considers rhetoric as an “isolated technique,” and in examining it he is not taking into account the psychology of either the reader or author, nor is he considering the issues surrounding creative inspiration (Booth xiii-xiv). Given Booth’s parameters, his ideas apply to this dissertation simply in his assertion that fiction is rhetorical.

Booth acknowledges that he has “reduced the free and inexplicable processes of the creative imagination to the crafty calculations of commercial entertainers” (xiv) which resonates earlier critics’ warnings of pandering to an audience. However, the “question of the difference between artists who consciously calculate and artists who simply express themselves with no thought of affecting a reader is an important one, but it must be kept separate from the question of whether an author’s work, regardless of its source, communicates itself” (Booth xiv). What underpins Booth’s ideas is that an audience is present and the fictional plot must be communicated, making the writing rhetorical by its very nature.

Parsing out the terms referring to audience that Booth uses most frequently in his book reveals several arenas to explore within the creative writing class. His first chapter, “Telling and Showing,” which refers to the ubiquitous writing adage, “Show don’t tell,” implies audience; whether a writer tells or shows mandates that an audience be present. Applying this term to the undergraduate creative writing class exposes elements of audience pedagogy, which refer to readers without overtly teaching that they are there. Another
phrase that suggests audience is “point of view.” Booth frequently refers to it and explains that the narrator’s position in the text is important to the text’s communication. He reveals that the technique of point of view has contemporary conventions that were not followed in early fiction such as the *Decameron* (Booth 9).

Authorial intrusion or direct address to the reader is another issue Booth explores. His treatment of this type of writer interference can be categorized more as literary criticism than as a rhetorical technique, but what is valuable to the consideration of audience is that this technique is a critical issue. One can refer to many canonical books where the author presents him or herself to the audience, but Booth’s point is that the presence of the author is “evident to anyone who knows how to look for it.” Furthermore, “though the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear” (Booth 20). This again suggests that awareness of author is a part of the conscious reader’s interpretation. What this does is remind us that an audience or reader is continually aware that the author is present, further blurring the line of the distinction between audience awareness and what some call “pandering.”

But the author’s presence is not at issue here. What is at issue is that the author is aware of his or her reader’s presence because in this awareness comes an unarguable acknowledgment that there is someone on the other side of the text. The handling of this acknowledgment for the writer is the real issue, and the “author’s presence” is clearly another term useful in our understanding of how audience surfaces in the undergraduate creative writing classroom. Booth’s beginning chapters spend generous time fleshing out the position of the author and exploring how authorial intrusion may ruin fiction, but it again echoes the issue of showing not telling. According to Booth, if an author directly addresses
the reader, the author is telling (27-8). Still, if the author keeps distant, without allowing the reader to step away from the artistic experience, does the technique make the story less rhetorical?

Although it may vary with genre, the audience’s presence as a function within literary criticism seems to be unimportant (Booth 37-39) or perhaps unacknowledged, which is why Booth explores the topic. Given theories such as Marxism, Feminism, and even Structuralism that place importance on the reader and the reader’s experiences when studying texts, if one looks at the rhetorical aspects of fiction in terms of communication, the realm of literary criticism turns away from the reader. This eschewing of audience consideration as an element of literary criticism may in fact be partly responsible for apprehensions about outwardly teaching audience in creative writing.

Still, Booth’s theories reinforce the issue of audience and its importance when examining creative writing. Booth outlines three useful ideas that speak to the rhetorical elements of fiction and are applicable to understanding how audience influences creative writing. First, he considers the novel’s realism. Determining how realistic a novel is may be up to the reader, but this idea certainly acknowledges an audience and the amount in which it is willing to suspend disbelief. Second, Booth explores the author’s objectivity. Another characteristic of modern fiction, a general objectivity, is expected from authors, but looking at fiction rhetorically, Booth argues that this feat is virtually impossible. He says that deliberate positioning in what he considers three areas of objectivity “neutrality, impartiality, and impassibilité” (ital Booth 67-69) is in itself a deliberate and thus subjective position. Booth does not argue for brimming subjectivity from either the author or the implied author, but he suggests, “emotions and judgments of the implied author are […]
the very stuff out of which great fiction is made” (86). The third general rule about fiction that Booth confronts, the one that most directly speaks to audience, states, “true art ignores the audience” and “true artists write only for themselves.” Booth reminds us that not only is the author constructing a “second self,” but the writer also helps “mold the reader into the kind of person suited to appreciate such a character and the book he [sic] is writing” (89). Examining this issue rhetorically, and with the writing student in mind, eschews “this act of communication, fundamental to the very existence of literature […] True artists, we have been told again and again, take no thought of their readers. They write for themselves” (Booth 89). We are reminded of Carol Bly’s earlier excoriation of writers who consider audience—and Booth agrees that “there are good reasons” to condemn those who pander. He says “in every bit of hack work on the bestseller lists [there is] evidence of what happens to art when the audience’s demands are allowed to control what the artist does” (Booth 90); the issue of bestselling books versus literature, or novelists and “true novelists” sometimes comes down to the issue of audience. Rhetoric is simply not considered in true fiction or in the “pure poetic object” (Booth 90-1).

But Booth reminds us that Aristotle believed that poetry was written in order “to produce effects on audience,” such as emotion or feeling, but true rhetorical consideration would bear in mind different audiences and their varied characteristics (92-3). Not only are audiences varied, but their ephemerality, especially due to the permanence of literature, must be considered. For instance, “a woman lighting a cigarette, say, does not mean the same thing in a novel written in 1960 as she would have meant in a novel written in 1860,” nor does sexual freedom or promiscuity mean today what it meant in the early 1900s (Booth 113-114). Booth argues that the critical urge to make the author separate himself or herself
from the voice of the narrative makes the act of writing seem unnecessary. If a “poet … ‘should speak as little as possible in his own person’…why, then, speak at all?” (Booth 93).

Literary study is infused with ideas about audience that assume certain emotional reactions regardless of the reader. Booth gives the example of T.S. Eliot’s idea of the “objective correlative,” which insists that writers can assume that certain things or situations will cause certain emotions. Booth says that there are “dozens of different concepts of what is ‘natural,’” which he says “have been covered by this convenient notion of the object which correlates with the natural, inevitable response,” and that the author is charged with choosing the most appropriate “object” (97). But the question is whether the desire for certain reader reaction or human appeal compromises the purity of literature. “Plato sometimes argued,” Booth says, “that literature as a whole is bad precisely because it must depend on base human appeals” (99). Booth indicates that literary appeals to audience are, in fact, what makes literature great. He offers examples of these conventions, such as the choruses of Greek drama, the soliloquies and asides of Shakespeare, or the clear audience awareness of how authors choose their titles (Booth 99-101). The point is that the frequent presence of rhetoric within fiction, drama, and poetry is a deliberate acknowledgment to those on the other side of the text.

Audience awareness allows that story to proceed; “[e]ven the finest novelists often create scenes which on analysis seem unnecessary except as they aid the reader.” These scenes “are appropriate to their contexts, but the critic who tries to defend their author’s economy must refer to the audience’s needs rather than to any completion of necessary details in the ‘natural object’ (Booth 101). Henry James used “ficelles” to aid the reader “in dramatic form” in order to better grasp the story. James created these characters he called
ficelles for the sole purpose of aiding the reader (Booth 102). Still, Booth believes that the author’s motivations or thoughts while he or she is writing are essentially irrelevant, but the inherent idea that literature is expression suggests that not only is there one (the writer) who expresses, but also, Booth urges, there is one (the reader) who is impressed (105-06). Booth galvanizes this idea by extracting scenes from novels. In this exercise, Booth illustrates that certain scenes may not further the narrative of a story, but they exist exclusively for the reader in order for the reader to sympathize, understand, or identify with characters or situation (107-08).

Another useful idea of a rhetorical literary technique is the idea of “distance,” or what Booth calls “aesthetic distance.” This literary term is often used in the teaching of creative writing, not only the author’s distance from the subject, reader, or narrative, but also the reader’s distance from subject, emotion, or involvement. The idea of distance is defined as the area between one and another, but implicit in that rudimentary definition is “the other” or the reader. Booth argues that the notion of distance is a deliberate rhetorical decision made by the writer, and the distancing, when it works, is meant to control the reader’s involvement (121-25).

Distancing is in part controlled by the conventions of literature. Reader’s expectations are formed by the “rules” of literature. Whether it is authorial distance, narrative order, or poetic meter and form, conventions are instrumental in the way we both read and write literature. In one of the most interesting areas of Booth’s book, he discusses the ways in which authors and readers rely on the conventions of literature (127-28). These conventions become very important pedagogically in the teaching of creative writing. The rules of poetic form or the notions of the novelistic standards are impressed upon us as
readers and then confirmed in the study of literature. These audience expectations are, in part, how we define literature and are also vital in the way we judge literary texts. In other words, the existence of literary conventions imply that the audience can agree on the typical pace or development of say a mystery, epic, fairy tale, or the rules of poetic form, that the sonnet has 14 lines of iambic pentameter. But it is precisely when an author deviates from these norms that the reader is unsettled, surprised and thus the author praised. In fiction, playing with narrative conventions can make a novelist successful; in poetry, poets stray from conventional form in order to startle the reader where these deliberate choices are imbued with meaning and importance within its compact form. Therefore, a writer’s play with technical conventions in creative writing has, at its core, a sense of the reader.

Besides deviating from reader’s expectations, writers must decide when to challenge the reader’s sense of reality. When writing classes measure “believability” in writing, the obvious rhetorical element is undeniable. Getting readers to believe the narrative, the subject, the characters, the dialogue requires audience. Booth’s chapter, “Beliefs and the Reader,” transcends the simple question, “Is that possible?” Complicated by the author, the implied author, the reader, and the implied reader, the audience of literature is charged with accepting or rejecting the multiple layers of confidence. If we consider that the author has created the voice, the characters, the expectations, and the knowledge of what he or she wants the reader to know, then we see the intricacies of responsibility the audience must undertake (Booth 137-38). In acknowledging the numerous contracts that the author sets up for the reader, the rhetorical nature of any literary endeavor seems undeniable.

Believability in fiction is oftentimes dependent on what the author chooses as his or her point of view. Booth, however, considers that point of view is “[p]erhaps the most
overworked distinction” because whether it is first, third or second person, the choice is not important unless the choice is further examined in terms of dramatization, distance, omniscience, reliability, privilege, or other nuanced designations of what the narrator knows and reveals (150-65). Rhetorically, the distinction is relevant because although one could argue that point of view is a pure authorial choice, the point of view is only revealed in relation to the reader.

Booth further explores the idea of narrative reliability by exploring the motives behind the author’s choice. Booth argues that “commentary serve[s] the purpose of heightening the intensity with which the reader experiences particular moments in a book. Though techniques such as commentary may do other things as well, they are primarily justified by some service they perform in molding the reader’s judgment on one scale of values or another” (Booth 197). Booth smartly considers that narrative commentary is “a character who experiences the rhetoric in his own person […] Every adjective and detail intended to set our mood is a part of the growing mood and experience of the central character.” Booth believes that because of this other “character” the “rhetoric now seems functional, ‘intrinsic.’ It is no longer simply directed outward—as if it were a drug that could be injected into the spectator on his way into the theater” (202).

Besides these examples of outward appeals to the reader, Booth writes that there are oftentimes “secret” collaborations between the author and the reader. He refers to Mark Twain, Vladimir Nabokov, James Joyce, and Henry James as deliberately charging the reader with certain responsibilities in interpreting the story. Forcing the reader to work to discover hidden or subtle meaning or techniques may invoke criticism, but Booth argues that these readerly challenges are often what makes novels classic, or at least reread. Referring to
Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, Booth shows that the “communion” (300) between the author and the reader forms a sort of hidden understanding of, in this case, Jason’s bigotry and moral deficiencies. Booth argues that no commentary is needed—the author knows and the reader knows (306-07). “What all this amounts to is that on this moral level we discover a kind of collaboration which can be one of the most rewarding of all reading experiences. To collaborate with the author by providing the source of an allusion or by deciphering a pun is one thing. But to collaborate with him by providing mature moral judgment is a far more exhilarating sport” (Booth 307). These examples of external and subtle collaborations with audience illustrate the intrinsic rhetorical elements of poetic writing.

In Booth’s Afterword to the second edition, he redefines many of the rules he used to characterize novels in the earlier edition of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. But he does maintain that literature is a “glorious meeting of authors (of many kinds) and readers (of many kinds) in texts (of many kinds)” (Booth 403), and that “rhetorical inquiry is universally applicable, that no fiction can fail to yield interesting stuff when we look at it through this lens” (Booth 405). Admittedly, Booth uses the afterword to clarify distinctions within rhetoric, namely “rhetoric in fiction and fiction as rhetoric” (415). He defines the first type of rhetoric as “overt and recognizable,” such as direct commentary by the author, and the second, “fiction as rhetoric in ‘the larger sense, an aspect of the whole work viewed as a total act of communication’” (Booth 415). Still, as Booth reassesses his work, he does not deny that audience is an integral part of understanding literature.

Booth’s compelling look at audience in the examination of literature is furthered and contemporized by Marjorie Perloff. Her work is best used here as a contemporary look at audience in the new age of communication. In the texts I use, Perloff considers literary
criticism within Postmodernism. Her ideas are especially useful because they acknowledge the outside forces that act upon the reader, making the consumption of text an ever-changing experience.

The two texts I rely on to survey Marjorie Perloff’s work on poetics are *Differentials: Poetry, Poetics, Pedagogy* and *Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media*. Perloff’s work is respected in the scholarship on poetry, and she has a keen interest in the writing and teaching of contemporary poetry; thus, her work is germane to this dissertation. Exploring how Perloff treats audience in poetry reveals not only a vocabulary on rhetorical poetic inquiry, but also a method in which we might apply these terms and ideas to study the teaching of creative writing. Unlike Scholes and Booth, Perloff focuses her work on the unique realm of poetry. She explores how it differs from prose and drama and how the idea of poetry and poetics is complicated by the ancient definitions and distinctions between rhetoric and poetics, especially in our age of expedited communication.

The introduction to Perloff’s *Differentials: Poetry, Poetics, Pedagogy* shows the discrepancies between how Formalism or New Criticism and Post-structuralism treat writing, where New Criticism believes in one meaning and one interpretation versus Poststructuralism where endless meanings and understandings depend on the reader. As Booth points out, readers’ knowledge changes; what may seem like everyday references during the time of the writing become archaic allusions often not fully understood when read later. Perloff offers examples, such as William Carlos Williams’s references to “the ice-man and the fish-man,” who, during the early part of the twentieth century, were common household visitors, but now have decidedly different connotations (*Differentials* xiv). Perloff argues that poetry exists in its own space and that between language, history, voice and
As a way to unpack her ideas on how we read and experience poetry, Perloff examines literary studies and the humanities in order to understand how they evolved and exist in the new millennium. She traces poetics and its classification into four useful areas. The first offers a valuable definition for understanding how rhetoric and poetics enrich the study of all texts. Perloff writes that rhetoric “has gradually evolved from its earlier prescriptive character (the description of rhetorical devices and strategies necessary to teach, delight or move a given audience) to the more empirical study of what figures and devices actually are used in literary and nonliterary composition.” She explains, that [r]hetoric thus means primarily practical criticism—the examination of diction and syntax, rhythm and repetition, and the various figures of speech” (Perloff Differentials 6). Perloff argues that rhetoric is fundamental to literary study since “[n]o other discipline, after all, has as its central focus the issue as to how language actually works and what it does, whether in newspaper editorials or poems or the weather report” (Differentials 6).

Like rhetoric, poetry is also classified as a branch of philosophy. If this designation is true, then Perloff’s examination of rhetoric and poetics reveals the common significance of language and, more important, the ability of language to reveal truth (Differentials 6). Considering Booth’s earlier explanation of the novel as necessarily truthful, here Perloff also considers the judgment or effect texts have on their audience. Despite the expected truth within these texts, Perloff also reminds us that ancient poetics is considered an art (Differentials 7), which defies interpretation, and “to conceive of poetry as an art also implies that it is a form of discourse inherently other, that poetic language is to be
distinguished from ordinary speaking and writing” (*Differentials* ital 8). But many theorists have argued that there are more similarities between ordinary speech and poetics than some would be comfortable admitting (Perloff *Differentials* 8-9). This idea complicates discussion of audience, but it can still be explored in the realm of rhetoric. Wittgenstein, who also explored the relationship of philosophy, poetics, language, and truth, believes, “that a poem, although it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of giving information” (Perloff *Differentials* 9). Thus, expectations of audience as to whether language is truthful and informative constrain the possibilities of literary texts, or at least obscure interpretation of them. In other words, the complex understanding of language makes meaning for each reader much more indistinct. Translating texts is one way that the difficulty of interpreting texts is obvious. In her book, Perloff devotes an entire chapter to Wittgenstein and understanding translation. Beyond the obvious difficulties in translating poetry of various languages, audience and context are key in attempting accurate translation since the denotative meanings of ordinary words depend on them (Perloff *Differentials* 62-3). What this discussion means in terms of creative writing is that if rhetoric is, as Perloff defines it, a practical way to examine literature and language, specifically the literary techniques and style of language, then the particular attention a writer pays to language and the deliberate choices he or she makes are fortified by the attention the writer gives to audience.

Perloff then situates her ideas into specific attention to time and place. Her final area in categorizing poetics sees poetry as strictly “cultural production” (*Differentials* 9). Clearly, audience plays an important role in Perloff’s first categories, but cultural production has at its core a belief in the role of the people and time (think of Bitzer’s rhetorical situation) that
both produce and consume texts. But as Perloff points out, ignoring the first three categories
to embrace the fourth is foolhardy since cultural studies includes discussion of language,
truth, and art that are all part of and affected by the study of history and culture
(Differentials 9-10). Forgetting that poetry and fiction are invented texts is also answered by
poststructuralists and cultural studies scholars who believe that authors are unaware of how
their cultural environments construct their ideas. Furthermore, readers cannot trust their
interpretive abilities either since they too are shaped by their unique cultural experiences
(Perloff Differentials 12).

The importance of audience is clear if we consider Perloff’s ideas, and each part of
her taxonomy. Not only is audience important in Perloff’s theories, she places responsibility
on the audience saying “reading […] takes training” and that training should be applied to
any kind of reading without forgetting that texts are art and remembering Aristotle’s two
necessities for any type of art, “the pleasure of representation and the ‘pleasure of
recognition’” (Differentials 16-17). For each of these pleasures, someone must be witness.

In the last chapter of Differentials, Perloff discusses the complexity and the frequent
difficulties of doing scholarship in the area of literature, more specifically the areas between,
among, and overlapping the “critical” and the “creative.” The distinction that Perloff makes
to punctuate her book speaks to one of the underlying struggles of this dissertation; that is:
does theory have a place in creative writing? And more specifically, should theory about
audience, both literary and rhetorical, have a place in the pedagogy of creative writing? As
Perloff admits, some poets believe that the reader is the one who solely “constructs the text,”
and that “there is no one ‘right’ (and hence ‘wrong’) reading” (Differentials 265), but the
interplay between the creative and the theoretical, or the “creative to the critical” is a
“complexity of affiliation [and] demands ceaseless and uneasy negotiation” (Differentials 267).

The second of Marjorie Perloff’s books that speaks to this subject is Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media. In this book she confronts the issue of poetry and audience in terms of two relationships: high art and mass, or popular culture, and poetry and electronic culture (Radical xii-xiii). Perloff says, “What I want to suggest here is that, even as the ‘great divide’ between ‘high’ and ‘low’ breaks down, the discourses of art and the mass media are not merely exchangeable; rather theirs is a relationship of enormous variation and complexity” (Radical xiii). This relationship is reminiscent of Carol Bly’s earlier criticism of writers who write for mass culture. Perloff reminds us of the blurring lines of art and mass electronic culture. Perloff says that a poem cannot “exist in the United States today that has not been shaped by the electronic culture that has produced it” (Radical xiii). What does this have to do with audience? Rhetorically, audience is not only about the reader; it is about context, moment, and occasion. Perloff suggests that this age of media not only affects all of these kairotic characteristics, but also reminds us of how language has been altered by it.

Perloff calls upon terms such as authenticity and commodification, arguing that each has a new complexity in our electronic terrain. Each term also requires one (a reader, viewer, audience) on the other side of the art. Authenticity requires a judgment and “is itself no more than a relational term” (Radical 11). Likewise, commodification requires not only product, but also a value and a consumer. Perloff, in fact, argues that authenticity has become a commodity (Radical 19). But if we consider what Wayne Booth’s ideas about the natural object producing a natural response from audience are made impossible if the natural
or the authentic is both expected, and thus commodified, then, perhaps, nothing is unmediated. Perloff cites John Cage’s *Lecture on the Weather* suggesting that the experience of the performance “instead of defining community in terms of verbal images and metaphor [...] gradually transforms a skeptical audience [...] into a community” (*Radical* 26).

“Artifice, in this sense, is less a matter of ingenuity and manner, of elaboration and elegant subterfuge, than of the recognition that a poem [...] is a *made thing*—contrived, constructed, chosen—and that its reading is also a construction on the part of its audience” (*Radical* 27-8). Yet, is this recognition important to the audience? Should they be aware of their contribution to meaning? Or is the onus only upon the writer?

Language and the mediation of language again underpin Perloff’s ideas. She wonders what Eliot might consider as “common speech” in an age so rife with voices and noise (*Radical* 30-1). This issue once more echoes the complicated notion of the “natural object.” In both cases, terms such as common or natural must be agreed upon, and in an age of media and hypercommunication, these abstractions are impossible to define. Although most might not agree upon what is natural or what is common, Perloff believes that to challenge our current culture, poets should be writing about what they might define as common or everyday life. She argues that “authentic” speech might be displacing the evasive common language once sought by poets (*Radical* 41-42), even though she argued that authenticity has itself been commodified. Perloff cites Eliot’s attempts to “make one’s own self a representative self, how to make what happens to that self matter, at a moment when the media were manufacturing and packaging ‘selves’ by the hundreds and presenting them for our inspection” (*Radical* ital 43). In other words, Perloff admits that poetry is artifice, and yet there can be authenticity in both subject and voice. She believes, despite the
mediating forces that simulate and package any image, thing, or word that attempts to stand alone, the poet may define what is authentic. Perloff considers that this type of language is neither ordinary nor natural, but what she calls “radical artifice,” which “must be understood in the context of postmodern information systems” (*Radical* 186). In defining her term, she deems language as not referential or informative. It is responsible for “the receiver as well as the sender,” and “is not primarily concerned with accuracy […] but with issues of connotation, nuance, context, and the like—indeed, all the factors that determine to what a given word or phrase is taken to refer” (*Radical* 186-87). Perloff continues that the “meaning of a given message, in other words, includes not only information (the message actually sent) but whatever modifies that message, whatever references become relevant, in the course of transmission” (*Radical* 187).

The theorists of this chapter all either explicitly or implicitly consider audience in their ideas. The controversial Stanley Fish makes a suitable concluding scholar to this study of audience in creative writing pedagogy because the audience, or reader, is the keystone of Fish’s literary theories on text. In his book, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, he essentially places the obligation on the reader for what the text becomes or means. He writes that if “meaning is embedded in the text, the reader’s responsibilities are limited to the job of getting it out; but if meaning develops, and if it develops in a dynamic relationship with the reader’s expectations, projects, conclusions, judgments, and assumptions, these activities (the things the reader *does*) are not merely instrumental, or mechanical, but essential” (Fish 3). He replaces “What does this mean?” by “‘What does this do?’ […] equivocating between a reference to the action of the text on the reader and the actions performed by a reader as he negotiates […] the text” (Fish 3) and
echoing Perloff’s ideas that text is experienced, not read. Yet, unlike Perloff, Fish sees the
text as constant and unchanging, but allowing the reader the “joint responsibility for the
production of a meaning that was itself redefined as an event rather than an entity” (3); the
reader is making the text rather than finding it; readers are not responding “to the meaning”
the response “is the meaning” (3).

Fish extends this argument to allow readers to define or demark the rules of literature
and to define the particular idea of literature itself. In terms of the workshop setting, this
idea functions in a way that limits the experience of the writer, or at least sets parameters for
it. Fish says “the reader is identified not as a free agent, making literature in any old way,
but as a member of a community whose assumptions about literature determine the kind of
attention he pays and thus the kind of literature ‘he’ [sic] ‘makes’” (11). Thus, if we reflect
on the rhetorical identity, usually defined or molded by the workshop leader of the
undergraduate creative writing workshop, the audience becomes a homogenous entity that
has certain characteristics that may not represent the full breadth of the potential audience of
the text. In other words, writers in this type of workshop setting may not be aware of the
definitions they themselves are identifying for their text’s meaning. Consequently, the
“relationship between interpretation and text is thus reversed: interpretive strategies are not
put into execution after reading; they are the shape of reading, and because they are the
shape of reading, they give texts their shape, making them rather than, as is usually assumed,
 arising from them” (Fish 13).

These multiple layers of community and interpretation are further complicated when
applied to workshops. Fish says that the composition of interpretive communities is “made
up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading but for writing texts […] these
strategies exist prior to the act of reading” (14). So, these communities are not at all objective, especially in terms of the workshop environment. It is “a bundle of interests, of particular purposes and goals, its perspective is interested rather than neutral,” he continues, “but by the very same reasoning, the meanings and texts produced by an interpretive community are not subjective because they do not proceed from an isolated individual but from a public and conventional point of view” (Fish 14). Fish says that this accounts for the “stability of interpretation,” and we might extend that to a public interpretation, particularly in the writing workshop. A useful illustration of this type of community is when, in a writing workshop, certain genres of fiction or styles of poetry are favored over others as a direct result of the collective taste of the professor and class.

Identifying this underlying subjectivity would be useful in teaching creative writing. Fish reminds us that reading is an action, and it cannot take place without a reader, making the reader essential, “but curiously enough when it comes time to make analytical statements about the end product of reader (meaning or understanding), the reader is usually forgotten or ignored” (22). This deliberate lack of awareness of the reader is one many writing workshops support.

Still, there are objections to his over-generalizing theories. Fish believes that in determining the responses from readers, the interpretation of those responses go through the filter of the one interpreting. He believes that broad generalizations can be made: “If the speakers of a language share a system of rules that each of them has somehow internalized, understanding will, in some sense, be uniform; that is, it will proceed in terms of the system of rules all speakers share” (Fish 45). In a workshop setting, especially one of young, undergraduate writers, the answer to Fish’s question, “Who is the reader?” is not an easy
construction. Fish believes that some assumptions can be made and that the “informed reader” is “neither an abstraction nor an actual living reader, but a hybrid” (48-9).

Considering Fish’s definition of literature helps in understanding the importance he places upon the reader. He says literature is

the product of a way of reading, of a community agreement about what will count as literature, which leads the members of the community to pay a certain kind of attention and thereby create literature. Since that way of reading or paying attention is not eternally fixed but will vary with cultures and time, the nature of the literary institution and its relation to other institutions whose configurations are similarly made will be continually changing. (Fish 97-8)

And within an institutional setting such as a college, “interpretive activities are not free, but what constrains them are the understood practices and assumptions of the institution and not the rules and fixed meanings of a language system” (Fish 306). What underpins Fish’s ideas is that communication, whether it be from text to reader or person to person, “occurs within situations and that to be in a situation is already to be in possession of (or to be possessed by) a structure of assumptions, of practices understood to be relevant in relation to purposes and goals that are already in place.” He continues, “and it is within the assumption of these purposes and goals that any utterance is immediately heard” (ital Fish 318).

Conclusion

Among the many parallels surfacing in the study of audience within rhetorical and literary theory, four issues resonate either explicitly or implicitly in all of the theorists chosen here. The theorists may not agree on these issues, but they are repeated in both areas
of textual study. The first concern is the audience’s expectation of and necessity for the real
or authentic in terms of ideas and language. The second is the idea that there is a universal
reaction or natural appeal of certain words, images, or tropes. The third issue resonating
through all of the theorists is the idea that an audience experiences text; it is not static. The
fourth and final issue is that there is joint responsibility between writer and reader in the
exchange of text. These four areas provide the theoretical grounding on how to look at
audience within the undergraduate creative writing classroom.
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the role of audience in the undergraduate creative writing classroom. The two questions that motivate my research are

1. How do theories concerning audience emerge in the undergraduate creative writing classroom?
2. How might these theories be practiced and incorporated into the pedagogy of creative writing?

This chapter explains how I worked to answer those questions in a pilot study that applied concepts of audience to syllabi and textbooks used in undergraduate creative writing classes.

In brief, this pilot study applies theories that emerged in Chapter Three’s exploration of audience in rhetoric and composition and in literary theory to textbooks currently used in undergraduate creative writing classes and to a sampling of syllabi of introductory creative writing courses found with an online search. The “Methods” section later in the chapter indicates how I selected those materials and presents the set of terms with which I analyzed them. Since this analysis involves close reading of texts (as Chapter Three involved close reading of theoretical works), it will be useful first to explain the theory behind my reading of the texts of these particular undergraduate writing courses.

Theoretical Grounding of Methodology for Pilot Study

Given that creative writing classes are founded on the production of texts, studying the texts used to teach creative writing seems like a natural place to begin an analysis of a singular writing issue. If teachers are asking young writers to improve attention to language and craft, then those teachers should be expected to give the same attention when choosing
the course texts and writing the syllabi for the course. Likewise, this method of textual interpretation echoes the close, interpretive reading encouraged in writing and literature classes. Last, applying the scholarly analysis generally used to interpret artistic texts, hermeneutics, elevates the importance of the textual pedagogies used in the classroom.

My research is a two-layered hermeneutic study resting on a foundation that recognizes audience as a necessary element to any writing class. The study investigates a small sampling of texts from undergraduate creative writing classrooms. This analysis of texts draws on the definition of hermeneutics in Hans George Gadamer’s book, *Truth and Method*. Gadamer challenges the traditional understanding of hermeneutics that considers any work of art or, in this case, text, only in terms of its original purpose and occasion or only by its original audience. Gadamer extends this aesthetic definition, contending that art “must be conceived as part of the process of the coming into being of meaning, in which the significance of all statements—those of art and those of everything else that has been transmitted—is formed and made complete” (146). He eschews the original idea of hermeneutical study that attempts to uncover the original, and what it considers immutable, meaning of the text. The original meaning “seeks to reproduce the writer’s original words” (Gadamer 148). Instead, Gadamer employs Hegel to help refine notions of hermeneutics. He states that in attempting to understand art or texts, one must recognize that the “essential nature of the historical spirit does not consist in the restoration of the past,” it is best done with “thoughtful mediation with contemporary life” (Gadamer 150). The application of this definition of hermeneutics complicates the ways this dissertation examines texts from undergraduate creative writing classrooms because those texts are filtered through contemporary rhetorical and literary theory. In other words, the act of considering texts
through this conceptualization of hermeneutics maintains that audience and occasion are continuously changing entities, whether in my interpretation or in the interpretation of the person reading this study. In situating audience in such a way, this dissertation’s research opens a challenge to the students of the undergraduate creative writing classroom to also consider the hermeneutical understanding of the texts that they themselves produce.

Given the nature of this dissertation, which is a text dealing with texts that ask students to produce texts, it is important to recognize that the theoretical framework of this study applies directly to the dissertation itself and especially to Chapter Three. Woven throughout is the recognition that each opportunity for its interpretation is endlessly renegotiated because of the changing audience, whether it is the dissertation’s committee, graduate students, rhetoricians, literary theorists, or creative writing teachers. Consequently, any attempt to define “audience” for use in this dissertation would undermine the complex and theoretical nature of the term. My hope is that this dissertation’s audience considers the rich arena of this writerly issue, and how undergraduate creative writing classrooms manage it.

As shown in Chapter Three, the ideas regarding audience in literature and the writing classroom are supported by theories of scholars in the fields of literature and rhetoric. These ideas are used to unpack the ways in which audience surfaces within a sampling of texts from the undergraduate creative writing classroom. A full exploration of this conceptualization, however, would necessitate going beyond the texts alone. But for the purposes of this study, I only look at the singular texts of the syllabus and textbooks used. This emic approach borrows the terms and language of audience from the disciplines of composition and rhetoric (writing) and literary theory (reading), with the dissertation
illuminating how that specialized language of writing and reading defines itself in creative writing. The undergraduate creative writing class can be considered this dissertation’s hermeneutic circle concerning the writing issue of audience, by defining and situating parts (the theories of composition, rhetoric and literary theory) of the whole (the creative writing class). Thinking of the research in these terms identifies how these three disciplines’ similar language and theories can converge in a university’s creative writing class.

This theoretical approach to audience is supported in part by the ideas of Susan Miller, who says that “writing is a social and socialized action […] and] that its purposes are never limited to the purposes in a text, but include the purposes for a text as well” (79). She argues that the writing occasion and situation are immensely important in contemporary writing classes and that by theorizing writing as continuously contemporary, writers can better understand “readers’ expectations, requirements, and cultural or idiosyncratic prejudices” and account for both “intended and accidental readers” (Miller 79). Miller’s idea is key to understanding my approach not only where I examine theorists from rhetoric and literature, but also in how I look at current creative writing textbooks and syllabi.

Given the theoretical issues in this dissertation’s research, the approach is primarily qualitative, with analysis limited to the interpretation of documents in which I identify references to audience in the pilot study of Chapter Five. The analysis involves listing and defining those references in terms of the rhetorical and literary theories explained in Chapter Three. Conclusions draw on the synthesis of theories of creative writing pedagogy, rhetoric and writing, and literary theory. This synthesis is mediated by the ways I count and classify references to audience (See Table 1, p. 115).
Another theoretical undertone of my approach to examining audience might also be categorized as feminist. Patricia Sullivan contends that feminist criticism “is never simply criticism for its own sake”; it exists to be useful and “generate new knowledge” (49), and “the concept of dispassionate, disinterested inquiry has itself arisen from patriarchal ideology” (55). The very nature of suggesting that creative writing embrace more theory echoes the urging of female academics to embrace the male-constructed versions of what is important to know, how knowledge is organized, how knowledge is made (Sullivan 39). Theory is a gender-privileged enterprise, as Susan Miller reminds us (74). Failing to recognize this feature and limitation of theory, perhaps discounts one of the subconscious reasons creative writers resist it.

Additionally, the dissertation’s conclusions maintain a feminist stance that precludes a need to find objective answers to the dilemmas that this study explores. Lisa Ede writes in “Methods, Methodologies, and the Politics of Knowledge: Reflections and Speculations” that an important element of writing methodology and knowledge building is in “resist[ing…] a strong impulse toward pedagogical closure” (326). Ede admits her own struggle regarding theory and practice and suggests that building theory is essentially asking writing practitioners to practice theory by consistently problematizing their classroom. Ede quotes Jane Flax in enjoining writing teachers from “neat integration, new synthesis” and enacting “a possible approach […] that is self-reflective about its methods and the limitations of knowing and of reason as the basis for knowledge” (qtd. in “Methods” 327). This dissertation acknowledges the impossibility of closure in terms of a fully accurate count, identifying all references and intimations of audience; yet, even without the
satisfaction of closure, consideration of audience holds great pedagogical promise, especially in creating a sort of cognitive dissonance for nascent creative writers.

This idea of promoting critical thinking and self-reflection works on several levels within this dissertation. One, it challenges undergraduate writing teachers to look critically about how they, themselves, consider audience in terms of their own writing (both creative and curricular). Two, it asks them to consider if and how they teach audience in their creative writing classrooms. Three, it urges them to problematize the issue of audience for their students in creative writing. In all of these instances, I, too, am resisting tidy platitudes and closure; the assertion that theory is easily defined and determined is counter to the subjectivity of the multiple audiences of writing.

Methodology for the Pilot Study

Identifying Terms

As a first stage of the pilot study, I used the theory presented in Chapter Three to develop terms with which to study the texts of the undergraduate creative writing classroom. For example, some of the terms are

“Interpretive Community” (deriving from Fish)
“Aesthetic Distance” (deriving from Booth)
“Terministic Screens” (deriving from Burke)
“Consumers” (deriving from Scholes and Perloff)
“Reader-based” (deriving from Flower and Ede & Lunsford)

In addition to terms deriving from specific theorists, I also used a number of general or widely used terms, such as “Audience,” “Readership,” and “Situation” in order to garner
how creative writing teachers and textbook writers use and understand the terms. The full list of terms used in the pilot study is listed in Table 1 (p. 115 in the Data Analysis Methods sub-section of this chapter), an Audience Grid I developed for recording information while studying specific texts of creative writing pedagogy.

As the previous section discussed, the context in which these terms are used in the texts studied is identified by the underlying ways in which I interpret the context. Given this subjectivity, the research primarily highlights the most overt references to the outside reader and audience stated in the texts. Furthermore, the other uses of the terms were only counted and underscored when they were openly referring to the way in which this dissertation defines audience.

**Data Collection**

My collection of syllabi, assignments, and handouts occurred during the 2007/2008 school year. I began my search by looking only at those universities in the *AWP Official Guide to Writing Programs 11th edition* that were listed as having Undergraduate Majors in Writing (BAs or BFAs) of which, at the time of the Guide’s printing, there were eighty in the United States (some names are abbreviated for formatting):

- Alderson-Broaddus Coll. (WV)
- University of Arizona
- Arkansas Tech University
- Beloit College (WI)
- Bemidji State University (MN)
- Bloomsburg University (PA)
- Bowling Green State U. (OH)
- Brandeis University (MA)
- California College of the Arts
- Univ. of California, Riverside
- Univ. of California, San Diego
- Cardinal Stritch Univ. (MN)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carnegie Mellon Univ. (PA)</th>
<th>Keuka Collage (NY)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Missouri State Univ.</td>
<td>Knox College (IL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia College (IL)</td>
<td>Lakeland College (WI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia University (NY)</td>
<td>Linfield College (OR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converse College (SC)</td>
<td>Loras College (IA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dartmouth College (NH)</td>
<td>Loyola College (MD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drake University (IA)</td>
<td>Loyola Marymount Univ. (CA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Washington Univ.</td>
<td>Lycoming College (PA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eckerd College (FL)</td>
<td>Univ. of Maine, Farmington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elon University (NC)</td>
<td>Marquette University (WI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerson College (MA)</td>
<td>McMurry University (TX)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emory University (GA)</td>
<td>Millikin University (IL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Evansville (IN)</td>
<td>Minnesota State, Mankato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield University (CT)</td>
<td>Univ. of Nebraska, Omaha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairleigh Dickinson (NJ)</td>
<td>Univ. of NC, Wilmington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin &amp; Marshall (PA)</td>
<td>Northwestern University (IL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frostburg State Univ. (MD)</td>
<td>Oberlin College (OH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Southern University</td>
<td>University of Oklahoma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard University (DC)</td>
<td>Pacific University (OR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana University, Purdue</td>
<td>Penn State University, Erie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inst. Amer. Indian Arts (NM)</td>
<td>Univ. of Pittsburgh, Bradford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins (MD)</td>
<td>U. of Pittsburgh, Greensburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson State College (VT)</td>
<td>U. of Pittsburgh, Johnstown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The list above shows both large universities and small college represented from across the United States.

I searched each institution’s site using Boolean search methods with the words “creative writing syllabus” and “writing syllabus.” On the sites where there was an option of an advanced search, I also searched under the prompt of “at least one of the words,” entering “poetry,” “prose,” and “fiction.” To keep track of the syllabi, I used a grid with all the schools from the AWP list, their URLs, and the dates in which I accessed the sites (see Appendix). My results of this search were disappointing. Of the eighty sites that I searched, I yielded only eight usable syllabi. The ambition of whittling down the number of syllabi by categorizing if the course was required for the BFA degree or simply a general education offering was no longer necessary. The few syllabi collected were all the data found.

The original motivation to omit syllabi from institutions that did not offer bachelor of fine arts degrees in writing was due to the possibility that these institutions might offer creative writing classes that had undergone less rigorous curricular development than at
institutions that do offer BFAs. Given the few postings of syllabi and course material, however, ignoring this stipulation seemed the best option.

In order to generate more documents, I used the search engine, Google. Using a general Internet search provided a sampling of syllabi that were electronically posted. As discussed earlier, creative writing teachers tend to be apprehensive about admitting to a planned curriculum; consequently, those who post their pedagogical plans on the Web most likely believe that they have something to offer their field, a departure from what past creative writing pedagogy has described of the nature of these teachers. A more general search allowed me to access the syllabi that are posted for students (given that it is a public site). I used the “Advanced Search” function on Google, directing the search to find pages with the word “syllabus,” the exact phrase “creative writing,” and one or more of the following terms: survey, introduction, imaginative, fiction, and poetry. I excluded pages that contained the words “advanced,” “graduate,” or “master” and ones that were not written in English, not from the United States, nor on .edu sites. Syllabi dated prior to 2004 were excluded, as were syllabi with no discernible dates at all. Given that general search engines and the results they yield vary from day to day, I searched several times with these terms during late 2007 and early 2008. Despite the many hits, the search yielded only twenty-six usable syllabi.

This approach of sampling creative writing syllabi may not produce texts from the typical undergraduate creative writing classroom within higher education institutions in the U.S., but it does approximate the types of classrooms discussed here and reflect the work of faculty willing to post their curriculum on the Web. Neither in the Associated Writing Program list nor the general Web search, does the data distinguish between large and small
universities. Although there may be exceptions, typical creative writing classes are capped at a maximum number of students (usually less than twenty), whether at a college with 2000 students or a university with 250,000.

After collecting the twenty-six syllabi found electronically, I located the creative writing textbooks that the syllabi noted as required reading. Many of the classes used various reading packets, anthologies, literary journals, or single poem handouts, but the collected syllabi list a total of ten different creative writing textbooks, one of which is a publication from the U.K. Besides those texts listed on the syllabi, I collected fifteen other recent college creative writing textbooks, for a total of 25 textbooks:


*A Short Story: Writer’s Companion* by Tom Bailey, 2001

*Writing Poems* by Michelle Boisseau and Robert Wallace, 2004

*The Creative Process* by Carol Burke and Molly Best Tinsley, 1993

*Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft* by Janet Burroway, 2003


*The Eye of the Poet: Six Views on the Art and Craft of Poetry* edited by David Citino, 2002

*The College Handbook of Creative Writing* by Robert DeMaria, 2002

*In a Field of Words: A Creative Writing Text* by Sybil Estess and Janet McCann, 2003

*Room to Write: Daily Invitations to a Writer’s Life* by Bonni Goldberg, 1996

*Creative Writer’s Handbook* by Philip K. Jason and Allan B. Lefcowitz, 2005
Data Analysis Methods

Since the dissertation’s research questions focus on how audience appears in the undergraduate creative writing classroom, my approach uses the theories of audience within writing theory and literary theory and considers how audience emerges and is treated in creative writing pedagogy for the undergraduate student. In the document analysis, I employed the categories of scholarship established in Chapter Three to investigate the
pedagogy of creative writing, constructing a grid of key terms and ideas of audience that surfaced in the research. Table 1 (p. 115) shows an example of the Audience Grid used to examine each syllabus and each creative writing textbook found. Placing this Audience Grid against each text, in order to gauge if and how the terms designating or suggesting audience surface, allowed me to examine each text in terms of singular audience references while also looking at the context in which each was used and noting their place in the chapter or section.

The Audience Grid shown in Table 1 proved to be superfluous in quantifying the actual terms found in either the syllabi or the textbooks. Similarly, the original Audience Grid proved to be excessively specific given that the textbooks only contained mostly general mentions of audience and reader with several noted exceptions. In finding references to audience in the textbooks, the Audience Grid evolved into a tallying list for occurrences of the most general of audience terminology. Chapter Five presents the study’s complete results.

For each textbook, I thoroughly read all of the instructional sections, including quotations from other writers illustrating the section or chapter themes. To avoid a largely literary analysis I did not analyze the poems, stories, and essays that served as examples when the author of the textbook provided them, but I did read the textbook author’s remarks regarding each. Clearly, the creative works references to audience and reader function very differently than those references to the issue as a teaching term. Also, I did not look through any final chapters on publishing work, given that the premise of this dissertation is that beginning creative writers might not have the goal of publishing their work. Many of the
books, however, did include smaller sections within the middle of the texts that reviewed publishing or other public presentations of writing; those sections were not overlooked.

While counting the references to audience, mainly in the terms “audience,” “reader,” “readers,” “readership,” “public,” or “other,” I noted and copied excerpts and quotations from the texts when these terms were used. The cited quotations approximated the most general ways in which the authors used the terms. Making note of these uses allowed me to contextualize and analyze patterns in the references to audience. In order to process the references to a writer’s audience, I looked at the complete body of data and determined patterns and ways to categorize how the references were used. I found two major categories and several ways to classify within those two sections. Chapter Five reveals the detailed and text-supported taxonomy of the data collection.
Table 1: Audience Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reader/Readers/Reader’s Audience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive Community (Fish)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terministic Screens (Burke)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification (Burke)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetoric</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer based (Flower, Ede &amp; Lunsford)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader based (Flower, Ede &amp; Lunsford)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ficelles (Booth)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic distance (Booth)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market/Mass Market</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parameters & Limitations

There are several logistical and theoretical limitations to the methodology of this study. Not only can one argue that syllabi posted electronically are different than those that are not posted (assignments and course expectations are oftentimes unwritten and discussed in class), but also there may be differences between those instructors who use technology,
even in simple document exchange, and those who do not. Still, if the sampling were to have been solicited, the chances for a more guarded release of documents from instructors increase. Therefore, though the collection of sample syllabi is inexact, it does peek into how audience emerges in the undergraduate creative writing classroom, one of the goals of this dissertation.

In terms of textual analysis within the classroom, the review of creative writing textbooks might be a better indicator of if and how issues of audience surface. Although the collection of syllabi is small, the twenty-four creative writing textbooks offer a wide range of instructional choices. The textbooks I examined are those assigned by the syllabi, and most are current. All but seven were published or reissued since the year 2000, affirming the publishing house’s confidence in the text and its sales. Consequently, the selection of textbooks is a strong cross-section of books creative writing instructors use.

The parameters of the texts used are determined by the data found, but there are several theoretical limitations to the study as well. Notwithstanding the allusions or unwritten nods to the reader or audience of writing, the tallying and analysis of references is still a subjective exercise. Given that I am the sole audience interpreting the texts and the sole party applying multiple layers of theory, one should see that the very foundation of this dissertation’s approach is applicable to the writing and reading of the dissertation itself. In other words, this dissertation relies upon my reading of writing theory, my reading of literary theory, and my reading of the texts from the undergraduate classrooms; and then it relies upon the dissertation reader’s interpretation of my writing. These multiple subjectivities are indeed a limitation of any text, but are certainly worth mentioning in a dissertation whose purpose is to expose and examine these references. Acknowledging the
special audiences involved in this text again illustrates this recursive, complex and pedagogically rich issue, but also reminds us of the limits.

Another theoretical limitation of this research involves gender. While an important body of literature addresses gender in this area, this dissertation does not take into account the possibility of the differences between the writing, reading, or teaching practices of men and women. Particularly in the academy, as Patricia A. Sullivan argues in her essay about writing research, “Feminism and Methodology,” “men have largely determined what is important to know, how knowledge is organized, how knowledge is made” (39). Sullivan’s essay reminds us how powerfully gender can influence any study of writing or discourse. Not acknowledging gender issues is a limitation of this study, but the function of this dissertation is to address the preliminary step of whether audience is a salient topic for the creative writing classroom. Once these practices are more transparent, gender’s effect on the issue of audience may bear future scrutiny.

Besides the dissertation’s theoretical limitations, one major logistical methodological deficiency involves the lack of direct observation of undergraduate creative writing classrooms in the research. Such work goes beyond the resource constraints of this study since direct observation poses special methodological challenges. For example, direct observation and the analysis of it would only amplify the already subjective interpretation of references to audience. For similar resource constraints, I only collected the syllabi posted on the Web. Had I collected these artifacts through direct request, instructors may have more carefully selected the documents they shared.
**Toward Results and Conclusions**

Within the small pilot study, the decision to only use syllabi and textbooks to determine the importance of audience is deliberate. If audience plays an important and theoretical role in a teacher’s pedagogy, then naturally it will appear in the syllabi and textbooks used for the class. Perhaps by identifying this pedagogy and the multiple implications of audience and its surrounding topics, the dissertation might help define or refine the teaching of audience in creative writing, especially as it serves the unique needs of undergraduate students. Investigation into the specific functions of audience in terms of writing and reading may offer areas where creative writing might fortify its pedagogy to advance its unique classroom goals.

In Chapter Five, I present the results of my analysis of a sampling of syllabi and textbooks in light of theoretical concepts of audience from Chapter Three, revealing the way audience surfaced and the patterns of context in which it was used. Then in Chapter Six, I present conclusions from the study and sketch areas for future research suggested by my research.
CHAPTER FIVE: CLASSROOM TEXTS AND TEACHING IMPLICATIONS

This chapter reports the results of a pilot study of audience in two major kinds of “texts” of undergraduate creative writing instruction: syllabi of introductory courses and textbooks used in such courses. The study applied the ideas about audience summarized into the terms of the Audience Grid (Table 1, Chapter Four, p. 115) to a sample of twenty-seven syllabi and twenty-four textbooks in order to gauge what may be happening more broadly in creative writing classrooms. The research reported in this chapter suggests what instructors are assigning, what students are reading, and what role the audience plays in undergraduate creative writing instruction. The following section presents the very limited information about the place of audience in undergraduate creative writing syllabi. Later, the “Audience in Creative Writing Textbooks” section presents more extensive information about the role of audience and discusses the relationship of terms from the Audience Grid to the ways that undergraduate writers think critically about their writing in conjunction with those texts. Each section offers a quantitative look at how often these terms appear. Then my interpretation of these numbers and references reveals patterns of context and habits of understanding audience that are likely in similar classes.

One of the main issues of this analysis is the way in which the term “reader” and those words associated with it are examined. In discerning references to the reader, I did not count the use of first person “we” or “us” which is used in many of the textbooks. For example, the textbook *Writing Poems* by Michelle Boisseau and Robert Wallace takes the approach that the reader is the collective “we” or “us” and oftentimes the authors substitute the pronoun “we” with the more distant term “readers” or “audience.” In other words, the authors write as if the students are participating in the reading of the poems and collectively
discussing the strategies of each verse. Boisseau and Wallace speak of the poem’s readers as themselves or “we,” continually referring to what the poem does to “us” rather than what it might do to an outside party. For example, when discussing the poetic line, they say “[p]ause or delay creates only part of the effect […] paradoxically, we feel a slight speeding up [their ital] as the momentum of the interrupted phrase and sentence reasserts itself” (Boisseau and Wallace 86). They discuss more of what the poems do to “us,” rather than what they do to the reader or audience. Consequently, the research of this dissertation focused solely on the deliberate use of the term reader, readers, and audience and these words’ various forms, while the study purposely avoided any first person references to the immediate reader.

**Audience in Introductory Creative Writing Syllabi**

The initial search for syllabi on each college Web site of those who offer BAs or BFAs in creative writing yielded only eight documents. I found nineteen more looking through the general search engine Google that produced twenty-seven more syllabi. Of those syllabi, only eleven refer to readers. There were twenty-five separate references to terms meaning audience within those eleven syllabi. Ten of the references occur in two syllabi from Oberlin College (OH) and Linfield College (OR), both of whom grant BAs in Creative Writing. The other fifteen references are in nine other syllabi from my general Google search.

The process of carefully going over each syllabus revealed seventeen clear references to an audience other than those readers within the classroom. The other eight occurrences suggest the readers within the class, but the term can also refer to a larger public
Unsurprisingly, the more jargonized terms on the Audience Grid such as “identification,” “reader-based,” “aesthetic distance,” and others from Kenneth Burke, Stanley Fish, or Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford did not appear at all. Given the very limited number of references, the original Audience Grid was unneeded in order to gauge references to audience and the contexts in which they are used. Simply counting the references to audience or readers was adequate in gauging their use. Tables 2 and 3 below illustrate the references and indicate the instructors and schools from which the syllabi came.

**Table 2: Syllabi from institutions with Creative Writing bachelor degrees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Instructor/Class</th>
<th>References to Audience:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Oberlin College (OH)     | David Young, Creative Writing: Technique and Form in Poetry | • “What modern and contemporary poets do […] is crucial information for […] anyone who would read [poetry] intelligently” (1).  
• “Helps the reader hear how the poem moves” (2)  
• “Most readers will be unaware of the regularity that governs these poems” (3) |
| Linfield College (OR)    | Barbara Drake, Creative Writing Nonfiction | “the readers trust in” (1)  
“frisson that attracts the reader” (1)  
“make the readers vicarious experience so rich and immediate” (2)  
“Your reader should feel that you are the expert”(7)  
“convey your expertise and enthusiasm to your reader” (7)  
“speaks to a larger audience”(2)  
“Who is your audience?” (7) |
Table 3: Syllabi from institutions without creative writing bachelor degrees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Instructor/Class</th>
<th>References to Audience:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh</td>
<td>Paul Niesen, Intro. to Creative Writing</td>
<td>• “As readers, our job is to consider whether or not the subject and form ‘work’” (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California, Santa Cruz</td>
<td>Andrea Quaid, Creative Writing: Experiments in Fiction and Poetry</td>
<td>• “Dramatic Monologue” a first-person directly addressing the reader or audience” (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest College (WY)</td>
<td>Robert Stothart, Creative Writing: Poetry I</td>
<td>• “I find observations are much clearer […] when the readers initially don’t know the poet” (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California, Santa Cruz</td>
<td>J. Guevara, Intro. to Creative Writing</td>
<td>• “creates and contributes to the larger community of writers and readers” (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivet Nazarene College (IL)</td>
<td>Sue Williams, Creative Writing</td>
<td>• “create private and public writing” (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McPherson College (KA)</td>
<td>Bruce Clary, Creative Writing</td>
<td>• “Your story has relevance for public readers” (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Puget Sound (WA)</td>
<td>Beverly Conner, Introduction to Creative Writing</td>
<td>• “Becoming a better reader, a more experienced reader, is an important part of becoming a better writer” (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of La Verne (CA)</td>
<td>Kirsten Ogden, Intro. to Creative Writing</td>
<td>• “create art as we tell our tale to find meaning for ourselves as well as offering it to our readers” (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn State University, Hazleton</td>
<td>Jim Manis, Introduction to Creative Writing</td>
<td>• “Can you make this merging of autobiography and imagination appear seamless to the reader?” (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “What you can use as a basis for revision is how your readers respond to your work” (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “The purpose of this course is to […] introduce student writers to an audience of serious readers” (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Section called “Reader Response Format” (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “The format is nonpejorative; that is, it does not ask the reader to find ‘fault’ with a piece of writing” (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “The first questions that occurs to me is whether it is clear to all readers” (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tables show the various references to audience indicating an awareness of the outside reader. Still, there are few occurrences and even fewer that adequately treat the issues of audience, given the terms are limited to “reader,” “response,” “audience,” and “public.”
The use of only the most basic terms of audience should come as no surprise, given the predilection of some creative writing instructors who avoid academic jargon and overly theoretical terminology. It is worth noting that some of the syllabi’s required texts confirmed this belief. Several assigned textbooks openly expressed their evasion of academic literary language and theory. In *The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing*, David Morely admits that his frequent use of the phrase “teaching of writing” supports the fact that he is writing this basic book for, among others, new teachers of creative writing although he also lets the more academic term “pedagogy of writing” slip in (6); however, he still admits to avoiding anything that is overly academic. Notwithstanding Morely’s eschewing of a scholarly backdrop, he starts with an historic introduction of creative writing beginning with Aristotle, and the genesis of rhetorical practice and meaning. By defining rhetoric, “[s]peaking and writing […] as art […] the means to speak and write effectively to persuade an audience and bind a society” (17), Morely is evoking how this dissertation sees audience as a key to any type of writing. These rhetorically-based ideas are woven with what it means to teach creative writing, and despite the author’s continued reminder of the trouble with creative writing and literature classes, many of the books he suggests for further reading turn to literary criticism and books that promote theory. Quoting Morely serves to illustrate how theory, scholarship and rhetoric ground many of these textbooks even if they are below the surface. Similarly, Robert DeMaria, in *The College Handbook of Creative Writing* 3rd edition, writes a book about craft for young college writers, and from the outset he says he will not talk theory, but he still alludes to aspects of theory periodically throughout his textbook. He states in his introduction that he intended to write a handbook for college creative writing that “deals with the practical aspects of the craft,” directly saying that he
doesn’t discuss the “many fascinating subjects […] such as theories of reader response” (1). This practice of creative writing textbooks setting their parameters early harkens to earlier chapters in this dissertation where teachers of creative writing struggle with reconciling scholarly issues of theory when constructing ways to teach the writing of creative prose, poetry, and drama.

DeMaria’s reference to “fascinating subjects” like reader response, and the urge to attenuate consideration of theory, is interesting in light of Stanley Fish’s ideas about interpretive communities from Chapter Three. It should not be surprising that the creative writing classes themselves determine and constrain “the understood practices and assumptions of the institution and not the rules and fixed meanings” (Fish 306) of the vocabulary and peripheral foundations of theory used. In other words, the classes themselves via the instructor, the syllabi, and the textbooks determine how students should define writing and the various terms and ideas they will employ to talk about the writing of the classroom. This common language may be decidedly non-academic. In fact, one of the syllabi refers directly to this issue, admitting the subjectivity of commenting, and thus grading creative writing. The class takes on its own audience personality, usually reflected from the instructor’s preferences. Paul Niesen of the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, writes in his Summer 2007 syllabus for the Introduction to Creative Writing that the “tastes and opinions of your instructor […] invariably come into play” (2). Fish’s theory and Niesen’s example further support the examination of the instructors’ syllabi and assigned textbooks in order to measure and analyze references to audience.

Besides the class taking on the vocabulary and habits, whether academic or not, of the instructor, the textbooks required on the syllabi may also set the students’ expectations.
These textbooks should echo the voice of the instructor through his or her choice of what to assign. Morley, in the preface to his textbook, admits proudly that he “[tunes] out academic white noise” (xii). In his first chapter, he says, “One of the purposes of the academic discipline of creative writing is to demystify itself without falsifying its intricacy” (Morley 5). Again, here is an example of a textbook writer who on the one hand purports to avoid academic “white noise” in order to elucidate creative writing without simplifying it, but on the other alludes to historical and theoretical ideas that inform his ideas. This example provides a reason that most of the terms on the Audience Grid were unnecessary. The vocabulary for audience in both the syllabi and textbooks did not seem to depart from the most basic and general terms for the reader. This dissertation argues that this intentional avoidance of theory undermines the possibilities for critical thinking, and the intricacy of creative writing can only be served by exploration of its many, complex facets.

Besides promoting a non-academic tone, another undercurrent to most of the syllabi is the emphasis on reading literature and contemporary creative writing. The majority of syllabi directly state that becoming a strong and frequent reader of fiction, poetry, and drama will make writers stronger. Most of the syllabi that went into the specific requirements or learning objectives of the course did stress community, response to others’ work, and revision—all elements of and references to audience—but none of the syllabi clearly stated recognition of audience as a writing issue central to the course. But embracing a non-academic tone, Robert Scholes would agree, is avoiding a key critical element in the examination of writing, that “every poem, play and story is a text related to others” and a creative writing student’s “response to a text is itself always a text” (Textual 20). This complication and added critical layer of textual examination is key to understanding the
multiple layers of audience. It is evident in the few numbers of audience references in the syllabi collected that undergraduate creative writing classrooms avoid it.

Looking at this lack of reference to audience reminds us of the obstacle of examining texts that deal with the examination of texts while using a text to explain it all. Not forgetting that Kenneth Burke says that the form of a text, in this case a syllabus, causes the reader to “grasp the trend of the form,” and if that trend is to avoid highlighting critical concepts, then the “participation” and expectations of the reader is therefore set (Rhetoric 57-58). Keeping the expectations of Burke in mind, this reader takes her participation and expectations of the texts (even if they are beneath the surface) into the examination of creative writing textbooks.

**Audience in Creative Writing Textbooks**

As Burke’s words suggest, what was most difficult about analyzing the sample of twenty-four textbooks was divorcing any discussion about writing from audience. Given that audience is the topic of this dissertation and fundamental to the research, it is easy to perceive audience in every facet of writing discussion. The aim was to count only references to audience or reader that clearly point to an outside party, not the readers within the workshop, the teacher, or the writer. The process seemed inexact because often the references to the reader suggested the workshop, but with a nod to a future, more general outside reader. For example, what is the real difference between a textbook that says “Your choice will result in confusion” and “Your choice might make the reader feel confused about your story’s direction”? Both sentences refer to confusion for the reader, one assumed and one overtly. In these books, audience is clearly a subtext. If Janet Burroway in her book
Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft writes “[o]ne part of the purpose of an essay will always be to inform or teach,” (249), what is the difference if one adds “the reader” to the end of that sentence?

Despite the difficulty of objectivity, textbooks were examined in their entirety even though the instructor may not be assigning every chapter of the book. Nevertheless, exploring audience within the totality of these texts does indicate whether it is an issue that the writers of the textbooks, and thus the publishers, deem worth discussing. Like the syllabi, the textbooks often approach audience broadly and not in the terms on the Audience Grid, but based on my pilot study, these authors (and the publishers of their texts) see audience as a considerably more important matter for beginning creative writing students than it appeared to be in the sample syllabi.

Still, only one of the texts had a chapter devoted entirely to audience. In David Citino’s edited collection, The Eye of the Poet: Six Views on the Art and Craft of Poetry, is a chapter written by Maxine Kumin entitled “Audience.” Rather than being a critical analysis of audience in the vein of how this dissertation sees it, Kumin’s essay is primarily about herself as part of the audience at poetry readings, and the recounting of her own early readings to a live audience. She also discusses the various strategies of reading to an audience such as choosing whether to stand or sit, selecting poems, and logistics such as sound and room size. The essay goes on to discuss audience in terms of who is reading and publishing it, and how slam poetry and technology have widened poetry’s audience. Kumin opposes poets claiming to write “only for themselves.” Kumin denounces them as unprofessional and disingenuous because often they will pay to get their poems published by vanity presses (Citino 167): “Such views distance poetry farther from its potential audience,
giving it an aura of pretentiousness and exclusivity” (Citino 168). Kumin’s discussion of audience is not overtly a discussion of the writerly issue, but it does bring up some topics that weave into how a writer might consider an audience on the outside of his or her text; Kumin’s essay also talks about craft and audience and how each affects the other. Although none of the texts have dedicated chapters on audience as a writerly term, there are sections that promote or suggest audience as central.

One noticeable trend of the audience issue is that creative writing texts tend to speak of “the reader” as a sole entity rather than as a collection of readers as both rhetoric and composition and literary theory do. This inconsistency is illustrated often by the textbooks’ authors writing of the “contract” one has with his or her reader. In a chapter about point of view from Janet Burroway’s book, *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, she says that the choice the writer makes is “a contract [that] has been made between the author and the reader, and this contract must not now be broken” (258). The idea of a contract, although referring to an outside party, suggests a sole contractual agreement with one person rather than the more abstract notion of possible general audiences. The discrepancy between a singular reader and an audience reduces the complexity of the issue. Granted, the writer is thinking of a reader, but a single contract with a single reader does not account for multiple audiences in assorted circumstances and occasions. Whether references are to a single reader or multiple readers, the references are not often pronounced. Still, in several of the textbooks, the reader is mentioned as the center of the motivation to write. Following are several examples of how the writers of these textbooks urge the students of creative writing not to forget their audience.
Morley’s *The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing* makes it very clear in the first chapter that “readers participate,” that writing “require[s] a vocation of trust between the writer and reader” (3), that there is a “dual citizenship: writers-as-reader, reader-as-writer” (7), and that readers “become, partly, writers […] tak[ing] part, consciously and unconsciously, in a literary creation […] while they are reading” (2). Morley continues, saying, “Whatever your approach to the content of writing, you may find yourself serving an audience,” (15), but he quickly says that writers should first serve themselves. He quotes Robert Frost, “No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader. No surprise for the writer, no surprise for the reader” (Morley 15), illustrating that the writer must have the first emotional response in order to potentially elicit response from an audience.

*The Creative Process* by Carol Burke and Molly Best Tinsley also asserts the importance of audience. They offer three writing commandments in their first chapter. “Write” is first on the list and “read” is third, but surprisingly what comes second is “Don’t forget your audience [their ital] […]No matter how attractive we may find the image of the alienated artist, contemptuous of the misunderstanding masses, we write for others as well as for ourselves. Deny it as we might, we write because we want to go public” (Burke and Tinsley 4). Juxtaposing Burke and Tinsley’s ideas with Lloyd Bitzer’s theories that imaginative writing and writing that is produced for imaginative situations is not rhetorical, students may better critically analyze their motivations to write and what it means to write for a creative writing classroom. Here, the examination of theory may help determine how “real” the situation of writing poetry or prose for a certain classroom is as opposed to Burke and Tinsley’s idea of going public.
In their final chapter, on the creative non-fiction form, “The Essay,” Burke and Tinsley have a section called “Audience.” It starts,

> to emphasize the issue of authority in the essay is to acknowledge the power of the *audience* [their ital] that grants it. Sometimes the essayist plays protagonist to an antagonistic audience, or vice versa. At other times, a sense of audience hovers in the back of the essayist’s mind as he or she writing […] But always audience exerts its influence as something the essay must not only identify but also shape and change. (164)

Audience comes up in this section on essays because, as Burke and Tinsley argue, unlike the fiction or poetry writer, the essayist claims expertise and has more of a role to teach, influence, or move the audience (164). In the exercise for this section, it says “the audience you assume influences many of your technical choices: style, tone, and selection and deployment of detail.” It asks the writer to revise for a different readership who varies in expertise on the subject, age, gender, and several other scenarios (166-67). Authority (ethos), transitions, and thesis are also part of this section, revealing three other elements related to audience consideration and issues normally discussed in composition theory and rhetorical studies.

Other books also promote the importance of audience. The most recent of all the textbooks analyzed for this dissertation is Heather Sellers’ *The Practice of Creative Writing: A Guide for Students*. In the “Preface for Instructors,” Sellers writes “Student writers have to learn to shift from focusing on the *self* to focusing on the *reader* [her ital]. The reader’s experience of the text is what counts. Creative writing isn’t ‘personal expression’” (vii). She says that the prompts and checklists in her textbook are to “encourage higher levels of reader
awareness” (viii). Later in the first chapter she, again, reminds the students “It’s about your reader. You are a sort of middle-person, a channel” (Sellers 26). Likewise, Janet Burroway, in *Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft*, puts audience at the forefront of her text. In the introduction, what Burroway calls the “Invitation to the Writer,” she says, “You started learning to write—at the latest—as soon as you were born. You learned within hours to recognize an ‘audience,’ and within a few days that expressing yourself would elicit a response” (*Imaginative* xxi). Both Sellers and Burroway place a clear importance on recognizing and acknowledging audience.

Despite the examples of the textbooks where audience is emphasized, most of the references to the reader and audience seemed incidental. In the twenty-four textbooks, there are

- 1,522 references to “reader” (singular, plural, or possessive)
- 315 references to “audience”
- 11 references to the “public”
- 8 references to a “readership”
- 6 references to the “other” and
- 2 references to the “market.”

Figure 1 shows each author, book, and the corresponding references and totals within each.
## Figure 1: Textbook References to Audience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors/Editors</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Reader/s</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Readership</th>
<th>“Other”</th>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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<td>Poet’s Companion</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>73</td>
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**TOTALS** 1523 315 11 8 6 2 1865
The numbers show 1,865 references to audience in the twenty-four textbooks. Looking at the texts more closely helps to contextualize the occurrences of these terms. Only eight of the books made references to other readers by using the terms “public,” “market,” “readership,” or “other” with one book using the term “addressee.”

The texts analyzed vary greatly in their structure and content. Some are unquestionably written for classroom use where the format follows the convention of most textbooks: content, examples and exercises. A few of the texts studied use highly technical literary terms, such as poetic scansion and plot devices or jargon-filled definitions of literary issues. Still, others admittedly eschew any academic ease, providing a more casual discussion of writing. Finally, some of these books used as texts for undergraduate creative writing classes are simply writing exercises or meditations on writing most likely written for a more general audience.

Another broad trend in the tallying, the books and sections of books that discuss prose, fiction, or non-fiction generally have more references to the terms “readers,” and the few sections within the books that review writing drama refer more to “audience.” The sections and books that discuss poetry then have the least number of references to an outside reader. Of the twenty-four books, five of them discuss only poetry; five discuss only prose, and fourteen are either general creative writing textbooks or discuss two or more of the typical creative writing genres (poetry, fiction/nonfiction, and drama). The five poetry books have 156 references to reader and audience compared to the five books on prose writing with 536 references. The chapters on fiction and poetry within each of the multiple genre books follow a similar trend in references to audience.
Analyzing these textbooks yielded some patterns from the data. From the sample of quotations where audience or readers are referenced and from the contexts in which the terms are used, I was able to categorize the general trends of the creative writing textbooks’ treatment of audience. I discovered two distinct categories of references to the reader: the writer’s responsibilities to the audience and the reader’s responsibilities as the audience. This trend harkens to Scott Consigny and Richard Young who suggest not only is the rhetor or writer responsible for the written form, “it is the audience’s onus to interpret and unify” (179). Walter Ong furthers this dual burden by saying that both parties must fictionalize one another (12) to successfully form a collaboration to give the text meaning. In understanding the references to audience and the reader, an interesting distinction emerges that is confirmed both by the theories from Chapter Three and the trends of the textbooks: although writing is mainly the responsibility of the writer, the reader has definite responsibilities as well. This discernible dichotomy in the textbooks shows the interplay between writer and audience, with one affecting the other in multiple ways, and both having a stake in the writing of texts whether prose, poetry, or drama. Moreover, the division is one that is frequently mentioned in Chapter Three’s theory, whether it is Consigny and Young, Ong, Booth’s “secret” collaborations and the “glorious meeting of authors […] and readers” (403), or Stanley Fish’s fundamental requirement of the reader’s responsibility for meaning.

When I considered the textbooks’ lengths, two of the books stand out on the chart with the most references to audience: Heather Sellers’ text from 2008, *The Practice of Creative Writing: A Guide for Students*, a 412 page book, and Jerome Stern’s 1991 book, *Making Shapely Fiction*, which has 270 pages. It is no surprise that Sellers, who admits in her introduction that creative writing is “for the reader, and it exists to activate her feelings,
her emotions” (ital Sellers vii) has so many allusions to the reader. Stern’s book, on the other hand, makes no overt introductory pledge to the issue of audience, but unlike any other book, he mentions the reader consistently in almost every section of the text. For example, in a chapter called “From Accuracy to Zigzag,” Stern writes, “The longer it takes to read the book, the more readers need to feel empathy, sympathy, and curiosity about your character […] your readers have to care [his ital] […] If your hero character […] is psychologically attractive […] readers will side with her […] Readers are drawn to energy.” He writes later on the same page, “[y]our other characters make their entrances and exits, but your hero is with those readers chapter after chapter. Readers must feel that they are always learning more about her” (Stern 140). Much of his book reads the same way with the reader woven in as a central part of his advice about decisions in writing. Later in Stern’s book, he sums up his feelings about fiction and the reader by asserting, “I would say this: A story is what happens to the reader” (his ital 217).

Whether overt as in the books by Sellers and Stern or incidental as in the other books, audience is a topic within the majority of these textbooks. Even if the reader is simply assumed, the majority of these textbooks make clear that the writer’s choices affect the way in which the writing is read, spreading responsibility to both parties of the text exchange, and thus supporting the two main categories of Writer Responsibility and Reader Responsibility that the text analysis uncovered. Under the writer’s responsibilities, six areas emerged where the terms audience and reader surfaced: Genre, “Show a Good Story” (a blending of the writerly adages of “Show, don’t tell,” and “Tell a good story”), Point of View, Literary Techniques, Revision, and Usage. These general areas indicate trends in which audience surfaced more overtly in the discussions of writerly craft.
Still, some of the textbook authors make it clear that even if writers do not admit it, they are writing for readers. Again, in the Sellers’ book, she iterates her central idea that creative writing is for the reader, not for the writer. Sellers tells the student writer that creative writing is “very different from the writing you do just for yourself […] It’s about crafting language—words on a page—so that a reader (a stranger!) will have a specific kind of emotional experience […] Creative writing is essentially a service industry” (4). Nevertheless, it is not all up to the writer, as any rhetorician would say. Although these textbooks’ audiences are not simply passive readers, they are, after all, reading the textbooks in order to learn how to write; the texts often remind writers that the readers have responsibilities, too. The areas that emerged during the text analysis where the reader/audience is clearly responsible were Common Knowledge, Believe-ability, and Sensory Response.

Certainly, all of these areas of writer and reader responsibility commingle, as many issues of audience do, but what is interesting is that the texts state that the reader is not passive, and brings certain knowledge, emotion, and human reaction to the text. The textbooks make clear that the writer should be aware of this. Following is an explanation for each of the categories of Writer Responsibility (Genre, Show a Good Story, Point of View, Literary Techniques, Revision, and Usage) and Reader Responsibility (Common Knowledge, Believe-ability, and Sensory Response) with examples that approximate the general tenor of the textbooks’ attitude toward each of these issues. After discussing and providing examples for each category, I relate the ideas to the theories built in Chapter Three.
Dimensions of Audience in Creative Writing Textbooks: Writer Responsibility

Creative writing textbooks are written in order to teach a person how to write creatively. Assuming the writing is for someone else, even if only the instructor or students in the classroom, the books imply, whether overtly or surreptitiously, that the writer has certain responsibilities to the reader. For example, Bonni Goldberg’s *Room to Write: Daily Invitations to a Writer’s Life*, refers to the reader in terms of what the writing can do to him or her. Whether engaging, cajoling, or affecting, the language of Goldberg’s book is primarily about how a writer can make a reader feel. Only two instances in the book look at the reader differently. One is an exercise in revision where the writer is asked to look at the writing “from the reader’s perspective” (Goldberg 81). And the second instance is where the writer is envisioning the audience and is asked to articulate who that audience is; in this exercise it is an audience of one (Goldberg 161). Similarly, the textbook, *Metro: Journeys in Writing Creatively*, by Hans Ostrom, Wendy Bishop, and Katharine Haake also includes an exercise in a chapter about language that says, “consider audience—write a letter that tells this story. The first audience is your parents. The second audience is a lover who is at a distance. The third audience is a young cousin who asks you about life. The fourth audience is a magazine that wants your view” (162). The examples where the writer is asked to envision and occupy different types of audience are infrequent within these textbooks, but these shifts in perspectives indicate that the choices a writer makes are affected by imagining various audiences. Besides imagining audience in order to better understand them, Wayne Booth argues that the writer “mold[s] the reader” to value the writing (89). As a result, the writer has certain responsibilities to the reader in order to fulfill his or her expectations. In analyzing a sampling of quotations and contexts that refer to audience, these
textbooks make evident seven general areas where audience plays a key role in the writer’s decisions.

**Writer Responsibility: Genre**

The first area pointing to audience is how the writer’s choice of genre affects the reader. Genre, in this discussion, is both the genre of prose, drama, or poetry and the genres within those types of writing, such as romances or thrillers in fiction, comedies or tragedies in drama, and even the “genres” of poetry, formal verse or free verse. In Chapter Three of this dissertation, Booth clarifies that both writers and readers depend on the conventions of literature (127-28), especially in the conventions that a writer’s genre may require. The expectations of readers through a genre’s conventions are the ways in which literature is defined. Clearly, the reader’s expectations for how a mystery might unfold are different from those expectations of the science fiction genre, for instance. The undergraduate creative writing textbooks surveyed for this dissertation discuss genre in fiction and prose a bit more thoroughly than those teaching poetry. Still, even in the poetry textbooks, the “genre” or form of the poem creates expectations in the reader. For example, readers of poetry expect different things from a sonnet than they do from Language or concrete poetry. David Citino’s edited collection, *The Eye of the Poet: Six Views on the Art and Craft of Poetry*, includes an essay by David Baker and Ann Townsend where they provide examples of rhetorical structures in poems that are sometimes defined by the form of the poem. They argue that “[a]ll poems are rhetorical constructions. Sometimes people don’t want to acknowledge that fact, preferring to see poems as pure, untainted by the more coercive designs of language,” but Baker and Townsend say “a poem wants to give you some kinds of power […] make no mistake: All language argues, whether overtly or under cover”
(Citino 101). Whether in poetry, prose, or drama, genre choice affects the reader and the rhetorical nature of the work.

The ways in which prose writers tell stories affects readers’ understanding in different and perhaps more varied ways than through verse. Still, more than poetry or prose, predictably the term “audience” is used much more regularly in the genre of drama. Playwriting clearly has a more pronounced link to audience. In DeMaria’s *The College Handbook of Creative Writing*, his chapter “The Performance Factor: Plays and Film Scripts” deals much more directly with audience than any other text reviewed here. In the chapter, he discusses various script possibilities and how the possible mediums affect the audience, and thus the way the writer should write. DeMaria says, “these work-and-viewer differences have to be taken into account by the writer” (305), and then he remarks how screenplays and television scripts differ because they “have no interaction between players and audience” (315), urging the writer to be constantly aware of this disparity. DeMaria argues that viewers actually want to view movies communally, they want the “collective experience” (315). Despite how technology has changed things, “there may not be any interaction between the audience and screen, but there is certainly audience reaction [his italic] to the fantastic things that can be done on a flat surface” (DeMaria 316).

By recalling Walter Ong’s ideas about the important interplay between writer and reader, the idea of a writer’s responsibility in choosing genre thrusts the reader into “the role in which the author has cast him” (12). Ong believes that genre consideration places responsibilities on the reader as well as the writer, given that the reader brings knowledge of these conventions and with his or her knowledge must help the writer fulfill the expectations in reading the text by anticipating the customary rules of the genre. The choice of genre is
clearly important in terms of how audience affects writing, but most of the textbooks argue
that regardless of genre, in order to keep a reader’s attention, the writer must write a good
story.

**Writer Responsibility: Show a Good Story**

The second area that emerges from the research is the conflation of the textbook’s
frequent advice to “Tell a good story” and “Show, don’t tell.” The books often advocate that
telling a good story is the first and most important step of captivating a reader, but that the
ability to show a good story is a much better categorization of this area. Just as *The Creative
Process* by Carol Burke and Molly Best Tinsley has a chapter called “Showing versus
Telling” with many references to readers (65-67), Jeff Knorr and Tim Schell in their book,
*Mooring Against the Tide: Writing Fiction and Poetry* write about telling a good story to
one’s reader in their chapter about theme in fiction. They say, “Remember that writing
fiction is creating a subtle art of experiential participation: The reader is to walk in the shoes
of your characters, go where they go, see what they see, do what they do, and through this
vicarious action the reader should be allowed to proceed unfettered by your overt
manipulation.” They argue that concern for the reader is not necessary. “So, keep your hands
off the readers. Leave them alone. Don’t worry about theme. Just tell a good story and theme
will take care of itself” (Knorr and Schell 231-32). Another example is *Steering the Craft:
Exercise and Discussions on Story Writing for the Lone Navigator or the Mutinous Crew* by
Ursala Le Guin who says that the writer’s choices affect the reader, “the basic function of
the narrative sentence is to keep the story going and keep the reader going with it” (39).
The sentiment of captivating the reader is also echoed by DeMaria who says that the narrative must “hold the interest of the reader,” “heighten the reader’s curiosity” (79), “capture the reader’s attention,” and should not “confuse or bore [the] reader” (80). All decisions of narrative affect the reader. This sentiment resonates in Janet Burroway’s *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, with a quote by Kurt Vonnegut in the beginning of her second chapter. It says, “A story has to be a good date, because the reader can stop at any time […] Remember, readers are selfish and have no compulsion to be decent about anything” (qtd. in *Writing Fiction* 31). This quotation is at the heart of the way most of the writers of textbooks view the reader, as one to keep rapt. DeMaria complicates this idea of a good story by bringing in both genre and the issue of high versus low art. He brings up the idea of creating reaction in the reader without differentiating between various types of literary works, saying “[t]rivial literary entertainments such as thrillers and romances and television dramas, however, cannot be dismissed with contempt.” He argues that “[t]hey have a role to play in the lives of many people […] Their aim is to thrill, chill and titillate” (DeMaria 20). In short, DeMaria is arguing that telling a good story is a key of strong writing because a good story will attract readers.

Reflecting on this category in terms of theory, Wayne Booth, in his first chapter “Telling and Showing” discusses this issue in regards to authorial distance and how that distance impacts the rhetoric of writing a story. He wonders if “telling” is more rhetorical than “showing” a story to a reader, but as the creative textbook writers claim the result is the same, to propel an interesting story forward, deciding which is more rhetorical might enhance the importance of this distinction. If we reflect on Knorr and Schell’s urging for the writer to avoid overtly manipulating the reader, while we consider how showing and telling
a good narrative can persuade, then the writer’s responsibility to the reader is clearly rhetorical. Persuading the reader to move forward, turn pages, read on, or keep listening and watching is at least one of the writer’s main goals.

**Writer Responsibility: Point of View**

Besides the approach of good story telling (or showing), a frequent subject within all of these textbooks is point of view. As explained earlier, theorist Wayne Booth devotes much time to authorial position (which includes point of view) and the critical and rhetorical implications of it. This third area implying audience is also discussed in the majority of the textbooks with many having entire chapters devoted to it. In most cases, these chapters show that the writerly choice of point of view has important implications for the reader.

Valerie Vogrin, a contributor to *The Gotham Writers’ Workshop: Writing Fiction* edited by Alexander Steele, writes on point of view. The term “reader” comes up frequently in her chapter. She says, point of view “tells the reader what kind of story he is reading. Break this contract and you risk losing the reader’s trust in you. Thereafter the story will never feel quite ‘real’ to the reader. You will distract the reader from the smooth red-carpet-like unfolding of your story” (Steele 100). Janet Burroway also avers the importance of this writerly choice and that in “choosing a point of view, the author implies an identity not only for the teller of the tale, but also for the audience” (*Writing Fiction* 263); situating the voice of the story determines the authority of the writer and thus the position of the reader. As Booth says, these vantage points may contribute to the rhetorical nature of the narrative, a critical element worth discussing in any writing class.
In drama, DeMaria says that point of view “is defined by the simple relationship between audience and play” (94). Point of view is overtly about what the readers or audience knows and, just as importantly, what they do not know. For example, in referring to specific writing strategies, DeMaria frequently discusses “what the reader should know,” “how much the reader should know” (47-8), or what the writer will leave to the imagination of the reader (51). This idea is akin the Henry James’s “ficelles” discussed in Chapter Three; Wayne Booth explains that this technique and its sole purpose is to help the reader better understand the narrative (102). Both what a writer puts in and what a writer leaves out is discussed in these texts with the clear idea that the decisions impact the reader. The amount of information given to the reader is closely linked to what point of view the author chooses. Whether it is first person, second person omniscient, or a variety of other choices, the decision on point of view actually determines how much and what kind of information to which the reader is privy. DeMaria argues that it is especially important to the audience when the writer carelessly shifts point of view; writers must “establish a clear vantage point for the reader” and not unsettle their “suspension of disbelief” (103). Booth also specifically discusses point of view in the “aesthetic distance” created by a writer in order to control the reader’s involvement (121-125). Most of the textbooks examined here do not recognize point of view in such a critical way, but the authorial choice of where to place the narrator, the distance from the audience, and the resulting position of the reader are clearly rhetorical choices.

Indeed, the textbook Metro: Journeys in Writing Creatively, by Hans Ostrom, Wendy Bishop, and Katharine Haake, refers to Booth. When discussing “reading form as a product of perspective,” the authors say that Booth explains how writers should map out the
perspectives within their writing by “actually sketch[ing] a little chart describing the author’s perspective, characters’ perspective, where the focal point of the narration is, where you would locate your own reader’s perspective, and so forth” (39). The exercise of sketching point of view helps to better understand the reader. Burke and Tinsley also refer to the reader more frequently in their chapter about point of view. They borrow directly from literary and rhetorical theory when they say “in a piece of writing, think of writing as a speech act, or strategy, with an occasion, an audience, and a purpose” (ital Burke and Tinsley 102).

The other arena that must be discussed within this area of the writer’s responsibility in point of view is the actual point of view that the creative writing textbooks themselves take when writing to their readers. Given that the textbooks are directed toward a student audience participating in the unpacking of poems or stories and are those doing the writing exercises, the implied reader is often talked about in second person. This authorial position of the textbook writers, where they are speaking directly to the readers and often include themselves as readers is important because it impacts the way in which the references to audience were counted in this study. Including only the direct use of the terms suggesting audience, those mentions of the reader that were written as second person were not tallied. For example, in Stephen Minot’s *Three Genres: The Writing of Poetry, Fiction, and Drama*, he spends more time than most books on the publishing aspects of writing. Therefore, there are moments in his book that focus on what readers want and how to grab the attention of readers (namely in the fiction section). Unlike other textbooks discussed here, Minot does not often use the collective “we” when explaining craft. He creates more distance, in typical textbook fashion, by describing what the writer’s choices do to the reader, rather than what
they do to “us.” The only time he slips into the first person pronouns is when he provides a sample poem, story, or play and discusses reader reactions to it, since presumably, the readers of his book completed reading the example. The discussion of point of view works on many different levels when studying the treatment of audience in creative writing textbooks. In fact, the multiple ways to approach point of view impacts the way in which this study counted references to audience. These examples again remind us of the very complicated issue of audience and its impact on the considerations of writing.

**Writer Responsibility: Literary Techniques**

Point of view can be considered one of many literary techniques, but this fourth area implying audience is more about figurative language and the crafting of words than it is about position. The techniques are described within the creative writing textbooks as what they can do to “us” or what the language can do to “the reader.” What is interesting is that the textbooks personify these literary techniques, arguing that they can act upon the reader in some way, instead of considering what readers themselves “do” to the creative work. This contrast is evident throughout these textbooks; it is a difference between acting upon the reader instead of having the reader act upon the text. This is a fundamental distinction in the way in which creative writers view audience and the areas affecting audience, such as language and revision of writing, as opposed to the way rhetoricians view these same issues. In other words, the creative writing textbook authors write as if language is acting upon the reader, and theorists in both rhetoric and writing and literary theory write as if the reader is acting upon the language.
In Sybil Estess’s and Jane McCann’s textbook, *In a Field of Words: A Creative Writing Text*, they write about metaphors and how writers should not make the comparisons too difficult for the reader. They encourage the use of metaphor to “enlarge the image of the basic subject, to help us picture it or to make it more dramatic” (112). Chris Lombardi, in the chapter “Description: To Picture in Words” from the *Gotham Writers’ Workshop* textbook, also talks about literary techniques to evoke “nonverbal meanings, immersing the reader in the experience in a rather primal way” (Steele 115). The treatments of literary techniques by the authors of creative writing textbooks clearly regard them as awakening feelings in the reader.

Unsurprisingly, literary techniques are discussed a great deal by literary theorists, but their treatment is wholly different. These techniques serve as anchors for meaning and richness of the texts, heightening meaning and contributing to the reader’s reading experience, but the reader brings in his or her own sensibilities. Kenneth Burke spends a great deal of time in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* understanding literary techniques and their use within his examination of language and symbols. As discussed in Chapter Three, language classifications and their associations contribute to the meaning of any writing or literature. Literary techniques whether synecdoche, metaphor, or other symbolic language are flawed because readers will understand the use of each through their own value system (Burke *Philosophy* 164-6). Burke would argue the reader should be the writer’s first consideration when deciding on literary techniques because it is the reader who decides the technique’s meaning. Marjorie Perloff considers these nuances as well, but she views them in relation to the current electronic and cultural environment in *Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media*. Clearly, teaching a varied and rich understanding of what
certain literary techniques, such as figurative language, can produce would enhance a beginning writer’s comprehension of the choices he or she makes.

**Writer Responsibility: Revision**

The difference between considering how readers will react to writing and how writing will act upon the reader is important when writers reconsider their drafts, bringing us to the fifth area: revision. Early on, this dissertation asserts that revision is related to audience. Expecting to find more references to audience or overt pointing to the needs of the reader in the chapters on revising, I did not. What I did find is that creative writing textbooks look at revision in fundamentally different ways than rhetoricians. Rhetoricians believe revision decisions are made to improve clarity, comprehension, and the reading experience, all for the audience. On the other hand, revision to creative writers is about reshaping, finding the potential of words and structure, refiguring space, and grooming language all for the sake of the work, not the reader.

In poetry, revision has less to do with the audience than it does with the core of the poem. To poets, revising a poem is about grooming it, massaging it in order to enrich the images, language, or shape. Toward that end, one might think, is the audience, but the poet is more concerned with the essence of the poem emerging, the *duende* as many call it, rather than revising for the reader. Jeff Knorr and Tim Schell say revision is the poet “not just learning to use the tools of her craft, she is also developing and refining and sensibility, her own way of shaping and understanding the world […] That is why revision is an art” (107). Still, readers are fickle, whether reading poetry or fiction, and some may not care less about the writer’s mastery of language or turn of a phrase. Peter Selgin understands this when he
writes about revision in Steele’s book. He says, “Readers are rude. They’ll put your story or novel down in the middle of that sublime passage you spent ten hours on and never pick it up again, without apology. The reader holds all the cards; he has no obligation to the writer, while the writer has every obligation to him.” Selgin emphasizes the importance of the audience when writers revise, saying “That’s why writers cut and tweak, mercilessly, throughout the revision process, down to its final stages” (Steele 233).

The theoretical ideas regarding revision might be fortified by looking at Robert Scholes’s ideas about that audience. Given that audience changes with every new reading of a text, students who write need to situate themselves within the context of space and time with an eye to future readers and the moments in which they might read the work. Similar to Perloff’s ideas about current cultural text production, Scholes’s belief of the mutability of writing could certainly enhance a student’s understanding of the importance of audience when writing and revising.

**Writer Responsibility: Usage**

Closely related to revision and the choices made while revising is another area suggesting the outside reader: usage. Defined here as choices of tone, wording, grammar, and clarity issues, the term “usage” implies that words are being used to some end, and that end is the reader. This area emerged within the creative writing textbooks because the reader was either overtly discussed or, more often, a subtext of the lesson. This sixth and final area indicates that usage and the decisions that are related to it are the responsibility of the writer in order to best suit the reader.
For example, in the sixth edition to their book, *Writing Poems*, Michelle Boisseau and Robert Wallace outline how to use the book in class and place clarity in writing as instrumental to its success. They say that “[b]eginning poets learn that clarity is demanding, for what may seem obvious to the poet may be anything but obvious to the reader on the outside […] But often the inexperience poet, in a state of ingenious solitude, has so tangled and hidden the signals in the underbrush that no one can spot them” (Boisseau and Wallace 17). As well as clarity, the tone that a writer takes is an important element of the writer’s responsibility to his or her audience. Robert DeMaria defines tone “as reflecting the feelings and attitudes of the writer […] the particular way in which the content is expressed” (113). He goes on to say that in fiction the style and literary devices the author uses determine tone. DeMaria also explains the importance of word choice in description: “What a reader wants to know is something about [the character’s] defining qualities, something that brings him to life, not as a list of statistics” (153). DeMaria’s attitude echoes Linda Flower’s ideas noted in Chapter Three regarding the rhetorical confusion writers can create with too many facts. DeMaria’s fifth chapter, entitled “The Fundamentals of Writing” is a chapter about grammar and mechanics, a surprising chapter devoted to what writing handbooks or style guides usually cover. One section is on diction. It contains issues like word choice, clichés, jargon, and slang—all issues usually related to audience and keeping the reader in mind. Still, in this section that is overtly about clarity and freshness for the reader, there is no direct mention of the reader or audience.

Le Guin’s book talks openly about audience when discussing usage. She says, “if you go back and forth between past and present tense […] without some kind of signal […] your reader will get all mixed up” (75). Le Guin urges student writers to be certain that
“when you shift [point of view], you carry the reader effortlessly with you” (107). Also looking to audience is Philip K. Jason and Allan B. Lefcowitz’s book, Creative Writer’s Handbook. They have an exercise that specifically puts audience at the center of the prompt. In a chapter about the nuances of language (style, connotation, denotation, idioms, consistency, and more), the exercise asks the student to edit two passages “to fit the audience proposed.” The prompt is “This is the beginning of a detective story written for a general audience,” and the second prompt says, “This is a portion of a short story intended for a sophisticated audience that reads literary magazines and The New Yorker” (Jason and Lefcowitz 84). This idea of shifting situations and viewpoints, similar to the earlier Ostrom, Bishop, and Haake exercise, is one rhetoric and writing instructors often use, but it works just as well when imagining various audiences for creative writing.

In order to buttress the area of usage with the theory from Chapter Three, invoking Kenneth Burke seems most logical. Burke’s very complicated view of language usage can be expanded here to mean more than definitions and meaning alone contribute to the importance of audience. Burke says that language “does not reside in its ‘usefulness’ and promise (though that is certainly a part of it) but in its style as morals, as petition, in the quality of the petition, not in the success of the petition” (Philosophy 167). Understanding language as petition with quality and style suggests that writers must make formal requests to their audience giving the consideration of audience much more weight. Besides heightening writers’ understanding that they help to form the expectations in their readers, Burke’s ideas remind us that the reader has a responsibility to act upon that petition as well.
Summary of Writer Responsibility

The authors of the creative writing textbooks mention the reader either overtly or as a subtext when discussing genre, narrative success, point of view, literary techniques, revision, and usage. The textbooks instruct students to understand and work on these areas, in part, to benefit the audience. Seeing these areas manifest during the pilot study while noticing the resonance of rhetorical and literary theory illustrates that these disciplinary sections dealing with writing indeed intersect. Nevertheless, creative writers still have control in the decisions made within these areas, but as the authors of these textbooks remind us, the reader is not an empty vessel. He or she brings varied knowledge and skill to the text and has responsibilities to create the writing as well.

Dimensions of Audience in Creative Writing Textbooks: Reader Responsibility

Besides the understandable responsibilities that writers have when composing poetry, prose, or drama, the creative writing textbooks also place some of the burden of writing’s success upon the reader. The intimations of audience were often to remind student writers of their responsibilities to the audience, but the creative writing textbooks also remind creative writers that readers are also responsible for bringing meaning and paying attention to the work. Boisseau and Wallace say that in the failure of some writing the “fault lies sometimes with readers who don’t pay close enough attention and so miss a signal” (17) holding readers as accountable as the writers. The chapter also discusses what readers bring to the work. Boisseau and Wallace say, “When readers bring themselves to a poem and make it truly their own, they are doing precisely what any poet hopes they will, making the poem come alive” (18). Clearly by placing some of the onus of writing’s success upon the
reader, the shared responsibility offers an important aspect of how the audience contributes
to any sort of writing.

In the final chapter of Boisseau and Wallace’s textbook, the authors write in the
section “Going Public” that “like any art, poetry has a practical side we should consider
when we take it from the private place where the poem lives with us to the world outside
where it might live with readers” (299). They say that “[r]espect for a poem also includes
finding for it the readers who complete the equation” (Boisseau and Wallace 299). These
examples from Boisseau and Wallace offer a look into the other discernible area of the
treatment of reader and audience in undergraduate creative writing textbooks: the
responsibilities of the reader. The reader is responsible for certain sensory and emotional
reactions, awareness of common knowledge, and the ability to believe or suspend disbelief.

**Reader Responsibility: Sensory Response**

The first area that emerges is what I call sensory response. Especially when
discussing poetry, when the authors of these textbooks refer to “engaging the ear,” or
“feeling the rhythm,” or “how the poem sounds,” they are clearly speaking of the reader and
the reader’s sensory response and thus emotional reaction to the language. Creative writing
textbooks use these sorts of references frequently.

For example, Mary Oliver in *A Poetry Handbook* spends several pages on the
importance of being a reader of poetry in order to be a strong writer of poetry. She says,
“Think of yourself rather as one member of a single, recognizable tribe. Expect to
understand poems of other eras and other cultures. Expect to feel intimate with the distant
voice” (Oliver 11). In other words, she is encouraging the readers to have expectations for
their own reactions, believing that these reactions are universal, as are the sounds that
generate them. Oliver discusses the “felt quality” of letters and sounds that poets use, akin to
the connotation of them (22-24), and talks a great deal throughout her text about what the
reader will do, feel, understand: how the writer/poet has control of those emotions. Oliver
says, “A meaningful rhythm will invite. A meaningless rhythm will dissuade” (57), but these
reactions are ultimately up to the reader to feel.

Robert DeMaria also has a chapter that discusses the sensory effect of words and
images. He says that these appeals to the basic five senses can have some sort of “public
meaning” (De Maria 254). Oliver and DeMaria are examples of how most of these creative
writing textbooks talk very generally and inclusively about audience reaction, as if all
readers will feel the same thing or react in the same way. This presumption is clearly
inaccurate, and rhetoricians and literary theorists not only would argue this point but also
might critically study the presumption as a product of the writer’s own ethos and
background. Still, the idea of a universal, general reaction emerges in these textbooks even
though Wayne Booth, as explained in Chapter Three, argues its flaws. Similar to Booth in
his Rhetoric of Fiction, Estess and McCann also call upon T.S. Eliot for his concept of the
“objective correlative.” They evoke Eliot in order to remind readers that they can depend on
readers to react in common ways. Estess and Wallace say, “an object, an action, a situation
which is the ‘formula’ of that particular emotion and which, when represented to the reader,
produces a sense impression that elicits the emotion” defines the “objective correlative.” The
context in which they discuss Eliot is regarding the “reader’s experience, learning, and
sensitivity […] all necessary to help detect the emotional quality of a poem” (123-24).
Nevertheless, literary theorists and rhetoricians would find this assumption overly reductive.
To understand a universal reaction to writing most fully, Wayne Booth, who refers to Aristotle’s belief that poetry should “produce effects on audience,” might say that a writer must consider various audiences during various times (92-3). Marjorie Perloff would agree with Booth, especially given the nature of communication, multiple media and audiences today. Rhetoricians, too, would echo these sentiments given that they see audiences as emphatically more complex.

**Reader Responsibility: Common Knowledge**

Similar to presupposing a common sensory response to a story or poem is how writers make assumptions about an audience’s common knowledge. Often the creative writing textbooks studied here refer to readers’ common knowledge and preconceptions, or *a priori* knowledge, urging writers to play on what their readers know by using allusions and everyday references that readers will understand.

In DeMaria’s “Images and Sounds” chapter, he suggests knowing something about the audience by using references and allusions “drawn from a common body of knowledge in a given culture” (252). Akin to this sort of common knowledge is the common knowledge of literary genres talked about as a writer’s responsibility. Writers have to fulfill genre expectations, but it is up to the reader to have knowledge of these conventions in order to have the expectations. In a chapter on patterns and form, DeMaria argues that readers have many more expectations of fiction and drama conventions than they do of poetry. He says that the “marketplace may have a lot to do with” the fact that poetry doesn’t adhere to restraining conventions, but drama and prose still do because “there’s not much money in poetry today and not much of an audience” (DeMaria 276). Following the prevalent trends
allows a writer to create a “large audience […] since there are substantial rewards for those
who cater to the general taste, instead of deploring new ways of doing things” (DeMaria
276). DeMaria is quick to mention that not catering to one’s audience creates “serious
fiction and drama” which “are more daring when it comes to form” (277). A writer’s
awareness of a reader’s common knowledge may work against him or her since the field of
creative writing may advise against catering to an audience in this way. Still, the creative
writing textbooks hold the reader accountable for shared knowledge, and remind the writer
to be aware of that understanding.

This reader responsibility is related to Burke’s citation of Aristotle’s commonplaces
and Wayne Booth’s and Marjorie Perloff’s idea that a reader’s knowledge changes over
time. Allusions to current cultural references that work now may not work in twenty years.
Perloff also wonders about T.S. Eliot’s “common speech,” or the idea of the “natural
object.” She argues that when a writer relies on the reader for certain knowledge or
understanding of image, problems arise in this current culture so packed with electronic
communication—and we probably cannot fully comprehend what the language and “noise”
might look like in the next few decades (Perloff Radical 27-8). Adding Stanley Fish who
sees texts as immutable but the reading of the text as “an event rather than an entity” (3)
would certainly enhance the discussion of Perloff when he questions if and how to rely on a
reader’s common knowledge. In an undergraduate creative writing classroom, these critical
theories might be interesting to students who have known little else than the cacophony of
expedited communication and, as many scholars argue, a less significant shared cultural
literacy.
**Reader Responsibility: Believability**

The last area on the list of reader’s responsibility is believability. Akin to common knowledge of what is possible and what is impossible, readers must be willing to believe or suspend disbelief when reading creative writing. Whether they refer to plausibility, possibility, or truth, creative writing textbooks discuss these issues when they cover topic and craft. The authors imply audience, but rarely are the terms for audience used.

DeMaria refers to the reader and how the decisions that the writer makes must be clear and believable (55, 56). Jerome Stern in *Making Shapely Fiction* supports DeMaria’s ideas. Stern writes about believability in terms of accuracy, saying “Accuracy refers to how well writers have observed the world […] If readers feel that the observations are genuine, then the fictional world comes alive” (79). Stern equates a reader’s belief with checking facts and using concrete images. He tells writers not to take readers’ knowledge for granted: “If you make up ceremonies and customs, you’re exploiting the naiveté or preconceptions of your audience.” Stern also recommends that writers do not risk readers by fabricating details. He says, “Don’t think, This is fiction—I don’t have to check my facts. Even minor errors can make your readers doubt you. You want your readers to feel: I don’t think this is made up; this sounds as though it really happened” (Stern 80). Despite Stern’s suggestion, readers still allow for a writer’s imagination even if the details sound doubtful.

Rhetorical theorists Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford contend that readers suspend disbelief more readily when reading fiction or poetry (162) but argue that that suspension still relies on the writer’s creativity (168-9). Booth echoes this idea as well in his consideration of a novel’s realism. He argues that the reader determines how realistic a novel is but the decision on the amount of realism must impact how the writer narrates. In
his *Rhetoric of Fiction*, in the chapter, “Beliefs and the Reader,” Booth explains the numerous levels on which a reader must believe the writer. Every element that a writer adds to a story must be plausible; thus, consideration of audience is key, but the burden of belief still lies with the reader. Knowing the multiple rhetorical areas where the reader can reject the writer’s story can impact any writer’s choices and is a worthy topic for a beginning writing class discussion.

**Summary of Reader Responsibility**

Predictably, there were fewer reader responsibilities than writer responsibilities that surfaced in the creative writing textbooks of this study. What these emerging categories reveal, however, is that the authors of these textbooks understand that the readers themselves bring something to the writing of creative texts. Although the myth of the lonely writer in the garret lives on, there is a deeper structure that highlights the reader’s part in the act of “writing a text.” This subtext of creative writing instruction is evident in the references to readers and the way in which they, in part, create meaningful stories and poems.

**Conclusions**

Despite the relatively few syllabi found, the creative writing textbooks certainly yielded a great deal of data. And the process made known that many teachers of creative writers and authors of creative writing textbooks are not ignoring audience. They may not make it a primary consideration for creative writers, but it certainly is a supporting area in teaching undergraduates to write creatively. Besides the data the study yielded, several other matters emerged.
Within the textbooks, the process of tallying revealed three things. The first is that the references to audience or readers really depended on whether the book was written by one author, was co-authored, or was edited. For example, the two edited collections: Citino’s *The Eye of the Poet: Six Views on the Art and Craft of Poetry* and Alexander Steele’s *Gotham Writers’ Workshop: Writing Fiction* were less consistent in their references than the authored or co-authored texts. Moreover, the textbooks with single authors were the most consistent in the use or non-use of references to readers. In other words, the references to an outside audience or reader were either part of the way the writer sought to teach writing, or were not.

The second observation of the tallying process was that the term “reader” or “audience” was primarily used in groups. When references were made to the audience they were multiple, as if the author was reminded not to forget the reader. For example, in Sibyl Johnston’s *The Longman Journal for Creative Writing*, the term reader occurred only three times in the entire book, and the references occurred in one section “Writing Poems and Stories: Theme.” In Annie Lamott’s *Bird by Bird*, of the seven uses of the term “reader,” three of them occurred in a section regarding plot. *A Poetry Handbook* by Mary Oliver had eighteen references to “reader” with five of them occurring in a section on the poetic line. Similar patterns appeared in most of the textbooks and only infrequently did references to audience occur without several more following.

Finally, the process exposed clear categories where the most frequent references to the outside reader surfaced. The distinct areas and their obvious division into writer and reader responsibility was the most significant revelation from this pilot study. As this dissertation hypothesized the likely dearth of overt references to audience, it was heartening
to see that the idea of readers underscored much of the textbooks (if not the syllabi).

Notwithstanding the way in which these texts suggested audience, the references were there, and they surfaced in interesting ways.

Consideration of audience is indeed a part of the texts of undergraduate creative writing textbooks. This pilot study revealed patterns in which audience surfaced that reproduced many of the reader theories that rhetoricians and literary theorists discuss. Although the junction of theory and practice is evident in my analysis, it is clear that the connection may not be clear to the student writer.

In the next chapter, I draw conclusions about audience in the undergraduate creative writing classroom given the theory and data of this dissertation. I also look to potential further support of the conclusions drawn here and possibilities for future study.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the theoretical study of audience that led to the dissertation and an overview of the pilot study’s conclusions. The chapter also provides a discussion of the results and their implications, suggestions for and benefits of action, and recommendations for further research related to the topic of undergraduate creative writing pedagogy and the issue of audience.

Overview of the Study

In this dissertation, I set out to explore the ways in which the writerly concern of audience surfaces in undergraduate creative writing classrooms. My method involved exploring audience in terms of the three areas of study present in the creative writing classroom: creative writing, college writing instruction, and literary theory. From this exploration, I constructed a list of terms suggesting audience and a theoretical setting in which to find those references.

The dissertation was motivated by two research questions that guided the study. They were:

1. In which ways do theories concerning audience emerge in the undergraduate creative writing classroom?

2. How might these theories be practiced and incorporated into the pedagogy of creative writing?

In answering the questions, the research revealed the various ways audience surfaced in these specific class texts and the discernible patterns in which they emerged. The manner in
which audience materialized allowed for an analysis of how audience can be considered, defined, and approached in the undergraduate creative writing classroom.

In the first part of my research I identified the definitions and applications of audience within the fields of rhetoric and composition and literary theory, the two areas of study that converge in the creative writing classroom. Relying chiefly on the ways in which rhetoric and writing and literary theory define and use audience, I then applied those definitions and theoretical approaches in a pilot study to quantify how audience surfaced. The pilot study studied a group of syllabi from undergraduate creative writing classrooms, the textbooks those syllabi required for their classes, and several other current creative writing textbooks. I collected the data searching for undergraduate creative writing syllabi on the World Wide Web. After finding the documents, I then tabulated the references to audience on the syllabi and within the textbooks. Besides tallying the number of times to which audience was referred, I also analyzed the contexts of the references. The contextual analysis produced discernible and interesting patterns.

The limitations of the dissertation are centered in the pilot study and are mostly due to the number of syllabi collected, which narrowed the size and scope of the data. Reviewing a limited number of syllabi and the texts those syllabi require may offer a peek into audience in the undergraduate creative writing classroom, but a study on a larger scale would more accurately gauge the use of this important aspect of writing. The way in which data were collected, through an electronic search of syllabi, limited access to a more substantial collection of classroom syllabi and other texts, such as assignments and handouts. Furthermore, the majority of syllabi noted only required and suggested texts, and a calendar of readings and assignments, data that gave little insight into the learning outcomes and
objectives. The study also did not examine what might be the most important part of the undergraduate creative writing classroom: the in-class discourse.

**Discussing the Findings**

My first research question concerning how audience emerges in the undergraduate creative writing classroom is essentially answered in Chapter Three where I establish the theories on how audience might emerge in the classroom. In other words, Chapter Three creates the terms I looked for during the pilot study. Then, the other element of that first research question is answered in Chapter Five and the results of the pilot study where I show the areas where audience surfaced and the patterns that emerged in the texts. I draw conclusions by looking to the categories of Chapter Five to see how the theories of Chapter Three fit into those groupings.

The results shown in Chapter Five expose two distinct categories of references to audience: Writer Responsibility and Reader Responsibility. These two areas show that, although not always overtly, the authors of these textbooks understand a general fundamental difference in the audiences of writing that exist in the creative writing classroom. Within those two categories, several sub-categories also emerged. The first category, the writer’s responsibility, shows that he or she is responsible to the reader to

- fulfill expectations in genre;
- show (not tell) a good story;
- contemplate point of view and understand that it defines the position of the writer, narrator and reader;
• use literary techniques that enrich the reading of the work with an awareness of varying audience sophistication and perspective;
• revise with the audience in mind; and
• be consistent, clear and not overly obfuscating in service to the reader.

In the second category, the reader is also responsible in bringing meaning to the writing. Writers are dependent on readers for

• a reasonable awareness of common cultural references, genre, and literary conventions;
• the ability to believe and suspend disbelief, granting creative writing some imaginative latitude; and
• appropriate or at least the knowledge of appropriate sensory or emotional responses to common cultural tropes.

In light of the theorists studied in Chapter Three, reflecting upon the two categories (writer and reader responsibility) and their subcategories uncovers some remarkable parallels. The theorists within the fields of rhetoric and composition, literary theory, and creative writing pedagogy generally agree on four things. First, they all believe that there is an essential interaction between the writer and the reader whether it happens literally or imaginatively. Second, both the writer and the reader are required for the text to have meaning. Third, the theorists also seem to agree that this meaning-making occurs and recurs differently with each reader and with each reading. And finally, they all would essentially argue that neither reader nor writer is completely responsible for making meaning although they do differ on who is has primary responsibility.
Recapitulating some of the ideas and theories within Chapter Three illustrates an echoing of the categories that emerged from the results of the pilot study presented in Chapter Five. First, in regard to the writer’s responsibility for fulfilling genre, Burke notes that the reader grasps genre before he or she grasps subject matter. Marjorie Perloff alludes to the understanding of genre as well when she asserts that readers must be trained to read. She suggests that the expectations of conventions, whether in genre, literary techniques, or usage, are all taught. Also, within the topic of genre and interpretation is Stanley Fish’s notion that the different communities which readers occupy have different strategies for interpretation (and expectation). In the case of a creative writing class, the class itself influences the genre expectations.

Akin to these expectations is the second area of reader’s responsibility; readers need to have certain expectations, know common allusions, and express typical sensory and emotional responses to shared symbols and metaphors. Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford assert that the meaning of text depends on interaction to create a human (or communal) understanding. The third and fourth areas, revision and usage, also depend upon a shared understanding of writing and grammar inventions to create clarity and comprehension. Although Linda Flower would maintain that the burden lies with the writer, the reader also has to be aware of and open to the conventions. In the fifth area of reader responsibility, common knowledge, the majority of theorists in some way speak to this issue whether they are asserting its flaws or the inability to gauge it accurately. The theorists also note that the common knowledge current today will have decidedly different connotations in the future.

This repeated current and future “event” of making meaning when reading texts certainly creates an exigency to the writing issue of audience and its importance in the
creative writing classroom. Furthermore, these parallels show that the authors of creative writing textbooks are already talking about audience, and, presumably, so are the instructors of undergraduate creative writers. More important, instructors are talking in the ways advocated by the theorists who support their pedagogy. What this dissertation recommends is that these discussions rise from the subtext and become an integral part of the teaching. Making the discussions about audience more transparent is a clear expansion of the current pedagogy, and this dissertation shows that the areas of rhetoric and writing and literary theory, which are already a part of the creative writing classroom, support these theories.

The results of this study show that audience is clearly built into the teaching of undergraduate creative writing, but it is certainly not as visible as I believe it should be. The incidental references to audience and reader are for the most part commonplace, but an emphasis on audience is noticeably missing. After establishing the theoretical significance of audience for creative writing, only under careful study could I find references to it within the undergraduate creative writing classroom. Audience will remain merely an undertone in the instruction until teachers of creative writing understand the benefits of a more critical approach. Those benefits include students who

• are more aware of the multiple and simultaneous audiences that read their work;
• better understand that their readers bring much to bear upon the writing;
• see that writers are not solely responsible for the meaning of the text;
• consider that language, allusions and metaphors have tenuous universal meaning;
• more critically examine their own and other’s work; and
• problematize audience to better serve multiple readers.

Instructors of undergraduate creative writers will also benefit. They will
• consider more critically how they view themselves as the audience of student writing;

• reflect more on the classroom as audience and challenge their students to do so;

• be better able to see how audience awareness can be more transparent in the texts and discussions within the classroom;

• be more conscious of the ways they use the terms “reader” and “audience” in their instructional materials and in classroom discussion; and

• by awareness alone, better problematize audience for their students.

This study alone cannot make comprehensive conclusions about all undergraduate creative writing classes, and it acknowledges the inclination of teachers of creative writing to avoid using too much theory. Still, given the foundation of creative writing classes and the importance of the pedagogical groundings of rhetorical theory and literary theory, the significance of this writerly issue is clearly valuable. It helps develop creative writers who, situated in an academic setting, approach their writing with both creative and critical understanding.

Despite Hans Ostrom’s recommendation that creative writers reconceptualize one area of pedagogy at a time, no other research has been done in undergraduate creative writing classes to recognize the role of single writing issues common to all writing classes. The results here and the ways other issues are managed are certainly preliminary. Still, in light of the findings, the approach seems both useful and promising.
Suggestions

Given the history of creative writing in the academy, the manifestation of a critical concept like audience may be inconspicuous. In “Writing Theory: Theory Writing,” Susan Miller skillfully compares creative writing’s apprehension to embrace theory with creative writing’s sometimes restrictive and discriminating view of good literature. She says “our image of the exclusivity that surrounds ‘big’ theories has a great deal to do with the nineteenth-century ‘high literacy,’ a focal point in a genealogy of ideas as texts” (Miller “Writing” 63). The application of theory and its goals and implications for teaching may not be easy for creative writing teachers. Miller reminds us that “[h]aving a theory […] differs vastly from saying publicly that we have one […] for having a theory determines how we teach and interpret every kind of text, while saying we have a theory has a much more complex relation to actual practice” (“Writing” 68). Both of Miller’s quotations illustrate that neither the acknowledgment nor the application of this dissertation’s recommendations will be easy for the area of creative writing. Consequently, as we embark on answering the second question that motivated this study, we must remind ourselves of the historical complexity of English studies reviewed in this dissertation’s first chapter.

The second research question explores how the theories of audience identified in Chapter Three are practiced and incorporated into the pedagogy of creative writing. While understanding the complicated background and conventional nature of the college creative writing classroom, I can offer several suggestions of incorporating audience in addition to the ways it is already present. These suggestions are relatively easy and practical applications of this dissertation’s findings.
Besides quantifying the frequency of the terms “audience” and “readers” occurring in creative writing pedagogy, I study the specific ways the terms surface, the categories in which the concepts appear, and the way in which they are linked to the theory built in Chapter Three. This three-way look at the issue of audience illustrates that although it might not be a well-defined or clearly noticeable area of study in the undergraduate creative writing classroom, it does occupy a space in the lexicon of this particular classroom. Therefore, it seems as if in some ways, audience is indeed incorporated in the pedagogy, but the transparency of practice needs improvement. As shown in Chapter Five, there are applications of audience already present in the classroom textbooks, but the suggestions here further advance audience as an important aspect of study.

Given that audience underscores much of what is already taught, bringing the reader to the fore of the discussion may be a simple undertaking. Even soliciting a discussion about considering audience when writing may elicit some critical responses or at least problematize the issue for the writer. Creating a cognitive dissonance for the student writer can, perhaps, influence his or her decisions when writing and when commenting about others’ writing. That effect alone can have favorable pedagogical results.

Another way of incorporating audience is what some of the textbooks already do: suggest writing to different types of audiences and readers. Similarly, a discussion of popular fiction versus literature, or even the various sections of fiction within chain bookstores, might draw out interesting conversations about readership. A more critical application is to read theories about audience, whether Barthes’s “Death of the Author,” Foucault’s “What is an Author,” or the theoretical texts that this dissertation uses. The pedagogical implications of discussions, exercises, or readings on audience would result in a
more critical creative writer and a more critical undergraduate who better understands the multiple perspectives, values, and backgrounds of readers and the very complex nature of language exchange. Again, many of the motivations for encouraging a more theoretical and critical foundation for creative writers is knowing that undergraduate study is not pre-professional study.

**Disappointments and Surprises**

I was most disappointed in the study with the limited number of syllabi available online and the few learning outcomes explained on those syllabi. Additionally, the references to audience, although common, were incidental, and thus the tabulations of those references were often hard to calculate. Perhaps a flaw of the research design, an accurate measure of references to audience, was difficult, but that difficulty in counting was mostly a product of the terms’ lack of transparency.

In all of the reading of undergraduate texts in order to find the topic of audience, I was most surprised at the infusion of the idea of audience and the reader in what I read. In other words, although it may not have been transparent to the layman or an undergraduate student, audience was a frequent undercurrent of the textbooks. Some might argue that I entered the material in order to find audience and readers, but repeated attempts to distance myself, read, and study objectively continued to yield moments where I would think, “This is all about audience.” Creative writing can neither be discussed nor taught without its relationship to those who read it, and this dissertation confirms that.

Despite my bias, when one thinks about texts rhetorically, audience surfaces in every facet of writing. In short, audience must surface, not only because we are the audience of the
text, and you are the audience of this text, but also because we cannot discuss or theorize literature or speak of language without thinking of both sides of the exchange: those who write and those who read.

**Final Conclusions and Recommendations**

The data confirm the evidence of audience’s presence in the undergraduate creative writing classroom. The study began with the hypothesis suspecting that audience would be present, but the results show more frequent references and considerations. The data do, however, show that the writing concept of audience is clearly not considered critically within these classrooms. The hope of this study is to promote the more earnest identification and application of audience and audience-related issues by clearly connecting the major role audience plays to the writing of any text whether prose, poetry, or drama.

It appears that audience’s current presence within the textbooks (more than the syllabi) shows that the potential to put the reader to the front of theoretical conceptions of writing is possible. Still, given the prefaces of some of the textbooks to avoid jargon- or theoretically-filled instructions, thinking about audience in the literary and rhetorical ways in which Chapter Three defines, an open scholarly examination seems unlikely. Perhaps these limitations illustrate a need for more theoretically-based teacher training in creative writing instruction.

Having completed this study, I have several recommendations for future research. The first is for carrying out case studies of real undergraduate classrooms, with direct observation, content analysis, questionnaires, and interviews. Such a case study is likely to produce a wider picture of how the theoretical conception of audience manifests itself.
Another possible research topic that arose as I tallied references to audience and reader is the often-varied ways in which these two terms were used in the textbooks themselves compared to the rhetorical theorists and literary theorists. In other words, the nuances of these terms and the contexts in which they were used were frequently at odds with one another. A close study of the distinctions of these two terms and their wide-ranging connotations is a worthy future project. Akin to that project is a close study of the techniques used for audience awareness in the way rhetoric and writing defines it as opposed to writing or “catering” to an audience and the way creative writers recoil from that notion.

A single and small pilot study exploring the references to audience is, of course, not sufficient to understand the complexity of the issue. Also the possible ways audience might be discussed in the undergraduate creative writing classroom cannot be garnered from only syllabi and textbooks. The research does, however, suggest critical possibilities that a more focused effort toward audience might yield. As explained in Chapter Four, the conclusions of this dissertation are admittedly flexible and resist closure, especially given the hope that teachers of these writers will continually reflect on their own pedagogy. The results urge problematizing audience for undergraduate creative writers because doing so will allow students a more critical and recursive reflection on their writing and their audience.
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### Appendix

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