EACWP 1ST INTERNATIONAL PEDAGOGICAL CONFERENCE

November 8th & 9th 2012

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

With the support of

SPECIAL THANKS

The EACWP wishes to express its sincere thanks to Aleph-Écriture and its team, especially Alain André, Louise Muller and all the people in charge of the program and organization of the event, for their warm welcoming, Karine Carfantan and Brigitte François whose precious help made these Proceedings possible.

We also express our gratitude to all the EACWP members who brought this conference to life with rich and stimulating debates and contributions: Escuela de escritores of Madrid (Spain), Scuola Holden of Torino (Italy), Les Ateliers d'écriture Elisabeth Bing of Paris (France), Literární Akademie of Prague (Czech Republic), Maastricht University (The Netherlands), Oriveden Opisto of Orivesi (Finland), Schule für dichtung of Vienna (Austria), Linda Lappin from the University of Rome La Sapienza (Italy), Fred Leebron from the Cedar Crest College of Allentown (United States) and Kate Moorhead from the East Anglia University (UK).

Our thanks also to the Institut Finlandais for its generous welcome all along the conference.

Credit: Harriet Nachtmann

Introducing the EACWP 1st International Pedagogical Conference

by Javier Sagarna

Organized by Aleph-Écriture and the European Association of Creative Writing Programme, the 1st International Pedagogical Conference, took place in Paris in November 2012, under the title "How do we teach creative writing?" There were two days of methodological interchanges and sharing of the strongly different points of view about our ways of teaching Creative Writing. A very necessary discussion taking into account how different the formative experiences, methodologies, pedagogical approaches and even the concept of what we are teaching and what our commitment as teachers is, are.

Creative writing teaching in Europe has been developed in a different way in every country, isolated one from another mostly because of the difficulties that the multilingual situation of Europe (a great richness on the other hand) creates for sharing in a discipline, Creative Writing, that have words and language at its heart. In this situation, and it not being, in most European countries, an official discipline that provides a degree or any other title, each school has managed to create its own methodology and pedagogical approach, in most of cases mixing what they know about other experiences in other parts of the world (USA, Latin America, etc.), the peculiarities of the literary and educational tradition of each country, and, of course, the ideas and developments that their day by day experience suggested them.

This has created an amazing variety of ways of teaching that, as well as the many languages of Europe, is an invaluable richness we have now the opportunity to share. Using English as the communication language and having not only respect, but love for our different and beautiful languages, the 1st Pedagogical Conference opened a path. It was the first step of a long route, the first word of a wide dialogue between our very different experiences, that, for sure, will result in an improvement of our teaching and a better and more complete learning experience for our students and young writers.

There are many ways to build Europe and writing together, sharing points of views about our teaching is, undoubtedly, one. Multilingual and multicultural Europe needs writers and teachers who talk, dialogue, grow and learn together. That is our vision and that is what happened last November in Paris.

As a teacher, the conference was for me a place of learning and my classes are now better with the knowledge I got there; as a director of one of the schools that participates, the conference was the right place to find ways to improve our school and its courses and programs and, also, to find partners for new collaborative projects; as president of the EACWP, the conference was the confirmation that our job has just started, that we need conferences, meetings, interchanges and collaboration, and that the EACWP is the right tool to lead this process.

The Ist Pedagogical Conference in Paris was a great success and I want to thank all the people that made it possible, especially Alain André, Louise Muller and all the team of Aleph-Écriture, who were the best organizers and the best guests. But it was also a first step, a decisive one. Now we know we need a 2nd conference and we are already looking forward to it.

Javier Sagarna

President of EACWP

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Lecture 1

Reijo VIRTANEN (Finland) - **Teaching ironical writing as an attitude towards life**

Irony in writing has been typically taught as a rhetorical figure of speech: "irony means saying something while meaning something else". Such a formalistic way of teaching may lead to some witty and amusing experiments that may have occasional value. But it does not lead to very deep and wise humor. Alternatively, you may teach ironical writing as a carnivalistic philosophical method. The lecture will show one case in Oriveden Opisto in early autumn 2012, and present some basic results of the course.

Mini-lectures sessions 1

- **Fiction and non-fiction**

Elena VARVELLO (Italy) - **Teaching storytelling: the shaping of experience**

"What is art if not a concentrated and impassioned effort to make something with the little we have, the little we see?" If this is art, according to Andre Dubus, and writing is a form of art, then what is teaching writing about? How do we have to do it? As a writer and a teacher, I work specifically on the idea of storytelling: an ancient gesture, profoundly related to experience and life itself. There are no general rules, and the point is not only to learn to write well, doing a lot of "homework" and dealing with technical issues, or, less than ever, learning some tricks ("Tricks are ultimately boring", as Raymond Carver said). The point is to bring to light *our* own stories and to search for the right way to tell *them* – the authentic voice. So, how can we help our students to become good storytellers, able to give shape to their deepest experience – their memories, their fears, their

desires, their obsessions? How can we prepare them to make something beautiful and, most of all, meaningful – not only for them but also for the readers – with the little they have, the little they see?

Danièle PÉTRÈS (France) - **Between writing and teaching short stories**

How to make people understand that often, in a short story, the essential meaning must remain unsaid? This is all about a workshop I have conducted about the subtext, based on Raymond Carver's short stories. By choosing such an angle, I had to go back to the source of Carver's work, who took courses of creative writing. So, I read American manuals. They were all very pragmatic, extraordinarily encouraging, full of insights written by interesting authors. The exercises I chose could help a lot to construct a story in a couple of days, sufficiently dense to let a subtext emerge in the participants' stories. My contribution will here consist in explaining how I worked with the American methods to create exercises on the subject, and how discovering this literature led me to question my own practice. In the end, the course on the *subtext* is actually a workshop on: why would someone want to write, if not about *what should remain unsaid*.

Fred LEEBRON (United States) - **The field of available time in narrative**

How the function of time can be taught in creative writing workshops. This paper will look at model texts and propose a method of talking about creative writing that allows us to integrate the true 'largeness' of time when addressing narrative in workshop.

- **The enunciation in question**

Marina GELLONA (Italy) - **A time for intoxication: finding one's own voice in writing**

In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* Milan Kundera speaks about the moment when the protagonist stay in front of the mirror trying to see herself, her own self, despite the likeness to her mother. When she succeeds, then it is a time of intoxication, it is the time in which the identity of her voice comes out and sings out loud. It seems to suggest that to be able to see one's own identity is a question

of time, of endurance, of wish, of solitude, of sight. I'd like to present how and why I introduce this image to the students of creative writing, to show the quality of a research in writing a story and of a flow of a creative process, until the time of intoxication happens.

Marie HALOUX (France) **- Writing at work**

The professional papers (papers realized within the framework of the exercise of a job/business) request relatively technical skills: a control of the information, the messages to be passed on, decision-making; a knowledge of the interlocutors: their logic and strategy of intervention; an anticipation on the effects of a communication in the name of a department, of an institutional entity... and a peculiarity which involves a subjectivity to be socialized. For the subject, the writing process produces a text, the mere existence of which thoroughly commits him/her. Supported by examples of professional papers (in the field of social work), the questioning will concern the implication of the writing of the subject in professional contexts: what of the subjectivity of the writing in professional settings?

Dario HONNORAT (Italy) **- To master a language: a story with a beginning and no end**

My paper will start with the adventurous story of my experiences as a student of creative writing from the very beginning: a fast summary of everything that has been asked from me to write since I was born. Then I will talk more in detail of my two years at Scuola Holden, the teaching approaches and methodologies that are used there. Then I'll approach my recent experiences as a teacher and how I personalized some activities and lessons I had learned in Scuola Holden: I will talk about some experimental activities I carried out with my students. I will also make a brief parallel between the teaching of Italian as a second language and the teaching of creative writing, emphasizing the things they have in common: most of all the need for practice and interaction.

- **Teaching for children and youngsters**

Enrica AJO (Italy) - **Why girls are better than boys quite in everything**

Anyway, I am not very interested, or better, I'm not interested at all in teaching creative writing to adults. I have always preferred children, and young girls to young boys, even if I was often told not to mention it. It is a matter of fact: girls are better than boys, quite at every age, and for sure in writing. Maybe they are not best sellers on Amazon.com but that is a problem with how society still is and not about the quality of the female sensibility. I have taught creative writing only to children, and this would be my second focus in the lecture: the reason why I prefer teaching children and the reason why to me only teaching children is more than just a trade.

Harri ISTVÁN MAKI (Finland) - **Teaching creative writing to children**

Children love to use their imagination as they create through fiction writing. Once a teacher prepares students for a writing action, teacher simply needs to allow for their creativity to flow. The following examples in my presentation are simple strategies that will allow a teacher to start young students off on the right foot. Free writing, journaling, collaborative writing and writing from prompts are all easy and relaxed ways to get students thinking and writing.

Radek MALÝ (Czech Republic) - **How to teach literature to children and youngsters (some Czech specificities)**

In the Czech Republic, teaching how to write children's and young adult literature does not have much of a tradition. Nevertheless, it is obvious that precisely this field has a great potential: it enables students to acquire and practice the basics of the craft of writing in poetry, fiction and drama, while also teaching them to get rid of certain stereotypes. These include opinions such as "writing for children is much easier than writing for adults" or "children read only fairy-tales".

- **The French session (lectures in French)**

Dane CUYPERS (France) - **Working on style in creative writing workshops: illusion or challenge?**

Style? The voice, the touch, the inspiration… "Style, which is the mark, in the work, of the author's presence." (Jean-Claude Milner). "(…) to restore the world's truth through one look that style enhances in vision." (Camille Laurens). Style, therefore, is intimately tied to what is said, written. Certainly. But here we have a large palette of tools, recipes, basic techniques that allow, if the basis is there, to deepen it, to fix it, to enhance it, to expand it. This work on the paste may even lead to new writing paths: to work on the form will enhance the content. May be. We can at least try…

Laurence FAURE (France) - **Teaching playwriting**

Comedian and creative writing teacher, before I even worked at Aleph, I had very soon the wish to make the students write after their improvisation in drama workshop. As part of my work at Aleph, I also use prompts created after contemporary writers' work for the stage. And I give a lot of importance to the oral reading of the first drafts, more than in a plain creative writing workshop: this kind of writing is just meant to be spoken out loud. The challenge is to make the participants (who sometimes neither do drama nor go to theater) understand that they have the opportunity to create this: somewhere, something is happening to someone.

Mini-lectures sessions 2

- **Poetry and Emotions**

Luis LUNA (Spain) - **Teaching poetry: some keys and tricks**

Poetry is a new way of considering, performing and re-building the world. Perhaps, teaching this art is very difficult because it is essential to understand the keys to connect the pupil's world, words to a poetic way of thinking. Teaching this rare way of considering things is the first trick for feeling the language, for feeling the Word like a living organism. But how can we teach these tricks? First

we need to read and imitate the Masters' Word, after that we need to find our own Word.

Simona GARBARINI (Italy) - **From the dostoyevskyan idea of emotional strength to creative writing courses**

Often, during creative writing courses, people do not seem to be able to focus on which kind of story they mean to tell. Sometimes they write a story with little or no pathos because when they write they do not manage to reach their deep inner feelings. My lecture will concern exercises that I utilize in my courses in order to help my students focus on what they really want to tell, exercises derived from the dostoyevskyan concept of emotional strength.

Béatrice DUMONT (France) - **About poetry in my workshops**

How can we enable trainees to write poetry, especially contemporary poetry? It has been well known since at least the beginning of the twentieth century, that writing poetry does not only mean expressing the pain in one's heart, one's feelings about death, nature, time passing by or the bitter sweetness of one's first love, using beautiful images and metaphors. Since the eighties, poets have been exploring new forms and topics, playing with language as never before. It can be pleasant (and funny) to allow trainees to follow them on this route, watching the surrounding world with distance and humor, taking down what is considered so obvious or writing their poem as a score or keeping a word in their mouth to put it down as it sounds on the sheet of paper.

- **Distant learning and creative writing**

Frédérique ANNE (France) - **Teaching by e-mails: shaping innovation**

Talk proposal by using email to conduct writers' workshops allows us to adapt to a growing demand and reach a different public. We must ask ourselves what we can do to perfect this new workshop structure to ensure the authenticity of a creative writing workshop. Which proposals, which feedbacks, which work upon texts? Which dynamics will emerge to solidify the group and optimize members' communication and feedback? What specific exercises and tools should be set up to ensure the best possible dynamic?

Mariana TORRES (Spain) **- How to keep an online course alive**

The idea of this proposal is to share my experience of online courses, but from a methodological way, not a technical one. The secret of the success during an online course is not technical: the tools are there to help teachers and students, but the really important point to focus here is a method to keep this kind of course: a kind of course alive with not real contact between teachers and students. We will explore different ways to keep an online classroom warm and healthy.

Fred LEEBRON (United States) **- An analysis of the modes of distance learning**

This paper will present an analysis of distance learning workshops versus distance learning tutorials, the two modes in which distance learning is delivered in this digital age. I will compare my experiences directing the Pan-European MFA (tutorial) vs the Queens of Charlotte MFA (workshop).

- **Creative process**

Catherine STAHLY-MOUGIN (France) **- About the notebook, as a tool for works in process**

Diary, notebook, by many ways, they are bound and what distinguishes them is more about the posture, the way of using them. Having a notebook whenever one wants to note something, exercises the attention, heightens our senses and develops our attention towards the world around. Throughout my experience in my workshops, I explored the various approaches the notebook leads to. One invents the use of the notebook: it doesn't let itself be caught in a definite frame. I will talk about this small polymorphic object in which creation is noticeable and how it accompanies a work in progress.

David Jan NOVOTNÝ (Czech Republic) **- About the scriptwriting workshop as a training process (from basic idea to second draft)**

Assignment: Triangle – one of the oldest themes, cliché par excellence, nihil nuovo sub sole; Conflict: clash of interests; Characters: chick chaser, woman in love 1, woman in love 2; Emotions: Love, jealousy, hate, revenge; Grand finale: death; Analyzing 1st draft; Inspiration, incorporation of new ideas; Rewriting

(assignment must be kept: triangle, infidelity, hate, revenge, death); 2nd draft as an outcome of creativity.

Panel discussion 1

Ana MENÉNDEZ (USA/Nederlands) and guests: Javier SAGARNA (Spain), Alain ANDRÉ (France) **- Is the workshop dead - what about the return to reading as the basis of creative writing instruction?**

In 1936, the University of Iowa introduced the first creative writing degree program in the United States. The model it introduced – a workshop of a dozen or so students led by a senior writer – remained relatively unchanged for 75 years. But slowly some universities are breaking the Iowa mold by returning to the classical pedagogies – namely studying the masters. At the University of Maastricht, workshops are still part of the instruction, but a much smaller part. The majority of what we do is teach writing through lots of reading, discussion, and specially targeted exercises. This panel will offer a 10-minute lecture of the Maastricht's program followed by a panel discussion: "Is the workshop dead?" Ana Menéndez.

Workshop 1

Cécile FAINSILBER (France) **- Perception**

This workshop is based on participant's perception and transcription of the *real*, the *here*, and the *now*. Echoes and singularities emerge from John Cage's *4'33 of Silence* score. A second experience, time permitting, is based on Kafka's diary impressions whereby the writer is at the center of a noisy storm in his home. Participants are invited to create their own landscape out of sounds and silence.

Workshop 2

Kate MOORHEAD (Great Britain) **- Inventing characters**

The workshop would consist of two distinct writing exercises which work as jumping off points for creating characters. One creates a character through close inspection of the character's personal effects and living space and the second uses

photographs and a questionnaire. A third exercise places these two characters in a location and develops them more deeply through dialogue and the consideration of what is spoken and what is left unsaid and should leave the participants with a solid 'beginning' for a longer creative work. It is a fun workshop which involves reading what is written out loud and encourages discussion amongst the participants.

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Lecture 2

Daniel SOUKUP (Czech Republic) - **Teaching writing in a foreign language: an overview of classroom situations**

Using concrete examples, the paper introduces some typical challenges involved in teaching writing in a foreign language. The paper briefly outlines a possible systematic approach towards this phenomenon, aiming to generalize unique teaching experience, and thus make it available for future teachers.

Mini-lectures sessions 3

- **Pictures and sound**

Françoise KHOURY (France) - **Shooting pictures and writing**

Finding new narrative forms by connecting two mediums (text/photography), decompartmentalizing disciplines, transgressing frontiers that can be related to the concept of "intermediality", were the origins of my interest for photography and text assemblage. During this presentation, I will first expose the ins and outs of this exploration, then pursue with how I organized these workshops for the participants, finding ideas in a didactic way in the works of writer-photographers and photography or literary critics. Finally, I will expose the positive effect of this practice on the participants, based on a few examples.

Denis BOURGEOIS (France) - **Sound as a step in the writing process**

For the last 7 years, I have been running a MFA program where the first year is named « Writing for the radio ». I built the whole training with this idea that sound comes first, and writing later. Several workshops have experimented the transformation of sounds into words. Through examples, I will show the principles of this method. The process could lead to alternate ways of learning how to write stories.

Orhan KIPCAK (Austria) - **Media education for creative writing workshops**

In the last 20 years the so called New Media Revolution has shaped new paradigms also for the literary production. These phenomena are – shortly summarised: hyper-textualisation, mediatisation, the development of new communicative and collaborative scenarios of text production, new ways of distribution and value-chains in connection with medial products like texts are. These phenomena are important for the teaching of creative writing. The lecture will present curricular concepts dealing with these topics and will show some of their results.

- **Workshop dispositive**

Marianne JAEGLÉ (France) - **Prompts: between technical ability and writing desire**

How do we create prompts? With which purpose? What can we consider as being a good prompt? Upon which criteria? In a creative writing course, giving prompts may be necessary to help the writers go ahead in their work and in the discovery of their own writing. This lecture will discuss the following points: the difference between a pattern and a theme, the purpose of the prompt: giving technical ability and stimulate the desire to write, examples of prompts. "Ready made prompts", etc.

Laure NAIMSKI (France) - **The creative writing workshop as a jazz orchestra**

There is small difference between a creative writing workshop and a jazz orchestra. Throughout my experience, both as a jazz saxophonist and a creative writing teacher, I will quickly explain the similarities between those two worlds. Then, I will focus on the way those similarities provide pedagogical tools to build my own creative writing workshops. A kind of tools box every teacher can use. No need to know jazz music to do so. Just be all ears.

Javier SAGARNA (Spain) - **Reading in creative writing teaching**

Reading is incorporated to the learning programmes of Escuela de Escritores as one of the basis of our system. From initial levels to the most advanced ones, teachers prepare a list of books (or stories) to read and comment, in order to bring out a reader and a writer in every student, as in a parallel process. Or a writer who reads and uses this reading to grow as a writer. Making contact with literature (not only with books), learning to read it in a critical but personal way, and discovering the techniques that a wide range of writers use to build up their stories are some of the achievements of a system that is being used both in our classroom courses and in our on line courses. A brief overview of our methodology will be given on this lecture.

- **To teach or to write?**

Enrica AJO (Italy) - **The economical impossibility of creative writing for someone with a life to live**

I' m very curious about different (?) case histories in other countries, but due to the worldwide crisis, and due to the Europe wide crisis, and due to the Italy wide crisis and due to my own memyselfandIwide crisis and due to the personalwide crisis concerning me and my mother fighting over my starvation for eternity and my duty in sending CVs to pizzerias, well, in the end I learnt you can' t get what you want (or at least five euros per hour) doing your honorable teaching work, and I can' t agree more with Mick Jagger in referring this sad story.

Thomas BOUVATIER (France) - **Narrative techniques**

Narrative techniques are a set of rules about how to build a story. As a teacher, author and editor, my experiences pushed me to focus on the human dimension before those rules, and then literally on them: 1) The work on oneself (one's identity as an author), the choice of a writing environment, the note taking, the conscience of one's own literary ambition; 2) Fiction and non fiction, the notion of plot, of red thread, the need for obstacles, the transformation and the snowball effect.

Catherine LE GALLAIS (France) - **About the relationship between writing and teaching creative writing**

Resting on interviews of creative writing teachers, I will gather some points of view on the living relationship between writing (i.e. working at one's own literary opus) and teaching creative writing. Who is (*or* feels) allowed to teach? Why teach at all? To what extend can writing and teaching go together? I will try to point out aspects of the relationship between writing and teaching creative writing that can be felt as problematic.

Panel discussion 2

Denis BOURGEOIS (France) and guests: Thomas BOUVATIER (France), Ana MENÉNDEZ (USA/Nederlands) - **About the writer's training**

How to justify that the writer needs training? This roundtable would rather avoid this endless question to consider the links between the writer's training and the professional openings. How to shape courses that lead to deal with professional partners: publishers, producers. How to offer a real training which will help the authors build their own writing world and, in the same time, be able to honor a contract or respond to an order? The questions of the best contents for programs in creative writing could also be raised.

Panel discussion 3

Alain ANDRÉ (France) and guests: Reijo VIRTANEN (Finland), Mariana TORRES (Spain) - **About the teacher's training**

A lot of creative writing teachers are writers or literature teachers first. But the art of teaching art is a specific one, isn't it? How can we help teachers manage with its specific and recurrent problems? Do they need an initial or a continuous training? Should they meet at regular meetings where to share and think about their way of teaching? Or should they find their own way on their own, as many writers feel sure they have done?

Workshop 3

Linda LAPPIN (Italy) - **Using myth: a focus on Katabasis**

The hero/heroine's descent to the underworld is a crucial phase in the universal myth of initiation and provides the archetypal underpinnings of many contemporary works of fiction, poetry, and memoir. Using classical sources and contemporary remakes dealing with Katabasis, this workshop will guide participants through the writing of their own downward journey in the medium of their choice. Emphasis will be placed on finding new pedagogical approaches to myth and mythology in teaching creative writing to young adults.

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INTRODUCING THE CONFERENCE

Alain ANDRÉ

I am a teacher, a writer and the pedagogical director of the French creative writing school Aleph-Écriture. I would just like to tell you:

- Why I feel very glad that this Conference opens at last;
- What we may expect from it;
- And introduce you to the staff who will help you travel safe during those two days: especially to Louise MULLER, because I really want to congratulate her on having done this wonderful job all along the preparation of our Conference.

1. The first EACWP pedagogical conference

First of all, I'd like to thank all EACWP members for their great help. I'd like to thank, of course, all of you, for being here in Paris, at the Finish Institute, that I wish to thank as well, because we desperately needed to meet in a wider place than the small Aleph training rooms and office. I'm very glad to introduce this Conference for at least two reasons.

EACWP / A European story

As a member of the EACWP board, I've been taking part in its Symposiums for some years – 4 years now, I think. From the very start, I was really stricken by the very friendly and productive atmosphere of these meetings. We are about to live the same here in France, and I was very happy last year to suggest the Elizabeth Bing Association (here in Paris) and very soon "Le Coin bleu" (something like "the Blue Corner", in Brussels) as new members of our EACWP.

In those Symposiums, we were able to understand each other, in spite of the English language hurdle race. English is used in our association as a sort of modern Latin, a communication language, and it's a good point for everybody, even if, especially in Latin countries, it's a pity to see that 3 of our teachers out of 4 are unable to take part in our works, just because of English, which they don't speak and sometimes just don't want to.

By the way, I think we might have another pedagogical conference, one of these years, about the way we use Anglo-American literature, and Anglo-American creative writing manuals, and the English language, in our teaching, in comparison with the way we use contemporary national and European materials… After all, if we are still living in the times of US domination, it's not forbidden to think about it a little bit!

The conference: a time for pedagogical sharing

I'm very glad to introduce this Conference, too, because it represents a real time for pedagogical sharing. It is focused on creative writing teaching, dedicated to creative writing teachers and searchers. Two previous international conferences were already organized by our EACWP, and I was in Orivesi, Finland, for the last

one - but they were conferences about creative writing in general, not really pedagogical ones. We had some pedagogical sharing in our Symposiums, let's say one day out of the three days they usually last, but we never had enough time to go very far.

I remember I gave a mini-lecture about "how to start with a novel" in Orivesi, a lecture about my "writing, teaching and managing experience" and a workshop about "polyphonic narratives", in Orivesi again, but they were not comprehensive and global interactive experiences, as the ones we are about to share here in Paris.

Here we had a training session in English, with Nora Ekström, whom I would like to thank again for the great job she did, and now we are about to have 2 plenary lectures, 3 panel discussions, 3 workshops and about 20 mini-lectures. It's really worth being underlined, because, as a lot of you already know, we hoped this Conference would be financially supported by the Grundtvig funds of the European Union, as it already happened for previous projects, and it wasn't, but nevertheless here we are, which is great.

2. How do we teach?

Questions

Well, what can we expect now? During the previous Symposiums, I was particularly interested in our pedagogical sharing. I remember a lecture given by Angel Zapata in Madrid about a Sam Shepard's short story. I remember a lecture in Vienna by Daniel Soukup about poetry. I remember many others. What fascinated me, I think, is the way Europe opens the landscape of our own French pedagogical debates. I was also stricken by the fact that some questions we've

been working on here in France for long do not seem to be so important in other countries. Let me give you three examples:

- One. What is the right posture for a creative writing teacher? I mean: is he a teacher or something totally different?
- Two. Is the art of teaching art a specific one, or a simple extension of creative writing art? I mean: do we think students just have to imitate, and especially to imitate their wonderful teachers, which is pure behaviourism, or do we think they have to build their own questions and ways of writing, and how, which is a rather different approach (a constructivist one)? What are the adequate contents?
- Three: do young teachers need a specific initial training? I mean: are they teachers just because they are writers, or not? What happens when they are not published writers yet? What training tools may be used, if training happens to seem necessary, or at least useful?

I'm not expecting answers for these questions. But I'm sure they will lead to new questions. More especially as you have already asked others, as Ana Menéndez did with the statute of reading in creative writing teaching, or Denis Bourgeois with the writer's training, or Frédérique Anne with the links between creative writing and creative writing teaching - sorry for all the ones I'm forgetting.

A panorama?

But I'm expecting something more: a sort of "état des lieux de l'enseignement de l'écriture créative à visée littéraire en Europe", as I'd say it in French: I guess I should better say a description, or a panorama of creative writing teaching in Europe, which includes, I do not forget, Great-Britain and the United States… That's why the future proceedings of this Conference are important. In a few

years, they will probably be considered as a starting point for our pedagogical research.

PLENARY SESSION-LECTURE 1

Reijo VIRTANEN (Finland)

Teaching *irony* as an attitude towards life

Theory of irony

I have been teaching ironical writing for almost twenty years. Before that I wrote many ironical columns and sketches during my years at the university, and also made some academic research on the topic.

In this autumn, my latest class of ironical writing was one of the first classes that our college started to teach the first-year students. For a moment, I once again wondered, is it really a good idea to teach this extremely difficult rhetorical figure of speech to newcomers. But then I remembered some important points:

In writers' schools it is typical to teach Aristotelian poetics to newcomers, and what about the classical favorites, like Oedipus by Sophocles – are they not ironical?

I also remembered my own hobby from the 1970's. As a 12-year-old boy I used to write pastiches about Mark Twain's ironical columns. So, the task should be very easy.

Actually, irony is not only a figure of speech. It is not only a literary technique, or method. It is basically something more. To announce it philosophically, irony means an attitude towards life. Being ironical means that you, as a writer, are prepared – anytime – to look at things dialogically, from somebody else's point of

view. Or, simultaneously from many contrary, or even contradictory points of views.

By the way, isn't that something that every writer has to learn in order to turn professional? To enter into the minds of his / her characters and - of course the narrator, too. So, I think that training on irony is fine training for all in playing with viewpoints.

After the latest course I am even more certain than before that irony must belong to the basics of creative writing, not only the basics of humor and satire.

However, in my latest workshop we were concentrating on irony as a device in humorous and satirical writing, only.

I have to thank Wayne C. Booth, Douglas C. Muecke, and Linda Hutcheon for their scholarly efforts in the field of irony. But the dearest theoretician for me above all has been Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian heretic and anti-formalist who passed away just before the Perestroika of Mikhail Gorbatshev. Bakhtin's theories of carnivalism and dialogism have been very important for my work as a writer of ironical sketches and columns. And also for my works as a scholar and a teacher.

Irony is one of the literary devices that have their roots in carnival festivities. For example parody, grotesque, macabre and burlesque are also carnivalistic devices. The development of literary laughter started from old fertility rites long before the classical comedy.

Carnival is a masquerade. In the beginning of festivities people put an amusing, or frightening mask on their face. They also disguise themselves in strange clothes, or forms of grotesque creatures. They start to act in an abnormal way, and speak in an inappropriate, or indecent manner. All kinds of freak shows, parodical acts

and playful blasphemies are allowed and favored during carnival period. The same tendency will be found behind all the shows. All that is basically ironical!

Originally the words behind irony, *eironeia* and *eiron* mean 'pretending' and 'pretender'. For example the Greek philosopher Socrates, as a famous eiron, used to pretend that he is a simpleminded person in his dialogues with other philosophers. But the people in carnival do not pretend, Bakhtin says, for they really live the carnival life. In a mysterious ritual of mental metamorphoses they have really turned to somebody else. For a short period of a few days they have a glorious opportunity to live the life of people who belong to a different social class, to a different age group, to a different sex, to a different species of living creatures. A rich man may turn into a beggar. An ordinary citizen may turn into a king. A lady may turn into the Pope. A human being turn into a bush or a tree.

And that is exactly what will happen also in the literary act of irony, if you want to write a powerful and efficient text. You can write your ironic speech as the president himself, or as the Pope himself, not just pretending to be the president or the Pope. If you are a woman, you can write a vindication of machoism as a man, and vice versa.

The same process is possible in a dialogue, or a tale. In a mysterious ritual of metamorphoses the writer turns into the narrator, and then to one character after another, shifting constantly from one disguise to another. And the play of eironeia continues throughout the whole text. And in this shifting process the writer really lives the life of all his or her narrator and characters.

But then you ask, what is the purpose of that literary masquerade?

It is well-known that irony, as well as all devices of humor and satire, can be used in malicious purposes. However, in our workshops of carnivalistic irony the aims are always democratic and humane. The basic idea of carnival and carnivalism is to encourage people with the help of laughter, to give them self-confidence and cut down all fears. Everyday life of all people is full of threats or terrors. When opening the daily paper, you cannot avoid news of robberies, gunfights, wars, hurricanes, floods, the whole climate change – and new Ice Age coming soon! You also read about corrupted politicians, fraud doctors, criminal-minded policemen, mad soldiers, megalomaniac presidents, bombastic dictators, and institutions and societies of the fascist type.

The targets of carnivalistic irony are typically those people and institutions that pretend to be high above the ordinary society. Their task should be to govern and serve in a wise and benevolent way, but suddenly they start to behave against the people and their country. Why one artist in America sculptured a toilet pot which look likes the smiling face of The President of the United States, George W. Bush? Why the Nobel Prize winner Dario Fo started to write a farce where Silvio Berlusconi is haunted by a group of witches? Why the dictators in Charles Chaplin's and Sacha Baron Cohen's films are so …. well … childish?

To put it short: the aim of irony is to distort and exaggerate in order to make the target of laughter look extremely stupid or evil. The target, whether a person or an institution, will reveal one's stupidity, or evilness in one's speech, or acts. In a skillful irony the writer does not insult or criticize the target directly. By using Mikhail Bakhtin's terminology, in irony the target alone degrades and disgraces itself.

Methods of teaching irony

In this autumn, my workshop on irony lasted 20 hours, during four separate days and within one month. Between workshop meetings, there were exercises.

You cannot start writing irony just right away. You'll have to have some preparation. First, the writer must have an opportunity to choose a topic which is very important and emotionally moving especially to her / him. It is also important that the topic is factual, not fictional. Ironical texts speak about this mutual world of all people. If the topic were untrue, the writer would not be serious enough in his / her laughing. Ironical laughter is indeed a serious matter, or serio-comical, as Bakhtin writes.

During our classes we often go to the college library or computer class in order to find serious topics from the media. This time students went to the internet and came back with pieces of news which they considered strongly touching.

The first exercise during classes was to write 15 lines about the chosen topic for a serious column. The students were ordered to take a very sharp point of view and clear attitude towards their subject. We could call this a monological, or one-voiced point of view (again using to Bakhtin's theory). Of course the final aim on classes of irony is to learn dialogism. But how can the writer know what is dialogical writing, if he or she has not first experienced what is monological writing?

Most of the topics, that the students chose, were really very serious. For example, one text was about some homeless students living in container boxes, another text about mental depression, one about the medicalization of society, and yet another

about the increase in the number of suicides. From these universal topics, it seemed to be an easy route to move on to laughter and irony.

But before any homework, the students needed a shock effect to shake them away from their ordinary humane thought towards something totally opposite. I considered the Irish-English priest Jonathan Swift would be a great poison for these purposes. When reading Swift's *Modest proposal,* from the early 18th century, the readers were persuaded to identify with the sinister idea and viewpoint of Swift's text. The narrator there is an evil gourmand who appears to belong to the English noble classes. To put it shortly, the narrating nobleman of Swift's pamphlet gives a short cut solution to the starvation and sufferings of Irish children. The babies ought to be utilized as groceries (foodstuff) when cooking meals to the rich English gentlemen. This reader's act is comparable with the grotesque disguise of carnival characters. It means being somebody else and thinking someone else's thoughts. Also it means looking at the world from somebody else's point of view.

The first homework was about verbal irony. The students were supposed to write a 1- to 2-page-long essay about the same topic they had chosen from the Internet. Now they had to take the attitude of an enemy, or of somebody else, whose ideas and viewpoints they opposed. Of course, the enemies were supposed to be also found from the news. And they were.

When writing about medicalization, could you normally identify with the viewpoint of a fascist doctor? This doctor talks deliberately about weak individuals who are not capable of living in our society? And could you make yourself invent the best means for getting rid of the weak and crippled people? No! But in irony everything is possible. After reading Swift you are more than

willing to do it. At this very moment, I have to remind you about irony: it means "saying something but implying the opposite". So, the fascist narrator in an ironical text is only a boastful marionette in the hands of a humane and democratic writer. The doctor with his absurd logic is like the braggart soldier of an ancient Greek comedy. He is the one who finally turns out to be stupid or evil, and the target of our ironical satire.

In verbal irony we have now already moved from monologism to dialogism, or double-voiced discourse, as Bakhtin would say. There the writer's aims are opposed to those of her or his narrator.

The next step – after verbal irony – was to learn dramatizing irony. It means that the writer has to invent more than one character to join in a dialogue (discussion or argument) and to create a plot for their acts. Dramatized irony means a structure where the expectations of the main character or the reader, or both, are frustrated. We expect something to happen, but in result, something else happens.

After my workshop I have come to a certain conclusion:

The teacher of irony ought to be very careful in choosing the exemplary text. It should be a short and a simple one, such as Boccaccio's short stories. My latest example was too long and too sarcastic – not ironical enough. It was a short story by Veikko Huovinen, a Finnish master of satirical humor – and not one of his best. But luckily, my error did not prevent the students from doing their job: they finally created ironical – and also funny – plots.

The topic for their short stories was again supposed to be the same as in the original news.

The student who had chosen suicide as her topic, drove her characters to the Moon like satirist Lucian did in the ancient Greece. There, on the surface of the Moon a young girl and her mother started to solve their family problems. The dialogue was ironical and the story terribly macabre.

The writer, who had chosen depression as her topic, wrote a science fiction parody resembling Jonathan Swift's type, inventing absurd acts and dialogues between irrational scientists and foolish computers.

The writer, who had chosen medicalization as her topic, wrote a horror story parody about a doctor who begins to meddle with drugs himself and will be driven to deep nightmares with medical conmen (= cheating consultants) and their Kafka-type offices appearing and suddenly vanishing.

Results

Most of the students found their way from the direct speech of a monological piece of news to a dialogical expression of ironical columns and essays. On the next stage the same students found their way to the dialogical expression of dramatized irony. Some missed the point and continued writing one-voiced discourse foregrounding their straightforward opinions and attitudes.

During a workshop on irony we have to change a writer, who is a virtuoso of styles, into a carnivalistic person. In a carnivalistic act of creating a column, or a story, the writer is not just handling with words or phrases, but he or she must learn to live the life of others. The writer must assimilate with the characters and adopt their attitudes, and posit them into a dialogue, both in the level of speech and the level of plot.

At the first steps of one's workshop, the description of the main ideas of carnival is very important but perhaps even more important it is to find appropriate examples of ironical writing. You just have to find texts which contain a vast variety of dialogue of attitudes. As Bakhtin insists, Dostoyevsky and other writers of irony have absorbed their carnivalism by reading texts of their skillful predecessors like Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Voltaire, Swift, and many others.

Conclusion

Irony is not just a technique but a philosophy. It means an attitude towards life.

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MINI-LECTURES SESSION 1

FICTION AND NON FICTION

Elena VARVELLO (Italy)

Teaching storytelling: the shaping of experience

A few months ago, I read an essay written by the great American short story writer Andre Dubus. Conceived as a letter (and titled Letter to a Writers' Workshop, indeed), this essay is a beautiful and smart meditation about how to teach writing in the most appropriate way, and about what should be good for students and what should be damageable for them. At a certain point, Dubus writes: "Hemingway once said that he had very little natural talent and what people called his style was simply his effort to overcome his lack of talent. Don't take that lightly. What is art if not a concentrated and impassioned effort to make something with the little we have, the little we see?".

I will use these words, one day, I thought, they will help me somehow. Then, three days ago, while I was rethinking about this paper, turning over the pages of a magazine I found an interview with Philip Roth, in which he said, talking about Joe Luise, the boxer: "He said he has done the best he could do with what he had", and then, suddenly, I returned to Andre Dubus' essay.

Well, all these words I simply, deeply understand, in a very profound and maybe irrational way. I understand them first of all as a writer and then as a teacher, since I am both. I have been teaching in Scuola Holden, in Turin, since 1999. A

long period of time, and this reminds me I have grown old in the meanwhile, but this is "a private affair", as our writer Fenoglio would say. The point is that, from the beginning, in 1994, our school has worked specifically on storytelling: what it is, how you can teach someone to be a storyteller, not only and primarily a writer, what it means, what you have to do, practically. And how you can prepare someone to make something beautiful and significant with the little he has, the little he sees, as Dubus said (because we are only human, with human instruments)?

In my view, the most important thing is to understand that teaching and learning storytelling is a neverending process (as is writing). After more than 12 years spent with so many students, teaching is still something I am reflecting upon, and it changes as my vision of telling and writing stories changes, book after book, story after story. What I know for sure is that storytelling has deeply and profoundly to do with experience (what we have, what we see), and that everyone has his/her own particular experience, his/her own land, his/her own imaginary country. In fact, *experience* is one of our key words, and it is our starting point. Also, storytelling has to do with what we think about life and experience, because everyone has his/her own life but also his/her own point of view about it. Then, at last, storytelling has to do with the voice we use when we tell a story, and, again, everyone has his/her own voice, his/her own specific language and rhythm.

So, there are no general rules: this is the only rule I have discovered. No general rules in telling a story and no general rules in teaching how to do it. I have my own personal vision and method, and my colleagues have theirs, and this is a great richness, I think. But, at the same time, we are all involved in the same research, and we share the same, strong belief: storytelling is an old, primary

gesture, a gesture that precedes writing; it is full of implications and meanings; it is partly mysterious and deeply related to experience and life.

In my opinion, this is the first thing that a student has to reflect upon, remembering that basically everyone is a storyteller. We are *all* storytellers. There is nothing more connected with being human than telling stories about ourselves and the world we live in and how we feel it and see it and respond to it and learn from it. But, then, what is teaching all these things about?

First of all, I believe that it has to do with the effort to free something inside of my students. This is the first step I usually take as a teacher.

"I don't have any idea, I don't know what to write": well, I hear this sentence all the times, with every single student (some of them don't say it directly, but you can read it on their faces). It is a paradox, because, as I have said, it is my strong belief that we are all storytellers, every day of our life, even if we do not notice it. So, the first thing I do as a teacher is trying to free my students from the heaviness of a platonic idea of what telling or writing a story should be, and lead them, if possible, to a sense of freedom.

Don't waste your time trying to catch an idea, but return to your experience, your own visions and obsessions: your world. Don't think about an idea as an abstraction that will reach you from heaven and bless you if you are very, very lucky. In fact, the word *Idea* comes from the Greek verb *idein*, which means "to see". We are in the right place: we are talking about our visions. So close your eyes and write what you see, because I know you see something. Write a page about a woman who is talking with her son, if this is what you see, or about a man who is driving his car in the evening, returning home from his work. Your mother, your father and their relationship. A dress you had when you were a girl or a boy.

Something that wounded you. A child who has stolen money from his mother's wallet to buy something he desperately wants. You, yourself.

Elizabeth Strout once said: "Before I began to write my first novel, *Amy and Isabelle*, I had this vision on my mind: a mother who cuts her daughter's hair angrily. I did not know where this vision would take me". So, dig inside of you, I say to my students. In the past four years, for example, I've been obsessed by fires and corn fields and by the fear of losing someone I really love. I don't know why, but however I wrote a novel in which all these obsessions are mixed together.

Memories and visions and obsessions: our own experience. Everything is already inside of you, I tell my students: this is the point. So, I encourage them to do this: work on their memories and visions and obsessions. Start from what you desire, what you fear, what you remember of your past, what you need, what you escape from. Write something about that, without thinking too much, not yet. You are not here to demonstrate you are a great talent: you are here to bring your own stories to light. So write about one thing you desire, for example. Describe your lover or one of your friends. Try to write a dialogue between you and your boyfriend, or a dialogue between two persons about an issue that is important for you. Reflect upon it and make it clear: what is really important, for you?

Usually, something good, funny or sad but full of life, comes out, and it feels like we are starting to reveal our deepest secrets to our best friend (which telling stories has to do with, symbolically, of course; Walter Benjamin called it the capacity of sharing experiences). I'm not talking about autobiography in a narrow sense. I'm rather talking about an exploration into the little we have and the little we see. What I want to say is that the old expression "write what you know", also means write what you only suppose or fear or desire or imagine. All these things

are parts of your experience. Write also what you partly ignore, as Wislawa Szymborska said talking about poets. She said: "Poets, if they are genuine, have to repeat themself again and again 'I don't know'".

In another essay, Dubus wrote: "I learned by hearing myself speak; the source of my speaking is our mysterious harmony with truths we know, though very often our knowledge of them is hidden from us". Replace the word *speak* with the word *write*: it works. There is a mysterious harmony with truths we know, though very often our knowledge of them is hidden from us.

Obviously, this is only the first step. A kind of deliverance from prejudices about what telling or writing a story should be (and I am talking about established rules and supposed commandments). It is like returning home. Or, to be more precise, it is like digging the foundations for a new house. But a house has to be build (a story has to be told) and it will take hard work and a long, long time.

And so we have the second thing, here: how to move from a personal vision, from our own experience, to a story (a short story or a novel, who knows?). At this point, we have to talk about connections and structures and shapes and editing. *Editing* (I mean the art of assembling and cutting and putting things together) is another of our key words, something we work on all the time.

Let's return for a while to one of the supposed visions I have mentioned before (it is funny, because I don't know exactly *why* I mentioned it): the boy who had stolen money from his mother's wallet. From a certain point of view, this vision resembles an Edward Hopper's picture, static but in movement at the same time. Who is this boy? Who is his mother? What does he desire so much, and why? What will he do after that?

Use your own visions, your experience and obsessions, and many questions will come out: then, connections will have to be made. Suddenly, the students understand that they have to imagine all these connections, bringing them to light, if they want to have a story. The visions ask for something more. So, after digging the foundations, they have to build the walls and the windows and the doors of their new house. The vision becomes larger and many-sided, connection after connection.

As a teacher, I try to help my students during this process, in which their world is so deeply involved. I ask them questions about their private visions, and then they usually start to see more than they would have thought. Are you sure?, I ask them. Do you really think that this can work? Do you really think his mother would react that way? What is the truth? What do you really need to say?

This is one of the strongest moments of every workshop: students touch with their hands the real meaning of words like resilience and determination, because building a house is not simple, nor fast. During this work of construction, a teacher is a guide and a goad. Make me see what you have seen, make it as clear as possible. Open your visions and articulate them, brick after brick, as if you were building a house. As Walter Benjamin said, the storyteller takes his material from his experience and turns it into everyone else's experience.

When we reach this point, involved as we are in the issue of giving shape to our private and maybe sometimes confused visions, we have to talk about language and what should be the most appropriate way to structure a story that everyone could understand and see. In the end, we have to take other people, the readers, in our private country, and language is the only map we can offer them. In the short

story *Guy de Maupassant*, Isaac Babel wrote: "There is no sword that can run through a heart much stronger than a period that has been put in the right place".

This is the third and the last step. We work on language (words, sentences, paragraphs: the voice, the rhythm), since language is our way to translate private experiences into something sharable and open to everyone else. Students have to learn to take care of the words they use, they have to be precise and to assume the responsibility of their language. So, practically, they simply put their stories to the test, reading them aloud in our workshops and let the audience – the other students – react, as readers, somewhere, someday, will react to what they have written. Then, other questions come out. I always tell my students: "The point is not only if you like a story or not. Try to understand it: what do you feel about it? Does this story bring you something?".

In the end, what I have learned in all these years as a teacher is that there is no other way than to start from every single student, leading him or her through the process of digging into themselves, helping them to become able to give shape to their experience through language. But, most of all, I have learned that there are no exercises or homework that will be more helpful than push them along this exploration of their private and imaginary world, starting from the little they have, the little they see, repeating them every time that this is and will always be their only real richness.

I mean that the point is not only to work on technical aspects, teaching students how they should write a perfect incipit or a perfect dialogue. Of course, I know these things are very important when you want to write something beautiful. I know it as a writer. But I know, also, that there is not only *one* way to write an incipit or a dialogue, and that, surely, the perfect way does not exist. It depends.

The point is to reflect upon technical aspects letting all these issues come out from what they have seen and written.

Everyone has to find his/her own way through the mysterious land of telling stories. Everyone has to find his/her own voice, just listening carefully to him/herself and remembering the value of language. And everyone, as Szymborska rightly said, has to repeat "I don't know": this paradoxical certainty will push him/her further and further. During this trip, a teacher is a guide and a loyal company, someone who has asked himself or herself the same questions long time ago, but also someone who continues to search, because, thankfully, the research never ends. With every single story, we return to be who we really were from the beginning: storytellers.

Danièle PÉTRÈS (France)

Talking about the unsaid

How did the strange idea of conducting workshops come up to me?

In 2008, I published my third book. It had been difficult to write and the previous one had not sold too well (euphemism). It was a short story book. Actually, writing this sort of book is not so easy, since it implies trying to maintain in a same tone 25 to 28 different melodies that will mix together. This one took me more than three years - even if it is very short - and, because it was to be published in May, I knew that it would have no publicity and very few readers. So what was I supposed to do? Was I going to let my book just drift from the counter of the bookshop to the box of the returns, three months later?

Was it possible to stand up for my book and plead for it? And how could I do that?

I did not want to let this one down. So this is how the idea to apply for a grant came to me. There are some in France. You apply, and you go to a "writer's residence" for three months where you are supposed to mix with the people, mingle in the crowd of a village of two hundred inhabitants, all farmers or ex-farmers. You are also supposed to do lectures, readings and writing workshops. So I said to myself, this is an opportunity to give my book at least the audience of a whole village; even if, when I arrived by bus, I realized that I only talk about urban neurotic ladies and mismatched couples in my books, and in that respect there were very few chances that I would reach my public in the middle of nowhere. But it was too late to get back to Paris, there was only one bus a day

anyway. And I had already spent the money to get there. That is how I entered a career in conducting writing workshops.

Why I chose Carver for the workshop project?

The story of how I started writing short stories is all about my reading of Raymond Carver and Stephen Dixon. And because Carver presents all the issues that interest me as a writer, I chose to make a workshop in my residence about his life, his writing, and his relationship with his publisher. Actually, I started thinking about the book I was going to write when I saw "Shortcuts" by Robert Altman. This was all very familiar, because I was at that time a video director encountering difficulties to make a whole smooth movie, especially because I could not tell one story but several short stories put together…

I did not choose Dixon; because he is all about style, but he is not about "telling stories".

So, I started to think about this first workshop: how to communicate to the participants the two of three things I had to tell them:

First, only consider becoming a writer if it is impossible for you to do anything else (because you are going to get bored with a life with few leisure activities and probably few rewards as well, and you are going to have to sit at a table at least three hours a day plus the time you are going to spend at your work, which will probably be a lousy job because you are not up to giving all your brain out to a job that is going to take your energy, substance and dreams.

Second, you have to work on your drafts and work again and again until it flows like water.

Third. There is no third.

In fact, Carver's life was the synthesis of all these aspects which I will not develop here, because it is not my subject and because all of you know more or less what his life was about.

But once I had said that to my little group in the little village (which I did), how was I going to make them write on something?

American way of teaching, manuals of creative writing.

My nephew being at the university in California at that time, he had just taken a course in creative writing, and his short stories were doing pretty well (even though he had never written any before). He told me that he had only read a manual and done the exercises so I asked him to send me the manual. And that is where I started from.

The title of the manual is "What if?" In the US you do not have problems, you only have solutions. And there they were: 228 pages of solutions.

There was a particular exercise that I liked, at the beginning of the method: about sending postcards. For me, when you write to be read, you "address someone", here lies the difference between writing your diary and writing a short story[1].

Generally now, I choose pictures and a pitch of a situation, different for each participant, at the beginning of the course.

E.g.: "*You left your husband. On vacation you regret, and you write him a postcard*". Or: "*You just bought a country house. You write a postcard to a friend*

[1] When you write to be read, you address someone, not only yourself, you communicate information to somebody else

who is jealous and doesn't have one". Or: "*You haven't seen your first love for twenty years, as you are journeying in the place where you met, you send him a postcard*".

By giving the pitch of the situation, the participants cannot compare each others' stories neither think they're competing with one another.

Even if some are reluctant to do the exercise (too simple, too childish, too boring), I am adamant. They must do it - because a postcard tells a lot on who's writing it. It is for me as a "teacher" the first opportunity to seize their obsessions, their repertoire in a way, which will be useful later. I extract then, a personal exercise dedicated to each one, taken from their own universe (it does not work all the time, it is just a first step in individualizing the writing process).

The first sentence: beginning in the middle of the story.

Then we go for the first sentence. I give each participant a different book of short stories (Stephen Dixon, John Cheever, Edith Wharton, Dorothy Parker, David Sedaris, etc.). I ask them to open the book, and to read whatever the first line is. It is an exercise to show there are no typical first sentences; and an opportunity to exchange on where exactly the story starts. In what period of time? In short stories, the beginning happens in the middle of the action. Something has happened in a recent past, and something must be told or resolved about the situation, and that is the issue of the story…

We start with a sentence taken amongst papers in my hat, with first sentences plotting the middle of an action… (lesson two, page 7 of Anne Bernay's book).

When the participants have written two short stories, we interest ourselves to the ending of the stories (I give the books to the participants again). Is there a

"definitive sentence", "a moral of the story", what can we find as "last sentence"? And then, we go back to the middle. In fact we scan the story itself to understand how it is made. We then come back to the Carver's story I have asked them to read at home, which is "*Where I'm calling from*".

We are now at the step of the subtext notion.

"*Where I'm calling from*" is all about the subtext, so much so that it is the title of the collection of Carver's best stories.

In fact, the title is in itself a subtext. "*Where I'm calling from*" is about the place where someone is "talking from". That is to say for a writer who chooses this title as the collection of all his works, the place where he is "*writing* from". That is to say, when you find the place you are writing from, you have found what you are going to write.

This short story is about an alcoholic person in rehab in a house where the instructor is an ex alcoholic. It pictures the difficulties of the therapy and the relationship with other addicted persons (building the therapy itself). It pictures the path to whether they are going to stop drinking (or not).

The reason why I focused my workshop on the "subtext" is because it is directly related to what a story should look like, whether you like it or not. And this aspect especially shows in the end of the story. A story can be interesting and well written but pointless. In fact, if you have nothing mysterious to say, something that you don't even know before you are going to write about, if there is not this something (like in the "backyard"), you are not going to write moving short stories.

In Carver' stories, this "something" appears in the subtext in a very characteristic way: by talking about something else, unrelated to the story itself, he gives an information that could remain unseen by the reader, but that constitutes the "sub-text" or the "metaphor" of the story[2].

In Carver's words, "*writing short stories allows to pass information from one world to another*[3]". It's about saying something. Which is an uncommon way to talk about literature: it is very direct and can appear charmless when it is just realistic.

Last sentence and subtext

I have noticed that people found it difficult to end a story; how not to say it all on the last sentence, and that they were sort of stubborn with it.

They really wanted readers to understand what they meant. But it is not like that. In Carver's story for example, you have the narrative of the people, seen on one angle, the narrator, and generally something is happening which is not related directly to the story (connex event); that event puts a different light or angle onto the story, and that is what I thought would be profitable to explain to future writers. And there lies the sub-text[4].

Sometimes the humor can be the subtext (Woodehouse, Sedaris), it lies in the unconscious things related to someone else in an awkward or a misplaced way.

[2] Often, the metaphor is used in a novel in a different way: the story is the metaphor.
[3] Raymond Carver, « *Fires"*
[4] This is about the charm, the mystery or the unsaid of the story. The unsaid and the sub-text (for me) make the point of the story. As far as there is no subtext, there is no story. It is just a text (even if it is not necessarily true for other authors than Carver).

Humor is never explicit, it is inducted, connoted, personal to the way the author sees life.

But there is not much humor in Carver' stories. Their charm is all about the subtext, about all the unsaid between the people tending to the emotion contained in the last lines that end the story with no satisfying conclusion; and that's what remains after the reading.

Extract of "Where I'm calling from[5]":

First sentence

> *"J.P. and I are on the front porch at Frank Martin's drying-out facility. Like the rest of us at Frank Martin's, J.P. is first and foremost a drunk. But he's also a chimney sweep. It's his first time here, and he's scared. I've been here once before. What's to say? I'm back".*

After JP had a nervous episode at lunch, Frank tells them that Jack London used to live on the other side of the mountain, and how drinking had conducted him to ruin his life, then they all get back to their rooms. The protagonist is looking out the window.

Last paragraphs

> *"I'll try calling my wife again. And then I'll call to see what's happening with my girlfriend. But I don't want to get her mouthy kid on the line. If I do call, I hope he'll be out somewhere doing whatever he does when he's not around the house. I try to remember if I ever read any Jack London books. I can't remember. But there was a story of his I read in High*

[5] Raymond Carver, « *Cathedral* » 1983. Knopf, New York

school. "To Build a Fire", it was called. This guy in the Yukon is freezing. Imagine it – he' actually going to freeze to death if he can't get a fire going. With a fire, he can dry his socks and things and warm himself.

He gets his fire going, but then something happens to it. A branch full of snow drops on it. It goes out. Meanwhile, it's getting colder. Night is coming on.

I bring some change out of my pocket. I'll try my wife first. If she answers, I'll wish her a Happy New Year. But that's it. I won't bring up business. I won't raise my voice. Not even if she starts something. She'll ask me where I'm calling from, and I'll have to tell her. I won't say anything about New Year's resolutions. There' no way to make a joke out of this. After I talk to her, I'll call my girlfriend. Maybe I'll call her first. I'll just have to hope I don't get her kid on the line. "Hello, sugar", I'll say. "It's me".

The emotion lies in the blank of the story, letting the reader fill it with his/her own issues. The blanks in the story are the unspeakable thoughts of the dreams, or just the interstice of time before we take a decision in everyday life. And that is where Carver seizes his characters.

Because the question is always: what should we do, what should we say to this peculiar person that we are related to, how far are we able to go with this someone in the saying of what belongs to ourselves, what is precious. What can we bear, what is the limit? It is about secret also, of what we really think, the secrets we won't tell.

How to make people talk about the unsaid?

I mix techniques from several manuals plus add mine to create a special exercise which in a way is the "momentum" of the workshop, everything before has tended to this moment where we're experiencing the unsaid.

I take several pictures from a book about Carver (photographs taken in the places he has lived in), and:

1- I give one of them to the participants (different for each one).

2 - I ask them:

- to depict the picture as closely as possible: just putting the related terms, the vocabulary (table, dirty pants, enormous hands, etc…). Just describing, not thinking about a story.
- to find a title for the picture.
- to pitch the story on the title
- to imagine that they are related to this scene. Maybe they are social workers going for a visit there, or they are relatives (son, daughter) of the protagonists, paying a visit to their folks.

Then, we work on the name of the characters that we see until we choose several (that expands their imagination, and contributes to the characterizing)[6].
Finally, I ask them to summarize the story in 10 lines. Where it starts, where it comes to.

3 – I give them a second picture that I think could be related to and ask them to tell the story that they can see in this new photograph in two lines. Note the vocabulary, and give a title. It will be the pitch for a new story.

4 – I ask them to write the first story and incorporate the second one in the third part of the story.

You have now understood that the second story will be the subtext of their story. If not a subtext, at least they will end up with a more inhabited story, with more depth.

Then we check if the last sentence gets back to the title, if the title provides a possible subtext to the story. And that's it (even if other writers do not proceed the same way, which everybody reminds me of course at that step).

[6] For the « characterization », if we have time, we work on exercises such as « *It's the kind of person who…* » (list of physical characteristics, personality traits, habits, and list of possible first names).

Example of associations:

Humboldt Diner, Arcata, Californie, 1989.

To go further: A conversation with Carver in 1983 with Don Swaim's CBS Radio studio in New York. http://www.wiredforbooks.org/index2.htm

NB: Photographs are taken from the book: "Le monde de Raymond Carver". Photographies de Bob Adelman. Editions de la Martinière, 2006.

In which way does teaching writing affect one's writing?

In fact, the analysis of the way a short story is made is indeed not something inspiring for a writer. It feels as if you knew all the building blocks of a story,

how it is manufactured like an apple pie - in that case why should you write a story after all ?- If you already know how it is going to end and what process it is all about?

It reduces the power of plain emotion, although I know now why I like Raymond Carver, and I still like his short stories even knowing the way they are made better (even if he himself probably never thought about it in this analytic way). But, for me, when I tried to do my own exercise, it appeared that the stories were artificial, so I stopped doing my exercises. There is one though, I'd like to make one day, and it is from Richard Russo's lesson: "*What to do about difficult characters*".

To conclude, I have not talked about what conducting workshops changed in my way of writing.

I think there are things that *must* remain unsaid, or maybe, the unsaid is somewhere in what I said, in this something I did not talk about while talking about something else.

Fred LEEBRON (United States)

The field of available time in narrative

As a writer and a teacher, I wasn't always obsessed with time. I was curious about how much time any narrative took on, and its overall treatment of time, but when I thought of time it didn't make me think of the endless possibilities. It wasn't inspiring to think of time; it was workmanlike, a series of questions to ask about both my work and any work I was reviewing, boiling it down to where were the opportunities in time but never stopping to wonder about how much time was truly available in any single narrative.

One of my favorite exercises in workshop involved teaching the story "Dundun," by Denis Johnson. I used the story primarily to teach the possibilities involved in endings, and how the ending in "Dundun" employs a number of strategies (twelve or fourteen, to be exact) to open up the story to its nearly limitless opportunities for expansion. While I understood, in drawing the world of the story and then drawing the lines of reach that are executed in its last three paragraphs, that Johnson was opening up the world of the story, I didn't quite understand how much it was producing what I came to call the field of available time in narrative.

But here, take a look at the ending, and how each line works across the grid of time (handout 1). And you can see how it thus actually creates the field of available time in narrative (handout 2).

Why is this so important? Well, to me it illustrates that all time is available in any narrative we might explore as writers: the past beyond personal history, the present wider than the focal stage, and the future beyond what any character or

narrator could possibly know. That means, as writers, that we should never feel blocked, if you want to be idealistic about it, and the reason that this is the case is because all content is also available in all narrative, as long as it somehow comes from the characters. This outlook on time means that time means everything to any narrative and conjures the primary instinct in why we indulge in narrative anyway: that before we limit ourselves by setting down any words on paper, that all words are possible. An understanding of the field of available time in narrative illustrates that, even while we are within the narrative itself, all content and all words are still possible.

The oldest springboard into narrative is those first four words we all instinctively recall from our childhoods, "Once upon a time." In these four words is the promise that in a single specific moment something extraordinary occurs, and this is the whole reason for being of the story. Now we can also see that, no matter where we are in narrative, these four words are still available to us as a springboard into whenever and wherever we might go. The promise of once upon a time doesn't exist only at the beginning of every story; it exists, as Johnson demonstrates, all the way to the end of any story. All time matters, and the potential of any time exists, up until the final word.

And that is the liberation, and that is the inspiration, of the field of available time in narrative. As teachers, if we can bring this potential into the writing workshop and the writing classroom, we can continue to make sure that the primary challenge of writing—the challenge of getting to the next word—is one our students can always meet. The point here is that time can be the 'unblocking' element of creative writing instruction, and not merely just one element of narrative.

THE ENUNCIATION IN QUESTION

Marina GELLONA (Italy)

A time for intoxication: finding one's own voice in writing

During my workshop on fairy tales (but I noticed it also in other genres of texts), with my collegue Simona Garbarini, I realized that the people's texts had two kinds of different problems. Either they were very deep (able to meet important issues, putting their experience and empathy in the story) but absolutely not fluent. Or they were very fluent but absolutely superficial. Since we realized it I had the feeling that I had to look for good metaphors, to make people get familiar with the concept of depth and surface in writing.

Here I am presenting some thought, the research of a vision about how to introduce people in understanding the kind of "movement" they can play in order to keep together a deep insight and meanings and the structure and the style of a story. I don't want to give people rules, but more to give them "stars", in the same way that stars can be useful for sailors. Some sailors explained to me that when you are at sea far away from the coast, the earth, you should be able to know where you are (to be conscious of what are you doing) only with the stars. That was so important for the great explorers of the XV and XVI centuries, because only by sailing away from the coasts could they arrive far away.

It is surely more complicated than this, but it is just to say that I would like that people can get out of the workshop knowing at least the North and the South of

storytelling, which for me is this relationship among depth and surface. The idea is to guarantee a real exploration without losing oneself (too much).

I use this metaphor of navigation because my students (here I speak about adults and younger 11-12 year old teen agers) also brought me to this idea. At the end of a workshop I usually ask three-four questions to understand how people lived through the experience and speak about it. And I ask to write a similitude of the act of storytelling, of writing a story. Everyone, as you can imagine, concentrated on different steps of the creative process. Here come some of them: "It was a great **journey**, I discovered things I didn't know and only by writing; visit a new place; go to the **not-yet-found island**"; " It's like riding a bike, I get inspired"; "Play footbal (lots of metaphors about!)", "Play like when I was a child: no votes, nothing wrong"."You can become who you want, you're the king, you create a **parallel word**"; "It's like creating a sea. You make a **sea of words**"; "Tap Dance on a mined field"; "Daydreaming, night-thinking (dream with open eyes, think with closed eyes)"; "Be myself, let emotion which are unknown and sleeping expressed"; "I felt **free**; I could get some emotions free and **communicate them to others**". The idea of a travel, of dreaming, of creating a parallel world, of freedom, of being a king are there, keeping together the two aspects of creation: freedom, discovering, giving a structure and the reader.

As Ahdaf Soueif, an Egyptian writer, says: "Our duty is to tell the story that comes to us in the most effective way possible. But we do not choose the story: we are drawn in to where the feeling is deepest. A work of fiction lives by empathy – the extending of myself into another's, the willingness to imagine myself in someone else's shoes. This itself is a political act: empathy is at the heart of much revolutionary action".

The more I reflect on the item, the more I feel I have to find some examples, metaphors, scenes in Arts (literature, and other artistic languages) to find points of view about some questions:

- how to make emotions, stories, questions come out

- how to work on them in order not to lose their depth but so that they can really communicate to the reader, have a significant surface

- why is it so difficult to be at the same time superficial and deep?

A text which suddenly seemed to me helpful is Kundera's *Unbearable lightness of being* and in particular this part:

> *"Tereza tried to see herself through her body. That is why, from girlhood on, she would stand before the mirror so often. And because she was afraid her mother would catch her at it, every peek into the mirror had a tinge of secret vice. It was not vanity that drew her to the mirror; it was amazement at seeing her own "I." She forgot she was looking at the instrument panel of her body mechanisms; she thought she saw her soul shining through the features of her face. She forgot that the nose was merely the nozzle of a hose that took oxygen to the lungs; she saw it as the true expression of her nature. Staring at herself for long stretches of time, she was occasionally upset at the sight of her mother's features in her face. She would stare all the more doggedly at her image in an attempt to wish them away and keep only what was hers alone. Each time she succeeded was a time of intoxication: her soul would rise to the surface of her body like a crew charging up from the bowels of a ship,*

> *spreading out over the deck, waving at the sky and singing in jubilation.* (Kundera, 1984)

If we assume Tereza as a metaphor of a writer, she tells us that the habit of hiding one's soul can be hard to loose. But… there is a interrogation in there… It's a question of time; of endurance (here the workshop helps); the mirror of a white page (call them there); her conflict (during the book) between soul and body is so interesting. She falls in love with a surgeon who has so many relationships with women that she falls back to the problem of her childhood and teenage: what makes the difference between her and others, if all the bodies are interesting? If we read the metaphor, we realize that using the body (the action, the landscape, the objects) to tell the "soul" of our characters is one of the main themes of the workshops. Just think that a student of 12 years wrote to me: "with some *ordinary* things like our 5 senses, things that in life we do not give much importance to, or the things we like or we don't like, my feelings… I can make a story. This is what I learned."

Kundera writes: "What is unique about the "I" hides itself exactly in what is unimaginable about a person. All we are able to imagine is what makes everyone like everyone else, what people have in common. The individual "I" is what differs from the common stock, that is, what cannot be guessed at or calculated, what must be unveiled, uncovered, conquered."

Tereza's lover / man is Tomas, a surgeon. Also Tomas has a question about identity; he sees different identities in women. What does he tell us about the creative process? His work brings him in contact with the body, he wants to see what is behind. He wants to heal. His conflict is between love for one woman and sex/exploration for all the other women. What does he shows us? Well, lots of

things, we do not have time to go through all of them. Maybe the most important things he shows is the image from which he was born. Kundera tell us he was born as a man standing by a window and watching at the wall in the courtyard asking himself if he is taking the right decision. His wish, his deep wish is to see what is behind the surface of things, the world, but on the other side it is the desire to make Tereza happy. And this is the last decision he takes. And eventually love for the two is possible. For the creative process it seems possible to choose one story, following the "empathic" path.

Another surgeon in other scenes, as in "The skin I live in", Pedro Almodovar's film, helps us to see a somewhat different approach to "emotions". A different obsession is that of the surgeon of Almodovar's film. This doctor tries to synthesize the perfect skin which can withstand burns, cuts or any other kind of damage; but a perfect skin needs a human support to be put on; it will be a kidnapped guinea pig. It is a work against identity, and it seems to tell people who are writing a story that they do not have to work on the skin, but to focus their attention on the identity who wants to be free, to get out.

The guinea pig writes all the time on a wall; the wall of a man who cannot hear the person for what she/he is.

Actually wall writing fascinates me, the sentences on the walls are sometimes the "theme" of stories, or marvelous "conflict", or wise ones. They bring up question they don't answer. They are similar to what happens to people in writing, sometimes. But let us come back to other examples of artists who act very near to their own life, and body. It could be interesting to see an example of an artist who uses photography to see herself and her world of people. She can see the soul on the surface of the body of the persons she loves. It's a question of time, of having

always the camera with her (which is something I ask my students to do, both really and metaphorically); writing lots of diary but would never publish them. This artist is Nan Goldin, see for instance, Self-portrait in hotel Baur au Lac, Zurich, 1998, Matthew Marks Gallery. She says: "Photography for me is not distance, it is contact, it is like a caress". Another photographer Francesca Woodman seems to tell us that you have to find a way of getting out of the wall to see yourself in the mirror.

Kundera makes Tomas say that earth and life are the planet of in-experience.

Could the mirror of the page be a space one which to reflect on experience? To find out the weight, the sense, different signification of experience? The parallel world my students speak about on writing?

I still don't know how helpful these considerations can be for my students' research on writing. But as a trainer I just felt the need to elaborate them. Now I'll see if and how they meet people and if and how they can be helpful for them. To end, a little story. In the cemetery of Pere Lachaise here in Paris there's Jim Morrison's grave. There are a lot of chewing-gums there. Why? I asked myself. Well, maybe there is a true reason I don't know. The story I imagine is that of a boy who arrived there and was chewing a gum and seeing the photo of Jim Morrison immediately wanted to start singing. And he put the gum on the three. And started to sing "People are strange, when you're stranger". The bottom of his soul came up. Just looking at the cold stones with the memory of the song. Then all the people who came later did the same. But the voice which sings does not stay, the written word does. What is she writing? The issue of our work, I think… maybe she's writing that *people are strange*?

Marie HALOUX (France)

Writing at work

See abstract page 12.

Dario HONNORAT (Italy)

To master a language: a story with a beginning and no end

Having been a student and a teacher of foreign languages and creative writing, I have noticed certain similarities between the two subjects: in my paper I have tried to explore and demonstrate those similarities. That led me to focus mostly on the "teachable part" of teaching creative writing. (I think that in creative writing, as in every subject that we teach, there is a "teachable part" and an "unteachable part", Wittgenstein said "explanations come to an end somewhere")

Many people have doubts about the teachability of creative writing. But no one has these doubts about the teachability of a foreign language. I see it mostly as a continuum from zero; the competence of a baby, or a foreigner who has never studied the language, passing through all the levels of language competence.

Giving examples taken from my personal life as a learner, from when I was born to the present day, I have tried to show and emphasize this continuum in language learning: from the first words a baby learns to the most complex narrative tecniques and rhetorical figures.

For example, I showed how the higher levels of competence in a foreign language (level C1 and C2) comprehend subtle expressive skills, like being able to perceive an implicit meaning, a subtext, or differentiating finer shades of meaning. The kind of exercise and activities that I proposed when teaching Italian to foreigners at the higher levels, are not very different to the activities which I found more fruitful for those who started to learn creative writing.

I underlined the importance of practicing for both subjects; the importance of having someone who reads the learners' texts, and goes deep in those texts, highlights details, picks out examples from them. Also, in both creative writing and Italian L2, I found it more productive to work in small groups of a maximum of fifteen people.

Applying the theory of the "natural continuum of learning", taken from the didactics of language L2 to creative writing, I ended up distinguishing some basic aspects of narrative creative writing, and I called them "elements". In my first courses of creative writing I proposed exercises on those elements: descriptions, dialogues, plot, characters. And then we began to put those elements together.

So basically I tried to give structure to my courses, to create a path that could be the easiest to follow in order to guide the learners in creating their own short stories. The more they went down this path, the more they progressed, the more elements they were asked to master. The more complex the exercises got, the more the texts became complete stories.

This continuum of learning and refining languages has a beginning: obviously the moment you are born, or the moment you decide to learn a new language. But this process has no end: you can keep exercizing, improving, practicing on your own or between friends or with teachers and mentors.

But of course, learning and mastering a language is a path on which there are always more and more forks in the road. The more you learn, the more options you have of expressing yourself, and the more you can choose in which aspect to specialize, and in which sublanguage. There are endless ways of practicing a language, which are more or less creative. There are endless techniques and structures to know, which are more or less basic, more or less common. There are endless nuances in the meaning of every word and endless new words to be invented.

Giving students good advice regarding starting to have a creative project, a voice, a world... is something very difficult to do. As a teacher of creative writing I found myself saying "maybe" a lot: "maybe you can cut out this part", "maybe you can emphasize this more", "maybe you can find a better word for that"... in the end, regarding creativity, there are no fixed rules, and if there were, there are a lot of exceptions.

I think that the "unteachable part" of language grows with the experience of the students, and the "teachable part" takes on less and less importance. But I believe that to teach creative writing is first of all to teach, to try to give something to the learners, to search for the best ways to help them improve.

TEACHING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNGSTERS

Enrica AJO (Italy)

Why girls are better than boys quite in everything

I made the wrong statement: it is not that "girls are better than boys quite in everything". I exactly meant: "I prefer girls over boys quite in everything". Well, now that I have corrected my statement maybe I could give up my speech, but I am not sure I could really do that.

When I started teaching for children it was not exactly a way to earn money. I am not able to earn money: there are people who are able and even if my family is half part Jewish I smartly earned some money just when I was seven years old and I stole all the stuff from my mother's fridge. I made a lot of sandwiches and I sold them to people passing by. I earned some money also when I sold my friend's toys because their toys were more beautiful than mine because they were wealthier than me. I always earned money over selling somebody else's stuff and this happened two times: when I was seven years old and in a period from eight to nine. My family is half part Jewish and that part is not rich. Maybe it is the cool part, the joking part, the curly hair part but not the rich part. I always let my family down for my inability to earn money and this is not a joke: this is sad reality. I am still ashamed of being here not earning money at all and I didn't mention my trip to Paris to my father because I know he would be pointing his big

finger against me - You! The fucking-not-earning-money-one!- Anyway, me and my problems with money is the subject of my second speech that is happening tomorrow: for the ones amongst you who love jokes about Jewish people and money. You perfectly know what the rule is: I CAN make jokes because I' m half part Jewish.

So going back to storytelling: when I began to teach children I did not intend to earn money over them: It was quite more about making experience of what I had never experienced and of what I supposed to love.

I had worked before in miniclubs and junior clubs and all that I had learnt was that things were easier with girls. Girls were able to sit and read. Girls liked colour painting images in books made for this purpose. They loved to create statements for treasure hauntings.

I could sit all afternoon long with my favourite girl picturing each other's nails, eating ice creams, looking at the sea as we were the perfect female pirates.

Everything indeed was always so difficult with boys: they were always screaming and hitting each other and when they pretend being Ninja turtles, their dialogues were so inconsistent.

So when I started my own course I tried in different ways to have to teach to girls only.

I made this promotional stuff (PHOTO). You perfectly understand that when you make this kind of promotional stuff representing a girl (even if in a Game of Thrones pose!) you lose half of your potential target by default.

At the same time offering creative writing courses during summer time, when any child wants to ride horses, swim with crocodiles and sunbathe, you lose the rest of your potential target.

Maybe I' m not a strategist but I showed you how I perfectly know marketing rules and my target: that is why at the beginning of the course we had only one student and it was a girl.

Her name was Camilla and she was about seven years old, quite the age I was when I sold my first sandwiches. Often in my stories characters are around seven years old: maybe it is an unconscious way to try to sell them. She was an only child and she was SO normal. While I was writing about her, I found out about her normality. And this excites me so much that I should maybe change the subject of this so-called-paper (I know that is not a professional one but you have to remember that I quit university!).

Maybe because of this "normality" do I find girls so intriguing and I often prefer them to boys.

I can also find a link with what we were discussing with a friend of mine about Star Wars not long ago. I was confessing that I never saw Top Gun and even if I really appreciate all its mythology, I didn't like Star Wars numerology either. We ended up with the obvious conclusion that maybe all that stuff was kind of boys stuff and not interesting to girls.

It will be difficult for to try and explain my thought in a language that is not mine but will give it a try. It seems to me that children have opposite way to take part in the world and their role on it when they try to describe it. Male children pretend to be someone else, alter egos, super heroes, different versions of themselves. It

sounds like they think they have to be stronger and better and they often tell stories, non-existing ones in non-existing places where incredible and very dangerous things happen. Girls indeed quite always talk about themselves and what is next to them. Sometimes girls use a nickname but it is often very similar to their own name. For example when I was a girl I had this wonderful doll that was exactly like I would want to be once I become an adult: she had got long blonde hair (I had them long and very blonde for more than ten years, until last May) big blue eyes and she was SO perfect. My name is Enrica but I always found it not so feminine so I called my doll Elisa. She was my alter ego and one day she was punched in the face and they broke her. I put her away forever.

This episode I told you about is clearly about female cravings for perfection and our fears about judgement regarding our physical appearance. Girls stories are all about them and their sisters or brothers, parents and always a boy (or a girl!) they are in love with or who is their best friend. Their aim is try to understand what their feelings are. They want you to know why they love, or hate, people. They want you to know why they dress in a certain way, why their kitchens are so beautiful and comforting and nothing is going stop them until you perfectly understand which their favourite flower is and why. They describe to make you understand and love.

While it seems to me that boys tell stories to distract you from discovering who they really are. I consider girls not "special" in themselves but in the way they look at the world and people. I find their way more interesting because I think that fantasy and invention have no limits but real life has them, and I am more interested in real life than in something that maybe will never exist and no one cares for after all.

Harri ISTVÁN MÄKI (Finland)

Teaching creative writing to children

Children love to use their imagination as they create through fiction writing. Once a teacher prepares students for a writing action, the teacher simply needs allow their creativity to flow. The following examples in my presentation are simple strategies that will allow a teacher to start young students off on the right foot.

Students do not need to worry about grammar while doing free writing. This activity is a great way for them to come up with story ideas, or to get a start on a more involved writing assignment. They can use the free-write as a guide for further work.

Students could also work in groups on a collaborative piece – this is a great aid for writing poetry and skits. To take this movement one step further, a teacher could ask the students to act out a play as a group for their class. Working in groups helps students criticize the work of others, or to write a piece collaboratively.

Teachers may ask students to journal the traditional way, or encourage them to write poetry, story ideas and drama. It is important to make sure that the journals are kept privately so that the students will feel free to write off the record.

In the rough draft the point is to get student fresh ideas down on paper. Re-working and correcting the draft piece into a final copy teaches students how to edit their own work.

It is most helpful for the students to read their writing aloud as this will make it easier to become aware of errors. After all the corrections are made, the final copy

can be written. The students should be left feeling proud of their fiction work and ready to share it with others.

Strategies for teaching writing to children

1. Teach Writers

What happens in your classroom during "writing time" has everything to do with you. Your beliefs, attitudes and biases will show up in every lesson or activity you teach. If you can show and inspire passion for writing, your students will handle onto that.

2. Writers Must Connect to Real "Stuff."

- Children want to write about things that are important to them
- We should allow our students to feel our approval for their ideas, thoughts, fantasies and issues
- The best writing comes from personal experiences

3. Teaching writing must be a mixture of ideas and techniques

The teacher must constantly model writing: share your ideas, and expose some of your own thoughts to your students.

- Lots and lots of literature samples and aloud reading
- Loads of practice
- Independently initiated journaling experiences
- Guided Writing
- Students working independently, in pairs, small groups and whole class

4. Writers must feel safe

Your students need to feel safe to explore their ideas and know that you will treat their writing with integrity and respect. If you want them to write, this is one of the key strategies for teaching writing.

- Kids must feel valued
- Provide loads of stimulation (help them see that their experiences provide endless ideas and thoughts that are worth writing about)
- Provide plenty of time to write, create and explore words
- Always create a possibility to share: this shows the students that you feel that what they wrote is important

5. Inspire your young writers

Just as you want your students to connect their reading to themselves and the world, their writing must be connected to actual experiences.

- Make something happen to loosen the words inside their heads
- Your students need to be overloaded with material they can use before ever putting pencil to paper
- Flood their brains with books, artwork, science, field trips - any experience can lend itself to elementary writing activities

6. Remember that writing is a process

- It is not a process that has to be followed in the exact order all the time
- Process takes time - one lesson on how to rework a piece is ineffective
- Never expect every piece to be a finished product
- Always be supportive of their attempts at each stage - if you aren't, they may never try again

- Don't forget that we write to share with others. Allow your students to share often, as their peers' opinion often matters more than yours to them

Starting

1) Writing Traditional Stories from a Different Point of View

Read "Three Little Pigs" with the children. This tells the "Three Little Pigs" story from the wolf's point of view.

Ask the children to think of a story that they know well, and to write another version from another point of view.

2) Design a special Room for the Chocolate Factory

Based on "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" by Roald Dahl.

Remind the children of the story and read a description of the Chocolate Room.

Now ask the children to make up a new room for the chocolate factory, making sure that they are as expressive as possible.

3) Start your story with a Bang!

Some of my favorite stories start in the midst of an action scene. Begin with something unusual. Get yourself curious. And have fun!

Examples 1.

Aunt Belinda kept fat caterpillars in her bathtub and an owl by her bed.

Now she is sick and needs a help from you…

Examples 2.

Pamela raced upstairs to hide George´s gift. He was going to flip when he saw his gift. It was one of only 3 homegrown dinosaur eggs in the whole world. How was Pamela going to keep George from finding it before his birthday party?

Examples 3.

Uh oh! Timothy´s dad looked mad! There were chocolate chip cookies and giant spiders everywhere…

THE FRENCH SESSION (LECTURES IN FRENCH)

Laurence FAURE (France)

Teaching playwriting

Both an actor and a teacher, I got involved into the workshops at ALEPH in 2003; I am now part of the teaching team for the regular workshops, the tale writing sessions, theatrical writing and writing for the stage.

The distinctive feature of theatrical writing, as well as that of film script writing, is that they are part of a more global project that will eventually involve a director, actors…. Hence the possibility of multiple interpretations, modifications, transformations between what is written and what gets played.

The requirement is to have characters act and talk within one or several specific situation/s. And these situations, whether implicitly or explicitly, lead to a resolution the progression of which the spectator is invited to follow.

There will hence be a time, a moment, when something happens for at least one character,

Spoken out or silent, mobile or immobile

Ordinary or extraordinary,

Calm or quick tempered,

Moral or immoral

Burlesque or tragic

Realistic or metaphoric…

Within my theatrical activities (workshops or creations); within my activities at Aleph, I make participants write. The very first time, the employer that had hired me had asked for a "little participation of the children"… (you will have understood it was a school project). He actually did not seem to be truly interested in the result, and his indifference caught my attention. I, on the contrary, considered the moment as a fabulous opportunity, the opportunity to introduce theater from its very conception, not just from the point of view of acting. It quickly resulted in a growing interest for collective writing of common projects. Since then, I have always enjoyed building processes with varied directions, options, protocols, which help the participants' creativity develop fully and also lead to a final show. WE explore a theme, an issue, a situation. I suggest theatrical mediation we can rely on. And WE create a moment of theater.

Among the mediations, there is one that I like to use, though it is scarcely theatrical and much more journalistic: the five Ws or Who, What, Where, When, Why (and how) or rather: who says what to whom? How does he/she say it? Where is it happening? Why? but also What for ? (Cause and aim) that all can bring out a very thrilling scene. It actually helps set a few markers that can then be used as supports.

For each of the texts thus produced, the important stage is the reading out loud, so as to give it to be heard and appreciate how it sounds, how it works. I also refer to three plays that allow me to construct the understanding and the writing of a theatrical text:

- To work on the monologue, its secret and disclosure:

  Il faut passer par les nuages (You must pass through the clouds) by François Billetdoux, whose subheading is: a bourgeois epic built not in acts but in movements, musical energies, to serve a family situation. After a burial, a woman takes a decision that will not only redefine her own life but also that of all the members of her bourgeois family. The moment of the disclosure, that starts off the radical change, interests me particularly and I like to make use of it as a starter.

- To work on language and the reinterpretation of myths

  Greek, by Stephen Berloff, a play written during the Thatcher years which, through a contemporary vision, revisits a myth in which the social and political dimensions make full sense; here, the language opens onto numerous routes and interpretations.

- To work on a global construction

  Les pas perdus (The wasted steps… name given to the large waiting halls in train stations), by Denise Bonnal, a play in which the set, the place is considered as the main character. The author has written a prologue in which she explains the key to the construction of the text. It can profitably be used as an incentive to look into the development of a consistent project for the stage.

  As a conclusion, I will say that I find it important to add what may seem obvious: theatrical writing does rely on a back and forth process. It sometimes starts from the exploitation of improvisations, sometimes arousing new unexplored paths, springing from everyday life, news, as well as everyone's life. It is meant to be spoken out and acted, and it is probably what makes it difficult to read for most

as, while reading theater, one has to imagine whatever surrounds the text, while the dynamics and temporality differ largely from those of a novel.

Translation: Brigitte François

Dane CUYPERS (France)

Working on style in creative writing workshops: illusion or challenge ?

See abstract page 14.

MINI-LECTURES SESSION 2

POETRY AND EMOTIONS

Luis LUNA (Spain)

Teaching poetry: some keys and tricks

Most teachers training in the teaching of poetry for adults face several problems, especially those related to the different levels the students start off from when reaching their target schools. This disparity in origin may make us reset our working method each time we face difficulties, as we may for instance have in a rural area schools with different levels among the students. In order to cope with this task, my experience was to attend one of those rural schools and learn how to develop a course methodology as satisfactory as possible, in terms of student and teacher. As results of this practice I was able to learn that the most important thing to do is to establish a reference level to start from, as we have no means of giving

individual teaching. This reference level must have a verge from which the pupils may begin by themselves. That is, according to our practice, the knowledge of certain referential readings and some rhetorical tools to let them labour with language itself.

Once established the referential level, the teacher must develop several strategies for the fulfilment of a good group working, leading to the individual and group awareness. It may be of interest to think, as Piaget, Vygotsky or Ausubel suggested, that learning must be meaningful, that is, related to other previous learning establishing a clear area of close development, including tasks linked to the former knowledge.

Taking these considerations into account, we must give priority the self-discovery of their own poetic voice, underlining several facts:

a) Imitative writing. Practicing imitative writing boosts the discovery of our own voice. All along the workshops we will discover how increasing the distance from the model tends to let our own word emerge. We have to bear in mind that this progressive fractioning must be taken very slowly and also including some cracks for free writing, where the pupil even without being aware of it, develops his / her own devices to cope with the limited supply of language in front of the showing of one's own feelings. These drills must also take advantage of a capacity to explain the rhetorical resources, focused on expressive or beauty increasing, understood in a wide sense. There are some tricks that may help the teacher face this task, without establishing a learning routine which might exhaust the students and push them to leave the workshop. These tricks consist among all in measuring the tasks, which go from those purely imitative, free ones, thematically or formally conditioned and those which merge inside the talking inside the

workshop. Along this task, it is not recommended, as my experience tells, to leave aside the performance of improvised exercises coming out from those previously mentioned talks. It is also important to correct and elaborate the exercises in group, favoring coeducation and co evaluation.

b) This co-educative character is precisely an important aspect in our own learning process as teachers, being conscious that our role is that of mediators in the teaching-learning process within the workshops. Mutual learning and interchange must be allowed among students. Contradictions must be placed to encourage progress. We will choose and show different texts already dealt with along the process. We will accept every production from our students, creating a hearing and word mood. We will boost situations in which we may use poetical language, etc. The key to it is clear: the goal is not create disciples but to generate criticism and personal creation.

c) Learning the concept "privative language". One of the most interesting parts of the process established inside the poetry workshops is that of the discovery of poetry as privative language itself, that is to say, a highly specialized language coded between reader and producer, building liquid micro-societies. To enhance this learning process, generating ties between poetic language and the mechanisms of its conformation and other languages as publicity, advertising, propaganda, etc. This learning also lets way to the teaching of poetical images construction through practice, as it helps the pupils in the task of how to progressively build those images and the endless possibilities poets have, not to fall into the trap of excessive obscurity. Through these tasks we may also focus on different trends or streams in poetry, especially underlying the dichotomy poetry-as-means-of-communication and poetry-as-learning.

That is when the classroom becomes a lab ready for experimentation on linguistics and poetry and, if needed we might use as many resources as we have available, from new technologies up to detailed analysis of conversational language, building the borders between common place and estrangement, proper of poetical language.

d) The study of the semantic field theory. To start with, it could be seen that deepening into such a complex study as this linguistic theory developed in the 30's under the Saussureian structuralism would be found as counterproductive in the search of the own voice for our students. Nevertheless, an adequate understanding and practice of it could lead us to a deep knowledge about how we structure language and which are the words that generate philias and phobias in us, apart from getting advantage of a wide lexical control every creator requires to have. It is really interesting to explore the process by which our pupils find their own fetish words which will be useful for them in finding their own poetical Word and how those words increase their relations towards others, so as in the end, we create a subtle connection net of an emotional kind among objects, experiences... that affect us. The creation of this web and its de-automatization builds a large part of what would be the success in getting their own personal voice.

e) The learning of the Word as a phonetic and rhythmical phenomenon. It is a must that pupils get to be aware of the capacity of words to get a further meaning beyond their own semantic meaning, through their sound qualities. If we pay attention to the relation between singing, reciting and poetry, we may imbricate our pupils towards several discoveries, among them the phenomenon of euphony, the key to some poetic expressions. Furthermore, we will explain the etymological meaning of the word rhythm, coming from the Greek work meaning flow.

We must then, set a key here: considering the poetical text as a musical text in which the Basic distinction is made between sound and silence, expressed by graphics and absences. It is convenient, in order to reinforce this theory to know phonetic poetry and motivate the creation of poems without any sense in the straight meaning, but full of harmonic meaning into the readers' side. It is also important to get them to be aware of their own vital pulse rhythms (as everything surrounding us has a kind of rhythm) to develop their own and hence conform creation.

One of the most suitable gadgets is the recording of the texts created by our pupils and practice intuitive listening, where group correcting mechanisms and self-correction must be generated. We must consider that the audition memory of our students has already grown, as it is usual for them to listen to music in a foreign language they do not understand, and even so, they are able to decode the primary emotions music causes on us.

f) The learning of poetry as a holistic whole, whose first main change is that of the way of looking at oneself. This is one of the "tricks" or keys that have helped me most when dealing with the workshops. The students are conditioned by the surrounding environment and the usual means of learning, apart from the use of an abstract language based on the priorities of information transmission. This condition adds in itself gadgets to automatic reality absorption, leaving aside self-reflection on a reality constantly changing. It is a must for our lessons to help our pupils to educate their sight, in such a way that they establish a critical point of view of their own, far from stereotypes, generalization and common grounds. This way of "peering through new eyes", leads us to include any topicality into poetry, paying attention not to the information transmitted but into the message being transmitted itself. To work out these learning duties we may use several varied

drills, such as focusing on an object about which we write or, if available, take a walk that may let us spot some new perspectives about what we see, leaving aside the straight use it may have. It becomes important to deal with the concept immaterial heritage at this point in order to give example of the importance of the ephemerae, which cannot be measured, quantified or be given any immediate use.

All these lines are mainly orientative and under constant revision as a whole. Nevertheless the systematic use of those above mentioned guidelines generates a deep thinking on language, reality and poetry having as a goal learning, self-knowledge and personal creativity.

Simona GARBARINI (Italy)

From the dostoyevskyan idea of emotional strength to creative writing courses

This communication aims to describe a didactical method I used together with my friend and collegue Marina Gellona during our course ‘‘Weaving the texture of a fairy tale’’. This course was held in Holden School last winter and it was organized in six one-day lessons that took place over a period of six months.

The method me and Marina used focuses on Dostoevsky’s definition of ‘impression strength’[7]. In his letters to his brother Michael, Dostoevsky describes the way in which he shapes his stories, and tells that, in order to write, he focuses on one or more impressions that he received from something that happened in his real life. When I write, he says later, I focus on these impressions, and, even if I describe completely different facts, I try to describe them as if they were the event that produced such an impression in me. This way, Dostoevsky believes that the facts he describes will have the same strength as the event that determined the original impression.

Departing from this statement, Marina and I tried to orient our students to write stories that could be not only a mere architectural game, but that could be an expression of their inner deepest feelings, in order to help them shape their personal experience.

[7] Dostoevskij, Fedor, ‘’Lettere sulla creatività’’, Feltrinelli 1991, p. 115

This quotation from Jonathan Safran Foer[8] will help me explain what I mean when I say 'to shape personal experience'. In his essay ''Speachless'' published in *New Yorker* on the tenth anniversary of September Eleven, Foer explains that the principal duty of literary speech after the crash of the Twin Towers is to organize thoughts about what happened.

There was a period, about a year ago, when every few nights my wife and I would be awakened by the sound of little steps in the darkness. Then our son's quick breathing in our room, and finally his trembling voice from the foot of the bed: ''I had a nightmare.''

''About what?''

The answer was always the same: ''I can't describe it.''

At the time, I thought he didn't want to describe it: putting a nightmare into words – saying it aloud and sharing it – would only expand the terror.

But I've come to wonder if he simply didn't possess the vocabulary. And if that failure of language was at least part of the problem. Words are capable of making experience more vivid, and also of organizing it. They can scare us, and they can comfort us. What makes thrilling is what makes childhood so difficult.

In a similar way, Marina and I thought that in our course we could help our students shape their personal experience. Fairy Tale is a genre that is naturally deeply involved with personal conflicts and could provide us with a perfect context.

[8] Foer, Jonathan Safran, ''Speechless'', *New Yorker*, September 2011

The first problem was to help them to understand which impression they could recall; then to organize a structured thought about these impressions.

Our first step was to advise our students not to come with a precise idea of story that they would like to develop.

Usually creative writing courses' students think they have a very clear idea of what they want to speak about, but they do not really have it.

When in the previous years we asked our students to come with a story, these stories had many problems, inherent above all to the plot that was either too weak, or too complicated.

But there were also problem linked with the characters: sometimes they were too much, but, above all, the characters were inconsistent, as the students weren't able to really perceive them when writing and they used to get their description from their best liked fairy tales.

We used different methods to help our students understand which the impressions they could really rely on were.

First of all, we showed them many different photos, drawn from some magazines that are well known in Italy for the high level of their images. The images we put our students in front of were all highly emotional, colored and weren't associated to any subtitle.

We told them to choose an image and depart from it in order to develop a little story; we advised them that the story did not have to be a report of what was happening in the image, but it had to be related to the emotions the image was able to convey.

For instance, if one chose an image containing some taxies half covered with water during a flood, we expected our students to talk about the sensation of being flooded by something, or, even better, to talk of strong emotions that could broach into the context of a boring day.

When they understood this mechanism, we invited them to use the same technique in order to underline which were the elements that hit them the most in their everyday life. The passage was obviously created in order to search for emotional elements instead than in highly colored and emotional photos, in their routine.

We asked them then to write down a little story departing from the most important impression in the month before. In the precedent lessons we had meanwhile provided our students with basic elements of literary theory about plot, characters, agonist, antagonist, sense and so on.

So they did, and we began to have a story to begin to work with together.

The next lessons, in order to deepen the perception of their story, we took them in a room that had been emptied of desks, chairs and everything that could prevent them from concentrating on their story.

We made them listen to a sequence of very different songs with very different characteristics (one was slow, and instrumental; another was rhythmic and strongly energetic and so on). We invited our students to dance, walk, or do whatever they wanted while listening and we told them to associate every single song to a specific moment of their story trying to imagine how their characters could feel listening to it.

Then, after the listening of every single song to rewrite a little part of their story integrating the emotions they had felt in their precedent version.

At the beginning we had some difficulties, because when our students understood they were writing about items they really cared about, they began to feel naked in front of their writing; one developed high expectations, another tried to skip the central core of his impression because it was too painful for him.

Little by little, anyway, we were able to help them create an ironic distance from their story and work on it according to the theoretical principles we provided them in the first lessons.

Comparing to preceding years, we could find a better enthusiasm in writing and rewriting, probably because our students felt the linkage of their story to a vital part of their selves and they were willing to improve in order to give value their personal experience.

Our students finally understood that everything in their lives they felt worthy could be the point of departure of a process of narration.

We had some problems, above all regarding those people who chose some impressions too burdening to them (linked with conflicts that weren't completely solved in their minds). Their constant attitude was to remain at the surface of the story. We had a student that had had previous psychological problems (anorexia) and that rejected the musical activity.

But even these problematic cases were able to follow our work in class and they expressed satisfaction at the end of the course.

As we're not psychologists, we decided not to explicit the relation between our students' stories and their inner selves and to work rather on technique features of the story never detaching from the plot and the characters.

Obviously a person with a more specific background could have made use of this precious time of rejection, anxiety, desire not to be involved, in order to help people to understand something important about their lives or their perception of their own self. In this sense, I believe that this method could be utilized also with therapeutic aims by those who would be trained in psychology.

Béatrice DUMONT (France)

About poetry in my workshops

How can we enable trainees to write poetry, especially contemporary poetry?

As a matter of fact, since the beginning of the twentieth century at least, writing poetry does not mean only to express the pain in your heart, the bitter sweetness of your first love or your feeling of death, nature, time passing by, using beautiful images and metaphors.

Since the eighties, poets have been exploring new forms and topics, playing with language as never before. It can be pleasant (and fun) to allow trainees to follow them on this path.

In the first part of the lecture, I'll talk about our practise of poetry in the workshop; in a second part, I'll explore what can be proposed with contemporary poetry.

First writing proposals concerning poetry in our workshop

The framework I am talking about is what we call in Aleph "the regular workshop" spreading over 180 hours (2 or 3 years).

Old stereotypes about poetry are still alive: there are supposed "poetic words" (soul, pain, heart, sky, moon, clouds, roses tears…) "poetic ideas" (love pains, roses fading, water flowing under bridges…) However, everybody has long known that no one is obliged to count feet on the line or to harmonize rimes. This freedom which can be taken with language conventions may induce some fear.

When you propose to write poetry, you feel something special in the air, a kind of apprehension as if people were about to land in a foreign country.

Our very first poetry session is far from the lyric temptation. On the tracks of Francis Ponge, who was writing, after the second world war, about objects (boxes, soap, oysters, bread, cigarette…) in a state of mind quite opposite to any sentimental matter . It is to say that we draw poetry in this direction.

One of the following poetry session is "to enter into an element" thanks to the anaphora "enter into/ enter into" (or another one with the same intention, if they prefer); everything is possible, one can enter a concrete element such as water, air, apple, forest, meadow, ocean and so on or in an abstract element such as smoothness, humidity, wildness, tenderness and so on. Back at each new line, employing the anaphora, one gets deeper and deeper in the sensation. Then, rewriting is proposed, in several steps, inviting trainees to transform their first draft, looking for a rhythm, using verbs, for example, as a tambourine.

Writing haikus is of course something we do. It is timeless. Beside the formal constraint, searching to pick up a single pinch of reality and to express it as simply as possible is a fascinating experience with language because it incites to give up "nice" writing. The most fascinating – and I am always amazed to note it and to make it note, is that if the sensation explored in the haiku has not really been felt in one's body, the haiku will not work. It appears without any error possible.

Personally, I very much like, in a time or another in the workshop, to let trainees experience automatic writing according to André Breton's instructions, then Aragon's: trainees are asked to write without raising up the elbow during 10 minutes, then ten minutes again but faster, and at least, ten more minutes still

faster. Then they read back their text and extract pearls directly delivered by the unconscious. Nice sessions too.

Contemporary poetry

But it is something else to let trainees experience contemporary poetry. The question of "what is contemporary poetry ? " appears at once. But quiet. There's no genuine answer: contemporary poetry is poetry written in the same time than the time I'm living in. But not only. That's all for now.

Unless you would like to hear this Jean-Michel Espitallier's definition: contemporary poetry: "an itch which causes an invention which causes itching"

Fortunately, since the eighties, poets have given us the chance to find plenty of answers by reading their works. And when you read them, plenty of ideas for new prompts come to your mind.

The purpose is to invite people to search for their "subterranean language", to use language with maximum of subjectivity, as Henri Meschonnic says. Writing poetry is an intimate experience.

The matter is always the same: we write about our world; that's the only thing we have to do. So, what about your shoes, your car, your toes, the dust under your bed? Do they have any poetic power? We say they have. Because they can be interrogated and looked at as wonders. There is nothing new: we have already mentioned Francis Ponge, writing poems about everyday life objects. But, the new thing in contemporary poetry is humor. You write poetry and you smile. You hear poetry and you laugh. And this is no derision, nothing is cynical; it is only the power of astonishment: you can play with words, you can play with sounds of

words, you can play with the sound of breathing between the words (Bernard Heidsick): you can play. You can smile.

Contemporary poetry gets rid of seriousness and solemnity. It becomes humorous, it breathes.

One of our teachers, Estelle Lépine, had a very good idea to initiate the process: first listening to this contemporary voice, then watching it: how does it sound? What does it look like? As a teacher you read several incipits of contemporary poems, then you give them to the trainees so they can observe how it is written: spaces between the lines, blanks on the sheet, thickness and shapes of the letters; all these elements give the voice, the breathing of the poet. Then, the instruction consists in simply proposing to write a poem from the very first line, trying to keep up with the poet's voice.

To go further: Nathalie Quintane's evidences

One of these contemporary French poets I appreciate is a woman. Her name is Nathalie Quintane. She asks questions about the world around her, in its very banality. It's a kind of sociological poetry. Sociological, clinical, surgical poetry. A gesture, a fact, an ascertainment is dissected to get to the very depth of it, to the core.

Opening a door, putting your shoes on, being at home, all that, give her the opportunity to explore our way of being. In full innocence, she dares writing poetry with shoes, cars and turns it into humour. It's an astonishment exercise, a way of keeping the world at a distance.

You'll be certainly amazed to learn, as Nathalie Quintane says that "The less doors there are, the less rooms there are" or "when you put your foot on the floor, it

hides the place on the floor where it's laying" or "light doesn't come into a shoe" or "the definition of a second is longer than the second itself"

Nathalie Quintane's poetry is full of evidences revisited to let us consider our world with a new look.

For trainees, the instructions are:

To write a sentence expressing evidence such as: "squares are not round" or" washing machines don't wash animals" or anything else. Then, to write on from this evidence other evidences resulting from the first one, going back to the line every time something new appears (washing machines do not stand in living-rooms, or a washing machine is smaller than the room it is in…)

The matter turns to absurdity.

And Nathalie Quintane winking to Gertrude Stein and her "a rose is a rose is a rose", declares: "as an object, a shoe means the same as a rose even if, as an object, a shoe is more useful than a rose".

This can lead us to another prompt: to combine two elements having nothing to do one with the other to carry absurdity to extremes. The challenge is to consider our everyday life from another point of view, with humor and distance.

Christophe Tarkos – sound poetry

Just as Nathalie Quintane, Christophe Tarkos writes about evidences. But he is not as "clinical" as she is; he does not keep himself at a distance from the world like she does. On the contrary, he plunges into the world and into language together, in an obsessional way. He organizes his poems as ritornellos, around one or two sounds, one or two words.

It is close to "sound poetry": the language makes sound as well as it makes sense, poems have to be said aloud, and heard more than read in silence. It is always the same intention: to demystify the poetic language and to get rid of its ceremonial aspects. This way of writing poetry may be seen as an extrapolation of poetic language conventions where the game with assonances and alliterations is carried to extremes.

The instructions, at first, are to read some of his poems and show them.

Then you can propose trainees to write a list of their obsessions, to choose one of them, and to pick up one or two words corresponding mostly to this obsession. Of course, it can be concrete or abstract obsession: you can be obsessed by food as well as love. This can be proposed in any language. The poem will be woven around the 2 or 3 words chosen and repeated all along: these words/sounds are used as patterns in repetitive music. The poem advances word after word, sound after sound. It is a heavy writing.

The ideal is to work writing and reading aloud together: reading aloud is a tool to use for rewriting. The purpose is to densify the poem.

Conclusion

I finally would say I regret not to have mentioned some other poets as Gérassim Luca, Olivier Cadiot, or some Spanish, German, Italian, or Finnish ones.

To finish this lecture, I propose to read , as an invitation to" poetry in action", an extract of the European constitution in verse, written in 2009 by a Brussels poetry collective of 52 poets:

Since Shakespeare can afford

to blow his nose in Desdemona's handkerchief,

why can't I play toreador with the bull that abducted Europa?

l'd like to slay it with my invisible-ink pen thrust right between its horns,[…]

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DISTANT LEARNING AND CREATIVE WRITING

Frédérique ANNE (France)

Teaching by e-mails : shaping innovation

A writers' workshop is essentially a group of people who meet to write together. It is a proposal of a specific topic, an allotted time for writing, followed by a reading exchange, on-the-spot reactions from the animator and the group members.

It seems the "Email workshop" format seems to go against the very principle imagined by writers' workshops initiators. No physically shared writing space, no common table, no reading out loud to the group, and no on-the-spot creative tension that seems to be such an essential component of this experience.

Email workshops raise 2 questions: Should we adapt to new social tools, taking participants' constraints into account, and give in to the idea of expanding our experiences to a new public? And if so, how do we preserve the spirit of the creative writers' workshop, those essential values and objectives the writers' workshops were forged on? These are the questions email writers' workshops bring to the table.

We called this session "Shaping Innovation" because of the new evolving nature of this email workshop format, and because we believe it can be just as valuable a tool and experience as the more traditional one. Sharing our experience can only be beneficial in determining together what possible practices can ensure its

success or avoid its pitfalls. In essence, what are the "best practices" for email workshops? What rules or guidelines ensure the highest success of this format, while maintaining the richness of an authentic writers' workshop? What suggestions or feedback, what specific work on the texts, what dynamic will work best for the group?

How do we best "shape this innovation?"

We clearly cannot "copy-paste" the writers' workshop structure onto the email format. There must be a concerted effort to re-invent the concept and make it work at its best. It cannot just be a second-hand format offered to those who can't physically make it to a meeting around a table, but rather a new and different format, just as rich and inspiring as its traditional counterpart - a new form of exercise made possible by this new shared space of technology. The pedagogy of this new space is just emerging and being invented, as are the relationship between the animator and the writers, and the relationship between the writers themselves.

So, the practice of two years of email workshops animation demonstrates that we indeed have a group of authors, exchanging about texts, in a real common story, even if they never meet and drink tea around a common table.

This experience highlights the wealth of a workshop where the participants have one week to write, raise questions, and also one other week to read, print, read again the other's texts, and make feedbacks. A huge difference! Through various examples of this practice, we did illustrate how this is truly a new form of creative writing exchange, that questions the very foundation of traditional writers' workshops.

Mariana TORRES (Spain)

How to keep an online course alive

The idea of this proposal is to share my experience in online courses, but from a methodological point of view, not a technical one. The secret of the success during an online course is not technical: the tools are there to help teachers and students, but the really important point is to focus on a method to keep this kind of course alive: a kind of course with not real contact between teachers and students. We will explore different ways to keep warm and healthy an online classroom.

We could consider an online course looking at it as if it were a living being. With 3 states: birth (creation and starting), life (all the course in weeks until the end) and after-life state (what kind of path do our students follow after the course).

A good preparation of the birth (creation and starting) will mark and define the good life of our course. We will talk about 4 common mistakes (or misunderstandings) at the starting point, birth: (1) teaching online means less work, (2) flexibility means improvising and 24/7 hours attention, (3) teaching online means independent study and (4) making couples is the same of group working.

The healthy life of our course totally depends on the teacher. The difference between the mix of Wikipedia + textbook + Google with an online course it is the teacher or instructor (how to be an Active Teacher, and do not turn into a machine or a robot). We will talk, using the Dave Merrill´s Five First Principles, about what kind of activities we could encourage since our director´s chair to keep a course alive. Online and especially long term courses have the quality of the

constant presence: your course exists each day of your students' life, so the right way is to keep that presence alive. In short and flexible periods, but with several, easy and entertaining activities to do (and not all of them in front of the computer).

The secret weapon to maintain this life structured is organization. We will approach this by using the metaphor of a stair: what (and where) are the teachers' steps and what (and where) are the students' steps. How to keep flexibility and freedom in a structured course. The key is always pointing to maintain an active presence (and does not mean an invasive presence, which is easier): regular posting, feedback, engagement, personality and predictable access.

And the last words should be dedicated to the after-life course, i.e. what happens to your writing students at that point. Because until here we could apply all of the ideas exposed before to any kind of online course, but at this point it is good to remember we are teaching writing. What about after the course? Can we consider we have had a good course if our students keep writing after… us? When they should finish their process from worm to butterfly? What about the group, in what kind of being could it evolve?

Fred LEEBRON (USA)

An analysis of the modes of distance learning

When I was hired in 1999 to design a low-residency MFA program for Queens University of Charlotte, there were only five or so other low-residency programs in operation in the United States, and they all favored the tutorial model in which students corresponded with faculty one-on-one during distance learning. It was clear to me that the way then for a new MFA program to break new ground would be to somehow utilize the workshop format in distance learning. Now, there are over fifty-five low-residency programs running in the United States, and both the tutorial format and the workshop format are being employed during distance learning. Which format is better, and why?

I wish it were as simple as that, but frankly both formats have their advantages and both formats have their disadvantages. I know this intimately because I am now directing a second low-residency program that I designed, and in this one, operating in Europe under the auspices of Cedar Crest College but serving both American and European students, we use the tutorial format. As the director of both of these programs, I hear firsthand from both faculty and students regarding their compliments, concerns, and, yes, even complaints. I also teach in both programs, and thus have a working experience with both models.

As the director at Queens, I've long believed that the tutorial model creates the illusion of one-on-one instruction, because all of the instructors within the tutorial model are of course assigned more than one student each. In addition, I've believed that while the tutorial model precludes the workshop, the workshop

model does not preclude the tutorial. By this I mean that no tutorial model can effect a workshop during distance learning, because the overriding principle is one-on-one instruction, whereas the workshop model allows for one-on-one instruction by the simple fact that each instructor's reaction is to the student directly, and is merely copied to other students in the workshop group; that, by its nature, is one-on-one instruction. In addition, in the workshop model, students at the residency of course have individual conferences with their instructors; thus, they develop individual, tutorial-style relationships with their instructors over the course of the semester.

Given these observations, and the desire to provide student writers with more than one set of eyes and one single critical reaction during any manuscript exchange, and, in fact, to attempt to decenter at least just a bit the faculty role in the development of creative writers, why would anyone choose the tutorial model over the workshop model in a distance learning or low-residency program? In fact, there are a number of excellent reasons. The first, less obviously, pertains to administration. In order for any workshop to be successful, it has to provide some kind of critical mass. At Queens, we've registered this mass as a minimum of three and a maximum of four MFA candidates in any given workshop, and we guarantee each of our faculty that same student "load." Thus, there is much pressure to create this configuration, and then, of course, to reconfigure it based on last minute issues with both students and faculty withdrawing from or even attempting to add themselves to the semester's program. Clearly, in the tutorial model, there is not this problem of a minimum critical mass. So, it is true that from time to time the workshop model will have to deviate from its own guidelines, due to whatever unexpected situation (personal or professional) that might arise and affect any participant's attendance in a given semester.

The other reasons for favoring the tutorial model are more aesthetic and likely more obvious. MFA candidates who prefer this model simply do not want to devote additional hours to reading one another's work; they'd rather devote those hours to reading work from an individualized reading list that they devise with their instructor. Faculty in the tutorial model often prefer not having to monitor and respond to student commentary on each other's work, a significant requirement for faculty in the workshop model. Some faculty also believe that the workshop model cannot succeed in distant learning, because a "real" workshop requires face to face interaction, and not the exchange of emailed letters.

In fact, the workshop model requires less "original" teaching to be a positive educational experience. First, the students' colleagues, if they are trained by the program (like we attempt to do at Queens), become adept at providing rigorous and objective feedback. Thus, anything an instructor might "miss" in an individual response is often covered by the student responses. Second, this additional set of responses almost always challenges the instructors to think beyond their initial responses and to grapple with additional perspectives on the work at hand. This responsive teaching can become a key and essential component of distance learning workshops in the same way it is crucial to face to face workshops.

It is true, then, too, that the tutorial model demands more original teaching from the instructor. In making this crossover to the tutorial model, as the director of the Cedar Crest program I found myself having to make up for the absence of the workshop. I had to look at student work from as many different perspectives as I could imagine, to achieve the range and level of feedback that would most challenge the student. No one else was going to look at the work, so it had to come from me. Usually, in any feedback I give as an instructor, I worry about

overwhelming the student with too many things that could be addressed in revision; part of this worry derives from the fact that the workshop, as a system of multiple critical perspectives, always will provide a lot of feedback. Without that feedback, I lost the worry and instead offered as much critical response as I could imagine. In addition, I found myself developing alternative curricula to further address the workshop absence. The primary component, as noted above, is the highly individualized reading list. Just as important, and in order to provide for a bit more community in this very private scenario of study, is the incorporation of monthly webinars that bring together the entire program's enrolment to discuss elements of craft that are useful across all the genres.

In my own experience, ultimately, it seems that the workshop model is better for training future teachers of creative writing, because they gain more experience in critiquing manuscripts and they gain from seeing/reading their instructors' critiques of all the manuscripts in the workshop group. These elements comprise significant additional exposure to methods and means for teaching creative writing.

Which model helps writers develop to their maximum potential is up for substantial debate. The workshop model betters writers by advancing their critical skills and by offering them a greater range of critical reaction to their work. The tutorial model betters writers by having them read more widely and deeply in the literary canon; it is hard to argue against the concept that a substantial part of becoming a better writer requires reading more literature well. The tutorial model, arguably, also requires more from the primary voice of instruction—the faculty mentor—and so more "expert" opinion comes into play, from what I can tell. Yet one of the reasons I developed the workshop model was because I questioned the instructor-centric world of the tutorial model. No

instructor can always be "right," and any number of instructors can not only be "wrong" but also somewhat oblivious to their "wrongness."

Regardless, any writer serious about craft will have to read well beyond his or her MFA curriculum, and any writer serious about teaching will have to deepen his or experience by reading more in the field, extending his or her critical experience, and extending his or her classroom experience. No matter which form of distance learning a student chooses, there will be plenty left to learn even after the MFA degree is achieved. The choice of whether to enrol in the workshop model or the tutorial model might well come down to the temperament of the individual writer. If he or she craves more community and more range of experience, then the workshop model might be the better fit. If he or she craves more privacy and individuality, more of a sense of being that single writer in a mentorship relationship with a single teacher, then the tutorial model is the better fit.

This final analysis, of course, is based on the construct that all other elements—the faculty, the location, the other curriculum involved—would be equal. Since this is hardly ever the case, the tutorial vs. workshop model is going to be just one of many indices that contribute to any MFA candidate's decision to enroll in a program, and, correspondingly, any instructor's decision to teach in a program as well.

CREATIVE PROCESS

Catherine STAHLY-MOUGIN (France)

About the notebook, as a tool for works in process

Diary? Notebook? Which tool to accompany a work in progress?

Telling you in such a short time about "how to teach" the use of the notebook is quite an acrobatic exercise! For this little object is everything but something to be taught! It is the paradox I had to face during the last twenty years each time a new workshop started. During this time we have explored the field of this odd creative tool and shared the inventive way of using it with some hundreds students: as many people as many singular way of conceiving the notebook!

"Diary, notebook: what is the difference?" In fact this question arises around the table on the very first day of the workshop: *"I have a diary, it is personal writing which I don't want to share. On the other hand, I have a lot of notebooks but I don't know what to write in them: private and personal things? Or readable material for others? I come to discover what it can change in my writing habits."*

To be short and a bit radical, I like to say that the word *"carnet"* (notebook) comes from the Latin word *"quaterni"* itself derived from *"quattuor"* > *quatre* (four): a sheet folded in four pages. It is the barest definition of the notebook as an object. And the most explicit!

A small bound notebook or a sheet of paper folded in four, because it is so informal and slim, one can put it anywhere: in a pocket, a bag or on a bedside table. The only fact of having it available at any time enables to catch unexpected events, to formulate what suddenly strikes you in the middle of a walk or at dawn when not yet completely awake.

Driven by a spontaneous movement in answer to an urgent necessity, one uses this object, light and flexible, like a butterfly net, mixing together fleeting thoughts and very important matters. One has to do it without delay throwing the words in haste on the paper so that they don't fly away.

One can't say "*I will write that later"*, it must be caught on the spot. Taking notes on the spot is an attempt to capture an instant in the net – a vision, a flash, allowing nothing to interfere. One picks up words or bits of phrases in the yet unformulated thought and throws it quickly on the paper as to see the words so they make sense.

Writing afterwards would already be the memory of it. The time in between the two actions being covered by other events, this particular thing one wanted to grab would already be transformed and have another meaning. It would be a recollection. In some ways, it would be something closer to the diary: written afterwards, after the event.

Jack London used to tell the people who asked him for some advises: *"Have a notebook with you. Go everywhere with it, sleep with it. Note whatever comes upon your mind. Cheap paper is less perishable than memory and notes written with a black pencil last longer than memory".*

The user of a notebook is like an explorer, a searcher and as such, he observes things and experiments the way of saying them. His/her notebook is a laboratory: accustomed to note what he/she sees - hears - thinks or feels, he/she exercises the way of finding the right words. Lists, inventories, constellations are some of his tools, handy and simple enough to put down a rapid idea of what he wants to express. A sudden thought, an epiphany, an apparition can just be pinned with one or two words.

And over all, when aware about this meticulous exploration, he/she gets more attentive about what's around; his/her way of looking at things is sharpened. He/she tries to shake up writing habits and to get rid of clichés ambushed in the common language.

A tool of freedom

What is written on the spot does not have to be completely clear. The handwriting, the way it's thrown on the small pages, leaving here and there some letters completely unreadable, is a mark of the writing in movement. It sometimes is quite illegible for an outside lector! It doesn't matter, *"you understand yourself"*: you know the sense of it. What is written does not have to be definitive: you'll come back onto the subject later on or not at all! It'll be used or not: what is important is the route accomplished throughout the successive attempts.

It is a suspended writing, unachieved. It can be quite uncomfortable to write a note in the middle of a street, or while looking at something which strikes you! You might be looked at as a fool whispering between your teeth something you don't want to forget until you've found a place to write it on a piece of paper! You

are on your way when suddenly something occurs: the shock, the sudden emotion has to be written down right away: it was so ephemeral! And though so intense!

For the writer or anyone who questions the meaning of things, it is a way of breathing: bring the outside inside, renew the look on things, search for a wider vocabulary, get rid of automatisms. Gain some freedom towards what repeats itself. Getting a bit naive, naked…

The small dimension of the notebook makes it difficult to let the pen flow away and what we catch is just the essential.

It is not necessary to sit in front of a table to write in a notebook. One just takes it whenever needed. One exercises forms or ideas, one plays with words. What it looks like doesn't matter: it is a tool, a workshop by itself. Picasso said about his notebooks that they were "a mobile workshop" or "a pocket workshop"!

It allows for a different way of writing, less intimidating than on a plain white sheet of paper. One doesn't have to write nicely, one can even leave mistakes or neglect to finish a word or a phrase: one knows that it is not the matter. One can write in a telegraphic style leaving blanks, or like in stenography: some signs thrown on the page are enough to recall what is around.

Walking in the countryside, the painter Pierre Bonnard makes very quick draughts in his tiny agenda and puts some words about the weather: *"A fresh day with vermilion in the orange shades and violet in the greys".* Then, back in his *atelier*, he looks at his notes on the sketches and says about them: *"It reminds me of the light and it's enough to evoke all the events of the day".*

In some ways, the choice of the notebook's size seems to be kind of a game: the smaller and the more impersonal it is, the more freedom one may feel. Some are

so small that they can be held in the palm of the hand! One may be remembers the famous François Truffaut's film: *"Jules and Jim"*. It is a love story about two friends and a woman whom they both love and who is in love with both of them. What is less known is the author of the book: Henri-Pierre Roché. He wasn't a writer when at seventy six he took back his tiny little notebooks in which, thirty years earlier he had written the whole frame of the story. He then rewrote it in larger notebooks and eventually made a novel out of those different stages! The telegraphic style attracted very much the movie-director for it was already like a script: very short phrases and sequences which nowadays would be quite a modern literary tendency. The book did not have much success when it was published in 1956. Today, after more than fifty years, it is quite a best-seller! That is just to say that writing in a notebook can be the beginning of a long life story: one never knows!

Something else happens in the bounded sheets of the notebook: the juxtaposition of the notes, the multiplication of the signs, their insistence, their similitude, the variety draw a network in witch something starts to appear progressively. What happens inside this small object, one cannot presume: one must wait some time before knowing it.

When students ask: *"Why should I write all these small events, for whom? It's hard to make it interesting"...* I say: *"WAIT!!! Do it and wait. If nothing is written nothing will appear. It's only when you write that something will come out. It's quite obvious you will say? Well, it has to become a personal experience to show its efficiency."* And slowly, one course after the other, each one using it their own way will discover the effects of this weird little object. One might slip all kinds of information: a telephone number, the name of people you've met in the day, a note about a lecture, a sketch, a list of things to do, a reflexion about

what someone said, many prosaic subjects but precious for their author as well as for the lector who follows the writer like a butterfly around a flower!

It is generally not a work to be published but a tool to accompany his owner: a *vade me cum* (come with me)! But if the notebook should eventually be published, the author would have formally rewritten the notes, at least put them in a readable shape. It seems that it gives a great pleasure to read back the notebooks. The author glances through the pages and then realises the path which has been covered. Although there has been a publishing work one can still feel the *work in progress* by the approach of the subjects, by the very concise style, by the attention put in the use of words and by the fact that the author regularly comes back towards what he is seeking.

Then comes the second question: *"I have plenty of notebooks, some are really nice, the person who gave it to me is a dear friend..., though they remain desperately empty, I can't write anything in them!".* Ernest Hemingway's Moleskin notebook doesn't make us genius! This small sheet of paper is cheaper and less attractive to indiscrete eyes. So, too bad for the nice Moleskin!

David Jan NOVOTNÝ (Czech Republic)

About the scriptwriting workshop as a training process
(from basic idea to second draft)

The basis of every film is a good story. It is easy to learn the technique of scriptwriting during one semester, but if you have no idea, no interesting characters and a good plot, if you have no theme, technique is useless.

Since our childhood we have been able to tell a story, to recognize a badly from a well told tale. We can learn to write a script, but we need a dramatic character and dramatic situation. I have been teaching scriptwriting and drama theory over 22 years drawing from my own scriptwriting and story-writing experience and the experience of my former teachers. I have never read handbooks about scriptwriting or about creative writing. My handbook is life praxis.

The base of my scriptwriting workshop is home assignments. Students work with the basic principles and basic stones of scriptwriting craft. We start with silent practise, because at the very beginning movies were silent. Film directors and scriptwriters worked with the action without dialogues, they worked with the image and they needed to know what had already been used by painters: to catch a story. And they moved the story in the film time. Let us have a look at the beginning of a famous silent movie by Charles Chaplin, *The Kid*, step by step:

1) In wide shot we can see the Charity Hospital building. The hospital is left by a young sad mother with a little baby in her arms. Then comes the title: ***The Woman – whose sin was motherhood.*** Hospital staff looks at her with the compassion.
2) Park – mother sits on the bench with her baby – she is visibly in distress

3) Painter's atelier – young poor painter stands with his customer in the atelier and looks unwittingly at the photography of young girl – mother. Suddenly the snap falls to the fireplace and burns down.
4) A crowd of wedding guests and the bride leave a house. The young mother passes by with her baby and sadly observes…
5) We can see the huge and expensive house. On the street stands a big and premium car. The mother with her child passes by, observes and then places her baby on the back seat of the car and disappears.
6) Couple of thief observes the car, then they get into and leave
7) We are again in the park. Mother sits on the same bench, but now is she without her baby.
8) Couple of thief stop the car at the desolate place and after a while they discover the baby on the back seat. They don't know what to do, so they put the baby away, close to dustbins and leave.
9) Back in the park: mother is sad and desperate…
10) Bleak place: We can see the main hero for the first time: Charlie the tramp and then a title: ***His morning promenade***. Charlie walks on the street looking here and there, turn the corner and take a look on trashcans. He fires the butt and then he discovers the baby, takes him into his arms. He sees a baby carriage with one child and puts the baby in. But the mother, who is near, hand him the baby back resolutely. Then we see a couple of situations where Charlie tries to get rid of the baby – but in one moment he discovers in the clothes a slip with the following message: ***Please, love and care for this orphan child.***
11) Mother stands on the bridge; it looks like she wants to jump into the river. A little charming baby hands her a rock - and the mother remembers her own baby.

12) Charlie comes home with the baby in his arms. There is no doubt, that he will care for this orphan child.

The film *The Kid* begins with twelve scenes without a dialogue. No need to say anything, we can show everything through the movie pictures because the basic material of a film story is the image. That is why I begin my lectures with silent exercises. The word is the base tool of literature and the image that of a movie. At one moment you can show as much as possible – in the story you need two pages to describe the same scene. In the first twelve scenes of Chaplin's film Kid, what is going on, what the plot is, is clear and the viewers get curious about the end. How will Charlie the tramp take care of the baby; will the desperate mother see her child one day or not? Such questions keep viewers in their seats or in their armchairs in front of their TV's.

Now, let me show you one practise example of my workshop. Week by week I assign homework and students read it in our seminar. We discuss it and I show, where students made mistakes, what was well or badly written. I have no permission to present student's works; I must keep the authors law, so I have written one sample study, based on the following assignment:

Assignment: Triangle (one of the oldest plots), one man and two women

Conflict: Clash of interests, infidelity, the revenge;

Characters: Chick chaser, women in love 1st, women in love 2nd;

Emotions: Love, jealousy, the hate;

Grand finale: Death

Volume: 1 ½ page

PROFESSOR CASANOVA: First draft

Scene 1 – Classroom - interior - day

Several male and female students sit in the classroom. Some are talking amongst themselves, others are reading, and one girl is putting on her make-up.

Voices are heard from the hallway, we can hear the street roar.

Through the partially opened door the hallway where other students are moving about can be seen.

Professor (off screen):

…I'm sorry, but I don't have time right now. My class is starting in a moment.

Female student (off screen):

But this is important, professor. I think I am expecting your child.

A hand can be seen which grabs the doorknob from outside. When the door opens, the distinguished forty and something professor appears who is looking with wonder at a beautiful redheaded girl, standing next to him.

Professor:

That certainly alters the situation, my dear…

All the students look toward doorway, watching the professor and the student. The professor hugs and kisses the student.

Professor:

…on Sunday I will introduce you to my mother.

Enter the solemn sound of violins

All the students in the classroom rise and start to applaud. Only one female student, a petite brunette, casts a murderous look into the classroom.

Thunderous applause joints the sound of violins

The professor gestures to cease applause. The professor bows like a pop star.

Professor:

Thank you, thank you…

The petite brunette pulls a revolver from her handbag, aims and squeezes the trigger.

The sound of a gunshot resounds throughout the classroom.

The professor falls to the floor. He looks at the brunette with confusion.

Professor:

My God, Maria, what is the meaning of this?

Brunette:

It's a practical solution to a dramatic conflict, sweaty. I couldn't think of anything better.

THE END

Now we will go from 1st to 2nd draft:

Scriptwriting is about rewriting. You do not write only the first, but also the second or the third draft. I have tried to create a new draft of Professor Casanova and to demonstrate, how you can deal with one theme, with the same dramatic characters and what faults were in the first draft. It includes the analysis of the first draft.

The character had no names. In the novel you need no names, sometimes we don't know the name of the main hero, especially when using the I form, but in drama or in film it is necessary to name the characters, at least for the costume designer, the make-up artist, the producer, the assistants etc. But the main reason is, that you know your hero by name, you are his father or mother and you must know all your characters very intimately.

The next assignment was the 2nd draft:

Keep the triangle; keep conflict; keep characters; keep emotions and keep grand finale – i.e. death.

Searching for new inspiration and incorporation new ideas.

The 2nd draft as the outcome of creativity:

Before I wrote the 2nd draft, I went for a Sunday walk with my wife and we spot one old Graveyard in a former Prague suburb. We started observing the gravestones and funeral sculptures. Ephemerality is present at every cemetery and it makes one think about earthly life and about eternity. Suddenly, I caught a glimpse of one gravestone. Black marble as many others, but the inscription was pretty strange.

KAZIMIR AND HIS MOTHER

No family name, no mother's first name. No date. It was only laconic information. In the shade of engraved letters an unknown story was hidden. It was more unknown than in any other case. We looked over ten minutes at this black marble and speculated about the relation between Kazimir and his mother. I was thinking about the story behind the gravestone and suddenly I got an idea about the 2nd draft of the assignment. And I had a new working title: Kazimir and his Mother. (It will be useful to explain the name Kazimir. It is a Slavic name, with the root in a verb kazit=spoil and a noun mír=peace. It was the name of old Slavic warriors.)

Now you can hear the old-new story.

KAZIMIR AND HIS MOTHER: Second draft

Scene 1 – Classroom - interior - day

Several male and female students sit in the classroom. Some are talking amongst themselves, others are reading, and one girl is putting on her make-up.

Voices are heard from the hallway, we can hear the street roar.

Through the partially opened door can be seen the hallway where other students are moving about can be seen.

Professor Kazimir (off screen):

...I'm sorry, but I don't have time right now. My class is starting in a moment.

Rose (off screen):

But this is important, professor. I think I am expecting your child.

A hand can be seen which grabs the doorknob from outside. When the door opens, the distinguished forty something professor Kazimir appears, looking with wonder at a beautiful redheaded Rose, standing next to him.

Professor Kazimir:

That certainly alters the situation, my dear… on Sunday I will introduce you to my mamma.

All the students look toward the doorway, watching the professor and the student.

Professor Kazimir hugs and kisses Rose. She falls on the professor's neck and bends her left leg. Her elegant pointy red shoe with high heels falls on the floor.

Enter the solemn sound of violins

All the students in the classroom rise and start to applaud.

The sound of the stormy applause

Scene 2 – Garden - exterior – night

Applause changes to the sound of thunderstorm.

The night is black as a coffin. Suddenly a streak of lightning splits the sky. Heavy rain pelts the trees.

In the corner of the garden someone in a waterproof raincoat and plastic hat shovels some earth back on to the flowerbed. Another person of small build stands beside him, also wearing a raincoat.

Sound of the huge thunder

In a flash of lightning we can see Professor Kazimir's face. He finishes tidying up the drenched flowerbed and, with a questioning look in his eyes, turns to the other person. It is the professor's Mamma.

Mamma holds an ebony walking stick with a silver handle. She points with the stick at a rugged place in the flowerbed.

Kazimir smoothes down this place with his shovel.

From under the raincoat, old distinguished Mamma smiles. She nods to the professor.

Kazimir and his Mamma walk across the turf. In another flash of lightning they see a pointy red shoe with a broken high heel.

Mamma, with the tip of her walking stick, lifts the shoe and shows it to the professor.

Mamma:

I always said, my son that young lassies, who wear shoes like this, ride for a fall.

Kazimir quickly and skilfully cuts out a piece of grass, mamma puts the red shoe into the hole and the professor puts a piece of turf back. He packs down the earth with his rubber boot. They both walk through the dark, sometimes illuminated by flashes of lightning. They go towards the black silhouette of a big house, till they blend in with the darkness and the landscape.

THE END

The working title was changed. The name Casanova is a synonym of any chick-chaser, but the professor's character was changed. The theme was kept: love, infidelity, jealousy, hate and revenge and death. Two women and one man were kept. The story finished with the crime but the victim was changed. The story came to by dark. And I have added a little requisite: a red high heel shoe.

In the 1st draft the professor dies. He is a chick-chaser and we know, that he dies without knowing why. He is the main character and he must die face-to-face his lovelorn Maria. In the 2nd draft Rose is one of the girls in the row and it is not necessary to show her corpse, we need not know how she was killed. For all that, the tension arises and lots of questions remain.

The professor's character was changed and also his diction was changed a little. In the 1st draft he uses the verb *mother*, in the 2nd draft he uses *mamma.* Kazimir's mistress got a name, Mamma was used as the name of a dramatic character: it is the synonym of all such mothers. The story was moved in time – a couple of decades back. Today no young man calls her mother Mamma and if some young men do , watch out!

The chance favoured prepared people. An accidental meeting with something unusual can help you resolve any scene or situation and can inspire you to think about the story, hidden in the shade of a gravestone.

PANEL DISCUSSION AND WORKSHOPS

PANEL DISCUSSION 1 – IS THE WORKSHOP DEAD? WHAT ABOUT THE RETURN TO READING AS THE BASIS OF CREATIVE WRITING INSTRUCTION?

Ana MENÉNDEZ and guests: Javier SAGARNA, Alain ANDRÉ.

Ana MENÉNDEZ (USA/Nederlands)

"Beyond the workshop"

"Creative writing" is a funny term. When you think about it, it's almost embarrassingly redundant as the title of a discipline that purports to trouble itself with good writing. Isn't all writing "creative" after all? And who on earth ever thought of teaching such a thing? Did Homer trouble himself with the pursuit of a fine arts degree?

We can trace the term "creative writing" to the progressive education movement of the late 1920s when the practice of self-expression came into vogue in the U.S. Students were encouraged to find their own voice, explore their own creativity. The term then was a reaction – almost a political reaction to the "uncreative" genres with which students had more traditionally struggled: translations themes, papers, reports.

But the first kind of "creative writing" instruction was meant more for children. In the United States at the beginning of the last century there was deep resistance at the university level to such a curriculum, much as there is today in Europe. In 1906, George Pierce Baker inaugurated a playwriting workshop at Harvard University that became very popular and successful. But he was still unable to persuade Harvard to offer a degree in playwriting. Baker finally moved the workshop to Yale University in 1925, where he helped to found the Yale School of Drama. Just how deep was the resistance at elite colleges? When After the success of *Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov applied for a professorship at Harvard University, the linguist Roman Jakobson fiercely opposed his candidacy. "Gentlemen," he wrote, "even if one allows that he is an important writer, are we next to invite an *elephant* to be Professor of Zoology?"

The first school to take creative output seriously as a worthy academic pursuit was the University of Iowa, which in 1922 announced it would accept creative work as theses for advanced degrees. A few years later, in 1936, they went further, establishing the first creative writing degree program in the United States. It became a model for the teaching of creative writing. Today, there are some 700 such programs in the U.S.

They have become a mainstay of university education in the United States, often derided, sometimes lauded, but undeniably influential. They have changed the landscape of publishing and reading – Iowa alone counts 17 Pulitzer Prize winners among its graduates. Some of the finest writers of our time have gone through MFA programs among them: Michael Chabon, Kazuo Ishiguro, Ian McEwan, Rose Tremain, Annie dillard, Henry Taylor, Jane Smiley, Michael Cunningham, Paul Harding, Flannery O'Connor, Allan Gurganus, Daniel Alarcon, T. Corraghessen Boyle, Denis Johnson, Nathan Englander, ZZ Packer,

Joy Williams. And my favorite poets Philip Levine, Charles Wright and W.D. Snodgrass.

So powerful a cultural force cannot stand long without fierce criticism and there has been much.

The most well-known of these was probably Tom Wolfe's, who in a 1989 Harper's Magazine piece sniffed at "writers in the university writing programs" who in "long, phenomenological discussions" have "decided that the act of writing words on a page is the real thing and the so-called real world of America" is fiction

The most depressing of these critics, perhaps, was Kay Boyle, the director of a creative writing program at San Francisco State for sixteen years, who told The New Yorker that, "all creative-writing programs ought to be abolished by law."

Part of the problem, I think, is that the model that Iowa introduced – a workshop of 10 to 15 students led by an established writer talking about why or why not a fellow student's story "works" has remained almost unchanged for 75 years. Orthodoxies become entrenched. And an established "way of writing or "sound" is created.

The contemporary workshop has become obsessed with rules (write what you know, show don't tell, strive for well-rounded characters). Sometimes this works. Sometimes it's disastrous, as the banality of the comments offered by students of varying experience can sometimes reach hilarious proportions.

I spent a year interviewing writers, researching programs and studying the culture at my university before designing the program we eventually came up with. Most teachers I spoke to urged me to move away from the workshop model. Cristina

Garcia called it "The Bad Apostles Model". Following their advice and examining my own development as a writer, I made the decision to build a foundation of reading before the students even began to write their full-length piece.

Our minor at Maastricht University deals less with "rules" or "tips" than with the process of self-discovery and development. While I don't agree with Kay Boyle that creative writing programs need to be abolished by law, I do believe that they must radically change. The primary change is away from a reliance on work shopping to a return to reading as a foundation for learning.

At Maastricht, we developed a 20 week course that approaches writing with the philosophy that it is both a skill that can be taught and a talent that can be nurtured. We spend the first 8 weeks studying classics that have something to teach us in a descriptive, as opposed to prescriptive, way. We read Flannery O'Connor for Plot, Ernest Hemingway for Dialogue, William Faulkner for Point of View, John Cheever for setting, and so on. Always the emphasis is on reading for craft itself, the way a fashion designer might buy a garment only to take it apart and see how it's put together. Students in this course are required to write two papers analyzing stories from a craft perspective. That is, why did the author make the particular choices he or she made in the text. In addition, we do exercises geared to each "foundation" of writing we are studying. For example, for the lesson on dialogue, I have students write the dialogue between a man and a woman in difficult circumstances: She has a lover in the closet; he's come home early because he's lost his job.

We talk a lot about how a writer approaches the task, concentrating less on rules (show don't tell!) than on results. The last class in this first eight-week period concerns itself with the ineffable quality of art that is read, in Nabokov's words,

with the spine. This approach, I believe, hews closer to the spirit of the European approach to art.

Europe enjoys a long tradition of aesthetic philosophy which argues that the "genius" of the fine artist is unteachable. Kant defined this particular genius as belonging to an "exemplary originality" for "which no definite rule can be given" Insofar as the example of the genius "gives rise to a school, that is to say, methodical instruction according to rules" fine art practice becomes the occasion for a "soulless" art of "imitation "aping" and "copying".

In our course we are searching for the underpinnings of the classical guidelines. These are those qualities that usually appear in the best writing: Vividness, a preference for the concrete of the abstract, an attention to and love of language. As well as honoring the fact that the best art has a separate, elusive quality that the great Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca called Duende, a sense of the human that is part keen observation and empathy and is born from a way of living and feeling.

By teaching students how to read closely, analyze for structure, and consider the choices the author made, I'm not just encouraging better writers. I hope I'm also encouraging them to become better readers, more engaged, more wise to what narrative does. For me, the fundamentals of writing have less to do with the accepted forms and more with those qualities of spirit that animate the best art: Curiosity, respect, Empathy, Discipline and above all Joy, that ability to keep one's outlook light and free, even when the subject is most somber. Reading and working in such a way allows one to find pleasure in the process itself. And when you find pleasure in the process, the writing never grows stale.

Alain ANDRÉ (France)

In 1936, the University of Iowa introduced the first creative writing degree program in the United States. The model it introduced – a workshop of a dozen or so students led by a senior writer – remained relatively unchanged for 75 years. But slowly some universities are breaking the Iowa mold by returning to the classical pedagogies – namely studying the masters. At the University of Maastricht, workshops are still part of the instruction, but a much smaller part. The majority of what we do is teach writing through lots of reading, discussion, and specially targeted exercises. This panel will offer a 10-minute lecture of Maastricht's program followed by a panel discussion: "Is the workshop dead?" Ana Menéndez.

If you can stand a last mini-lecture, I'd like to tell you one of the reasons why I stopped believing, as far as the writing workshop as a kind of "cena" or Last Supper is concerned, in Jesus-Christ (as the right posture for the teacher).
Of course, as to the relationships between reading and writing, national stories are really different. I'd just like to say a few words about the American one, as far as I know, and about the French one, and then, explain how I dig my way in this old creative writing teaching problem. Three short points, then…

The American story

An academic discipline

Ana's fine lecture questions the Iowa model. It is noticeable that this critique is frequently developed by American creative writing teachers. Last year, in July 2011, a Conference was proposed in Cerisy-la-Salle about French writing

workshops. I listened to a lecture by an American poet there. She lives between Washington and Paris, she teaches poetry at the Iowa University and translation in Paris. Her name is Cole Swensen, she published a dozen of poetry books, some of them translated into French by Corti, and critiques.

She told us that what was invented in French creative writing workshops was fascinating for her, seen from a US point of view. In the States, as you know, creative writing is an Academic discipline, with Masters of Fine Arts (MFA), Masters of Arts being different and focused on literary critique. Students chose writing as their future jobs. They are selected for their writing qualities. The idea is to develop their skills thanks to a favourable atmosphere, life inside a community of other writers and pertinent activities. It lasts 2 or 3 years. You've got about 300 programmes like that in the States, with an identical structure: writing workshops and literature courses. From the very start, creating and learning how to create are linked together. Writing is considered as an art, just as sculpture or music. It began in 1898, with a programme called "verse making", and the first MFA was created in the Iowa University in 1931. Teachers are mainly writers. Flannery O'Connor and Raymond Carver were among the first students, as you know, and gave its reputation to the programme. All these Masters developed a lot in the seventies. And now the USA have got a lot of writers able to teach creative writing, but not so many jobs to do so. The pedagogical model seems to be always the same: a group of 8 to 11 students; texts of some pages are shared before the course and discussed during the course.

Cole Swensen's point of view

According to Cole Swensen, this teaching needs to change, in order to allow work on different and mainly longer texts, and in order to integrate new technologies. She lays the stress on words, instead of expressing one's own self, on ethics in writing, on collaborative writing, on inter-art writing practices and on translation,

but I can't develop this point. Her point as to French workshops is that we're inventing generative workshops: we work on a writer's process and we help students to experience the whole process or device, step by step, to help them invent their own creation processes. I don't resist saying now that those workshops are most of the time starting from reading. We don't suggest exercises, as John Gardner does in his Art of fiction, for instance, let's say… "Describe a barn as seen by a hungry bird, but don't say a word about the bird and about the point he's bloody hungry". We read short or not so short literary extracts, from Marcel Proust, Malcolm Lowry or Bob Dylan, and the prompts derive from this reading.

The French story

University: the reign of critique

Anyway, the French story is quite different. Creative writing is not an Academic discipline. The first creative writing Master is being created now in Toulouse. Creative writing teaching was abandoned even in secondary schools in 1901, as what we called Rhetoric classes disappeared. It became the reign of commentary, text explanations and compelled admiration exercises: the reign of critical reading.

First workshops: the reign of spontaneity

This model began to die at the end of the 60s, after the new novel and the new critique period: with May 68, with a global refusal of magisterial and authoritative courses. New approaches began to be developed in pedagogical movements, among French literature teachers, in continuous education or professional training, and sometimes even in universities. The idea was to write together right now, even from nearly nothing, the atmosphere in the classroom, something somebody said when entering it, a tiny fact. The idea was to look at the student as a potential

writer. You didn't have to study all the classics, from Homer to James Joyce, before trying to write your own first verse or fiction sentence. You mainly needed to help people love writing instead of hating it as a scholar stupid obliged job. You just needed a magician able to invent prompts. You also needed, did we think, a pedagogy based on personal projects. The idea was also to get reading free. Read what you want and do it the way you like, wrote for instance the French writer Daniel Pennac. Then creative writing workshops associations, reading clubs and so on appeared.

About the relationship between writing and reading in the creative writing workshops

Reading as a writing problem

I can just give a hint about the way I began to think about the problem. It was a problem, because I considered that becoming a writer meant becoming a good reader too, and probably first. As Marcel Proust noticed: "The most difficult point, for a writer, is to become a fine reader of one's own texts." As to the first teachers in Aleph-Écriture, a lot of us were former French literature teachers and young writers. We agreed with the idea that too much constraint or literary stringency could be a cause of writers' blocks for young writers, but we didn't accept the general worship of spontaneity that prevailed in the seventies.

Detours

So we invented a strategy based on "detour". It means we first gave poetical objectives, explicit ones, to our workshops. But the students were first invited to do something: to write something, not to study a literary text. Then, as they obviously needed some help to go further, they were invited:

- To read short literary extracts related to the technical theme of the prompt: not to produce a scholar commentary about them, but to extract one among the literary tools they just needed to go on with their own writing.
- Then, to share with the teacher about these tools how to use it? Is it really necessary, up to which point? Then, they were invited:
- To share in a small group the texts they'd produced, and to see if the proposed so-called tool was a useful key and device or not?
- To rewrite alone, or just go on with their writing.
- And, but eventually, at the end of the workshop, to read or give their texts to the whole group, members of their small groups being the first readers to give a feedback.

Example

For example, I had a workshop that was designed to help students identify the stake of a sentence. You assume that a sentence is the main stake of any novel, don't you? I used to read the very beginning of a novel by the French writer Marie N'Diaye: *A classical comedy*. It's a rather short novel, but composed of a unique sentence of a hundred pages or about. By the way, you can see we use contemporary writers from the start, which doesn't forbid us to come back to Montaigne, Chaucer or Tacitus if it seems useful. I suggested the students to write the beginning of a story that included, as in the novel, a narrator in a certain mood (sleepy, or stoned, or desperate, as you wish) and considerations about the previous and about the upcoming day. The beginning had to be written in 2 or 3 manuscript pages, but in one sentence.

After the experience, you could give students a set of rather long sentences. I have a collection of them, if you like, but they're in French, by Marcel Proust or Mathias Enard, of course, but also by William Faulkner, etc. They chose just one.

Two questions about it: How is this sentence built? How does it "hold", instead of falling into nowhere and nothing?

It was a good introduction to stylistics, I think, even if they were spared with too much of its specific vocabulary. But we were speaking about parataxic and epitaxic sentences, for instance. Then they shared their own sentence in a small group, with the same questions. Then they had to rewrite, to affirm their choices and mainly to make their sentence become a seaworthy boat. And at the following course, they were invited to give their rewritten sentence and to receive prepared and public feedbacks by the members of their own small group first.
Of course, the stakes change when it comes to novel writing, for example. But I use the same scheme when I want students to work on novel structure, on characters, on time in narrative and so on.

Just a last word: why did I work like that as a teacher? Because I think that, at least in France, we have to change the way students or trainees consider literary texts. They are used to forced admiration exercises, they are used to empty or just too erudite or skilful commentaries. They have to become good gold-miners, good poachers, good literary predators, able to look for what they need as writers, and to aim straight as poachers. And how shall they succeed in it, if we, as teachers, don't help them to read the right way?

WORKSHOP 1

Cécile FAINSILBER (France)

Perception

This 90 minutes workshop took place at Aleph's ground floor room November 8th. There were five participants, a moderator, and a facilitator. There were also several noises coming from inside and outside. The session was divided into two moments. The first one is shaped after John Cage musical piece « 4'33 of silence ». In the actual performance, the public makes itself the piece of music out of the sound material heard during three movements initiated by a silent pianist opening and closing a piano lid; the three movements are: I. 33', II. 2'40, III. 1'20. In the writing workshop, the participants followed John Cage's score, writing down the sounds they heard during the three parts orchestrated by the facilitator's chronometer. Everybody ended up with a triptych of words about sounds, already organized by the limits of time. The productions transcribed the noisy background shared in the common 4 '33, they came in different personal rendering such as: precise realistic wording of noises in the actual order of occurrence, text unfolding into an incantation with anaphors and repetitions, notes on the silence and evocation of ghost's sounds, and homemade onomatopoeias on the spot after being bored with the mundane jotting down of what was heard.

After all the texts had been read, participants acknowledged a deeper sense of what was going on around them on an acoustic level. They felt empowered with a greater hearing ability. They were able to notice details they were unaware of beforehand. They had gone into another dimension, down within themselves while gathering material from outside. At this point, all had had a hint of Rilke's:

"If you will stay close to nature, to its simplicity, to the small things hardly noticeable, those things can unexpectedly become great and immeasurable".

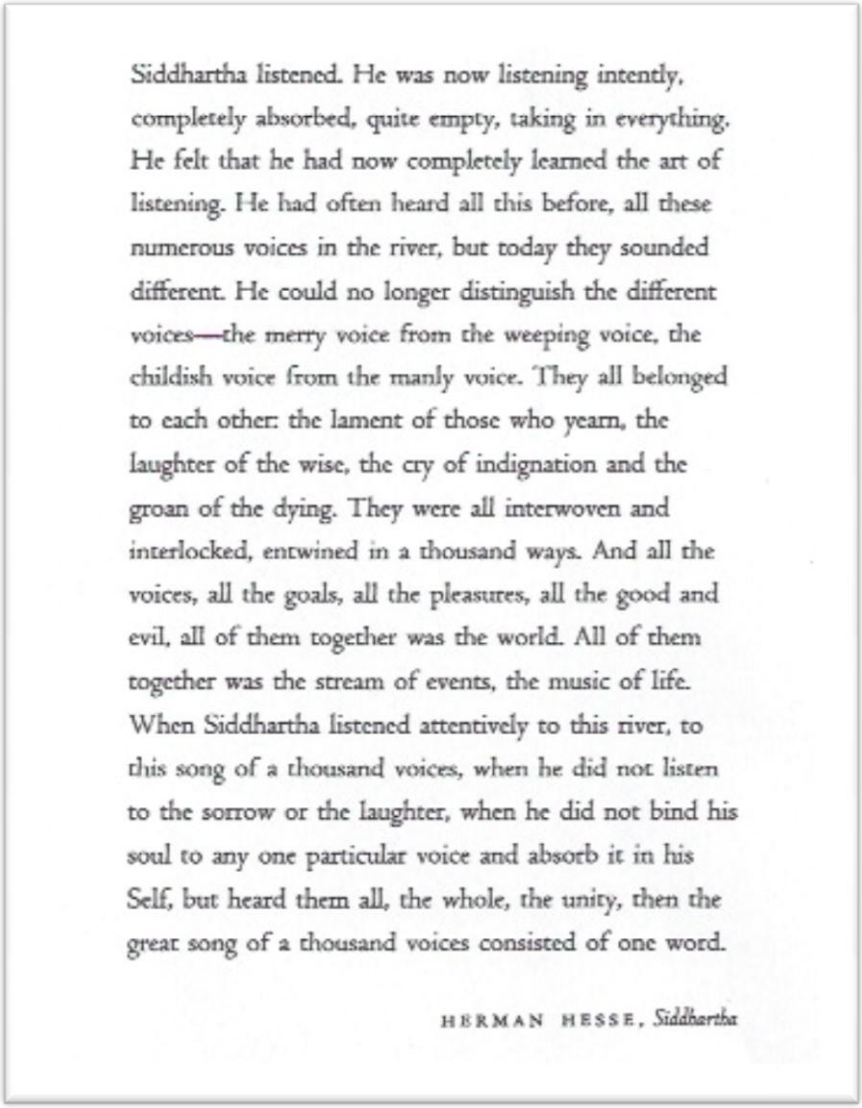
The second moment of the workshop was devoted to Kafka, with the prose piece he called "Great noise," written in November 1911, and published in the Prague Literary Journal in 1912. The page was read aloud by the facilitator, and then everybody was invited to describe a place with the noises heard, out of the music belonging to it, in order to create a landscape of sounds, showing the world as though apprehended by one ear only. Each of the following texts written produced specific universes, all anchored in special time and space by means of sound rendering: interior monologue of a feverish character, woman at the hairdresser's, morning street in Rome, coming day in and day out of a classroom, and what Kafka hears on his bed at the hospital.

Participants found useful to concentrate on a single perception channel for rendering a scene, but expressed the need for shaping a story out of it. Then came the idea of a text in which a character wakes up early in an apartment and makes his way through the rooms trying to be as silent as possible, but nevertheless produces a lot of sounds, and notices them with perfect accuracy as he wants to avoid them, until he gets out and unexpectedly make a terrific noise which wakes the entire house up.

This having been said, the Aleph's fridge stopped humming in the foreground, and we all looked at each other, sharing a magical moment of silence. In the facilitator's view the overall experience was embodied by texts of Rilke and Hesse reproduced below.

" If we wish to be let in on the secrets of life, we must be mindful of two things: first, there is the great melody to which things and scents, feelings and past lives, dawns and dreams contribute in equal measure, and then there are the individual voices that complete and perfect this full chorus.

And to establish the basis for a work of art, that is, for an image of life lived more deeply, lived more than life as is it lived today, and as the possibility that it remains throughout the ages, we have to adjust and set into their proper relation these two voices: the one belonging to a specific moment and the other to the group of people living in it". - Rilke.



Siddhartha listened. He was now listening intently, completely absorbed, quite empty, taking in everything. He felt that he had now completely learned the art of listening. He had often heard all this before, all these numerous voices in the river, but today they sounded different. He could no longer distinguish the different voices—the merry voice from the weeping voice, the childish voice from the manly voice. They all belonged to each other: the lament of those who yearn, the laughter of the wise, the cry of indignation and the groan of the dying. They were all interwoven and interlocked, entwined in a thousand ways. And all the voices, all the goals, all the pleasures, all the good and evil, all of them together was the world. All of them together was the stream of events, the music of life. When Siddhartha listened attentively to this river, to this song of a thousand voices, when he did not listen to the sorrow or the laughter, when he did not bind his soul to any one particular voice and absorb it in his Self, but heard them all, the whole, the unity, then the great song of a thousand voices consisted of one word.

HERMAN HESSE, *Siddhartha*

WORKSHOP 2

Kate MOORHEAD (Great Britain)

Inventing characters

This workshop used multiple exercises to help participants develop characters and through them, a story. The first exercise asked participants to start by thinking of three small objects their character might carry on their person. These objects were written as short descriptive phrases. Then the participants were asked to think about the home of the character they were creating and write about three aspects of the person's home, also in short descriptive phrases. Finally, they were asked to join up each of the items with each of the aspects of the home, describing the significance of each in a few sentences. From here, the participants have begun to create a character with a backstory, a personality, a life.

The second exercise used photographs and a 'Character Questionnaire' which consisted of twenty questions to answer about a second character being created. These ranged from 'what's your name?' and 'how old are you?' to 'what is your greatest fear?' and 'when was the last time you said "I love you"?'. Participants chose from a selection of photos of people, and using the visual representation as a starting point, wrote the answers to the questionnaire in one continuous paragraph in the voice of the character, creating a first person monologue. This exercise helps the writer to 'know' their character fully and start to develop a strong and unique voice. The author should be able to answer any question about their character, even if the specific information is not relevant to the story they appear in. This practice helps to create well-rounded and consistent characters.

Finally, participants chose from photos of various locations (a park, a theatre, an art gallery) and were asked to write a scene in which their two characters meet. First, they described Character Number 1 from the point of view of Character Number 2, then vice versa. Then, they wrote a scene in which the two characters have been in each other's company for an hour or so and have reached a point in the conversation where one of the character's secrets is touched upon. This allows the participants to speak in the voices of their two characters and to experiment with subtext in dialogue.

NOVEMBER 9TH 2012

PLENARY SESSION-LECTURE 2

Daniel SOUKUP (Czech Republic)

Teaching writing in a foreign language: an overview of classroom situations

The one obvious obstacle which sometimes bars the way to fruitful European cooperation in the field of Creative Writing is the bewildering multitude of languages. In theory, we can only approve of our wonderfully rich linguistic diversity; but in our everyday dealings, we all too often have to struggle with the practical problems arising from it. As it is sometimes difficult to understand each other even about the most straightforward matters, teaching writing in a foreign language might seem a sheer impossibility. Nevertheless, experience shows that there is, in fact, quite a wide terrain of opportunity between the abstract ideal of multilingualism, and the frequent exasperation of not being able to communicate: creative writing students and teachers who speak different languages do meet, interact, and learn from each other.

In this paper, I would like to introduce the most typical classroom situations that involve a foreign language element, and outline some of the challenges which characterize them. Most of the concrete examples come from my own practice, because I do not feel confident enough to speak in detail about other people's teaching. However, my aim is to provide a simple matrix which might serve to systemize the experience of other teachers and students, too.

In the following overview, the language which students use in their writing is called X. Apart from this, there are three other languages to consider: the language of instruction; the teacher's first language; and the students' first language. Of course, two or three of these languages might be (and usually are) identical. I leave out the case of a bilingual or multilingual teacher; but I do consider the possibility of a linguistically mixed student group.

This overview does not contain all the combinations which are logically possible, but only the most typical ones. In fact, it seems unlikely that any of the logically possible situations which are *not* listed here might ever occur in reality; for instance, the idea of a Czech teacher explaining, in Czech, to a group of Finnish students how to write in Finnish (pattern XAAX) sounds quite bizarre. But one can never predict with confidence what linguistic mishmashes life might bring, particularly in Europe.

Apart from the languages used, the other aspect which I look at is the overall *aim* of teaching writing in a foreign language; of course, this aim might differ in different classroom situations. In order to systemize pedagogical experience, I use the typology of attitudes towards Creative Writing outlined by Paul Dawson in his book *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*. According to Dawson, "Creative Writing is the product of four institutional trajectories – each with particular theories of literature, authorship and pedagogy that sometimes conflict and sometimes overlap. I will label these trajectories *creative self-expression*, *literacy*, *craft* and *reading from the inside*." (Dawson 2005: 49). He summarizes these approaches as follows:

Creative self-expression is a technology of the self whereby language (especially through the medium of poetry) is a device for discovering and developing the expressive potential of one's own human character. The *literacy* model situates

"creative" writing within a general writing instruction which trains students for competency in a variety of compositional modes for the purposes of accurate expression and professional communication. The *craft* model involves the conjunction of formalist criticism with the concept of artistic training associated with the fine arts. *Reading from the inside* is founded on the belief that practical experience in writing literature leads to a greater knowledge and appreciation of it. (ibid: 49)

Naturally, the application of Dawson's interpretive labels is less objective and less generally valid than the lists of languages used; ultimately, the overall teaching aim always depends on the particular course.

Situation 1: A Czech teaches Czechs to write in English
Language of writing: X
Language of instruction: X and/or A
Teacher's first language: A
Students' first language: A

Of all the situations listed here, this one is the least relevant to international cooperation in Creative Writing, because the teacher and the students share the same first language. The only international element is the foreign language used for writing, and sometimes also for instruction. But I do not believe in sharp dividing lines, and it seems to me that all the various approaches to teaching writing in a foreign language might inspire and enrich each other.
Rather than in the Creative Writing context, this configuration typically occurs in foreign language teaching, which classifies writing as one of the four "basic skills" (with reading, speaking and listening). Teaching writing from this

perspective can – and often does – involve creative exercises, too. The most commonly used genres seem to be the narrative ones, because story-telling, as an obvious human universal, helps to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps. But one can make a strong case also for using forms which are perceived as more difficult, notably poetry.

For instance, a textbook focusing on "reading and writing poems with students of English" lists a number of different reasons "why use poetry to learn English": 1) "poetry is a special type of English, just as scientific or newspaper English [...]; it deserves study as much as they do"; 2) "poetry can [...] help us to assimilate the typical rhythms of a language"; 3) "poems are often very easy to remember"; 4) "the topics which poems talk about are in themselves interesting – and important"; 5) "the process of composing poems, especially if it is done in groups, leads to *real* discussion, about something that matters to you"; 6) "[writing poems] allows you to try out different ways of saying the same thing"; 7) "[writing poems] gives you a purpose in writing, and allows you to bring in your personal feelings and ideas". (Maley and Moulding 1985: 1)

As another author says, sometimes we might even write "better in a language that is not our first [...]. We write simply and to the point and are more aware of the sounds of the new language because they are strange and wonderful to us. We avoid clichés because probably we do not know them so well." (James 2007: 13)

Some literary genres and traditions are particularly suitable for language education. For instance, experimental "concrete poetry" is often used in German language teaching, because it opens up space for playful linguistic creativity, while also familiarizing students with the typical patterns of the German language. Moreover, one can compose interesting concrete poems in a foreign language even without being very good at it, which is highly motivating.

In terms of Dawson's typology, this classroom situation clearly falls under the *literacy* model, with some elements of *creative self-expression* ("bringing in your personal feelings and ideas"). Besides, *reading from the inside* can be employed, too.

Situation 2: An American teaches Czechs (and others) to write in English

Language of writing: X
Language of instruction: X
Teacher's first language: X
Students' first language: A (B, C...)

This situation, like the previous one, often occurs in foreign language teaching, but it is not limited to it. Here I cannot speak from my own experience, because there do not seem to be many international students who are keen on learning to write in my first language (Czech). Nevertheless, I can still give a few general observations. Obviously, the teacher in Situation 2 (who teaches in his first language) has a great advantage over the teacher in Situation 1 (who teaches in a foreign language). In fact, if one of the main aims of the class is to improve the students' writing skills, a native teacher is probably preferable over a non-native one. Therefore, for instance, at the Josef Skvorecky Academy, the optional seminar "Creative Writing in English" (for Czech students) has been taught only by native speakers.

With the teacher being a native speaker, the overall teaching aim might be based not only on the *literacy* approach ("general writing instruction"), but also on the *craft* model: teaching foreign students to produce, for instance, "well-written" short stories. However, if the teacher has experience only with teaching writing to native speakers, she might find it quite difficult to adjust her expectations to

foreign students; she might tend either to underestimate, or to overestimate their achievements. Another possible drawback of this classroom situation might arise from the fact that, by its very nature, it gives the teacher almost too much symbolical power: she possesses pedagogical and social authority (as a teacher), linguistic authority (as a native speaker), and often also aesthetic authority (if she is also a writer).

Situation 3: A Czech teaches Finns (and others) to write in English

Language of writing: X

Language of instruction: X

Teacher's first language: A

Students' first language: B (C, D...)

An example of this classroom situation is the workshop *Understanding and writing (short) stories* which I taught in September 2012 at the University of Jyväskylä (Finland). Before the class, I asked the students to read Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, selected short stories by James Joyce (from *Dubliners*), and selected short stories by the Canadian writer Alice Munro (from her book *Progress of Love*) – a heterogeneous mixture which made use, pragmatically, of books which the students had to read anyway for another course. There were three classes, one on the work of each writer. The student group was quite varied, consisting of both Finnish and international students. It even included one Czech and one American, so the catalogue of students' first languages should, strictly speaking, include not only "B, C, D...", but also "A" and "X".

With the reading list being so diverse, I used a simple, generally applicable approach, and asked the students to consider the following elements of the stories

they read: a) characters, b) plot, c) setting, d) atmosphere, e) emotions, f) style, g) cultural references, and h) the overall meaning. Each class concentrated on two or three of these elements; we discussed, for instance, the overall meaning of *Heart of Darkness* (issues of allegory); stylistic ruptures in Joyce's short story *The Dead*; or Alice Munro's depiction of characters. Each line of discussion was concluded with a short writing exercise.

Using Dawson' typology, we could say that this workshop combined elements of the *craft* model and *reading from the inside*.

Situation 4: A Czech teaches Austrians to write in German

Language of writing: X

Language of instruction: X

Teacher's first language: A

Students' first language: X

This situation is pedagogically interesting because it puts the teacher clearly at a disadvantage: he/she, as a non-native speaker, teaches native speakers to write in their own language. In this configuration, the teacher might actually be better placed to *learn* something about writing from the students; but still she, being a teacher, must be able to discover something to teach them. What could it be? Unless the teacher is very proficient in the foreign language, she will find it difficult to employ Dawson's *literacy* model, and will be able to make only limited use of the *craft* approach.

An example of this classroom situation is the workshop *Czech-German translations (part "Kingdom of Bohemia")* which I taught in Vienna in May/June 2012 (it was organized jointly by Vienna poetry school and University of Applied Arts). The workshop consisted of three sessions. The first language of all the

students was German, though not all of them were Austrians; one came from South Tirol, and one actually had a Czech family background. The workshop consisted of four classes and a final public presentation.

When musing about what to offer to students whose language I speak only imperfectly, I decided to concentrate on the long history of Czech-Austrian relations. Since 1526, we lived together in the Habsburg Monarchy; and even after its dissolution in 1918, there was a strong German-speaking minority in Czechoslovakia, until most of them were expelled after World War II. The class did not provide a comprehensive historical overview, but it was primarily creative, introducing various linguistic, historical and cultural fragments of the past Czech-Austrian coexistence in ways which were meant to enable students to make imaginative use of them. One source of inspiration was the novel *The Flight to Egypt* (*Die Flucht nach Ägypten*) by Otfried Preußler (1923), a German-speaking writer born and raised in Bohemia, and expelled by Czechs after WWII.

I find it difficult to classify this workshop in terms of Dawson's typology. One could probably say that it was a blend of *creative self-expression*, *craft* and *reading from the inside*, but with a strong cultural component which interconnected all these approaches.

On the other hand, some of the discussions and exercises did not revolve around culturally specific Czech-Austrian-German issues, but focused on more general questions, such as the role of memory in constructing identity, or on specific stylistic devices. The three texts which students read at the concluding public presentation represented these divergent aspects of the class: one text came out of the exercise *the story and the story-teller hunt each other* (based on the narrative technique of Preußler's novel); the second student wrote an essaystic reflection inspired by a few lines by the Irish poet Seamus Heaney: "Memory as a building or a city, / Well lighted, well laid out, appointed with / *Tableaux vivants* and

costumed effigies" (Heaney 1991: 75); and the third student wrote the imaginary life story of two anonymous figures in a photograph, probably mother and son.

This is a photograph I found in an old house in one of the Czech border regions which were formerly populated by the German-speaking community. Re-inventing their long-forgotten life story is a way to restore, at least in a fleeting moment of imagination, something which was crushed by the brutal forces of history. This example also shows that when there is a shared cultural background, work with "found objects" might give writers – and writing teachers – a whole range of impulses across languages and cultures. For instance, the Czech poet Radek Fridrich collects German grave inscriptions in old churchyards in Czech border regions, and uses them in his writing. Here is an example:

Fragment

Anna
geb.
Wirtschaftsb
gest. 6.
im 48. L
Gatt nub
und
Josef
edin
Septemb
68. Lebensj
(Fridrich 2002)

This poem, obviously a verbatim transcription of a half-destroyed grave inscription, is all in German, and yet it appears in a Czech collection by a Czech poet. In an inconspicuous way, it speaks volumes about historical memory, national identity and nostalgia, while also indicating the scope of possibilities of what it might mean to "write in a foreign language".

As his last project, Christian Ide Hintze, the Austrian poet and founder of Vienna poetry school, worked on what he called "7fold poetics", integrating traditional, literary poetry with other types of poetry (acoustic, visual, performative, interactive, infrastructural, and instructive). His ideas included moving away from the exclusive focus on "a national & standardized language", and away from the effort to "find truth" only "by carefully following the black & the white of the letters & the spaces in between them." (Hintze 2010; see also the project website: www.ide7fold.net)

Teaching writing in a foreign language also seems to work best when it does not focus exclusively on literary aspects, but involves, for instance, performative or intercultural elements, too. An example of this are successful drama workshops for Finnish and Czech students which took place at the Literary Academy. The language of both instruction and writing was English, and the workshops were co-taught by Harri István Mäki (Orivesi College of Arts) and a native creative writing teacher (Joanna Coleman and Brad Vice).

In addition, Ide Hintze's visionary "7fold poetics" is in line with concepts like *hybridization* which are gaining more and more weight in our increasingly intercultural world. Two examples will illustrate what impact this might have on writing. In her book on "literature between the cultures", Sabine Scholl quotes from the seminal book *Borderlands/La Frontera:*

The New Mestiza (1987) by the Mexican-Texas author Gloria Anzaldúa:

To live in the Borderlands means you

are neither hispana india negra española
ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata, half-breed
caught in the cross-fire between camps
while carrying all five races on your back [...];

To live in the Borderlands means to
put chile in the borscht,
eat whole wheat tortillas,
speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent [...]. (Scholl 1999: 59–60)

Scholl notes parallels between the geographical borderlands (the Mexican-Texas border), the body and the consciousness of "the new mestiza", as well as the stylistic texture of Anzaldúa's book: they are all marked by similar heterogeneity. (ibid.: 61)

Margaret Anne Clarke uses the same metaphor in her article "Creative Writing in the Borderlands" which analyzes student texts written for the Creative Writing in a Foreign Language competition at the University of Portsmouth. Clarke sees writing in a foreign language as a way of overcoming the traditional concept of the "native speaker", used as

"the yardstick against which the language learner [...] must gain enough competence to attain the ideal of the still imperfect 'near-native speaker'." In an increasingly globalized world, this elitist and monoglossic concept of language

learning seems dated, and so does the idea of "a homogenous or monolithic entity representing the 'official' language of one nation-state." In language teaching, "the focus is no longer on the learning by students *about* a separate language and culture located on the other side of a national frontier, but on the heteroglossic third space emerging within the consciousness of the language learners themselves." When writing in a foreign language, "the language learner is [...] actively participating in her chosen speech community, and is actively contributing to the transformation of language within that community." (Clarke 2008)

The most significant aspect of this linguistic "third space" may be the fact that, as Clarke mentions, it is based on *choice*; writing in a foreign language is not open only to "new mestizas" or to Czech poets living in regions full of old German cemeteries. All of us are free to start learning any language, and to make use of its words in our teaching and writing.

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MINI-LECTURES SESSION 3

MULTIMEDIA AND WRITING

Françoise KHOURY (France)

Shooting pictures and writing

Origins

I started writing short stories during my first creative writing workshop. After a while, I found my stories too linear, but by trying to get them less linear, I felt they were more and more enigmatic, abstruse and confused. (Not only for the reader, but also for me.)

The big question was then: how can I represent the world, how can I explore new narrative forms with an innovative relation to time, to chronology.

At that time, I was practicing photography which I found closer to reality, while my writing was pulling me towards psychical worlds, hectic images, which seemed, at that time, less real. I was strongly resisting to that.

The work of writers and artists who had managed to abolish the frontiers between different mediums or categories interested me. Photography appeared as an appropriate medium to connect with writing.

Unlike language *(consensus)* or painting *(iconic)*, photography had been defined as a sign (Peirce's "indexicality"), a relation to reality by physical contiguity, proving the presence of a subject/object. It is a stamp, a mark and, as Roland Barthes said: "Ça a été" (It has been).

I decided then to assemble writing and photography.

Some critics wrote about photography as being a mirror, or a window. I subscribed to the idea: my writing was the mirror (introspection: focusing on self-expression) and I wanted my photography to become the window, which is the opening on the outside: (observation).

Today, these ideas seem a little outdated. The frontier between documentary and fiction or autobiography is unstable. Still, the question of the relationship between representation and reality has not, and may never be resolved. The real world remains unattainable.

For Hubert Damish, an art critic, if photography and writing have something in common, it is in the relation to a non-linear time, a reversible time. Photography troubles and shakes up history, personal as well as collective history.

Photography has no duration, it is a piece of reality, a cut in the temporality, an extract taken to the time flow, which suggests that there is an after and a before. Yet, there is no narration without a development in time. In the articulation between text and photography, the text brings the image on the narration side in a complementary relation. Writing plays the role of a link between these frames or it can accentuate the feeling of paradoxical time and be fragmented as well.

If we compare this assemblage to film editing where two heterogeneous images are linked together, you get a third object. This is the nature of editing. Writing and photography would be these two images, the verbal and the visual, which, put together, reveal the third object: the assemblage.

We can place this assemblage in the field of intermediality which is a conjunction of different systems of representation which leads to sensorial and aesthetic experiences. Intermediality is heterogeneity. It is not a juxtaposition of closed systems but an interaction. Photography is not the illustration of writing, but creates an impact between both, which leads to new forms of reception for the reader-spectator.

Our eyes don't move the same way while looking at a picture or reading a book. Eyes move in one direction (left to right, right to left or downwards) when they « read », but looking at a picture, they move in all directions, starting with the center or the darkest part of the picture.

In the case of assembling text and photography, intermediality can generate a more complex identity. This complexity is one of the modern responses to the uncertainty of the subject.

Intermediality is also emancipation.

There is a type of photography that is silent and opens on a world of representation. Another one silences us, submits us to its own representation. This is the iconic image, the one from which intermediality emancipates us.

Iconic photography is when nothing more can be said. It is so well known that only one meaning is recognized by all. It is the authoritarian photography which is often constructed by the medias.

Intermediality is then like a liberty towards the images. It cuts them (as in editing), it rearranges them, it writes on them, not words describing but words playing with representation and paradoxical time.

My workshops

After reading the books by Denis Roche, Arnaud Claass, Hervé Guibert and Alix Chloé Roubaud, and discovering the works of Sophie Calle, Duane Michals and

Christian Boltanski, I decided to go into depth with this practice of writing and photography.

My practice was very experimental. While reading these books I picked up ideas for the creative writing workshops and experimented them with the participants.

Denis Roche inspired one session of my workshop. A poet and a photographer, Denis Roche talks about the "rise of circumstances" concerning a series of six photos he took and the texts that went with each of them. He says there is nothing after the photo. For him, the image is what closes, the image is the end of the story and the text describes the circumstances of the shooting and what came before. The text stops at a certain point and the photography comes as an ending. Therefore, this text gains a tension because it is limited in a short period of time.

I asked the participants to do the same, but with an existing picture. They elaborate on what made this picture possible.

Another writer inspired me. Georges Perec, whose parents died during World War II, went to Ellis Island in the sixties. For decades, this place in Upper New York bay was where most immigrants were cooped up, waiting for their entry in the USA. He felt proximity with these people, although he had nothing in common with them. Perec shot pictures of Ellis Island and combined them with pictures Lewis Hines had taken in the early 20th century. Then he wrote a text about his trip and interviewed some people who had been, as immigrants, on Ellis Island. All this put together, gives a hybrid book of mixed elements: «Récit d'Ellis Island». At one point in the book, he talks of "probable autobiography". What would have happened if his family had gone to Ellis Island before the war...? Would his identity have been different?

Perec's book inspired instructions I gave the participants. I asked them to assemble several photos representing portraits as well as landscapes or objects. From there, they were asked to elaborate a probable autobiography, not of a

dreamed life, but a "documontage", which means mixing factual elements and impressions in a documentary assemblage respecting the concept that documentary is a certain idea of truth.

This instruction pushed me a step forward. I asked the participants to work on « autofiction » and use the pictures and the text as documents that can be diverted. This assemblage mixes both real and invented documents.

I studied history and was influenced by the status of the document. Some artists had aptly questioned this status by playing with the idea of true and untrue. As if the photographic document, instead of establishing an archive of the reality, was used in a prior decision for a result which was a masquerade. The photography's capacity to represent reality can be questioned, therefore it is diverted.

Sophie Calle and Christian Boltanski are two French artists who use photography and text to question reality. Their work can be described as a performance, which means a preconceived action aiming at making an image.

Here we move from the representation of a world to a protocol of experiences. There is an action over reality, different from the usual documentary.

In an exhibition, Sophie Calle presented one hundred photos of a hotel room. The text below each photo told a story of an unhappy love affair. The text was gradually reduced, one sentence after the other, although keeping the same incipit. For the last photography, there was only the incipit left.

This kind of work was an inspiration for a session on « autofiction », and particularly, rewriting. Participants were astonished by their own choices when it came to reducing the text to just one sentence.

In the seventies, these artists, but also Jean Le Gac and Duane Michals, were part of an expression called Narrative art. The idea was to proceed to an expansion of time by using the photography in a sequential way. These fragments were then rearranged in a paradoxical temporality which opened, with the assemblage of

texts, to narrativity. The photo-romance genre was reinvented (roman-photo).
If we wanted to delimitate the practice between writers and photographers, maybe we could say that for writers who use photography, the image is an « image statement » (something like an acknowledged image), and for photographers or artists who use language, image is more of a performance, they act on reality.

What do the participants get from these workshops

The image is a powerful initiator of writing. At the beginning of the workshop, the object (photo) creates a distance, a diversion, a relaxed atmosphere. It is fun. Participants are encouraged to manipulate these objects. But an image is not just an object and when it is time to choose, to observe, to contemplate and then to write, some of the participants feel an identification which leads to an emotional life.
I always bring a pile of postcards representing different photos, in white and black or in color, contemporary or old, but I let the participants choose between working on their own photos or the ones I brought. This choice is made by the eruption of emotions connected with a personal photography. First a distance, then an « appropriation » of the object.
Practicing writing and photography is a way of discovering authors, of course, but also a way of seeing things differently, framing reality and recomposing it in a new "disorder" or order, a configuration were the words give place to a different temporality.
In my workshops, the participants move. They get up to watch different assemblages pinned on the walls like in an exhibition and they look at a few images I spread on the table. This helps discussions and contacts between people and is less intimidating.
In one of my workshops with migrant teenagers whose French wasn't the mother

tongue, and who had a hard time with syntax, photography was liberating. They were able to tell a story, forgetting their difficulties. I remember two students of 18 whose writing was so full of mistakes that reading their paper was practically impossible. I suggested them creative writing, asking them to elaborate a photo-romance, and observed how they were able to imagine a fiction.

For adults for whom writing is a leisure activity or more of a long term project, photography revisits family albums, log books, captions, autobiographies, autofictions.

For all of them, learning how to see differently is a shared attitude. We live in a society where images are invasive and we are overwhelmed by information. Taking the time to select these images is meaningful.

This type of workshop usually produces a brief narration style that can be compared to the short and instantaneous moment of shooting. Photography is a piece of space and time, a fragmented vision, and the text has the propensity to be the same.

The writer Claude Simon who also practiced photography, said that framing was important. Framing is a selection in the time flow, a fragment. It intensifies our way of looking. For Simon, literature has been reducing its visual field since the 19th century. Today, representation is broken into fragments, details, which is close to the nature of photography. Claude Simon says coherence in narration is outdated: what we live, especially in crisis moments where the unity of identity is threatened, is made of fragmented mental images contradictory and imprecise, but this open to new and unknown truths.

Conclusion

As I said earlier, my photography was the link to the real, the window, and I can say, after all these years, that even my photography became a mirror. Today, the

differences between documentary, fiction, or/and art, are brought into question. There is a psychical reality which is no less real than the reality of the material world. And the notion of the "purely visual" is a naïve idea, as well as photography is not a transparent "window on the world".

The philosopher Walter Benjamin talked about photography as being the “optical unconscious”. Photography is not only part of our collective memory but plays an important role in the individual psyche, sometimes as a “latent image”.

I notice that some photos that I took a long time ago that had no importance for me at that time, slowly made their way to a new meaning that includes writing.

I am made of images, like everyone. Our eyes are full of images mixed up between dream images, segments of films or photos, pieces of memories, scenes of the world. And words are here to accompany that idea of an unattainable real world, which is much less stressful for me now. Photographing and writing is more like a walk. Therefore, considering all these years of exploration, my sensibility is close to Arnaud Claass’s (a writer-photographer). He believes photographing sees the world, and writing tells what we see. No cult for profoundness nor anxious intentions here.

Denis BOURGEOIS (France)

Sound as a step in the writing process

In a boarding school, long time ago, in the centre of France, a young man used to write long love letters to his beloved girlfriend. Once, a dormitory supervisor intercepted one of these letters and found it worthwhile to read the letter to all the boys in the dormitory. It was such a shame for the young man that he decided never to write again in his whole life. Later, he became a documentary film maker. At the end of his career, he opened the first training in documentary film at the university of Poitiers in France. And he decided that the students wouldn't write their film before shooting. On the contrary, they would shoot first and write afterwards or never write. When I met the man, he was almost old, ready to retire. This man (who used to write love letters when he was young) passed on to me the responsibility of this course. Although I was a writer, I did accept the method: shoot first, think after. I did agree to follow that stream because it suited the way I felt about writing: write first, think later... and rewrite...

At the very moment when the old man handed the work over to me, I had to develop the training towards a Master's degree in 2 years. The old man, just before leaving, advised me to dedicate all first year to sound, because sound (especially the voices), is very important in documentary movies. I thus followed the advice. But I forgot to plan that sound alone does not work as sound with the camera: a sound recorder and a microphone, alone, become incredibly lighter and more mobile and change the nature of the shooting. The microphone, less impressive than the camera, allows to recover much faster a word which will less tend to

refuse itself. At the border between cinema and literature, sound is, considering the editing process, an eminently plastic material. I had to bow to fact, sound alone, in the documentary field, and from a narrative point of view, offered huge possibilities which so far are not explored in training.

Because the process of realization can be much faster in radio than in movie, the students were capable of producing things successful enough in a very short time and from their first recordings. It allowed me to transform the progression of the program from top to bottom: I decided to begin the year with a succession of short realizations which would plunge directly into the act of realization (according to the mantra: "shoot first"). The training is built as a succession of workshops which all lead to an individual realization. At the beginning of the year, workshops last one week, from Monday to Friday. As the year goes on, workshops grow longer, and the last workshop of the year lasts seven weeks.

Another event had an incidence on the evolution of the training: Numerous professionals of the French radio supported this program dedicated to sound, and it was bent towards radio realization, then towards all the forms of radio writings: documentary, adaptation, fiction.

By way of method, every student chooses a subject which is important to him, and lugs it around all year round through realizations. The choice of the subject is fundamental, but as it is difficult for somebody, who has never realized, to choose the "right" subject, the fact of linking numerous micro-realizations in the first weeks of the training, allows them to refine their choice. The realizations consist either in reading one written work, or in listening to a work dealing with sound. 12 realizations give rhythm to 8 months training: 1 mixed voice, 1 report paper, 5

sound documentaries, 1 documentary narrative, 1 radio adaptation, 1 scenario and a sound track of cartoon movie, 1 scenario of radio fiction, 1 sound creation. This high number of individual realizations (12 per student per year) is understandable by the enormous narrative potential of sound material. For instance, during the first week of training, every student writes a personal text the first day, reads it aloud with a comedian the second day, records it the third day and mixes it then with a music of his choice the fourth day, and the fifth and last day of the week is dedicated to listening and to collective returns.

The realization which I am now going to analyze is a documentary narrative of a particular kind. At the end of the 3rd month of training, each student realizes a sound documentary of approximately 15 minutes. This sound documentary serves as a medium for the documentary narrative in question. Things take place in the following way: the students compose the script of their sound documentary, either they collect the pieces of transcriptions which served for the editing of the sound work, or they listen again to their own work and transcribe directly the sound material of their documentary. In fact, they proceed to both operations simultaneously. They get back the transcriptions and add stage directions to describe the sound material which is not vocal (thus impossible to transcribe directly). This script is a composition made by dialogues and by stage directions that the students are gradually going to transform into a narrative of 30 pages (6000 words). It is an approach which inverts the classic process of putting the writing at the beginning. Here, on the contrary, we put the writing at the end of the process. We use sound to go towards writing.

When I conceived this workshop, I was looking for something which could make these students understand the importance of writing for developing their subject.

In students' minds, the writing was often perceived as an archaic way of preparing a realization. It was perceived as a thankless tool to ask for some money (for production). The writing could serve also to tinker at the last moment a voice-over, a sign of the failure of the director to avoid words: according to this simplistic idea that an audio-visual realization consists of images and sounds, and that the use of a voice is not the indication of an additional wealth, but denotes of a lack of sound or visual writing. In fact, when this work had been set up which consisted to extract a narrative from a sound documentary, I noticed that the reluctance of the students came simply from their lack of real practice in creative writing. When creative writing workshops were organized, this reluctance melted away. Writing became a particularly pleasant practice, arousing a lot of curiosity.

Before the beginning of this workshop, it seemed to me that some work on the mere literary narrative would not be enough to make these students consider the idea of writing. It has to look more impressive, more "sacred". I suggested the students to gather a collection of their narratives, a book that they would compose, make and shape themselves. So that for 5 years, the students write their narrative within one month and make a book of more than 300 pages after only four months of training !

Beginning with a script allows the students to sweep immediately any anxiety of the blank page: a text pre-exists, and it is at once possible to rewrite it, and without having even written it! It is so convenient! Besides, the specificity of this material (made only of dialogues and of stage directions) pulls the student immediately towards technical questions: Why a dialogue which was alive in sound is not so any more once it is written? How to restore it to life? All this sound material which does not exist more than in the form of stage directions,

how to make it exist through writing? How to describe the spaces which existed only through sounds in words?
Besides, concerning the construction of the narrative, the fact of having already elaborated an editing (that is a narrative) for the sound documentary, gave the students the freedom to tell things differently through writing : not only is the text already existing without having even been written, but the story also is already here. The possibilities of the story became wide open, again. How to tell it differently? Or else, if this story seems exhausted, how to tell another one from that one, or from something else, or out of nothing?

The students noticed very quickly that writing allowed them to restore moments they did not have been able to record, especially tiny moments with the persons they met. They noticed that writing is a fantastic tool to restore memory and internal states. Finally, they understood that writing is a method of capturing reality in the same way as the microphone or the camera are. Writing is a special tool that allows to restore things registered in the memory, which the other devices do not allow.

It also very quickly appeared that writing was useful to bring an internal voice to the foreground, and help to make the point of view of the author sensitive. In the form of chronicles, all that the students had noted in their note books, could be re-used and allowed them to shape a new character, often absent in the sound work, a character of the narrator who was the character of the author himself. In the process of transformation of sound material into writing, it was not rare that this character became the protagonist of the new narrative. The report of the student (location and documentation) was used to feed the narrative of an adventure, that of a character facing several events, that of a character deliberating with himself

and crossing the difficulties of a necessarily puzzling investigation.
In terms of construction, the script of the sound documentary remained a rather disembodied, somehow "cold" material. If some operations (see above: return the alive dialogues, add descriptions) were easily made, that script remained a "stiff " stuff. The students lacked practice: the writing requires some training. It was necessary to reintroduce writing workshops upstream from the beginning of the year, and during the workshop itself, to allow the students to play more freely with the sound as well the written materials.

There was also another problem to face: Documentary recorded material, as far as it is "real" (which means "recorded from the reality"), could hardly be mixed up with other types of materials, for example fiction materials. It has a "sacred" origin: reality. And this origin cannot be removed. You cannot cut out with this origin. A "cut-up" workshop enabled the students to understand the profoundly plastic nature of all materials, whether they are sound or text. The organizer of the workshop, asked the students to bring photocopies of their documentation on their subject (extracted from books, from articles, printing of internet pages). He made a big heap of the set and tore it to fragments of paper. Then, he gave these fragments in small packages to the students, by turning from one to another and by suggesting them to read these fragments and note the words or the sentences which interested them. The operation lasted more than 40 minutes. Then, the organizer of the workshop got them to write during one hour a text only from the sentences and the words collected by them during the first part of the workshop. This breakdown of documentation, without being in direct link with the sound material, allowed them to understand that the written material can be completely de-structured and re-structured. During the reading of texts, the students were struck when they noticed that the fragments collected "by chance", as it seemed,

managed to generate a particularly coherent and personal text.
At the end of the process of writing these documentary narratives, I looked for a means for the students to read their text again with accuracy before publication. I set up a simple system of crossed proofreading. But there were still students who did not appropriate their own text at the level of the musicality of their language. I thus suggested to the students the coming of an actor to listen to the reading of each student's prose. So that they could "hear" their own language. So that the workshop was transported in a continuum where the sound led to the writing and returned to the sound before the book was printed.

Finally, leaving sound to go towards text strangely accelerates the acting out of writing. All the questions of style as composition appear at the same time and find solutions in one single movement. So that it seemed natural for the students to write and to make a collection of narratives in a single month.

I am conscious that this experiment is not necessarily transposable. The question is also that of contagion between media. As any other recorded sounds and images, these documentary capturings can become the medium for a composite writing.

I hope that I respected the deep desire of the man who wanted the students to shoot first. Ten years later, even if the students write now almost during half of the first year, they proceed from their own realizations. It is difficult to prevent them from getting to like writing, as far as they understood that writing was, by itself, a realization. And that writing could even come first, as far as it showed itself as a gesture, and as a tool for capture.

Orhan KIPCAK (Austria)

Media education for creative writing workshops

See abstract page 19.

THE WORKSHOP DEVICE

Marianne JAEGLÉ (France)

Prompts: between technical ability and desire for writing

This presentation will review how we, *Workshops Elisabeth Bing*, are creating prompts based on a pattern, and I'll quickly talk about the principles underlying this way of working.

What can we consider as being a good prompt? According to which criteria?

Which criteria will allow us to evaluate a prompt? I found two of them.

I think that the first criterion to evaluate the prompt would be that it helped the writer to write a better text than the text he would have written without the prompt. Better in every possible way: more efficient, with a better structure, more original, more personal, etc.

And the second criterion is that the prompt helped the writer himself to become better: that means more self-confident, more daring, more conscious of what he does, more independent etc.

According to me, we can consider as a good prompt a prompt that participates in the construction of the text and/ or the prompt that contributes to the writer's expertise and autonomy. That means: a good prompt stimulates the desire of writing and gives a reusable teaching, what we could call a motif or a pattern.

How to create a prompt that makes the writer and/or his text better?

What we do is to find a published text that contains a motif, in the artistic sense of the term, that means at the same time a reason to write and an element with an aesthetic unity.

To give a prompt, we read the text, define the motif, and propose to the students to write, drawing inspiration from it.

I give you an example of the kind of prompts we create and we use: this prompt can be used with people writing autobiography or novel.

Pierre Loti and the encounter with the sea

In le *Roman d'un enfant*, the book named *the Story of a child*, the famous French writer Pierre Loti tells about the first time he saw the sea, when he was a child.

Nothing very meaningful happens: the meeting in itself is quite trivial. The child is maybe five years old; he climbs up a dune, he sees the sea, he feels fear at the idea that the sea can capture him and he runs to his mother. End of the chapter.

Despite this trivial aspect, this meeting is to be decisive in his life, because as an adult, Pierre Loti happened to become a sailor. Most of his books are about the sea, the travels he made on it, etc.

So I usually read the text about that encounter: then, I propose to write not about the theme of the text (i.e. the first time you saw the sea) but about the pattern, the narrative element, making a whole in itself that this text includes: the pattern of "the first time that reveals itself afterwards to be decisive".

What kind of teaching can we give with a pattern?

Several kinds of patterns exist: a pattern can be a form, a specific technique, a structure, a way of writing… etc. Some examples:

- the pattern can include a specific technical writing used or invented by a writer (the stream of consciousness with Molly Bloom's monologue, in *Ulysses* by Joyce, interference in *Madame Bovary* by Flaubert, the soliloquy in *La Chute* by Albert Camus, *The fall*, by Albert Camus),

  Writing with these patterns, means for the students to learn these techniques.

- It can include a structure: many texts written by Kafka in his diary are written with a very special and very visible grammatical structure, that makes the reader wait for the end of the sentence / the end of the text (if, if, if, if, … then…); by using this structure, the students will learn how to create a suspense in their text.
- it can include a way of writing : writing using only infinitive, or using the past conditional (such as Georges Perec does in *W ou le souvenir d'enfance*).
- it can be a ready-made form, such as the pattern of the first time, the pattern of involuntary memory with Marcel Proust, etc

What does it mean to use a prompt based on a pattern?

In *Préface à une vie d'écrivain,* Alain Robbe-Grillet defined literature as a process of constant rewriting:

"Art in general and more specifically literature would be a communicable chain, always trying to reproduce the same things, but differently. The past work is perfect, but as it fell into ruin, it must be done again"

In a creative writing course, giving a prompt based on a published text and including a pattern does not mean that the teacher suggests to imitate the published text: it wouldn't be of any interest. It means proposing to the student to build again what has fallen into ruin.

The pattern will be offered to students as a ready-made link in the chain of literature. What do you have to write about that link? How can you make it new? How can you make it yours?

And the pattern will be proposed with the freedom for them to write close to the pattern, far from it, or against the pattern. I can very easily imagine someone who, in response to the prompt of the first time, would write "the last time I did … , the last time I went somewhere, the last time I saw someone…"

What are the advantages to use prompts based on a published text including a pattern?

I was very surprised when I realized that Natalie Goldberg hardly ever mentions any writer nor any published text in her books *Writing down the bones* and *Thunder and Lightning.*

What difference does it make to use a published text in giving a prompt?

- First of all : the text is as an evidence: writing about one's own name is possible, a writer like Michel Leiris or Pierre Loti, or anyone else… didn't reject writing about this, and the result of writing about this is a literary text. Once again, the idea is not to give the text as something to imitate, but to read it as an example of what can be done. It is a basis on which the writer can build his own text.

Other advantages of quoting published texts:

- Second, the literary text involves the desire to write for its beauty or its apparent simplicity, it may create rivalry among published writers and students, it creates a "bath of words" that is a stimulation of the writing desire. The text works as a starter for the students.

- Third advantage: it serves culture. It gives the students an idea of what other writers have written during the centuries before their birth and of the techniques of writing they have created. That way, they don't have to reinvent the wheel. They can benefit from all that has been invented before. The pattern includes a teaching for the students, that will help them write a better text. Most of all, he patterns will be reusable later, when the students write other texts. That way, the patterns help them to become more independent in their writing. The patterns contribute in the education of the writer, and in the building of its autonomy.
- Fourth advantage: the desire of writing does not depend from the teacher and from his/her demands. The published text creates the desire to write, to renew the past work, to do as well as the writer, and even better, if possible.

The consequences on the teacher's practice

The consequence of this is to considerably reduce the role of the CW teacher. We are used to considering that in a CW course, there are a teacher and students. In reality, what we merely consider is that there are the published texts and the texts that are being written.

And the job of the creative writing teacher could be defined as a go-between. He/she must facilitate the transition between the published text and the text being written (and also facilitate the transition between the text being written and the future published text). He/she must use the published texts to help the writers in writing their own text. **The teacher's function is merely to find patterns that will allow students to build themselves in order to become authors in the published texts.**

The difficulty for the teacher is to find texts that are both stimulating for the desire to write and instructive in terms of technical writing, to identify the pattern and to

offer it to the students. To find patterns that are sufficiently wide to suit all the students and sufficiently precise to create the desire of writing.

Conclusion

"A writer is someone who knows how to proceed to his own childbirth" said a French writer. We could also say "a writer is someone who is able to create his own patterns for writing".

The bet is that after a certain amount of patterns, a student should be able to become the writer he means to be, and also to become independent from the teacher and the creative writing course.

What can we consider as a good prompt? The image that comes to me is the vertebra.

All the beginners are invertebrate. One prompt after another, without knowing it, without even feeling it, the prompts build their vertebral spine.

The Story of a child, by Pierre Loti

Chapter 4

> *I will now endeavor to explain the impression that the sea made upon me at our first brief and melancholy encounter, which took place at twilight upon the evening of my arrival at the Island.*
>
> *Notwithstanding the fact that I could scarcely see it, it had so remarkable an effect on me that in a single moment it was engraven upon my memory forever. I feel a retrospective shudder run through me when my spirit broods upon the recollection.*
>
> *We had but newly arrived at this village near St. Ongeoise where my parents had rented a fisherman's house for the bathing season. I knew that we had come here for something called the sea, but I had had no*

glimpse of it (a line of dunes hid it from me because of my short stature), and I was extremely impatient to become acquainted with it; therefore after dinner, as night was falling, I went alone to seek this mysterious thing.

The air was sharp and biting, and unlike any I had experienced, and from behind the hillocks of sand, along which the path led, there came a faint but majestic noise. Everything affrighted me, the unfamiliar way, the twilight falling from the overcast sky, and the loneliness of this part of the village. But inspired by one of those great and sudden resolutions, that come sometimes to the most timid, I went forward with a firm step.

Suddenly I stopped overcome and almost paralyzed by fear, for something took shape before me, something dark and surging sprang up from all sides at the same time and it seemed to stretch out endlessly. It was something so vast and full of motion that I was seized with a deadly vertigo—it was the sea of my imagining! Without a moment's hesitation, without asking how this knowledge had been wrought, without astonishment even, I recognized it and I trembled with a great emotion. It was so dark a green as to be almost black; to me it seemed unstable, perfidious, all ingulfing, always turbulent, and of a sinister, menacing aspect. Above it, in harmony with it, stretched the gray and lowering sky.

And far away, very far away, upon the immeasurable distant horizon I perceived a break between the sky and the waters, and a pale yellow light showed through this cleft.

(…) We communed together a moment, one with the other—I was deeply fascinated. At our first encounter I am sure I had a nebulous presentiment that I would one day go to it in spite of my hesitation, in spite of all the efforts put forth to hold me back,—and the emotion that

overwhelmed me in the presence of the sea was not only one of fear, but I felt also an inexpressible sadness, and I seemed to feel the anguish of desolation, bereavement and exile. With downcast mien, and with hair blown about by the wind, I turned and ran home. I was in the extreme haste to be with my mother; I wished to embrace her and to cling close to her; I desired to be with her so that she might console me for the thousand indefinite, anticipated sorrows that surged through my heart at the sight of those green waters, so vast and so deep."

Laure NAIMSKI (France)

The creative writing workshops as a jazz orchestra

Introduction:

The first important thing to know is that I do not make a living by playing jazz music. I'm not such a good musician. 15 years of practising music and more specifically playing saxophone made the proof of that. I make my living with my writings in journalism and communication field. 2 years ago, I also started an activity as a creative writing teacher for adults who like to write more as a hobby.

The creative writing workshop as a jazz orchestra:

Not long ago, an idea came to my mind. No doubt it was already there. But it came more clearly and I can't exactly say why it grew at that particular moment. The idea is that Creative writing workshops share some similarities with jazz orchestras, let's say jazz bands. And I think that it is one of the aspects that give me the desire to go on more deeply with that experience of workshops both as a participant and more recently as a creative writing teacher. It is for me a way to mix both worlds by feeling and experimenting some strong links between them.

I have more and more wondered why I could feel that link during my experiences in creative writing workshops. And I suddenly figured out that a creative workshop works more or less as an orchestra. An orchestra that does not play any music but that plays jazz. A music with scores but also an improvised music, a free music, with the support of chord lines and harmonies. That is this idea that I would like to develop now.

I will expose several examples of similarities between creative writing workshops and jazz orchestra and I will try to figure out some pedagogical tools related to those examples. Tools that can help anybody build their own creative writing workshops.

First of all, I would like to say that as a musician I have always felt nervous when I played in orchestras or had to go on stage. It is the same thing now while I am part of creative writing workshops as well as a participant or a teacher. Because there is always an audience. Like today, here among all of you.

Similarities and Tools:

First is to give the A or to set the tone:

After each participant made the choice of a place where he feels comfortable to write, the teacher who is more or less the leader proposes to give the A or to set the tone. At that point, I use two steps.

First of all, one of the tools I use is the classical one: ask the participants to introduce themselves. Have you ever been in a creative writing workshop before? What are you looking for by coming in that workshop? And so and so on.

And I think, during that classical introductive moment of a creative writing workshop, being a musician gives me a certain sensitivity that I can use in that specific context. For instance, I straight away feel some nuances in people. Who will be out of tune, who will be Inside. It is a moment to listen to the voices of each participant and to see how it is going to be possible to work together in a kind of harmony. It is nice to have some discordance sometimes in a group. But, as a teacher, you have to be able to feel it quite quickly, to be aware of them.

Musical sensitivity can help me to do so. And then, it can be a first tool to use in creative writing teaching. Even if you are not musician. It is enough, I think, to have a profound listening of the voices of each participant. Surely it must be a

help to conduct your creative writing workshop, a little bit as a leader does for a small jazz orchestra where you have the leader and the sidemen. Even if I must admit that I know nothing about being a leader because I have always been a sidewoman.

Then, the next step of the workshop for me is to set the tone, also taking all the voices I just listened to into consideration. As a teacher it is important for me to do so.

That tuning, or the tone, is one of the tools I use when I teach creative writing. By the word tuning or tone I mean to be sure that all participants of the creative writing workshop will play in tune. For that I give the key of the scale.

What is the key? My key, which is for me very important as a teacher, is to say that we are going to write not too close to the affect (or affective) and not too far from it. That gives the tone, the harmony but also the scale inside which every participant will play if he/she agrees to do so.

To make such an introduction is of course quite subjective in a way. And everyone will understand it as they can.

About a common tune:

A jazz tune often starts with a common theme that every musician will play according to the score the composer wrote. To make a link with creative writing workshops, we could say that the jazz tune is the proposal or the prompts the teacher gives to the participants.

What is the tool I can use here? How can I use my jazz musician experience in that specific field to help me to build my workshop? I give the Theme in a way I will try to enlarge the desire for writing. So, in a way, I don't enunciate the theme, I work on it to be able to sing it (in a way) and moreover to feel free in front of it

as if I was the one to do a chorus line, to play a kind of free jazz music. So I do not prepare it too much but I give to myself as I do for the participants a tone, a key, a scale, a harmony that I will follow during all the workshop. I like to let the prompts a little bit alive to give people freedom and to make them comfortable about it.

About the tempo and the rhythm:

I try to find out a kind of tempo and rhythm in the group trying to use this pace to lean on it and to conduct my workshop with that support. It's a kind of inner pulse. That is not so easy. But I think that it is important to try to find that tempo and rhythm. Once more, to do that you really have to have your ears and eyes wide open.

In a jazz band, it is as important to listen to the other musicians of the group as to watch them in order to be receptive to the signs or body signs they can give you. Once more, no use to be a musician to be aware of this. Everybody can do it. It is more a question of sensitivity.

Time line:

For me, to give the tempo is also to give the time line. The participants write during a certain amount of time. As does a musician who plays a chorus and then returns to the common theme with all the jazz band. That time is part of the experience. And time of course is also an important part of a jazz score. I can accelerate the tempo by giving a shorter time to write like a bebop tune or give a longer one like a ballad. To be aware of that tempo and to have the control on it, to be able to accelerate or slow it is also a tool I can use.

Chorus line:

All participants write their own creative writing part as a chorus line. But the participant is not on his/her own, at home, in front of a computer or a sheet of paper. He/she is part of the group. Part of its energy. Even if that energy is a silent one. He/she can feel it. It is a support. Or not. Anyway it is an element. And the participants write with the « harmony » of the proposition made by the teacher. Here I can see some similarities with a jazz orchestra, but I can't really say that there exists a tool I can use to help me to build that specific part of the workshop. Here, it is more about opening my ears to listen to the music of the pencils on the sheet of paper. Or the music of computers keyboards.

First reading time:

Then the moment of reading. The moment you share your « chorus », your creative writing production with the other members of the group. For the participants, it is often a moment of great tension. For the teacher too. Because he/she will have to give some feedbacks. So to play his/her own chorus just after the one of each participant.

Feedbacks:

One of the pedagogical tool given by my experience being part of a jazz orchestra would be to remember the way I used to play my own choruses when I used to play saxophone. I remember entering very slowly into the chords and into the rhythm. Using some silence. Some moments of rest. Brief. Short. But efficient. I will say that I use the same method when it is time for me, as a teacher, to give some feedbacks. It is a play between questions and answers.

To feed each other:

Then comes a second proposition made by the teacher. Second Chorus line, second time line, second Reading. But then the writing is nourished also by the first part of the creative writing workshop. We have taken from the others. As a musician takes from the other members of the jazz band to nourish his/her own music. As a jazz band, a creative writing workshop is really a collective creation. Spontaneous, ephemeral. You can choose to go on with your writing at home on your own. Or not. But nevertheless, you will keep in mind that unique moment. That unique group of people.

Example: Recently, during a literature festival I went as a participant to a creative writing workshop with American novelist Ron Hansen. We worked on several writing proposals. And for the second one, one of the participants wrote on a theme she heard during the first Reading after the first writing proposal. She used a specific element: that was the American state of Nebraska. After Reading, she explained that she had taken the idea and the inspiration of her own text from the text she had heard few minutes before starting her writing. I think it is an important element to know that she was not a volunteer participant. She was Ron Hansen's translator and she had decided to join the participants at the last minute. So it was in a way a candid voice perhaps more aware of each voice in the group. And she made her nourishment with those voices.

Space as a tool:

To be a jazz musician, gives me a special attention to the body and the way the body takes its specific place in space. Speaking about tools to help me teach creative writing workshop, I would say that it also gives me the desire to invent some prompts in order to free participants' body from the frame of the workshop and perhaps even from the space of the sheet of paper.

Conclusion

I think that what I am looking for is to find again that miracle that special alchemy I can find in a jazz orchestra which is a real moment to free some creative energy. Now that I am more aware of that, I am more able to think my creative writing teaching experience with consideration to those similarities and pedagogical tools I have just spoken about.

I can use my practise as a musician as a tool to emphasize that unique alchemy in the group as much as I can.

It is all about the interaction between me and the participants. It is more about the global shape of the workshop. That musical sensitivity, and especially free music as jazz music can be, is efficient in the building of my workshops.

To have that sensitivity is like when you are in a band and that you are overwhelmed by the music without really being able to listen to every voice but taking all the voices at once as if they were only one but also to dissociate them if necessary in the conduct of the workshop.

Javier SAGARNA (Spain)

Reading in creative writing teaching

For many years, the teaching in Escuela de Escritores, the same as in the rest of the creative writing schools in Spain, was focused on writing exercises that would be commented and corrected in class sessions. In every class, a technique or literary strategy was studied and a proposal for writing was made to the students, who had to write it at home during the week. In the next class, the texts would be commented by the group and the teacher. Of course, most of the theoretical explanations were supported by examples taken from literary texts, extracted mostly from great literary books, and, in every moment, reading in general and some specific books were strongly recommended. Nevertheless, reading was not considered a part of the learning process itself, but as a complement, something undoubtedly useful for students, but that they had to manage by themselves, in case with some guide and advice from the school.

Five years ago, in Escuela de Escritores, we decided to make a change. We reached the conclusion that, from a pedagogical point of view, it was absolutely essential to make reading a basic tool in our teaching processes. It was not as much to follow this old topical statement that says that you cannot be a writer if you have not read a lot, but to define a double objective for our learning process: train writers, yes, but also train readers, with an ability for critical reading and personal analysis, capable to make reading a pleasant and meaningful experience. Maybe, in other countries with educational systems designed to do this job at school or university, a focus like this would not be necessary, but in the Spanish environment it looked essential to implement a learning process oriented not only

to making writers who read, but also writers who know how to use this reading to grow as writers.

To start up this process, we defined some basic ideas:
- Make the students make contact with literature, not only with books. Show them to make the difference between literature and products in the shape of a book.
- Use the experience and variety of focus and literary preferences of our teachers, encouraging them to guide their students to the texts that they better know and they like the most, as a way to enrich the reading experience of the students. Contradictions, if they rise up, would make the students take position and build their own personal opinion.
- Even if showing the most relevant techniques and literary strategies in each book is, undoubtedly, one of the objectives, it is also very important to develop the artistic sensibility of students. Do not give them a way to read the text, but guide them to find their own reading. Anyway, texts must be analyzed from a practical point of view.
- Discussion of texts must be in group and must be done in class. Teachers can give students some tools for reflexion, as reading guides, list of questions, etc., if they feel it necessary.

Once this starting point established, teachers of all courses and levels were asked to modify their classes. The role of the teachers was to:
- Define a list of readings appropriate for the level and contents of each course. Teachers are free to select the books they prefer, but students have to read not less than a book per month and not more than one each fifteen days (in some groups it was admitted to read just short stories, that were analyzed in depth).

- Define the learning objectives for each book. It is not intended to make students read the best ten books in the history of literature, but to read ten good books, literature, useful to show techniques and strategies and how they work in "real" texts, and help them to improve their writing as well as their artistic sensibility.
- Save time in their classes for the comment and discussion of the readings. Not less than half an hour in classroom courses. In on line course it was established to make a one hour long chat for each reading.
- Define and prepare, if needed, the reflexion tools they feel necessary for each case: reading guides, questions to answer, articles about each book, etc.

An example of a list of readings, could be the following:

- **October - December**

84 Charing Cross Road, Helene Hanff
La señora del perrito y otros cuentos, Anton Chejov
El vacío y el centro, Ángel Zapata
King Lear, William Shakespeare.
La colmena, Camilo José Cela

- **January - March**

El gran cuaderno, Agota Kristoff
Cazadores en la nieve, Tobias Wolff
1280 almas, Jim Thompson
Un fragmento de vida, Arthur Machen
Bestiario, Julio Cortázar
La Odisea, Homero

- **April - June**

El coronel no tiene quien le escriba, Gabriel García Márquez.
Pájaros de América, Lorrie Moore
El espejo del mar, Joseph Conrad
El porqué de las cosas, Quim Monzó.
El barón rampante, Italo Calvino
Música para camaleones, Truman Capote
Farenheit 451, Ray Bradbury.

In the same way, programmes as our Master in Narrative (a two year and 576 hours of classes programme, that meets the Bolonia´s process requirements) were already designed including an important part of readings and textual analysis.

It is important to notice that the idea was not to substitute the habitual dynamics of the writing workshop (that we still think are the best way to train people for writing), but to complement and enrich them with this new tool.

After five years, we can say that this procedure has been a complete success. We can underline the following achievements:
- Most students follow the reading programme. Even students that have a lower commitment with writing, follow enthusiastically the reading proposals and share their opinions with the group.
- Students discover new authors and the pleasure of reading literature instead of commercial products.
- A better understanding of the utility and power of a wide range of techniques and literary strategies.

- An improvement of the perception and analytical capacities, that, little by little, is being reflected in the capacity of students to analyze the goals and defects of their own texts.
- A measurable improvement in the students' writing.
- An improvement in the students 'artistic sensibility.
- An increase of the individuality and originality, as they receive very different influences in a short time.
- As a side effect, an improvement of the abilities of the teachers, that had also grown in this process.

As a conclusion, we consider that including reading as an essential part of our teaching plan and of our leaning procedures has been a very positive decision and, without substituting the traditional work in the writing workshops, has brought a very necessary complement. Combining reading and writing, with theoretical units and exercises focused to stimulate the creative abilities of the students and to practice techniques and literary strategies, the learning experience becomes richer and more complete.

TO TEACH OR TO WRITE?

Enrica AJO (Italy)

The economical impossibility of creative writing for someone with a life to live

This is a sad story about not being paid.
I' m quite sure you are not paid for a lot of works that you do neither.
You are not being paid when you make your laundry or wash your dishes or watch all those tv series just to know how they work and what are the secrets of the American script writing.
There are no secrets: Americans have more money.
When you have sex with your boyfriend maybe you are not paid either.
That' s what I call: love without benefits.

So, when I quit my master in creative writing that was a real sad moment because I got to get back to find myself a job. I'm not kidding but finding a job is as stressing as working in a mine with dwarves.
Then I gave a thought about working with children.
Not working using children, not working in the same office with children but something in between teaching them and letting them play in a way they wouldn't be able to hurt themselves. Not too much.
I thought I could teach something to someone: but they had to be very young and naive, otherwise it would be the other way.

I read a lot in my childhood, then I read a lot when I was in high school and I read so much that I ended up reading during lessons.
This kind of behaviour was obviously discouraged.
I could write a long paper about the Italian educational system and about quite the worldwide educational system but I don't have time now to get specific.
I think that is painful at every age when you love something and you are taught to love it "but not that much". It's painful when you love reading and literature but you are told you ought to love the same way maths or chemistry that you really don't give a fuck and you are not are going to understand either in eons of time. They teach you that you have to love every class the same way but it's insane. It's like you should love everyone the same way. It's like you shouldn't have a best friend and if you want to invite him at the party, everyone is coming in.
When you are not pushed by love or passion in what you do, I think discipline works well.
You don't need discipline if you really love what you do.
And if you are doing something that you don't love you have to wonder why you are doing it. Because life is short.

Anyway: I read a lot when I was a child, I read a lot in high school when I was not a child anymore and I read a lot even when I quit university. I studied cinema but I had already seen all that movie stuff and what I really wanted indeed was to be in the world and get practical.
But before quitting university I sat three American literature exams because I love reading American literature. That is why I thought I had chosen the wrong faculty and I got depressed and started working.
I think all this reading was the basis.

When workshops with children started there were the two of us: me and Chiara, one of my ex classmates at the master in creative writing.
I have to point out that I hate quite all my ex classmates.
Maybe “hate” it's not the right word but I really really HATE the one who slept with me and then he left in the middle of the night using my bike and then he had it stolen and he never gave me my money back: I pray every day for his soul to burn.
I MUST hate them until they will prove me I must not.
This proof will never come and it never came indeed.
I worked as an actress for a long time and I perfectly know that an actor without others is nothing.
An actor knows that he needs at least one watching him.
The main difference between an average actor and an average writer is that the writer doesn't think he needs neither the only one who is reading him.
Even if he craves for everybody to read his tales or books he usually does not give a fuck about his readers’ opinions. Even if his reader was a dead reader, a corpse reader, the writer simply would stamp his book at his face at the cemetery and then leave.
I'm telling you this because the main difficulty for me in organizing workshops was finding someone interested in the job and someone who could be a part of a team job.
A writer usually doesn't love working and most of all doesn’t love sharing something with others.
That really scares me.
Every time someone tells me he's a writer I scream and run away.

I picked the only one left of my ex classmates who needed a job.

We had the idea of what we wanted to do but we weren't able to explain: it was all about feelings. When you present yourself as a children teacher everyone starts to visualize cakes and pink ribbons and blue ribbons and little robots and little cars and little circuits for cars and little dresses for dolls. And yes! This is a part of it.

But your work is most of all about the relationship you have with children in the end. Working with children is like working with writers, but they are younger and they usually don't know already they want to be writers or art directors in Vogue magazines or cool hunters of future hunters or head hunters: all that kind of jobs you will never be hired and paid for unless you are Anna Wintour's niece or Mexican.

(I say "Mexican" because the only art director I know is a Mexican boy I was in love with. This boy opened a bookshop thanks to his father's money: his father was a marine. Then the bookshop failed, like every human activity concerned with books, and he became an art director.)

When you find a child that is outside all those logics related to his parents' ego, you find magic.

I really move myself every time I think about that because it is not about the fact that they are young, pure and so cute. Most of them are not cute at all (males overall).

They are powerful because when you find the right one, he is not afraid to fail.

I think, me miserable, I really think that all that cheap stuff about the writer's block is about fear.

While I was writing this I visualized myself like something in between Scientology and Amishes and I was afraid to look stupid or demagogical while a

child would have think -Wow! Scientology! All those aliens and space shuttles and volcanos! Wow! Amish! All those real angry birds!-
And the child's story will be better than mine because mine is born in fear and shame while his story lives in the realm of enthusiasm and joy.
I don't have the time now to wonder why the world works this way: why we love stories about love and justice and bravery and enthusiasm but in our lives things turn out different.

I will never be rich teaching for children.
I don't want to relate with average adults' stuff: the ones who attend courses to find someone to fuck or to have a dinner with. Anyway I don't understand why you should have dinner or fuck with a writer the moment after is stealing your bike!

I really think that if you want to write you just write. I really think that you have to read a lot: not to imitate but just to discover what you like and what you dislike. Listen to other people's stories and opinions can' t really harm anyone.
Unless you are Hitler.

I' m not going to kill anyone who teaches creative writing to adults but this is simply not my kind.
I really need money and I really need a job but I really know that if I do something I would love for reasons I hate, I'll end up hating myself.
Then I could write something like Bridget Jones' Diary: but I' m not interested in all that amount of money.
Not until I get to pay my rent.

Thomas BOUVATIER (France)

Narrative techniques

See abstract page 21.

Catherine LE GALLAIS (France)

About the relationship between writing and teaching creative writing

I've been triggered to explore the relationship between writing and teaching creative writing by an unease I've felt when I started to teach creative writing after having gone through the required training at « Les Ateliers d'écriture Elisabeth Bing ». After a year, it dawned on me that unless I didn't finish what was to become my first novel, I would not continue to be able to give the students' texts the « right» attention and support. A vague intuition yet forceful enough to stop me from teaching for two years.

This personal experience inspired me to interview three senior creative writing teachers who both write (published literature) and teach on an intense and regular basis: Isabelle Mercat-Maheu, Marianne Jaeglé and Bénédicte Fayet.[9] All three kindly agreed to answer questions like: How would you talk about the relationship between writing and teaching? How do writing and teaching co-exist in your life?

[9] Isabelle Mercat-Maheu and Marianne Jaeglé are President and Vice-President of « Les Ateliers d'écriture Elisabeth Bing » respectively. Bénédicte Fayet has taught creative writing at « Aleph écriture » for many years. After a break she took in order to stand back, she resumed teaching at les « Atelier d'écriture Elisabeth Bing ».

Do you feel tensions or antagonisms between these activities? Do you think a creative writing teacher must write? Are there dangers a writer should be aware of when he/she decides to teach? Etc.

Tensions that might arise between writing and teaching

Teaching creative writing is a job all three interviewees love and that offers them many rewards. Nonetheless it is a very demanding profession whose characteristics can cause a fair amount of frustration and suffering. External factors like the lack of symbolic, social and financial recognition can be partially blamed for that, at least in France. But some distress might also be due to tensions that intrinsically arise between teaching and writing.

How teaching can jeopardize writing.

a) Competing time-schedules

In France, only very few writers make a living with their writer's income. Therefore writers might be « pushed » into teaching by economic necessity and invest more time in it than they would want. Indeed to make a living from it, one has to teach a lot. The time it takes to prepare the classes (reading, creating prompts), the time it takes to read some longer writings the students produce, and *in fine* one's own writing « compete » with all other aspects of private life during the free-time. No doubt that is a stress and frustration factor.

« When you teach a lot you don't write anymore»

b) Teaching drains literary creativity

Teaching requires a lot of creativity. It may well be that teaching drains a part of creativity meant to be invested in writing. It indeed takes creativity to:

- invent a new prompt

« New prompts are like new books»

« A part of one's creativity can very well develop and even blossom in creating prompts »

- give useful feedbacks on the students' work

« The most difficult part in teaching is to always have something to say about the students' texts. It's spontaneous creation. Where does it come from? How can we always feel something just listening to bits and pieces, to a so called rough draft, to things that just sprung up and don't know where they are going? »

- motivate a group of students over a long period of time (courses range from one week to three years)

« To teach a group is a living work».

« I create prompts made-to-measure for some students to try to get them to go further »

c) Teaching is energy consuming

Teaching « wrings » you: at the end of the day there might be too little energy left for writing

« When the students read their text, we put to work all our mental, psychological and physical forces to give them feedbacks. »

« To teach (*« animer»* in French[10]) *is to give your soul»*
« What is so tiring when teaching is that you give the students' writings the attention and the energy you should be giving your own writing. It is the writer's job to organize her life in order to have both time and energy to create her artwork. »

If the tension between writing and teaching is too intense and becomes antagonistic - for example if one has to teach full time to make a living with no time left for writing, or if the intensity of the effort of teaching is not given some relief, or if the « writer's creativity » is not given enough space, there is a risk of burn-out, of disgust for teaching, even of disease because teaching, as much as writing, seems to draws from a vital source (*« to give your soul », « living work», « mental, psychological and physical forces»*).

How writing (or not writing enough) can endanger teaching

It seems an all the more distressful paradox that teaching creative writing could endanger writing that the latter is considered a condition for the former. Indeed the three interviewees see writing as a *necessary* condition to teach creative writing.

The teacher's legitimacy partially depends on her own commitment and ability to continue writing. Notice that writing is not seen as a *sufficient* condition to teach. Teaching requires pedagogical skills that have to be learnt in order to offer students a fruitful and safe transmission. But even once these two conditions are fulfilled, the legitimacy to teach seems an alchemy one has to find for oneself.

[10] In the French context, a workshop teacher is called « a*nimateur »*; derived from Latin « *anima* », «*animateur*» is the agent that «moves » or, literally, the one who « endows somebody or something with breath, life, inspiration, energy ».

« The teacher must always stay somebody who writes … But you're never legitimated to teach in the same way that you're never legitimated to write. Writing and teaching are positions you must seize.»

Questions like « How much is a teacher supposed to write? », « Must she have written a lot before starting to teach? », « Must the teacher be a published author? » cannot be given an unequivocal answer. Hence the teacher's writing activity can take many forms.

Why then is it considered necessary? What are the risks if, for some reason, a teacher writes too little or not at all?

a) Transference of the desire to write on the teaching activity

« The desire for teaching might work as a substitution to the desire for writing. »

« If you are a creative writing teacher but writing in itself is not a necessity for you (I don't see how that could be, but let's just advance this hypothesis), maybe you don't need to write in order to teach. But if, to some extent, writing matters to you, you must write, because if you don't, you might make the student's write on your behalf».

For the above quoted interviewees, the « shift » of the teacher's desire to write onto teaching involves a risk that she unconsciously manipulates the students to write what she ought to be writing, thus losing sight of the group's needs.

« What do you do with your own desire for writing? If you don't write, will you not impose your desire on the students? »

b) Lack of fences between what's mine and what's yours

If you don't write, you don't know what your own writing territories are. Thus you might never be sure you have not stolen your students' ideas.

« If I hadn't been writing for a long time, if therefore I weren't sure of which my own writing obsessions are, if I hadn't already written books, I'd be afraid to be steeling my students' ideas when their writing comes close to my own interests ».

Let's now discuss the more common situation in which a teacher writes. Here two other possible pitfalls are pointed out:

c) Transference of sense of failure

What when a teacher who writes gets stuck in writing setbacks or develops a sense of failure as a writer? There is a risk that the teacher transfers her self-image onto the students.

« A strange relationship develops between the group and the person that guides it […] There are transference and counter-transference phenomena that make it difficult for the person in charge to find her position and that involve her sense of legitimacy. It seems to me that the teacher's capacity to help the group evolve depends upon her capacity to evolve in her own writing. I remember a difficult moment: I had only published books that had been ordered to me - that weren't the literature I really wanted to write - and I was teaching a group that had a self-image of failure. That group mirrored back to me a very negative image of myself and to some extent refused to acknowledge what I could offer. But other scenarios

exist too - for example very positive ones: the writer believes in him/herself, the group is self-confident and everybody starts to write happily. This would be a virtuous circle… »

d) Rivalry

Another difficulty might arise when teaching students thought of as better writers than oneself. That situation requires humility and philosophy.

« It is difficult to manage that for a teacher … well maybe not that difficult. I myself solve that problem thinking of John the Baptist who baptizes people in the Jordan. When they tell him « You are the Messiah », he answers « Someone is coming soon who is greater than I am » … Being a teacher implies to be put in a situation where we teach people who one day will do better than us. »

Ways to reinforce a happy co-existence between writing and teaching

Differentiating two positions

To clearly differentiate - as illustrated in the quote below - writing and teaching as being two different (even opposite) positions can be helpful to reduce competition between them.

« For me writing and teaching are two opposite positions that do not compete. Teaching means you forget yourself as much as you can: you forget your tastes, you teach pupils whose books you'd never search for in a bookstore because you don't like science-fiction or erotic writings … I forget my tastes and try to serve the others' writing as much as possible.

Writing is on the opposite side: when I write I only follow my taste, I flounder in my own mud, I follow my obsessions. It's very personal. It's my territory. I never

prompt students to write in my territories. I don't want their work to cause interference on mine».
« I don't feel frustrated anymore. I've come to an understanding that all three « dimensions » are important to me: there's my life, there's writing, there's teaching. »

Differentiating can also prevent searching in teaching the rewards of writing and vice-versa. While writing responds to needs like creativity, expression, accomplishment amongst others, teaching responds to needs like socialization, transmission, exchange, helping others discover their own potential, etc.

« What moves me to teach? Curiosity for other people's writing. The satisfaction to help people accomplish what they thought to be impossible … But also the extreme pleasure of finding in literature, what could work as a lever to make people write. »
« My ethic involvement is in my writing. I do not feel I owe transmission to society.»

Finding the ideal personal mix.
Knowing that teaching is energy and time consuming, everyone can think what the ideal proportions between the two would be for oneself. When asked « what would your ideal mix be? » the three interviewees gave very different answers.

While thinking about these proportions, one should keep in mind that writing is seen as a necessity to teach well (How can I protect the desire, the time, the energy to write from teaching overstrain, given that writing is necessary to teach?)

« Every teacher must find the good proportions. Teaching is a remedy to writer's isolation, teaching gives a little socialization which is pleasant but one should beware of an overdose ».

Establishing a fair recognition of the respective values of teaching and writing

a) In the teachers' minds

- Do not downplay the value of teaching

« It is less difficult to teach than to write, therefore one might get trapped into teaching instead of writing. »

It may be that for some teachers writing has a more prestigious « aura » than teaching. As if literary creation were of more value symbolically than teaching.

Is that a fair statement? Is the creativity involved in teaching « inferior » or « easier » than the one invested in teaching?

« There is some ambiguity. If I say to myself: « it is the students who are creating, it's not me », I suffer. But if I say « we create together », I feel much better. […] It's magical. Because you talk for fifteen minutes giving the students a prompt, all of a sudden there is silence and they write. It's the teacher who has produced that, it's a gift. One must see that as a gift ... But to understand that, one must grow stronger. »

- Do not downplay the value of writing

On the other hand writing mustn't be put aside with the excuse « I have no time to write because I teach too much» or « It's not necessary to *be* writing to teach ». How long can that stay true? It is important for a teacher to understand the

necessity of writing, be it only to stay a good teacher. Unless writing is of no necessity whatsoever for him/her … But can that be true?

b) In the outside world

« Of all the jobs I've had, teaching creative writing is the one I have mostly loved, the most interesting, the one that has most filled me with enthusiasm … and the worst acknowledged: I think we must work on the acknowledgment of the teachers' quality - the ones who have really put a lot in their work. »

There is a symbolic aspect to the acknowledgement teachers ask for. In that context, one may question the French word « *animateur* » as to being the best conveyor of the profession it stands for. Does it not obscure the literary knowledge, the writing experience, the pedagogical skills, the creativity, the emotional intelligence it takes to teach creative writing?
But there also is an economical aspect. It would seem fair to receive economic compensation for the time and skills it takes to create prompts and the time and skills it takes to read and give feedback on the students' writings. Could there be a copyright on new and innovating prompts?
There sure still is much to be thought of to improve the symbolic and financial recognition of creative writing teachers, at least in France.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND WORKSHOP

PANEL DISCUSSION 2 – ABOUT THE WRITER'S TRAINING

Denis BOURGEOIS and guests: Thomas BOUVATIER, Ana MENÉNDEZ.

See abstract page 21.

PANEL DISCUSSION 3 – ABOUT THE TEACHER'S TRAINING

Alain ANDRÉ and guests: Reijo VIRTANEN, Mariana TORRES.

Alain ANDRÉ (France)

A lot of creative writing teachers are writers or literature teachers first. But the art of teaching art is a specific one, isn't it? How can we help teachers manage with its specific and recurrent problems? Do they need an initial or a continuous training? Should they meet in regular meetings where to share and think about the way they teach? Or will they find their own way alone, as many writers feel sure they have done?

I proposed this panel discussion. It looked necessary, according to me, since our Conference is a pedagogical one. Of course, about the teacher's training (as about yesterday's question about the relationships between writing and reading into creative writing teaching), national stories are different. I do not intend to propose

a model of what training creative writing teachers should look like: I would just like to tell a French story, which is a part of the hisstory of our school here, Aleph-Écriture. It will allow me, of course, to ask a few questions, and perhaps to listen to other stories…

At the root of French creative writing workshops

At the very beginning of Aleph were 3 French literature teachers. Before becoming a professional training society, Aleph was a small association devoted to creative writing, as hundreds of them still exist in France.

We were pedagogical militants (we had been political ones, all coming from the radical left wing) and young writers, who had published just a few things, pedagogical papers or translations, things like that.

We were dissatisfied with the way we were suggested – prescribed - to teach, and two of us hastily stopped teaching in the French public secondary schools.

We had experienced several sorts of literary workshops among the very first ones existing in France. Most of them were proposed on the fringe of public teaching institutions, or even opposed to ordinary ways of teaching. That's probably why, in French, we don't use the words "teacher", "course", "lesson" or "student", when we speak about creative writing workshops. They are workshops: you work and you sweat and you produce something in it, you are not attending a literary course, you know!

I must add most teachers there were not what we call writers, which means, in French, not the fact of being a writer, but the fact of having published a novel at a good publishing house. In France, you know, the dominating idea, even now, is that you don't learn how to write: either you're a genius from the cradle, or you'd better sell vegetable than write. There were exceptions, with surrealism and with the Oulipo movement, but they didn't suggest workshops, but punctual

experiences of automatic writing or derived, as it come to Oulipo, from their well-known – and precious – formal constraints.

Among these first creative writing workshops in France of the seventies, I didn't exactly find what I was looking for: a space to share my manuscripts with other young writers, and to learn what I had to learn to write better ones. Most of the time, the improvised teachers were terrible behaviourists: the programme was the teacher's programme; good literature was supposed to be coincident with the teacher's favourite writers; the teacher's immortal opus, and not students' texts, was at the very centre of the workshop; ant this teacher didn't seem to think about the way he was teaching, except for one point: he wanted to have very faithful and obedient students – docile pet animals. In a way, the teacher was the problem, not the solution.

This is the reason why, as soon as I'd created Aleph with the help of two friends of mine, I made up my mind to get into three closely related actions:

- Organize a training for new creative writing teachers;
- Recruit a team of teachers;
- And write a book from the results of this teachers' training.

Basic training

Recurrent points

At far as the training is concerned, first, I taught one group a year, from 1987 to 1998 or about, when we had to create several groups every year and therefore to have new teacher trainers (there are about 12 of us at the moment). The programme of the basic training, a 90-hour long one, derived from the questions and problems identified by the group, which I usually tried to reformulate in order to come to a common basic language. In fact, a short list of points nearly always emerges from this initial time of negotiating or transaction:

- What is literary writing (space, dimensions, process)?
- How to invent and test a new prompt?
- How to use the different ways of sharing texts (voice, paperboard, video-projector, photocopies and so on) in the workshop? How to use and articulate solitary work, work in small groups, sharing in the whole group and magisterial moments in the workshop? What are the main differences between a face-to-face workshop and an e-mail one?
- Which poetic or rhetoric tools does teaching creative writing require?
- What is our relationship with writing made of? And what does our personal behaviour, or ways of managing the creative process, consist in?
- Which are the current "drafting profiles" in a group?
- Which is the link between my desire to write and my desire to teach? Where is the blind spot here?
- How to use literary texts? To illustrate our technical prompts, or as literary detours, in order to get some technical points explicit? Or what? How to be careful with those texts?
- How to give feedbacks, with beginners or with more advanced writers? About short texts and about manuscripts? What do we think about the value of one precise text?
- How to think, plan and invent a series of workshops, according to their explicit objectives?
- What are the frame and the human rules of this strange device or dispositive called a creative writing workshop?
- What are the teacher's roles and basic professional gestures?

Training tools

To this shortlist, I like to add three training tools:

- A personal diary of the training: it includes notes about the sessions, personal developments, texts written in relation with the training, etc.
- Reflexive writing, including case studies: of course, the personal diaries are intended to induce in all the students' writings a specific writing: it means writing about the workshop, for instance you're invited to write a short story, but then, you're invited to write about such or such aspect of the workshop, the use of a writer's text, a technical problem arising from the experienced workshop, a difficult relational point: it means writing about one's experience as a student and as a teacher; well, it means a regular use of a narrative and reflexive writing, in order to think about the problems met along with the sessions, in order to share with others, in order to make and develop links with the professional literature on the theme - which is new in France, where personal essay is not a highly prized "genre"; it includes case studies, for instance…
- A carefully commented bibliography: it helps students make the links between their own thinking and the professional literature on the theme.

Professional projects

This basic training is proposed to all sorts of people beginning to teach creative writing, in a university or in an elementary school, whether they are writers or not, teachers or not, or psychoanalysts, or journalists, etc. Of course, it progressively tended to become more complex. So we have now other sessions, that people attend only if it is useful for their own professional project: teaching French as a foreign language; teaching rewriting for advanced learners; teaching with specific audiences, with children or in hospitals or prisons, for instance; teaching writing at work; small groups dynamics; and so on.

A new job?

Today, most regular teachers in Aleph have attended this Aleph curriculum, first as students, then as young teachers. It means about 180 hours in different writing workshops and 180 hours in initial training as a writing workshop teacher. They work together in regular share sessions. They are invited to research meetings, they write evaluations and so on.

We also have guest teachers, teaching with the authority of their own experience and books. They generally teach in short workshops because teaching in a regular writing workshop is another job – and a difficult one.

Training and criteria

As a matter of fact, teaching in a writing workshop involves a bundle of different skills, as writing involves dozens of small jobs. We have a problem in France, and in French-speaking Belgium or Switzerland as well, with many people posing as teachers, proposing anything-goes workshops. That's why we keep on training young teachers seriously. We accept them in this training if we think they will roughly satisfy 5 criteria after one, two or three years of training:

- A good mental health, because human relationship is essential here (no oversized egos, perverse seducers, depression pumps and so on);
- A good experience of groups, I mean between 6 and 12 people – because its dynamics are important in a writing workshop;
- A real practice of writing, because you don't teach macramé;
- A real literary culture, because literature is the mine, where authors, genres, techniques and different approaches lie;

- A negotiated curriculum: because if you want to teach in a writing workshop, you'd better have attended writing workshops, and you have to think and share and get tools about a variety of questions.

A new professionalism?

As for the team of Aleph teachers, my idea at the end of the eighties, a pretty naïve one probably, was that we had to invent a totally new kind of professionalism. We were not teachers anymore; not recognized writers yet. I noticed that when you put teachers together, they play the role of teachers; and it is the same comedy when you put professional rewriters together, or psychoanalysts, or journalists, and so on.

I therefore tried to build a very composite team, in order to compel each of us to make his language explicit and to invent a new one together. With men and women, and people coming from those different jobs, which meant coming with different visions of the way a creative writing workshop could live. It compelled us to open our minds. We shared a lot, at the beginning of Aleph, and we still do, even it's not with the same naïve and pioneering enthusiasm. I think new teachers need this sharing, instead of managing alone with their groups. I think, even if I know it's even more difficult, older teachers need it too, instead of being pretty sure nobody has nothing to teach them …

Books

As for the book I was referring to, its title is *Babel heureuse* ("Happy Babel?") and it was published a long time ago – 1989 - by Syros-Alternatives, and re-published last year by Aleph. Its writing is the pure consequence of this practice of reflexive writing. By the way, I don't pretend to write when I'm teaching. I'm

here for the group, not to write myself but, as it is a little bit frustrating, I allow myself to write… about the workshop. This small trick helped me a lot to stand the fact that students were writing a literary text, as I wasn't!

It is an essay and the formalized version of this training I was talking about. It's not a method for creative writing teaching, but a set of work hypotheses. It was followed by two other essays, deriving from the results of our collective experiment: *Devenir écrivain* ("Becoming a writer"), first published in 2007 by Leduc and re-published this autumn by Aleph; and *Écrire l'expérience – vers la reconnaissance des pratiques professionnelles* ("Writing one's own experience – towards the recognition of professional experience"), in cooperation with a Swiss psycho-analyst and university teacher, Mireille Cifali, published in 2007 by the Presses Universitaires de France and still in bookshops.

Writing those three essays gave me a strong conviction. Writing is one thing, and I published novels and short stories as a lot of people here, and I hope I will go on with it. But teaching creative writing is another thing, and it really requires professional training and sharing, even if you are a famous poet and the greatest literary shaman on this planet.

What do you think?

Reijo VIRTANEN (Finland)

When you ask whether a creative writing teacher needs an initial or continuous training, I answer YES. They need both. But actually, the case is not really that simple.

In theory all teachers need some training but if we started demanding pedagogical qualification now, we would be short of those teachers who know enough about writing.

Who are the teachers of creative writing?

At the moment we in Finland have at least three kinds of creative writing teachers;

- artist-teachers: a teacher who is a professional writer in one or several areas like lyrics, prose fiction, drama, script writing, journalism – their competence is typically practical. They know how to do it, but they have not written any theoretical about it
- scholar teachers (including literary critics): a teacher who is professional in reading and analyzing literature and writing about that but whose own writing in the genre they should teach at the college has not been at a professional level
- teachers of Finnish language and literature

The only group which has initial pedagogical education is the third one: **teachers of Finnish language and literature.** They have achieved 40 study points in general pedagogy and teacher training. They teach in high schools, or at a lower level. These are the people that we – in writer's colleges - do not usually want to

choose as teachers in art schools. The reason for this is that their best competence concerns language skills and correcting writing errors. Their competence in belles-lettres is often very weak. So, this is a very paradoxical situation.

It is typical that the **artist-teachers** perhaps even despise pedagogical education. They do not even want be called teachers but trainers, or mentors. They think that they know all the secrets of writing and the process, too. They think that pedagogy belongs to children's school, not to a serious artistic workshop.

The **scholar-teachers** consider themselves as specialists in belles-lettres. They are qualified readers and editors of literature. They despise all linguistic counseling. They aim to a higher goal which is, of course, art. They are used to collecting study points from the university so they do not oppose pedagogical studies. Perhaps they have the aim of carrying out all the studies of 40 study points, in the future. But they usually feel that at the very moment there is always something more important to do. Of course they know that they cannot get a permanent teacher's job if they do not fulfill the qualification of 40 sp. And the salary is smaller, now. This is a good stimulant for their later pedagogical studies.

Quite the opposite, an artist-teacher does not want to become a permanent teacher. His or her full-time job is to write and get published.

Should they need pedagogical education / teacher's training?

Those who work regularly as teachers get training on the job. It is certain, that they get to be better and better teachers day by day, just by proceeding in planning new courses and putting them into practice.

But we have to ask would they become even better teachers if they'd also get some theoretical pedagogical training.

I am sure that many artist- and scholar-teachers would get a lot of self-confidence if they went through the pedagogical basic and subject studies (40 sp). They would realize the nature of their own previous practice. They would learn why they have done something which they've done automatically in their daily job. They would find soul-mates in the different approaches of learning theories and basis for their already existing methods. They would learn scientific names to the phenomena that they encounter and do in their daily job. And they would start getting better wages because of their new qualification.

In Finland we have a convenient system of proof-examination: if you have worked as a teacher for three years and own the highest degree in your discipline, you have the right to pass the pedagogical studies with an examination where you only collect and show evidence that you are a skillful teacher. This usually means part-time studies within one year, a real teaching project, and a 20-page-long seminar article (and simultaneously you have to do your normal work as a teacher).

And of course everybody may go to the Open University to learn the basics and subject studies in pedagogical science. This is possible also for example to the artist-teachers who have no university degree at all.

But do the teachers of creative writing need the general pedagogy in order to become better teachers?

I think that it would be better for the scholar-teachers and the linguists to carry out the basic and subject studies in creative writing and specialize in teacher's training there. Here I give you an example of subject studies of writing from the Jyväskylä University. In these studies there are 20 study points altogether

available on the basics of teaching writing, the basics of giving feedback and a training in teaching writing.

But I would not like to force an artist-teacher or anybody else to the courses of pedagogical theory. Maybe they could read it all from books and articles?

However, for the artist-teacher I certainly recommend participation in conferences and seminars of teaching creative writing. This conference in Paris has been a great opportunity for all kinds of teachers.

We at Oriveden Opisto (The Orivesi College of Arts) arrange a pedagogical conference every year for Finnish teachers of writing. And every year we also invite one or two foreign teachers as guest lecturers in the conference.

And for those scholar-teachers and linguist-teachers who are not professional in writing lyrics, fiction, or drama, we arrange a long training course every year. This course is primarily about improving one's own artistic writing skills in those basic genres of belles-letters.

Mariana TORRES (Spain)

A lot of creative writing teachers are writers or literature teachers first. But the art of teaching art is a specific one, isn't it? How can we help teachers manage with its specific and recurrent problems? Do they need an initial or a continuous training? Should they meet in regular meetings where to share and think about the way they teach? Or will they find their own way alone, as many writers feel sure they have done?

Three kinds of teachers collaborate with us in the EdE: (1) the creative writing student, with a special talent to talk and analyze the exercises of the others, (2) the Literature teacher, coming from University or College and (3) the writer, with a special talent to communicate with people and share practical experiences about the creative process. Is there still another kind of creative writing teacher?

About the time someone needs to become a really good teacher: it is not possible to improve the teaching skills without practising. You need to teach a lot of hours to become a good teacher: different environments, different students and situations, different students' ages and desires or objectives. Is there a better way to learn how to teach… creative writing? Is there a way to supply this real practise?

About the difficulty of some writers to share and change their teaching habits. "This is working well for me, so, I don´t need to change it". About the flexible methods of teaching and inertia: "I have been teaching this way for many-many years…? I cannot change it, it will not work for me in *your* way". What about the students? What about their needs?

About not losing the students' point of view. how can we manage to do it…? It is enough to come back to the student chair once a year? It is always necessary? About the experience we have about it in the EdE (again, 3 kinds of teachers).

About the kind of creative writing students we have actually in classes, did they change in the last ten years? What about the youngest, and about the big amount of information and geeks habits they have now… mobile apps in classrooms, tweets about the teachings, etc. Could that improve our classroom?

About the differences we can find between a writers-friends group talking about their jobs and a teacher talking about student writings. "I have my friends critical group, I do not need a teacher anymore". About some groups of this kind in the EdE, what happens with them after some meetings. Is it mandatory that all these groups have a leading person, something like a *teacher* in a way?

About the difficulties and facilities to teach adults? The good point about teaching people which are really interested in learning and improving. The bad point about teaching people with, sometimes, a big gap to change methods and habits.

How to keep your teachers fresh and alive? Do they need to actively write before teaching creative writing? Is is necessary to be a *good* writer?

What about the writing class as a group therapy? "Why are you in my class? My therapist says writing will be good for me". What can we teach our teachers to do with that? Is it our job too?

About the necessity of structure and organization, versus chaos and improvement. How can we manage with *chaotic* teachers… but *genius*, with a really and effective way to communicate? Do they need structure? What kind of method can they follow to teach? Do they have *a* method?

WORKSHOP 3

Linda LAPPIN (Italy)

Using myth: a focus on Katabasis

In our creative writing workshop focusing on the myth of katabasis held at Aleph-Écriture during the 2012 Pedagogy Conference of the European Association of Creative Writing Programs, we first examined the concept of katabasis viewed through the lens of Joseph Campbell's research on the monomyth. We next read and discussed four short pieces, two poems and two prose passages dealing with katabasis in very different ways. In the final phase, the participants proceeded to write their own katabasis narratives using the prompt which appears at the end of this text.

Phase 1 Presentation of Material: Defining Katabasis

There was a very remote time in human history when the only way we knew to make sense of ourselves and our world, to transcribe emotions and experience, or to transmit knowledge was to tell a story, to conjure an archetype or create a symbol. The myths, symbols, and stories that sprang from our imagination in those distant days are some of the most powerful and enduring creations of world culture, and they still reverberate in our minds today, in our unconscious, in our dreams, and in the stories we keep telling and retelling.

The American mythologist, Joseph Campbell, dedicated his life to studying the myth of the hero in cultures all over the globe. From this immense body of

material, he extracted a single formula which he defined in his seminal work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, as the ***monomyth*** charting an itinerary of quest and initiation culled from the great mythologies, legends, folklore, fairy tales, and religious narratives of the world, from Osiris and Prometheus to Buddha and Christ. Campbell summed the monomyth up as follows: "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."[11] He then identified a series of phases in the hero's journey: The Call to Adventure, The Road of Trials, The Goal or Boon. These three phases may also be described as Separation/Departure, Initiation, and Return, and are in turn divided into several minor phases, or we might say, plot variations. The study of this formula and its application in analyzing or constructing the plots of fictional or nonfictional narratives offers endless possibilities to the creative writer as well as the literary critic.[12] For the purposes of today's workshop, we will be examining one of the early phases in the formula: *Katabasis*, or the hero/heroine's descent. The archetypal story-pattern of quest and initiation is among the basic structures of fiction-- from fairy tale to bildungsroman to adventure tale -- as well as of nonfiction, such as travel writing and memoir. In that story-pattern, the act of katabasis, the descent to the underworld, *wherever that may be located for the individual writer,* is a key moment in the quest.

According to Campbell, the hero or heroine's descent to the underworld is often preceded by a "call to initiation" and separation from family and home environment. This "going down into " entails journeying into the deeps of the

[11] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with the Thousand Faces.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, p. 30
[12] See the current use of this myth in fiction and screenplay writing as treated by Christopher Vogler in Vogler, *The Writer's Journey.* Los Angeles: Michael Wiese Publications, 2010.

earth or into the depths of oneself, leaving the sunlight and the familiar terrain it shines upon to wander in darkness. It is a time of solitude and doubt; mourning and danger; anguish, fear, alienation, often estrangement from what we hold most dear: our sense of who we are. Thus do the mythic figures of Ishtar and Cybele; Gilgamesh, Aeneas and Ulysses enter the gates of the underworld; thus does Dante trudge through the freezing circles of hell in *l'Inferno*; thus does Marlowe journey up the Congo River in search of Mr. Kurtz, guessing where the rocks and shallows lie which might tear open the hull of his boat. Although we may not be deprived of our dominant sense of sight as we make our way through the murky underworld, we will be required to rely heavily on other senses, just like Marlowe: hearing, smell, intuition. Very often we require a guide, a map, precise instructions, a goal, to help get us out again, such as the golden branch Aeneas plucked from a sacred tree to use as his passport to Hades.

In this shadowy subterranean realm, the protagonist undergoes tests and trials and may be imprisoned or enslaved. He or she will encounter allies and enemies, lose a possession or receive a gift, find a treasure, discover his or her true origins, acquire knowledge, achieve liberation for him/herself or for another, ultimately to return to the light of day, transformed, and ready for a new stage in the journey to selfhood. It is easy to see how this formula underpins many fictional narratives from westerns to science fiction. It also appears disguised in many memoirs, too, in which quest, conflict, resolution, and transformation are the key the phases of their narrative structures.

Psychologists tell us that these journeys to the underworld are explorations of the individual or collective unconscious where we may encounter repressed and buried instincts, desires, emotions, secrets, and unacknowledged needs. It is the realm of chaos and the irrational, and yet a source of creative and vital power. It is

home to what depth psychologist C.G. Jung called the **Shadow** – the dark side of the self that we cannot easily recognize because it contains repressed, negative and unfavorable aspects of ourselves which must be integrated into our greater self to achieve full realization of our inner nature. [13]

For the ancient Romans and Etruscans, the underworld could be entered through caves, tunnels, and caverns. In other traditions, however, the inner realm of chaos and treasures need not necessarily be "under the ground" - it may be beneath or across the sea, in a desert or forest, enclosed in a mountain or located at the top of a beanstalk. It is, however, outside the realm of immediate perception, hostile to human life, and often accessed by a magic entry existing within the ordinary world: In C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, that door to the other world was behind old clothes hanging in a closet. As Rene Daumal writes in his allegorical novel, *Mont Analogue, the door to the invisible must be visible*

In classical literature, the journey to the underworld sometimes requires preparation: instructions on what to do or not do, on when to be silent or to speak, and things to bring along: coins to pay the ferryman, oat cakes to throw to the ferocious three-headed dog Cerberus so that it will not tear the seeker to pieces. Sometimes an object or device is needed to find your way back again like the thread given by Ariadne to Theseus to lead him back out of the labyrinth in the myth of the Minotaur. Before penetrating into the other realm, there is usually a boundary to overcome (a river to cross, for example), and a gate keeper to be dealt with through cunning, negotiation, or combat. Once we get past the guardian, the journey may progress in stages. In the Mesopotamian myth of Inanna's descent to the underworld, the goddess was required to shed her veils and garments at each

[13] See M.L. Von Franz "The Process of Individuation," *Man and His Symbols*, New York: Doubleday, 1964, pp. 158 -229

successive gateway until she reached the bottom stark naked, symbolizing that she had attained essential truth. Once we are all the way down we discover a world operating under its own laws. The place may be extraordinarily beautiful, but somehow uncanny; or horrible and life-threatening with manifestations of extreme temperatures or a menacing landscape. It may contain an uncontrolled proliferation of natural forms relating to death, disease, and fertility as in the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch, or it may be strewn with treasures. It may be desolate or teeming with creatures human or otherwise, crowded with dead people and objects vanished long ago. Or it may take the form of an absolute deprivation, containing absolutely nothing.

As we manoeuvre this terrifying environment, we may encounter a helper to prepare us for the confrontation with the reigning entity: The Shadow. In classical literature the shadow was the Minotaur, Pluto, or other inhabitants of the underworld. It may also be a person, an animal, a form of addiction, self-destructive tendency – a fear –disease, an unpleasant side of ourselves, your evil twin. Whatever or whoever the shadow may be, it must be dealt with before we can go up again. Confrontation with the shadow is a dangerous undertaking that marks the hero's or heroine's initiation. At the resolution of this confrontation, we will receive a boon: power or knowledge to take back up again to the world we have left behind where we will emerge transformed.

Phase 2: Readings

The texts chosen for reading and discussion were two poems by A.E. Stallings dealing with the myth of Persephone taken captive in the underworld, "Hades Welcomes His Bride" and "Persephone Writes a Letter to Her Mother," both contemporary reworkings of classical myths For the two prose passages, I first

read a section of my own novel *The Etruscan*, in which the main character, a feminist photographer from the 1920s, slips, falls, and loses consciousness in an Etruscan tomb, only to wake up and find herself partially undressed in the presence of a strange man. The second reading passage was from Paul Bowles' extraordinary story, *Allal*, influenced by Moroccan tales, in which a young man descends into the consciousness of poisonous snake after smoking kif, only to be trapped there, with very dire consequences for both himself and the snake.

Phase 3: The Writing Phase

Using the prompt below, we wrote short passages of descent. The workshop participants included Marina Gellona of the Scuola Holden, author of one of my sources and expert in fairy tales which spring from the same matrix as myth. More than a simple workshop, this was a seminar in which we all learned something new.

Writing prompt: write your own myth of katabasis

Using elements in your immediate environment, write a narrative of descent based on the patterns just discussed. It is important to emphasize that we need to feel free when working with myths, as indeed ancient writers did. If the exercise below seems schematic, you may vary, transgress, elaborate, or reduce as you wish.

1. Create a character and the circumstances though which he or she finds himself alone, separated from family or community. Give him or her a goal to reach, a quest to fulfil, a problem to solve.
2. Imagine the portal to your underworld. Situate it within something *ordinary*. In E.M. Forsters' short story, *The Celestial Omnibus* the hero finds himself

transported to literary heaven by a bus that leaves each day from the square at dawn.

3. The portal is guarded by someone or something so that it is not *immediately* visible or perhaps not easily accessible. **Identify and describe the guardian** and give your seeker a means with which to deal with him/her/it The guardian may simply be "an inability to see," an obstruction due to a barrier in the outer world, or an inner barrier in the protagonist's psyche
4. Narrate the journey further down (or across or through), describing the passage across the threshold of the underworld. Focus on the moment of transition. What sense perceptions or landmarks signal entry into the other realm at the moment of transition? What concrete details might serve as the objective correlative of his/ her emotions?
5. Describe the landscape of the underworld
6. Create an encounter with a helper or guide in any form //
7. Meet the Shadow. Describe his/her physical appearance. What makes him or her so fearsome?
8. Narrate the conflict and find a resolution. What gift or boon is given or withheld?
9. Bring your character back into the light of day. How does he or she look at the world with different eyes?

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ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION

Radek MALÝ

Teaching writing for children and young adults and its Czech specificities

At Czech universities, teaching how to write children's and young adult literature does not have much of a tradition. The first one to offer this type of courses was, in 2005, Ivona Březinová, a university teacher and author of successful books for children and young adults. For six years, she taught these creative workshops at the Josef Skvorecky Literary Academy, the only Czech university focusing primarily on Creative Writing. In 2011, I took over teaching writing for children and young adults. After one-year of practical experience, I would like to try to outline the particular challenges of this rather specialized discipline, focusing both of its general features and the specific Czech context. One reason for this is that, in my opinion, many of its elements could be used also when teaching children's and young adult literature at secondary schools and universities, and even when working with children at primary schools.

Having mentioned the short, seven-year tradition of teaching writing for children and young adults, I should add that, in the Czech Republic, creative writing as such has been taught only for about twenty years. Zbyněk Fišer (from Masaryk University, Brno), one of the few Czech academics who not only teaches creative writing, but also reflects theoretically on it, correctly observes that "nowadays, Creative Writing may be characterized as an emancipated interdisciplinary branch of the humanities, fulfilling all the requirements which we have with regard to the

definition of a discipline. Creative Writing as a branch of the humanities has its own field of study, [...] in addition, it studies and articulates the laws of text production, enables experimentation in the field of text production, and designs methods of working with texts." (Zbyněk Fišer, in Malý, in print) And we can only agree with Fišer's opinion that Creative Writing needs constant reflection and self-reflection, so that it remains a lively, stimulating and fruitful discipline. In the international context, Creative Writing has, of course, a long and rich tradition, including also teaching writing for children and young adults – we can mention, for instance, the Finnish teacher and author Harri István Mäki from the Orivesi College of Arts.

Among other writing workshops taught at the Literary Academy (poetry, fiction, drama, and script-writing), children's and young adult literature has a special place because it does not focus on a specific form. The only thing which the texts written within this workshop have in common is the aim or ambition to appeal to child readers. I believe that precisely because of this, this field has a great potential for creative writing pedagogy: in a natural way, it enables students to acquire and practice the basics of the craft of writing in poetry, fiction and drama, without necessarily locking up the text within the pre-given rules of a certain genre. The main point is not the form of the text, but the particular target group of young readers. At the same time, one has to bear in mind some specific features of the national tradition – which is, in the case of Czech children's literature, unusual in several respects.

Let us therefore list some typical characteristics of teaching writing for children and young adults. First, students should get rid off certain stereotypes regarding writing for children. Above all, one often hears the (variously worded) opinion that "writing for children is much easier than writing for adults". The roots of this

mistaken belief seem to be the failure to understand some specific functions of children's and young adult literature (see below), as well as the underestimation of child readers as somehow less demanding. The second common prejudice is the belief that "children read only fairy-tales". Both prejudices are also linked with the students' age group: they are usually between 18 and 23 years old, which means that they are long past the child age, but not yet in the age of parents who read books to their children.

Getting rid of these prejudices is the main aim of the initial classes. What works very well is exploring what students used to read in childhood, and what their favorite books were. This "remembering" exercise needs time, and it must be prepared by suitable questions. Students are then often surprised to recall that, in childhood, they read not only children's classics or books from reading lists, but very often unknown books which, for some reason, stuck in their memory. The reasons for this are often banal, not connected with the intrinsic value of the text: what mattered was, for instance, who gave the book to the child and in what situation; what state the book was in; or how the child was affected by the illustrations. Students come to realize that the child reader is individual, unpredictable, and unable to recognize "quality" according to objective criteria. In other words, they come to realize that children's and young adult literature has also other aspects than those which are linked with literature in general. Which are they?

When writing for children, a very important capacity is the so-called child's insight (Jana Čeňková) – the ability to feel oneself into the child reader, to respect his/her perception capacity and to establish communication with him/her. In addition, one cannot deny that writing for children is characterized by several specific functions: apart from the aesthetic function, which is typical of any

literary text, they include the learning function, the didactic function, and the relaxation function. Each of them needs to be considered both individually and in connection with the primary aesthetic function. Therefore if one wants to write for children one should realize: the text which is destined for children must not bore them, and it should also have an artistic value, while taking into account children's mental development and their receptive abilities. The author must also realize that his/her text educates its readers (even if the author does not have such ambitions) and gives them new information about the world around; therefore this information should not be misleading. Apart from these givens, it is desirable always to bear in mind that, as a rule, the child reader does not understand irony.

In this first stage of working with students who want to write for children, it becomes evident that their childhood reading experience is the key factor influencing their willingness to write for children. Students who did not enjoy reading in childhood find it difficult to discover any motivation to write for children; they tend to attend the course in order to develop specific writing skills. On the other hand, students who, as children, used to be avid readers develop the ambition to write for children very soon, even if it has been buried so far underneath the layer of conviction that "real" and valuable literature is written exclusively for adults. Nevertheless, both groups are in danger of starting to underestimate the child readers and to infantilize their texts, particularly by overusing diminutives. This is another thing which the teacher needs to bear in mind from the very start, making the students recall also what books they used to dislike in childhood; they were often overly didactic texts with too clear a message.

When the students are prepared in this way, they can start working on their own texts, both in the class and at home. Children's literature is rich in genres which

did not belong to it originally, but which it integrated because of their simplicity or their closeness to children's perception. As one of the first genres, the students are taught to master **the riddle** and its laws. Only few students know that riddles have a very long history connected with tribal magic, incantations, and the power of the word. Because of this, students learn about Old Germanic riddles which retained this ancient character. Students find it interesting to discover that some of the Old Germanic riddles had no solution, or that sometimes there were several solutions – the aim was not to find the answer, but to experience the fun of looking for it.

Formally, the riddle is a simple genre, and it can be expressed both in prose and verse. Out of consideration for the child reader, it is suitable to make the students look for straightforward solutions, which does not mean that their riddles have to be simple. The process of writing a riddle is also interesting: one usually starts at the end, by inventing the solution. This simulates the general writing situation: from the very beginning, we should know what we want to achieve with our text, and what effect it should have. When writing riddles, students also practise the work with metaphors and metonymies – the two fundamental figures of speech.

From the riddle, one may move on to **the nursery rhyme**, a genre which we today associate especially with the younger school age. However, nursery rhymes also date back to archaic society where they were believed to possess magic power, as evident until today in magic formulas and spells. When working on nursery rhymes, students can acquire, above all, the sense of poetic rhythm, because rhythm is the fundamental aspect of nursery rhymes. In the context of the Czech accentual-syllabic versification, nursery rhymes are unique, because in them, the accentual aspect is more prominent than the syllabic one, which is otherwise unthinkable in Czech poetry. So we can see that, when working with

this seemingly banal genre, one can bring into play, in an interdisciplinary manner, also theory of verse.

Although nursery rhymes do not seem to adhere to any formal rules, one can still make good use of some formally strict genres. For instance, children enjoy counting-out rhymes (although the ones known today usually originate in folklore) or limericks. In nursery rhymes, one can also employ elements of nonsense poetics which strongly resonates, for instance, in the Anglo-American literary tradition.

There is a direct way from nursery rhymes to **children's poetry**. There are quite a few European nations whose tradition of children's poetry is not very rich; in the Czech Republic, however, poetry is still an active part of children's reading. In the first years of primary school, teachers work with poetry quite a lot. As for creative writing students, we, again, encounter certain prejudices or entrenched ideas about what a poem for children is supposed to look like; they usually believe that "a poem for children should be cheerful and about animals." To face this stereotype, we can, for instance, ask students to write a poem set in a contemporary city, or one dealing with a more serious topic. Students find out soon that to communicate with children through poetry does not mean to pander to them with cheap puns.

Folk fairy tales cannot, of course, be actively created, but they provide suitable material for adaptation. An interesting method of looking at a seemingly familiar story in a new way is trying to tell a folk fairy tale from the perspective of one of the characters; suddenly, a story about clear-cut figures whose psychological motivation is usually completely unknown provides space for introducing ambivalent characters.

Students frequently fail to differentiate between folk fairy tales and **modern fairy tales**. The modern fairy tale might be the one most productive genre of children's and young adult literature; a genre which, in the 20th century, strongly resonated in the Czech context. Because of its protean nature, a modern fairy tale is a seemingly easy form; but, in fact, it is – alongside stories with child protagonists – perhaps the most difficult genre of children's and young adult literature.

Finally, **work with illustrations** is a crucial aspect of teaching writing for children and young adults. When writing a children's book, the author should bear in mind that his text will probably be illustrated. However, the author should not set his mind on a concrete idea, because authors often cannot keep the necessary distance, and their notions about book illustration are often idealistic. A creative writing seminar will benefit greatly from a debate with an experienced illustrator. In children's literature, we often encounter texts written in response to pictures. This method is sometimes used in creative writing courses as a way of "looking for inspiration". However, only in children's literature does this non-traditional, "reversed" way of writing represent a productive approach, a way real children's books are written.

To conclude: although the tradition of teaching writing for children is not very rich in the Czech Republic, it offer opportunities which could be used by teachers of literature and creative writing at any level. Obviously, not all students will become successful children's writers; but the experience they gain in such a course is so unique that they can make use of it in many other areas, too.

Translated by Daniel Soukup

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Alain André is a French writer. He has published a dozen books (novels, translations, essays about creative writing teaching, short stories). He is not a professional photographer or multimedia specialist, but uses photography a lot in his work. He is the pedagogical director of the French creative writing school Aleph-Écriture, where he teaches for students (autobiography and novel writing) and teachers.

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At the beginning, she was a Literature professor. She escaped towards a career in adult training and communication. All the while, she continued to write and read voraciously. She has a passion for the mixtures of genres: combining writing and photo, popular literature with Oulipo, humoristic thrillers... She developed and continues to conduct email writers' workshops for Elisabeth BING Writers' Workshops.

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A teacher, scholar, writer and specialist in radio/video narrative documentary, Denis Bourgeois teaches at the University of Poitiers where he runs the Creative Documentary Master's program within the Angoulême Cité Internationale de la bande dessinée et de l'image (International City of the comic strip and the image).

Thomas BOUVATIER
His publications include novels: *Regression* (Flammarion, 2004), *La Pigmentation du Caméléon* (*The Chameleon's pigmentation*, 2006); short stories: *Plumes et Dentelles* (*Feather and Lace*, Ramsey, 2007), *Le Déni* (*The Denial*, Plon 2008); essays: *Les Mutations Corporate…* (*Corporate Transfers*, Verbe, 2009), *Paris Porteño* (magazine 2010); and a one-man show: *J'ai marché sur la scène* (*I walked on stage*, Point Virgule, 2000.). He directed the creativity departement for Publicis Consultant, and developed several television series

(*Scènes de ménage*, M6, 2012). He currently works with l'Officiel Mode, gives writing workshops, and is writing his next novel.

Cécile FAINSILBER
Cécile Fainsilber studied comparative literature and English, and is a professor of non-conformist French literature. Also a pianist and b&b hostess in Paris, she gives writing workshops in senior centers, and loves to host, to make words ring their truest and artfully assemble them into prose.

Laurence FAURE
Both an actor and a teacher, she got involved into the workshops at ALEPH in 2003; she is now part of the teaching team for the regular workshops, the tale writing sessions, theatrical writing and writing for the stage.

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Simona Garbarini worked as a translator, as a scientific journalist and she is currently working as writer and a pediatrician. She works as a teacher and tutor in Holden School. In the past, Simona published some short stories in the scientific magazine *Doc's Letter,* in the anthology *Italiane* by Lineadaria Editore and in the anthology *Natale in Casa Cooper* by Edizioni Cooper. Her novel *Il posto giusto* was named finalist in two important national awards and will soon be published.

Marina GELLONA
Degree in Philosophy and diploma at the Scuola Holden of Storytelling in Turin, currently working at the Scuola Holden as a teacher of fairy tales and short stories, editor and researcher. Teaching storytelling to kids, teenagers and adults. Working and writing experience in various institutions: museums, research institutions, foundations, theatre companies. Publications: short stories in two anthologies and contributes to an essay on teaching Italian through creative writing for the Scuola Holden. Work with a psychologist, writing fairy tales for the children and family she's taking care of.

Marie HALOUX
In charge of training in social field and a writing trainer, she typically gravitates towards texts that contain both subjectivity and objectivity. She appreciates a balance between emotion and logic, its author's duty to interweave these contrasting aspects of a subject. As a writer, she has learnt to make use of these skills in social work. Furthermore, her artistic training has given her the ability to provide others with a creative environment.

Dario HONNORAT
Dario Honnorat is a teacher and a writer. He was born in Florence, Italy, in 1980. Part of his thesis about Thoreau has been published in English for Firenze University Press and in Italian for Clinamen. He is specialized in didactics of Italian L2 and graduated from Scuola Holden. Since 2007 he has been teaching Italian in various private schools and at the IIC of Rio de Janeiro. Now he is mainly teaching creative writing. Dario Honnorat also published various short stories in magazines, or collections with other authors (for Feltrinelli, Terre di Mezzo, Mostro, Semicerchio...), and also a graphic novel (*Memorie di mondi notturni,* editrice Lightbox).

Marianne JAEGLÉ
Marianne Jaeglé has written and published several books, including *Writing, from the white page to publication* (Scrineo editions), *You only have to close your eyes* (Jacques Marie Laffont editor), *A doll that says no* (Calmann-Lévy, in collaboration with Galina Valkova) and *History of Paris and Parisians* (Company 12, price Haussmann 2006). She is also the author of documentary films: Moravia, the man who looks (France 3), Sant'Egidio, the peacemakers (Arte), Medea's black blood (KTO). She is a trainer in the leading of creative writing workshops at the University (Paris V and Paris XIII).

Françoise KHOURY
Françoise Khoury has been leading creative writing workshops for the last twelve years with adults and teenagers; these workshops are focusing on the relation between words and photographs, not as an illustration of one medium to the other but as an exploration of the impact between these two kinds of representations, the verbal and the visual, in the task of finding new narratives forms and an innovate relation to time, to chronology. Françoise Khoury has published short stories and a book of photographs and poetic fragments.

Orhan KIPCAK

Orhan Kipcak, was born 1957 in Istanbul, Turkey, and is currently living in Graz, Austria. He studied architecture in Graz and Vienna. He is a Media designer, a creative artist and a producer. Since 1982, he has been working with digital media and systems. He has participated in numerous projects in art, design, virtual exhibitions and digital exhibitions for museums, festivals, the public sector and the industry (Biennale di Venezia, Ars Electronica, ZKM, Reuters, etc.). Since 1997, he closely collaborates with the *schule für dichtung* (sfd), the *Vienna poetry school*; he developed the internet academy (www.sfd.at). Key researcher in EU research projects, projects in the field of tele-learning, game design and cultural heritage, he has been teaching since early 90s at universities in Graz, Vienna, Basel and, since 2001, has a chair for Media Design, at the head of MID major degree program of information design at the FH-Joanneum, University of Applied Science, Graz.

Linda LAPPIN

Linda Lappin teaches writing and composition at the University of Rome La Sapienza and creative nonfiction writing for the USAC study abroad program hosted at the University of Tuscia in Viterbo. Her novels include *The Etruscan* (Wynkin de Worde, 2004), *Katherine's Wish*, about the life of Katherine Mansfield (Wordcraft, 2008) and *Signatures in Stone, a Bomarzo mystery* forthcoming from Caravel Books in 2013. She holds an MFA from the University of Iowa Writers Workshop.

Fred LEEBRON

Fred Leebron, program director of both the MFA in Creative Writing at Queens University of Charlotte and the Pan European MFA in Creative Writing at Cedar Crest College, is also a professor of English at Gettysburg College. His novels include *Six Figures*, *In the Middle of All This*, and *Out West*. He has received a Pushcart Prize <http://www.hollins.edu/summerprograms/tmww/faculty.shtml#>, Michener Award, Stegner Fellowship, and O. Henry Award. He is co-editor of Postmodern American Fiction: A Norton Anthologyand co-author of Creating Fiction: A Writer's Companion. The independent production of *Six Figures* premiered at the 2005 Toronto International Film Festival, and he is currently at work on launching an independent press, Unboxed Books (www.unboxedbooks.com).

Catherine LE GALLAIS
After graduating in social sciences, she has worked in the sector of studies and communication. For the last ten years she has been writing, translating children books, editing a magazine and teaching writing at Les Ateliers d'écriture Elisabeth Bing and at l'École Française de Yoga.

Luis LUNA
He was born in Madrid, in 1975. Licensed in Hispanic Philology, nowadays he conducts the Doctorate in this speciality. He is the holder of a Diploma of Advanced Studies (DEA). He is a teacher in Escuela de Escritores (Madrid) and in UNED University. He has published *Notebook of the forester* (Amargord, 2007), *Al-Rihla* (Amargord, 2008), *Territory in semidarkness,* (Gens Ediciones, 2008), *Almond* (Amargord, 2010) and *Umbilical* (El sastre de Apollinaire, 2012).

Harri ISTVÁN MÄKI
Author, theatre director and teacher of creative writing Harri István Mäki was born in 1968 in Finland. Spent childhood in Hungary. Mäki is the author of 49 novels, mostly children and young adults' books. Stage plays, TV plays, radio plays and movie scripts. Hobbies: toy dogs, Guinean pigs, ponies, drawing and travelling.

Radek MALÝ
Born in 1977, Radek Malý is a Czech poet, author of children's books, translator and university lecturer. He graduated in German and Czech studies at Palacký University (Czech Republic). He lives in Olomouc (Czech Republic) where he works as a university lecturer, translator to/from German and editor. For his collection "Větrní" he received the Magnesia Litera award for poetry. He also works with translations of medieval German love songs. He also prepared an anthology of German expressionist poetry. Since 2011 he has been the head of the Department of Creative Writing in the Literary Academy of Josef Škvorecký in Prague (Czech Republic). At the same time he organises (at his alma mater University of Palacký in Olomouc) seminars such as comparative studies, Czech literature for children and youth or contemporary Czech poetry.

Ana MENÉNDEZ
Ana Menéndez is the author of four books of fiction, *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, which was a 2001 New York Times Notable book of the year, *Loving Che* (2004), *The Last War* (2009), and *Adios, Happy Homeland!* (2011). Her work has appeared in a variety of publications including *Vogue*, *Bomb Magazine*, *Poets & Writers* and *Gourmet Magazine* and has been included in several anthologies, including *Cubanisimo!* and *American Food Writing*. A former prize-winning journalist, she now coordinates the creative writing minor at Maastricht University in the Netherlands.

Laure NAIMSKI
Laure Naimski is a French journalist and author living in Paris. She also teaches creative writing as a freelance teacher after having been trained by Aleph-Écriture.

Kate MOORHEAD
Kate Moorhead is originally from Philadelphia but is now based out of Norwich. She teaches undergraduate Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia where she received her MA in Creative Writing in 2007. Her first novel, *The First Law of Motion*, is published by St Martin's Press, NY and is available on Amazon. She is currently working on her 'difficult second novel' and occasionally blogging about the trials and tribulations of Second Novel Syndrome at www.krmoorhead.wordpress.com/second-novel-syndrome

David Jan NOVOTNÝ
Professor David Jan Novotný (1947) is a writer, scriptwriter and publicist. Since the beginning of the 90's (over twenty two years) he has worked as an academic pedagogue. He taught scriptwriting and dramaturgy at FAMU (Film faculty of Academy of performing Arts), he was the first rector of the Film Academy of Miroslav Ondříček in Písek, presently works at the department of Literary Arts at Literary Academy of Josef Škvorecký and at the department of journalism at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University. He engages in teaching scriptwriting, theory and praxis of literary and dramatic creation; as an author, he has written textbooks about practice dramaturgy, novels, story collections, child books and film and TV scripts.

Danièle PÉTRÈS
Short stories and novels author (published by Denoël), she wrote: *La Lecture (the Reading) 2005, Le Bonheur à dose homéopathique (Happiness in homeopathic doses)* 2002, *Tu vas me manquer (I'm gonna miss you)* 2008. As a playwright, she also wrote: *Deux partout (Two all*) 2002 - France Culture, Théâtre de la Ville; *La lecture,* adapted in 2008 for the Saint-Étienne Verso theatre. She is teaching in Creative Writing Workshops (Aleph: 2011 & 2012).

Javier SAGARNA
Javier Sagarna (Madrid, 1964) is a Spanish writer and creative writing teacher. Since 2006, he has been the director of Escuela de Escritores, a creative writing school based on Madrid (Spain), and he is the current president of the European Association of Creative Writing Programmes (EACWP). He has a long experience as a teacher and has collaborated with institutions and universities all around Europe and Latin America. As a writer he has published the novel *Mudanzas* (Gens, 2006) and the book of short stories called *Ahora tan Lejos* (Menoscuarto, 2012).

Daniel SOUKUP
Dr Daniel Soukup (1976) is graduated in English, German, Czech Literature and Literary Theory from Charles University (Prague, Czech Republic). Since 2002, he has been teaching at Josef Skvorecky Literary Academy (Prague); since 2010, he has been the university's vice-rector for international relations. In 2005, he was one of the founders of the European Network of Creative Writing Programmes, becoming its first coordinator (2005–2010), and then vice-president of the follow-up European Association of Creative Writing Programmes (since 2010). He has published translations, original poetry and academic articles.
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Catherine STAHLY-MOUGIN
For her studies, she went to the « Beaux-Arts » of Paris and sometimes later to the « École Estienne » a graphic school. After that she created her own enterprise of museography including edition bound to the orders.
Besides, she realises some happenings about writers: among others, for the "Salle d'actualité" of the Centre Georges Pompidou and in 1990, a European itinerant exhibition about the Czech journalist Milena Jesenska; in the late 1990's at the

famous cinema "l'Arlequin" created by Jacques Tati, with Aleph-Écriture, various manifestations with the help of "Lire en fête" organized each year by the culture department.
In 1994, she started to work with Aleph-Écriture as a teacher and created the workshop "The notebook" and other occasional workshops. In the last ten years, she took part in the public lectures of Aleph-Écriture.

Mariana TORRES
She was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1981, and lives in Madrid. She holds a diploma in screenwriting from the Madrid School of Cinema and Audiovisual (ECAM), and since 2003 has taught at Escuela de Escritores.
Additionally she teaches creative writing with regularity, so much in the virtual workshops as in the ones in person of Madrid. In Escuela de Escritores is in charge, as well, of the Quality Control department that supervises the good functioning of all aspects of the global teaching. This department also works with the school's in-house Training Programme which enables teachers to continue their learning in any of the subject areas delivered in the school.
It has published short stories in some anthologies and directed a first short film, *Rascacielos* (Skyscrapers). She writes articles about creativity and writing regularly in her blog *Otras hierbas*, website created in 2005 and actually still alive. Her short stories where recognized by literary contests like Gabriel Aresti or Casar de Cáceres. She is currently working on a novel.

Reijo VIRTANEN
Reijo Virtanen (born 1959 in Oulu, Finland) is a scholar, a teacher of literary history and theory, a journalist, an art journalist and a nonfiction writer. He holds a Master of Arts and is Licentiated in Philosophy.
He is currently a teacher of creative writing and arts Journalism (Oriveden Opisto, Finland).

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