---. "Our Past, Chad Oliver's Future." *Austin Chronicle* 21 Dec. 1984: 16-17.
Shore, Chris. "Audit culture and illiberal governance." *Anthropological Theory* 8:3 (2008): 278-298.
Strathern, Marilyn. Reproducing the Future. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1992.
Suvin, Darko. "Radical Rhapsody and Romantic Recoil in the Age of Anticipation: A Chapter in the History of SF." *Science Fiction Studies* 1:4 (1974): 255-269.
Tolkien, J.R.R. "A Secret Vice." 1931. *The Monsters and the Critics, and Other Essays*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984. 198-223.
Williams, Raymond. "Science Fiction." *Science Fiction Studies* 15:3 (1988): 356-360.

Samuel Gerald Collins is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Towson University in Baltimore, Maryland. He researches globalization and information society in the United States and South Korea and is the author of *All Tomorrow's Cultures: Anthropological Engagements with the Future* (2008) and *Library of Walls: the Library of Congress and the Contradictions of Information Society* (2009).

Loren Glass: Getting with the Program

"This book is the result of a vision." So opens the introduction to Paul Engle's edited volume, *Midland: Twenty-Five Years of Fiction and Poetry, selected from the Writing Workshops of the State University of Iowa.* Over the course of his introduction, Engle elaborates his vision of "a powerful new direction in this country's culture, the writer everywhere on campus, the older as teacher, the younger as student" (xxii). For Engle, the creative writing program could become a home for writers in a country that had no viable culture capital to which they could migrate. Instead of London coffee houses or Parisian cafés, young American writers would have the Writers' Workshop, which would offer them "hard criticism and decent sympathy" from their peers in an institutionally subsidized community "freed from the imperatives of the market place" (xxvi). Engle concludes his introduction with a prediction that "by the end of the twentieth century the American university will have proved a more understanding and helpful aid to literature than ever the old families of Europe" (xxx).

Few prophecies have been realized as completely as Engle's. In 1961, the year *Midland* was published, there were only a handful of creative writing programs in the United States, and Engle's vision would have seemed not only unlikely but also undesirable for many if not most American writers, working as they were in the long shadows of Hemingway and Faulkner, whose insistence on autonomous apprenticeship and resistance to institutional discipline seemed to constitute the very possibility of their literary art. Nevertheless, creative writing programs expanded rapidly enough that by 1967 long-time Workshop faculty member R.V. Cassill would see the need to found the Associated Writing Programs (now the Association of Writers and Writing Programs with 439 member programs). By 1975, there were fifteen creative writing programs granting MFA's (of which nine were founded by Iowa graduates) and 32 granting MAs (of which sixteen were founded by Iowa graduates). In 2009, there were a total of 822 creative writing programs in the United States, 153 of which grant MFAs, and 37 of which grant the increasingly

popular PhD in creative writing. However, aside from a handful of histories that focus exclusively on the institutional aspects of this development, no scholar has really devoted a serious book to the relationship between postmodern literature, broadly speaking, and the rise of the creative writing program.[1]

It is this nigh symptomatic gap in our knowledge that is filled by Mark McGurl's remarkable new study, *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing,* which, as its title boldly indicates, wants to do for postmodernism what Hugh Kenner did for modernism: establish its subject as the center of the era it names. Indeed, postmodernism has never been entirely satisfactory as a description of the literature produced after World War II, and the categories that McGurl develops to replace this overworked term powerfully validate his central argument that, as he states in his opening sentence, "the rise of the creative writing program stands as the most important event in post-war American literary history" (ix).

McGurl, who focuses exclusively on fiction (a point to which I will return), suggests that we replace the big tent of postmodernism with three "overlapping aesthetic formations" that he calls technomodernism, high cultural pluralism, and lower-middle-class modernism (32). The first of these, technomodernism, is closest to the narrower meanings of postmodernism, as it designates the sustained engagement between post-war fiction and the techniques and technologies of the information age. The second, high cultural pluralism—a particularly useful category, I believe—refers to the convergence of modernist standards of literary value and pluralist versions of ethnic and cultural difference that have become canonized in the wake of the new social movements of the sixties. The third, lower-middle-class modernism, refers to the so-called "dirty" realism of Raymond Carver and others, which has been such a convenient pedagogical instrument in the creative writing workshop. What all of these formations tend to share is precisely an orientation around the creative self, what McGurl calls "autopoetics," that links them to the creative writing programs from which they all emerge in one way or another.

And, as McGurl reveals most convincingly, this autopoetics takes its shape from the dialectic of pride and shame that constitutes the core emotional experience of the writing workshop. Aesthetically, this dialectic translates into the tendencies toward minimalism and maximalism that, originating in the "Hemingway/Faulkner dialectic" that cast such a long shadow over the generation that built the first creative writing programs, constitutes one of the key formal peculiarities of post-war fiction. As McGurl so nicely summarizes: "Grounded in an affective dialectic of shame and pride, the autopoetic processing of experience as creative writing cashes out, in the literary marketplace, as a dialectic of 'minimalist' and 'maximalist' narrative forms" (286). One of McGurl's more illuminating illustrations of this dialectic is the work of Sandra Cisneros, whose time at the Iowa Writers' Workshop in the late seventies resulted in the eloquently terse, and widely assigned, *House on Mango Street*, the spectacular success of which then precipitated the gargantuan and garrulous *Caramelo.*

The other dialectic that McGurl's generous book offers us unfolds between the drive toward disciplinarity that determines the university's institutional structure and the investment in autonomous self-expression that so deeply informs the sensibilities of most creative writing faculty. These tendencies are usually understood to be in

tension, if not outright opposition. But what McGurl reveals is, in fact, a fairly fruitful accommodation, wherein the rigors of a craft aesthetic, tagged rhetorically and methodologically to the new criticism being practiced in many English departments in the immediate post-war era, supplied enough disciplinary dignity to satisfy university administrators. McGurl illustrates this accommodation in a marvelous section on Flannery O'Connor, one of the earlier students of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, in whose work, McGurl argues, "the discipline of narrative form can be seen as a masochistic aesthetics of institutionalization" (135). It would be the discipline of craft, so elegantly exemplified by O'Connor's streamlined prose, that would allow administrators such as Paul Engle to supplement the adage that talent can't be taught with a practical pedagogy in the mechanics of fiction and poetry which continues to form the terminological and methodological foundation of the workshop form.

Finally, McGurl is attentive to both the regional and the increasingly international affiliations and migrations that constitute the literary field that first enabled and is now generated by creative writing programs. As McGurl affirms, "opposed equally to a dislocated mass culture and to a deracinated cosmopolitan high culture, regionalism's celebration of the particularities of place was fundamental to the aesthetic sensibilities imparted at Iowa" (148-49). More perceptively, McGurl comments on the differences between Midwestern and Southern regionalism which account for the peculiar fact that the former would provide the institutional incubator for creative writing while the latter would provide its more enduring ideological legitimation. As McGurl elaborates, "while Midwestern regionalism, as exemplified in Engle, looked outward and sought prestige through expansion, the Southern regionalists insisted that the regionalist project must turn inward and achieve literary excellence through exclusion, through the willed imposition of limits" (151). As a Midwestern pioneer, Engle plotted a trajectory for the creative writing program as an institutional innovation, but it would be the far more well-known Southern Agrarians such as Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks who would model the actual theory and thematics of the literature produced by those programs in the massively popular new critical textbooks *Understanding Poetry* and *Understanding Fiction.*

This fruitful tension would also inform the increasing internationalization of creative writing over the last few decades. Engle was the pioneer here as well, as he left the English department in 1966 after an acrimonious power struggle to found, with his new wife Hualing Nieh Engle, the International Writing Program, which has arguably been as influential globally as the Writers' Workshop has been nationally. Engle's new program has routed writers from all over the globe through Iowa City, making it one of the most cosmopolitan small towns in the Midwest. His achievement can be measured by the recent triumph of his successor, Chris Merrill, in having Iowa City designated as an International City of Literature by UNESCO. In analyzing the international ramifications of creative writing, McGurl reveals the degree to which it has been crucial to dismantling the centuries-old World Republic of Letters whose history has been so brilliantly documented by Pascale Casanova's recent study of that name. As McGurl affirms, the literary dominance of Paris that forms the basis of Casanova's argument has been challenged in the post-war era precisely by the rapid proliferation of creative writing

programs, which have helped to forge connections between minority writers in the United States and international writers in the new nations that emerged from the old empires during the era of decolonization. According to McGurl, "it was above all the U.S. university that would sustain the symbolic connection of minority writers to a global pluralist space" (331). As a result, the World Republic of Letters has been replaced by "a global literary pluralism, a World Pluribus of Letters" (329).

McGurl cannily defers any evaluative claims in his monumental study, waiting until after he has proven the centrality of creative writing programs to the post-war literary field to venture any judgment as to the value of the literature produced by them. He then concludes by suggesting that we adopt a "strategic triumphalism" which affirms that

> the tremendous expansion of the literary talent pool coincident to the advent of mass higher education, and the wide distribution, therein, of elevated literary ambitions, and the cultivation in these newly vocal, vainglorious masses of the habits of self-conscious attention to craft through which these ambitions might plausibly be realized" […] [has resulted in] "a system-wide rise in the excellence of American literature in the postwar period." (409)

The Program Era, in other words, is a success story, showing how the implantation of creative writing programs into the expanding institutions of higher education has enhanced both the quantity and quality of American literature in the post-war era. And the success of McGurl's argument makes his concluding question—"Is there not more excellent fiction being produced now than anyone has time to read?" (410)—strictly rhetorical.

Comprehensive and convincing as *The Program Era* is, McGurl by necessity brackets some crucial components of the history and significance of creative writing in the American university system upon which I would like briefly to speculate. First and foremost is, of course, poetry. In truth, the creative writing program responds more directly to the dilemma of poets who, unlike novelists, can never really hope to earn a living on the product of their literary labors. Indeed, the list of major post-war poets who have made their permanent home in the American university constitutes a far more comprehensive and culturally significant roster than the novelists, many of whom could afford to come and go. Correlatively, it could be argued that contemporary poetry is the "purer" example of an institutionally produced literature, as the creative writing program has enabled an almost perfectly autonomous poetic field to develop, in which poets can write, read, and evaluate each other's work without any external market interference. This relative purity may, somewhat paradoxically, account for the critical neglect of a relationship that is so structurally congruent as to be almost invisible. It may also explain why much discussion of contemporary poetry tends to emphasize death and disappearance. American poetry, at least in the academy, has arguably become a victim of its own success; its nigh perfect autonomy appears as irrelevance in the public sphere. However, it would be more accurate to say that poetry, unlike fiction, has professionalized to the point that its protocols of evaluation are completely internal

to its institutional location; it functions in a homogenous field in comparison to fiction, whose inevitable heteronomy makes it a more tempting target for critics looking for cultural significance, if not literary value. If McGurl's book inspires a trend in scholarship—and I hope it does—a study of post-war poetry and creative writing would be an invaluable companion text.

The second crucial component of any comprehensive account of the significance of creative writing is the roughly coincident rise of composition in the seventies. Unlike creative writing, which has been perennially dogged by the dictum that it can't be taught, composition has been constituted by its pedagogical debates; it is usually understood, unlike creative writing, as something that *must* be taught, though few can agree on the best way to teach it. I would suggest that it should be in terms of the distinction between a required and elective English course that one might begin to unpack the complicated relations between composition and creative writing in the contemporary university. The teaching of composition has become both a key service component in and one of the central ideological justifications of the size and scope of the contemporary English department. If composition, then, serves as a form of literary labor, something that students must take and graduate students must teach, creative writing, at least ideologically speaking, figures as a form of leisure, an easy elective class to pad one's schedule and a relatively unburdensome course to teach. Correlatively, composition carries no charismatic component; its theorists aren't famous and the university is relatively unconcerned with its prestige. Creative writing, on the other hand, is all about charisma, and the university's investment in its faculty is expected to pay off in cultural capital. Most English departments are constituted by some version of this division, which arguably can be understood as symptomatic of a larger fission in our culture between labor and leisure as they are inculcated by the institutional experience of higher education.

Finally, there is the rise of Theory which, like composition, coincides historically with the emergence of creative writing programs and, in an institutionally refracted instance of the so-called culture wars, has been frequently held responsible for the friction between literature professors and creative writers. In its interrogation of the very nature of the "literary," and in its deployment of highly technical vocabularies and methods of analysis, Theory often came to be understood as an enemy of creative writing, which continued to be invested in purportedly romantic ideas of individual talent and inspiration. At their most stereotypical poles, Theory was "soul-crushing" (metaphorically, if not literally, responsible for the Death of the Author!) and creative writing was "anti-intellectual"; together they seemed to figure as an institutional microcosm of the culture wars that raged around them in the eighties and nineties.

However, the institutional histories of literary theory and creative writing are not only coincident; they are congruent. That is to say, both are stories of professionalization achieved through what Max Weber has called the routinization of charisma. The most trenchant version of this history in terms of literary theory remains John Guillory's *Cultural Capital*, which affirms, in a now classic analysis of the figure of Paul De Man, that "the charismatic persona of the master theorist is the vehicle for the dissemination of theory" and that "while charisma may first appear in the seminar as a personal quality, it passes into the disciplinary field as a certain

effect of *style*, an imitable effect" (179). With some terminological substitution, Guillory could be describing the forms of discipleship that obtain in the writers' workshop, where the charisma of the famous poet or novelist also translates into the institutional transmission of a recognizable and imitable style. Both creative writing and Theory, in other words, illustrate that "professionalism is […] lodged within bureaucracy as the affirmation of the principal antithetical to bureaucracy itself, the principle Weber called 'charisma'" (254). Sociologically speaking, both theory and creative writing are ghosts in the machine, quasi-mystical affirmations of individuality in an institutional structure based in impersonal functions. And both, in turn, have provided prestige for that institution in their very resistance to its impersonal protocols.[2]

Nevertheless, in what is obviously something more than the narcissism of minor differences, these two parallel professionalisms have, with a few significant exceptions, remained at best indifferent and at worst outwardly hostile to each other. Part of this persistent schism is surely due to the institutional marginality of the "program" itself, which is by its very nature subordinate to and dependent upon the personnel and resources of the larger department(s) to which it is adjacent. The allocation of these resources and the promotion of these personnel remain, for the most part, in the hands of literature professors, who continue to dominate the administrative hierarchies of English departments. Indeed, it seems worth affirming that the protocols of textual study as they are transmitted in the still theory-dominated discipline of English are more congruent with the bureaucratic functions of university administration than the habits of self-expression inculcated in the writing workshop.

This rarely discussed institutional difference between the department and the program can be roughly correlated to the *stylistic* difference between literary theory and creative writing. Certainly, to imitate Derrida or Foucault is not the same as to imitate Mark Strand or Raymond Carver. As Guillory affirms, theory tends to model its methods on "the technobureaucratic labor of the new professional-managerial class" (181). Though it is based in the cultic charisma of the master theorist, in practice it becomes a method of analysis whose protocols closely conform to the bureaucratic structures in which it finds its home. The creative writer, on the other hand, as McGurl affirms, is more like "a performance artist: making his name, doing his job, owning the product of his labor of 'self-expression'" (408). The creative writer, in other words, is a key institutional avatar of what Richard Florida has recently designated as the "Creative Class," whose "new lifestyle favors individuality, self-statement, acceptance of difference and the desire for rich multidimensional experiences" (13). The style of theory, then, translates into a method of cultural analysis, whereas the style of creative writing translates into a mode of self-expression. As forms of labor, the former is far more congenial to institutionalization than the latter, which is why, even now, successful writers frequently prefer to "visit" universities while successful theorists not uncommonly become administrators.

This division can be further illuminated if we remember that the institutionalization of criticism and the institutionalization of creativity were coincident with and enabled by the canonization of literary modernism. Initially, modernism did allow, and even mandate, the simultaneous acquisition of creative and critical competencies

in its practitioners (think T.S. Eliot). Ironically, though, these competencies tended to diverge in disciplinary terms at the same moment they converged in institutional terms. Why? I would hazard a guess that the very institutionalization of literary practice in the post-war era mapped the contradictions within modernism onto the burgeoning bureaucracy of the English department. Prior to its institutionalization, modernism had been split between the overtly radical critique of the avant-garde, which challenged the autonomy of the aesthetic, and the covertly conservative retreat of high art, which was based in that very autonomy. Roughly speaking, one could argue that English professors institutionalized the former and creative writing programs institutionalized the latter, rendering the political contradictions of modernism as an enduring bureaucratic division between academic critics who are skeptical of literary value and creative writers who base their identities in it. This would help explain why the points of overlap between theory and creative writing have tended to occur in the more experimental genres of meta-fiction and language poetry. Furthermore, in its formal complexity and thematic opacity, literary modernism operated in a self-conscious resistance to the easy accessibility of mainstream and mass culture, and this split also seems to have mapped an after-image onto English departments in the prevalent dismissal by literature professors of much workshop prose as fatally middlebrow, and the correlative accusation by creative writers that academic theory is obscure and elitist. Postmodernism, in other words, may be too loose a designation to describe the plurality of genres and forms that constitute contemporary literary production, but it is an accurate historical term for designating our common institutional predicament.

If we are to respond productively to this predicament, which is inevitably going to become more acute in this current era of contraction and scarcity, we will need the knowledge of our shared history. Indeed, I would claim that institutionally oriented analyses such as McGurl's could potentially provide a common sociological language for understanding our situation which doesn't impinge on the more specialized vocabularies and practices we've established within it. Rather than strive for some impossible unity, English departments can continue to thrive on their diversity and division, but this can only happen if we share a common understanding of our institutional location and the challenges, and opportunities, it provides us.

Notes

[1] See, for example, Wilbers, Myers, and Dawson. Statistics about the growth of creative writing programs can be found at the AWP website: http://www.awpwriter.org/aboutawp/index.htm. Information about the number of these which were started by Iowa graduates can be found in Wilbers' Appendix, 137-39.

[2] For a more extensive Weberian analysis of the rise of creative writing, see Glass.

Works Cited

Casanova, Pascale. *The World Republic of Letters.* Trans. M. B. DeBevoise. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004.

Dawson, Paul. *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Engle, Paul, ed. *Midland: Twenty-five Years of Fiction and Poetry, selected from the Writing Workshops of the State University of Iowa.* New York: Random House, 1961.

Florida, Richard. *The Rise of the Creative Class.* New York: Basic Books, 2002.

Glass, Loren. "Middle Man: Paul Engle and the Iowa Writers' Workshop." *the minnesota review* 71-72 (2009): 256-68.

Guillory, John. *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

McGurl, Mark. *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2009.

Myers, D. G. *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Wilbers, Stephen. *The Iowa Writers' Workshop.* Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1980.

Loren Glass is Associate Professor of English at the University of Iowa. His first book, *Authors Inc.: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States, 1880-1980*, was published by New York University Press in 2004. He is co-editor, with Charles Williams, of *Obscenity and the Limits of Liberalism*, forthcoming with Ohio State University Press. He is currently writing a study of Grove Press.

Bartholomew Brinkman: Imitations, Manipulations and Interpretations: Creative Writing in the Critical Classroom

"What's so great about 'In a Station of the Metro?' It's a couple of lines and it doesn't even rhyme. I could write that." A familiar question, no doubt, to anyone who has attempted to teach the poem. In response, I've trodden the regular routes: Textual Analysis ("Let's look at the images and the role of punctuation."), Biography ("It took Pound two years to whittle it down from thirty lines."), History ("Consider how the poem engages with modernity through mass transportation and the crowd."). But I've also added another response to this repertoire: "If you think you could write that, well then, why don't you?"

Over the past few years, I've been assigning creative imitations and manipulations in my undergraduate literature classrooms and have seen a marked improvement in students' understanding of—and interest in—literary genre and form. Not only an interest in how complex themes and subjects can be effectively conveyed in a villanelle, a scenic description, or an exchange of dialogue, but a profound interest in technique for its own sake, as we consider what distinguishes the poem, the novel, the short story, the essay. In bringing creative writing into the critical classroom, I have also attempted to frame literary study as not only reception, but also as production—and as an ongoing interchange between reception and production—that provides an example of what Gerald Graff has advocated as "teaching the conflicts"[3] (Graff). Students can better understand and articulate their thoughts on a topic as they adopt, adapt, react to, and frame their critical responses in the language of specific literary texts. To be most effective, however, creative pedagogy needs to extend beyond individual texts and classrooms to more fundamentally structure the literary discipline as a whole.