

Public Abstract

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The Last Monarchist: Stories from Nepal

Rewriting the Creative: Toward a Happenings Theory of Creative Composition

This dissertation explores the relationship between composition and creative writing in the light of the binary of rhetoric and poetics, and addresses the issue of creativity in composition by proposing a happenings theory of creative composition. The proponents of the notion of creative composition call for bringing the two writing fields closer based on the assumption that creative writing would help make composition more creative, hence the term “creative composition.” Wendy Bishop wants to erase altogether the line that divides the two fields, and Doug Hesse advocates for making a place for creative writing in composition studies. This approach disregards the fact that creative writing in the university is about certain genres of writing, just as composition is about other genres. That is, the term “creative” in creative writing does not necessarily invoke creativity any more than any other form of writing does. I maintain that we need to acknowledge the epistemological differences that constitute the two fields as two distinct writing disciplines and that, in order to practice composition creatively, composition studies needs to build on the theories and practices that are conducive to creativity rather than on the creative writing field and the genres that are practiced in it. Building on Geoffrey Sirc’s formulation of English composition as a Happening, I work with Gregory Ulmer’s notion of choral writing and Byron Hawk’s renewed emphasis on vitality in composition to constitute the Happening as a theory of creative strategies. Thus this research reorients the focus of the existing conversation on creative composition away from creative writing and its genres to composition theories and pedagogies that are creative.

The Last Monarchist: Stories from Nepal

The nine stories in this dissertation depict individuals’ desperate efforts to keep their dreams intact in times of a national crisis. They are set in remote villages of Nepal and Kathmandu at the turn of this century, at the time when the Himalayan country transitioned from a monarchical state to a new republic as a result of a ten-year-long communist rebellion. On one level, these stories stand as a testament to a bloody war waged in the birthplace of the Buddha, for good or ill. And on another, they depict human frailty as well as resilience among those exposed by a civil war. Lokraj, the protagonist of a story, for instance, flees his village when Maoist rebels demand that he donate them one million rupees to support the so-called “People’s War.” But in Kathmandu, where he rallies against the Maoists, Lokraj finds himself further trapped in the continuing conflict as the rebels kill one of his colleagues and force his daughter, living back in his village, to fight the Maoist war.