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Creative Writing in Australia: The Development of a Discipline

The formation of the Australian Association of Writing Programs in 1996 marked the professionalisation of Creative Writing as an academic discipline in Australian universities. The main issues which have arisen from this formation have been the need to define 'creative writing' (or work produced by teachers of writing) as a form of research in order to grapple with institutional questions of funding and promotion, and the related issue of how creative work, especially at the postgraduate level, is to be assessed. The result of this ongoing discussion about the professional disciplinary nature of Creative Writing has been a deliberate move to align the AAWP with representative professional bodies of schools of Visual and Performing Arts.

It was professional bodies for the Visual and Performing Arts which first mobilised to define artistic production as 'research equivalence', in order to stake out the claims of the Creative Arts sector in the research-oriented funding patterns of tertiary institutions (see Strand). The political identification of Creative Writing with the Visual and Performing Arts operates by claiming not only a fraternal association, but a similar institutional trajectory to schools and colleges of art, thus positing an historical narrative which is neither sustainable nor fruitful. In his recent survey of the Arts, Malcolm Gillies reports that the 'amalgamation of universities and CAEs in the late 1980s and early 1990s led, effectively, to the absorption of many schools of a practical orientation into a system strongly emphasising traditional models of teaching and research' (261-62). This narrative of absorption has been adopted to explain the origin of Creative Writing courses (see Krauth, Flann). An analysis of the development of writing programmes in individual universities and colleges, however, demonstrates an array of functions and purposes too disparate to be classified as an apprenticeship in writing which subsequently became absorbed into the research-oriented programmes of traditional universities. Instead, Creative Writing evolved out of a series of institutional and curricular responses to the perennial crisis in English studies, in the form of new pedagogical approaches to the study of literature in both CAEs *and* universities.

The discipline of Creative Writing in the United States has a number of disparate origins: the development of handbooks and university extension courses on short story writing in the late nineteenth century, which were the beginnings of a formalist criticism designed to enshrine the short story as a distinctly American art form; the establishment of 'modern' composition at Harvard university in the 1880s; the rise of Progressive Education out of the theories of John Dewey in the 1920s; and the foundation of the famous Iowa Writers' Workshop in 1939. In his history of this discipline, *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880*, D.G. Myers is nonetheless able to assert that

creative writing as a university discipline was not instituted as the unforeseen consequence of a dozen haphazard experiments - or even three dozen - operating under nearly as many aliases. It was a deliberate effort carried out for an articulate purpose in a single place. As such it was founded by Norman Foerster. (124)

Myers is referring, of course, to the precursor of the Writers Workshop, i.e. the School of Letters founded at the University of Iowa in 1931, where Creative Writing was granted higher degree status as part of a unified literary programme in graduate studies including criticism, scholarship and history. Myers could thus claim that the initial motivation for

Creative Writing in American universities was a clear desire to reform the study of literature in departments of English, and that it has been part of a struggle for literature to be studied for its own sake, not as an entry into other forms of knowledge (Myers 4).

Unlike this history, the development of Creative Writing in Australia has been much more piece-meal, without any homogeneous purpose, and without any one institution or individual being of seminal importance. It was the Colleges of Advanced Education, the poorer cousins of the universities in the binary system of tertiary education, which pioneered the discipline of Creative Writing in Australia. What needs to be understood, however, is the institutional context for this haphazard development.

One reason why the discipline of Creative Writing has developed relatively recently in this country is the strong ties Australian universities have enjoyed with British literary education, which has always been unimpressed with the mediocrity of the democratic vision of authorship supposedly embodied in Creative Writing classes (see Potter 257, Leavis 63). In the first century of Australian universities, according to Leigh Dale, the discipline of English was a means of retaining cultural ties with the Mother Country, and of erasing convict beginnings and colonial status by valorising 'Englishness'. In the fifties and sixties, despite the development of economic and defence ties with Asia and America, Dale suggests there was a concerted effort to maintain a cultural connection with England (1-2). Nigel Krauth and Tess Brady argue that when Creative Writing courses began to emerge in tertiary institutions in the 1970s they 'carried with them the stigma of being an American [or anti-British] idea' (47). In fact, for Krauth and Brady, it was the discipline of English itself which hindered the development of Creative Writing in Australia. Before the introduction of tertiary writing courses, they argue, 'there was little concern for the process of producing the literary text; the focus of English Departments was the received text and the reading process' (47). The writing process was ignored because of 'the illogical consideration that the act of writing was somehow beneath the dignity of tertiary study' (47). This is a somewhat specious argument. The act of poetic creation had been an object of serious study since the Romantic period. Rather, the production within the academy of writing which purported to be literature was looked down upon as improper and presumptuous (see Lee, and Hope, 'Literature versus the Universities').

Creative Writing first entered literary education in Australia in primary and secondary schools, where the production of 'creative' work had no pretensions to the status of literature. In Romantic aesthetics a 'creative imagination' was viewed as the gift of a talented few, embodied in the doctrine of original genius and expressed through the creation of art. By the twentieth century the investigations of cognitive psychology had established creativity as a latent quality in every person, applicable to any field of human endeavour. This democratisation of creativity, and especially of the Romantic belief in the natural poetic gifts of the child, motivated the 'creative writing' movements which rose at the vanguard of Progressive Education in American schools in the nineteen-twenties, and as part of a shift from a 'cultural heritage' to a 'personal growth' model of education in English and Australian schools in the sixties (see Lee, Dixon). Creative Writing in schools was less concerned with either producing writers or with understanding literature (although that was a byproduct) than with the personal development of individual students. A perusal of *English in Australia*, the journal of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (founded in 1965), reveals that Creative Writing was an established pedagogical device in schools long before it reached universities. In a 1968 issue Joan Woodberry observes that '[c]reative writing in English teaching has been with us for a long time now,' and 'shows signs of becoming a gimmick'. (29)

If students were to be encouraged to write 'creatively' in schools, it was necessary to develop in teachers an ability to foster this creativity. Creative Writing first entered the tertiary education sector as part of the curriculum in Teachers' Colleges. In a 1962 article in *Drylight*, the journal of the Sydney Teachers College, A.D. Hope talks of a visit he paid to the United States and Canada in 1958 and his observation of Creative Writing programmes. While he reveals a scepticism about the possibility of teaching writing based on this

observation, he also discusses a 'course' he devised as an 'experiment' (5) or 'trial run' (6) in Creative Writing at Sydney Teachers College in the mid-nineteen forties. Hope claims that he 'was interested in what I had heard of creative writing courses in universities overseas', and also felt that it would be beneficial for teachers to 'have some first-hand experience of writing' since creative work was being encouraged in schools in order to 'extend and vary the ordinary drill in classroom composition' (5). Hope commented that the 'course' was 'reasonably successful' (6) before concluding that Creative Writing is better suited as an extra-curricula activity. This, no doubt, was the first Creative Writing class in a tertiary institution in Australia. Perhaps the first College of Advanced Education to offer classes in Creative Writing was the Mitchell CAE (originally Bathurst Teachers' College and now Charles Sturt University). Here the New Zealand poet, Louis Johnson, taught classes in the Department of English and Modern Languages from 1969. However, Creative Writing was 'part of the College's overall aim to provide a sound educational background to future teachers in the related subjects of literature and self/written expression, reading and writing'. (Mitchell CAE Calendar, 1974)

The crucial factor for the wide-scale attraction of Creative Writing, however, is not only a desire for individual self-expression which was cultivated in schools, but a cultural environment in which it seems possible and attractive to become a published author. Pretensions of teaching literary writing in Australia could only find purchase if there was a tradition of Australian writing. The gradual legitimisation and canonisation of Australian literature as a cultural form via the academy and the development of a stronger local publishing industry contributed to this.

While figures such as Hope, Vincent Buckley, and James McAuley were contributing to the institutionalisation of Australian literary studies as part of a desire to establish a national canon, and thus to contribute to the fostering of a literary culture, Australian literature underwent significant changes. The 'new' Australian writing which developed in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s emerged in the shadow of the Vietnam War and the sixties' 'counter-culture', and in reaction to established traditions of Australian writing: against the classicism and formal prosody of 'academic' poets such as Hope and McAuley, and against realist fiction, especially the traditional Henry Lawson/*Bulletin* 'bush' story. In fact there was a shift away from a sense of a national literature, with writers turning overseas for inspiration. In poetry this revolution could be seen as a belated shift towards modernism (in its European and American variants), but also as an embracing of postmodern American poetry, especially the New York School and the Black Mountain poets. Fiction writers were influenced by the postmodern fabulism and metafiction of North and South America. This generational shift and move towards a literary internationalism was accompanied by a challenge to traditional means of publication, made possible by technological changes. Rejected from mainstream or establishment journals and publishing houses, young writers employed type-setting typewriters, roneo copiers and cheap off-set printing to establish an alternative network of 'underground' little magazines and small independent presses. They also gained wider audiences through public readings in both poetry and prose.

What did this explosion in literary activity have to do with the rise of Creative Writing? For a start there are chronological links. At the same time that the new Australian writing was developing, workshops in Creative Writing were proliferating in summer schools and evening classes (see Clarke, Dugan). The new Australian writing, which developed out of cheap or free magazines and was accompanied by public readings, helped to open up for many people the possibility of authorship in Australia (see Hemensley 120, Tranter 43, Wilding 316, PiO 4). It is impossible to know whether more people actually started writing in this period, but it can be surmised that more people entertained the possibility of publishing their work. If 'underground' writers created a greater enthusiasm for writing, then it is obvious that writing workshops would begin to flourish, for they are themselves another form of public reading and underground publishing.

Another perhaps more important point to make, however, is that alongside this flourishing of small press publication, writers came more and more to assume positions in universities as

the tertiary sector expanded throughout the sixties (see Shapcott and Hall 10). While these writers all taught literary studies, their presence meant that as Australian literature became accepted as an object of study, and the possibility of teaching Creative Writing gradually emerged as even more challenges to traditional English studies developed, there would be a large number of writers already working in universities who would be able to teach it. In fact, the presence of practicing writers in universities was the necessary precondition for the development of Creative Writing, not only because they were able to teach it, but because they generally instigated it. Tom Shapcott's history of the Literature Board of the Australia Council points out that one of its major projects was to provide funds for writer-in-residence schemes at tertiary institutions. This began in 1974 and over the next decade virtually every university and CAE took advantage of the project, hosting a range of local and overseas writers, many of whom conducted writing workshops during their residence. Shapcott quotes David Malouf's claim that one benefit of the writer-in-residence project was that it would 'allow practitioners to see how our literature is being treated in the universities and to offer their own suggestions about how this could be improved or made more relevant'. (123)

Rather than developing as part of a network of apprenticeship and patronage, however, Creative Writing was a product of institutional and disciplinary changes which occurred in tertiary education between 1960 and 1990. In 1961 the Commonwealth appointed a special committee, chaired by Sir Leslie Martin, to investigate and provide recommendations for the development of tertiary education in Australia. Reporting in three volumes over 1964-65, the Committee argued strongly in favour of encouraging a greater diversity in higher education and called for the expansion of technical education through the creation of Colleges of Advanced Education.

Formed out of technical colleges [and teachers colleges, but also later CAEs were newly instituted - *eds*], the CAEs were geared towards a practical, vocational education for those students with different capacities and needs from the academically inclined students which a university would naturally attract. Hence an education could still be provided for those not able enough or interested enough in university study, with the benefit of a direct boost to the industrial, technological and economic growth of the nation. This marked the beginning of what became known as the binary system of higher education in Australia, comprising universities dedicated to research and the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge, and a vocational sector concentrating on teaching and professional training.

How did Creative Writing develop out of these technical institutions? Even viewed as a practical subject, graduates of a writing course might seem to have dim vocational prospects (since most graduates do not go on to establish careers as authors), nor would they provide any advancements in technology. There are two reasons. In order to raise the status of CAEs in the eyes of the public, the Martin report recommended the development of courses in the humanities and social sciences. Secondly, in order to provide a broader and more developed education for technical students (rather than mere training in a profession) it encouraged the introduction of 'relevant and integrated liberal studies' (171), which would develop the 'critical, imaginative and creative abilities' of students (182). Any education in the liberal arts would have to be adapted to the professional needs of the students.

The Canberra College of Advanced Education, the Western Australian Institute of Technology, and the NSW Institute of Technology all pioneered degrees or majors in writing before becoming accredited as universities in the late eighties and early nineties. All three have claimed, at some stage, to have been the first tertiary institution to establish writing programmes in Australia. Brief case studies of these institutions demonstrate the diversity of influences out of which Creative Writing developed.

The Canberra College of Advanced Education (now the University of Canberra) was established in 1967. In 1970 a diploma course in Professional Writing was introduced under the guidance of David Swain. Although the first title chosen for the course was 'Creative Writing', it was subsequently rejected in order to distance it from negative associations with American college programmes. 'Professional Writing' was agreed upon as the term most

suited to an educational institution with a charter to provide vocational training. Journalism, copywriting, scientific and technical writing were included in the curriculum, as well as fiction, poetry, drama and scriptwriting for radio, film and television. Nonetheless, instead of offering strict rhetorical training in various modes of composition it was geared towards a general education in writing. For Swain, 'the true subject of the course is the student' (49). Here we see an open-ended approach to education; interactive pedagogy with a mixture of vocationalism, free expression, and craft-based writing all geared towards producing writers 'whether artists or craftsmen' (49). This recalls that figure from an earlier era, the man of letters, the 'near-creative writer' as John Gross put it in his book, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters* (324): the literary journeyman with a respect for quality and a pen for hire. In 1974 Professional Writing became a three-year degree course and John Hay was able to claim that it was 'the only degree course in this subject in the world' (34).

According to the Curtin University website, the Creative Writing programme in the School of Communication and Cultural Studies 'was the first three-year major course of study of its type in Australia'. Curtin was first established as the Western Australian Institute of Technology to offer professional training and educational alternatives to traditional degree courses in universities. English began under the auspices of General Studies, mainly as a service department offering communication skills to other disciplines, but with one elective class in Creative Writing. In 1973 Brian Dibble, who had taught Creative Writing and Literature in America, became Foundation Head of the Department of English and Language Studies within the School of Social Sciences. The following year the department moved to the School of the Arts and Design, and a Creative Writing major was established alongside Literature, Australian Studies, Journalism, Film and Television and Theatre Arts. One of the first teachers in the major was Elizabeth Jolley. A writer-in-residence scheme was also established. For Dibble, Creative Writing is 'a praxis which, therefore, should be conducted in the context of the assumptions, theory and principles of some discipline' (4). That discipline was English. According to Dibble:

all of our majors were subsets of a BA degree, and the Creative Writing major was defined as complementary to our Literature major, the opposite side of the coin, so to speak. If you wanted to do second-year Creative Writing, you also had to do the counterpart second-year Literature unit. More provocatively, Literary Criticism was also required of Creative Writing students. (Dibble 4)

The New South Wales Institute of Technology (now the University of Technology, Sydney) was established in 1965 with a charter to 'provide higher education for vocational purposes, that is to say, to offer courses for those wishing to enter or to advance in professional work'. (NSWIT Calendar 1975: 11) The school of Humanities and Social Sciences began primarily as a servicing course which provided basic writing skills to students from other departments. When the Whitlam government came to power in 1972, however, this precipitated a large expansion in higher education and enabled NSWIT to establish a Bachelor of Arts in Communication (it also enabled Canberra CAE's Professional Writing course and WAIT's English course to attain degree status). Two compulsory subjects in this new degree were Professional Writing I and II. The course outline for 1975 lists 'imaginative prose, fiction and verse' as genres attended to alongside technical writing, and indeed the university website dates its writing major back to this year.

In 1976 Bill Bonney arrived to take up the role of Dean and Associate Head of School, having left a Philosophy department at Sydney University which had been split with virulent intellectual and curriculum debates. In a whirlwind overhaul of the new degree he gathered around himself a body of recruits energised by radical Marxist and Feminist views of society, as well as interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge and education. The continual adaptations and restructures of the Communication degree which followed were based on anything but vocationally oriented education. Most of the staff members, Helen Wilson recalls, distanced themselves from the functional model of communication which was

developing in American universities by taking a much more radical approach which had its theoretical roots in the work of the Frankfurt School, as filtered through British Cultural Studies (279-80).

How did Creative Writing, which supposedly is antipathetical to theory, fit into this new degree? The workshop approach, for a start, was well adapted to both the teaching style and the ungraded pass/fail mode of assessment. By 1978 Professional Writing had become a major in the Communication degree. In the following years, as journalism and public relations developed into separate majors, the writing strand became increasingly concerned with 'creative' or literary genres and the prefix 'Professional' was dropped. Apart from Graham Williams, who was originally hired to teach technical writing, the main influences on the development of the writing major were Arnie Goldman, who brought with him experience of the American workshop model, and Drusilla Modjeska, who was best known for *Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers 1925-1945* (1981) but is now also a respected 'literary' author.

There was less concern with any formal or curricular attempt to produce published writers than with the political ideas emerging from other parts of the department. The textual studies major, commonly taken by writing students, was not concerned with traditional English studies, but with new Theory. Although there was an incredible diversity of ideas and motivations among the teaching staff, the central concern, according to Graham Williams, was a vision of 'the writer as a worker with a particular kind of position in society'. It was this vision which situated the writing major within the broader theoretical and political considerations of the Communications degree. The dominant ideology of authorship was Marxist, in the form popularised by Terry Eagleton's *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (1976). In this book Eagleton recounted the argument of writers such as Pierre Machery that 'the author is primarily a producer, analogous to any other maker of a social product...a worker rooted in a particular history with particular materials at his disposal' (68). So even though students might draw on inspiration or write for therapeutic reasons, they were compelled to do this within an environment which saw the writer as possessing a social responsibility.

When WAIT became the Curtin University of Technology in 1987, this was the catalyst (according to its historian, Michael White) for massive higher education reforms carried out by John Dawkins in the following year. The crux of the 'Green Paper', a policy discussion paper on higher education issued in 1987, was that the binary system in Australian Higher education perpetuated an 'artificial' divide. Under the Dawkins reforms a Unified National System was introduced in 1988 which, through a series of amalgamations, mergers, and consolidations, attempted to dismantle what was seen as an unproductive educational structure. New universities were established out of vocational colleges; Institutes of Technology were awarded university status; smaller institutes, CAEs and specialist colleges amalgamated with larger establishments; and links were established between the TAFE system and universities. This brought many writing courses into universities (such as Deakin University's Professional Writing course), and many writing teachers have since joined schools of Visual and Performing Arts in claiming that the practical training characteristic of the 'creative arts' has to artificially adapt itself to research paradigms in order to compete for funding. As we have seen, however, other writing courses had been operating in institutions which were universities in everything but name, and provided more than just a practical apprenticeship.

Many writing programmes have developed in older universities since the Dawkins reforms (such as the Master of Philosophy in Creative Writing at Queensland University). Some factors contributing to this, according to a recent review of the state of English studies by Robert White, were the need to attract more students and the desire of individual universities to increase their research output by recognising the fictive work of staff and postgraduate students (103). Nigel Krauth and Tess Brady have put this more bluntly. Once writing courses in CAEs 'started producing almost instant giant names in literature and entertainment', they claim, 'the universities rushed with indecent haste, it seemed, to get onto

the bandwagon they had formerly despised' (47). But in fact Creative Writing had already been developing in universities with as much diversity as in the vocational sector. The Dawkins reforms hastened the expansion of Creative Writing in universities (by bringing writing courses in vocational colleges into the university sector and encouraging the expansion of Creative Writing at the postgraduate level) rather than introducing it. The point of the Dawkins reforms was that the binary divide in the tertiary sector between CAEs and universities was an artificial one. And indeed many of the Creative Writing courses which developed in universities before the introduction of the Unified National System were barely distinguishable from those already described in vocational institutions.

Macquarie University was established in 1966, due to a recommendation endorsed by the Martin report, and according to a recent postgraduate handbook, 'it set out to provide a genuine alternative to existing universities in its approach to the academic curriculum and to teaching and learning methodologies' (Macquarie University, 1997: 7). This was the first Australian university to run classes in Creative Writing. 'Literary Craftsmanship' was taught in the School of English Studies from 1970 by the Australian poet, Alexander Craig, who had also been a teacher and student in the MFA programme at the University of Iowa. According to the university calendar for that year, the course was concerned 'with craftsmanship of original writing in poetry or prose fiction' and was to be 'conducted in critical seminars, based on the students' own work and intended also to clarify more general principles and problems'. (Macquarie University, 1970: 361)

Deakin University (founded in 1974 as Victoria's first regional university) established classes in Creative Writing in its Literary Studies stream in 1978. These were taught by the poet Graeme Kinross-Smith. From 1979 there was also a class taught by Trevor Code called 'Life in Words' and described as a course which combines literary study with creative writing. The pedagogical philosophy of Literary Studies in the School of Humanities is best presented in an article by Ian Reid, the department's foundation professor, entitled 'The Crisis in English Studies' and published by *English in Australia* in 1982. Reid suggested several curricular changes which this crisis might prompt, along the lines of accepting the methodologies grouped under the names 'critical theory' and 'cultural studies'. Furthermore, while pointing to 'honourable exceptions', he argued that the emphasis on the formal essay in university English departments needs to be challenged, and that the development of 'more varied communication skills has been hampered mainly by the barriers of silly prejudice which in this part of the world still separate "creative writing" from literary criticism'. (16-17) While allowing 'some scope' for the higher degree professional model, he was more interested in prescribing writing exercises as a means for understanding narrative method. His argument was that 'the critical and the creative belong together, resting on the fundamental educational principle that the most enlightening way to learn about something is by trying to do it yourself'. (18)

The University of Wollongong was the first university to offer an entire undergraduate major in Creative Writing, and the first where it was possible to attain a postgraduate degree by submitting a work of fiction, poetry or drama. Starting in 1962 as a College of the University of New South Wales, it became an autonomous university in 1975. Although its Department of English and Drama did not offer Creative Writing, the development of scripts was carried out in performance classes. When the university amalgamated in 1982 with the Wollongong Institute of Education (which had previously been a Teachers' College founded in 1962), it inherited a large department of Education. Many academic staff members from the WIE formed the nucleus of the new School of Creative Arts, which was established in 1984. One of these was the poet Ron Pretty, who was responsible for instituting the Creative Writing major within the School, and whose secondary-school textbook, *Creating Poetry* (1987), can be seen as a legacy of this history.

The diversity of Creative Writing, which previously had developed within literary studies, communications and Professional Writing, is demonstrated by its placement in this new school alongside the visual and performing arts, as well as ceramics and woodwork. According to the Course Handbook for 1985 (the first year of its offering), the Bachelor of

Creative Arts 'seeks to train a creative artist with a high degree of skills flexibility' (University of Wollongong, 1985: 392). A multi-disciplinary view of the arts was adopted under the ungainly title of 'fusion-training'. Here a student would be able to 'enrich the palette of their single major talent' by acquiring a 'working practical and theoretical experience' of other art forms (392).

The course hoped to see its graduates emerge as 'fully trained "modern" Arts person[s]' able to work either as professional executants or in the teaching profession or the Media Arts. The writing major itself was little different from similar courses in other universities, however. It adopted the workshop approach of group critical appraisal of individual student work, supported by a study of techniques in fiction, poetry and drama, plus considerations of the creative process. And, unlike other strands in the degree, the writing major was supplemented by 'link subjects' offered by the Department of English, Literature and Drama. Students majoring in poetry, for example, could back up their practical workshops by attending classes such as 'Eighteenth Century Poetry' with literature students.

What these examples show is that Creative Writing evolved within newly established universities which were willing to try non-traditional approaches to tertiary education. The University of Melbourne was the first sandstone university to offer any form of Creative Writing. While a post-Dawkins merger with the Victorian College of the Arts brought Creative Writing within a multi-media arts school into the University, one elective class called 'Creative Writing' had been taught in the English department from 1981. This was an 'integrated' subject which required a critical essay as well as a creative piece. The department has a tradition of poet-critics including Vincent Buckley, Chris Wallace-Crabbe, Evan Jones, Andrew Taylor and Peter Steele, although it was Wallace-Crabbe who showed the most enthusiasm for Creative Writing. In 1993 another poet-critic, Philip Mead, commented on the 'unique version of Creative Writing that has evolved in the English Department, namely a combination of and negotiation between critical, theoretical and creative writing' (3). The university has now developed an undergraduate major and a Masters degree, although these seem to be situated alongside English and Cultural Studies rather than being integrated with them.

It is obvious that Creative Writing developed in Australia out of educational agendas opposed to traditional English studies, just as in America where, according to D.G. Myers, it emerged as 'an alternative institutional practice for the study of literature'. (1993: 287) But much of this occurred within the parameters of the discipline of English. Creative Writing may have offended British sensibilities, but it is not 'outside' English studies. It is part of an ongoing series of reforms to literary education, carried out in response to the intellectual and pedagogical challenges created by the crisis in the humanities. While in America the rise of Creative Writing was intimately connected to the New Criticism and its campaign against literary scholarship in the form of history and philology, in Australia in the seventies and eighties the critical climate was beginning to challenge what John Docker has called the 'metaphysical ascendancy' of New Criticism and Leavisism (see Docker: 83-109). There were local institutional reasons for the development of Creative Writing in Australian universities, but these occurred within an international shift away from traditional literary studies and towards Theory, and the very real pedagogical and curricula changes which accompanied this. The interdisciplinary location of writing programmes in English, Cultural Studies, the Creative Arts, Communication and Media studies, and Professional Writing is indicative of this.

I have managed to sketch only a brief history here. However, I hope this history suggests that rather than a practical apprenticeship in literary craft with ambitions (as opposed to accreditation) to service the publishing industry, and which became housed in universities as a result of external pressures, Creative Writing has developed within the university as an institutional site at which writers can contribute to knowledge in the New Humanities.

Note

From a private interview with Graham Williams, conducted at UTS on June 24, 1998. return to article

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