



On Writing in Two Languages in the Creative Writing Workshop: Exploring Diverse and Inclusive Workshop Models and Pedagogies

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ABSTRACT

Rooted from a particular experience of literacy exclusion in an MFA creative writing workshop, this presentation seeks to discuss and trace the underlying workings of linguistic racism and exclusion of writers of color in creative writing workshops. As the field of Creative Writing Studies explores the multiple facets that make up the field by moving beyond the genre and the page, this presentation seeks to examine the ways in which creative writing might imagine and take up inclusive pedagogies (Adsit, 2017, 2019) that support the work of writers of color. The presentation also includes articles and reports about and from writers who highlight their past workshop experiences like Junot Diaz (2014), Sandra Cisneros (Gleibermann, 2017), Lan Samantha Chang (Neary, 2014), Ayana Mathis (Neary, 2014), Esmeralda Santiago (Gleibermann, 2017), Bushra Rehman (Neary, 2014), Claudia Rankine (2015) and emerging Latinx writers in MFA programs across the southwest (“Our MFA Experiences,” 2016). Such experiences reveal traditional pedagogies and workshop models that are historically rooted and linked to exclusion and structural racism in creative writing programs (Ali, 2016).

The presentation will therefore examine the historical underpinnings of the traditional workshop model (Manery, 2012) and a traditional literary canon (Das, 2019) that is often embraced in creative writing classrooms today. This exploration leads to crucial questions. How does a traditional literary canon – one that is not as diverse – shape and direct students’ conceptions of what “good writing” is? And In what ways is the creative writing workshop today still shaped by a traditional workshop model that can sometimes go unquestioned for its exclusion of writers of color?

Leaning on the work of Karim Ali (2016) and his call for curricular diversity, this presentation examines what inclusive and socially-just creative writing pedagogies mean at a time of increasing diversity of writers in creative writing classrooms – where multiple literacies, writing backgrounds, styles, and approaches are at work within the same space. This also includes the

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potential implications of how diverse and inclusive pedagogies can shape the development and functionality of a workshop community. Such pedagogies include discussions and activities surrounding race, positionality, and privilege. For example, Janelle Adsit's (2019) "Unpacking Privilege in Creative Writing," includes statements on potential biases and intersectional privileges like "I have never experienced microaggressions in the creative writing workshop."

The presentation will move to the potential affordances of rhetorical understanding in revised workshop models. Questions within such models might include: Who might the audience for this piece be? First, let's examine the context surrounding the piece. How does the context of the piece shape our understanding of the work itself? Does the author have a specific publication aim? Scholars like Adsit (2017) have even suggested how letters of context, written by students themselves, can shape a specific workshop that informs the writer's revision path. Overall, this presentation examines and advocates for inclusive pedagogies as the field of creative writing witnesses an increase of diverse writers who seek to build and celebrate their own writing and literacies while contributing to a larger publication field.