

## DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH MINUTES

February 15, 1980

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m., Mr. Moldenhauer presiding.

Mr. Moldenhauer announced that Mr. Reborn, the first editor of the resurrected departmental Newsletter, would be using the information Ms. Boose compiled on papers read by faculty members during the summer and fall of 1979 in the first issues. Any faculty member who does not want his contributions included should contact Mr. Reborn by 3:00 p.m., Thursday, 21 February. He also invites additional information from faculty members. Mr. Friedman announced that the TAC and AAUP would be meeting jointly on 18 February. Rep. Wilhelmina Delco will be one of the featured speakers, and topics of discussion include faculty salaries, research support, tenure and leaves of absence.

Mr. Moldenhauer opened the subject of the day's meeting with a brief outline of the mechanics of recruitment at this late date. First of all, he explained that the Dean had recently expressed his willingness to open three to four slots in the areas of Creative Writing, Rhetoric and Composition, Language-Linguistics-Medieval, and English as a Second Language. The staffs of these groups met individually at the beginning of the week, and they agreed to support recruitment in Creative Writing and Technical Writing at this time. If the department agrees that we should recruit a faculty member in each of these areas, then we will pursue the most promising of the applications received before the fall 1979 deadline. We've already begun sifting through applicants for the Creative Writing spot. Mr. Whitbread and the Chairman gave quick readings to those applicants (excluding those who were poets only) and have given the remainder to Mr. Mewshaw for his opinions. The strongest applicants will be telephoned to determine if they are still available; we will also draw upon "word of mouth" and convention placement services about other qualified potential candidates. MLA is not a major market for Creative Writing and Technical Writing job-seekers; we would have opportunities to interview at the Associated Writing Programs meeting in San Antonio on March 13-15 and at the CCCC convention in Washington at the same time. Mr. Moldenhauer remarked that belated recruitment into highly specialized fields is not impossible, and, as it is, the Department has little choice in the timing of its effort.

The Chairman then opened the floor to discussion of the pros and cons of recruitment in these two areas. Mr. Mewshaw stated that the Creative Writing group had renewed reservations about hiring in that area right now. These reservations stemmed from the lack of an M.A. program in Creative Writing, the absence of a statement defining the value of Creative Writing to the department at this time, and the belief in a de facto policy of requiring more of creative writers than of other faculty. The Creative Writing group was upset and concerned that a recently-submitted proposal for an M.A. concentration in Creative Writing had been considered inappropriate by the Graduate Studies Committee chairman because the Creative Writing staff had written into the proposal conditions or suggestions on the value of creative writing to the department. Mr. Mewshaw wanted to know where it is appropriate to discuss these questions of valuation; what assurance could creative writers give young



faculty members that their work will be taken seriously by the department? Mr. Mewshaw said that he has asked the department several times to discuss the current state of creative writing. If one looks at promotion pacing and merit raise scales, then creative writers must feel that such a state is currently low. The creative writer always has publications (sometimes extensive) before being hired, but then he is required to write even more to obtain tenure. CW publication is not weighted equally with publications by scholars. It is this inequality of status and pay that the creative writers want the department to address. The department should discuss these issues when discussing recruitment because it is the position of the creative writing staff that another writer should not be hired until the matter is settled.

Mr. Moldenhauer responded that he would cheerfully address the MA proposal and its assumptions if it were on the agenda. As it wasn't, the departmental members should decide whether to open the floor to this discussion. Mr. Gordon so moved, and no dissent was expressed. Mr. Moldenhauer voiced concern that the boundary conditions presented as part of the M.A. proposal in Creative Writing were unworkable because so many of these conditions would require actions at different levels of the UT and System administration; the department might have a long wait, without CW program development, for these prior conditions to be met. Moreover, different parts of the creative writing proposal needed to be addressed by different units in the departmental structure, e.g., Graduate Studies Committee, Undergraduate Course Committee, EC. Mr. Twombly suggested that as a starting point for discussion the department should request a report from the Executive Committee within a month on the policy of promotion and tenure as it affects creative writers. Mr. Gordon opposed this because he felt that the department as a whole should decide such matters, not the EC and Chairman. In response to a question, Mr. Friedman said that he was aware of no previous departmental policy on creative writing.

Mr. Moldenhauer outlined the EC's promotion- and tenure-recommendation procedures and annual review for merit raises. EC decisions are based on (1) evidence of teaching effectiveness, including both student and peer evaluations; (2) creative and scholarly output, including original research, publications, and consultantships; and (3) contributions to the department, the college, and the academic community. The first two are more important than the third. The Executive Committee does not attach a fixed weight or dollar value to a published page; publications are evaluated as to both quantity and quality. Usually the EC includes readers qualified to assess an individual's work; when it does not, the EC contacts qualified individuals within or without the department to assist in the evaluation. If a faculty member has extensive publications of high quality, he or she will be handsomely rewarded for them. Extensive publications of lower quality will be regarded as evidence of diligence. Small amounts of distinguished work will be counted big; small amounts of undistinguished work will be counted small. It is unfair to ourselves and others to say, "I'm treated worse although I've got more titles in print." Reviews of CW faculty were usually presented by a creative writer on the EC or by a non-CW member who found the writer's work especially engaging. Outside opinion would be sought if needed. Mr. Mewshaw responded that during his seven years at UT he has yet to be asked to evaluate the work of another writer on the faculty. Mr. Moldenhauer explained that the EC also looks at reviews, awards, standing of presses, magazines, and journals, and other such data. To Mr. Mewshaw's suggestion that the distinction of the CW staff explained the heavy student demand for courses, Mr. Moldenhauer said there might be other contributing



factors, and pointed to the growth in sophomore technical writing, taught chiefly by teachers without national fame. He further explained, with respect to promotion timing, that the Dean's Committee on Promotion requires firm documentation; for example, it will not approve a promotion without some reliable evidence of superior teaching ability. Mr. Mewshaw replied that if he was being told that creative writers don't get promoted because they lack teaching evaluations, then he will go back and tell this to the creative writing staff. The only point the creative writers are trying to make is that they want to be judged in comparison with others. For example, Mr. Mewshaw cited the case of Cynthia McDonald, a creative writer who was turned down in 1974 for employment by the department because she wasn't good enough. She's now chairman of the Creative Writing staff of the University of Houston where she is making \$32,000 per year, with only two books in her bibliography. The creative writers don't think there's personal bias against them, but obviously there's a lack of communication about the quality of the present staff and of their work. It is unrealistic for the department to maintain its present standards of creative writing without recompense.

Mr. Moldenhauer said that every definable discipline group in the English Department has similar claims--claims not only for merit salary increases but money for secretarial support, supplies, etc. It is the unhappy duty of the Chairman and the EC to distribute what is given by the administration; he tried to do so equitably where he had a say about spreading resources. Mr. Walter said that in such situations, someone is always going to be displeased, and that in his experience the EC had worked responsibly. Mr. Reed said that he could understand the creative writers' position; better markets seem to exist than for faculty in other fields, and keeping creative writers here at UT may be a problem. Ms. Rodi asked if it were possible that certain groups weren't being assessed justly; perhaps these groups could supply more information. Mr. Moldenhauer answered that in difficult cases the EC already seeks expert advice as does the Dean's Committee, and that the EC asks all faculty members to submit pertinent information for their files. Mr. Mewshaw explained that, indeed, the department was often unfamiliar with creative writing as a field. For example, he cited his own experience with promotion where he had letters of recommendation from four noted writers, including Graham Greene; the EC member preparing his dossier requested letters from more important people. Mr. Whitbread observed that when he worked on Mr. Mewshaw's dossier the following year, when the promotion was approved, his main efforts were devoted to assembling the documentation for Mr. Mewshaw's teaching effectiveness. Mr. Renwick expressed his opinion that even if there were inequalities between creative writers and scholars within the department and even if the status of the creative writing program may be ill-defined, the immediate need to hire a creative writer should be the pressing concern. Perhaps, he added, the department should just be honest with the new faculty member; we could tell him that these problems do exist but that we are working towards a solution. Mr. Mewshaw stated that the policy toward creative writers seems to be that material published before the writer accepts a position here is important only to the hiring; the writer must start over to obtain tenure. Mr. Moldenhauer explained that the department is, and should be, dubious about hiring a writer without previous publication; the department wants to be sure that the candidate will continue to publish. Furthermore, Mr. Moldenhauer thought that the academic training period for writers with M.A. or M.F.A. is shorter by several years than that for scholars, and that most scholars' essays compete for publication in a more restricted market than that for poems and short stories. Mr. Mewshaw refuted Mr. Moldenhauer's beliefs and said they reflected a bias the creative writing staff



was trying to overcome. Creative publications are not easier to come by than scholarly ones--only 138 first novels are published each year. It is extremely difficult to get published. The creative writing staff of the English Department has tremendous publishing experience, much more than some of their colleagues at sister institutions. Mr. Mewshaw wondered if perhaps the present staff hadn't spoiled UT and that UT, in turn, was not giving sufficient recognition to its writers.

Mr. Moldenhauer observed that the creative writing (fiction) offering obviously needed teaching support. Since 1977, and perhaps earlier, registrations have been heavy and during adds and drops students wishing to add E325 (Fiction) were turned away. Whatever our desires for four- and five-year plans or our concerns for the state of writers at UT, it is a disgrace to turn away upper-division students. Without additional faculty in the field, however, the only other alternative is to increase class size, from the ideal of 20 past the desired maximum of 25 and possibly up to 35 per section. Mr. Moldenhauer added that if the department did not staff the sections and a Dean felt the need for a staff addition, the Dean could simply hire someone himself. Mr. Friedman noted that what the department seemed to need was a creative writer of significant stature who would be rewarded for those accomplishments. Mr. Moldenhauer explained that the Dean's willingness to open slots for recruitment applied specifically to the beginning levels. Mr. Mewshaw concluded that since the resources of UT are not currently applied to a coherent, academically responsible program in Creative Writing beyond an elementary level, the creative writing staff could not in good faith search for a candidate; he was willing to go along with the decision of the department, but such support would not amount to active involvement in the recruitment process. To do so, Mr. Mewshaw concluded, would be a charade. Mr. Moldenhauer said that the department would be ill-advised to bring in a junior colleague if the CW staff saw the new person as a contribution to chaos. Mr. Slatin moved that the department defer the question of recruitment for a creative writing position. Mr. Ohle seconded the motion. There were 8 in favor, 3 opposed, and 4 abstentions.

Mr. Moldenhauer then opened the floor to discussion of recruitment of an assistant professor in Technical Writing. Mr. Bowden said that the English Department has a long and distinguished tradition in this field; in fact, Gordon Mills and John Walter have been two of the biggest names in the country. With Mr. Mills gone and Mr. Walter (age 65) retiring in the foreseeable future, wouldn't it be wise for the department to recruit a senior faculty member to this position? Mr. Moldenhauer reiterated the Dean's willingness to hire only at the beginning levels. Mr. Walter said that the interest in technical writing exploded about six years ago and has been increasing steadily; for both fall and spring semesters there were 25 sections of 25 students each. Obviously, we lack regular faculty qualified and available to teach all these students, and so the department has enlisted the aid of a large number of temporary instructors. Some of these instructors are very good. Nevertheless, Mr. Walter believed that it would be a good idea for the department to add to the staff someone else with expertise in Technical Writing. He hoped that some of the temporary instructors would apply for the position. Mr. Simon moved that the department hire an assistant professor in the Technical Writing slot. Mr. Slatin seconded the motion. There were 9 in favor, 0 opposed, and 1 abstention.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Correction of 8 February Minutes: read "Duban" for "Shay", p. 1, paragraph 3.

Attached: "Proposals for an M.A. with Concentration in Creative Writing"



## PROPOSALS FOR AN M.A. WITH CONCENTRATION IN CREATIVE WRITING

### 1. Admissions

Admissions standards would generally be the same as those for the English Department. But the provisions for exceptional cases would need to be more flexible for applicants in creative writing. As several members of our committee pointed out, many creative writers of considerable skill and attainment might not have been English Majors as undergraduates, might not have attained the appropriate GPA, and might not have taken the requisite number of English courses. But writing samples submitted by prospective CW students should allow our faculty to judge whether an applicant deserves special consideration for admission.

### 2. Course requirements

There was general agreement that the current Ling-Lang and Criticism requirements would discourage many CW students from applying to U.T. After some research into the matter, we discovered that, no other program has such requirements. This would put us at a disadvantage in attracting students whose talent and interest lie primarily in writing. We therefore are in favor of waiving these requirements for CW students.

We also voted in favor of offering CW students a wider range of options in choosing courses in a minor field.

Several members felt strongly that we should offer on a regular basis graduate level courses in literature--i.e., contemporary fiction, contemporary poetry, the theory of the novel, poetics, etc.--taught by writers on the faculty. This is standard procedure at all creative writing programs, and since these courses are open to non-CW students, it has the effect of involving writers from the scholarly side of the department, while at the same time giving scholars and critics an opportunity to gain insight into the way working writers approach and interpret literature.

Another possibility is an omnibus course, aimed at CW students, but open to other students and faculty members as well. This course would address the practical problems facing novelists and poets and would include lectures and discussions of publishing, editing, agents, commercial publishing houses, small presses, university presses, magazines, journalism, etc. Our assumption is that it is foolish to attempt to train aspiring writers--or scholars and critics, for that matter, without presenting them an accurate picture of the dynamics of the business which lurks behind "the art and sullen craft".

### 3. Thesis

Since CW students have to submit a booklength manuscript--i.e., a collection of poetry or short stories, or a novel--before being awarded an M.A. with concentration in Creative Writing, it seems only natural that such a substantial achievement should count as six rather than three hours of credit.

#### 4. Courses

In addition to six hours for the thesis, an M.A. candidate in Creative Writing would have to pass 27 hours of course work.

Three of those hours would be for the omnibus course, perhaps entitled, Intro. to Grad. Studies in Creative Writing.

Six hours would be in either 385M or 391L. A student could take two semesters of 385M in either fiction or poetry, or one semester of each. Or he could take one semester of 385M and a 391L individual conference course. But in no case could a student take 391L without at some point taken at least one 385M seminar.

The remaining 18 hours would be in English-American literature, and in the student's minor.

Since the members of the CW committee are uncertain how rigid the departmental, or college, course requirements are, we propose the foregoing paradigm of courses with the knowledge that we may have to bring the CW concentration into conformity with University rules. But we feel strongly that any serious proposal for a program in Creative Writing must take into consideration what is offered at other universities. We cannot reasonably expect to attract and keep talented students if our requirements, however appropriate they may be to a conventional M.A. unrelated, or irrelevant to a conscientious course of study in Creative Writing. In the case of every proposal we have made, there are ample precedents at other universities, especially at the best Creative Writing programs i.e., at Stanford, Iowa, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Virginia.

Quite clearly, however, a creative writing program does not consist only of a paradigm of courses and requirements. Therefore, at the request of Max Westbrook and Joe Moldenhauer, we have set down certain minimal conditions which would have to be met before we could embark on an M.A. with concentration in Creative Writing.

1. We would need brochures and posters to advertise our program and attract students from throughout the state and around the country. We cannot continue to count on students who have come to UF for purposes entirely unrelated to Creative Writing. The result of this haphazard approach has all too often been seminars consisting of a few English majors, looking for an interesting elective and too many special and part-time students who are unprepared for serious work.

2. Advertising alone will not attract CW graduate students. We must be able to offer the best of them fellowships and assistanceships. [It is common practice for writing programs to offer several outright grants of \$4,000 or \$5,000, and many more assistanceships.] This may well require a reallocation of departmental resources or an infusion of new funds.

3. Almost all programs have a regular schedule of guest speakers and lecturers. In some cases these visitors serve as outside examiners. In other cases, they help galvanize interest among current students and capture the attention of prospective students. Our program in CW would therefore need to have a dependable budget for speakers and guest lecturers.

4. In the most immediate and practical terms, a CW program would require a secretary (at least one day a week) to take dictation and answer letters of inquiry from prospective students and faculty. This, of course, presupposed that we would have franking privileges to send out brochures and answer letters. Occasional access to the telephone might also be necessary. These requests strike us as reasonable, but it should be noted that we have had little or no access to the secretarial pool, the typing pool, or to the telephone for the last seven years.



5. Since CW faculty members would be advising and directing students as they produced booklength manuscripts--manuscripts as long as Ph.D dissertations--it seems reasonable that they should be given some course relief. Ph.D dissertation directors receive 3TLC points. At present, M.A. thesis directors receive only .5TLC points, but this is for a short paper. If we are to read and edit multiple drafts of novels or collections of poems or short stories, we believe there would have to be some new formula for additional TLC points.

Our research has shown that at most CW programs the standard load for CW teachers is 3-2. (At Virginia it is 2-2.) This reduced load strikes us as justifiable when one considers that CW faculty members, in addition to directing thesis, will be reading the work of prospective students and job applicants and screening candidates for conference courses. All this comes on top of the writing submitted in class, and the reading which all CW faculty members do as judges for various writing contests on and off campus. While the Texas Legislature would forbid a formal teaching schedule, a revised formula providing TLC points for thesis direction might have the same effect.

6. As a precondition for any CW program we would want a written statement of departmental policy concerning the way in which creative publication is judged for purposes of merit raises and promotions in rank. To be specific, does the EC consider a published novel or volume of poems to be the equivalent of a book of scholarly criticism or literary history? Is a published story, poem, or review the equivalent of a learned article?

On the evidence, it seems to us that the department has applied a double standard, demanding publication from prospective CW faculty members but not from prospective assistant professors. In order to win tenure, CW faculty members are then required to produce substantial additional publications, while other members of the department are promoted on the basis of one book or a few articles. Furthermore, judging by the departmental salary scale, little effort is made to reward CW faculty members who have substantial publications and national and, in some cases, international reputations. If the term "merit increase" has any meaning, then there must be more recognition given to the CW faculty. One obvious way of granting this recognition is to allow CW faculty members greater access to departmental and university resources, such as: VRI grants, summer grants, travel grants, and typing expenses.

Our feeling is that it would be senseless of us to set out to establish a CW concentration unless, or until, these conditions are discussed and steps are taken to meet them.

