

RETHINKING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CREATIVE WRITING: A NEGLECTED ART FORM BEHIND THE LANGUAGE LEARNING CURRICULUM

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In many countries, including China and the UK, creative writing is seen as a subject within the broader area of first language learning. Embedded within language learning, creative writing therefore appears very functional. Teachers often pay more attention to the technical writing skills but neglect emotion and creativity. However, many researchers argue that emotion and creativity should be the core elements when seeing creative writing as valuable for its own sake, as an art form. This essay will draw on the argument that we should rethink the significance of teaching creative writing as an art form. As the author had educational experience in both the UK and China, this paper will mainly use the examples in the UK and China to explore the following questions: in what ways can we see creative writing as an art form and why is it educationally valuable? What is lost in a functional view of creative writing and how does it contribute to language learning? These answers will address the democratic nature of art education, the role of aesthetics in generating creativity and motivation for language learning. From the perspective of democracy, creative writing is a significant way for self-expression and voice of freedom. From the view of aesthetics, aesthetic experience takes an important role in generating emotion and creativity, which helps personal growth rather than only working on the skill-based learning. Another perspective is that creative writing can help students generate motivation in language learning by giving them more space and time for self-expression and helping them experience the beauty of language, which corresponds to the democratic and aesthetic factor.

Keywords: Creative writing, Arts education, Language curriculum, Democratic expression, Aesthetic experience

Introduction

What is creative writing? Is creative writing an art form? During its development, creative writing is first linked to “creation” and “creative power” and then comes to substitute for literature in published works (Dawson, 2005). The modern version of the discipline of creative writing begins in 1940 with the founding of the Iowa Writer’s Workshop, which is partly a reinvention in composition of both “ancient dramatic teaching” and “Renaissance rhetorical exercises” (Dawson, 2005).

After the Education Act of 1996, the revised National Curriculum of 2000 contains twelve subjects, which contain English and creative writing (which was historically within the language subject curriculum) (Moon, 2001). Indeed, creative writing education is embedded within the language subject in the curriculum and is not seen as arts education worldwide. During teaching and learning, creative writing is also mainly taught in functional ways rather than creative ways (Winston, 2011).

However, from the democratic, aesthetic and motivative perspectives, it is time to rethink creative writing as an art form, one which can play a significant role in helping students express their voices freely and generate creativity. Just as Dawson (2005) says, “The educational goal of Creative Writing in schools, however, was not to create a nation of literary geniuses, but a nation of children whose creative spirit had been released as a means of assisting their personal growth, via self-expression” (p.15).

Creative Writing - an Art Form

Defining Art

To explore the relationship between creative writing and art, it is important to define these two concepts. The question “What is art?” can generate many controversial answers. Warburton (2003) lists several major philosophical attempts to answer the art question in the twentieth century. The author will draw on five of the answers Warburton introduces in his book.

Warburton (2003) begins with Clive Bell’s formalist account of art, which argues that all art of all ages has a common denominator-significant form. Bell (1915) uses a technical term called “aesthetic emotion”, which is special to our appreciation of art, is sometimes aroused by natural objects and is derived from its primary meaning somehow. Warburton (2003) further explains that, for Bell, the beauty we feel and realise when we look at natural beauty such as a flower or a butterfly’s wing is not the same kind as the significant form of art work. Bell believes that the only common quality that all works of arts share is the significant form:

There must be one quality without which a work of art cannot exist possessing which, in the least degree, no work is altogether worthless. What is this quality? What quality is shared by all objects that provoke our aesthetic emotions? Only one answer seems possible-significant form. In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. (Bell, 1915, pp. 7-8).

Warburton (2003) introduces another theory by R.G. Collingwood, the Oxford philosopher, who argued that a peculiar form of emotional expression is the common core quality of art work. Collingwood (1958) is strongly against the technical theory which takes art as another kind of craft. In his opinion, art is

the imaginative expression of emotion and art provides an imaginative tactile experience for viewers. Based on such perspectives, Collingwood even believes that a work of art need not exist as a particular form of material and can exist purely in the artist's mind:

A work of art need not be what we should call a real thing. It may be what we call an imaginary thing. A disturbance, or a nuisance, or a navy, or the like, is not created at all until it is created as a thing having its place in the real world. But a work of art may be completely created when it has been created as a thing whose only place is in the artist's mind. (Collingwood, 1958, p. 130)

Alongside the ideas of significant form and emotional expression, Alfred Lessing (1965) claims that art should be original. In his view, the work of artists is not merely producing works of beauty, but to produce *original* works of beauty, unknown and unexplored realms of beauty.

In the twentieth-century, Institutional Theory was developed as an answer to the mystery of art. Institutional Theory pays attention not to the look of a work of art, but rather to its social context. Dickie (1974), a representative of this theory, writes:

A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon in the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld). (Dickie, 1974, p. 34)

When you are confused with so many different definitions of art, Wittgenstein (1963) suggests, in his *Philosophical Investigations*, that there is no common feature shared by all things that are under one concept. Wittgenstein (1963) gives an example of the word “game”, for which we will not be able to find a single defining common denominator that all games share. Similarly, there is no single clear common essence shared by all works of art, so no simple definition is possible. Likewise, Tony Godfrey has pointed out:

Art is a concept: it does not exist as a precisely definable physical type of thing, as elephants or chairs do. Since it became self-conscious, aware that it was a special category, art has often played with this ‘conceptual’ status. (Godfrey, 1998, p. 19)

At the end of the book, Warburton (2003) points out his own hypothesis that “art” is indefinable on the grounds that this is the most plausible position given the evidence. From all these theories, the author comes to her own view that while art cannot have a clear definition, it has some key elements: to help decide difficult cases and to explain retrospectively why what has been called art is art and to tell us which objects in the world are likely to repay specific kinds of close attention. These elements, it may be argued, are *significant form, expression of emotion, originality and creativity*. We cannot find a definitive sentence to decide what is art, but it is possible to define art by these key elements, which are also the most common words pointed out in many theories before. If a piece of work has all or some of the key elements, we can define it a work or partly a work of art. Then, in the next part, we will explore the definition of creative writing and find out how it could be seen as an art form.

Defining Creative Writing

Before answering the question “What is creative writing?”, it is necessary to find another definition: “What is creativity?” Unfortunately, the concept of creativity is again widely recognised as complex

and challenging and is a term which is often abused and misused by the government, media and policy makers (Prentice, 2000).

Cropley (2001) believes one of the most important things about creativity is that it should lead to worthwhile results. Pateman (1991) describes creativity as rule-breaking and rule-making: “Creativity is then much more a matter of sniffing out and exploiting an area of ill definition and taking the initiative in making up the rules as one goes along” (p. 62). Pateman (1991) also lists two other ways of thinking about creativity: one may think of creativity as the central element in problem-solving so artists are just like problem-solvers; another will define creativity as the exercise of imagination. As problem-solving, Craft (2000) also claims the process of “possibility thinking” is the core of creativity and highlights the role of problem-solving in this thinking process. Taking creativity as the exercise of imagination, creativity and imagination have had strong links to each other since they were born. As Dawson (2005) says in his *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*, “Creativity is the productive imagination fully secularized and divested of any ambivalent connotations” (p. 17).

Worthwhile results, rule-breaking and rule-making, problem-solving or imagination? In Paul Dawson’s definition of creativity, these key concepts are all contained:

Creativity, on the other hand, designates the ability to create; to produce something new and original, to provide innovative changes to anything which is routine or mechanistic. Its products are the unique expression of each individual. (Dawson, 2005, p. 22)

In his definition, we find creating or producing something new and original can be seen as the worthwhile results and capacity of imagination; innovative changes to anything which is routine or mechanistic can be judged as ability of problem solving and rule-making. Besides, what is noticeable in his definition is the word “unique”, which is also highlighted in Marshall’s definition of creativity and creative writing:

Creativity is the ability to create one’s own symbols of experience: creative writing is the use of written language to conceptualize, explore and record experience in such a way as to create a unique symbolization of it. (Marshall, 1974, p. 10)

Marshall (1974) claims that “unique” means the work that is “creative” should be able to communicate some essential quality of the experience. Marshall (1974) explains further that “creativity” lies both in conceiving and executing the symbol in which it explains its meaning either by measuring up well to already set standards, or by building new standards.

From Marshall’s point of view, the medium of creative writing is the written language and the content is the experience of somebody and the result is a unique symbolisation. Based on this definition, Marshall (1974) believes if a child assimilates experience, scrambles it and reconstitutes it in written language that measures up to accepted standards, his work can surely be termed “creative”. In agreeing with Marshall’s perspective, Dawson (2005) states that “creative writing does not need to refer specifically to ‘literary’ works, but can refer to any writing which is ‘creative’, i.e. original, unconventional, expressive, etc.” (p. 91), just as the teacher Chapple (1977) defines creative writing as “written expression in which children put down their own ideas, thoughts, feelings and impressions in their own words” (p. 1). He highlights that this written work should not be imitative but original, and such expression is sincere and generated by the unique personality of the child.

As analysed above, what are the key elements that creative writing contains? The answer is: *creativity, unique symbolisation, personal expression and originality*. These key terms highly echo those of “art”. Self-expression, originality and creativity are central to both creative writing and art. Unique symbolisation means creative writing should have *a significant form* to record the personal experience and convey self-expression, which is also an important element of art. Based on such analysis, it is not difficult to conclude that creative writing is an or at least part of an “Art Form”.

Creative Writing Education

Brief Introduction of Creative Writing History

In order to understand the development of creative writing education, it is first necessary to know the historical development of “creative writing”.

The notion of man as a creative being is a product of Renaissance humanism, originating from Italy (Dawson, 2005). Plato and Aristotle gave the name “imitation” to “creation” and poetry was regarded as “creation” in the Renaissance (Williams, 1983, p. 11). Judging the poet as creator was introduced to Elizabethan England in *An Apology for Poetry* by Sir Philip Sidney, who claims that creation is the gift from God, which is “God’s creative power” (Sidney & Shepherd, 1973). The word “creative” became established in general usage by the mid-eighteenth century (Dawson, 2005). At that time, it was the concept of man’s creative power which stimulated discovery about original talents, as against imitative genius, that began to appear (Dawson, 2005). Throughout the eighteenth century “the creative power” was linked to natural ability from God, which later introduced to the key debate of creative writing: can writing be taught and should it be taught?

The dominating theory of original genius believes that only certain gifted people can possess the creative power which is necessary for the production of great poetry such as Coleridge (Dawson, 2005). However, in America, an oration “The American Scholar” delivered by Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1837 claimed that the true scholar will not be the bookworm but a person who can be inspired by books with an active soul (Dawson, 2005). Although Emerson was the first to use the term “creative writing”, his point drew on creative reading and only defined creative writing as a practice (Dawson, 2005).

In *The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing* Morley (2007) claims, “The modern version of the discipline of creative writing begins in 1940 with the foundation of the Iowa Writer’s Workshop, although there were precursors, including George Baker’s ‘47 Workshop’ at Harvard from 1906 to 1925” (p. 23). From his point of view, Aristotle and Plato can be seen as the first creative writing teachers (Morley, 2007).

Similarly, with the historical perspective, Dawson (2005) links the development of creative writing tightly to the history of modern English Studies. He demonstrates three important turning points in the history of English Studies which influence the development of creative writing education. The first is the debate between criticism and scholarship in American universities in the early twentieth century, which tries to replace historical and philological research on departments of English with a literary criticism that evaluated literature in terms of its aesthetic qualities. The second is the rise of “Theory” which challenges

the authority of “practical criticism” in English Studies and reconstructs literature as a privileged aesthetic category. The third change is caused by “culture wars” that generate a sense of crisis in universities, such as adaptation of research and teaching to vocational outcomes and job markets. With this history of crisis, Myers (2006) in *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing since 1880* describes creative writing in the 1970s as an “elephant machine” because of its “professionalization”, which becomes a production line to produce teaching programs and teachers rather than writers.

Creative Writing Education

From the analysis above we can recognise that scholars often describe creative writing as a discipline for English learning and teacher training, but where is creative writing in primary schools, secondary schools, high schools or higher education? The answer is also within the subject of English.

In order to find creative writing in the curriculum in the UK, an introduction to the National Curriculum is necessary. In *A Guide to the National Curriculum*, Moon (2001) says, “The National Curriculum was first introduced in 1988. It is the public and legal statement about the curriculum that every child should study between the ages of five and sixteen” (p. 41). A National Curriculum now exists in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Scotland has different arrangements. After the Education Act of 1996, the revised National Curriculum of 2000 contains twelve subjects: English, Mathematics, Science, Design and Technology, Information and communication, History, Geography, Modern foreign languages, Art and design, Music, Physical education and Citizenship. Among these subjects, English, Mathematics and Science are the *core subjects*, while others are *non-core foundation subjects* (Moon, 2001).

In the National Curriculum, creative writing belongs to English Studies, not Art. Art and design “includes a craft element and, therefore, involves the use of a range of processes and materials.” (Moon, 2001, p. 14) What should be noted is that this particular context of “Art” only represents visual art. In Art classes, students may learn painting, design or photography, but no creative writing. In contrast, another art form, Music, “has always played an important part in the life of schools” (Moon, 2001, p. 15) and is highlighted as a foundation subject in the curriculum. Meanwhile, in higher education, those who work actively in Creative Writing Studies have had to operate most often within the institutional structures of more established subfields of English studies (Mayers, 2016). This is not the only case in the world. Indeed, creative writing education is bedded within the language subject in the curriculum and is not seen as arts education worldwide. Indeed, the Creative writing’s lack of recognisable academic research is also a big problem (Hergenrader, 2016). The existing research is also mainly focused on how to teach creative writing to improve language learning rather than seeing it as an art form.

In *Creative Writing*, Marshall (1974) indicates three categories of writing study: handwriting, composition and English. He describes a typical lesson of composition: “The teacher showed the children an object of some sort, and from the entire class, ranged in their rows of desks before her, she elicited ‘facts’ about the object which could then be written down.” (Marshall, 1974, p. 16) Only recording observable but uninteresting facts, such writing classes, in which students compose their own sentences about the selected topic, has very little use to students. In China, the author has experienced so many such writing lessons from primary school: the teacher not only points out the words and sentences that should be used, but also makes an outline on the blackboard to show the “right” order of these sentences. Besides, in Marshall’s book, “there was English, when time was spent in exercises (usually from an out-dated textbook), which were meant to ensure that such

compositions as the children did produce were couched in formal, grammatical language and therefore ‘acceptable’ (as well as assessable in a marks system)” (Marshall, 1974, p. 17).

Indeed, composition as a subject has been seen as a product of the scientific method (Dawson, 2005). For example, in many creative writing lessons in China, students are asked to read poetry and learn unfamiliar words, analyse the structure, learn the rhetoric, then write poems with selected titles to use the words and rhetorical strategy they have learnt before. It is more like a science class; teachers draw attention to the technical skills in writing rather than explore the students’ emotion and creativity. Similarly, Andrew Levy (1993) argues that composition was motivated by “a belief that the technical aspects of English composition could be taught with the same rigor and discipline as chemistry or mathematics” (p. 82). From both theory and practice, although students could learn more words to express themselves even through this way of teaching, creative writing is neglected by teachers and students to be seen as an art form rather than a purely functional way to improve language learning. However, it is important to rethink the significance of teaching creative writing as an art form in several aspects, which the author will explain in the next chapter.

Rethinking the Significance of Teaching Creative Writing as an Art Form

Democratic Factor: Creative Writing as a Unique Way for Self-Expression

In the first part, the author concludes that the key elements of art are *significant form, expression of emotion, originality and creativity*. In these elements, expression of emotion plays an important role in art’s effects, which is also the key aim of creative writing.

In the epic poem, *The Prelude*, Wordsworth (1995) mentions an “infant sensibility” which first begins in the infant but is gradually lost to most adults. Just as the protagonist said in the fairy tale *The Little Prince*, “Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them. (Saint-Exupéry & Woods, 1943, p. 14) This prompts the question: how is it possible to retain this infant sensibility, to awaken the sense of childhood enthusiasm?

One answer is “Democratic self-expression”, which can be taken to mean expressing what you want freely in your unique way (Winston, 2011). “Democratic” in this context represents not the political dimension but free expression without limitations. When you are trying to express yourself freely, you will reconstruct the outer world in your own way and give it your unique meaning, which helps you become sensible to the environment and retain the infant sensibility to some extent (Dewey, 2005).

In addition, Winston (2011) claims democratic self-expression can not only help us remain sensible to the outer world but also develop self-consciousness in a person’s growth process, especially in adolescence. “Adolescence is a time of acute self-consciousness, when young people need to declare their own autonomy at the same time as they define who or what groups they belong to” (Winston, 2011, p. 63). Then how can children be helped to express themselves democratically? Certainly, creative writing can be a significant way to help self-expression. As Mearns (1925) explains, literature is simply unique self-expression.

From my own experience, during my childhood, I was fond of writing because it retained my original sensibility to this world and was a good way for me to express myself, just like talking to my soul. To some extent, this habit also helped me to find my personal identity and had positive effects on my mental growth. As a link between the outer and inner world, creative writing has a unique position in such democratic self-expression and it can also generate more creativity. Just as Dawson (2005) introduces Coleridge's view that "creative writing is the democratization of original genius which enables the child to develop their creative potential" (p. 25).

Therefore, writing is not only a communication method for practical use; it is also an expression of instinctive insight which can set free the voices of children. Then how can creative writing be taught to better complete its role in self-expression? From Mearn's view, students should not be given assigned themes and methods of writing in creative writing lessons, but be given freedom for expression to speak out in their unique ways (Mearn, 1929). No matter how rational and practically applicable Mearn's suggestion may be, creative writing should be given greater attention for its unique opportunity in allowing self-expression.

Aesthetic Factor: Beauty and Creative Writing

In *Beauty and Education*, Winston (2011) claims that whether in the detail of curriculum documentation, national strategy papers or educational research reports, beauty is sleeping with few educationalists trying to awaken her, and it is time to rethink the role of beauty in education.

To explain beauty as an educational experience, Winston (2011) begins by introducing the "moment of epiphany", defined by Armstrong as one of revelation in which we suddenly gain a great insight into ourselves and the world. For example, Joanne Kathleen Rowling, who wrote the famous *Harry Potter* series, got the idea in "a moment of epiphany". In 1990, while she was on a four-hour delayed train trip from Manchester to London, the idea for a story of a young boy attending a school of wizardry came fully formed into her mind. She told *The Boston Globe* that "I really don't know where the idea came from. It started with Harry, and then all these characters and situations came flooding into my head" (Rowling, 2012).

However, no matter whether it sounds like fortune or miracle, the moment of epiphany cannot happen without some form of cognitive process. In the book *Experience and Its Modes*, Michael Oakeshott (1933) explains the relationship between beauty and knowledge. He points out that any experience of beauty we encounter is not a simple stimulus response to the environment but it involves a thinking process informed by prior knowledge and cognitive reflection. This leads to an opinion that "teachers can learn from beauty by using aesthetic ideas to shape their pedagogy" (Dewey, 2005, p. 19). In fact, teachers cannot plan such epiphanies, but they can prepare to make them more likely to happen. Just like the story by Rowling, beauty experience takes an important role in generating writing inspiration and creativity. Many writers have suddenly got ideas when encountering beauty, which illustrates the special relationship between writing and beauty. Therefore, in creative writing education, experience of beauty could be given more attention to help students' writing; however, the picture now is disappointing.

As Winston (2001) says, "unlike beauty, which involves a deep emotional connection between learning and what they are learning, skills-based curricula are founded upon an absolute split between

the one and the other” (p. 11). Unfortunately, English composition, which was also the first name of Creative Writing, is a subject that has been seen as a product of scientific method. Composition was motivated by a belief that the technical aspects of English composition could be taught with the same rigor and discipline as chemistry or mathematics (Levy, 1993).

To rethink this phenomenon, it recalls the debate of whether art is a kind of craft. Collingwood (1958) states that although works of art may involve craft, art is not to be identified with craft. This is because art is not just a matter of technique; it is not something that can be taught as a skill can be taught: “a technician is made, but an artist is born” (Collingwood, 1958, p. 17). From this point of view, education of creative writing, as an art form, should not be centred on skill-based learning but something more like aesthetic learning, with the possibility to help students experience beauty and stimulate their inspiration and creativity. Instead of the technical aims, stated objectives and emphasis on generic skills, education is envisioned as something of a conversation between the learner of the present and the achievements of the past (Winston, 2011). Beauty can convey the past to the present and creative writing education can build the link between past writers and present readers. Based on aesthetic experience, students will find the true beauty of creative writing and may encounter more “moments of epiphany”.

Motivation Factor: Creative Writing and Language Learning

In 1976, research by Marton (1976) showed two different cognitive learning styles by students: one is “deep-level processing” aimed at understanding the meaning of what they study; the other one is “surface-level processing”, which focuses on the reproduction of the contents from lectures or textbooks. What is worth paying attention to is that research has illustrated that it is students whose intrinsic motivation impels them into “deep” and holistic strategies for learning who actually do best in their final exams (Fransson, 1977).

Indeed, motivation plays a vital role in education. Many people have such experience that when you are strongly interested in something, you will find infinite energy and enthusiasm to explore the relevant knowledge and skills. Therefore, the key aim of education relies not on teaching knowledge or techniques, but on encouraging students to find their unique gifts and learn from their intrinsic interests (Dewey, 2005). Only students who desire to learn can entirely immerse themselves in learning and make valuable results.

To focus on creative writing education, which as we have seen is within the language learning curriculum, the question is whether creative writing can help generate motivation in language learning and how to generate such motivation. To answer this question, it also relates to the two key factors we have discussed before: democratic factor and aesthetic factor. They both generate the motivation of learning.

In relation to the “democratic” factor, in the book *Writing Voices* (Cremin & Myhill, 2012), the authors introduce several examples of research that show young people’s attitudes to writing lessons. One of these has suggested that the high profile ascribed to writing and the incessant focus on tests and targets has generated disaffection and lack of interest in writing (Hilton, 2001; Wyse et al., 2007). In another piece of research, young writers are less keen on writing when tasks are entirely set and framed by their teachers and the curriculum (Grainger et al., 2005; Myhill, 2005). In contrast, many students expressed

satisfaction in writing about their own experience and unique emotions without limitation being imposed by teachers:

I love my beginning-when I did the opening paragraph, I thought: 'I like that.' I just liked it; it brought tears to my eyes- it took me back in time. And I could immediately hear my Mother and Brain's mother yelling at us, 'Get out of the gutter!'- Because we were always in the gutter. So that's where it starts – in the gutter. (Cremin & Myhill, 2012, p. 86)

From the example, we can see that as an art form to express emotion, if creative writing can be given more space and time, it will generate more interests and motivation in learning writing. Therefore, with the democratic consideration, creative writing, a way for self-expression, should be given sufficient freedom. As Dyson (1997) observes, “for children, as for adults, freedom is a verb, a becoming; it is experienced as an expanded sense of agency, of possibility for choice and action” (p. 82). As teachers have a responsibility to nurture students' autonomy in learning, they need to offer more freedom alongside space, time and form for discovery and innovation (Dewey, 2005). In creative writing classes, teachers need to foster the sense of ownership and independence of students. Given more choices, students will feel the authority of their writing and be more autonomous to take part in the learning process, which is a positive circle for learning motivation.

From the perspective of the aesthetic factor, taking creative writing education as an aesthetic education can not only stimulate students' inspiration in creative writing learning, but also can generate motivation for language learning. As an art form, the medium of creative writing is language (Ross, 1986). Indeed, in many people's views, language is fundamentally seen as a vehicle of communication and may therefore be linked to functional learning. As Abbs (1989) argues, English has remained on the very edge of the arts debate, reluctant to become involved, reluctant to be, in any way, implicated.

However, language contains beauty. In the book *The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing*, language is described as a kind of “music”. “Reading is also a form of listening; and the tunes of language trigger new writing.” (Morley, 2007, p. 46) To see language as music, is to show the inside beauty of language. Another typical example of beauty in language is the work of Shakespeare. “As the dictionary tells us, about 2000 new words and phrases were invented by William Shakespeare. Shakespeare's poetry showed the world that English was a rich vibrant language with limitless expressive and emotional power.” (*The History of English in 10 Minutes*, 2012)

We can imagine that, if students can experience the beauty of language in creative writing classes, it will stimulate them to learn language from intrinsic interest and motivation. As autonomous learning, beauty generates motivation to learn skills and in turn skills that help students to understand the beauty more deeply. As Winston writes,

The knowledge I gained from beauty framed the skills I learned as I learned them and indeed provided the impetus for learning them in the first place. And this, in turn, was deeply related to what I liked, who I felt I was and who I wanted to be. (Winston, 2011, p. 35)

Thus, creative writing can be a new way of teaching English as an aesthetic education. It should have a more important role in promoting language learning. The aesthetic experience of art is powerful which makes you immerse yourself in another art world and even lose yourself in moments. Such moments are especially valuable for an individual, which will generate the inner motivation to

explore the secrets of the whole forests. Just as Hector comments at the end of the scene in the movie “The History Boys”:

The best moment in reading are when you come across something—a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things—which you had thought special and particular to you. Now here it is, set down by someone else, a person you have never met someone who is even long dead. And it is as if a hand had come out and taken yours. (Winston, 2011, p. 59)

Similarly, the best moment in writing is when you come across something, which you had not thought special or valuable to readers, people, for example, you have never met. And it is as if a hand had gone out and taken theirs. What teachers should do in creative writing education is to make such moments more likely to happen. In turn this may help students to find the beauty of language and expect to discover more autonomously.

Conclusion

Creative writing is an art form as it contains the same key elements of art: *significant form, expression of emotion, originality and creativity*. However, current creative writing education is within the subject of language learning in curriculum, which leads to an inconsistent educational system and functional teaching strategy. It is not only neglected behind the language curriculum, but also neglected as an “Art Form”.

To rethink teaching creative writing as an art form, the essay draws on three perspectives. From perspective of democracy, creative writing is a significant way of democratic self-expression, which can not only help remain infant sensibility to the outer world but also develop self-consciousness in a person’s growth process. From view of aesthetics, beauty experience takes an important role in generating writing inspiration and creativity, which means creative writing education should be more based on beauty education than be centralised on the skill-based learning. With consideration of motivation factor, creative writing can help students generate motivation in language learning by giving them more space and time for self-expression and helping them experience the beauty of language.

Admittedly, it is challenging that teachers may feel difficult to help students express themselves freely, for reasons like some teachers don’t want to lose authority over the class and the results of aesthetic education are often not easy to assess. Creative writing education has a long way to go, but it is worthwhile to rethink creative writing as an art form to help democratic self-expression and generate motivation in language learning.

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