

Ableism and Neurodivergence in Creative Writing

Call for Contributions

Editors:

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Felicia Rose Chavez's release of *The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop: How to Decolonize the Creative Classroom* in 2021 was a watershed moment for diversity studies within the field of creative writing. Its large-scale impact had much to do with not only its skillfully written, inclusive, and hands-on content but also the fact that no book-length work had addressed this vital topic previously. While Chavez's work is an excellent step toward pushing the field into a new dawn, more work needs to be done to shed light on varying marginalized groups within the field of creative writing.

It's currently estimated that 15-20% of the world's population is neurodivergent. We can likely expect that a similar percentage (if not an even higher percentage) of writers are neurodivergent. This does not include writers who face other kinds of physical disabilities and chronic illnesses. If you pool these groups together, they make up a significant portion of the writing population. However, the field of creative writing, which includes educational and publishing groups and institutions, prefers and is narrowly geared toward the neurotypical.

For many of us, the first writing advice we were given was that *writers write every day, writers read every day, writers are naturally gifted writers, readers, and speakers, and writers publish often*. These beliefs are commonly and freely touted within writing communities as absolutisms, and if they do not or cannot apply to you, you're considered to be lazy, underachieving, untalented, and/or irrelevant. While variations on these beliefs can be helpful in certain contexts, they are essentially ableist, and they are harmful and exclusionary to writers at all levels. After all, not all writers are physically able to read, write, and publish on quick and arbitrary timelines.

Despite existing within a field that marginalizes them, writers with chronic illnesses and disabilities publish world class poetry, prose, and drama that moves readers, wins awards, and is released from top publishers around the world. However, they face particular difficulties getting to these achievements, difficulties which often go unnoticed, unmentioned, and underappreciated. Visibility and insight are needed to create more inclusive writing beliefs, practices, and opportunities around the world.

To this end, we are seeking critical/researched-based essays, first person CNF/narrative nonfiction essays, or essays that combine both that address a broad range of topics regarding ableism, disabilities, chronic illnesses, and neurodivergence within various creative writing domains. We are also keen to publish lesson plans and resource lists. This list is not exhaustive, but we invite contributions on the following topics:

- **Ableism & Neurodivergence in Writing Beliefs & Practices**
 - *Experiences with exclusionary writing beliefs, attitudes, practices*
 - *Early experiences with writing, reading, and neurodivergence/disability*
 - *Advice on using technology to aid writers with disabilities*
 - *Approaches to navigating the field of writing for those with disabilities*

- *Approaches to/experiences with the language, terminology, and/or rhetoric of disability/illness as it applies to writers.*
- **Ableism & Neurodivergence in Creative Writing Workshops**
 - *Experiences with exclusionary writing beliefs, attitudes, practices within the classroom/workshop*
 - *Approaches to teaching CW to students with neurodivergence/chronic illness/disabilities*
 - *Teaching methods that incorporate technology to better serve writers with disabilities*
- **Ableism & Neurodivergence in Creative Writing Higher Education**
 - *Experiences with exclusionary writing beliefs, attitudes, practices within higher education (outside the classroom)*
 - *Areas for improvement within English and CW departments (undergrad and grad)*
- **Ableism & Neurodivergence in Publishing**
 - *Experiences with exclusionary writing beliefs, attitudes, practices within the field of CW publishing*
 - *Ways that publishing entities could be kinder/more inclusive*
 - *Ways that publishing entities could incorporate technology to better serve readers and writers*
 - *Approaches to navigating the field of publishing for those with neurodivergence*

Please send 250-300-word abstracts and brief bios to Dr. Christie Collins (ccc111@msstate.edu) by August 7, 2023. Contributors will be notified within a month and completed essays of 3,000-5,000 words will be due by December 1, 2023. We invite proposals first and foremost from writers who are neurodiverse/neurodivergent and/or writers with lived experience of writing/publishing with a disability/chronic illness. However, we will also accept proposals from professionals in the fields of teaching and publishing who have ample experience working with marginalized writers in this vein. Bloomsbury is keenly interested in publishing this collection.

Please note:

- Critical essays should have some amount of personal experience/anecdotes interwoven within the work. Similarly, first person CNF/narrative nonfiction essays should “look outward,” offering perspective and takeaways for readers.
- For this collection, we will be focusing on chronic illness, physical disabilities, and neurodivergence. We are defining neurodivergence as a term that applies to conditions such as autism, dyslexia, dyscalculia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), though we welcome broadening our understanding of the term. Additionally, we are interested in including experiences of those with what Rosqvist calls “neurominority” conditions such as “bipolar and hearing voices.”
- We encourage discussion of/research on the terms “neurodiverse/neurodiversity” and “neurodivergent/neurodivergence,” and we invite writers to choose which term they prefer as it applies to their identities/lived experiences.
- We are happy to look at previously published work on this topic as a possible reprint.