Throughout composition classes, students are taught how the program would like them to write, rather than truly writing. Composition classes do not accept expressionism anymore nor the idea of imitating writers to learn how to write. Within my own experience, I learned how to improve my own style through the process of imitation. My own creative writing classes would not allow any writing to take place until a clip from a movie was shown or work from another writer was first read. Furthermore, no two writers were read or viewed more than once. After a piece was read aloud, we as a class would discuss the piece and analyze it before any writing could take place. Why is this process not used in all composition level classes? English composition is the starting line for writers; however, the way writing is taught is more of a continuation of high school rather than teaching writers new skills. Reading should be strongly encouraged in composition classes as students still develop their own style as multiple writers are being read. Writers are able to experience and understand concepts such as organization or dialogue after reading from another writer whether they conscious or unconsciously go about the process of imitation. English composition is where students learn how to write; however, very little to no exercises to practice imitation take place. Instead, writers are expected to go about the same five-paragraph styled papers.

However, composition is where they should first be taught to become writers, as all writing is imitation. In composition level classrooms, students should learn about imitation, plagiarism and the writing process. The reason for this being that imitation differs from genre and style as imitation helps shape and is in turn shaped by both of these. It is the repeated imitation of stories that then creates genre but it is genre that then separates different imitations which in turn shapes style. Writing is completely unique. No two stories can be called the same, there are always ways of differentiating between the two, however, this differs from plagiarism. Imitation is not plagiarism as plagiarism is merely copying a piece of writing rather than actually making an effort to imitate the writer. When a writer goes through the process of imitation, they are able to pick up new styles that may not have been previously known or understood. Learning how to imitate is key for writers, as it will help them branch out and grow as their skill is being improved and shaped.

**Deconstruction in Writing**

Writing is both imitation and completely unique and this fact can be proven through Derrida's deconstruction as well as through well known stories like *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* and *Twilight.*  *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* covers the idea that Romeo and Juliet are forbidden from loving one another due to their families being at constant war with one another. If one were to deconstruct *Twilight* and look beyond it simply being a forbidden love story, they would see how it is able to imitate *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* while keeping its own unique qualities. *Twilight* is about a young mortal woman who falls in love with a vampire which is then forbidden by everyone around them. The concept of two individuals being in love though their family, whether it be by blood or simply those close enough to be considered so, being against it is completely imitated. However, there are still unique qualities as one is about two mortals in 14th century Italy while the latter takes place in Washington during the 21st century. From that alone there will be stark differences with customs and technology that effect the overall story. Furthermore, one deals simply with a forbidden relationship between humans while the other is the taboo of a human being in love with a supernatural being which arguably makes *Twilight* unique from *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* in and of itself. All stories imitate one another because writers are imitating one another while writing; however, all of these stories are still exclusively unique.

*Derrida's Deconstruction*

Through the concept of Derrida's deconstruction, one can see how writing is able to not only be imitation but still in and of itself unique. Deconstruction shows that when something is created, the pieces of it come from a multitude of places. Niall Lucy helps define many of Derrida's terms in *A Deconstruction Dictionary* and explains that in order to understand deconstruction, it is just as important to understand origin and to know that everything must come before something, a wildly accepted fact that is just as true in writing (Lucy13). This then means that every story has a story that came before it, just like *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* comes before *Twilight.* Stocker also defines deconstruction as not only a theory that "Derrida applies, but a movement within philosophy within the consciousness that Phenomenological philosophy is trying to describe....Deconstruction [is] a material force" (Stocker 177). The reason for this is because deconstruction takes these original products, puts them together and forms something brand new. Once something new is created, it too will fall into the ever growing process of deconstruction. In *A Conversation with Derrida,* editor John D. Caputo highlights that "deconstruction is the relentless pursuit of *the* impossible, which means, of things possibility is sustained by their impossibility, of things which, instead of being wiped out by their impossibility, are actually nourished and fed by it" (Caputo 32). Derrida's deconstruction argues that not only writing but everything is constantly being built only to then be destroyed which is then rebuilt from the rubble like a phoenix rising from the ashes.   
 One well known example of this that goes beyond common literature is America's Declaration of Independence. It has been argued that while Thomas Jefferson wrote it, he copied John Locke, this however is incorrect. Philip F. Detweiler explains that if we were to strip the Declaration down, we would actually see that Jefferson had been inspired by a variety of writers and philosophers, one of them being Locke (Detweiler 569). Garry Wills shows that Jefferson was influenced by Aristotle, Cieeto, Locke, Sidney and more beyond that thus meaning he did not only mimic John Locke (Wills 1). It is deconstruction that allows this, as Jefferson had to take the writing of all of these writers and philosophers while formulating his own piece. These pieces of literature gave him ideas, he took bits from all of them and placed them into the Declaration of Independence, thus making it a piece of imitation but completely unique. Just like deconstruction can be applied to Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, it can be applied to *The Tragedy Romeo and Juliet* and *Twilight* to prove that not only does the latter imitate its predecessor but both are also completely unique.

**All Writing is Imitation**

Imitation is a process that is not by any means exclusive to writing, it takes place everywhere in life as everything humans do is imitating something or someone else. Infants imitate their parents when learning how to speak but also when playing games of sorts that require imagination such as house where they try acting like adults. Similarly, a new writer may start off by writing fan-fiction, thus going about imitating someone else. Writer Edward P. J. Corbett explains that Aristotle himself stated that "man is the most imitative of all creatures, that he learns at first by imitation, and that he takes a natural delight in the contemplation of works of imitation" (Corbett 243).  Writing is no exception to this fact.  Students use to learn how to write through imitating the pieces of already well-known authors.  There have been others to encourage imitation as well, as the practice is used to improve one's own writing. When consciously imitating, "you emulate by writing a piece in your own words, but at the same time making a conscious effort to write in the style of the author you have been studying" ("Creative"). Through this process, a student can learn how to write as they see the style, organization, description use and many other factors used by well-established writers.  Many writers have stated that the reason they read is to get ideas from their fellow writers, thus meaning they are unintentionally, or intentionally, imitating these writers.  It is key for one to fully understand the way genre and imitation work together as well as where the line between plagiarism and imitation is drawn.

*Genre Allows Imitation*

Genre does not work against imitation, rather it works for it and even encourages it. It is genre that places similar imitations into different categories, thus making it easier for readers to find similar books. Furthermore, writers Caroline Eisner and Martha Vicnus also explain that  "imitation, indeed, is the backbone of writing courses in many disciplines, enabling students to master the distinctive and defining terms and style of their specialty" (Einser 4).  Eisner and Vicnus are explaining that imitation is a key to writing as it helps the writer to learn style and refine skills.  In addition to that, "if we want to understand imitation's inventive power- that [it is] genre-differentiated point of transformation where imitation becomes [an] invention" (Bawarshi 80). This then means that genre is helping aid imitation which aids one's own writing abilities. Donna Gorrella adds to this argument when maintaining that "imitation can assist [the writer] in learning to shape their sentences, develop their paragraphs, express their own voices, and perform many of the complicated tasks that the writing process involves" (Gorrella 54). It is imitation that allows a writer to learn writing as well as all of the style requirements put into writing. Imitation however, is different than genre as genre is categorizing these imitations. Einser argues that "genre combines forms of originality, imitation and plagiarism and suggest that perhaps all writing partakes of this mix" (Einser 5). Genre works aside imitation, not against it as it allows imitations to be separated from one another. A romance writer could still imitate the writing of a science-fiction writer; however, these are still considered to be two very different genres. Furthermore, Amy J. Devitt explains that "genres are actions embedded in shifting social contexts, they remain dynamic, not static" (Devitt 83). One reason that genres are always changing could be due to writing being the ever going process of imitation as well as the role of deconstruction as everything is being built only to be torn down. Hart-Davirson maintains that within genres there is always a common structure (Hart-Davirson 39). This then means that genre is working alongside imitation as Einser states, though it constantly changes as Devitt maintains but is still holding its basic structure just as Hart-Davirson argues. It is because of this that imitation and genre are working together rather than against one another and that genre only proves that writing is indeed imitation.

*Plagiarism is Not Imitation*

There is a very fine line between what is imitation and what is plagiarism.  Writer Robert Brooke best explains this when saying that "it is by imitating another *person,*and not a text or a process.  Writers learn to write by imitating other writers, by trying to act like writers they respect" (Brooke 23).  This is why we consider imitation to be the best form of flattery, we imitate those we respect and wish to be like. Plagiarism is copying a text rather than the actual writer. Bill Marsh states that plagiarism is the "creative failure to produce an original work- through either overt theft or the inability to warrant claims to textual transformation" (Marsh 33). When one goes though with plagiarism, there is no imitation as it is nothing more than copying another's work, whether it be directly or through paraphrasing without citations. Furthermore, the stealing of "intellectual property claims, literary conventions and writing pedagogues is still plagiarism as there is an ethical code around theses (Marsh 34). Furthermore, "imitation is not plagiarism...originals and copies exist side by side quite reputable in our world" (Gorrell 55).  This is shown through countless things in life, fashion, music, cars, appliances, everything is imitation though it is still original.  Furthermore, "originals exist to be imitated" (Gorrell 55).  Nearly everything imitates something as there are similarities between most everything. However, we do not call everything a copy of something else unless of course it truly is a copy.  
 A real world example of plagiarism taking place would be when Melania Trump allegedly copied the convention speech of Michelle Obama. BBC news outlines parts of both speeches, showing Obama said, ""And Barack and I were raised with so many of the same values: that you work hard for what you want in life; that your word is your bond and you do what you say you're going to do; that you treat people with dignity and respect, even if you don't know them, and even if you don't agree with them"" ("US"). While Trump said, ""My parents impressed on me the values that you work hard for what you want in life; that your word is your bond and you do what you say and keep your promise; that you treat people with respect"" ("US"). While Melania did not directly copy Michelle, she still did copy her ideas as this is more like paraphrasing then copying word for word. Had she tied the speeches of several first ladies together to form her own, it would a different story as she would have used their work to consciously create her own. However, she did not do this, thus technically making her speech plagiarism. She also could have started off by stating how her story was very similar to Michelle's then give her own personal reasons as to why. When doing this, it would be wise to ensure she did not copy Michelle's structure of speech. Again, plagiarism is not by any means imitation because through imitation one still makes their own work since we as humans are constantly imitating. The work produced is one's own because it was not a replication or copy of someone else's. Plagiarism is nothing for a writer to be proud of nor is it something applauded because it means stealing someone else's work.

*Imitation Within Writing*

Now that it has been shown that genre works aside imitation and that plagiarism is not imitation, what imitation truly is can be shown. Kevin Roozen argues that writers constantly imitate one another, every idea is intertwined; furthermore, "texts even rely upon a range of nonwritten texts. Readers and writers, for example, might draw upon visual images as they engage with a focal text. The child's reading of *Winnie the Pooh* might be informed by pictures or video images she has seen of the characters and scenes from the book" (45). Every story is related to one that came before and the line of stories before that because writers constantly imitate one another, especially when reading the work of others. Although all writers do imitate, those who go about it consciously are able to enhance their skill at a faster rate. Chard Ford shares his own experience, stating that imitation helped make him a better writer because "in reading we learn more about writing, such as symbol, point of view (first, third and omniscient. The important parts of the story" (Ford 57). The reason for this is because "reading is writing's nourishment...writers learn the craft of writing by reading the work of other writers" (Huddle 76-7). Writers who learn how to imitate, generally through reading are far more likely to be become better writers faster. Charles Bazerman argues that "if as teachers of writing we want to prepare our students to enter into the written interchanges of their chosen disciplines and the various discussions of personal and public interest, we must cultivate various techniques of absorbing, reformulating, commenting on, and using reading" (658). This then means that students are able to learn through reading other writers because they can then imitate these other writers. Writers are constantly influencing and therefore imitating one another.

Life itself influences a writer; however, all writers are imitating the writing of others, teachers, stories or peers, in order to improve their skill. Bringing back the example of *Twilight* imitating *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* can illustrate this. At first glance, one would likely either say the two are the same or completely different; however, a keen eye would say that *Twilight* actually imitates the latter. No part of *Twilight* actually directly copies *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* nor does it paraphrase it, it is simply a story of forbidden love. Countless other stories have imitated *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet,* some sharing *Twilight*'s supernatural themes; however, that does not make these stories the exact same. Stories such as *Twilight* are merely imitations of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* of which genre has placed into the same category*.* There was a "formal template" as Ford puts it, used in this imitation as is used in all imitations, but that does not make these two pieces the same, as all writing is still completely unique.

**All Writing is Unique**

The act of writing is a very imitative process, whether it is consciously or unconsciously performed. A writer is bound to get either the spark for their idea which is then molded into something brand new or their style from a variety of other writers. Writers are working with one another constantly thought their work. It is important to note however, that all stories are completely unique from one another, including fan-fiction. One reason for this is because writing moves on a spectrum (Mayers48). Tim Mayers discusses creative writing and its long history. The idea of being expressive with writing was key during the Romantic period as more were interested in interpreting the meaning of work over simply looking at the finished product (Mayers 48). This then means that the idea of being expressive was encouraged as uniqueness was beginning to gain more attention. The uniqueness of writing moves on a spectrum of sorts. On one end of the spectrum we have individual work such as a novel while at the other end there is plagiarism. Just like plagiarism is not imitation, it is also not unique as it is nothing more than copying the work rather than imitating the style as a way to learn. Individuals who consciously imitate the work of others would lie in the middle of this spectrum, as it is a conscious act. However, one who writes a novel for example holds a piece that is completely unique because ideas and pieces were pulled from a multitude of places. These ideas or concepts were then stripped down before being melted together to then form a whole new idea. This ties back to Derrida's idea of origin, everything has something that came before it which in turn can bring up the chicken-or-the-egg question as to what came first.   
 Although two stories can be similar because one imitated the other, they are both still unique. In the case of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* and *Twilight,* the latter came second. Prior to Shakespeare's tragedy of forbidden love, there were countless similar stories told across cultures. Genre then took these similar stories and imitations to place them in to differing categories. In addition, genres actually "frees creativity rather than stifling it" (Gorrell 54). Although there are ties between Stephenie Meyer's and Shakespeare's stories, both are completely unique from one another. If one chose to argue that they are the same, would that not also mean every forbidden love story is the same and therefore not unique? There is a very clear difference between the two, making both completely unique. They hold different characters, sub-plots and even points of view as one is a play while the other is a novel. Countless forbidden love stories exist beyond just these two. A few to name would be- *The Mortal Instruments series*, *Hush, Hush*, and *Fallen.* The three listed books however, do not copy *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* even though it is their "origin" story as Derrida may put it. All of these stories hold differences in then, hence how they can all be completely different books that are only related through the categories that they were placed in. Even though our writing is imitation, it is still completely unique.

**My Own Experience**

In doing this project, I had nothing I was able to imitate, making it very difficult. Without a piece to imitate, there was no template to follow or mix of other writers I could melt together. This in turn led to quite a bit of frustration and struggles at producing this document. I was not able to take a similar piece of writing to then deconstruct and assemble the pieces that best fit together. However, I was able to overcome this by talking to peers who were writing similar pieces or getting pointers from my professor. With these tools I was able to see how I could go about properly writing this specific style of writing.

**Imitation in the Classroom**

Imitation is an important tool writers must learn to properly harness. If a writer does not learn it correctly they may resort to using plagiarism or only write styles like fan-fiction. There is nothing inherently wrong with fan-fiction. However, a writer will not grow if their work is constantly reliant on one piece rather than using their own ideas and imitating the styles of many. As previously stated, I did not learn how to imitate the writing of others before writing my own piece until taking creative writing courses. Prior to this, I had written my own pieces but preferred to write fan-fiction because it was easier. However, after learning how to properly use this tool, I learned how to read more carefully and pick up on the styles of other writers. I could see the correct level of description to use and how characters were developed then apply that to my own writing. Various writers will go about this process differently, allowing one to mix the ideas together in a way that produces a unique piece. This skill should indefinitely be taught in all composition level classes. Students should not have to take creative writing to learn this because it is not only our writing majors that need to write. An individual writing up a job resume will be required to write and should not completely copy that of someone else as that would be plagiarism. If one has to give a speech at some point in life, they should know how to pull sources from other writers but not to completely copy them, instead looking for inspiration. Writing is a constant act of imitation, when a writer puts a piece out into the world it will indefinitely be imitated at some point in time. It could be imitated for reference or as a way for one to spark ideas but writers always imitate. Furthermore, all original writing then produced by writers is unique. Every story holds differences within it, whether it is with characters, plot, style or point of view, there are differences. It is these differences that make these stories unique. Young writers should learn that although their work is imitation it is unique so they feel encouraged and not as though their piece is just another to be lost in the masses.

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