

THE APPRENTICESHIP OF LAURELL K. HAMILTON: HOW ASPIRING WRITERS  
LEARN TO WRITE

by

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to aspiring writers and the *New York Times* bestselling author  
Laurell K. Hamilton.

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## ABSTRACT

How do aspiring writers learn to write? Laurell K. Hamilton's blog records and presents her thorough apprenticeship to readers. This thesis is a case study of the writing process that she documents on her blog. The results reflect aspects of composition theory including formula deviation, character persona construction, audience function and awareness, diverse research possibilities, revision and motivation strategies, digital literacy and technology acquisition, and the blog as a genre. Hamilton also develops and contributes her own writing process theories. The study reveals that both aspiring and professional writers both adhere to common established composition theories and create their own unique, different approaches to the writing act. Aspiring writers can learn how to write by reading professional authors' accounts of their writing processes, and then adapt, practice, and experiment with them to find what works for them.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	ivv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vv
ABSTRACT .....	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: APPLICABLE COMPOSITION THEORIES .....	8
Models.....	9
Author Identity .....	11
Character .....	12
Revision .....	13
Research .....	13
Audience .....	14
Digital Literacy .....	16
Weblog.....	20
Motivation.....	22
Hamilton's Case .....	28
CHAPTER THREE: THE CASE STUDY .....	31
Models.....	31
Author Identity .....	34
Character .....	35

Revision .....	42
Research .....	45
Audience .....	51
Digital Literacy .....	57
Weblog.....	59
Motivation.....	61
CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION.....	71
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	79
REFERENCES .....	82

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

How do aspiring writers learn their craft? Beginners typically study rhetoric and composition in college, some go on to pursue a degree in writing, and for most there's more to learn after graduating with a writing degree. One way that an aspiring writer can learn how to write is to read and study published authors' diaries, essays, interviews, books and weblogs on writing. To understand how the experiences of published writers can help aspiring writers learn, composition researchers have studied writing elements such as models, author identity, character, revision, research, audience, digital literacy, weblog, and motivation. A case study of an individual writer's career, as evidenced in the writing blog of the *New York Times* bestselling author Laurell K. Hamilton, can reveal how these elements work in one writer's life. Hamilton has blogged about her writing process since 2003, providing a window on one author's apprenticeship. In this study, I will use a case study both to verify and challenge some of what the literature in composition studies says about how writers learn to write.

Some composition scholars would object to the use of a case study of just one writer to represent how any writer can learn to write. However, others defend the validity of the method.

For composition researchers, qualitative studies, including the case study method, are popular ways to study writers' experiences. Empirical researchers Janice Lauer and William Asher describe them. Case studies are "a type of qualitative descriptive research that closely examines a small number of subjects, and is guided by some theory of

writing. Researchers collect data using a variety of methods... They analyze the data, identifying, operationally defining, and relating variables, and then report results in the form of extensive descriptions, conclusions, hypotheses, and questions for further research” (34). These levels of the case study ensure that researchers narrow their findings from collecting variables during examination, to analyzing the data, and drawing conclusions for future researchers to question. The whole process contributes to writing theory.

Case studies are appreciated for their contribution to writing theory. Stephen North defends the case study method as a way to make knowledge in composition. First, he says, case studies are easy to do: the case study “method provides the easiest entrée for would-be Researchers” (205). Also, with the case study, the usual requirements of composition research don’t apply. The results of case studies don’t have to be comprehensive or replicable, but can be partial and unique: “comprehensiveness, not replicability or the need for investigative unanimity that drives it, is where the power of Clinical knowledge resides (205). North also addresses the criticism that each case study of a writer would be so idiosyncratic that it would present different and possibly contradictory findings. In fact, he finds power in these very differences. “Different findings,” he says, “would simply serve to make the emerging portrait that much fuller” (205). He mentions Carol Berkenkotter’s case study of the individual writer Donald Murray as one that makes contributions to the field. He says that the case study researchers shouldn’t try to characterize the typical writer (“the first-year writer,” “the professional writer”), but should focus primarily on “the individual writer, whole and in-depth, not the type—Lynn and Tony and Donald Murray” (237). Case studies

researchers, he says, “need to recognize—and indeed, to revel in—the power of idiographic inquiry” (237).

Some authors have made careers by studying their own writing process. The writing instructor and editor Donald Murray responded to the study of him: “I have made a career of studying myself while writing” (169). Researchers can also study the writing process of a single writer because of the case study. Writing careers are made from these studies so they shouldn’t be invalid. The validity claims of case study are based on claims for all qualitative research such as case studies that study, report, and discuss the strategies of a single published writer. Carol Berkenkotter, for example, in a study North would admire, studied Murray and published her findings. Berkenkotter acknowledged that the emerging research method would show the differences in writers’ processes as “Research on single subjects is new in our discipline; we need to bear in mind that each writer has his or her own idiosyncrasies” (167). Not all case studies are wholly idiosyncratic. Although authors have their idiosyncrasies, there are also common themes that either relate or contribute to composition theory. As case study researchers, “We need to replicate naturalistic studies of skilled and unskilled writers before we can begin to infer patterns that will allow us to understand the writing process in all of its complexity” (167). It’s complex because it’s both idiosyncratic and has commonalities to composition theory.

In her naturalistic study, she observed Murray’s writing process as he spoke aloud while he wrote. One of the patterns of composition theory that Berkenkotter discovers is the “stating of rhetorical goals, i.e., planning how to reach an audience: ‘I’m making a note here, job not to explore the complexities of revision, but simply to show the reader

how to do revision” (161). In order to reach an audience, Murray was, “primarily concerned with the writer’s planning, revising, and editing activities” as he sought to teach his readers how to revise (160). Berkenkotter discovered that the writing process is made of the planning, revising and editing variables. Her conclusion contributes to composition research and theories. Murray’s writing instructs readers on an aspect of composition and Berkenkotter’s study enhances this process. Readers learn how to revise by reading his composition and Berkenkotter’s study of his writing process.

Previous to composition case studies, authors were limited to publishing their writing process: such as Virginia Woolf’s writer’s diary, essays and novels; the *Paris Review* Interviews; and Stephen King’s book *On Writing*. Composition instructors often use excerpts from these works in their classrooms. Case studies introduced the idea of directly observing how writers work. Now the technology of the weblog has given us a virtual place where authors can post messages about their process rather than have to publish essays or books on writing or submit themselves to study by a case study researcher.

Now an aspiring writer can learn how to write by reading authors’ blogs or at least learn strategies to experiment and practice with in their own writing. Carolyn Miller and Dawn Shepherd identify the blog as a genre with: journalistic qualities; self-discovery; identity construction; experience and the information of interest sharing; and relationship and community development. These qualities of the blog genre contribute to a unifying theory of writing. Amy Devitt envisions the theory of genre contributing to “a unified theory of writing” (573). The unified theory of writing is the composition theories

that most writers use, which can be learned by studying authors' processes, for example, from their writing blog.

The web is a quick, assessable outlet for the curious reader and writer community. They come together in this location and contribute their ideas, thoughts, and feelings on composition processes. For example, fans inspire the author Laurell K. Hamilton's writing process and her writing process inspires them by involving them in the process. She welcomes this relationship by her determined presence on the website and what's special about her blog on her website is its length at no cost for the reader.

Over the twenty year span of her writing career, she published at least thirty books for her two fiction series on top of other projects such as book tours, comic book adaptations of one series, charity events, new blog entries, and Facebook and Twitter posts, all while raising a family. She posts at least a page every other day with fifteen to thirty posts a month on fan questions, aspiring writers' wants, or her life activities. Even just a five year span from the start of her blog, or the first half of it, shows that parts of the posts relate to the themes that composition theorists write about.

Hamilton and her environment of readers can be closely studied to answer Lauer and Asher's case study questions. The case study of Hamilton's blog adheres to their definition because I'll informally observe the methods that work for Hamilton. The question about this particular case study of Laurell K. Hamilton's apprenticeship is whether the author's blog guides aspiring writers in a way that is supported by composition theory.

Her blog exhibits many aspects of composition theory. She's a unique subject and worth studying for more information on connections to composition theory. Hamilton is

part of the large population of writers and she relates to common processes, but she also deviates from them. The variables that are important relate to previous composition studies and theories, and add to them. The case study shows how she's also an example of how aspiring writers can differentiate their strategies and themselves in the writing field.

Through this window provided by her website, I'll analyze Hamilton's writing processes displayed on the blog. The key variables are the processes that recur on the blog. I'll note and arrange the themes in a narrative to describe this environment. The themes are common composition topics such as: writing models, author identity, character, revision strategies, various research options, fictionalizing audience, digital literacy acquisition, the weblog genre, and self-regulating motivation.

This case study of Laurell K. Hamilton's writing apprenticeship shows how aspiring writers learn to write because she was once a young writer and practicing author outside of classroom instruction. My goal is to present the previous studies and composition theories on the writing process by researchers; study and narrate Hamilton's recurring posts about her writing process to show the relationship to composition theory and the unique contributions that she makes to the process since these studies have been done before; discuss the meaning of the findings, which is how she exemplifies theory, deviates from it, and is idiosyncratic; and then conclude upon what aspiring writers can and should take away from such studies when they don't have access to classroom instruction.

## CHAPTER TWO: APPLICABLE COMPOSITION THEORIES

Traditional composition theories and, more recently, theories of digital rhetoric can illuminate the writing processes of an individual writer. The elements of composition theory I will examine that relate to the writing apprenticeship of Laurell K. Hamilton are:

- **Models.** Composition instruction uses the published work by professional writers as models most often through textbooks.
- **Author identity.** One theory war is academic product versus writing process, which influences an aspiring writer's identity because it's not just the emphasis on product that makes an author's identity, but the growth process or journey of self-discovery that led them to the finished product.
- **Character.** Authors use parts of their own identity to construct characters to discover meaning.
- **Revision strategies.** Authors like their writing enough to reread and see it so that others will like it, too.
- **Research options.** There are many available and interesting research areas outside of texts so that the audience suspends their disbelief.
- **Audience.** Authors have to fictionalize their audience (see Ong). Audiences vicariously experience the meaning with the author's characters and some of them are inspired to write.

- Digital literacy and technology. Writers have online audiences and fragment their identity between networks. Each user is an individual store of knowledge, which they contribute to participate.
- The weblog. It's an online journalistic writing genre that includes self-expression, participation, collaboration, and free informal learning.
- Motivation. Professional writers motivate aspiring writers. Self-regulation schedules, outlines, plans and various strategies motivate authors to write.

The apprenticeship with Laurell K. Hamilton supports what composition theory says about how aspiring writers learn to write. I'll begin with literacy, writing models, and processes. This is often where authors find their identity and can then create characters from parts of their selves. They must like what they write and read during revision and fill in the blanks during this process with research. They must also like what they research so that the audience believes it, likes it, purchases their publications, and wants to write. Authors must acquire digital literacy in order to reach and journal to their audience, which requires a blog. This funnels down to one of the most important themes, which is motivation. It includes a schedule, plan, and outline, etc. The particular key terms for this contemporary study of how a writer develops, then, are: models, author identity, character, revision, research, audience, digital literacy, blog, and motivation.

### **Imitate and Deviate: Writing Models**

One of the ways that beginning writers learn to write is through introduction to the five-paragraph theme essay in grade school. It's still debated by composition theorists and it's one of the first debates presented to grad students in composition theory courses. Though the form is denounced by most composition instructors, and the main argument is

that it limits young writer's creative exploration; its merits to writing development are acknowledged. In her history of the form, views toward it, and argument against it, Michelle Tremmel recently agreed that the form can function "as a promoter of creativity" (32). She drew on Robert Perrin's ten-paragraph defense of the five-paragraph theme written a decade earlier. He says that the five-paragraph theme "may even foster creativity by giving student writers a set of conventions to break away from. It seems to me that creativity emerges when artists, musicians, writers, and others (including student writers) begin to modify rules. Manipulate rules, reinterpret rules, create new rules, ignore rules" (312). Perrin believes that beginner writing creativity is influenced by bending the rules of such stock writing formulas.

After the five paragraph theme, there are writing template books. In between the publication of both articles, Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein compiled such a book for inexperienced student writers. In their introduction to the text, they also address the question of whether templates stifle creativity. They say, "In our view, the above template and the others in this book will actually help your writing become more original and creative, not less" (10). By manipulating the template rules to suit their unique needs and desires, student writers create original work. Similar to Perrin, they say, "Even the most avant-garde, cutting-edge artists (like improvisational jazz musicians) need to master the basic forms that their work improvises on, departs from, and goes beyond, or else their work will come across as uneducated child's play. Ultimately, then, creativity and originality lie not in the avoidance of established forms, but in the imaginative use of them" (11). They agree that artists, musicians, and writers find and express themselves by molding and constructing convention to meet their vision.

### **Product versus Process: Author Identity**

Another hindrance to creative composition that beginning writers face is the composition conversation that's referred to as the theory war. Peter Elbow finds it "odd that most English courses study and honor writing (literature), but seldom treat the act of writing as central" (75). This is something that aspiring writers might encounter when they seek higher education to develop writing. Elbow says, "If academics were more like writers—wrote more, turned to writing more, enjoyed writing more—I think the academic world would be better" (82). If writers are unable to find fulfillment in academia, then they must seek other sources to develop their writing craft from, such as published author's documented writing processes. Donald Murray addressed this discussion. He says, "Our students knew it wasn't literature when they passed it in, and our attack usually does little more than confirm their lack of self-respect for their work and for themselves...autopsying doesn't give birth to live writing" ("Teach Writing as a Process Not Product" 11). He connects on a similar level with Elbow and argues for teaching composition to focus on the writing process rather than the academic product. Through this act, student writers can better identify themselves as writers in academics and construct an author identity which leads to persona exploration.

### **Parts of the Author: Character**

Once aspiring writers build confidence in their writing process and begin to develop confidence in their author identity, then they begin to develop their personas. Edwin Black makes one of the earliest contributions in 1968 to "The Second Persona." He defines it as one of the "two dimensions of character" (110). Michel de Foucault develops this notion further in 1969 when he asks "What is an Author?" He says that the

“‘author function’ is characterized by this plurality of egos” (130). Writers have more than one persona where “the quibbling and confrontations that a writer generates between himself and his text” is a writer’s record of a conversation with their self through the text (117). Vivian Gornick acknowledges the “various selves” in which the “narrator becomes a persona” (7). She says, “The situation is the context or circumstance, sometimes the plot; the story is the emotional experience that preoccupies the writer...it’s a story of self-discovery and self-definition” (14). A writer has various selves to choose from when they create a narrative persona. The persona doesn’t include all of the writer’s selves, but has a few for the particular story that the author writes or the particular emotion they explore. Through this process, the writer discovers something about how their present self looks at their past self that might be less possible otherwise. Phillip Lopate instructs aspiring writers on the “Necessity of Turning Oneself into a Character.” He says, “mining our quirks is only the beginning of turning ourselves into characters” (41). He shows aspiring writers how they can begin to select and draw from their quirks to create a particular character to use in a story to discover something about the self. This also “allows the reader to participate vicariously in the experience as it was lived” (“Reflection and Retrospection” 1). Vicarious participation leads one next to consider their audience and how to immerse them in the relived experience so that they take something away from the writing. When an author wants their writing read, they must be able to like rereading it so that others will, too.

### **Rereading: Revision Strategies**

Elbow proposes one of the first and basic revision strategies. He says, “I like it. Damn it, I’m going to get it good enough so that others will like it too” (“Ranking,

Evaluating, and Liking” 199). If aspiring writers like their writing or want their audience to like it, then they’ll strive to practice, improve, revise, and pursue future writing.

Writing and revising are perpetual acts. Murray says “the words on the page are never finished” (“The Maker’s Eye” 671). Writing can be endless. It’s reworked until it’s the best representation that the writer’s capable of and inspires them to reread their own writing. He says, “John Ciardi, the poet, adds, ‘The last act of the writing must be to become one’s own reader. It is, I suppose a schizophrenic process, to begin passionately and to end critically, to begin hot and to end cold; and, more important, to be passion-hot and critic-cold at the same time” (671). Writers fill multiple roles in the process. They revise the writing through the audience’s eyes to present information so that it’s more interesting and they want read it.

### **Available and Interesting: Research Options**

The interesting research options are what and where writers want to study, which affects the energy that the writer puts into their work. Richard Larson says, “What I argue is that the profession of the teaching of English should abandon the concept of the generic ‘research paper’—that form of what a colleague of mine has called ‘messenger service’ in which a student is told that for this one assignment, this one project, he or she has to go somewhere (usually the library)” (816). If writers search outside of the library, then their interest in writing improves because of the active pursuit and engagement with the material. Doug Brent says, “Ballenger reinvents the research paper as the ‘research essay.’ The research essay starts with the self, and explicitly encourages students to use personal, subjective response as part of the process” (14). Both perspectives support the

exploration of diverse researches that begin with self-exploration, then what the writer wants to know, and then writing the knowledge for others to believe and learn from.

### **Writers Fictionalize: Audience**

This idea of a writer's audience is developed by composition theorists. In his "Argument for Ignoring Audience" at the beginning of the writing process, Peter Elbow agrees that "writing invites...the dialogue with self" and that "the self is multiple, not single" (60-1). Some composition theorists wonder whether a writer writes for themselves even if it's in a diary. The writer's self still serves as a reader that vicariously participates in the relived experience. Elbow believes that writers should "always revise with readers in mind" (66). Though he says that writers should ignore an audience in the first draft, he acknowledges that there is an audience in the writer's mind at the end. Writing process researcher Linda Flower distinguishes between what she calls writer-based prose and reader-based prose. She says that a more experienced writer edits as he or she writes (30). She says that "In the best of all possible worlds, good writers strive for Reader-Based prose from the very beginning" (34). Rather than just revise with them in mind, the writing process becomes more focused and efficient. The writer progresses in their process.

This suggests that writers imagine fictive audiences in the writing process since they can't physically see them while writing, unlike actors in the theater or musicians on a stage. Walter Ong says that the "'audience' fires the writer's imagination" (12). The author imagines their writing as well as the audience reading it so that their imaginative capacities are fired on another level. He thinks that even journals and letters, as narrative devices, cast the readers into a role. Journals have an audience and the role is vicariously

re-experiencing a select persona of the author's as it was lived. By casting them into a particular role or perspective while reading, the writer also constructs a particular audience. He says, "we have thought so little about the reader's role as such, about his masks, which are manifold in their own way as those of the writer" (20). The author wears many masks or personas, and the reader also comes to the page wearing multiple masks of their own, and those that are cast by the author.

Studies defend and prove this. In Carol Berkenkotter's study on "understanding a Writer's Awareness of Audience," each of the subjects "formed a rich representation of the audience; this representation played a significant role in the development of the writer's goals. Second, most subjects created individual rhetorical contexts or scenarios" (395). Her study supports Ong's idea that writers imagine representations of an audience and this audience influences what's written. Lisa Ede and Andrea Lundsford also further Ong's notion of "The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy." They write, "The second assertion thus emphasizes the creative, dynamic duality of the process of reading and writing, whereby writers create readers and readers create writers. In the meeting of these two lies meaning, lies communication" (169). It's twofold. Not only do writers create a fictional audience, but the audience also constructs the author. The meaning forms between the communication exchanges. David Bartholomae says that, "Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion" (4). The student writer fictionalizes or invents their audience. The student writer assumes their author identity as they "must learn to try on a variety of voices" (4). Their total identity forms from these different fragment voices and they learn to access a particular part of their identity given the specific writing situation. The web is a space

that gives them more practice with different voices and identities. Digital literacy and technology are where this type of fragmentation is common among different websites.

### **Knowledge Sharing and Participation: Digital Literacy and Technology**

Composition theory includes digital literacy. In their article, “Becoming Literate in the Information Age: Cultural Ecologies and the Literacies of Technology,” Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe, with Brittney Moraski and Melissa Pearson, use two narratives to present the differences in digital literacy acquisition. Two women are different in age and backgrounds but both of their stories begin with literacy acquisition. Both women were read to by their elders and then they continued to educate themselves based on their own interests. The oldest woman in their narrative educated herself in technology because her generation wasn’t exposed to it at an early age unlike the youngest woman. The younger woman says, “We do best at things we have a genuine interest in, not those that are spoon-fed to us” (660). These women exemplify the success of self-education. Once graduated, it’s possible to engage in lifelong learning without formal instruction. Bloggers can either teach readers their informal learning process, or readers can informally learn from the blogger’s posts. Another appeal of the blog is the heart of the author. At the 2011 Computers and Writing Conference, contributor Fred Kemp of Texas Tech University says what makes them appealing, “It is the heart. Many more people in this country are reading blogs than academic essays, mostly because of the heart” (Walker 331). Readers learn from blogs because they connect with the emotion and sense the heart in the writing. Technology users experience both appeals in the blog.

Composition theory applies to technology and technology contributes new considerations to composition theory. In his book on television, Robert Allen asks, “How

does the text attempt to construct us as readers/viewers?” (133). It can construct heartfelt readers that form relationships either to the people on the television or on the computer by allowing them into their lives. In her article on a life on the virtual frontier, Sherry Turkle “looks at the computer as the gateway to relationships with other people.” The computer is new access to and for readers. In her book, *Life on the Screen*, she says that “the self is multiple” (15). Even though the medium has shifted from paper to computer, the self is still multiple because of the many different connections that are available. She asks, “are we watching the slow emergence of a new, more multiple style of thinking about the mind?” (180). She writes that this is because kids say: “‘We’re not fully in our lives. We’re living a little in our lives and a little bit in our Facebook lives.’ You know, you put up a different life, you put up a different person” (“Digital Nation”). Users fragment themselves among the multiple accesses to human relationships.

The fragments teach something different to networks or blogger communities. Turkle’s concerned about education, “getting children to love learning, to find something in learning that fits with their life and experience and where they can find meaning in their own lives and love learning this” (“Digital Nation”). Blogs, for example, could appeal to the heart of children and inspire them to love what they learn from them because each individual in the blogging community contributes some different knowledge, interest, and experience. Harold Rheingold is an example who participated in one of the first online communities called the WELL. He sees that “a virtual community is like a living encyclopedia” (57). Each reader is an individual store of information. No one is the exact same so their personal interests and experiences influence what’s shared among the community. Each person brings something to the page to inform their take of

the reading and writing. Richard Lanham focuses on *the Economics of Attention* where “The basic economic resource is no longer capital, nor natural resources, nor labor. It is and will be knowledge” (4). The web is an accessible store of vast amounts of knowledge that individuals contribute to for others to learn from, which fosters participation among people.

Consumers participate in processes through technology developments. Henry Jenkins’s *Convergence Culture* emphasizes this. Instead of “talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands” (3). Producers receive quick feedback from consumers over the web so that consumers influence what’s produced for them. Catherine Driscoll and Melissa Gregg say that the fan communities in Jenkins’s book “that constitute the basis for several chapters are shown to require the interpretive skills of an insider informant who accrues scholarly capital from trading this accumulated knowledge” (567). They also visualize the economic growth of knowledge sharing through developing forms of computer mediated communications. When participants identify with an author or character, the knowledge shared enhances. Charles Soukup’s observations of “Celebrity, Fandom, and Identification on the World Wide Web” also make similar connections to Jenkins’s research. Researchers have applied the concept of identification to media and audiences share a character’s perspective and vicariously participates in the character’s experiences (322). The audience identifies and participates with the author’s character and can learn from the shared experience.

They acquire knowledge and make meaning in their lives through the experience. Because of increased web outlets, “The fan can participate in a public discourse that creates the meanings and personae of celebrities” (323). Authors develop their celebrity persona from the beliefs and values that fans share with them. Soukup’s “ethnographic research suggests that strong empathy and emulation of the values and beliefs of the celebrity can develop into an involvement in a social network or community of shared values exemplified by the celebrity” (321). Empathy can develop into shared knowledge and a different type of writing community can form from this example of online interaction. The distance is reduced between producers and consumers, “As a public, mediated text, the fansite further reduces the distance between the ‘audience’ and the ‘performer’” (331). Rather than just connect with an author’s character through their publication, the web can close the emotional distance between real authors and audiences. Jenny Diski writes in her article that it can also change the writing process where, “Readers control what the authors can write” (20). There are sites that allow authors to present their idea online to receive feedback from readers before they write it which involves the reader in the process. Writers might face pressure to fulfill both personal and public expectations. The tension between the two expectations exists in places such as digital rhetoric considerations of the weblog.

### **Online Journal: Weblog Genre**

Digital rhetoric is defined differently from traditional rhetoric. James P. Zappen defines the characteristics of the weblog as “the new media support and enable the transformation of the old rhetoric of persuasion into a new digital rhetoric that encourages self-expression, participation, and creative collaboration” (321). He adds to

this definition that “Speed encourages...redundant and repetitive postings” (321). The form of the weblog has redundant and repetitive writing, which reveals the themes of the blog. On *Into The Blogosphere*, Anita Blanchard agrees that blogs function “much like that of a personal journal” and they “are regularly updated. So the author is clearly interacting through updating, with the audience” (5). On the same site, Carolyn Miller and Dawn Shepherd say that both public and private purposes co-exist because the blog is journalistic (10). They also observe that, “The blog-as-genre is a contemporary contribution to the art of the self” (15). Amy Devitt presents new conceptions of the old concept. She says that, “This reconception of genre may even lead us to a unified theory of writing” (573). There are more places to write, read, and examine the similarities between processes online. The blog unifies theories of writing through the author’s self-expression to the participatory, collaborative public on their writing process.

These unifying theories by writing blogs can help aspiring writers learn about the individual and collective writing processes. Young Park, Heo Gyeong Mi and Romee Lee study “Blogging for Informal Learning” and “the majority of participants (90.0%) agreed that they had experienced some kind of learning through their blogging activities” (155). Most readers learn from a blog and if they’re aspiring writers reading a published author’s blog then they’re informally learning outside of the classroom about the unifying theory of writing processes. If an aspiring writer seeks informal learning outside of classrooms, then author blogs are a valid, accessible option. In *We’ve Got Blog*, blog author Rebecca Blood views blogs as “noncommercial ventures: they don’t make money for their maintainers, and in fact probably even cost them a little” (xi). Blogs are free information for the inquisitive public. Blood also views them as “a training ground for

writers—and there is fine writing being produced daily on hundreds of sites” (xii). Blogs are a new place for writers to converge on the unifying theory of composition. It’s a valid space for the public to learn about writing and what motivates it.

### **Professional Writers and Self-Regulation: Motivation**

Motivation is a key to writing and it drives aspiring writers to want to learn how to write. All of the above mentioned composition theories motivate writers as well as other self-regulation strategies that individual authors discover and use. Aspiring writers learn from professional authors about the writing process. Barry J. Zimmerman and Anastasia Kitsantas assert that professional authors are an example for aspiring writers and motivate them to write. They quote the American novelist William Faulkner to illustrate how an author’s words may motivate aspiring writers to work hard on their writing and better themselves: “Always dream and shoot higher than you know you can do. Don’t bother just to be better than your contemporaries or predecessors. Try and be better than yourself” (55). The well-known author John Irving also “engaged in extensive planning, gathering information, making notes, systematic observations, and studying before beginning to write a book,” using what Zimmerman and Kitsantas call these self-regulation activities (55). Self-regulation relates to motivation because they’re activities that authors willingly engage in to inspire and enhance the writing process. Professional examples of self-regulatory strategies show beginners how a professional’s habits of good writing work. Virginia Woolf’s diaries are a good example of how a writer documents Zimmerman and Kitsantas’s “self-regulation activities.” Woolf’s self-regulation activities include how she creates characters and how she relates to her audience.

Virginia Woolf began recording her practices, including discussions of character, in her writer's diary in 1897. In her essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Woolf teaches readers that "The foundation of good fiction is character-creating and nothing else" (108). In *A Writer's Diary*, her friend Lytton Strachey observes that in one of her first books the character Clarissa is covered with Woolf (77). She uses parts of herself to create her character and find answers to her questions about identity. In her writing diary, Rachel asks, "Why is there not a discovery in life?...This is it? Who am I? What am I?" (85). These questions also inspire her writing. In *The Voyage Out*, there's a similar pattern. Lorna Sage says that the character Rachel might be a portrait of the artist (xx). In the text, Rachel asks, "And life, what is that?" (138). The character reflects parts of Woolf. Woolf even admits to Lytton, "'Yes, I'm 20 people'" (*A Writer's Diary* 33). As a writer, Woolf is made of characters because parts of her are seen in them.

The way Woolf discusses audience can also be an example for young writers and can motivate them. Woolf asks, "Do I even write, even here, for my own eye? If not, for whose eye? An interesting question, rather" (*A Writer's Diary* 276). Even in the privacy of her diary, she wonders if she composes only for herself. She writes, "I may as well make a note I say to myself: thinking sometimes who's going to read all this scribble?" (315). Woolf converses with herself but acknowledges an outside reader. Steven Putzel claims that "Virginia Woolf's work is performance—her narrative is dialogic, always engaging readers into co-authorship" (466). She involves the reader and passes the torch to future writing generations. She writes, "I've done my share, with pen and talk, for the human race. I mean young writers can stand on their own feet. Yes, I deserve a spring—I owe nobody nothing" (*A Writer's Diary* 318). She passes her legacy and writing process

to them through her diaries, essays, and books. They can co-author with Woolf by experimenting with her techniques in their writing and add to the shared knowledge. At the end of her career during the war, she writes, “No echo comes back. I have no surroundings. I have so little sense of a public... Those familiar circumvolutions—those standards—which have for so many years given back an echo and so thickened my identity are all wide and wild as the desert now” (325). It wasn’t enough to just compose and converse with herself. She’s no longer driven to compose without an audience to share with. Being read constructed her writing identity.

In *Three Guineas*, Woolf even includes her audience in her process. Jane Marcus says that Woolf “took on various personalities in order to shape her reply to the reader she had created” (xlii). She creates her character and fictionalizes her audience in order to include them in the writing. She adds that, “Woolf’s advanced project in experimental writing was to involve the reader in both the reading and the ‘writing’ of the script for her book” (xlix). The fictionalized relationship with her audience influenced what she wrote. She says it’s participatory, united by a collaborative act, mirrors self-reflection, community, and collective thinking (lix). Woolf’s voice progressed from singularity to multiplicity. Patrick Collier agrees that one way Woolf “critiqued the literary public sphere was by constructing imagined exchanges between readers and writers that were more private, more intimate” (365). She sought to close the distance between writer and readers with character creation.

Outside of writer’s diaries and essays, another source of writing processes that brings writers closer to readers is *The Paris Review* interviews that began in 1953. They offer “authors a rare opportunity to discuss their life and art at length; they have

responded with some of the most revealing self-portraits in literature.” This was a place for writers and readers to learn about a collection of published authors writing processes for over sixty years.

Another example of where readers can learn about an author’s writing process is books on writing. In his memoir *On Writing*, King describes to readers how he has them participate with the text through character. He says that, “Description is what makes the reader a sensory participant in the story...If you want to be a successful writer, you must be able to describe it, and in a way that will cause your reader to prickle with recognition” (173). The reader participates through their senses so that they feel what the author feels. He explains how readers identify with characters by describing the world through the character’s eyes, which makes them more real. He says, “It would be fair enough to ask I suppose, if Paul Sheldon in *Misery* is me. Certainly parts of him are...but I think you will find that, if you continue to write fiction, every character you create is partly you. When you ask yourself what a certain character will do given a certain set of circumstances, you’re making the decision based on what you yourself would (or in the case of the bad guy, wouldn’t) do” (191). The character is part of the author and the author also becomes the character. The reader becomes the author character through reading and immersion through sensory description because a reader also asks themselves what they would do in a certain situation, therefore trying on the character’s shoes. He says that his characters “are just interests which have grown out of my life and thought, out of my experiences as a boy and a man, out of my roles as a husband, a father, and a lover” (208). King’s roles help make his characters.

Similar to Woolf's essay, in Paul Janeczko's interview of King on reading and writing, King says characters are important to the story. He says, "I think the characters should be real, and they shouldn't do anything in the course of the story that is false. I don't like that chessboard feeling. Characters should be able to move on their own. I guess I like *The Shining* best of all because the characters seem to do that" (qtd. in Janeczko 10). *The Shining*'s characters are the most real because there's a strong sense of himself within his character Jack Torrance. He unintentionally wrote from his experience. He says, "I was after all, the guy who had written *The Shining* without even realizing (at least until that night) that I was writing about myself" (95). In the story, Jack applies for the caretaking position at the Overlook Hotel because "He needed the job" much like Stephen King needed the job at New Franklin Laundry when he was an aspiring writer (4). The manager at the Overlook, Mr. Ullman, regrets hiring the last caretaker because he was a drunk but says to Jack, "Yes, Mr. Shockley told me you no longer drink. He also told me about your last job... your last position of trust, shall we say? You were teaching English in a Vermont prep school" (8). Similar to King, Jack taught English and had a drinking problem. Lastly, Jack says, "My wife and I both like to read. I have a play to work on" (10). Both are also readers and writers. King gives the character Jack four elements of himself: lower middle class, English teacher, ex alcoholic, and writer. Readers are presented with the opportunity to try on a mask of King and participate with the text. Also similar to King, Jack writes himself into his work. He says, "He had written [his agent] about the play... the student he sees as a younger version of himself... he felt in a way that the play itself, the whole thing, was the roadblock, a colossal symbol"

(105). Like King, Jack's writing reveals his roles from school, the home, and as a citizen. These writers show readers how to juggle multiple character voices.

King also emphasizes that he was able to write by reading. He says, "If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot. There's no way around these two things that I'm aware of, no shortcut...I don't read in order to study the craft; I read because I like to read...Yet there is a learning process going on" (*On Writing* 145). Writers learn by reading professionals' texts such as Laurell K. Hamilton's extensive blog on her writing process. Attention to what Woolf and King say about writing, character, and autobiography are significant to the author blog because they're earlier contributions to the topic and connect to what readers might find by reading an author's blog like Hamilton's. These connections show what works for the processes of more than just one author, which makes it worth attempting and practicing for effective writing or strong composition.

### **Hamilton's Case**

Laurell K. Hamilton created her blog to connect with her audience outside of her publications and book tours. It shows that readers connect with her writing values and beliefs. They respond by reading her, and make her a part of their lives, schedules, and routines. Had they not responded in numbers, she would've continued to post only about writing. The main value is writing, but her blog grew to include other topics as journals often do. Hamilton's blog is nonfiction writing about fiction writing. Her posts are generous contributions to informal learners and curious writers because it's free of charge. Her writing blog is an example of a space for aspiring writers to continue to informally learn from outside of print publications.

Hamilton's blog is a place where writing theories weave. She contributes to the writing conversation and, as a professional, proves the stability of pre-established theories by composition researchers. She's also a professional author that deviated from pre-established expectations in one of her college writing courses. The head of the writing program expected student writers to write literary fiction and not the genre that Hamilton was drawn to. She deviated from what her instructor tried to spoon feed her and pursued an education outside of the classroom. She educated herself by developing her own stories and practicing writing. By breaking away from the writing program's conventions, she wrote more unique, original work and developed her own author identity. She exemplifies that through the trial and error of professional's writing strategies, aspiring writers can imitate and deviate to build their own writing tools and also develop their own author identity from which to create character.

She also teaches readers that she cares about her characters. Readers sense and connect with the strong level of pathos in her writing. She took parts of herself and created her popular character Anita Blake. They share at least six similarities that readers can experience vicariously through the writing. Similar to Woolf and King, Hamilton creates a character from fragments of herself. Linda Holland-Toll says that Anita, "living as she does as a woman who is a vampire executioner/detective and who, because she is also a necromancer, a practitioner of magic, is to some degree both a human being and one with the things she hunts" (176). She wrote what she wanted to read and wrote it so that others would want to read it. It's researched fiction, which she says is more common to nonfiction writing. She shows her levels of research options in her process. She generates self-interest, asks unanswered questions, reads answers in publications,

interviews experts, researches in the field, and weaves the knowledge into her narrative for accuracy and credibility. It informs her readers.

Hamilton engages in the strategies of successful authors that aspiring writers can experiment with, develop, and apply to their own process. She envisions an audience that's interested in her writing process and some of her readers play the role of aspiring writers. She writes about her writing process because readers want to know how she writes and they can explore their own stories and writing process by adopting some of her useful strategies. It's meaningful to them that she shares her knowledge. If the voice of her online author identity is used wisely, then she can continue to positively affect her audience. She influences a collection of people who are also drawn to her positive stance on humanity. She's technophobic but still attempts to reach her fans through the blog, Facebook, and Twitter, which is beneficial because people respond to her efforts. She builds an online community of individuals that converge on her writing blog. Participation is seen and readers influence what she posts. They see the connections because she addresses their feedback on the site. If they contact her on the site, she'll address them and answer their inquiries in a post for all to access.

Writing processes evolve as well as the collective ideas about them. They're read and studied from professionals' diaries, interviews, books, and blogs on writing, which all contribute to a unifying theory of writing. It unifies more over the space and speed of technology where knowledge communities and participants converge. This theory begins with the creative exploitation of classroom writing models. From this initial experience, beginning writers develop their writing identity. They fragment themselves into characters so that they can explore an aspect of a personality. They write what they like

and rewrite it so that others want to read it, too. They ask research questions and find answers to them from different interesting sources. They fictionalize an audience to experience the life and lesson of the character. They motivate, strategize, and find inspiration in the unique processes of professional authors.

### CHAPTER THREE: THE CASE STUDY

Hamilton's blog reflects composition theory and her own unique process discoveries. The genre of the blog is a journal for her book tours, writing process, fan questions and answers, and public life. She struggles with the technology but overcomes it as she's done in the past. She deviates from both of the literary and genre traditions. She creates her main character Anita Blake from herself for a more accurate fiction that readers believe and connect to. She records many revision and research strategies of interest. Motivation self-regulation encompasses a large portion of the blog because it fuels her writing. Her thorough apprenticeship teaches aspiring writers how to learn to write post their college education.

#### **Imitation and Deviation: Writing Models**

Previous to blogs, one could only find information on Laurell K. Hamilton's writing process through published interviews. Interviews provide the initial background, bringing readers up to speed, while the blog continues her story with regular updates. In one of these interviews, she says that in college the head of the writing program told her that she was a horrible writer and that she would never write. She told her that she was a corrupting influence on the other students. So she had to leave (MacDonald). On a similar note, in an interview, Aimee Levitt writes that, "Hamilton recounts. '[Dr. Bush] declared that all genre was trash. She wanted us to write straight fiction. I refused. By the middle of the semester, half the class had abandoned literary fiction for mysteries, Westerns and romances. 'They were doing genre,' Hamilton says proudly, 'because I wouldn't bow

down.’ Hamilton tried to argue literature and genre weren’t necessarily incompatible.” Hamilton continues, “‘She sliced me, diced me and spread me on toast. She told me I would never succeed. She crushed me’” (cited in Levitt). Chastened, Hamilton switched to biology, but continued to write. ‘It worked out,’ she says. ‘Now I realize she didn’t try to crush me because she thought I wouldn’t succeed, but because she thought I would.’ She grins. ‘I’ve corrupted millions’” (noted in Levitt). Aspiring writers are an example of one in a million. In a blog post she even writes, “Eat that Dr. Bush” (“Quote of the Day”). She exemplifies deviation from what one doesn’t want to write and to aspire toward what one does.

Hamilton imitated and deviated. She blogs that, “You’re supposed to use things as inspirations not rip them off, or regurgitate them on paper. You can be inspired but find your own voice, and your own unique vision. Because that’s what it’s all about. Your own take on an idea that no one else could do” (“Muse Driven Frustration”). She sold her first book *Nightseer* but the sequel was rejected by her editor. She blogs, “My series, the one I’d been dreaming of and making notes for since high school, was dead...I was crushed, and thought seriously of giving up writing, getting a real job, a grown-up job. All those thoughts you have as a writer when things crash around you” (“Once There was a Story”). She didn’t give up. She blogs, “I had this one story, it featured a character called Anita Blake. She raised the dead for a living. She lived in a world where people discussed vampires and zombies as a given. I had this one story. Everyone had rejected it, and I mean everyone. I got some of the nicest rejections, they loved the story, but they couldn’t figure out what it was” (“Once There was a Story”). She chose a different route from before.

She offered to do a reading at a science fiction convention, which she hadn't done before. She blogs, "I finished, and there was utter silence. I thought, oh, God, they hate it. Then the applause started, and swelled, and yells, and cries of, when will it be published? I couldn't answer that. Read more, read more. I didn't explain that there was no more. I'd read the room what I had. But their reaction was one of the things that gave me the courage to finish the book" ("Once There was a Story"). Listeners reacted positive toward her new story unlike the editors which prompted them to reconsider her work and vision. Hamilton says, "I had this one short story, unpublished 'Those Who Seek Forgiveness' which featured Anita Blake. I thought well that's fun, but is there a book in it? As it turns out, yes. The rest as they say, is history" (McElroy). Her first series began with the exploration of an idea that others found new and interesting as well, which was inspired by aspirations toward deviation from conventions.

She deviated from mystery conventions and explored personal interests. In a 2000 interview, she says, "Series idea. When I first read hard-boiled mysteries I found that the female detectives didn't get to curse as much as the men. If they killed someone they had to feel really bad about it, the men did not. Sex was off stage and barely dealt with, the men got to have sex in more detail. This all seemed unfair to me. So I wanted a female main character that was every bit as tough as the men, or tougher. Anita is that" (Rambraut). She expanded genre dimensions and added new elements. She adds, "I wanted to strike a blow for equality" (McCune). She made room for authors with similar interests to follow, and deviate from her path, to pave their own for aspiring writers to engage in the same growth cycle. She created her own opportunity as an aspiring writer and for future aspiring writers. She says, "I looked at the world and wondered: If

vampires were all real, if we had to deal with them, what would change?” (Levitt). She asked a question and answered it with fiction. She blogs, “What intrigued me from the beginning was our modern world having to deal with real monsters, not as something hidden, but as a truth” (“Frost is Done”). She found truth in fiction that rebelled from the genre norms.

### **Write What One Wants to Read: Author Identity**

Hamilton’s rebellion transformed into a writing career. She blogs, “I write because no one was writing vampires the way I wanted to read them almost twenty years ago. No one was doing the fey the way I wanted to see them, so, like *The Little Red Hen*, I’d do it myself...What do I write? What I want to read. Isn’t that what all writers write?” (“Pages”). She wrote what she wanted to read and she wanted to read what didn’t exist. Levitt writes that “Susan Allison, who has edited the Anita books the past six years, credits Hamilton for creating the subgenre of paranormal fiction: a blend of horror, mystery, and romance. Now, almost all best-selling romance novels feature vampires and werewolves, but, notes Allison, ‘Laurell was there first’”. Hamilton published in a new genre and wrote of vampires before their popularity. She constructed her deviant identity and created a character from some of her traits.

### **Fragments of Self-Discovery and Imaginary Friends: Realistic Characters**

Hamilton constructed her character from herself. Levitt writes, “Hamilton took some inspiration for Anita from her own life. ‘Anita and I were similar in the beginning,’ she says. Both are five feet three inches tall. Both have dark, curly hair and lost their mothers at an early age. Both speak bluntly and have a dry sense of humor.” She drew off of herself to create Anita, which makes her more relatable to the author if she’s able to

connect with traits of her own character. Because of her qualities that she imbued in her character Anita, readers identify Hamilton with her. She writes, “Everyone thinks I’m Anita. A lot of people thought that Richard represented my ex-husband. Hate to burst anyone’s bubble but this is fiction. Try to bear that in mind. I finally, this book, realized who Richard reminds me of. Me” (“Hey. Me, Again”). Another of her characters bears similar qualities to herself, which shows some fragmentation.

She appears fragmented and has personas in her characters, and to her fans. She blogs, “Richard reminds me that I still have work to do inside me. God, I hate this ongoing process of self-discovery. When does it end? When do you get done?” (“I’ve Spent the Last Week Planning a Fight”). She relates to another character. Her fiction not only uncovers truths about character in that world where vampires are citizens, but it also serves as an outlet for self-discovery, which is most common in nonfiction. She blogs, “How do you embrace yourself when most of your life you’ve been taught that what you are, and what you want, and what you’re good at, is wrong, even evil? How do you shake a lifetime of negativity? How do you let it go? A piece at a time. One small, bloody, painful piece at a time. Let it go, and feel how much lighter you feel” (“I’ve Spent the Last Week Planning a Fight”). Richard leads her to reflect on her past and reach an understanding that she shares with readers because this process makes it realistic for readers.

She constructs realistic characters from her personal life experience that others may connect with. She blogs, “I initially gave Anita some of my phobias to help her seem more human, more real, and more vulnerable” (“Back Home”). This enhances the connection between author and character. She blogs, “I’m so far into Anita’s head, that it

seems like a weird thing to do. I've reached that magical point where her world is almost more real than anything else, yet not" ("Blessing and Curse"). She experiences the realm of author identity and character construction. She blogs, "I was searching for my baby penguin mug. I don't have a baby penguin mug. Anita has a baby penguin mug. I was searching for my character's favorite mug, not mine. She collects penguins, I don't" ("Penguin Mugs and Imaginary Friends"). This is the extent that she spends in her character's head. Anita comes out unbeknownst, but Hamilton also channels her when she needs to write. For example, she blogs, "I've resorted to coffee, that sense memory thing. I haven't had to do sensory work to get into Anita's head for years, but it's working, and that's what counts. It can't be flavored coffee either, and it can't be as weak as I usually drink it" ("The Comic is Sold"). Their differences also allow Hamilton to trigger the character as their similarities also work on a level. She's so far into character that she blogs, "We topped five hundred pages today. We, at the end of a book I usually start saying 'we', because I've spent the day writing first person narration. I've spent the day writing, I and we, and it's hard to stop" ("Twenty-Seven Pages and Bird News"). Her pronoun use suggests that she includes Anita in her post but Hamilton's other characters also cause a similar experience.

Richard's character, for example, also triggers her. She blogs that, "There are signs that the new Anita book is going well, and that I am heavily into her world. What signs? I saw a small pile of mail on the island in the kitchen last night. It had a note on it that said, Richard's. My first thought was why would Richard have any stuff in my house? I was thinking of Richard Zeeman, one of my imaginary friends...It was, of course, a note pertaining to our dear friend Richard, who some of you have met at

signings” (“Almost Too Real”). She also admits her proximity to Anita when she blogs, “I can take a vacation, but it’s almost as if Anita is my alter-ego, and it’s not just me that needs a break. A few days away with the family rests me, but it doesn’t rest Anita” (“Death”). Anita’s a part of Hamilton as she spends a full amount of time in the character’s fictive world. It’s both an escape and a confinement when Hamilton blogs, “I had anxiety dreams last night. Not my anxiety dreams. Anita’s anxiety dreams. I spent much of last night searching for my gun because I was going to have to report to the Federal Marshals, or sometimes it was the F.B.I. And it was like I was worried they’d be mad because I’d misplaced the gun that they’d given me” (“Anxiety Dreams, but Not All Mine”). Her subconscious recycles her thoughts at night so that she believes that world when she dreams. She blogs, “I’ve been writing Anita since 1987” (“Frost is Done”). She’s been in and out of Anita’s head for years so she sought an occasional escape in a second series.

In her second series, she still writes what she wants to read. In 2000, she launched “a new series featuring Merry Gentry, a faerie princess private detective named after her grandmother” (MacDonald). She shifts her identification with a character to maintain fresh writing. She says, “As to Merry, I’d written five Anita books in a row. I needed a break. I needed to write something different. I was dreaming in Anita’s world...So I put a proposal together for Merry Gentry. I wanted a character who wouldn’t argue with me as much as Anita does...I wanted to do faeries, the fey. Nobody had done it quite the way I wanted to do it” (McCune). Again, she deviates, develops a new character, and breaks from excessive time with Anita because of her strength in Hamilton’s life which affects her health.

Her wellbeing is affected by her disrupted sleep patterns because she mentions the dream in her blog. She posts, “I dreamt that I was me, but I was trapped in an Anita plot. I had a gun, and a shoulder holster and I was with Edward. We were supposed to be body guarding some man. We were trapped in a narrow stairwell with a crowd of people. There was no way to keep our man safe, no way with just two of us in such a crowd, and . . . I woke up in a cold sweat thinking. Thinking that it was real” (“Frost is Done”). Her fiction became a reality and she adds that, “The next morning I decided I had to write something else next. I needed to clear my imagination. I did not want any more Anita anxiety dreams. Merry and her world came out of that need for a break between books. I now have the amazing experience of having two bestselling series. Merry started as a vacation for my muse, and now she’s a serious contender.” She grew from a deviating aspiring writer, lost in her character, to an experienced author with two different series. “Merry is different from Anita in another way, in that it’s a close-ended series. Anita is open-ended, it could go fifty books” (McCune). She continues Anita, but when Merry ends she can open another series to break from Anita and write what she wants to read because Anita’s the stronger voice.

This is because of her close traits to Hamilton’s and series longevity. She posts, “The four pages of the new Merry book had to be scrapped because it wasn’t Merry; it was Anita. It was so Anita’s voice, just the characters were different. I have to get Anita out of my head before I can move on to Merry” (“What I Did Yesterday”). She learns that she needs the right voice and instructs aspiring writers in accuracy. She blogs, “A lot of people on tour asked me, how do I keep the characters straight? How do I remember what they look like? I told them that these are my friends. When you go into a room full of

your close friends you don't need notes to remember what they look like, they're your friends and you know their faces" ("Almost Too Real"). She addresses their inquiries, which young writers can learn from. She says, "The continuing characters become like old friends, or steady dates, people you know and love, and enjoy spending time with" ("Auction for Granite City APA"). She reveals how to cast characters that are realistic. If they're more realistic for the author, then they're realistic to readers that connect with the image because of emotional attachment.

She even connects emotionally with them so that they're more believable. She blogs that, "For Merry and her gang, this was the first book where I cried for them. I cried when Galen got hurt. I cried when Doyle finally found something that made that calm captain-of-the-guard exterior crack wide open. I wept with and for these people, which I had not done before. For me, it's as if the fourth book in a series is when I finally give myself up to the world" ("Auction for Granite City APA"). Her vision is so vivid that she immerses into it and engages mentally and emotionally. She blogs, "No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader. Robert Frost" ("Some Wounds Never Heal"). Her mental and emotional reaction adds to the reader's as well. She continues, "Frost is one of my favorite American poets. There are poems of his that I reread periodically. It's always nice when one of your literary heroes agrees with your own philosophy of writing. Of course, perhaps reading his work when I was in my mid-teens helped shape my own attitude towards writing" ("Some Wounds Never Heal"). Frost was her model as an aspiring writer and through her models her aspiring writer blog readers. She adds that, "We're always so impressionable as young writers" ("Some Wounds Never Heal"). Her

pronoun choice shows that she still acknowledges aspired writing and their molding from experienced authors. She also directly addresses them to find her answer.

She addresses the pathos toward her characters in her process. She asks, “But if I did not feel my characters so deeply, would you, the reader, feel them, at all?” (“Tears, and a Present I Can’t Deliver”). The answer is: likely. The emotions of the characters help influence the reader’s emotions. If she’s not in it, they won’t be. She blogs, “I finally gave up writing on the book for the day when I told myself out loud, ‘Be in the scene, Laurell, not just talking about it’” (“First Day Back in the Saddle”). She reminds readers of the important submergence in the scenes. She blogs again of the problem in detail and says, “I can’t seem to ‘see’ the scene in my head. I need to feel the seat of the car Merry is sitting in, smell the gunshots. Oh, yeah, you can smell a gun shot, if you’re close enough. It’s especially easy if a lot of rounds are going off. It’s the CORDITE, that you smell. It’s not a bad smell, or even acrid, just a smell” (“Slogging”). She envisions scenes by sensing the hypothetical surroundings, constructing the real feel of that world. She blogs, “I need to feel Merry’s hand around her sword hilt, and I don’t. I don’t ‘feel’ it. It’s just words on paper today.” She repeats its importance and reaches for the right descriptive feeling so it’s conveyed through the page. The effort that she takes to render accurate feeling of character and scene pays off in the end.

She reflects on her growth and success from an aspiring writer to a professional author that came from deviation and character construction. She says, “MISTRAL’S KISS comes out next week. Merry number 5. There was a time just after my first series was rejected that I thought I’d never sell another book. Now here I am editing book fifteen of one series, and days away from the release of a fifth in another series. Both

series are New York Times bestsellers. Both of them are mixed genre which I was told, years ago, did not sell. I lost track of the number of agents, editors and publishers that told me what I wanted to write didn't have an audience, would never be successful" ("Pages"). Even after she was rejected and her first series failed, she aspired to write what she wanted and cultivate her craft. The editing process inspires reflection.

### **Cut, Remove Self, and Reread: Revision**

One way that she adds to her editing process is by participating in a writing group. She adds, "I have been a member of ALTERNATE HISTORIANS for over ten years...I learned to be a better editor of my own work...We are one of the longest running and most published groups that I am aware of...It has been one of the special things in my life to call these people my friends, and watch us develop as writers" (McCune). Support systems such as writing groups help advance both aspiring writers and professional authors. Hamilton revises in at least three ways by cutting unnecessary written material, removing herself from the writing to refocus, and by getting caught up in her own reading when she's editing. Cutting leads to fluid reading.

At times, she cuts chunks of material. For example, "I cut sixty-two pages out of the book not long ago, which dropped me back down to under nine hundred pages...Sorry, not my choice, not my decision, just that the book changed on me, as they often do" ("No, Not Another Damn Sex Scene"). She's unattached to material or the time spent on it if it doesn't work. She makes the best decision for the work progression and reception. She also doesn't force material but let's the book evolve at its own pace. On another instance, "Then I sat there and stared at the screen and thought, why isn't this working? Why have I stalled out completely? Then the answer came to me. I had been

pushing myself for days to finish a scene, maybe I didn't need the scene... So, as much as I hated to do it, I dropped back nine pages, kissed them good-bye, and started this chapter over. I realized that everything I'd been attempting to put on stage could be found out in dialogue, and it moved the plot ahead a lot more quickly" ("Sometimes You Have to Give Up, to Get Going"). When it doesn't work, she doesn't hesitate to restart because it works better for the book and the series. Removing herself from the page for a while also helps the book and series.

If she's too stuck, she removes herself from the writing to return later. When she, "Edited on STRANGE CANDY... My head went really ugly during the editing, which it does sometimes. You know, nothing makes you happy, nothing seems right, and you hate it all. Every writer I know admits that sometimes you just can't see your own writing clearly... Both ugly and muse-driven bliss are cured by time... You usually find that the writing is neither as bad as you feared, nor as perfect as you thought" ("Ugly and Blissful"). When one steps away, then comes back to the writing their perspective changes. On one occasion, she posts, "Just reread the scene as I wrote it in the morning, and it's good. It's better than the rewrite I did in the afternoon. Both are good, but the first one's better. Aren't I glad that I didn't delete it when I did the rewrite? When my head goes ugly I often keep the old version so that if sanity returns I can recover it" ("Blessing, or Burden? Sometimes it's Both"). The act clarifies that removal from the work benefits both the author and writing. Since she took a break, the momentary feelings dissipated and she chose the original that fit best in that situation. This makes it more able to read again.

Rereading is an indicator of how good a work is. She often says, “I also find that I end up reading the book instead of editing. I start by trying to decide how I feel about this reworded sentence and end up pages later reading until the scene stops. I guess it’s a good sign that I can still get caught up in my own book, but it’s one of the reasons that copy edits are hard. I get distracted” (“The Copy Edits for *Seduced by Moonlight*”). If she gets caught up in her own work, then it shows that there are no hang ups that remove one from reading. She’s caught up in her own accurate sensory descriptions that the words flow smooth and the case might be similar for readers. She notes, “The best writing is rewriting. E. B. White” (“Paying the Piper, or I Hate Edits”). As she draws from a professional author, their emphasis on rewriting might influence other aspiring writers in their process. She exemplifies, “I got past one of the scenes today that I did so many versions of that I honestly didn’t remember which version I kept” (“Something”). She rewrites to the extent at times that she forgets the number of rewrites she’s done and which made the appropriate cut. This is where lists help.

For productive revising, she makes lists. For example, “I have a list of things that I know need fixing...You need fresh eyes that haven’t been dreaming, planning, writing, reading and rereading a scene for months” (“Another Step in the Process”). Revision is for fresh eyes. She also has other revision strategies. When she says, “I’ve done the first read through of the edits of *BLOOD NOIR*. I am now color coating the first round of sticky notes on the second go through. What do I mean by that?...Research changes are color coated in one color. Major scene additions a second color. Small changes another color”; thus, aspiring writers receive a thorough glimpse into her revision process (“What We’ve Been Doing Today”). She also applies revision outside of just writing. She says,

“Recreation means to re-create yourself. We all need time for that...I need to rediscover the things that helped me re-create myself, outside of books and writing. I think so many of us get so caught up in our work, and just surviving from one family activity to another that we forget ourselves...I think it’s a message that I need to look up more, out more, and remember that life is not narrow, but very wide” (“Done.”). As writing becomes narrow and an author removes themselves from the work for a bit, one must also remove themselves to gain a new or different perspective and broaden their horizon in order to maintain interest in writing work. She proves that most research comes before revision unless it’s filling in the missed research blanks after.

### **Questions, Interviews, Belief, and Substance: Thorough and Accurate Research**

#### **Options**

More inclusive research is another way that she develops and enhances her writing process. Hamilton engages in research for an accurate and believable series so that both she and the fans believe it. She says, “Not to mention I do more research for my fiction than most people do for their non-fiction, according to people in the publishing industry anyway” (Levitt). The Anita series began with a research question that she was able to explore through writing fiction. As an example, on the blog, she posts, “But before that I have to see what the dead gardens have in store for Merry and her men. How do you get someone down from a tree that has decided to make him part of the tree? Very bad ju-ju to cut a faerie tree. So what, you use magic, but what kind? How do you persuade a tree to give up a part of itself? How do you talk to a tree? I always get such interesting problems in my books. I’m going to go try and figure it all out” (“For Those of You Who Have Read the Last Two Blogs,”). These can be research questions. They

prompt her to find the answer for this fantastical situation that she created. Expert interviews also help make this possible for Hamilton's fiction.

She interviews experts on a topic that she has little knowledge of but needs to access though she writes of a fictive world with some realistic qualities to submerge readers in believability. She says, "I talk to people, I read about a topic, figure out what I need to know and then talk to people who have lived it or done it. You will see most of them mentioned in the Acknowledgements section in the front of the books. All these folk have been incredibly generous sharing their time and expertise with me" (McCune). She interviews experts for her series. As an example post, she tells readers, "If when I'm finished with this book and I talk to my experts and they tell me that, well, actually, night vision after all, I'll have to rewrite it, but if I'd tried to start interviewing people before the book was finished, the scene wouldn't even be finished. So I literally wrote, **NOTES; FLASHLIGHTS OR NIGHT GOGGLES**. I have almost a dozen questions that I will be asking my expert, but until I wrote the entire scene I didn't know what I needed to ask about" ("Hey, Everybody" 21 March 2004). She jumps into scene and notes the gaps in her knowledge that need to be filled in the story so that it feels accurate and pulls readers deeper into her fiction. She describes this in detail when she says, "Because the moment the reader catches you out in something they know about, you've lost them. If they know you're wrong on your guns, or cars, or bombs, then they won't believe immortal warriors, vampires, and werewolves. You've got to make sure your reality is as real as you can make it. Make the ground your reader is standing on so real, that when they look up and see fluttering fairies, they don't hesitate to believe" ("Tempted"). This comment attests to her realistic rendering of both character and scene through sensory imagination and

correct information. It educates them on the accurate knowledge so that they learn from the text such as actualities about night vision. This is worth relaying to beginning writers.

She also advises beginning writers about her research process. She posts, “The advice I give beginning writers is not to get bogged down in the first draft. The example I usually give is from my own first book, NIGHTSEER. There was a moment when I had to get her undressed for the night, and I had no idea what a society equivalent to about 1300 to 1400s would wear under their clothes...I just typed, ‘NOTES; WHAT DOES 14TH CENTURY UNDERWEAR LOOK LIKE,’ and kept writing. My early second drafts were almost entirely just filling in the holes of research questions” (“Taking My Own Advice”). She theorizes that if an aspiring writer is hung up in the writing on unknown specifics then the writing process stalls. She advises that they write so that they can call themselves writers, practice passionate writing and research the small stuff after the heat cools. She also exemplifies research that’s out of the box.

On top of her demanding writing schedule, she’s also involved in charities such as The Wolf Sanctuary. She says that they were “also kind enough, years ago to let me use their resources and help research wolves so my werewolves would be as realistic as possible” (McElroy). On the blog, she writes, “I’m always wanting to know what animals smell like, for the writing, and I think writing the wereanimals has made me more aware of that oft neglected sense; smell” (“Con Report: Constoga 11”). This is how much she’s willing to enhance her material, down to the smell of animals so that the reader smells it. This also attests to the different possible avenues of research that writers can pursue to enhance their work. For example, one time she wrote, “Today I needed color photos of tigers, these two books have them. But I needed more, and what did I find in my stack of

clipped pictures from magazines, photo books, and calendars? A tiger calendar, never opened from 2001. Why did I buy a tiger calendar years ago when I wasn't planning on doing tigers? No idea. But I've learned over the years that if I have a real desire to buy something research like that makes no sense to me, to just buy it" ("Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright"). Even a calendar serves to inform her accurate writing.

She accesses a lot of research to inform her and readers. "Several of you guys have asked where I got my terms for my weranimal nomenclature... Where did I get them? I did research not into actual weranimal societies. Sorry, folks, but it's fiction. But into mythology, folklore, heraldry, entomology, ancient languages, and the history of names... I remember now why I didn't want to answer this question; its a long answer, but so many of you had asked" ("Research for My Wereanimals"). She accesses six different sources for the right creature terminology. She even blogged of researching her own books as research to continue the series. She writes that, "I always learn something new when I try some of the equipment that Anita will be using. It's one of the reasons I try to do my research, because it adds. If I can hold it in my hand, try to wear it on my body, then when I next sit down to write, that bit of knowledge will be on paper, and you guys will get a more realistic world to play in" ("Celebrating, My Way"). She believes that research adds and shows from personal experience that even if it isn't used at that time, it can be stored for later to progress a series, spare writing time for the author and reading time for the readers.

Assistance also saves writing time. Research contributes to engagement with the material and authenticity of characters. Her assistant Darla posts, "Research. Looking up dead words. Words that are no longer in use but may still be used by the fey. Worse, is so

many words have changed meaning over the years. So while it had one meaning originally, it now has a completely different one so choices have to be made carefully” (“Childhood”). It also enhances the fictive world for readers and feels more accurate. She also adds, “Ireland. Yes, I have been researching ancient Ireland. Mostly for where Damien was probably last human. I have probably just about ran through an entire cartridge on the printer printing pages about Ireland for Laurell to peruse. And then going back for more in depth view and history on some areas. And may I just say, Ireland is really cool!” (“Childhood”). Darla shows readers that research appeals especially when it’s on a topic of interest.

She also uses her husband to help keep research interesting. She’s said, “I knew that I needed Jon to help me physical out the scene. Play act it with me... We discovered quickly that some of the injuries just weren’t possible. Wrong angle, wrong weapon, whatever” (“Guns, Play Acting, and More Research”). This shows the depths she’s willing to go to work out her scene. An author’s imagination can only go so far until reality sets in. There’s a balance and she achieves it through all-encompassing avenues of research. Her reasoning is that, “It drives me nuts when I’m reading along, and find that a writer obviously didn’t do any research. I’m okay with a problem here, or there, but when it’s blatantly obvious that they treated the material with no respect, it just ruins my enjoyment of the story. Research, research, research” (“Guns, Play Acting, and More Research”). Lack of research pulls the reader’s mind from the story causing an undesired reaction. She emphasizes the importance of research to her readers also exemplifying credibility. Also, “My vamps levitate and sometimes fly, but I see it as a type of energy use, that acts as lift to push against gravity. You don’t just stroll along the wall and

ceiling. It is bad biology. So many movies of late, just can't seem to resist a good visual, to hell whether it makes any sense. What happened to logic? What happened to research? What happened to thinking, why, or how, a thing works, not just can I do it" ("My Husband, Jonathon,"). She voices frustration in inaccuracy and fallacies of some mythical creatures. She proves that she cares to deliver correctness to her audience. Again, "I am so tired of watching monster flicks where just because it's vampires and werewolves, or whatever, that no one seems to care about biology, real mythology, real folklore, real history, real fighting tactics, real weaponry used in a realistic manner, and who decided that to be a vamp you have to have the long black leather, or leatherish coats?...I try to do for the clothes, what I do for the weapons. I research it. Substance over style, people, not style over substance" ("Jon's Underworld Rant"). Reality blending is possible through the amount of research that she conducts for more accurate series. She's an example of a staunch research advocate, which bodes well for readers and aspiring writers.

### **Relationship, Tour, Participation: Audience Construction**

Her audience was herself. Her fiction world interested her and translated to others. The self and research that she puts into her characters connects with readers and helps construct an audience for her that's at signings and online because they help finance her as long as she creates interest in her work. She's aware of her readers. Because of her pursuits, "Hamilton has forged an unusually close relationship with her fans, thanks to frequent readings, charity events and a blog she updates almost every day" (Levitt). Fans sense the dedication to her work and show appreciation by seeking that connection and relationship with Hamilton. Hamilton says, "My husband and I had done the blog for a year. I'd about decided to stop it, but the last con I did MARCON, so many people in line

at the signing told me they loved the blog. So many told me that they started their Internet visit with our blog every day, that I decided to continue it” (McCune). She would’ve quit the blog had they not encouraged her to connect with them. She influences a broad range of fans.

She doesn’t attract just one group of fans. She says, “I love my fans, because they are such wide demographics. They go from everything from teens to 50+...From the very beginning it has been a diverse fan group for me. With the new series starting up, it will be interesting to see what the fans think” (Brown). She shows emotion toward them and celebrates their diversity. Levitt says, “The majority of her fans, Hamilton is quick to note, are ‘the best in the world.’ She receives 100 e-mails every day and 100 letters per week; her monthly fan club newsletter, ‘News to Die For,’ has 3,500 subscribers. ‘I’ve lost track of the number of people who’ve told me they got out of an abusive relationship because Anita wouldn’t take it’” (Levitt). Anita’s real to the audience. She guides fans toward right, moral decisions to improve their lives. They find meaning and learn from her thoughts and actions.

The internet’s an outlet for fans to learn more from her. She says, “For me, the idea began with the impact the Internet had on my fan base...Darla Cook had done one of my Web sites as a hobby in maybe 1998 and I made hers the official site. Jonathan, who is now my husband, had done another one. At first it was just the Web site, then she started doing a newsletter and I started paying to print it off” (MacDonald). She’s dedicated to her audience. She adds, “Then we did Christmas cards and sent them out to fan club members, who absolutely loved it. Darla started doing fan letters because I couldn’t keep up with them” (MacDonald). Hamilton’s blog is a space where fan’s

questions can be addressed for efficient access and communication. She says, “People are really enjoying the T-shirts, the coffee mugs. They like being able to feel like they’re a part of the work” (MacDonald). They want to feel the work as Hamilton does. Some also want to meet Hamilton and she makes this possible for them to travel to her.

Those that don’t make it to the signings show it by purchasing her series and new releases. Her audience shows in sales which at one point are “Anita Blake, 15 books, over 6 million copies in print; Merry Gentry, 5 books, over 1 million copies in print” (“ComicCon Schedule”). She amasses an audience of millions. Her acclaim rises over the years. She posts, “BLOOD NOIR is number one on the New York times hardback fiction list...I know I should be all cool about it, and say something witty, but my honest first response when my editor Susan called to tell me, was, ‘You’re shitting me’” (“Blood Noir is #1 on the New York Times Bestseller List!”). She’s humble of her success and the hard work honing her writing process shows. She progresses since the rejection of the sequel of her second series, her deviation from genre and her deep characters show. Audience numbers show from tour, book sales, and even online.

Email is another indicator of audience construction. Darla responds to the mass on the blog. When Hamilton posted about embracing self, Darla responds, “We have heard from so many folks that they too are not members of the herd and Laurell’s post made them realize there is nothing wrong with them after all. The age range has been astonishing from early teens to late 50’s” (“Hi All! It is Darla”). Hamilton encourages individualistic fans, and the connection spans ages. Later, Darla adds, “Goodness, I don’t think any blog has generated as much mail as the one on being part of a herd... Be the wildebeest, be the elephant, be the gorilla, be the meerkat, be whatever you are”

(“Goodness I Don’t Think Any Blog Has Generated as Much Mail”). She reveals their quantity through their feedback to the original post and reiterates the message in her own words. The audience also responds to Hamilton’s moods. After a particular post, she adds, “This is a thank you to everyone who sent in positive messages last weekend. So many positive messages that the e-mail crashed three times. This is not a complaint, guys. Darla explained to me that the crash happened because of the overwhelming number of positive messages” (“Thanks”). She’s gracious to mailers and their sheer number affects her and her technology. The most common inquiries that she receives ask for more than she posts about the writing process. Darla writes, “One of the things we seem to be getting a lot of lately, is requests on how to make your dream of being a writer come true” (“Writing Help”). Aspiring writer’s questions accumulate until they’re addressed informing those that seek guidance in the writing world. She answers them with the best of her ability, which includes them in her process.

She also involves them in the process through voting. She requests that they vote for a character and she considers their choice. For example, “I’ll give you guys the opportunity to vote for which of the men you’d most like to see a one on one scene with Merry. I’m not saying you’ll get your wish, but I would be interested in which of the guys that we haven’t seen, or those we have, that you guys would be most interested in seeing on stage in a more complete manner. So write into the forum” (“A Rhys Question Answered”). This generates interest in her characters and active engagement with her material. And she adds, “I’m a little surprised at the Merry vote. Though, on the other hand, not surprised at all. Doyle and Frost have been fan favorites from the beginning. Rhys coming in a strong second, before Frost, is a surprise. No promises, but I’ll see what

I can do on Rhys's behalf in the next book. The three way tie between Usna, Barinthus, and Aisling was a surprise. Again, I'll see what I can do" ("More Questions Answered"). The audience surprises the author and influences her to consider decisions based on their feedback. A later post reads, "Laurell hasn't been able to settle on a stage name for Jason. One he uses as his stripper name. So we are opening it to a contest!...That's right we are asking you to name Jason's stage persona. The winner will be chosen by Laurell. The winner will also appear in the acknowledgements" (January 2, 2008 "Jason Name Contest"). Fans participate in the process. When they have drawings, thousands enter and again numbers arise. Such as, "We have 14,392 entries" ("Domestically Challenged"). There're many participant supporters. She asks for topic choices as well.

She asks for votes, and she considers their blog topic preferences. She says, "I'm beginning to be puzzled by the blogs. Some of you are really enjoying that I'm answering more fan questions. Other's want more writing advice or insight. Some are missing the little bits about our daily life" ("Blood Noir is #1 on the New York Times Bestseller List!"). She answers fan questions, aspiring writer's wanted advice, and writes about her life. She also desires to share more of the process with them. When she works on the comic for the series, she says, "Anyway, talked to Les, and said, or wrote, 'I wish I could share the splash page of Jean-Claude and Nikolaos with the fans.' It was such an amazing image. So, guess what? Les checked with everyone and said, 'Share.' So we're sharing" ("A Surprise for the Fans"). She involves them in the process and shows them a product so they can visualize the story and characters. This allows them to be on the same visual page, although there are those few fans that won't be on the same page.

Not all fans engage with her story and she can't help but address these fans in her blog. She tells them, "I finally realized that I'm not going to understand this noisy, unpleasant minority of my fans. Because you are fans. Only fans would spend this much time and energy on anything. It's a strange kind of fan, a negative fan, but you spend so much time and energy hating and complaining that some part of you must love the hate and complaining" ("Dear Negative Reader"). She realizes that her critics engage with her work in a negative form apart from the positive fan base. But the positive trumps the negative. She informs them that because some read since the beginning of her series that she shares with them often, "Maybe it's the fact that it's book 15 that made me want to share. Some of you guys have been with me from the beginning. You remember when no one cared. You remember when you said my name, they said, Laurell Hamilton, who?" ("One More Day Until The Harlequin"). She harkens back to when she began writing. Not only do the books help people through life but they and she reveal that the blog serves a similar purpose to remove them from their reality for a moment and experience something different. Because "Finding an audience is something you can't plan for, only hope for. I am lucky that what interests me, interests you guys...Life is big and messy, and exciting, and scary. I want my books the same way" ("Love and Hate"). She blends realities and she and the audience meet bringing their personal experience to the books to make connections.

### **Acquisition and Phobia: Digital Literacy and Technology**

Her grandmother encouraged story at a young age. MacDonald says, "Her grandmother always had plenty of 'bloody bones' stories from Arkansas to share with the wide-eyed Hamilton." And in a 2004 interview with Alisa McCune, Hamilton says, "I do

know from the moment I figured out how to read, I've loved books. Before I could read, I drove my grandmother crazy asking her to read to me. When she was too tired, or too busy, I would make up stories about the pictures. By second grade I was making up stories, verbally, and telling classmates...I was attempting to write down stories at twelve and a half." She started writing at a young age. She continues, "Between the age of thirteen and fourteen I discovered fantasy and horror...Not only did I want to be a writer but that was what I wanted to write. By seventeen, I was writing stories and sending them out, and collecting my first rejection slips. But why, writing, why words, and not rockets, or flowers? Who ever really knows why something captures their imagination" (McCune). Aspiring writers often face rejection. In a blog post, Hamilton says, "People ask when did you become a professional writer. Answer, when I received my first rejection slip, which would be at about seventeen" ("Once There was a Story"). Aspiring writers experience the profession through frequent rejection of their story submissions. Hamilton didn't stop learning her writing process.

Hamilton's an example of a generation with less experience in technology and digital literacy but it doesn't stop her from learning how to use it. After the blog began, she posted, "I will do my best, but in truth, the changes in the format are literally causing me anxiety flutterings. I don't joke when I say that I am a technophobe" ("Hey, Everybody"). Despite her technophobia, she continues to post. She doesn't let anxiety stop her from reaching her audience. She notes her advances with technology. Two years later, she says, "I have now graduated to reading on screen. Something I thought I would never do. I actually missed more tech than just my computer for writing. Perhaps I will

not be a leadite forever” (“Hey, Guys, We Got Power!”). Its efficiency grows on her and becomes a part of her life and influences the medium of her writing.

She follows by example and learns to attempt it. She says, “I tried to get on blogger this morning and it told me my cookie functionality was not working. Jon is still asnooze because he likes that last hour of sleep and I like an hour to myself in a people free house. But I’d just watched him fix the cookie problem late yesterday. I saw how he did it, so I thought, what’s the worst that could happen?...But the end result, you are reading. I fixed it myself” (“Cookies and Cake in Computer Land”). Since the education didn’t exist when Hamilton attended school, she acquired digital literacy through trial and error. She says, “I must say that working on the comic mostly via telecommuting with people around the country and out of the country has helped a great deal towards my technophobia. But also the MySpace page and the LKH forums and boards have helped as well. You guys and the comics have all helped convince me that maybe tech isn’t evil, it’s just differently organized” (“Cookies and Cake in Computer Land”). Social networking influences digital literacy through experience as she experienced story at a young age.

### **Journal, Private versus Public: Weblog Genre**

One of the features that Hamilton identifies is that she began the blog as a writing journal outside of her book tours to continue her connection with readers. She says, “This is sort of a trial run. My husband and I are thinking about doing a journal about the tour. But since neither of us has ever kept a journal for longer than two weeks at a time, we thought we’d practice. So, really, this is a journal about getting ready for tour” (“Happy St. Pat’s Day, and Special News”). It arose as a journal for public appearances and

events. On the blog, she mentions that “My agent, Merrilee, said I could only do the tour diary if I could stay cheerful. I tried, I really tried, but with less than a week to go I am loosing this particular battle” (“Insert Primal Scream Here...”). She alters her agent’s initial requirement. A few months later she says, “This is supposed to be a journal about the writing of the twelfth Anita Blake novel. But, of course, it will be about other things, too. Journals always are. Journal comes from the same root word as journey. This journal will be about the journey from the blank computer screen to several hundred pages of finished book” (“Trying Not to Give Away Too Much”). Her blog is the writing process journey, but also deviates from this.

On the off chance that she posts other than on writing, she still generates a strong response from readers, which is seen on the blog. For example, she writes, “I went today to pick an ornament off the tree, because I think it is a great idea. There was a woman there to do the same thing. We were standing there reading the different gifts requests, when she said, ‘Size twenty, isn’t that sad?’ I said, ‘No, why?’ Her point was that a size twenty listed for a girl was sad. My point was that it wasn’t sad. I informed her that the average size for women in this country from about age 15 to death is size fourteen” (“I Apologize Ahead of Time.”). She celebrates diversity. She supports her belief with a statistic to authenticate her position. She later writes, “I thought this blogger was supposed to be about writing. Specifically about writing the next Anita Blake novel. So I’ve tried to avoid things that were too far off topic. But the amazing response to the last blog entry I did, which had nothing to do with writing, and everything to do with the horrible attitude in this country about women and their bodies, has made me reconsider

what this blog is supposed to be” (“I Thought This Blogger”). Readers connect with her strong feelings and help construct her blog and what she posts.

This post illuminates her rhetorical stance on the blog. She writes, “My point is that so many people read my blog. So many people took my opinion and some will give it more serious consideration because of who I am...I find that kind of power to persuade both frightening and exciting. My hope, my most fervent hope, is that I use this louder voice that success has given me, wisely. That I always remember that fame is the by product, not the substance of what I do” (“I Thought This Blogger”). She’s honest about her intentions on the blog. She’s modest about her position as a published author and focuses on her writing though she considers topic deviations.

She makes frequent posts about her struggle between privacy and public. She admits that, “It is hard sometimes not to get overly personal on the blog. It begins to feel like a diary, and more private than it actually is. But it’s not private. It’s like the opposite of private. I’m not sure I like the opposite of private” and “The temptation on a blog is to treat it like a true diary, something that only you will see, but a blog is not a diary. A blog is a piece of writing meant to be published and shared. Sometimes I have to remind myself of that” (“Heroes Don’t Whine” and “Back at Work”). The blog is a journal, not a diary, but there’s a fine line between public and private information. Rogue fans might misuse personal information so Hamilton still protects herself and those affiliated with her. She posts that, “Too many people take the information and use it for cruel purposes. And strangers on the Internet are not always what they seem, and certainly not always as friendly as they seem. So I’ll air on the side of caution. How cautious the rest of you are out there in cyberland is up to you, but do bear in mind that Trojan horse is a term alive

and well in the modern tech. It's still a term that can mean something very bad" ("Don't Know What to Blog"). Technology presents new considerations. Hamilton answers fan questions and records her writing process, but filters her posts about life. Technology also presents Hamilton with new challenges to face to connect stories to readers but she continues the motivation to reach them and write. There are other motivations that can help writers.

### **Schedule, Page Count, Outline, Music, Imagination, and Balance: Motivation Techniques**

One of the motivators to write is a schedule. Hamilton wrote fantasy and developed expertise in it by dedicating time to a schedule. In another interview, she says, "Almost as soon as college ended I started trying to sell again. I set myself a goal of a short story every three months. My goal was to always have something in the mail and another story in the process, so I didn't hover by the mailbox. Yes, I was working full time in corporate America at that time. I wrote my first book by getting up at five in the morning, doing two pages, then getting ready for the day job" (McCune). This diligent work contributed to the continued growth in expertise from short stories to books. Without a schedule to dedicate to, the writing would be less frequent.

The schedule leads to fulfill writing expectations because the series led to them. "My agent says she's never heard of anyone having two best-selling series before," Hamilton says. 'I'm it.' Success has led to a punishing writing schedule: one new Anita book every spring and one new Merry in the fall. And as the two series have progressed, the books keep getting longer, routinely weighing in at 1,000 manuscript pages" (qtd. in Levitt). By enjoying what she wanted to write and read, Hamilton went from a short story

writer to a one thousand manuscript page author with two working series in a new genre. She says, "I'm writing two series, with huge books. I'm touring for both, which means there are some years that I tour twice less than six months apart, and I'm still trying to write the books, and have a family and personal life." (Levitt). She's so dedicated to her writing and audience that she sticks to her schedule. She says that once, "They canceled my tour just after 9/11 and I fought to go out as planned because to change our plans out of fear means the terrorists win. My husband and I went out and made every scheduled appearance. We will do so during this tour, as well" ("Press Release-3/20/03-Laurell K. Hamilton Tour"). Little holds her back from her work, even travel threats considering she's afraid to fly. It shows that she overcomes fears to support the books and connect with fans. Fulfilling her schedule prompted her to continue tour for her hard, diligent work.

Her motivation starts with a schedule to sit down and write almost every day. She says that, "People ask, how have you written so many books in such a short space of time? Answer, I feel like crap today, but I'm at my desk. I'm working. There are excuses I'll accept for missing work, but damn few of them. How do you write a book? By putting your butt in a chair and writing more days in a row than you miss" ("Hey, Everybody. Saturday was a Bust."). One of her first steps positions her in the writing atmosphere. She insists that "The most important thing for those of you who are serious about this odd job of writing, is a schedule of some kind. Almost any schedule is better than no schedule" ("Page Count vs. Hours Spent"). A schedule motivates writers to write and deadlines enhance them. She says, "It's called deadlines folks. I'm successful, beyond my wildest dreams, but it comes with deadlines" ("Something More Cheerful").

Deadlines motivate the finish of the writing race. She jokes, “I hope the next interviewer that asks me, if I only work when I’m inspired reads my blog. Of course, if they read the blog they’d know the answer to the question, wouldn’t they?” (“The Frost Scene is Done, Yay!”). Hamilton’s blog details her process. Whether she’s inspired, she’s motivated to sit in her chair and write pages regardless. With a schedule, there is also a page count goal.

These page counts frequent her blog. She informs readers of her progress so they know what to expect from her. She says, “For me a book gets into a rhythm, and that rhythm becomes a number of pages per day. But hey, whatever works for you. Twenty pages is my maximum a day, and eight is my minimum, so that means there must be an average, right? Between ten and fifteen pages is about average” (“Okay, Today was the First Day Back”). Though she doesn’t stick to a page count, she records an average and has a maximum when the writing meets rhythm. She says, “I’ve got eleven pages for the day. Two hours for eleven pages. Four, or more hours earlier today, and I got a page. One page. This kind of thing is one of the reasons it’s so hard to figure out how many days it will take to do a book. It just isn’t always logical” (“Done for the Day, or Would That be Night?”). She informs them that page counts aren’t consistent from one day to another. Even if one doesn’t meet their average or maximum, at least they’re making some progress rather than none. She’s since adjusted previous averages. She says, “Those of you who have read the blog for a while know that here too, on the page count, I usually beat myself up if I don’t do at least eight pages a day. Well, you know what, somedays there is simply no way to do it. I’ve scaled down to my page count of years ago, four

pages minimum” (“Sometimes Less is More”). Those who read the blog are well informed of her process. Page counts adjust as well as her process.

She adjusts her process, deviating from the prescribed norm to what works for her. Another motivator is an outline. She says, “I write entirely too organically to divide everything so cleanly. I also found the outline format they teach in most classes to be almost useless for me. Some writers swear by them, I’m more likely to swear at them. The character interaction is too complex to be divided up into neat bites...So in a bid to find a method to help me organize that works for me, and how I write, I have the binders” (“Organizing the Creative”). Her form of an outline is personal to her process. Just as page counts are subject to change so are the outlines, which lend to the writing a natural progression. If forced to conform, it’s inauthentic to the material. She says, “I’ve spent the last week organizing my notes, both on and off the computer, and going over my outline. My outline is very organic, and my characters are free to throw out huge portions of it, if they come up with a better idea” (“Other Writers”). Before writing her book, she prepares an outline and it changes depending on the needs of the writing or characters. She also uses sticky notes to motivate writing. She’s a contemporary example of self-regulation that promotes good writing. She writes, “So I’ve got my beginning, now what? Well, for me I need certain things. A gross of sticky notes in the colors I’ve chosen for this book. The sticky notes go on the wall above the computer. I put up bits of dialogue, plot, names, quotes, French phrases, anything and everything that seems needed” (“Other Writers”). She also engages in her form of extensive planning, information gathering, and note making by using her choice in sticky notes so that anything and everything that seems needed is visible at once and easily accessible. She says, “I put my sticky notes on

walls and cabinets, places I can see them. I find just seeing them daily helps me not forget them, and helps stimulate the imagination” (“Hey, Everybody. I’m off the Christmas Music”). She figures that visible notes are more accessible. Similar to the outline, if a sticky notes are unnecessary then it’s trashed. This bodes for her other strategy as well.

The blog records her personal approach of her process to even continue the series after a book is finished. She writes, “I finished CERULEAN SINS, as in typed THE END, and opened up a new computer file. In that new file, full of nothing but blank whiteness like being lost in a blizzard, snow blind, I wrote words. The beginning of the twelfth book. Sometimes I keep the beginning almost intact, but often it is thrown away later, when the rest of the book is written” (“This is Supposed to be a Journal”). This strategy promotes her perpetual writing. When she completes the draft of a book, she’s also at the start of the writing process for the next book. She says, “Other writers have asked me how I keep Anita’s voice so real and alive from book to book? My answer is the fact that I write the beginning of the next book at the end of the other, because at the end is when the voice, the world, the characters, are all at their most intense. This is the moment when every writer thinks they will never lose the feel for their character” (“Other Writers.”). She addresses the inquiry of other writers and gives an answer to their question about keeping a character’s voice consistent from one book to another. Music enhances the voice of a book.

She also listens to music for other reasons. She says, “When I feel stressed I listen to musicals...On the days when musicals don’t do it, I turn to Christmas music...My husband, Jonathan, and my friend and assistant, Darla, know that when they hear Nine

Inch Nails, it's a good day, but when they hear musicals or Christmas music, it's not a good day" ("Low Day, Today"). Certain selections motivate stages in the process and sometimes select music is associated with one scene only. She says, "A rather painful scene is ahead of me, and for the really dark moments, or when I'm really stuck, or both, its Christmas music" ("Hey, Everybody" 29 October 2003). When the writing flow is disrupted, she listens to Christmas music to motivate her writing process. She says, "I hate that, but sometimes the right music is absolutely essential for me. Other writers need absolute silence to write. Every one's different, it's part of what makes the whole process so terribly interesting, and so terribly frustrating. One of the reasons that you can't truly teach another person how to be an artist of any kind is that art is like love; what works for one person is a complete disaster for another" ("Confused with My Muse"). Although she acknowledges that this approach might not work for everyone, approaches are often discovered.

She motivates her imagination. She says, "when my new office gets done...it will be blue, and green. I first discovered that green worked as well as blue when my first husband used to take me to a store in California that specialized in telescopes...The store was painted an odd shade of pale green, like a minty color. Terrible color, I thought, but every time I walked into that place, I sat in a corner and wrote copious notes. It just flat did it for my imagination. Pale blue, and pale green, are the two surrounding colors that help me get ideas, and keep it moving" ("Hey Everybody. First Off,"). She notes what stirs her creativity and employs it for future writing situations. In a later post, she also says that, "For those of you who think I work in a dungeon or in the Addams family mansion, sorry, but I like light, air, and pale blue walls for my working environment. Lots

of windows, too. I really like a view. It just seems to give scope for the imagination” (“Scene Difficulties”). Regardless of expectations, she sticks to what works for her writing process. She adds, “My imaginary friends are in worse need of therapy than I am” and “People ask me why do people feel so strongly about your characters, your world, the answer of course, in part, is because I feel strongly” (“Hey, Everybody” 29 October 2003). One of the reasons that she’s able to convey and render her characters so effectively for her readers is because of their realness in her imagination. She writes, “I’ve learned not to argue with my subconscious on how much to put in this book, because every time I put my foot down, and say no, we don’t need it, I end up having to put it back in before the book can be finished. My subconscious often knows more of what is going on than I do” (“Okay, So We’re Finally Over Three Hundred Pages In”). This contributes to composition theory. When writing is forced, it can be inauthentic and fail to do the ideas justice. To get into character, she admits that, “I have, on occasion, dressed up for writing” (“Romancing the Scene”). She’ll attempt to motivate her muse for accurate characterization. The writing process is both work and play.

One of the largest motivators is her struggle to balance both work and play. She says, “It usually does, but since I’m always working, I need to figure out a way to balance work and recreation...I feel more relaxed than I’ve felt in ages. I think sometimes I get so focused on everything that has to be done, that I forget to do some things that never have to be done, but if you never do them, it hurts your heart, your soul, and your mind” (“Catching Up”). She reminds herself that play also motivates the hard work that she puts into her writing. She says, “Part of our partnership as a couple seems to be me helping Jon be more focused and goal attaining, and him helping me remember to enjoy the

process” (“Forecast. Optimistic”). One of her solutions is companionship. Her husband often recalls her initial motivation to write for joy and in turn she grounds him. She says, “Again, trying to get out more. I find that when I visit with friends I tend to be more refreshed for work next day...I know one thing, I need a better balance between work and play” (“Balancing Acts”). The blog reminds her to refuel the imagination while also building upon previous notions of what constitutes rest, relaxation and socialization. Story began as play for Hamilton when she was young and while she grew.

The genre of the blog allows for her to work and play with writing process apprenticeship in a public space though the technology came with challenges that she overcomes. Though Hamilton experienced challenges to her writing choices in college and initial publishing, she developed her writing process that began to deviate from literary and genre conventions. She constructed her author identity and created her character Anita Blake so she’s realistic to readers. She shares her unique process with aspiring writers. She shows them that she cuts, walks away from, and rereads her writing. She also shows them research possibilities outside of books. She constructs an audience of shared interests. She motivates: schedules to sit and write almost every day, page counts, organic outlines, colorful sticky notes, music, blue and green office colors, dresses up, and balances work and play. Hamilton aspires to write developing her process. She proves composition theory and studies her own for aspiring writers to attempt the same.

## DISCUSSION

Laurell K. Hamilton's apprenticeship presents a range of ways aspiring writers learn to write. She stands for lifelong learning of the writing process as it continues to evolve. She proves dedicated and hardworking toward her craft, which shows through a connection with audience and as much motivation as she can discover and engage. Aspiring writers can learn from the many parts of the writing process that Hamilton engages because they're recorded and accessible on her blog. First experiences with the informal blog also encourage comfortable engagement with the material so that it's more applicable to other's situation and lives. Hamilton's case is also useful because it connects with composition theory. An analysis of the features of Hamilton's blog during the five year period she has kept it reveal an emphasis on motivation theory, on character, and on audience. Much of Hamilton's practice reflects ideas in the literature from composition studies beginning with deviation from genre conventions.

### **Writing Models**

If she'd followed the rules, and not rebelled from college and genre conventions, she wouldn't have captivated millions. People wouldn't have been recommended to read her work and aspire toward writing and degrees in it. It is authors such as Hamilton that create and inspire the inner writer within. Application of the composition materials, reading of the five paragraph essay, and writing models applies to Hamilton. The pro from composition readings on the five paragraph essay is that it compels student writers to rebel from its limitations, which could be argued in at least two ways. By rebelling

from the form, it allows for students to discover themselves as writers and develop and establish their own personal writing identity. One of the positives of writing models is that it subconsciously pushes aspiring writers to create their own form.

Perrin references untraditional poets who are known because of their dissension from rules. Even Hamilton was kicked out of her writing program for being unconventional, 'corrupting' her classmates, and following her own path. Through creating their own set of rules, students are taking part, at an early point in their writing careers, in carving out their own place in writing. Some classes teach and exercise the 'imitate then deviate' strategy so that aspiring writers adopt the conventions and make them new in their own way. Since this becomes a positive experience throughout college education, student writers connect with the process. Hamilton's an example of an independent writer who embraces her sense of self, which influences people to embrace themselves and pursue writing exploration.

### **Author Identity**

Her experience relates to the personal vs. academic writing theory wars. The blend of both writing situations helps one balance, experiment with, and experience both identities. This writing is all-encompassing. Student writers often prefer not just one, but both identities. Some students complain of not having enough creative writing in the academic realm. This can make it difficult for one to continue their education when they don't feel that they have writing options, and academic writing is emphasized over creative writing. Hamilton attempted to embrace both identities in the academic setting but her program director discouraged personal writing such as genre, in her case. Hamilton's genre writing is to personal writing as literary writing is to academic writing

in the theory wars. Similar to King, Elbow says, “My theory thus far is that one learns in part by reading what they enjoy reading and write what they enjoy writing” (“Being a Writer vs. Being an Academic” 82). Hamilton relates because she says that she wrote what she wanted to read and now she’s a *New York Times* bestselling author. Readers sense the interest or enthusiasm of the author toward their work and might enjoy reading it as well. The academic world would be improved because people would be learning more from their engagement and enjoyment with their personal pursuits and course material. Personal, free and natural, writing could lead to expertise such as Hamilton’s.

### **Character**

The process begins when an author finds their identity and writes a first draft. Murray says, “When professional writers complete a first draft, they usually feel that they are at the start of the writing process” (“The Maker’s Eye” 670). Hamilton writes and then rewrites the first chapter of the next book soon after the previous book is finished because the voice is still alive. Murray says that, “Voice is the force which drives a piece of writing forward” (673). Hamilton listens to her characters. She imbued her protagonist Anita with qualities of herself. She creates what Lopate calls the I-character, or persona. She adopts the Anita persona to convey a similar experience for the reader so they can identify with the character through the strength and quality of her voice. Characters also have the power to influence her outline. They’re strong enough to affect the preconceived direction of the writing for a better reading. She becomes her own reader. If she reads instead of edits, then she constructs an engaged role for her audience.

### **Revision**

This connects to Elbow's notion of how good writers get published. He says, "Only if we like what we write will we write again and again by choice—which is the only way we get better. This hypothesis sheds light on the process of how people get to be published writers...People who get better and get published really tend to be driven by how much they care about their writing" ("Ranking" 200). People are more likely to care about what they're writing if they want to write and read about it. Wanting to write develops into practice which teaches better writing. Hamilton's Anita series relates to Murray's, "A piece of writing is never finished" ("The Maker's Eye" 674). If some view writing as perpetual, then Anita's an open ended, perpetual series since Hamilton enjoys writing and sharing it.

### **Audience**

If it wasn't for Hamilton's dedication to share her work with interested readers then they wouldn't search for her outside of her publications. They want to know more about her and be influenced by her. She's become a staple in people's lives by not following the rules, writing what she wants to read, and researching what she wants to know for accurate composition. The evolved experience is more meaningful to fans. They're able to become closer to the work that they enjoy and participate with her writing process through her blog. They can adopt her writing strategies and attempt their craft. Elbow acknowledges that, "discourse is naturally addressed to some audience" even if it is the self ("Closing My Eyes" 61). Miller and Shepherd share the notion that "no one ever kept a diary for just himself" (qtd. in Miller and Shepherd 13). There's discussion that those who write in a journal want to be heard. Though, Elbow advocates for ignoring them during the early stages of writing and to "direct our word only to ourselves or to no

one in particular” (“Closing My Eyes” 52). Flower believes, “so long as the writer is also the audience” then the writing is better than if the writer wrote with no audience in mind at all (37). The writer’s an audience, conversing with themselves and their text. Elbow says that, “writing invites...the dialogue with self” and that “the self is multiple, not single, and discourse to the self is communication from one entity to another” (“Closing My Eyes” 60-1). If Hamilton didn’t write for herself and foster reading, then fans wouldn’t seek her, if they didn’t seek her presence online then, as she said, she wouldn’t continue to blog. Readers need to suspend their disbelief. For example, the correct background research on the language that would be uttered by the fey affects the reception of the story and the world that Hamilton creates for readers to observe and learn. This consideration adds to what readers take away from the text.

### **Research**

Hamilton’s an example of an author that relies on sources other than print in conducting research for her series. Richard Larson says, “Much research relies upon books, but books do not constitute the corpus of research data except possibly in one or two fields of study...much research that is still entitled to be called humanistic takes place outside the library” (815). Doug Brent adds that, “In fact, if the definition of ‘research’ is extended to include searching for information in any place outside the writer’s own self, then almost any writing is research writing” (2). These two acknowledge and support research choices like Hamilton’s. She uses her findings to enhance her fiction. Even in fiction, she’s careful to find the truths to answer the questions that she raises. She strives for honesty and accuracy, which lends her credibility and makes her a more attractive author to continue to read and devote personal time to.

One could even learn new information from a fiction series. Research is interesting when a writer is able to gather from different types of sources especially when it's a topic that they want to know more about. If an aspiring writer wishes to improve their writing, Hamilton's an example of an author that presents her writing to other's experienced in the same field for constructive feedback as well. From the positive tone toward her writing group, they are collaborative rather than competitive, which connects to notions of comp theorists that collaboration increases motivation and competition is detrimental to it. These professional authors develop together by motivating each other's processes.

### **Motivation**

Zimmerman and Kitsantas quote the processes of professional authors such as Stein and Faulkner for novice writers to learn from. Hamilton's a source for aspiring or working writers to informally learn strategies for writing. In their chapter on self-regulation, motivation to write, Zimmerman and Kitsantas emphasize the role of the self in the process. These practices compile in the writer's mind to be more accessible during the writing process so that the writing progresses rather than stalls.

Blog readers glimpse behind the scenes what goes into Hamilton's process which proves more than some might initially conceive from just reading the published text. Her characters are so real to her and she cares so much for them that she refers to them as imaginary friends. She spends so much time with them that sometimes they affect her reality, for example, where she searches for their coffee mug, sees their mail, or even thinks about buying something for them even though she knows they're not real. She engages them by drinking their favorite drink even if it's not hers and embraces their senses. They have the power to affect her mood and fans connect with them, too. She

throws out many pages for complete accuracy and spends weeks editing. She writes one draft and then goes back to fill in the blanks. Once she rewrote a scene so many times that she forgot which she kept. One of her books amassed almost one thousand pages and she whittled it down to just hundreds. Fans will make art of her characters and give it to her at signings. She pursues all accessible sources of research to complete her work and make the fiction worlds as real and accurate as possible for readers to vicariously experience. She asks research questions, reads from many different sources, interviews experts, acts out scenes, buys calendars with pictures, travels to setting locations, and even smells animals. Her motivation strategies are unique and work for her. She keeps a notebook no matter where she is, makes an organic outline, sticky notes to her wall, color codes her office walls, lets sunlight in, sits in her chair, sets a schedule and deadlines, listens to different music to set the mood of scenes, writes the beginning of the next book after finishing one to keep voice fresh, attends a writing group, exercises, socializes, tours, describes writing metaphors, quotes professional authors, and blogs to fans. She shares on her blog for others to know, develop, and learn.

## CONCLUSION

Laurell K. Hamilton is an author that inspires millions which began through literacy exposure at a young age, interest that motivated practice, and creative rebellion. Composition theories help support her writing process first in interviews and then on her blog. She also contributes to and develops her own theories toward her writing process and makes information available to inquisitive others and aspiring writers to informally learn through her regular posts. She sheds light on a process that would otherwise remain in the dark to readers without the widely available and accessible digital avenue. She embraces diversity and individuality, constructing a diverse readership and potential writing community that develop upon motivation and writing as she does. Hamilton's blog celebrates writing by sharing knowledge and connecting emotion to the craft of exploration through and with words. Aspiring writers should take composition theories, experiments, practices, strategies, and developments from this case study of Hamilton's lifelong writing apprenticeship to write well and succeed. Aspiring writers can follow a similar path to cultivate their craft by revising, researching, and motivating as professionals have before and also find what works differently for their unique writing process as Hamilton accomplished. Read and attempt the writing conventions because they propel aspiring writers to position themselves apart from every other writer. Reading the process of the professionals, Hamilton's blog, or even this study could cause them to search for ways to write.

There's still thorough study to be conducted after this one because there are many working writers. As North acknowledges, even if future case studies of individual authors' writing processes differ, they only fill the portrait of the artist. Future studies can narrow the focus to one composition theory, theme, time frame, or the last half of Hamilton's blog especially since it still grows. For example, I'd like to read case studies about other horror, vampire, or fey writers such as: Stephen King, Anne Rice, Charlaine Harris, Stephanie Meyer, or J.K. Rowling even if they're studies similar to Berkenkotter's observation of Murray since these authors don't have writing blogs or maintain their own social network pages. In this regard, Hamilton's process is one of a kind. In case studies, I'd like to hear more about motivation strategies especially since it's a concern in composition classrooms. It's a large and unique theory. I'd like to see other case studies of Hamilton that this one didn't have the space to touch on in order to fill the knowledge of her as a writer.

Lessons for aspiring writers: Hamilton's blog records a decade of her writing process. Readers see the majority of what she puts into her writing and the return from such hard work. She shows them relations to composition theory and where they can experiment and develop their own. She acknowledges that what works for her doesn't work for everyone and that's why one must at least try it. At times, the same strategies work for her and at other times they don't. Her blog shows that processes also evolve, which isn't for the worst. She engages just about everything for her work so it's realistic and believable. She cares enough about her work and the reader's experience to do so. Aspiring writers should try to get into character, rewrite to reread, ask questions and pursue research, schedule writing, outline so there's a direction at the start, take notes and

make them accessible, write in a comfortable environment, recall the spark of aspiration that ignited the initial writing desire, and use the motivating words of published authors such as Hamilton for support.

As an aspiring writer, it's a surprise how much time authors spend on the work outside of the writing act. I've learned that the record of authors' writing processes is vast beginning with old diaries, collections of interviews, books on writing, and years of blogs. They prove comp theory and add to it. They funnel down to motivation. Identity, character, revision, audience, and research motivate writers. There's a breadth of practices and strategies to consider and keep in mind when writing. This process of discovery is perpetual.

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