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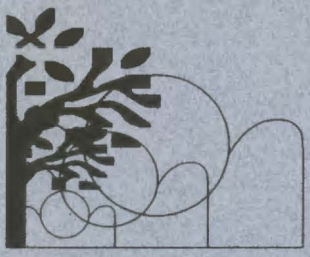

JAEPL

The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning

Serendipity:

Teaching for Accidental Wisdom

Volume 9 • Winter 2003-2004

The Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning

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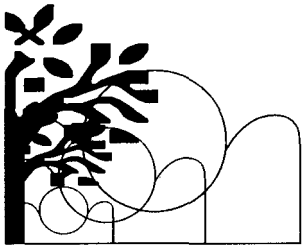

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JAEPL

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Editors' Message

Surrounded by the dead he had caused through his wanton murder of an albatross, the tortured mariner of Samuel Taylor Coleridge fame watches the water snakes beyond the shadow of his ghost ship and "blessed them unaware./The selfsame moment I could pray; And from my neck so free/The Albatross fell off, and sank/Like lead into the sea" (ll. 287-291). Without deliberately looking, he suddenly recognizes the beauty of all creatures and blesses them "unaware." The sailor experiences a serendipitous moment, and through that accidental wisdom frees himself from his self-created purgatory.

"Serendipity: Teaching for Accidental Wisdom" serves as the theme for our ninth volume of *JAEPL*. The essays in this volume reflect in various ways the felicitous union of chance and sagacity, emphasizing that the excitement of serendipity is a necessary dynamic in our teaching, reading, and writing. A term coined by Horace Walpole in 1754, serendipity is a combination of blunder and perspicuity. Walpole introduces the "very expressive word serendipity" in a letter to a friend; he derives the neologism from a "silly fairy tale" about the three princes of Serendip [modern Sri Lanka] who "were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things which they were not in quest of" (qtd. in Boyle).

A serendipitous discovery results when something important not sought is found. John Barth in *The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor* notes that "it [Serendip] could never be reached by plotting a course directly for it, but only by sailing in good faith for elsewhere and losing one's bearings" (504). But, in addition to losing your bearings, you have to have the wisdom to recognize the importance of what you discover. So serendipity depends on three elements: accident, a prepared mind, and the wisdom to recognize what one stumbles upon. Thus, we have Columbus's discovery of America, the rabies vaccine by Pasteur, and dynamite by Nobel, all serendipitous discoveries (Royston).

We open our celebration of serendipity with "Spiritual Identities, Teacher Identities, and the Teaching of Writing." Kilian McCurrie explores the accidental wisdom that results from the intersection of his spiritual and teaching identities, a fusion that fosters a pedagogy of "original blessing" wherein teaching begins with the individual student's commitment to self and community.

While teaching and spirituality both hold within them the potential and need for serendipity, happy accidents are also central to our textual explorations. Robert Root in "The Experimental Art" highlights the happy union of form and content in creative nonfiction. Regardless of our formulas, he argues, creative nonfiction is an experimental art, one governed by felicitous sightings that return our attention to writerly concerns.

Geographical as well as spiritual and textual travelers also make serendipitous discoveries as Candace Walworth recounts in "Women in Black." Traveling home from Naropa University where she teaches, Walworth comes upon a group of women all dressed in black, silently inhabiting a street corner in Boulder, Colorado. They hold a lone banner pleading for peace. This discovery draws Walworth into joining them and weaving their silent protest into the Buddhist activism at the heart of her belief system.

Serendipity is not just accidental discovery, whether pedagogical, spiritual, textual, or geographical. A central element of serendipity is preparation: the mind must be poised or prepared to recognize the wisdom that accident reveals. The essays by Laura Milner, Christina Vischher Bruns, and Kia Richmond highlight ways in which we can prepare ourselves for the grace of accidental wisdom.

In "Compos(t)ing Loss," Laura Milner helps up ready our minds and souls for healing in the face of deep loss. The metaphor of composting—the art of transforming decaying matter into rich and fertile life—serves to organize her essay in which she argues that writing helps students and teachers transmute pain and loss into acceptance and new beginnings.

Christina Vischher Bruns in "Encounters" explores the vagaries of literary theories and, in the process, stumbles over an insight that enables her to unify these disparate stances and shape a teaching philosophy. She argues that we can prepare ourselves and our students for literature by focusing on Martin Buber's I-Thou, a relationship that embraces the intersecting lines of text, author, and reader.

Returning to a disturbing moment in her classroom, Kia Richmond in "An Unspoken Trust—Violated" emphasizes the necessity of reflection in the life of a teacher. Beginning with a "successful" classroom lesson that catapults her into a consideration of the connection between our values and our teacher identities, Richmond calls us to a reflective stance, one that enables us to perceive the overlap between who we think we are and how we teach.

Finally, serendipity can be fostered in our classrooms by making spaces that invite happy discoveries, spaces that become wise places. In their careful study of nontraditional prewriting experiences in elementary grades, Carolyn L. Piazza and Christine Jecko in "Multiple Forms of Prewriting in Elementary Writing Lessons" point to non-mainstream strategies that enable students to draw on multiple literacies as they generate ideas in writing. They point to the ways in which art, role playing, music, dreamwork, and meditation can help students make their own happy discoveries.

Finally, we return full circle to community and spirituality. W. Keith Duffy in "Community, Spirituality, and the Writing Classroom" enriches the discussion of community building in the composition classroom by suggesting that community results when we allow ourselves to be "found" by another. Drawing on Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketcham, Duffy argues that a wise place is one which allows community to be as well as to be built, a realization that requires him to embrace an attitude of openness so that he, too, can be found by his students.

The excitement, lure, and reward of writing, reading, and teaching lie not only in what we expected to find but also in what we don't expect to find . . . but do. Our classrooms become richer sites of learning and our literacies become deeper when we teach for accident wisdom.

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Spiritual Identities, Teacher Identities, and the Teaching of Writing

Kilian McCurrie

In *The Secularization of the Academy* George Marsden chronicles the intellectual, religious, and educational developments that he believes led to the secularization of American universities. While Marsden and others have persuasively shown that our institutions became increasingly world centered as administrators and scholars pursued the aims and goals of the Enlightenment, this scholarship still remains blind to the influence of religion on teaching and learning, and, in a broader sense, the relationship between spirituality and pedagogy. Regardless of increasing secularization, universities remain infused with spirituality. Spirituality is the ancient search for meaning and connection to the sources of life, and, while institutions like church or university may express or connect people to the spirit, only people can be spiritual. Whether this search has led an individual to the lab, the pew, the psychiatrist's couch, or "all the above," our identities as spiritual beings influence our teaching.

My own identity as both a religious brother and teacher at a large state research institution, has given me the opportunity to ask myself questions about the alchemy of my own spiritual identity and the context of my work. This is not a question that only I have asked; my brothers in community also want to know how I can carry out my teaching ministry at any institution that is not Catholic.[1] Shouldn't finding work at a Catholic institution have been my number one priority on the job market? After all, wasn't Chaucer correct in observing that a monk out of his monastery is like a fish out of water? Of course, this opinion is based on the assumption that only a school with a religious mission can support the spiritual lives of teachers and students, and that ministry for the church can only occur within narrowly defined institutional parameters. The question of institutional identity does, however, have me struggling to figure out how visible a spiritual

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Until August 2003 Kilian McCurrie had been an assistant professor of English Education at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. He taught courses in the teaching of writing and critical issues in English Education. Currently, he is a member of the English department at Columbia College in Chicago where he teaches a variety of writing courses.

[1] I am a member of the Congregation of Christian Brothers, a Catholic religious community for men founded in Ireland in 1801 by Edmund Rice. As brothers in the Catholic Church, the focus of our lives is the living out of our vows (poverty, chastity, and obedience) and our ministry of education. Although we traditionally live and work alongside other brothers in institutions that we own, often a brother's gifts will lead to work in a variety of contexts. My work at Louisiana State University, for example, has given me the opportunity to do important work in a variety of contexts, but unfortunately I must live outside the community since we do not have established residences in Louisiana.

identity can or should be and how or to what extent the institution contextualizes the relationship between spiritual identity and the teaching of writing.

When I look around me at the state university where I teach, I am struck by the recent phenomenon of student athletes gathering for prayer in the end zone after a football game or the sight of the little white crosses students carefully placed on the marching field at our school to remember the anniversary of Roe v. Wade. I have asked myself why these sights make me restless and anxious. Do they highlight my own lack of visibility or witness? At least part of the answer to this question may lie in the differences between my own religious and spiritual tradition and the way students choose to express their religion and spirituality, but these feelings of discomfort also prompt deeper questions in me about the connection between my own spiritual identity and the ministry of teaching. Too often, it seems, this tension gets presented to me as a kind of dualism: Are you a monk who teaches composition or a composition teacher who happens to be a monk? Many writing teachers may find themselves trying to escape similar binaries that set in opposition a teaching identity and a spiritual identity, or perhaps more commonly, teachers are simply unaware of this tension. Since spiritual identity can influence the assumptions we make about our role as teacher, the relationships we establish with students, and the overall purposes for writing, it is important to understand the workings of the spirit. By reflecting on the intersections of teaching identity, spiritual identity, and the contexts of our work, writing teachers can re-see the agencies of teacher and student as well as the knowledge they produce.

Spiritual Attachments in the Teaching of Writing

In the space of my own classroom, I believe my identities as religious brother and teacher do productively fuse to create a pedagogy which serves the needs of my students, but it is not a pedagogy rooted solely in the scientism foundational to the university or articulations of Christianity that tend to create binaries between spirit and flesh or salvation and damnation. Too often these unexamined spiritual attitudes produce controlling metaphors in writing pedagogies that inscribe students as inherently deficient. Even critical pedagogy, which claims to save students by empowering them to read ideological codes, must cast student writers as blind, waiting to be shown how to see clearly. Bruce McComiskey's *Teaching Composition as a Social Process* makes clear the ways this pedagogy replays the sin/redemption metaphor. According to McComiskey, typical articulations of critical teaching often use a cultural studies model that requires students to apply a theorist's interpretive model to their own experience. This "model-the-author" approach – similar to Bartholomae and Petrosky's *Ways of Reading* – often ignores notions of the social grounded in writing theory and instead measures the faulty student writer against the enlightened cultural theorist model. Even curricula that use social context as a point of departure for the critical teaching of writing too often emphasize mastery of the relevant debate over student writing. While critical teaching approaches from Berlin to Freire have advocated student writing that intervenes in power relations, students may often see these acts of intervention as just another part of an academic initiation that promises to make them acceptable to the university. Other students experience the writing defined by critical teachers as little more than an academic game played for a grade. In either

case, McComiskey argues that students are not given the opportunity to experience writing as part of an authentic social process. This line of argument reveals that often "critical" pedagogy takes on the status of "objective" when teachers or students perceive it as grounded in a more rooted sense of being on the "right" side. This unacknowledged attachment to the "right side" is aligned with a spiritual orientation that places the teacher in the role of seer/prophet and students in the role of initiate or, worse yet, backslider.

In *Mutuality in the Rhetoric and Composition Classroom*, David Wallace and Helen Rothchild Ewald attempt to respond to these criticisms of critical pedagogy by bridging the gap critical pedagogy often ignores between the intended curriculum and the experienced curriculum. Wallace and Ewald focus on reviving the dynamics of the classroom itself to support a mutuality of knowledge-making among all members within a class: "Teachers and students share the potential to adopt a range of subject positions and to establish reciprocal discourse relations as they negotiate meaning in the classroom" (3). This theory offers both personal and social transformation through dialogic interaction in the writing classroom. By focusing on the creative moment of interaction with student writers, Wallace and Ewald do not assume assimilation or resistance to the status quo as a predetermined objective. They relinquish the drive to convert students so that they can be more open to the moment of interaction with them. They argue that this change in teacher disposition creates a classroom dynamic that promotes the integration and transformation of personal experience/knowledge and the teacher's representations of disciplinary knowledge. They conclude that without students' willingness to integrate their knowledge and experience with the teacher's disciplinary representations of knowledge, there can be no internally persuasive authority or transformation (5).

Pedagogy must be focused on teaching students to use language effectively to create knowledge, meaning, and community, but teachers must consider how these creations differ from the knowledge, meaning, and community that surround students. Valuing students' knowledge and experience requires teachers to venture into the frontiers where the self begins to fray and the subjective and objective flow into each other. Pedagogy at these frontiers requires a spiritual orientation not based on the sinner/saved binary but on the connectivity between students, teachers, and the knowledge they produce.

Reflecting the Spirit in the Teaching of Writing

The spirituality of teaching flows from the present but unseen connections among students, teachers, and knowledge, but this insight can only benefit writing teachers if they are willing to articulate and reflect on the nature of these connections. Reflection is a term that finds its way into many attempts to enhance teacher's professional development, but as Kathleen Blake Yancey has pointed out in *Reflection in the Writing Classroom,* without a more comprehensive understanding of reflection, it can often be reduced to a kind of facile or idiosyncratic activity (20). From a spiritual perspective, reflection is much more involved than merely thinking about something. The history of meditation and contemplation in the Christian tradition demonstrates that reflection is both a retreating, a turning back, and a future oriented practice that requires both action and waiting. The practice of communal reading during meals in monasteries and convents, for example, evokes the active image of chewing food and "chewing"

the reading, but it also suggests a more passive waiting, holding, savoring, and finally ingesting. The meditation practiced by religious was aimed not only at an aesthetic appreciation of the reading, but also at an intertextual understanding of the reading's implications for the present and the blessed future. The technology of writing extended this practice since it enabled the production of artifacts detailing this inner conversation, and while the specter of supervision in religious communities is often evident in these writings, many like Theresa of Lisieux used this writing as a way to question, understand, and celebrate her life. When reflective practice is thought about in these terms and not mistaken for simply the thinking through or thinking over of something, it demonstrates how writing may bring sustained attention to the vivid flux of our spiritual and teaching identities.

By reflecting on the metaphors of brothering and community, I have tried to articulate and shape my own pedagogy. The process of creating meaning in a religious community is also not solitary or closed, but rather evolutionary, continually enfolding new experiences. In *Illuminations of Hildegard of Bingen,* theologian Matthew Fox brings together the images and words of the medieval mystic Hildegard of Bingen to demonstrate the connection between early Christian cosmology and the formation of community. Hildegard attributes the evolutionary process of making meaning in community to the Word itself which is "living, being spirit, all greening, all creativity" (qtd. in Fox 32). This Word manifests itself in each member of the community, indeed, "in every creature"(32). Making meaning in a religious community cannot, therefore, simply rehearse a purifying dialect that demands displacement or substitution. By recognizing the Word present in each person and in creation, the communal process is collaborative, promoting growth and transformation. Writing, in this view, is an inward and an outward journey, committed to re-presenting the explosive unity that emerges from the centripetal and centrifugal forces at work in community. While our language does both conceal and distort as it reveals, writing and truth are not opposed but dialectical. Key to the pursuit of this inward and outward journey is the community, joined together to promote social/human growth through building trust and allowing risk.

Just as Wallace and Ewald create a mutuality in the classroom, one that precludes *a priori* assumptions of student deficiency, my own spiritual and communal understandings do not foreground the deficiency of students but the ample sufficiency present in each individual and the community. Drawing on the resources of creation spirituality, I rely on Fox's notion of "original blessing" to energize a dynamic between individual writers and their communities. Fox's theology acknowledges that we enter a broken and torn world, but we do not enter as blotches or defects. We are each original blessings (*original* 47). Just as this insight transforms the life and goals of community, it also suggests how my identity as brother could enhance more mutual relationships in the writing classroom. In this view, brothering becomes a way to escape one of the most troubling aspects of teaching: the impulse to reproduce ourselves in our students. The sibling metaphor of brother or sister expresses the mutual relationship we share with nature and the word. Substituting the procreative metaphor for the sibling metaphor expresses each individual's connection to the source of blessing. Understanding the metaphors of brother and community has been a powerful way for me to nurture the spiritual center of teaching and promote greater mutuality and growth in the classroom.

Pedagogy that flows from this spirituality concerns itself with a different kind of power: not the power of control or the power of being over or being under or the power of self-replication but the power of fertility itself. By rereading scripture and tradition, creation spirituality moves away from the preoccupation with personal salvation and instead focuses on the salvation and healing of the people of God and the cosmos. This vision of both connecting and believing can transform writing, responding, and revising. A pedagogy rooted in this spiritual tradition seeks to transform the social sphere by celebrating not just the benefits of personal contemplation, but also contemplation's relationship to the work of peace and justice. In a pedagogy centered on creation spirituality, time is not focused on either a lost past perfection or an unrealizable future perfection, but on the amplitude and fullness of possibility the present offers. In a larger aesthetic sense, this focus on transforming the ordinary in accord with our dreams and desires for a better world also reflects the spiritual impulse to enrich life as a whole.

Creation Spirituality in the Writing Classroom

In my own writing classroom I have tried to promote literate habits that reflect these beliefs. Developing students' ability to both create and understand textual effects requires teaching practices that value the connectivity between teachers and students, allowing multiple ways of speaking and listening. Logs, dialogue journals, webboards, workshops, small group work, or simple turn-taking can all emphasize the knowledge-making possibilities in community and enhance students' awareness of the conditions of their own reading and writing. Even making silence in our classrooms can be a powerful tool in bringing about and deepening the connection between writers and the mores of our world. Since a pedagogy rooted in creation spirituality must relinquish the always-already of a prescribed pedagogy or curriculum, the design of the course itself must also allow for an ongoing negotiation in which students help to define what genres they will write in, how disciplinary knowledge will relate to students' knowledge, how this knowledge will be represented, and what roles and identities are available.

In a case study I conducted in a learning community section of first-year composition (FYC), I came to see the significance of a teacher's spiritual orientation in the overall ecology of his or her classroom. The learning community program at Midwestern State University (a pseudonym) was a voluntary program that placed first-year students together in groups of 25 for three general education courses and a weekly learning community seminar. In the spring of 2000, I investigated the experiences of one learning community that I participated in as the FYC teacher. My data collection was initially designed to help me answer questions about students' writing in the general education curriculum. Through weekly log entries, the students in the learning community recorded the ways they used writing in core classes designed to promote critical thinking. What I found most surprising as I read students' logs, however, was not the ways they used writing in their core classes or the methods of their teachers, but the much broader influence a teacher's spiritual identity had on the development of student voice. Nick, for example, one of a group of males that occupied the back of class, thought of himself as something of the class clown. On the first day of class, he shared from his writing activity that "hey, I ain't first class, but I ain't white trash neither." The class laughed, seeming to expect this from Nick, but I found

his self-parody hid a far more reflective student, so while he enjoyed effecting the carefree/careless working class white student, his log revealed more. In the short writing activity that day, he shared the joke, but the rest of the entry shows someone else:

> I guess I know I'm a writer because at home I'm surrounded by people who just can't period, or read for that matter. The fact that somebody asked me to finish the sentence "I know am a writer because . . ." makes me think that maybe I will be a writer?

What became more obvious to me as I read logs like Nick's was that my initial focus on writing in the core curriculum ignored the space that individual teachers created with students and how this could influence how they saw themselves in relation to each other, the teacher, and knowledge. In the first log entry, I had asked students to finish the statement "I know I am a writer because. . . ." I have used this prompt as a way to help students begin to think about their identity as a writer, but I found that it also revealed to students something about me: I wanted to believe in them. Even if most students simply wrote about their positive or negative experiences of writing in high school, they would have the opportunity to complicate that understanding as the course progressed. By foregrounding in writing prompts the sufficiency as opposed to deficiency of students, teachers initiate a practice that reflects a deeper spiritual conviction about blessing and the connectivity of the classroom. Many teachers design practices that reflect a similar spiritual center, but, through a greater awareness of the relationship between spirituality and pedagogy, teachers can also persevere in the face of struggles.

A pedagogy based on original blessing does present many challenges, among them are those students who do not want to share authority or risk staking a claim for themselves in their own learning. This resistance is not the same, however, as that offered to critical teaching, which often characterizes resistance as a lack of critical consciousness. By beginning with students' own motivations, spiritual pedagogy uses the community of the classroom to bridge the individual and personal with the communal and social. Often this transformation of the personal and communal entails helping students re-see issues, not necessarily more clearly, but differently. This vision and voice are the grace that community offers: words that breathe, create, and transform. The critical consciousness Freire had as his goal was dependent on just such a notion of community, but we have struggled to articulate this part of Freire's work in our own classrooms. Freire does not simply offer teachers of writing a method or writing programs a curriculum or mission. He offers an overall disposition towards the human beings we teach: love that is tough, tender, and courageous.

Through his reading, writing, and interacting with others in the FYC course, Nick had been offered alternate ways to see his own identity, but he found it difficult to perform as anything other than the "class clown," someone on the margins of the class and the university. His struggle was not simply in *knowing better* (critical consciousness) – he shows in his first journal entry a desire to be something other than the class clown. The tough part, the part that requires a teacher's spiritual resolve, is helping a student like Nick *do better*. An awareness of the spiritual dimensions of teaching can sustain hope-filled, optimistic teachers and help them move past the disappointments that drive teachers away from the profession.

One of Nick's most revealing journal entries was part of his description of a revision activity in which students were asked to take a graded essay from another class and revise it. The Writing Program required this assignment as a way to help students connect learning experiences across classes. Nick's entry expresses his resistance, but it also demonstrates that the dis-connect he experiences transcends course content and reveals his sense of being personally and communally objectified:

> Why would I want to look at my Political Science paper again? I did what Dr. X wanted. He doesn't want to look at those papers again. How can I revise it? What's the point? These classes are just totally different. . . You know are names by the third class like some high school teacher, and Dr. X spends fifteen minutes of every class calling our names. We say "here." How are we suppose to write a paper for a guy like this and then revise it for your class?. . . Nothing like having to say "here". . .The same people every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. He's a philosopher, I guess. I only hope I can find the paper.

Nick's experiences mirror other students in their reluctance to engage with this revision project. For Nick, his resistance and pessimism are in part due to his precarious status in FYC. As a student who had at this point in the course yet to do one revision of a draft, Nick might perceive this revision project might appear to be a waste of time. Compound this with his belief that only FYC teachers actually care enough about revision to consider it, and it becomes clear that Nick will have a hard time gleaning anything from this revision experience. Nick not only resists the prospect of revising a paper from another class in our FYC class, but he also suggests that the revision assignment fails to account for the apparently very different ways he views his teachers. Nick contrasts my "high school teacher" habit of learning students' names with his political science teacher's apparent inability to learn names and reliance on the ritual of calling roll. For Nick, the working class student, the ritual of calling roll seems to reinforce his feelings of being an outsider, while my ability to call students by their names seems too reminiscent of high school. In the end, Nick suggests that the main difference between his teachers is the fact that his political science teacher is a philosopher, which may be his way of accounting for the different ways knowledge is made and valued in his political science class and FYC class.

Nick observed that the political science teacher, a "philosopher," wanted students to write arguments on some relevant current event "packed with claims and warrants" but to ignore other rhetorical concerns like purpose and audience. This a-rhetorical approach left students feeling that the purpose of this writing was simply to display a competency. Writing and teaching satisfied by these kinds of displays of competency flow from the spirituality of deficiency: the assumption that students lack intellectually and socially, which deficiencies the curriculum and teaching should correct. By listening to students, I found that many feared writing about the beliefs and values that form the criterion for argument because they were first and foremost unsure of what they believed, but even more importantly, students feared sharing beliefs because they expected the teacher to deconstruct them or, as one student put it, "mess with" them. In other words, writing about something they had little interest or stake in was a move to ensure

"self" preservation. In *Plato, Derrida, and Writing* Jasper Neel argues that this kind of vapid writing is exactly what students produce when they are writing in a Platonic system in which "truth" in writing is an impossibility. I view this disconnect as the consequence of a spirituality of deficiency that separates the knower from the known, teacher from student, and believing from doubting. A spirituality rooted in creation would not atomize these oppositions but fuse them, creating and re-creating our perceptions about teaching and learning. The political science teacher's writing assignment reflected the programmatic requirement that students demonstrate the ability to use claims and evidence when writing an argument. While claims and evidence are important in argumentation, the argument itself can only become important for students when it is seen as a complex rhetorical act. General education curricula can often present argument as a Platonic method for writing others "off," instead of a spiritual way of writing others and ourselves "in." Defined in this way, the argument practiced in our classrooms becomes a place to negotiate the inward and outward search for meaning as well as the consequences that meaning may have for action in the world. Teachers' spiritual identity has consequences, then, not just for their own classrooms, but for the programs and institutions within which they work.

Nick's log entry after a workshop on this revision demonstrates his ability to re-see argument and his stake in his writing when a class flows from a creation-centered spirituality:

> In workshop Kate said I could write a revision about gun safety. Brian told me my value sucked, but I was joking about that. I wrote this to argue for the freedom to own guns. I got a B- . When you asked us to think about a value I wrote I liked guns. I'm like Elmer Fudd or something. Brian and Kate got me thinking maybe I just want to be able to hunt. I don't have to write this paper defending every Rambo who wants a gun. I could write a paper about some of things people do to try to keep safe, and some of the stupid things I see guys do.

Nick did write a revision of the original argument from political science that reflected the way his workshop group was able to help him think about a more authentic purpose and audience. His revised argument reflected Brian and Kate's ability to see beyond Nick's public persona, to believe he could write a different argument, based on his values, beliefs, and experiences. While someone telling you that your value "sucks" may not sound profoundly spiritual, I think this log entry does demonstrate that our connectivity to others is vital in our attempts to revise. Nick's encounter in this response group helped him foreground his experience and enthusiasm for hunting as he addressed other students and informed them about the ways they can promote safety and responsibility. Both Kate and Brian showed that Nick could re-see his rather formulaic argument by considering his underlying values and personal experience.

Nick's account of this workshop is not unusual. Writing teachers and students are a part of these types of encounters everyday, but what this log does is highlight a slice of what it means to come to know through a deeper understanding of our inward and outward journey. Even in the great strides Friereian theorists/teachers have made in creating classrooms more open to the pressing social concerns of the world, they have often created critical pedagogies that ignore the relationships

they create in their own classrooms. In their efforts to promote the critical and rational habits necessary to a democracy, some teachers have left unexamined the ways the bonds they forge give students the confidence and trust to risk caring about things beyond their immediate world. The seeming banality of a log entry like Nick's might make some teachers cringe, and its lack of drama left me wondering how I would forge the narrative elements so necessary to effective qualitative research. In the end, however, I came to realize that these scenes demonstrate the powerful relationship between our deepest attachments and beliefs and the spaces we create for students.

Many students recorded in their logs how important it is to feel connected to other students and how this connectivity affected them as writers and learners. Often students digressed in their log entries, beginning with descriptions of their own writing and then commenting on the effects their relationships in the learning community were having, especially on their collaborative projects. Because this learning community had only five males, however, one of the male students, Haranu, a student from Africa, found himself in a group of female students who wanted to work in local women's shelter for victims of domestic violence. Haranu records his reaction in his log:

> I do like Maren, Erica, and Sue, but I think I should have been allowed to join the group with the other men. Would one group of five be a problem? I didn't ask in class because I did not want the women to think I did not want to be in their group. I do not understand why they want to work in the shelter and write on such a topic. This the kind of talking and sharing I am against. Don't they feel shame? I was embarrassed to listen. We don't talk about such things although they are very evil and wrong. The other men are doing their project with coaching soccer. I could really contribute to this group. I may still ask to switch groups.

Both his gender and cultural location made this group project a challenge for Haranu. Surprisingly, none of the other group members mentioned anything about Haranu's discomfort, and he never expressed his desire to switch groups to me. While Haranu expressed his resistance in this entry, his relationships with his classmates seemed to stall his attempt to switch groups. Haranu's work in this group shows students' ability to stretch outside their own foundations of self and knowing when they are able to connect to one another. Several weeks after his first entry on the collaborative project, Haranu writes in his log about some of the research the group has done and reveals a significant insight:

> This collaboration is very time consuming. We have not done this much for our other classes . . . Each group member is researching some area. I said nothing, just hoping to get through it. Maybe they wouldn't notice that I wasn't really interested or understanding. Yesterday we went to something called clothesline project. The women were very moved listening and reading stories written on blood spattered clothes of women who were beaten. I do not react as they do, maybe I come from a violent place? But when we were leaving the group thanked me for coming with them. This felt strange. I could not imagine why after all our time together in the

> learning community and our classes. I felt different yesterday, for the first time like I wanted to understand. And I definitely want our project to be good. . .

As I tried to make sense of this log entry, I was initially disturbed by the silence that Haranu had imposed on himself. While Haranu's doubt and resistance to this project could have been incorporated in valuable ways that could have made their writing more compelling, the generosity group members demonstrate is in itself quite compelling. Haranu's connection to his group members and their generosity ultimately creates a space for him to reconsider his position and re-see the issue from their point of view. No one in the group was questioning or skeptical of including Haranu in the collaborative project, and Haranu's moment of grace seems based on three women in his group thanking him. "For what?' he wrote. In their own way the group had moved beyond mere tolerance, seeing Haranu in the best, most optimistic way, and Haranu is motivated to ask himself if he can, in fact, live up to their image of him and really see the issue as they do. Community and the sense of self it promotes enabled Haranu to do the rhetorical work of positioning and re-positioning himself in light of his new experiences. Haranu's silence represented, not just his resistance, but also his generous attempt to listen and defer making final judgments.

Spirituality in the Thick of Things

Ignatius Loyola, the sixteenth century founder of the Society of Jesus, encouraged his followers to be contemplatives in action. This was his way of trying to make sense of our often contradictory longings and desires for both solitude and community. Teachers must also find ways to manage the overlapping of their spirituality, their pedagogy, and their institutional context. Whether we work in a secular or religious institution, whether our spiritual identity derives from a religious tradition or the psychologist's office, developing a more comprehensive understanding of these connections can help teachers re-see their own practice. A pedagogy rooted in Fox's idea of original blessing does not need a particular religion to be effective. It does, however, require a renewed spirituality. The damaging tendency of any institution, religious or secular, is to assume it must lead people to some predetermined place instead of accompany them on their journey. Teaching has too often made this mistake as well, but through the metaphors we create for connecting with and accompanying students on their journey, writing teachers can revitalize the life-giving mission of the university.

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The Experimental Art

Robert Root

Perhaps it is because we have for so long treated nonfiction as a "non-creative" or "non-literary" genre—somehow distinct from the fiction, poetry, and drama that are the focus of creative writing and literature courses—that we so frequently treat composition, the principal likely (though not inevitable) site for college students to generate nonfiction, as something other than a course in writing. The pendulum of composition studies cyclically swings away from attention on the writer and composing processes—into critical reading, problem solving, cultural studies, critical theory, interdisciplinary discourse—and then swings back toward writerly concerns again. But even when we aren't focused on these kinds of concerns, nonfiction in composition courses is often taught as if it were a predictable art, as if there were something about nonfiction that allowed its writers to evade or ignore the processes and strategies writers in "creative" genres go through. The rise of creative nonfiction and the emphasis on nonfiction as a "fourth genre" has helped draw attention once again to writing from the writer's perspective. It's helped to remind us that, like other forms of writing, nonfiction is not a predictable art. Nonfiction writers need to experiment with meaning and experiment with design. Nonfiction is an experimental art.

The nonfictionist needs to determine the design demanded by the material. We're dealing with reality here; the material of nonfiction is always what's already out there to begin with; it's not something we manufacture out of whole cloth but something we have to make sense of *by means of* an essay or a memoir or an article. We experiment when we explore the material, when we gather and research information, when we try to make connections and determine relationships and see what fits and what doesn't. The shape of a work of nonfiction arises from its subject; its design emerges as the *result* of composing rather than from *rules* for manufacturing it. It's rather like Michelangelo's approach to sculpture, starting with a block of marble, then trying to "liberate the slave in the stone,"—that is, discover what the marble tells him ought to emerge from the sculpting. In a similar way, nonfiction discovers its form in the subject.

Sometimes the form that emerges is a strict chronology or a step-by-step process. Sometimes it is a movement from particular to general or from general to specific. These are traditional patterns, to be sure, but no writer decides first to write in such a pattern and then locates material that will fill it; instead, the writer works with the material and tries to discern an appropriate shape as understanding unfolds. Sometimes experimentation will lead the writer to traditionally linear or conjunctive forms; I think a Montaigne essay, in its

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meandering stream-of-consciousness, is following the course of its own experiments with meaning.

But sometimes experimentation will lead the writer to a design so untraditional it seems never to have been used before. Nonfiction is an experimental art because it experiments with meaning as part of the discovery process and with form as part of the presentation process.

Reflection Rag

Let me offer up a specific essay to serve as illustration. Consider Christine White's "Reflection Rag: Uncle Joe, Roberto Clemente, and I." It begins with this short paragraph:

> So much happened so quickly after Uncle Joe died. The tempo changed. This new rhythm blew aside the curtain and there it was, this other order of things that lies beneath or beyond; a hidden stage where we play out our lives and strange bedfellows mingle and the orchestra plays ragtime and spirits stand in the wings, feeding us lines, leading us home. (206)

The essay is rich, complex, intricate, multi-faceted, and the paragraph is a prelude, an introduction, an overture, to the movements which follow. It is a segmented essay, and each segment has a separate title: "Exit Uncle Joe," "Enter Roberto Clemente," "Arriba! Arriba!," "What the Music Means," "Grace Notes," "Hypertime," and so on. The essay begins with a segment on the death of her uncle Joe, raised in Pittsburgh but dead in Colorado, and the succeeding segments follow an unpredictable thread of connections. While waiting for Uncle Joe's funeral, the narrator attends a ragtime music festival and hears a rag called "Roberto Clemente." It is named for the Puerto Rican right-fielder who played for the Pittsburgh Pirates while Christine White was growing up in Pittsburgh.

"Reflection Rag" goes on to explore the unexpected connections between the author, her uncle Joe Roberto Clemente, Scott Joplin, and ragtime music. It also serves as meta-nonfiction because it is also about the author's discovery of the synchronicity in these connections as she researches and writes the essay.[1] White explains that, though she doesn't entirely understand why, she feels a bond to Clemente and a bond with the rag named for him. She tells us,

> I believe the universe works this way. Uncle Joe and Roberto Clemente and I, we were destined to interact with one another. It doesn't matter that Joe died last week and Clemente died over twenty-five years ago and I'm still around. That's how time works sometimes.
>
> And, I am to find out, that's how writing is sometimes. I start out chasing one story and then another story starts to chase me. I want to write about Uncle Joe but Roberto Clemente jumps in. And then other forces become involved. You see how it is. Sometimes a writer has no choice. (209-10)

[1] The theme of Christine White's essay on synchronicity was sadly validated by life itself. After "Reflection Rag" was accepted for publication, Christine White and her husband were killed in a plane crash, as Roberto Clemente had been. As tragic as this event was, it was one about which Christine White had already said, "I believe the universe works this way." These circumstances give unsettling relevance to the themes of her essay.

At the end of this segment she writes, "I tell you, it's the best part of writing sometimes, to play hide and seek this way with the past, to live things again, and to write about ragtime" (210).

As the essay progresses, we learn more about Roberto Clemente, including the bias he faced as a baseball player and the circumstances surrounding his death in an airplane crash as he was returning to Puerto Rico; as it happened, Clemente died on Christine White's birthday. We learn more, as well, about Uncle Joe, including his difficult personality, his prickly relations with his wife and son, his finally coming to accept the granddaughter whose Latina mother his son was afraid to commit to because of his father's bias; we learn too about Scott Joplin and ragtime music, how the "left hand on the piano plays the stride bass or *basso continuo*, keeping the pulse with the characteristic *oom pah* beat" and the "right hand plays the melodies and rhythmically works against the left hand" (212), how Joplin's wife refused to have "Maple Leaf Rag" played at his funeral, how his final composition was titled "Reflection Rag."

In a segment titled "No Simple Stories," White writes: "I think it would be nice to write a simple story for once but there are no simple stories. Just simple ideas and little insights that take a long time in telling. All of this back and forth, the meshing of the pieces of this ragtime puzzle, is how I sort through the ideas that fill my head when I write" (218). Later she reminds us, "I told you before. We really don't choose our stories. When we're hot, our stories chase us until we catch them" (218). The essay illustrates this, as if it is being written while we are reading it.

As I've suggested, the theme of "Reflection Rag" is synchronicity, the obscure but suddenly obvious connections between people and objects and events that we do not realize are there, have been there all along. How can one make sense of synchronous connections? How can one work through them? David Roberts wrote the rag after seeing a film about Roberto Clemente and wanting to commemorate him somehow. Christine White explains that "As a musical composition, 'Roberto Clemente' has four musical themes or melodies. These themes vary and repeat, vary and repeat, returning with nuances and interpretations determined by the composer and the performer." Then she adds, "To me this sounds a lot like life" (222). To that response I can only add that, to me, this sounds a lot like her essay. She herself has written what may be the only nonfiction rag and made "Reflection Rag" not only the title of both a Joplin tune and her essay but also a new form for nonfiction.

Moreover, Christine White is right about the way that writing works. Think of her statement, "All this back and forth, meshing the pieces of this ragtime puzzle, is how I sort through the ideas that fill my head when I write"(218). For a moment, in your mind's eye, see that image of someone moving around pieces of a puzzle, experimenting with the placement of one piece in juxtaposition to several others, looking for a place where its shape locks against another shape or at least suggests the shape of a missing piece that might link the two pieces that she has. When we write, we are continually working with pieces of puzzles, and the rules say we can only play with what we're given—we can't manufacture linking pieces to complete the design; instead, we have to make sense of only the pieces we've turned face up. The puzzles you buy in a store are easier to complete—the pieces were cut deliberately from an original whole, made to go back together, constructed so that they fit back into their original mold. But

nonfiction puzzles never show you an original image that can be eventually reconstructed from the pieces you have before you; some pieces will always be missing, most pieces will never fit tightly with another piece, and the pieces you're trying to arrange into a whole may not have come from the same original— perhaps they came from several or perhaps from no entire original whole at all. You may not only have to experiment with where the pieces go in order to imagine how they fit together, you may also have to experiment with their arrangement in order to get anyone else to see what you see in the pieces before you. To help the reader understand what the writer feels about synchronicity and ragtime, it may be necessary to write a nonfiction rag.

The Malleability of Contemporary Nonfiction

One of the elements of contemporary creative nonfiction that makes it an experimental art is its malleability in the face of an author's need to invent a completely new design to accommodate the subject she's writing about; it demands as well that the author find a way to guide readers through a form they can't have had any experience with. A ragtime essay may reveal to another writer or to any reader the possibilities inherent in an experimental art—the way a structure may be created or invented to meet a need—but, unlike such formulaic models as the "five-paragraph theme" and the "inverted pyramid," it doesn't provide a template, a boilerplate, a ready-made mold to be filled.

Contemporary creative nonfiction abounds in examples of idiosyncratic experimental forms. Some, like Nancy Willard's "The Friendship Tarot" or John McPhee's "The Search for Marvin Gardens," are so distinctive and individual that they are unlikely to lead directly to anyone else's work. What are the chances another essayist will find it appropriate to invent a tarot deck and imagine a reading in order to tell the story of a friendship, as Willard does? What are the odds of another essayist needing to alternate between a board game and a tour of the city its based on, as McPhee does between "Monopoly" and Atlantic City?

Other essays suggest an interplay that seems obvious enough that other writers may be prompted to experiment in their own ways with its design. For example, Wendy Rawlings opens her essay called "Virtually Romance: A Discourse on Love in the Information Age" with a series of epigraphs about time, the Internet, and relations between men and women and then provides a scene of a man and a woman spending time together as the consummation of an Internet relationship. From that segment she braids together three strands—a series of excerpts from the couple's e-mail under the heading "Cyberspace," a series of reflections on online romance under the heading "Tempus Fugit," and a series of scenes from various states of mind in various states ("Abiding, Utah")—and concludes with sections on how to buy a personal computer and how to snorkel in the British Virgin Islands. The crots or segments are short, the braiding or interlocking linkage tight, and the sad and funny chronology is clear, but rather than narrate a story in chronological sequence or argue some thesis drawing on the example of her own experience, Rawlings experimented with form in order to discover one that matched the reality of her subject.

Or, to take another example, Rebecca McClanahan is similarly experimental in the essay "The Riddle Song." The title refers to an old folk song which begins with a series of enigmatic statements ("I gave my love a cherry, it had no stone/I

gave my love a chicken, it had no bone/I told my love a story that has no end/I gave my love a baby with no crying"), then questions those statements ("How can there be a cherry that has no stone? . . ."), and finally explains the statements ("A cherry when it's blooming, it has no stone . . ."). Except for the story ("The story of I love you, it has no end"), the statements end up being about bringing forth life. McClanahan weaves together scenes from different times in her life involving birth, death, childhood, motherhood, generations of women interacting with one another, all threaded through the lyrics to the folk song. As in countless other contemporary examples, the pattern of this essay is determined by the pattern of the experience, the juxtapositions and associations and sympathetic vibrations of accumulating knowledge—as is the pattern of Christine White's essay.

Teaching an Experimental Art

I've been stressing the uniqueness of Christine White's essay partly because I want to insist on its problematic value as a model for other writers. By "problematic" I mean that no one else should sit down to write another nonfiction rag (unless ragtime is as essential to the theme and the structure of the essay as it is in White's). I once used an excellent student narrative about a drunken party in her hometown as an example for my first year composition class of powerful storytelling—characterization, dialogue, narrative arc, reflection—only to get from them a collection of haphazard stories about behaving badly while stoned. One of the ways we all respond to what we read is to link it to our own experiences; this is the great power of memoir and personal narrative—as memoirist Patricia Hampl says, "You give me your story, I get mine." It's good to find a text that triggers connections with what has meaning for us, but it's problematic to use the text simply as a template for recording those connections. Students trying to link family death, celebrity death, and popular music in imitation of "Reflection Rag" are inviting disaster that isn't unique to ragtime essays—imitating "Once More to the Lake" by E. B. White or "Politics and the English Language" by George Orwell or "Living Like Weasels" by Annie Dillard can get them into the same trap. What I want students to appreciate about any of these essays is the way the form is constructed to lead the reader through the content the way the writer her- or himself understands it.

The unfolding "narrative" of "Reflection Rag" follows the arc of the author's encounters with these synchronous connections and her blossoming awareness of their significance or meaning, rather than the chronology of events according to the dates when they occur. In its forward progress her essay emulates the piecing together of the puzzle she talks about, but it also emulates the multiple layers of the typical rag—what she calls its "syncopations, broken rhythms, and shifting accents," its "melodies and countermelodies," its "embellishments" and "grace notes." By experimenting with the content of the essay—the disparate subtopics, the varied strands or movements or motifs—she experiments with creating an appropriately reflective form, the nonfiction equivalent of the matching of lyrics and melody in an ideally-composed song. I want students to take away from a reading of "Reflection Rag" an appreciation of what experimenting with meaning and design can accomplish, the art and power of the essay. I want them to understand that an essay needn't only march relentlessly forward from beginning to end; an essay can also dance. My primary motive for stressing the uniqueness

of Christine White's essay is my hope of encouraging the uniqueness of student essays. Too often the goal of writing courses and writing textbooks seems to be the achievement of the predictable, but a writer's real achievement comes when she or he writes an unpredictable paper, a paper only she or he could have written, a paper unique to that writer.

Predictably, perhaps, there's no predictable way to teach an experimental art except experimentally. One notion that has appealed to me over the years is what the columnist Tom Wicker calls, "assiduous string-saving" (49), by which he means the continual jotting down of notes and observations about topics of personal or professional interest, creating a pool of references that may be drawn from when needed. It intensifies the kind of associations writers often make from memory (as when I hearken back to a misguided use of a sample essay in a composition class from years ago or when I link one essay I've read with another). Lists and notes and clippings build webs of associations that may be completed by fruitful connections further along. The Detroit columnist Jim Fitzgerald used to keep a folder of notes and clippings and go through it looking for associations between seemingly disparate items to leap out at him and inspire an exploratory essay. The poet and essayist Sydney Lea often asks students to look for topics in two separate journal entries. In either case the writer has to trust that the subconscious mind will recognize associations that are in some way important to the writer and that the process of composing from those premises will lead to further discoveries. There are no formula for entering this kind of composition and no possibility that a detached, disinterested writer will achieve anything this way. It requires ongoing engagement and the expectation that experimenting will lead to discovery.

Another way of experimenting with associations that I've used with students, particularly when I've wanted to help a class write segmented essays, is the creation of a heuristic grid. For the most part students who read segmented essays, which make up a large percentage of contemporary published essays, will intuitively gravitate toward the form, but it's also useful to emphasize the range of possibilities by specifically teaching segmentation. I'll ask students to draw horizontal and vertical lines on a sheet of paper to form nine to twelve boxes, and then, in a freewriting activity, enter into the boxes as many associations with a topic they've chosen as they can think of—vignettes, anecdotes, images, literary (including musical and cinematic) allusions, family or historical parallels, and the like. Clustering and mapping exercises can have a similar effect. What are the personal, artistic, social, psychological associations they make with their topic? What kinds of evidence and references connect to their central image or event? If whatever they're thinking about is their subject homepage, what hyperlinks would they attach to it and where would they take the online reader? If the reader were invited to leap from one section of the grid to another and then to another, in what order would they arrange the items on the grid? what would they discard? what would they add?

Yet another way, even more visually oriented than these first two, is to talk about different ways of reading images. I use photographs as heuristic devices a great deal in my own writing and have carried the habit over into my classes. I have scanned into the computer a World War II photograph by Robert Capa of four people gathered around a Sicilian shoeshine stand and an image of Jan van Eyck's Adoration of the Lamb (Ghent) Altarpiece, a polyptych of multiple panels

depicting the Last Judgement, the earthly paradise with worshipful saints, and the figures of Adam and Eve, and shown both to my students. The Capa is the kind of photograph we're most accustomed to, one unified image recording a single moment in a single scene; the van Eyck, divided into separate panels juxtaposing single figures with landscapes and group portraits and differences of scale and emphasis, demands an associative, cumulative reading. On the computer I have been able to remove panels from the frames of the Van Eyck altarpiece and substitute for some of them images from the Capa photograph, suggesting that there is more than one way to represent the event, more than one level of meaning that can be depicted in the images. We discuss what images we might find to fill the blank panels in this "Capa Polyptych" depending upon who we are and how we might relate to the images we already have—if the Sicilian scene represents what might be seen by a reporter or researcher, the panels would be filled with something different than what would be placed there by someone seeing it as a participant or a descendant of any of the people in the scene or an individual who has lived a similar scene. The images in the panels are equivalent to segments in an essay; when we realize that, we are ready to begin experimenting with the essay as we have experimented with the multi-paneled altarpiece, substituting prose for pictures.

Some essays are snapshots, candid pictures; some are studio portraits, formal and posed; some are polyptychs, arrangements of various images that create a collective, multi-faceted whole. Before you can experiment with form, you need to have an awareness of how flexible the form of nonfiction can be.

Living in an Experimental World

We are all accustomed by now to read the world as texts and to use the patterns of those texts to tell our stories. So, in our nonfiction, we draw upon the repetitions and patterning of quilting; the flashbacks, flashforwards, close-ups and crane shots, cross-cutting and split-screen editing of film; the multiple-voiced alternation of first person testimony and omniscient narration, stills and stock footage and dramatizations of television documentary; the framing of photography; the juxtapositions of hypertexts and anime and comic book art. Although writing classrooms and textbooks seldom acknowledge it, nonfictionists have been doing this for a very long time.

The world we and our students live in is routinely, often outrageously, experimental. We come to know that world by association, juxtaposition, disjunction, intuition, experimentation, much more than we know it by logos, linearity, conjunction, formulation. By experimenting with nonfiction, we aren't rejecting formulas that would have produced a more predictable result—the only predictable outcome of writing in formulas is that the writing will be formulaic. The only predictable outcome of writing experimentally is that the writer will be more engaged, committed, and challenged by the writing, and those are the qualities in the writer that most predictably generate better writing. When we experiment with nonfiction, we are simply doing nonfiction the way it *needs* to be done because nonfiction is an experimental art.

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Engaged Buddhism & Women in Black: Our Grief Is Not a Cry for War

Candace Walworth

5:15 p.m., Oct. 10, 2001: I had just left work and was headed west on Canyon to pick up a Nick-N-Willy's pizza for dinner. On the corner of Canyon and Broadway in front of the Boulder Municipal Building, an unexpected silence and stillness caught my eye. The silent stillness was dressed in black and female. Among the 80 to 100 assembled women were friends and colleagues. I recognized a familiar nose and a beloved head tilted to one side.

I was stunned and delighted. Who were these women? What were they doing? What was their purpose? Their message? I rolled down my window to hear what they had to say, but this was a feast for eyes, not ears. No petitions to sign. No candidates to promote. No initiatives. No money to raise. Except for a lone banner that I couldn't read, the customary signifiers of social action were strikingly absent. I was taken aback by the powerful collective presence: a steady, alert gaze and relaxed posture. Were these women practicing street-corner standing meditation? Drive-by communion? Performance art?

The light changed from red to green, and reluctantly I accelerated to keep pace with the congregation of buses, trucks, and homeward-bound motorists. But something had shifted. Eighty local women publicly demonstrating silence bounced the post 9-11 commentary out of my brain. I was touched by an unwritten law of social and spiritual action: once you've been touched, you desire to touch.

The next day I ran into friend and colleague Anne Parker whose silhouette I had seen in the twilight.

"I saw you on the corner of Broadway and Canyon last night. What *was* that?"

"Women in Black."

"What's Women in Black?"

Women in Black started in Israel in 1988 with a small group of women protesting the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Jewish and Palestinian women stood together at a busy intersection in Jerusalem once a week. Women in Black caught on, stretching across scores of war zones to Australia, Canada, Europe, and the U.S. In Boulder, two local women organized WIB by getting on the phone and calling friends. They decided if no one else showed up, they would simply stand together on the corner of Canyon and Broadway from 5-6 p.m. on Wednesday evenings. But others did, and continue to, show up.

5:15 p.m. Oct. 17, 2001: I'm standing on the corner of Broadway and Canyon dressed in black coat, pants, gloves, and boots. The driver of a US West truck leans out the window, grins, and waves. A woman with a crying baby in her arms hurries to the bus stop on Broadway. Two women in black toting backpacks walk across Broadway. The woman next to me steps to her left while I step to my right, making room for the newcomers, exercising the permeable boundary between "actors" and "audience."

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A half-hour passes. My eyes are tired. The tension in my eyes reminds me to *experience* the tension and notice the placement of my attention. Am I grasping at something, trying to produce an effect? Do I believe this action ought to produce a result, sound an alarm, or wake someone up? I discover a cluster of thoughts revolving around the belief that social change requires agents whose actions produce or instigate change. As I relax my eyes and rest my gaze half way between the traffic and the earth in front of me, I notice a subtle shift from an aggressive desire to change others to awareness itself. Gratitude and appreciation arise.

For the next half-hour my attention comes and goes, wandering to the war in Afghanistan, experiencing anger, returning to the sound of buses and trucks grinding gears, occasional horns honking, sensations of cold in my hands and feet. Breathing in. Breathing out. Branches of nearby trees against the pink sky catch my eye. Their presence reminds me of the power of roots, of standing still, and of Pablo Neruda's poem:

> And now we will count to twelve
> and we will all keep still. . .
>
> For once on the face of the earth
> let's not speak in any language;
> let's stop for one second,
> and not move our arms so much . . .
>
> If we were not so singleminded
> about keeping our lives moving,
> and for once could do nothing,
> perhaps a huge silence
> might interrupt this sadness
> of never understanding ourselves
> and of threatening ourselves with
> death (qtd. in Amidon and Roberts 394)

After 9-11 I had distributed the poem to my classes, but I had not found a way to embody, *to live,* the poem. Inadvertently I had relegated the poem to art, something to read and appreciate rather than to call to social activism deeply rooted in contemplation. "Art offers a bridge between thinking and doing because it is at its best a little of both, whether it remains in the galleries or gets out on the streets. Art isn't supposed to be practical, but it's great when it is," writes activist and art critic Lucy Lippard in *A Different War: Vietnam in Art* (118).

For me, Women in Black has been such a bridge between thinking and doing. I had been thinking about how to speak out against war as a response to terrorism when the silent vigil of Women in Black shook me with a bolt of beauty and the gift of unexpected stillness. WIB offered me, the activist, an affinity group with which to stand for peace and me, the practitioner, a regular time and place to practice being peaceful, doing nothing with others, interrupting grief and sadness with a huge silence.

Saturday morning, February 16, 2002: I'm headed down Arapahoe to return overdue books to the Boulder Public Library when unexpectedly I make a right onto Broadway heading to Canyon, taking the scenic, sacred route to receive the blessings of the Women in Black intersection and its trees who will stand still long after I have departed. Since October I have driven through this intersection

many times, sometimes lost in thought, "singleminded about keeping my life moving," suddenly reminded to turn off the inner radio, the nearly continuous stream of commentary I often mistake for me.

In times of war, small actions ripple through our communities, creating new forms to help us find our way. We name and classify these actions: art, social action, spiritual practice. But before we name them, they work on us, leaving us momentarily undefended.

Buddhist-Inspired Social Action: From the Streets to the Classroom

Often I do not know the woman in black standing next to me. She may be Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Pagan, or atheist. She will, of course, have her own understanding of the significance of WIB both personally and politically. Because my interest—both in life and in this paper—is in the relationship between Buddhist practice and social action, I have identified four aspects of my WIB narrative that characterize social action informed by Buddhist practice. From there I explore contributions of well known Buddhist teachers and activists and offer examples of how Buddhist principles and practices can operate in the classroom. The final section is a review of engaged Buddhism in action.[1]

1) Start with Yourself

My eyes are tired. The tension in my eyes reminds me to experience the tension and notice the placement of my attention. As I relax my eyes and rest my gaze half way between the traffic and the earth in front of me, I notice a subtle shift from an aggressive desire to change others to awareness itself. The willingness to investigate our own hearts and minds is basic to Buddhist practice. Honest meditators with an activist orientation would, I think, agree with Joan Tollifson when she says, "One of the shocks of meditation practice has been to discover that all the behaviors and attitudes that I hated 'outside' are residents of my own mind as well: the same reactive, defensive, conditioned processes have been going on in me as well. There is no 'other' to blame" (qtd. in Friedman and Moon 23).

In the abstract I'm committed to being in the present moment and experiencing the truth of things as they are; in reality I am often upset, inconvenienced, and even outraged by "what is." The trick of practice is to keep returning to the here and now, mustering the courage to experience my own anger, fear, helplessness, and insecurity—noticing when I seek out a target in my immediate family, across

[1] While the focus of this paper is socially engaged Buddhism, I think it's important to note contributions of socially engaged leaders of diverse spiritual traditions. Mohandas K. Gandhi, perhaps the most well known spiritual social activist of the twentieth century, was a devout Hindu. Gandhi's close Muslim associate, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan (also known as the "frontier Gandhi"), led the Pashtun people who live on the Afghan-Indian border on the path of nonviolent civil disobedience. Socially engaged Christians such as Septima Clark, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks helped end legal segregation in the United States. The Trappist monk and widely acclaimed writer Thomas Merton engaged issues such as civil rights, nonviolence, and the nuclear arms race from a hermitage in Kentucky. Under the leadership of Rabbi Michael Lerner, the journal *Tikkun: A Bimonthly Jewish Critique of Politics, Culture & Society*, continues a long tradition of Jewish activism. The January/February 2003 issue of *Tikkun* features an article called "Activism from the Heart" which includes contributions by eleven diverse activists.

the hallway in the English department, or in an abstraction reachable only by proxy, like the US military.

Starting with yourself includes paying attention to your sense perceptions: touching, tasting, smelling, hearing and seeing. My grade science teacher, Mr. Conrad, showed up one day with a candle and a book of matches for each member of the class. The experiment he proposed for his rambunctious bunch of eighth graders was that we each light a candle and sit quietly observing as it burned. It's the only time I remember in elementary school, high school, or college where a teacher guided me in "bare attention" – open, non-interfering awareness of the phenomenal world. I doubt that Mr. Conrad would have called his experiment "mindfulness practice" or practice in "not knowing," but I'm sure he hoped we would notice the difference between our assumptions and direct experience. I remember slowing down and becoming still, not because I wanted to but because the flame held my attention in a way I hadn't been held before. My attitude of boredom and exasperation disappeared as I participated in the miracle of fire. The flickering, alive quality of the flame reminded me that I too was breathing and that this was worthy of my attention.

Many Buddhist-based practices involve heightening awareness of our physical presence; thus, many classes at Naropa University begin and end with a simple bow. We start with ourselves: feet on the ground, backs straight, hands resting gently on thighs, and shoulders relaxed. Bowing is a way of acknowledging our basic presence and the presence of others. It's a gesture that gives us a moment to drop the speed of our lives, a moment of doing nothing together before doing something together.

2) Notice Gaps, Silence, & Stillness

On the corner of Canyon and Broadway in front of the Boulder Municipal Building an unexpected silence and stillness caught my eye. The silent stillness was dressed in black and female . . . . Except for a lone banner that I couldn't read, the customary signifiers of social action were strikingly absent. I was taken aback by the powerful collective presence: a steady, alert gaze and relaxed posture. In the late-seventies if you had suggested to me, the political activist, that stillness and silence could be the ground for activism, I would have scoffed. I had very little experience with silence as anything other than something imposed from the outside. Silence equaled "being silenced" and "speaking out" was the antidote. Like many feminists, I agreed with Adrienne Rich that "Where language and naming are power, silence is oppression, violence" (qtd. in Belenky 23). It didn't occur to me that speech nourished by silence has different qualities than speech intended to influence or persuade.[2]

I was visiting one of Dee Coulter's Cognitive Studies classes at Naropa one

[2] For an in-depth investigation of the relationship between silence and expression, see George Kalamaras's *Reclaiming the Tacit Dimension: Symbolic Form in the Rhetoric of Silence* and for a side-splitting critique of negative ideas about silence and ways of nurturing silence in the classroom, see Mary Rose O'Reilley's *Radical Presence: Teaching as Contemplative Activity.* Anne Klein in "Mindfulness and Silence" from *The Meeting of the Great Bliss Queen* writes that "The silence of mindfulness comes from a capacity of mind, not a failure of speech. This capacity, moreover, can be intentionally, deliberately, cultivated [. . .]. The silence of mindfulness is not a means of communication, not another form of speech, but a deep listening" (83-84). Klein's Buddhist perspective on contemporary feminist theory may also be of interest to readers.

day when Dee asked that we form two circles. She invited those for whom public speaking was stressful or anxiety provoking to sit in the inner circle. Anyone not in the inner circle became a member of the outer circle, a circle that agreed not to talk but to listen while the inner circle spoke. I placed myself in the outer circle and found myself both irritated and intrigued, irritated with the pauses and gaps where "nothing happened" and intrigued by the pauses and gaps where "everything happened." Most of the inner circle spoke in hushed, barely audible voices, requiring an unusual level of attention. By reversing the usual speaking-listening dynamics, we collectively created space, a welcome silence not usually encountered in public discourse.

In meditation practice we learn to pay attention to the space (gaps) between thoughts, not to make thinking prima donna but to practice "resting the mind" rather than feeding the mind. Naropa faculty Lee Worley joined one of my classes recently to give us a taste of Space Awareness practice.[3] We stood in a circle for about five minutes. As we stood, Lee guided us:

> Pay attention to the space inside you . . . in front of you . . . behind you . . . to the sides . . . above you . . . and below you . . . . When you find your attention wandering, come back to your body. When you feel restless and want to wiggle or giggle or scratch your head, see if you can just notice it and put that awareness into your body.

Slowly, Lee directed us to begin to move through the room, asking us to "keep your awareness of space and body as you move." Space Awareness practice is available to us anytime or place; paradoxically, one of the benefits of this practice is that we see how rarely we are at home in our own bodies while engaged in the ordinary activities of daily life.

3) Practice with Emotion-Thoughts

For the next half-hour my attention comes and goes, wandering to the war in Afghanistan, experiencing anger, returning to the sound of buses and trucks grinding gears, occasional horns honking, sensations of cold in my hands and feet. Shortly after 9-11 the front cover of *The Turning Wheel*, a journal of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, carried a photo of four women dressed in black with their backs to the camera, their arms linked around one another's shoulders and waists. On one woman's back sat the bold caption "Our Grief is Not a Cry for War," a reminder that when we're willing to experience our grief and anger, we don't need to turn it outward in aggressive action against others. The Dalai Lama, Tibet's leader in exile, describes the relationship between world problems and emotions in this way:

> World problems also cannot be challenged by anger or hatred. They must be faced with compassion, love, and true kindness. Even with all the terrible weapons we have, the weapons themselves cannot start a war. The button to trigger them is under a human finger, which moves by thought, not under its own power. The responsibility rests in thought. (Eppsteiner 5)

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[3] Lee Worley's book *Coming from Nothing: The Sacred Art of Acting* includes a chapter on Mudra Space Awareness. Dee Coulter's audiotape catalog and selected articles are posted on her website at http://www.kindlingtouch.com.

Intellectually it's easy to agree with the Dalai Lama that anger cannot be overcome by anger, yet to touch anger rather than to get angry or get angry at anger—mine and yours—takes practice.[4] Prompted by a paper her son wrote on "Thermal Pollution from Nuclear Reactors" in his freshman year at Tufts, Joanna Macy, Buddhist scholar, activist, and systems theorist, undertook an intensive study of nuclear proliferation. The more she learned the more overwhelmed she felt by the apocalyptic implications of her study. Like many of us, she unconsciously opted for depression and denial. Seeing clearly was too painful. Too overwhelming. From the down-under place, Macy developed what became known as Despair and Empowerment work.[5] By choosing contradictory words to name her work, Macy challenges a common assumption: if I allow myself to feel despair at the state of the world, I will become immobilized, paralyzed, disempowered. To the contrary, Macy's intention is "to acknowledge and explore our deepest responses to threats to life on Earth, in ways that overcome numbness and paralysis and open us to the power of our interconnectedness in the web of life" *(Widening Circles 214)*. I was first introduced to this work in the early 1980's at a time I did not want to experience my pain or, for that matter, anyone else's. Ten years later when I re-encountered Macy's work, I was ready to explore this basic Buddhist tenant: to experience compassion for others, we must first experience our own pain.

Mr. Conrad's assignment to observe the flame of a candle provoked mild emotional resistance in his students, mostly annoyance and boredom. I suspect that *JAEPL* readers bring texts that evoke strong emotional reactions into the classroom: novels, short stories, and essays that depict the tremendous suffering humans inflict on one another. Among the novels I teach is Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, which portrays the intersection of race, class, and gender in the life of eleven-year-old Pecola Breedlove. In the afterword to *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison reflects on one of her challenges as a novelist: how to keep from dehumanizing characters who have hurt or failed to help Pecola (211). In the same chapter in which Cholly rapes Pecola (his daughter), readers learn about the neglect and abuse Cholly suffered as a child (132-63). By showing the causes and conditions of Cholly's behavior, Morrison connects us with his humanity. As readers, we face the same choice as Cholly: can we create a gap between an act of violence and our response? Once hurt and poised to retaliate, can we stop, be still, and

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[4] Many Buddhist teachers, who include a sizable number of psychologists, emphasize practicing with emotions. I recommend Thich Nhat Hanh's *Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames* for working with the emotions of everyday life. Feminists who would appreciate reading a Western woman's perspective, see Rita Gross's "Anger and Meditation" in *Being Bodies* edited by Lenore Friedman and Susan Moon. "The point of feminism is not to fight wars but to alleviate the suffering caused by conventional gender roles. Practice can tame the anger and unleash the clarity of feminism so that communication is more possible," writes Gross (101).

For a series of conversations between the Dalai Lama and Western scholars on the subject, see *Healing Emotions: Conversations with the Dalai Lama on Mindfulness, Emotions, and Health* edited by Daniel Goleman. To explore the overlapping and non-overlapping domains of psychotherapy and meditation, see Jack Kornfield's Chapter 17 ("Psychotherapy and Meditation") in *A Path with Heart*.

[5] Macy has collected many of the exercises from the Despair and Empowerment work in a chapter called "Taking Heart: Spiritual Exercises for Social Activists" (*World*).

actually experience our pain?

To work with the strong emotions that many students experience while studying *The Bluest Eye*, I adapted an exercise on compassion from Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese monk, poet, and activist. Each student selects a character from the novel who is especially difficult to stomach and then writes *as that character*: "I am Cholly, I am Mr. Henry, I am Soaphead Church, I am Geraldine. . . . " [6] Almost without exception, my students and I have found "the despised" within as well as without.

4) Abandon Hope of Fruition

Do I believe this action ought to produce a result, sound an alarm or wake someone up? I discover a cluster of thoughts revolving around the belief that social change requires agents whose actions produce or instigate change. One of the trickiest states of mind for an activist is the desire to produce results, to change something. From there it's easy to slide into aggression and manipulation, attempts to force a particular outcome, admonishing others to change their views, to mend their ways. The first tenant of the Zen Peacemaker Order, an international organization of activists, is "not knowing." Bernie Glassman, one of its founders, explains that bearing witness to suffering must be followed by letting go. He describes bearing witness and letting go as a continual process, an antidote to burn-out and self-righteousness characteristic of activism at its worst. In *Bearing Witness: A Zen Master's Lessons in Making Peace,* Glassman writes,

> In the Peacemaker Order we don't ask ourselves what are the right methods of handling conflict. Instead we try to approach the situation with no attachment to ideas or solutions. Only then can we really bear witness. And as we become each situation that arises, as we find in ourselves the place of suffering, illness, or despair, the healing arises. (88)

Pema Chödrön, an American Buddhist nun, reminds us that we can act decisively without attachment to the outcome of our activity. Chödrön writes:

> It's important to remember, when we're out there nonaggressively working for reform, that, even if our particular issue doesn't get resolved, we are adding peace to the world. We have to do our best and at the same time give up all hope of fruition.[. . .] When circumstances make us feel like closing our eyes and shutting our ears and making other people into the enemy, social action can be the most advanced practice. How to continue to speak and act without aggression is an enormous challenge. The way to start is to begin to notice our opinions. (112-13)

Whether we're trading stock options, baseball cards with kids, or ideas with students and colleagues, we can simply notice when our opinions take over, leaving us with little awareness of others or ourselves. Once we notice where we are (caught in our thoughts about how things ought to be), we can return to "not knowing," to space itself. As activists and academics we have been trained to quickly fill in the gaps of what we don't know to avoid discomfort and

[6] For Thich Nhat Hanh's meditation "on the suffering of those who cause us to suffer," see *Peace is Every Step* (83).

embarrassment. Shortly before she died of cancer, a friend of mine joked, "I'm happy to say, I *don't know* where I'm going or even *who* is going. I'm stepping beyond the knowledge of Western science. How many times in your life have you been able to say that?" The practice of "not knowing" continues as long as we do.

In *The Un-TV and the 10 MPH Car,* sociologist Bernard McGrane explains his work with "applied meditation" or "liberation sociology." My favorite of his classroom experiments is called "un-occupied, un-employed," which could be seen as a solo version of Women in Black. McGrane's instructions to students are simple and straightforward: Do nothing for ten minutes, preferably in a busy place and "see what you can see" (13).

Not unlike the experience of meditation or my experience standing with Women in Black, McGrane's students found that while their bodies could stand still, their minds were occupied, restlessly seeking escape or entertainment. By breaking a taboo—the social expectation that all activity should be "productive"—students reported experiencing fear and anxiety. According to their teacher, they began to question where "self" ends and "society" begins, tasting what Bernie Glassman calls "bearing witness"—simply *being with* or *becoming* each moment, each situation. Bearing witness, the willingness to take action while letting go of the demand for a particular outcome, is at the heart of engaged Buddhism.

Engaged Buddhism in Action

The term "engaged Buddhism" is attributed to Thich Nhat Hanh whom Martin Luther King nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967.[7] Nhat Hanh's many books describe the ground for Buddhist social engagement as mindfulness. Mindfulness is a quality of attention we can bring to each moment: washing dishes, reading a poem or a student paper, or standing on a street corner protesting war. For Nhat Hanh, activism is simply an extension of mindfulness practice in daily life. During the Vietnam War he formulated the precepts of the Order of Interbeing (*Tiep Hien* in Vietnamese), which provide a compelling example of how Buddhist precepts apply to social action. For example, the precept "Standing Up to Injustice" expresses the desire to "transcend all partisan conflict" while at the same time exposing the truth concerning unjust situations, enumerating the causes of injustice, and proposing measures for removing the injustice (*Interbeing* 39). The precept "Social Justice" focuses on "bringing to our awareness the pain caused by social injustice" and the importance of not "profiting from human suffering" (43-44). Rather than siding with the North or the South during the war, the *Tiep Hien* monks viewed the suffering of the North Vietnamese, the South Vietnamese, and the Americans as identical, thus expressing the Buddhist perception of interdependence.

[7] For a genealogy of the term "engaged Buddhism" and an analysis of the dimensions, challenges, and possible directions of engaged Buddhism, see Donald Rothberg's "Responding to the Cries of the World: Socially Engaged Buddhism in North America" in *The Faces of Buddhism in America* edited by Charles S. Prebish and Kenneth K. Tanaka. Also, see Christopher S. Queen's excellent anthology *Engaged Buddhism in the West* and Ken Jones's *The Social Face of Buddhism: An Approach to Political and Social Activism*, especially Part Five, "The Rationale and the Forms of Buddhist Social Activism" (193-224). For "Critical Questions Concerning Engaged Buddhism," see the final section of Donald Rothberg's essay "Buddhist Responses to Violence and War: Resources for a Socially Engaged Spirituality."

Where Nhat Hanh uses the word "mindfulness," Robert Aitken Roshi, a co-founder of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, uses the word "practice." Aitken describes engaged Buddhism as "practice within or alongside poisonous systems" (229). Practice (or mindfulness) refers to bringing our attention precisely, yet gently, to the moment.[8] Aitken does not define what he means by "poisonous systems" but, based on his other writings, he could be referring to widespread environmental destruction, military solutions to diplomatic problems, or homophobia. Another articulation of the relationship between poisonous systems and practice comes from Zen teacher Phillip Kapleau:

> More than any previous society in human history, capitalist industrial society has created conditions of extreme impermanence, terrifying insubstantiality, and a struggling dissatisfaction and frustration. It would be difficult to imagine any social order for which Buddhism was more relevant and needed. Surely Buddhists should be sharp and active critics of all social conditions and values that move [. . .] humanity to increase pain and suffering, greed and violence. At the same time, they must remain compassionately responsive toward the individual men and women who drive others and are themselves driven by their own undisciplined impulses. (qtd. in Kaza and Kraft 244)

Aitken, Kapleau, and Nhat Hanh identify "self" and "world" as co-arising, not separate from one another. In his remarks about how Buddhism contributes to a culture of peace, Aitken includes "practical organizing in the Buddhist spirit to ameliorate suffering and to challenge covetous and exploitative systems" (qtd. in Chappell 93).

To challenge covetous and exploitative systems, Western Buddhist practitioners have created organizations such as the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, the Zen Peacemaker Order, and many environmental organizations ranging from the Dharma Gaia Trust, which raises money for Buddhist-inspired ecological restorative projects in Asia, to the Nuclear Guardianship Project guided by Joanna Macy. The religious studies department at Naropa University inaugurated a Master's degree in Engaged Buddhism "to couple contemplative practice with training in social engagement, a combination designed to tame fanaticism in the activist even while it arouses engagement in the potentially complacent contemplative" (Simmer-Brown qtd. in Chappell 118).

Buddhist practitioners have written memoirs that intimately depict the nuances of lives dedicated to activism and contemplation. In *Dreaming Me: An African-American Woman's Spiritual Journey*, Jan Willis vividly portrays the moment she stood poised either to join the Black Panther party or return to Nepal to study with her Tibetan teacher, Lama Yeshe. She chose Lama Yeshe (124-29). Joan Tollifson's *Bare-Bones Meditation: Waking up from the Story of My Life* provides a fascinating exploration of one woman's journey to reconcile her Buddhist practice with activism on behalf of the disabled (she was born without a right hand), Central American solidarity work, and lesbian-feminism. To explore racism, sexism, poverty, and compassion, *The Shambhala Sun*, a journal inspired

[8] For further discussion of practice in everyday life, see Joko Beck on "What Practice Is Not" and "What Practice Is" in *Everyday Zen: Love & Work*.

by Buddhist practice, published a dialogue between scholar and activist bell hooks and Pema Chödrön ("News You Can Use"); to examine loving kindness practiced in a painful world, *The Sun* interviewed writer and activist Alice Walker who discusses, among other things, her work to help end female genital mutilation.

Though this paper has focussed on the work of Buddhist activists who live and work primarily in the United States, engaged Buddhism is a worldwide movement. One of Thailand's most prominent social critics, activists, and proponents of engaged Buddhism, Sulak Sivaraksa, founded the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. His book *Seeds of Peace: A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society* explores such issues as the relationship between Buddhism and nonviolence and the impact of Western consumerism on Asian culture. Professor A. T. Ariyaratne, founder of the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement in Sri Lanka, gives voice to the nonviolent movement to end the war between the Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka. Finally, this list would not be complete without mention of Myanmar's (Burma's) human-rights activist Aung San Suu Kyi who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.[9]

By happenstance, Professor Ariyaratne and I were both visiting Auroville, South India, several years ago when we were offered a tour of the surrounding villages by Tamils and Westerners working together on village action projects. Given the noisy vehicle, the potholes in the road, and my busy, spinning mind, I missed most of the explanation of what we were seeing. The knot in my stomach teamed up with a massive demonstration of thoughts, the leader of my thoughts complaining, "Social activism back home is a drop in the bucket compared to the enormity of human suffering here. Does it *really* make a difference?"

If I were working on village action projects in South India, under the influence of the same logic, I could easily think, "Even if *this* village gets a well, what good will it do? What about all the villages without wells? Even if every person in the village learns to read, it will do nothing to alter the concentration of wealth protected by violence. . . . "

Yes, building wells, teaching reading and writing, and standing silently on street corners are "small" actions. But perhaps the tendency to measure actions as "large" or "small" does nothing but rob us of our power.

January, 19, 2003: Thousands of people showed up in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco yesterday to protest the war with Iraq threatened by the Bush Administration. Last night the local TV station in Denver flashed a photo of Denver's Women in Black standing together on the corner of 15th and Colfax. The coverage included a four-second interview with a Woman in Black who had just enough time to say, "It's time to make our voices heard, whether through words or silent, symbolic actions."

Anyone driving through central Boulder these days finds an alternate route to avoid the intersection of Canyon and Broadway, once the location of Women in Black, now cluttered with giant cranes and bulldozers owned and operated by the Boulder Public Works Department. Women in Black has moved south to the

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[9] See books such as Sally King and Christopher Queen's *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, Joanna Macy's *Dharma and Development: Religion as Resource in the Sarvodaya Self-Help Movement*, and Aung San Suu Kyi's *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*.

outskirts of the Basemar Shopping Mall at the corner of Broadway and Baseline. I remind myself that even sacred sites do not last forever and any place is a good place to practice street-corner standing meditation— no "them" to oppose and no "me" to oppose them. ☖

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Compos(t)ing Loss: Transformation in the Telling

Laura Milner

Students use their writing to sort through what has happened to them, to make sense of their suffering within the discourses available, to argue for the choices they have made and hope others will make upon reading their essays.

—Michelle Payne, qtd. in Anderson and MacCurdy

Successful witnessing, then, leads to an acknowledgment of many losses: the loss of the experience, the loss of others through death, the loss of a life untouched by trauma, and the loss of the memories and histories of civilizations. Mourning these losses constructs us as individuals and as cultures.

—Cassie Premo

Many college students have suffered traumatic losses by age 18 that we, their teachers, may not have known: the death of a parent, sibling, or friend, or the severance of significant relationships through abuse or divorce. When they find themselves in a freshman composition course, some students choose to reconstruct their sorrow in the presence of peers and teachers, especially when allowed to select their own subjects for writing. They bring these stories to class, where we witness the seeds of change as we read their drafts about what was lost and what remains—about where and who they once were, are now, and may become. When these students honor us by keeping in touch after they leave our classes, we have much to learn from them about the transformative power of writing and its influence on identity. We begin to see, as editors David L. Eng and David Kazanjian acknowledge in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, that loss can be creative and meaningful, and that loss is "inseparable from what remains, for what is lost is known only by what remains of it, by how these remains are produced, read, and sustained" (2). Some students discover, in attempting to

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reconstruct their lives after catastrophic loss, that writing and being read can be essential to survival.[1]

During her first semester of composition in fall 1999, Chanda wrote about the unexpected death of her grandfather who had encouraged her for years to continue her education. Seeing her scholarly potential, I recommended her for my honors section of Composition II, where she flourished as a first-generation college student. A few weeks into spring semester, her mother was killed by a hit-and-run driver. When Chanda returned to class, she wrote the following "You" poem and chose to publish it in our *Class Anthology* at semester's end:

> You were born in Georgia August 7, 1981
> First and last daughter brought unto Jacquelyn and Robert
> Within the first year of your life you lost your father
> in the last year of your life you have lost your
> grandfather and your mother
> You do know and recognize the plans of God and
> You dare not question His will, but ask
> for infinite strength to carry His will out
> Through your trials you will become stronger
> and through all your loss, love will shine brighter
> You are never satisfied or content with where you are
> because you see vivid visions of where you could be
> With a few frowns and many smiles, you
> realize that you are a soldier
> a soldier trying to stay among the
> fittest and win the wars of life. (Spring 2000)

Within weeks of her mother's death, Chanda was attempting *to compose*—which Ann Berthoff defines as making meaning of the chaos of life—and *to compost* her losses: to contain and transform them into food for her own survival. While writing could not bring her parents or grandfather back to life, it enabled her to articulate and begin to accept her losses and to figure out who she now was and might become, and how.

Later that semester, I asked each student to select a song or poem to share with the class as an exercise in analysis, interpretation, cultural literacy, and connection with each other's lives. Chanda shared a song by R. Kelly that celebrates the mother-child relationship and wrote an essay comparing the singer's feelings to her own. In a reflection letter accompanying her portfolio, Chanda writes:

> Losing my mother in the first weeks of second semester was a heavy trial for me, and it will be for the rest of my life. This essay offered me a lot of peace and relief [. . .] though painful to write, it stimulated a lot of growth for me as an individual. I do not want to blow my own horn, but it took a lot of courage and discipline for

[1] For a more detailed explication of the connections between personal and cultural healing, please see my article, "On Writing, Healing, and Wholeness: Personal and Cultural Benefits of Naming What Remains," forthcoming in the comparative journal *Intertexts*, a special issue on cultural memory edited by Meili Steele. Portions of the work of two students, Katie and Chanda, appear in *Intertexts*.

> me to actually sit down and write about my mother's death which occurred less than a month before the assignment. It was something that I knew I had to face and deal with, and I chose to do it as a writer!

She concludes her letter this way: "I learned to use rhetoric to express pain, grief, and love at the same time. This changed my attitude toward writing because I have never had to use writing to 'get over' an experience. I realized when my friends and family are too busy, my pen and pad will always be available. I now see writing as a road to recovery."

Over the next few years, Chanda emailed me occasionally about her academic progress, her job tutoring athletes in English, and her struggles socially. In May 2003, she graduated magna cum laude and enrolled in a master's program in counseling. When I asked if she would reflect on the consequences of having written about her mother's death, she quickly obliged:

> Writing through a trauma is always beneficial. Many people cannot express themselves orally, and writing is their only sense of relief. Writing helps you think about every aspect of the trauma, breaking your feelings down bit by bit, and that is the only true way to get over things. First we must recognize how we feel, then it is up to us to discover why and deal with it. (Email, April 29, 2003)

She added that sharing her "You" poem and song analysis with her class may have helped others to understand what she was going through and enabled them to support her through difficult times. While she "wasn't happy" to be writing about her mother's death, she found writing to be "a helpful medium that brought additional ears, as well as hearts into my life." She concludes that "writing in general helps me to understand who I am and what I want [. . .]. College was my opening experience to writing and healing, but since I discovered it, I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world."

Similar stories seep up and out every semester, often uninvited. While I avoid asking first-year composition students to write about traumatic memories, a handful each semester choose to do so, and I marvel at their courage. Under what circumstances do we choose to loosen the stories "caught in our throats," as Mary Rose O'Reilley describes the process of writing about memories that, if left untold, tend to block one's ability to learn? (*Radical* 25). What are the short- and long-term effects on the writer, the teacher, and the peer readers of releasing stories of loss into a college writing class? How might teachers move through their own resistance to death and respond to such writing in ways that lead to re-visioning and growth, serving as the busy red worm in the compost bin, facilitating the process of decomposition that turns garbage into flowers? How might we encourage our students to define what remains?

Zen and the Art of Compos(t)ing

Poets have cautioned for centuries that pleasure and pain are interwoven, love and loss inseparable, yet many of us pursue the flow and resist the ebb, hoping somehow to have one without the other. The Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us that we cannot have joy without sorrow, that the most fragrant rose contains elements of garbage, and the garbage has rose

elements. Likewise, even the happiest, healthiest human beings encounter sadness and despair: "In the way that a gardener knows how to transform compost into flowers, we can learn the art of transforming anger, depression, and racial discrimination into love and understanding. That is the work of meditation" (82). He defines meditation as the act of stopping and looking deeply—actions practiced routinely by writers and writing teachers as we attempt to compose/compost our experiences and re-envision ourselves in the presence of others.

Nhat Hanh has been writing, teaching, and living in exile from Vietnam for more than 40 years—exile being a condition that Rabbi David Wolpe calls "the prerequisite for growth" (36)—and has written dozens of books about mindfulness, anger, peace, and social justice. Instead of running away from the pain of loss, Nhat Hanh and other Buddhist writers encourage us to befriend it as natural and inevitable. Just as decay is essential to the rebirth of the flower, most spiritual traditions agree that suffering is essential to human growth. Zen master Jakusho Kwong says that most of us try to avoid suffering and loss at all costs, seeking instead to be happy and to gain that which we desire: "Even though we understand intellectually that loss is the very mud in our lives that the lotus needs in order to bloom, when it comes to our actual lives, most people still believe loss is the opposite of gain" (128). Like Nhat Hanh, Kwong reminds us that letting go and interpreting pain as gain can provide the impetus for waking up and enjoying the life we're living now.

After the death of his mother in the early 1960s, Nhat Hanh wrote his first book and discovered that "once we have experienced something deeply it is always there for us to touch again" (10). In a Zen sense, nothing is lost or gained, just as in physics nothing is created or destroyed, only transformed:

> Separation from loved ones, disappointments, impatience with unpleasant things—all these are also constructive and wonderful. Who we are is, in part, a result of our unpleasant experiences. Deep looking allows us to see the wondrous elements contained in the weaknesses of others and ourselves, and these flowers of insight will never wilt. (49)

Writing is one way of looking deeply, an art that aids in the process of transformation. Using language to compose, decompose, and re-compose images and ideas provides avenues for composting loss; by naming, knowing, and reframing our sorrows, we have a better chance of transforming them into something useful rather than being defined, reduced, or embittered by them. For both composting and composing, certain conditions may facilitate the transformation of decaying materials or memories into nutrients. Melon rinds and wilted irises will become mulch for next year's garden if contained, watered, wormed, turned, and tended.

Composting happens best when we add new ideas and experiences to the mix of what we already know. One night after reading Ellen Cushman's *The Struggle and the Tools*, I dreamed of my father's death and woke up at 5 a.m. to write the following poem, "Tool and Die":

> Daddy worked midnights at the Ford Plant
> 30 years of tool and die
> then Alzheimer's, confirmed by a Vanderbilt autopsy,
> finished him before his 65th birthday.

I was one week away from 29,
a medical writer for *The Tennessean*.
Three years earlier
I had recorded the neurologist's prognosis
in my reporter's notebook
flipping rectangular pages over their spiral coil
absorbing the news of Daddy's demise
as if just another story.
"Your Dad won't get better," Dr. Petrie said.
"In effect, he's gone."
I used the only tools I had for processing this
my pen and pad
and like Daddy, my hands, my work ethic.

Now a college writing teacher
and doctoral student in composition
my job is composting
using my pen as shovel, rake, plow
to heap fresh wounds and words onto the pile
to cover them with decaying leaves of ancient ruin
then stir, watch, and wait until eventually
as if by magic, the pile emits the heat and moisture needed
to make mulch for daylilies, gardenias, tea olives.

Seduced by the promise of immortality
even as I know the inevitability of death
I employ my pen as chisel, scalpel, ax
to excavate through tunnels of grief and longing
my own and my students' memories
wishing I had better tools or smarter hands
praying my tears might be of some use
as I attempt to compose, decompose, transform
the garbage of my life, my Daddy's life
into roses, orchids, magnolias
while I'm still alive enough to breathe their fragrance
still able to meet their fleeting, naked beauty

Contemplating the struggles that many of us encounter in coming to literacy has reinforced, for me, the educational value in attending to "what is," as J. Krishnamurti asserts in *Education and the Significance of Life* (14). Reading Cushman's ethnographic study of literacy along with Wolpe's *Making Loss Matter* has reinscribed, for me, the value in attending to rather than turning away from painful memories, even when the urge to turn is strong: "To make loss meaningful requires courage" (Wolpe 16). Regardless of age, race, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or education, each of us lives "as a child of wilderness [. . .] enmeshed in loss, in search of home" (39), that imaginary place where we would feel welcomed and safe forever. Does such a place exist in the land of impermanence and change? As Georgia author Janisse Ray asks in *Wild Card*

Quilt: "What is it in us that wants to return to the dream of childhood, to reenact it or fix it? What is it in us that keeps coming back to that potent place?" (33).

This yearning for security in an insecure world appears often in the essays of first-year college students. In ten years of teaching composition at a public university in southeast Georgia, I have witnessed countless students wrestling with their grief for homes they have lost or their desire for homes that exist only in their imaginations. Every semester, several students choose to write personal narratives or poems about the death of a friend or family member, even when assignments do not call for such disclosure. In *Bequest and Betrayal*, scholar Nancy K. Miller acknowledges that a parent's death, whether dreaded or desired, "is a trauma that causes an invisible tear in our self-identity. In the aftermath of a parent's death, which forces the acknowledgment of our shared mortality, loss and mourning take complex paths, since our earliest acts of identity are intimately bound up with our relation to the dead parent" (x). Citing dozens of literary and personal examples, Miller concludes that "writing a parent's death is a way to repair a broken connection" (xi). My students practice such writing and reconnecting almost intuitively, even (or especially?) when they know their stories will be read and revised.

Composting for Health, Personal and Cultural

Since the late 1970s, psychology professor James Pennebaker and other researchers have shown that most people are helped by speaking or writing to someone else about their experience, even if the "other" is not a trained therapist (Anderson and MacCurdy 197). In a series of studies, Pennebaker discovered that survivors of childhood sexual abuse and other traumas who don't write or speak of the trauma tend to develop more major illnesses than survivors who do express their feelings (DeSalvo 22). Repressing traumatic narratives can be an ongoing stressor which gradually undermines the body's defenses. On the other hand, Pennebaker found that "confronting the chaos of our most difficult memories and translating them into coherent language can have remarkable short-and long-term health benefits" (24). In his keynote address to the AEPL's 2002 conference on writing and healing, Pennebaker explained that writers, whether college students or prison inmates or otherwise, tend to "self-dose" when writing about painful memories. Accordingly, they will stop when the pain becomes too great, and, even if they cry or feel upset temporarily, the long-term benefits are unmistakable (Pennebaker). How many composition teachers have had to rush a student to the hospital for over-dosing on writing?

Researchers agree that the key for writing and healing is twofold: writing detailed accounts, linking feelings with events, "so it's not just writing as catharsis, writing to vent, but describing the feelings, then and now, associated with traumatic events" (DeSalvo 22), *and* sharing it with readers in a safe, hospitable space. Trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub agree that the role of a reader or listener is critical in the survivor's recovery process, just as truth-telling is essential to personal and cultural recovery from trauma.

Many spiritual writers have pointed out that "we are the victims NOT of what happens to us, but of what we THINK about what happens to us" (O'Reilley, *Radical* 10). A college English teacher for 30 years and self-proclaimed Buddhist-

Quaker-Catholic, Mary Rose O'Reilley notes that if we can teach writing in ways that encourage students to tell their own stories, "maybe we can keep [them] from getting sick" (11). She continues:

> If one is aware of storytelling as a way of being present in the world, one soon becomes aware of its opposite: not telling. If we can't tell our story, if it's caught in our throat, it seems to block our spirit's longing to participate in the world. At an extreme, we can't reach out at all. And everybody [. . .] has a story or two caught in the throat. (25)

We never know what students are holding or what we give them by paying attention. When someone shares a painful memory, we should "just listen hard and try to be present. It's very bad business to invite heartfelt speech and then not listen" (27-28). As writing teachers, we listen first and respond later to the text, remembering that the student and his or her text are not the same entity. A text is a representation of experience, and the experience is not equal to the writer himself or herself. Texts are relatively fixed and limited, whereas human life is fluid and evolving, always open to revision.

Consider the consequences of denying students the opportunity to write, revise, and share their experiences with readers. O'Reilley suggests that if we can't "pull the weight of these stories off people, it is very hard for them to learn. Such stories linger on the soul like the hungry ghosts of Buddhist legend [. . .]. We have to lift the weight before the student can learn anything. Fortunately, moving ghosts is a team effort" (28). Further, she insists that these are not isolated, solipsistic tales but are connected to cultural and societal trauma: "Personal pain is connected to ancient insult; the wounds of history, racism, war, homophobia, cruelty of all kinds fester unhealed" (38). In making such wounds explicit, bringing them up and out, we may begin to heal, individually and culturally; we may find a way, as O'Reilley posits in *The Peaceable Classroom*, to "teach English so that people stop killing each other" (9). When wounds fester, untended, we see tragedies and their aftermath.

Writing Loss: What Students Say They Gain

Several years ago, perhaps as a result of Chanda's writing, I began to notice a pattern among my students: their narratives of parental death would arise in response to being asked to draw a neighborhood map and to tell, then write, a story from it. In students' initial reflections about writing these stories, and their reflections ten weeks later as part of a portfolio project, students were finding the writing painful at first, but ultimately beneficial. I have collected several essays and reflections from students about the consequences of their writing about loss. The *Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning* published my narrative about Steve, a student who wrote an essay about his father's death, then cried in class while telling the story. Weeks later, Steve withdrew from school, raising questions for me about the risks involved in allowing traumatic stories into the classroom. Steve later returned to college, graduated with honors with a double major in engineering and management, married, and is managing a large department store. When I saw him recently, he was beaming as he showed me a picture of his infant daughter: "I'm really happy now," he said.

Tearful classroom moments like the one with Steve are rare, but essays like his that grapple with the premature loss of a parent appear frequently. Although I do not ask students to write about traumatic experiences, a handful each semester choose to write their sorrows. Like ethnographer/teacher Elisabeth Chiseri-Strater, I have discovered that "our relationship also [gives students] an additional interested audience for overhearing their decisions about changing both their texts and their actual lives" (118). In her interviews with students who had benefitted from writing personal stories, Chiseri-Strater notes that one student had used her freshman writing course "to develop a better understanding toward the loss of her mother and her sense of being more adult than most of her peers," and that their "researcher-informant discussions, which often touched on personal connections" between them, most likely had affected how students saw their own writing and revision processes (118). While my experience is anecdotal, theoretical, and inconclusive, I am interested in learning more about the extent to which writing and releasing stories of loss may facilitate a process of transformation for both writer and witness. Learning more about the conditions for such writing could prepare writing teachers to meet, more humanely and effectively, the traumatic stories our students choose to share.

KATIE: In her neighborhood narrative, Katie describes losing her mother at age 14 after a long struggle with breast cancer and the somber house after her death: "We ate out almost every night. Sometimes I would cook, but it was just too uncomfortable to eat at the table. It seemed so empty. Usually my dad and I would sit in silence, except for a few sentences of idle conversation." In her initial reflection about the essay, Katie acknowledges that she "used this paper as an outlet for feelings I had held back since the death of my mother . . . if I had the time, there is a lot more that could be said. There is not a day that goes by that I don't think about my mama. The effect my mom's death had on me is an ongoing story. It will never have an ending." Katie cautions her readers, in a comment that echoes Felman and Laub's sentiment about the incomprehensibility and inaccessibility of trauma, that "the emotions described here differ for everyone when they deal with the death of someone. Also one should not try to relate to this paper because you don't know how it feels until it happens to you" (71).

Six weeks later, in her portfolio cover letter, Katie says:

> This was a hard paper to write. It stirred a barrel of emotions that I had locked away. Never before have I expressed the emotions I felt during that difficult time in my life the way I have in my paper. Not only is this paper one of my finest, it also helped me face a reality I had ignored. Reading my own words made me realize it is okay to say how I feel. I also want to thank you for your response. Your words reassured me that what I felt was normal and that I had done a good job on this paper.

A year later, I saw Katie on campus. All smiles, she said she had broken her engagement to a prison employee and had been accepted to a dental hygiene program in Florida. I asked if she would mind writing one last reflection for my research, and she was delighted. Here's part of it: "Writing the paper about my mom really has had a lasting effect. Many of my friends have read the paper since then. Many of them cried because my paper told them the things I never could explain." Her stepmother had asked to read her portfolio and had

complimented her on her work, but her dad "didn't say a word. I don't believe it's because he was mad or anything. I just think we were back at the dinner table afraid to comment. I think about the paper I wrote for your class more than any other paper I have written. I suppose that's because I think about my mother every day. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to vent and for reassuring me I was normal."

DONNIE: Like Chanda, Donnie is a first-generation college student. His mother died of cancer when he was in tenth grade. After drawing a map of his neighborhood and describing some of his memories to a classmate, he wrote an essay about his mother's dying. Ten weeks later, he writes this reflection:

> I must tell you while I was in high school I attempted to write [a similar essay], but I didn't succeed in expressing my complete thoughts and feelings. I think that our class discussion helped me to uncover these feelings and thoughts that I was hiding in the back of my mind. Writing this paper was very therapeutic for me, and now my mind feels so clear and open. Sometimes sharing your problems through writing or discussion can help relieve pain and sadness.

A year later, he showed up for my composition II class and wrote and published a narrative about the pain of being separated from his own newborn son by the racism of the child's white grandparents. Donnie sees his son sporadically and continues to work and go to school in hopes of supporting his child.

JANE: During a lively class discussion in her composition I class, Jane described how her alcoholic mother had pushed her down the steps and broken both ankles when Jane was 16, the last of a series of "accidents" that finally drove Jane away from home as a high school junior. In her essay about a neighborhood memory, Jane writes: "I cannot remember ever feeling safe, and that is why I cannot complete this assignment successfully: I feel that one cannot call any place 'home' unless she can exist freely there. I could never acquire an accurate self-concept; I was constantly worried that my words, actions, or emotions would catalyze my own demise." Jane sees her home now as "entirely internal. Within the wreckage of my battered soul, the refuge I continually sought abides." Ten weeks later in her portfolio cover letter, Jane reflects:

> I love the thoroughly exhausting act of giving voice to my deepest fears and most capricious dreams . . . This was no ordinary writing course. I was forced not only to think, but also to feel. I was required to confront anger I didn't know I possessed, and to discover joy I didn't know I was capable of feeling. Each paper was a clumsily written epiphany.

She concludes that she is "not the same person that registered for your class. I've become a writer. I can't explain when the transformation began, but I realize now how firmly my growth over the past four months is entrenched in the pieces I've written for this class . . . the writing process parallels my life more than I care to admit. Through the act of composition, I've learned that I am a work in progress, and that I can revise my story as many times as needed."

The Writer is Not The Text

Whether invited or not, students bring their losses into class every day, mostly unarticulated. At least since the 1980s, when David Bartholomae challenged Peter Elbow's "expressivist" methods of teaching writing, compositionists have argued that we are not trained as therapists, that personal writing has no place in the college classroom, and that we must teach argument steering clear of the risky realm of personal narratives. Rather than repeat the tired binaries used in debating academic vs. personal writing, why not take the discussion to a new realm that acknowledges the inevitability of loss and the failure of our culture to embrace sorrow with equanimity and courage? Why not explore what happens when teachers and peer readers meet and respond to traumatic stories in ways that facilitate transformation and self-actualization, potentially for everyone involved in the process?

I've seen many first-year students discover a sense of agency after naming, in writing or speaking or both, that which they think has hurt them, saved them, or otherwise shaped their identities. Whether they're writing about loss, betrayal, abuse, or the joy of growing up in a safe, caring environment, many student writers seem to benefit from naming and revising their experiences and having them legitimized by a witness. In fact, "writing about an experience—any experience—inevitably changes it" (Hawkins 225). For years, Peter Elbow, Donald Murray, Ann Berthoff and others have promoted writing as a means of discovering what we think and know and want, as a process of creating knowledge that may remain inaccessible otherwise, knowledge that may change the way we treat ourselves and others. The act of revising a text often facilitates transformation because the text is only a representation of experience, not the writer himself or herself.

As Barbara Kamler says in *Relocating the Personal*, the text is "from you but is not the same as 'you'—it represents a particular way of telling your experience—a representation—a construct" (64). Likewise, in Buddhist terms, the finger pointing at the moon is not the moon. In revising our own texts or working with students' texts, we encourage transformation when we ask what is missing, or what is not being said, because "what is omitted may be as important as what is included" (65), in texts and in life, composing and composting. Writing has the power "to transform the text and the way experience is viewed," for in the act of writing and revising narratives, writers "reconstruct and renegotiate their identities" using multiple literacies (54) such as writing, listening, speaking, reading, observing, and revising. This process of reconstructing and renegotiating identities is infinite because much is unknowable, indescribable, and unspeakable. Sometimes "words are an insult to the pain of much experience, or the complexity of it" (O'Reilley, *Radical* 28), yet human beings are compelled to create meaning via language. As Rabbi Wolpe reminds us: "We love, even though we know that the beloved cannot live forever. We create, although we realize that all creation will decay. To be fully human is to stand before death, not ignoring it but not allowing it to undermine the meaning of the time we are given" (213). And facing death, our own or its trajectory through our students' lives and writings, requires courage.

Courage for Tending the Heap

It is not simple or easy to engage ourselves or our students in writing that may lead to healing. It takes courage, hard work, mindfulness, and attention. It is not fun. Administrators and colleagues will not praise us for creating space for personal writing. Yet language lets us live. I opt for what Natalie Goldberg calls "writing down the bones [. . .] writing from our pain [which] eventually engenders compassion for our small and groping lives" (107). I encourage students to write for and from their own lives because the advantages for them and for their peers and teachers are becoming more apparent. Witnessing other human beings in the process of reconstructing their losses and their lives potentially creates empathy and understanding as it prepares the witness for meeting his or her own inevitable sorrows. Sharing our stories is important because, as Cassie Premo-Steele says,

> As we witness to the past and as we serve as witnesses for others, we may begin to see how the cords of one story link to the cords of another. This recognition of how our histories are woven together enables a reconnection between people in the present. As we witness to our past, we open the possibility of allowing ourselves to be healed from the past through a healing relationship with another in the present. (9)

When we and our students feel safe enough to write and read aloud our stories, we increase our chances of knowing and valuing each other and of learning to treat ourselves and others well.

Knowing ourselves is the first step toward connecting with others and engaging constructively and compassionately in the world. As Marian MacCurdy says in *Writing and Healing*, "Personal essays begin with the individual but end with the universal, a process which itself creates connections that can heal" (197), a truth echoed by the Buddhist writer Pema Chodron in *When Things Fall Apart*: "Learning how to be kind to ourselves, learning how to respect ourselves, is important [. . .] it isn't just ourselves that we're discovering. We're discovering the universe" (75). The benefits of stopping and looking deeply, as writers, teachers, and human beings, may be more than we can imagine. To practice sitting with sorrow, our own and our students', may be part of our calling as teachers of writing, as human beings on a path toward the inevitable: death. What do we have to lose? And what might we and our students gain from creating space for compassion and truth-telling? British psychotherapist and Zen monk David Brazier describes the inter-relatedness of all pain: "The suffering in the world is not something for each of us to solve on our own. It is of concern to us all. It is by reaching out to one another that we can respond to our collective pain in a noble and constructive way" (135). When we find the courage to stop running away, the result may be "a profound relaxation in our heart" (135), an experience many of us seek but rarely find.

My pedagogy is driven by the belief that teachers should become the most attentive, compassionate human beings possible. As strong people committed to paying attention to *what is*, as opposed to only *what was* or what *will be*, we encourage our students to explore their own lives within a cultural framework, to bring their stories up and out for examination in the larger world—an often violent place where people wage war over religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, and

cultural differences. In *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks reminds us that holistic education or "engaged pedagogy" emphasizes well being: "Teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualizing that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students" (16). Students don't want therapy, hooks says, but "they do want an education that is healing to the uninformed, unknowing spirit. They do want knowledge that is meaningful [. . .] addressing the connection between what they are learning and their overall life experiences" (19). Most of our students have suffered significantly, whether they show it or not, and like the adults around them, they have learned to mask, repress, or do whatever is necessary to escape their pain. How can we hope to connect with our students or with each other, much less save the world, if we continue to turn away from suffering?

Reading and responding to students' personal revelations may make us uncomfortable sometimes, but teaching and learning have long been risky, life-changing endeavors. James Moffett acknowledges that most university faculty resist playing therapist and don't see the mission of higher education as healing; however, when human beings are involved, personal pain is present, and "unhealed wounds and undeveloped souls will thwart the smartest curriculum" (261). If we fear and resist our students' written representations of their painful experiences, what are we teaching them? If not with their composition teachers, how and where will they learn the power they have in re-shaping their lives via language, via stories? Janisse Ray echoes Moffett and Pennebaker as she notes:

> I know, too, the danger of silence, as well as of leaving things unnamed and unrecognized. By understanding what you feel as love, by naming love, you claim it. By claiming a thing, you give it life. Then when something happens to yank it away from you, you are prepared for the sorrow that befalls. You are prepared to create anew that which is beloved. (47)

The more violent our culture becomes, the more we need to acknowledge the effects of loss, whether individual or collective, on all of us.

In *The Performance of Self in Student Writing*, Tom Newkirk addresses the criticisms of those who oppose narrative writing in introductory composition courses. Citing twenty years of reading thousands of anonymous student evaluations of composition faculty, he notes that he "cannot remember one" in which a student complained of being forced to disclose private information. To the contrary, "the overwhelming and consistent comments we see are those of appreciation for the opportunity to write and reflect on life experiences" (18). As for therapy, Newkirk says students do not want teachers to play a counseling role:

> These [personal narrative] writing situations can be therapeutic precisely because we don't act as therapists [. . .] the therapeutic power of such writing may be the experience of having it treated as 'normal'—that is, writing that can be responded to, critiqued, even graded. Writing may have healing power because [. . .] it is an artifact, a construction, a relatively stable representation of experience. By asking many of the most basic conferencing questions—those that encourage elaboration, reflection, and the exploration of other

> perspectives—I believe we can respond sympathetically and helpfully. Paradoxically, the writing can most effectively be therapeutic by not being *directly* therapeutic. (18-19)

New perspectives often arise as part of the process of reflecting and elaborating on loss in the company of teachers, peers, or others bearing witness to the writer's evolving story. Likewise in composting, when the conditions are right and the debris is turned over after a period of decay and integration, everything looks different: the garbage has been transformed by heat, water, and the composter's attention.

What Remains?

We do not need special training to respond humanely and compassionately to human suffering and loss. We do need to create safe spaces and pay close attention, ever mindful of our role as witness. As Goldberg says in *Writing Down the Bones,* "Writing is deeper than therapy. You write *through* your pain, and even your suffering must be written out and let go of" (114). Composing, like composting, enables us to take our emotions and "give them life, color, and a story. We can transform anger into steaming red tulips and sorrow into an old alley full of squirrels in the half light of November" (114). While writing is no panacea, no magic cure, *not* writing is worse. It aids and abets disease. It cripples and silences. It stunts our growth and prevents us from being fully present in *this* place, in *this* time, with *these* people. Writing about loss can lead to growth and empowerment, especially when the writing is voluntary and the readers are able to meet the writer's words and experience with equanimity, offering the intellectual light and emotional heat needed to facilitate the writer's composting effort, a process that works best when contained and attended.

Researchers, physicians, and therapists report that mental illness and suicidal despair are not caused by trauma itself but occur because the survivor can't verbalize what has happened and what has been suffered (DeSalvo 168). Through writing, we adjust our perspective: we move into "an acceptance as whole of what remains" (183). This movement could spell survival for those who have lost a parent or a sense of home, of belonging, in a sometimes savage world. Writing can change us because "through writing, we revisit our past and review and revise it [. . .] we use writing to shift our perspective" (DeSalvo 11). Writing cannot cure us, but it may prolong and enrich our lives. It may give us insights into who we are and how our identities have been shaped by our experiences, especially by loss and the stories we tell about it. Losing a loved one to death, divorce, or misunderstanding can be devastating, for "the more keenly we desire something—a person, a state of being, a piece of our own history—the more savage its loss" (Wolpe 145). While writing cannot return to us what is missing, it may lead us to a deeper understanding of love and an acceptance of the universal nature of impermanence: "Loss, a deep loss, is chaotic, cavernous; it resounds in the hollows of the soul. It rages, and nothing can tame it [. . .] Understanding what we have lost, we can find a place for the memory inside us" (194). In articulating memories that may have remained buried and therefore unknown, yet still a defining force in our lives, we begin the process of turning what was lost into what is found, and paradoxically begin to let go of that which, finally, we have begun to name and know intimately in the company of others.

The consequences of such naming and witnessing may be survival, individual and global. In her essay on the connections between memory and imagination, Patricia Hampl concludes: "There may be no more pressing intellectual need in our culture than for people to become sophisticated about the function of memory. The political implications of the loss of memory are obvious" (190). The memory that sits smothered under layers of denial, grief, and fear has less chance of being transformed into something useful, just as garbage that is not composted takes longer to become fertilizer. Becoming a non-judgmental container for all life experiences—joy and sorrow, birth and death and rebirth—means opening our hearts, for "what loss cries for is not to be fixed or to be explained, but to be shared and, eventually, to find its way to meaning [. . .] we cannot face loss without knowing that we can survive it and make it meaningful" (Wolpe 15). As writers and as teachers, we are called to find meaning in a violent world where meaning often eludes us.

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Encounters: Relationship in the Study and Teaching of Literature

Cristina Vischer Bruns

After almost ten years of teaching composition, I now find myself turning my attention to teaching my first love, literature. Like most conscientious teachers tackling a new subject area, I've sought to acquaint myself with the recent developments in the field, only to be bewildered by the variety of pedagogical approaches that have passed in and out of popularity in the past several decades. In my classroom, should I focus on the text itself or on the reader's response to it, on the cultural situation from which the text arose or on the divergent readings of the text that are possible? The pattern of progress in literary studies, where a new theory is built upon the discrediting of the "old" theory, leads one to assume that only that which is most recent is valid and leaves me feeling that I must reject much that seems potentially beneficial as I attempt to follow the latest advances in literary theory.

But what if these various approaches might be seen as compatible rather than oppositional? Stanley Fish once described his method as "the surveying of the critical history of a work in order to find disputes that rested upon a base of agreement of which the disputants were unaware" (2071). Locating such a "base of agreement" is my hope in this examination of recent trends in literary education so that my classroom practice might benefit from the strengths of all of these trends. Rather than making contradictory claims, perhaps these apparently conflicting approaches can be seen as offering various aspects of some broad and valuable shift in our conception of the study and teaching of literature.

As a lens to clarify what that shift might be, I will use a concept from the work of theologian Martin Buber. He claims that human beings tend toward two different ways of perceiving other persons and entities around them. One way he terms "I-It," sees others as things, static objects detached from the self. The other way he terms, "I-Thou," sees others around her as beings that can and do affect the self and that respond to the self. This latter way of perceiving others is relationship, reciprocal and mutual. And it is the move toward relationship, the shift from I-It to I-Thou, which can link the recent trends in literary pedagogy.

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Literary Education Without Relationship

Those of us trained in the methods of New Criticism rarely had an opportunity to encounter relationship through literary study. While authors and readers or students were necessarily part of the literature classroom, they were viewed as "It," detached objects with no role in the meaning made in the literary event. The text carried the meaning, and the teacher imparted that meaning to the students who merely received it. The particular identities of the reader, the author, and the other students had no bearing whatsoever on the meaning of the text as conveyed by the teacher. Written in 1971, George P. Elliott's recollection of a memorable class he taught serves as an example of a teacher-centered I-It approach, and one in which even the text itself is hardly a factor:

> [. . .] at ten past one in the afternoon, I walked into a classroom with 70 or so students in it and began to talk about the Book of Job. [. . .] I had only the foggiest notion about what I was going to say, and 75 minutes to fill. What in fact I did was to ask a central question to which I did not have an answer in mind, explore all the answers I could think up and dismiss them one after another, and then with a minute to go come up with a good one. The stillness in the room that last minute and the opening of my voice as I said what came into my head constitute the finest classroom experience I have ever had. I discovered afterward that the answer I came up with was ancient and respectable, the sort of chestnut you expect to yawn over in a college-outline series. [. . .] No matter: at the moment of talking I was discovering something worth discovering, and I was doing this because of the people I was talking to, for them and for myself at once. (83-84)

Mariolina Rizzi Salvatori describes what's missing from the instance of literary education Elliott relates: "The students, the people to whom the teacher was presumably talking, are nowhere to be seen or heard. And theirs is not the only noticeable absence: an articulation of teaching as a transaction of knowledge between teacher, students, text, the cultures that shape them, is absent as well from this way of talking about teaching" (299). Unlike the type of teaching in Elliott's anecdote, some of the more recent trends in literary education recognize teaching as transaction, and make room in the classroom for the reader, the author, and other students, transforming them from "It" to "Thou," and inviting them, together with the teacher and the text, into mutual, reciprocal relationship.

Relationship Between Text and Reader: Reader Response Theory and Its Limitations

This shift toward relationship begins with Reader Response Theory, originating in the work of Louise Rosenblatt in the 1930s but not widely recognized until decades later. Rather than locating meaning within the text, Rosenblatt claims that it resides in the transaction between the reader and the text. Reading, according to Rosenblatt, "activates certain elements in [the reader's] past experience—external reference, internal response—that have become linked

with the verbal symbols. Meaning will emerge from a network of relationships among the things symbolized *as [the reader] senses them"* (11). Meaning does not exist within a text independent of a reader, but rather in relationship with a reader whose memories and perspectives shape that meaning. The reader is no longer "It" in the literary experience, having no effect on meaning, but is "Thou," and the work between text and reader becomes a reciprocal relationship, each influencing the other.

Yet the adequacy of this formulation of the transaction between individual reader and text has been called into question. It appears to assume that responses to a text are automatic or natural, to leave unexamined the sources of these "personal" interpretations, and to allow for little discrimination among different interpretations. Bronwyn Mellor and Annette Patterson summarize these concerns:

> Students had been taught to feel that they were finding a meaning 'in' the text while bringing to the reading their own personal experience, an approach [. . .] that appeared to make the reading *process* curiously invisible. Approaches that emphasized the personal, the individual, the empathic response [. . .] produced readers who were unaware of the ways in which they operated to construct meanings and who were unable to 'read' not only the terms of their own interpretations but those of others as well. Such practices, far from being inclusive [. . .] disenfranchised those students whose experiences and values were not the 'dominant' ones. What was unlikely to occur in [these] practices [. . .] was an analysis of the construction of divergent readings, the values they supported or affirmed and the grounds on which any particular reading might be defended or challenged. (n. pag.)

As Mellor and Patterson observe, the focus in Reader Response Theory on the interaction between the individual reader and a text leaves hidden much that is involved in producing an interpretation of that text. The role of culture in shaping what is available to be written and to be read remains invisible.

Cultural Criticism or Critical Literacy as a Missed Opportunity for Relationship

These concerns of "cultural critics," like Mellor and Patterson, bring into consideration another once overlooked component of the literary transaction: readers of marginal cultures who do not share the hidden assumptions of texts and readers representing dominant cultures. These readers can become another potential focus for a shift from Buber's "I-It" to "I-Thou" relations. Yet Critical Literacy, the pedagogical approach offered to remedy the limitations of the personal response model of literary education moves all readers away from relationship and treats the text as an object for examination rather than extending the relationship between the reader and the text to include multiple and diverse readers.

For Critical Literacy, the study of literature becomes an opportunity to focus primarily on alternative interpretations. The text is examined as an ideological construction, shaped and limited by the culture in which it was composed, and resulting in a multitude of possible readings that will differ from culture to culture.

In such an approach, according to Bronwyn Mellor, Marnie O'Neil, and Annette Patterson:

> The purpose of a reading is not to find and accept the position the text is assumed to offer as the correct reading, but rather to consider what the possible readings of a text might be; to be, in a sense, always a resistant reader aware of the plurality of a text's meanings and the partiality of all texts and readings. (44)

These critics make the questioning of the text, the search for its cultural assumptions and alternative readings, the primary task of the reader. The persistence of the reader's attitude of resistance, even suspicion, means that the text remains an object for examination, an "It," preventing the mutuality of an "I-Thou" relationship. The reader also becomes "It" rather than "Thou." Because he is asked to question the text from the outset, he is given no opportunity to have his own response to the text, a response nonetheless shaped by that reader's own cultural perspective. By rejecting whatever an individual reader may have to offer in response to the text, the reader also is treated as "It." Because his particular identity plays no role in the literary encounter, no relationship is possible between readers and texts.

Peter Elbow calls this problem the "distancing mode" characteristic of a "cultural studies" approach to teaching literature. He writes, "The goal in cultural studies tends to be to help students read with more critical detachment—to separate themselves from felt involvement in these texts" (538). It is this "felt involvement" that enables the reader to engage fully in reading a text and that carries much of literature's effect. The "cultural studies" approach to literary education, like that of New Criticism, Elbow claims, "work[s] against students' impulses to involve themselves personally with literature and [to] feel they are making personal connections with characters and authors—to feel a genuine relationship with Chaucer or Iago" (538). It is this possibility for an "I-Thou" relationship between reader and text, characters, and authors that may be lost in making, as cultural critics do, the multiplicity of readings the central focus of literary study. Might there be a way to acknowledge and examine the multiplicity and partiality of readings without alienating the reader and the text?

Relationship and Difference Among a Community of Readers

In "Interpreting the Variorum," Stanley Fish, a prominent Reader Response theorist, questions his own assumptions about the practices of the individual reader and proposes the concept of "interpretive communities" to account for the use of strategies for interpretation that he observes. Interpretive communities might also exist in classrooms, not only for the establishment and reinforcement of norms and practices as Fish describes. Such communities also prove useful as a means of addressing the concerns of cultural critics by making visible culture-bound norms, practices, and assumptions through the existence and observation of differences.

Some experienced educators utilize this potential available in a community of readers in relationship with one another. For Alan Purves, who recognizes the role of other readers in moving beyond a purely individual interpretation of a text, "meaning resides in the negotiation among readers in an interpretive

community" (352). Likewise, Judith Langer explores the possibilities for negotiated meaning among students in a classroom setting; when "the social structure of the class calls for (and expects) the thoughtful participation of all students, the teacher assumes that there will be multiple interpretations to be discussed and argued, and the students learn that horizons of possibilities that are pondered and defended characterize the ways of thinking that are sought" (210). For Langer and Purves, divergent interpretations are expected from the diverse students present in a classroom, and the interaction among them becomes the source of learning. Transcripts of student interaction which Ruth Vinz includes in *Becoming (Other)wise* demonstrate the learning that can come through students' relationships with one another, particularly how interaction among a diverse group of students fosters cultural awareness (56). Rather than asking readers to question intentionally and persistently their readings of texts in order to expose the partiality of the texts and the readings, these three educators allow the cultural differences among students in their classrooms to make evident this partiality. Students have an opportunity to see how differently their classmates "read" the text. In this approach, readers become Thou to one another, in mutual, reciprocal relationship, and their unique perspectives and contributions shape the meaning that is constructed among them with the text.

Relationship and Difference Between Readers and Author

Another presence available for relationship and to share in the meaning made in a literary encounter is the text's author. Robert Scholes is one who contributes to what Michael W. Smith calls the "project of rehabilitating authors as essential participants in literary conversations" (47). Scholes suggests that semiotics offers a means to more deeply understand a text by identifying the author's presence within it. Semiotics distinguishes between a text and the events it relates, and then further distinguishes the diegesis or the story as understood by the reader based on the text. This distinction between the text, the network of particular words, and the diegesis, the story as it stays in one's memory and can be retold in different words, serves to make visible and meaningful the choices the author made in composing a text that tells a story. New Criticism deliberately avoided giving attention to authors and their intentions, but Scholes's semiotic reading of "A Very Short Story" by Hemingway demonstrates the contribution of an alternative approach. Scholes writes:

> Seen as a text that presents a diegesis, this story is far from complete. There are gaps in the diegesis, reticences in the text, and a highly manipulative use of covert first-person narrative. There are signs of anger and vengefulness in the text, too, that suggest not an omniscient impersonal author but a partial, flawed human being—like the rest of us—behind the words on the page. (121)

Through careful attention to the way the story is told, including what's unsaid, Scholes draws forth a very human author once hidden in the text.

Another literary theorist attentive to the author's presence is feminist critic Patrocinio Schweickart. Schweickart makes explicit the I-Thou relationship between reader and author. She claims that a feature of feminist readings of women writers is "the tendency to construe the text not as an object, but as the

manifestation of the subjectivity of the absent author—the 'voice' of another woman" (203). She says, "To read Dickinson, then, is to try to visit with her, to hear her voice, to make her live in oneself, and to feel her impressive personal dimensions" (203). This relationship, through the inanimate object of the text, meets a need that Schweickart says motivates feminist readings of women writers, the need to connect (210). While Scholes draws forth the presence of a human writer from a literary text, Schweickart describes the relationship possible between the writer and the reader, and so both shift the author from It to Thou in the literary encounter.

Yet perhaps, in these days since the author has been declared dead, it seems naïve to suggest that the presence of an individual author exists within a text. In an essay on teaching Shakespeare, one of the most highly suspect of all authors, Robert Watson claims that effectively engaging students' interest in a text requires positing the existence of an author. Watson writes:

> The postulated author, the sentimental idea of a Shakespeare, allows us to focus on the particular emotional experience represented, and evoked in us, by the drama. To accept the increasingly popular notion that the cultural ideology rather than the individual author creates the literary work is to doom any such response before it begins, to forbid the impression that the play constitutes a communication from one person to others about something they share as sentient individuals. (142)

No matter how contested the identity of Shakespeare, students, according to Watson, need a sense of that author in order to respond to the plays because literature is ultimately a communication between people, an I-Thou relationship.

Along with the author comes "the world that shaped the author" (Watson 142), and a literary encounter with the author's world becomes another opportunity to develop a broader cultural awareness. Some approaches to literary education overlook this opportunity, as Purves explains: "When one considers only the text or the reader as many contemporary pedagogies do, one is tacitly assuming a monocultural view, a view that denies the roots of a literary work and the intellectual and cultural struggle that has produced it" (358). An awareness of the context in which the text arose becomes not only a tool for multicultural education, but also an essential means of making meaning of the text. According to anthropologist and cultural theorist Clifford Geertz, attempting to understand how "the constructions of other peoples' imaginations connect to those of our own" requires attention to "the practical contexts that gave [those constructions] life" (48). That a text does not exist in a vacuum but was authored by someone who is part of a culture means that a text becomes an occasion for a reader from one culture to enter into relationship with an author from another culture. To exploit this relationship, Purves advocates literature programs that teach students that they "are not simply reading texts, they are reading writers" (359). Purves continues:

> They also need to acknowledge themselves as readers with prejudices, ignorances, and beliefs that impinge on their readings and interpretations. They need to see that as they are engaged in the hermeneutic task, they are learning to interpret themselves as read-

> ers as well as to interpret the authors as writers. They are members of a culture with the habits of that culture engaged in reading the work of inhabitants of other cultures. (359)

So by attending to the presence of the author, reading literature becomes, for Purves, a vital means of multicultural education.

An I-Thou relationship between reader and author, as well as among a community of readers, has the capacity to build in students the awareness of the situatedness of all texts and readers and of the multiplicity and partiality of all readings that is the objective of the cultural critics' approach to literary education. And this relational approach to the teaching of literature can accomplish this objective without alienating the reader, but rather inviting her to connect with and interact with a human author, a community of readers, and a text. It is this that a pedagogy of relationship has to offer. As a new teacher of literature, it is this pedagogy of relationship that I seek to work out in my classroom.

The Benefits of a Relational Approach to Literary Education

The primary benefit of a literary pedagogy based on relationship stems from the difference between a theoretical understanding of what the identity of the reader is and how that reader experiences herself. Regarding the identity of the reader, Critical Literacy or the cultural studies approach to literary education raises valid concerns about the unwarranted assumptions behind a pedagogy that emphasizes personal response to literature. Rather than entirely independent individuals with truly original thoughts, personal motives, and natural responses, we are shaped by countless cultural and ideological influences. Actions and reactions that seem automatic or natural have in fact been learned.

Yet that is not how we experience ourselves. On a conscious level we experience ourselves as individuals with particular and personal experiences, motivations, values, and reactions. We are unaware of most of the influences upon us. Our students likewise are unaware of how they have come to acquire what seem to them to be natural responses to the texts we ask them to read, and yet those learned and often narrow responses are all they have to contribute. If their contributions are not welcome in our classrooms but are suspect because of their unexamined assumptions, then our students as persons are not welcome and will learn to question their own capability to contribute. As teachers, we must start where they are, inviting them to be present and to contribute whatever it is they have to offer. Through the multiplicity of those contributions—their interaction with one another, with the text, and with the author through the text—they will begin to question their assumptions, to see unexpected alternatives, and to grow in their awareness. The primary benefit of a relational literary pedagogy is that it begins with the student's lived experience of himself and his encounter with a text, and it uses that experience in relationship with others' to foster growth in his understanding of himself and of others different from him.

Welcoming the student as a being in the classroom can also result in a change in the classroom environment by avoiding an unfortunate phenomenon common from middle school through college and described by teacher Christine Cziko:

> You see this with so many kids. In the hall, in the cafeteria, in their communities, in all these places there are these active, engaged,

> bright, funny kids. They come into the classroom and they turn into a ghost of themselves, like a shroud just drops over them. Their academic identities are these fragile, ghostly things, not robust in the way their whole person identities are because of so many things – repeated failures, being told what they can and cannot do, being mystified by what is asked of them in school. (Greenleaf, et al. 9)

Students become "ghosts of themselves" when repeatedly viewed as static and replaceable objects with limited capabilities. But the recognition of the contribution and the impact of the student in a learning encounter can bring change, making the educational environment a safe place for those "active, engaged, bright, funny kids."

Another benefit of relational literary education is that it addresses a strong felt need of many students. As our society becomes more and more characterized by isolation and alienation, many desperately seek community or connection with others. Literature, taught in this way, offers the possibility of connection both in the encounter with a text and an author, and in the community of readers created in the classroom.

The Challenges of a Relational Approach to Literary Education

Like most benefits, these come with some challenges. Encountering a multiplicity of readings of a text among a community of readers requires that some diversity exists within that community. In most classrooms diversity is a given, but not in all. Yet differences which may not be obvious can still yield noticeable divergence. My own beginning attempts to work out this approach in the predominantly upper-middle class, suburban classroom in which I teach bear evidence of this possibility. After I asked my students what they had learned from the stories we had read, the overwhelming majority replied that they had learned how differently people respond to a story. Also, an additional source of diversity can come through the choice of texts, including some that might challenge widely held and largely invisible assumptions.

A more difficult challenge is how to ensure that divergent perspectives are spoken and heard, how to prevent dominant views from squelching others. Inviting the broad range of responses into the classroom conversation requires a shift in the role of the teacher and the objective of the class. Working toward the correct understanding of a text based on the teacher's authority means that "wrong" responses detract from the course objective and are therefore to be avoided by all. If instead the course objective is to learn how readers arrive at meaning in encounters with texts, where the teacher is an inquirer along with the students, then all responses become profitable to further understanding. Even the student who declares that the story was so boring he didn't read past the first page spurs more inquiry. Why did this reader find this text so uninteresting? What does this tell us about readers and texts? When every response contributes to learning, including the teacher's learning, then the classroom becomes hospitable to radically divergent views (within, of course, the boundary of respect for the members of the community, including the text and the author).

While essential for a relational approach to literary education, this kind of shift in practice introduces some additional challenges. Students present, as Cziko observes, "fragile, ghostly" academic identities in class as a response learned

over years of school experience. To invite students to participate in a different way in a classroom requires them to refigure their own academic identities. Like any redefinition of oneself, the shift from a passive recipient of information to an active contributor to the making of knowledge occurs in students neither immediately nor automatically but requires careful prompting by the teacher. Means to invite such a change in students include time for individual reflection (often through writing), open-ended questions, opportunities to interact in pairs or small groups which are less threatening than a whole-class discussion, expressed appreciation for all responses, and even the option to remain silent which frees students from a potentially stifling pressure to participate. Only over time will students come to trust that their contributions are not only welcome but essential to the learning event.

While students can be reluctant to risk a new role in the classroom, the shift required in the teacher's position proves a greater threat to established identities. It means the teacher relinquishes her position as the sole source of authority in the classroom. Nancie Atwell offers an explanation of her own resistance as a teacher of writing to this kind of shift:

> Eventually I saw through my defenses to the truth. I didn't know how to share responsibility with my students, and I wasn't too sure I wanted to. I liked the vantage of my big desk. I liked setting topic and pace and mode, orchestrating THE process, being in charge. Wasn't that my job? If responsibility for their writing shifted to my students, what would I do? (11)

For Atwell, and for teachers at every level, the shift toward relationship is ultimately a shift in power. That kind of relinquishing or sharing of power is initially terrifying, reason enough for anyone to avoid it. Here a return to Buber's work offers some insight as his description of the I-Thou world suggests additional reason for such fear:

> The world that appears to you in this way is unreliable, for it appears always new to you, and you cannot take it by its word. It lacks density, for everything in it permeates everything else. It lacks duration, for it comes even when it is not called and vanishes even when you cling to it. It cannot be surveyed: if you try to make it surveyable, you lose it. It comes—comes to fetch you—and if it does not reach you or encounter you it vanishes, but it comes again, transformed. (83)

In a mutual relationship, the other is not fixed, stable, nor predictable but is beyond the self's control and expectation. The other also affects the self, and the self the other. So in the I-Thou classroom, outcomes are difficult to predict, content difficult to plan, and everything impossible to control completely because there is a room full of free beings whose interaction—with one another and with those present through texts they have authored—means the possibilities for meaning and learning are limitless, and the outcomes unknown. It seems appropriate then that Parker Palmer's book on education as relationship is entitled *The Courage to Teach*. Besides courage, what's required to take such a risk? Trust. Elizabeth Close mentions the necessary quality as she describes her experience with a relational classroom:

> Allowing students the opportunity to develop and discuss their own questions and to dominate the discussion can be very frightening for the teacher. I worried about losing control and about not covering the 'important' areas of the curriculum. What I discovered was that the students could be trusted to ask important questions, to address the important issues seriously in the literature, and to listen and learn from one another. (71)

Great good can come from trust—trust in the students, trust in the texts, trust in the authors, trust in the process, and trust that in relationship, along with conflict, misunderstanding, and many surprises.

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An Unspoken Trust – Violated?

Kia Jane Richmond

"I never expected someone to read this!" one student groaned aloud. Others in the room nodded in agreement. One said that he was uncomfortable, his stomach was tight, and his heart was beating fast. Another added, "I'm not ever going to put my feelings in my writing again, not if someone might read it!" Another grunted, " It's not fair." These students were part of my first-year writing class, and their responses were ones I expected. You see, on one particular day, I wanted to teach my students a lesson. The lesson learned, though, was not necessarily the one I had planned.

One morning, I asked students to freewrite for fifteen minutes about their experiences with writing the essay they had just completed for class. I had explained to students earlier in the semester that freewriting, according to Peter Elbow, is "writing whose goal is not to communicate but to follow a train of thinking or feeling to see where it leads" (270). I had also said that freewriting is not "a published communication intended for an outside audience" (Lindemann 111). After waiting patiently as students wrote, I asked them to switch seats with another person, read that person's freewrite, and respond in writing to what they read. After five minutes, students returned to their own seats and began to discuss how they felt when they realized someone else would read their freewrites, when they realized that I manipulated them.

The responses shared above were ones I anticipated. I hoped, in fact, that students would find themselves uncomfortable and nervous so that they would acknowledge that writers have emotions associated with writing, emotions they might not even expect in every situation. I wanted my students to realize that they may feel protective of their writing, an issue important to discuss in a classroom dedicated to peer response and workshopping essays. And it worked. Students absolutely got the message I wanted them to get. However, what I did not expect were the pangs of guilt that I felt after manipulating my students.

When I asked students to engage in the freewriting activity, they believed that the exercise would be what I said it would be: an opportunity to think and feel on paper or computer screen in private. They trusted me to tell them the truth, and I violated that trust. True, for a very good reason. But the fact remains that I manipulated my students, and I felt guilty about that. Like Parker Palmer, I too believe that "[w]hen a class that has gone badly comes to a merciful end, I am fearful long after it is over—fearful that I am not just a bad teacher but a bad person, so closely is my sense of self tied to the work I do" (36).

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I'm not going to belabor this issue, though I imagine that with the guilt I feel, I could fill ten to twelve pages with angst and self-doubt. While that might be beneficial to my own emotional healing, what's more important is how this episode highlights issues of ethics and teacher identity on which we should reflect. Considering these issues—the connections between our values and our jobs—would benefit all of us who teach.

To start that reflection, I ask the following questions: Why did I react the way I did? Why get so upset over misleading my students? It's possible that my response to my experiment is related to what Madeleine Grumet calls a "feminine version of the Protestant ethic," one that reflects an appreciation of "patience, obedience, self-abnegation, and loving-kindness" (52). Teachers are supposed to be trustworthy individuals, bastions of the community, morally superior human beings who do not lie to their students. Female teachers, especially, are expected to be "good girls," ones whom parents and administrators can count on to do the right thing at all times. Moreover, students are conditioned to trust the teacher, to view educators as benevolent people who choose to spend their days with adolescents and young adults because of the love their subject or teaching or kids, not the money or the glory or the power.

Furthermore, Robert Yagelski reminds us that "the image of the teacher as idealist, as hero, as iconoclast, is well-rooted in American culture" (41). Teachers are expected to be truthful and to treat students justly. We need not only look to television *(Boston Public)* and the movies (*Mr. Holland's Opus* or *Dead Poets' Society*) to verify this ideal; we can also look at many of our own assessment practices. On the evaluation forms given to my students at the end of each term, for instance, there are questions about the instructor's "helpfulness," "patience," and "impartiality," suggesting that the university (or at least my department) values these qualities as indicators of one's effectiveness as a teacher. Students are asked to assess the teacher's ethics in addition to the teacher's ability to organize and present materials; our values, then, are incorporated into our teacher-identities whether we want them to be or not. And the expectations that we bring into the classroom, as well as the roles that we adopt in trying to meet those expectations, are connected to the ethics of our teaching.

There are a variety of models of the student-teacher relationship, each of which distinguishes a specific role for the teacher. Some of the models position the teacher as a pseudo-parent, responsible for students' success and for setting up classroom activities to lead students to make specific decisions about writing; other models view teachers as partners with students in inquiry. If students and instructors are working from an ontological system of education, one in which knowledge is passed down from generation to generation, then students would expect the teacher to direct them consistently toward an unvarying set of beliefs or facts (Knoblauch 129). Students who act within the limitations of this system are not expected to question the nature of things or attempt to create knowledge through discussion or self-discovery; rather, they accept what the teacher offers as true, rational, and not likely to be modified.

The power in the situation described above resides with the teacher, but it is the students' belief that the teacher will use that power for the good of the students—the pre-determined good that is the same for all students—which allows the system to work. It is students' willingness to buy into the system that authorizes the teacher to act in any way he or she chooses. The freewriting exercise I

developed was not designed to lead students to a single unchanging fact or belief; rather, I planned the experience to encourage students to explore their (diverse) beliefs about writing and emotions associated with writing. Nevertheless, while I encouraged students to be active participants, I typically position myself as an expressivist teacher, one who acts as facilitator or planner to set up opportunities for students to explore language, with the goal of self-discovery through collaboration (Berlin 16). In this instance, I set myself up as the authority in the classroom.

Let me give a bit of background about my writing classes before moving on. I use a series of writing workshops to promote students' authority as writing experts; I bring in my own writing to share my identity as a fellow writer; and I employ student-designed rubrics and self-evaluation to encourage students to take responsibility for their growth as writers. The lesson that I planned for students on this specific day, though, changed my role in the classroom from facilitator to director/authority. And, though I was oblivious to this shift in roles, my students were quite aware—as Jeff Smith says they always are—of "who in the room has the power, ultimately, to set rules and requirements if she so chooses, and who doesn't" (306). It is this discrepancy in identity that led to my feelings of guilt about the incident: not the students' responses to the incident but my own. And it is this issue—paying attention to how we perceive ourselves and how we connect our values to our everyday actions—that I wish to highlight in this essay.

In his "Students' Goals, Gatekeeping, and Some Questions of Ethics," Smith asks a useful question: "[A]re we obliged to enact our values [. . .] in each moment as opposed to pursuing them through means which may, at least temporarily, seem at odds with them?"(310). I believe we should allow our values to guide the decisions we make as educators; we should pursue actions in our classrooms that allow us to enact our ethics on a daily basis as much as possible. Perhaps, more importantly, we should reflect on our actions each day, considering how what we value is manifested in our choices as teachers. It is the consideration of our actions—as much as the actions themselves—that contributes to our growth as ethical professionals.

We should reflect regularly on our teacher identity and its relationship to our ethics, asking ourselves questions such as the following: How do we perceive ourselves? What image do we offer students of ourselves as teachers? As individuals? As partners in education? Who are we perceived to be? We are encouraged by many in our field to be reflective, to think as we teach (Knoblauch; Ronald and Roskelly). But how many of us consider on a regular basis our reactions to students, their work, or our own positioning in relation to both? Beyond keeping a teaching journal, talking to colleagues about the pile of papers we have to read or the lesson that fell flat (or the student who failed), do we really spend much time reexamining our actions in the classroom? Do we have any rewards for doing so? It's hard work, emotionally and cognitively. Such consideration requires us to first articulate our assumptions and then systematically believe and doubt them in order to better understand ourselves and our students and ourselves. More than that, it's work that is not necessarily valued in the academy. Where does self-examination fit into the typical model of service-teaching-professional development?

Considering how we react to decisions that we make in the classroom on a daily basis is paramount to active reflective teaching. Peggy Raines and Linda Shadiow tell us that

> [T]hinking about teaching practices is only the beginning; describing perceived classroom successes and failures is an initial step. Reflection, in the most potent sense of the word, involves searching for patterns in one's thinking about classroom practices and interrogating the reasons for one's labeling some lessons as successes or failures; it challenges one not to stop with the thinking about the doing. ("Reflection and Teaching" n. pag.)

Of course, the practice of reflective teaching, while becoming more popular in some academic circles, also entails some risk. It's possible that asking ourselves why we react in various ways might cause us to question the way the academic system is organized in the first place. And, though we are encouraged to reflect on (and account for) our teaching and related activities in annual evaluation reports, we are not rewarded for questioning the status quo or our relationship to its continued existence, especially if we are not tenured. The university system, as it has been designed, maintains a specific relationship between teacher and student, one that is based in part on the idea of the teacher being in control and being truthful in and out of the classroom.

Another risk associated with reflecting on our teaching—especially on those days when we don't see ourselves (or the way the class went) as successful—is that we might have to leave our comfort zones and view our teaching actions as external to our teacher "selves." What we believe about teaching, what we were taught about good teaching, what students have told us about ourselves as teachers, all these surface when we slow down and contemplate the decisions we make in the classroom.

Disconnecting from one's teacher self to consider choices made by that self is emotionally difficult as is any practice which asks us to evaluate what our preferences and judgments might be. This discomfort with self-evaluation became apparent to me when I introduced a role-playing activity to my students in another writing class. I asked them to respond to their own papers as if they were not the author: taking notes as they read, thinking about what the author's point was and how well the author explained that point. Students were asked to write notes to themselves about what they might change now that they've read their own work as readers. It was awkward for students to separate the decisions they made as writers from the interpretations they constructed as readers; however, when students accepted that their choices as writers did not define their writing identities (i.e., "I'm a good writer, I just didn't have a good introduction to this essay"), they were able to give themselves better advice for revision later.

Teachers would benefit from trying the same kind of self-detachment in their reflections; however, the danger of discovering flaws in our teaching identities keeps many of us from asking complicated and often personal questions concerning our beliefs about teaching or our decisions as instructors. Recognizing who you represent yourself to be rather than who you think you are can be disconcerting. When I stopped and asked myself, for instance, about my feelings related to the student reactions in my freewriting experiment, I found myself questioning my beliefs about what teachers should do. I found that I couldn't ever step outside the position of influence I inhabit in the writing classroom, despite my wanting to do so. Realizing that my students sometimes have blind faith in me because of my position, rather than because of who I am as an individual, shook my notions

of the emotional intensity of the student-teacher relationship and efforts to build trust with students individually. Teachers engaging in the kind of self-analysis I have illustrated here might find themselves discovering parts of their teaching identities that are unsettling or, at the least, contradictory.

What is clear to me now is how much reflecting on our decisions in the classroom (those in which we were honest with our students and those in which we were not)—and our identities as characterized in those decisions—can offer opportunities for growth and change. James Banner, Jr., and Harold Cannon suggest one way for us to get started in this endeavor: "Professors[Teachers] can begin simply by thinking concretely and honestly about their own personal qualities and dispositions and then intitiating some conversations about them with their colleagues" (n.pag.).

This is exactly my motivation in recounting the interchanges between students and me in this essay. It's also what motivated me to read a draft of this essay to the students in that class and to ask for their feedback. Interestingly, they were surprised that I spent any time or energy thinking, much less writing, about the incident. This response gave me the perspective I needed. Students, even those who have been manipulated by their educators, trust us to make the right decisions, to do the right thing, to be on their side. My reaction to the incident, then, is more about me than about them. Thus, my purpose in writing this essay changed midstream, from reflecting on what they learned and what that means to what I learned and what that might mean.

When I stopped concentrating on my students, I was able to come to the following realization: though I advocate honesty and encourage congruence, I am predisposed to withhold information, to tell only what I think students need to know at any given moment. This tendency is part of a controlling personality, a part of who I am as a person that also bleeds over into who I am as a teacher. There's a great sense of power that comes from planning what will happen in a classroom, an emotional payoff that we don't often acknowledge. By recognizing it, I found myself open to questioning it, to asking myself about what might have happened if I told students we were going to try something a little different before doing the freewriting activity. Thanks to changing the focus back to myself, I was able to learn something from the activity, something that has made me a better teacher. My need to feel in control, combined with my choice to work within a system that sets up the student-teacher relationship so that the teacher is most often the (benevolent, well-intentioned) decision-maker, leads me to design lessons in which I am the knower. Even though I do not intend to set up my relationships with students based on a current-traditional pedagogy, my preference to control can position me that way.

That's why I had such a significant reaction to the incident; I was aware of how much control I had over what students did (and felt), and I didn't like it. Students did exactly what I wanted them to do and learned the lesson I expected them to learn, leaving little room for dialogue, exchanges of ideas, or growth. It felt wrong because it was not the way I usually teach (yet, emotionally, it was comfortingly familiar. I was in charge and everything went the way I wanted it to go). The contradictions that surfaced as a result of my writing about the lesson-gone-wrong were ones that were useful, but not until I reflected on them and began to dialogue with others about them.

Considering these issues—positioning in the classroom, my intentions, my

personality, my beliefs about teaching writing—and talking about them to students, to other teachers, even to myself, has helped me to better understand myself. This, I am convinced, is the lesson that was supposed to be learned as a result of the activity I did with my students. And, although it wasn't the lesson I intended, it was the one I needed. Whether students got what I wanted them to get is really not pertinent now. What is important is that I take more opportunities to think reflectively about my reactions to students and to the possible lessons (for me) in my classroom. In the spirit of growth and change, then, I offer this story of the day I wasn't completely truthful with my students as a mirror for others to hold up to themselves to ask, "What have I done that I'm not proud of, that didn't work the way I wanted? How can I learn from that?" I invite all teachers to join me in thinking about the ways that our reactions to classes, to students, or to our work can help us better understand our beliefs about learning, teaching, and ourselves.

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Multiple Forms of Prewriting in Elementary Writing Lessons

Carolyn L. Piazza and Christine Jecko

First grader Daniel is absorbed, turning the pages of *Catch That Cat!*, a wordless picture book about an extraordinary feline who rescues her owner from a shipyard villain. When the teacher approaches Daniel and invites him to tell her the story, Daniel interprets and dramatizes the black and white drawings with nonverbal gestures and sound-making. Crouching like a cat and uttering the word "meow," Daniel moves in and out of drama to elaborate the narrative and transform the sequence of pictures into words, as the teacher asks questions to frame what he observes and enacts.

In this glimpse of classroom life, Daniel and his teacher create a story narrative based on the visual images of a book. Proceeding from artwork to drama to narrative, Daniel goes deeply into the story, not just to write a description (the cat is small) or label inanimate objects (the cat; the boy), but to connect, through narrative, the moments and events of the story while bringing into play expressive literacies that go beyond print (e.g., art interpretation, role playing, sound making).

Daniel and the other first graders often express themselves by drawing on multiple literacies, the complex amalgam of communicative channels, symbols, and signs (Piazza 2; The New London Group 61). With many available options, they frame ideas from different perspectives and demonstrate their competence in a variety of ways.

In recent years, attempts have been made to integrate nonprint and extralinguistic (nonlanguage) literacies with language instruction.[1] This trend is often attributed to a greater emphasis on inquiry models and interactive methods, meaning as socially constructed, recognition of multiple intelligences, and value in expressing emotional and personal experiences through the visual and performing arts. Research in multiple literacies suggests, for instance, that when students respond to literature through drama, music, and even mathematics, they expand, enrich, and unravel potential meanings not otherwise possible (Alejandro 12; Eisner, "Role" 48; Short, Kauffman, and Kahn 160).

Just as readers benefit from multiple forms of expression, so too do writers, especially during prewriting, the part of the process that extends "from the time a

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[1] Consider, for example, Karen Ernst and Ruth Hubbard's *New Entries of Learning by Writing and Drawing*, Claudia Cornett's integration of literature with the arts, Carolyn Piazza's teaching writing through the arts, and Kathy Short, Jerome Harste, and Carolyn Burke's authoring cycles.

writer begins to perceive selectively certain features of his [sic] inner and/or outer environment with a view to writing about them—usually at the instigation of a stimulus—to the time when he first puts words or phrases on paper elucidating that perception" (Emig 39).

Most educators are familiar with typical prewriting strategies such as webs, clusters, maps, or outlines. However, perhaps less well-known, but used by many expert writers, are experiences that activate thinking through visual images (e.g., drawings and art), sensory channels (e.g., music, guided imagery), the subconscious (e.g., dreams) and intensified contemplation, (e.g., meditation) (Darnton; Moyers). An interest in various types of prewriting and their effects on a writing assignment is not new. Research in the 70s and 80s considered the impact of pictures (Golub and Frederick 168-69), auditory and tactile stimuli (Kafka 32), music (Donlan 116), and guided imagery (Mahoney 42) on fluency and quality of writing, but these studies were often "atheoretic" and told "nothing about the processes of writing or instruction, and little about the conditions conducive to better writing" (Hillocks 174). With today's emphasis on diversity and culturally relevant instruction, multimodal prewriting resources can offer novel ways of perceiving, interpreting, and shaping writing.

This article reports the impact of nonlanguage prewriting invitations (creative visualization, art, music, dreams, and meditation) on the writing of students in first, second, and fourth grade. The idea of prewriting as "assisted invitations" was borrowed from Ann E. Berthoff (9) to capture the purposeful intent of framing writing with multisensory experiences rather than teaching a specific strategy. Before discussing these prewriting invitations, we outline classical and contemporary theories in which nonlanguage experiences are grounded.

Building A Framework For Multiple Forms of Prewriting

The five prewriting invitations that we identified for this study—creative visualization, art, music, dreams, and meditation—go beyond language to consider expression in all of its various forms. Three communicative theories overlap to offer a framework for tapping into this wider expanse of meanings.

The Art of Invention and Rohman's Prewriting

The term "invention" reflects the classical notion of "ways of knowing," while at the same time building on work which extends rhetorical contexts to studies of creativity and multiple forms of literacy. The early Greek philosophers were among the first to show interest in the "art of invention," the rhetorical practice of exploring a subject and discovering a line of argument that would affect an audience. In classical rhetoric, the subject was not just a topic but rather a topic-as-a-method-of-inquiry (Lindemann 43). Strategies for dealing with topics, traditionally of an argumentative nature, considered use of opposites, various senses and meanings of an ambiguous term, selection of powerful and skillful words, and other persuasive techniques. A more contemporary rhetorical function placed the topic in new relationships with the audience to achieve a broader range of discourse aims. It was during the 60s with the advent of writing process approaches that the term "prewriting" was coined by D. Gordon Rohman whose work started a generation of writers moving beyond classical invention to creative inquiry techniques aimed at expressive and literary discourse. Although Rohman's

broad conception of prewriting resonated with creativity, subjectivity, and simplicity (Young 16-18), the forms that inquiry took in classrooms were those in which verbal facility and logical aims dominated. By contrast, professional writers and creative people embraced multisensory sources for guidance and inspiration (Ghiselin).

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences

Howard Gardner's seminal work *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* offers another set of principles for framing inquiry beyond linguistic and logical dimensions. "Gardner's basic premise is that intelligence is a biologically given capacity that manifests itself in a variety of forms" (Eisner, "Commentary" 556). Eisner outlines Gardner's multiple intelligences as follows:

- Linguistic Intelligence: Using language strategies and words to maximize experience
- Logical-Mathematical Intelligence: Drawing on reasonable arguments and numerical symbols
- Music Intelligence: Perceiving rhythm and time with a melodic mind
- Spatial Intelligence: Thinking in pictures and images with the mind's eye
- Kinesthetic Intelligence: Moving the body and physical self through space
- Interpersonal Intelligence: Noticing others and connecting with the social world; understanding others' temperaments, meanings, and perspectives
- Intrapersonal Intelligence: Developing self-awareness and recognizing the range of emotions, habits, and actions that guide behavior
- Naturalist Intelligence: Working and exploring nature and natural events
- Spiritual Intelligence: Pondering the nature of existence and the existential life

For writers, these intelligences represent multiple ways of knowing and a broad spectrum of inquiry approaches that guide reason, stimulate memory, encourage intuition, and give rise to problem solving. Worth noting is the overlap of the musical, spatial, kinesthetic, and spiritual realms with Rohman's prewriting. The intelligences offer untapped resources to stretch writers' thinking in ways not often considered.

Peirce's Semiotics

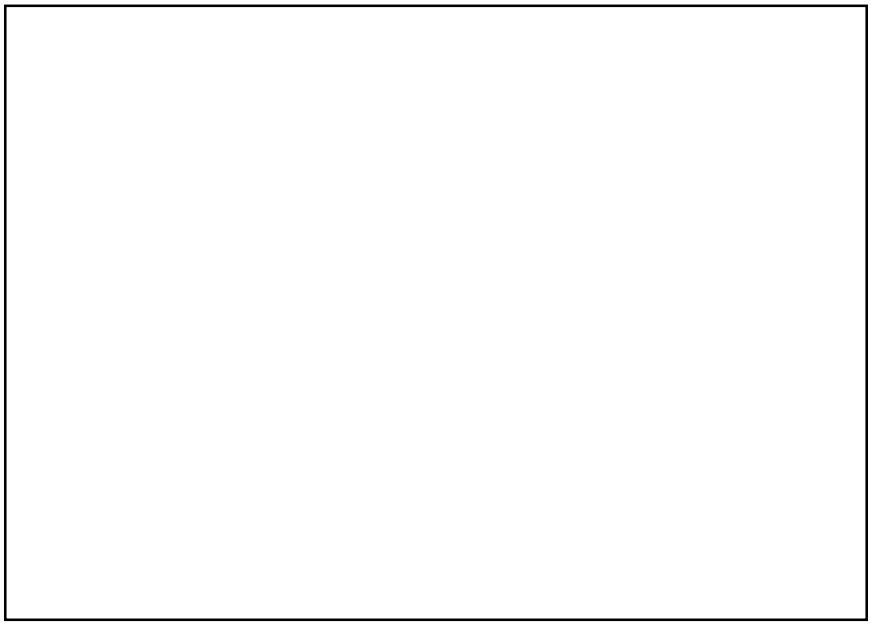
Semiotics, the study of signs, is also relevant to multiple forms of prewriting. Charles Peirce, considered the father of modern semiotics, contends there are three ways to represent or express mental ideas (135). They may be iconic, that is, signs representing a picture or diagram and resembling that which they signify (e.g., a photograph), symbolic like those typically connected to speech and writing (e.g., words in a book), or indexical signs, those which are inherently linked in some way (e.g., smoke equals fire). Children and adults respond immediately to iconic messages because they appear almost tangible, a set of "summary images" or graphics that stand for a concept without defining it fully (Bruner 10-11). Iconic representations rely heavily on visual, perceptual, and sensory organization and invite children to examine image properties, or affect, to arrive at a gestalt before using linguistic categories (Bruner).

Words are symbolic signs and are challenging to readers and writers because they do not always resemble the signified but are arbitrarily agreed upon for

meaning (Barthes 35-53; Eco). For example, the word stop is used to signify the same directive as a red traffic light. On the other hand, indexical signs point out physical or actual relationships rather than arbitrary ones (symbols). In the case of smoke and fire, smoke is an index because it indicates and implicates fire by virtue of an "actual" connection between the smoke and itself. Peirce sees icons, symbols, and indices as interdependent rather than as separate forms of representation.

Almost two decades ago, Charles Suhor. a well-known English educator and researcher, discussed the importance of a semiotic-based curriculum. This curriculum considered photography to focus a writer's perceptions and shape interpretations, dramatic enactments to organize experience, and nonverbal communication (movement, silence, sound) to carry human emotions and feelings. Suhor argued that these literacies were not simply a set of "frills" but a way of offering children new meaning-making systems and potential tools for thinking, introspection, inspiration, associations, and experimentation. The overlap of semiotics with Gardner's multiple intelligences and Rohman's prewriting is significant because it forms a conceptual framework for expanding invention tools to include multimodal forms of expression. Table 1 represents these multiple forms and shows how each literacy conveys its own special language and grammar. Although the focus of our study was nonlanguage prewriting experiences, we recognized spoken language (directions, questions, read-alouds) and interaction (teacher, student, text) as integral to transforming ideas into written language (symbols).

Table 1 : Rohman's Prewriting with Multiple Intelligences and Semiotics



As Table 1 indicates, writers use a wide variety of meaning systems, beyond language, for generating ideas or redirecting thought. These lines of inquiry touch deep emotional reservoirs and inner-most thoughts along with reasoning and logic.

Prewriting Invitations In Writing Lessons

The present study considered a broad, exploratory question: Do nonlanguage prewriting invitations promote writing fluency and idea generation? The participants in this study were writers and their teachers in first, second, and fourth-grade classrooms who volunteered to experiment with one or more prewriting activities. Mr. Nolan, the teacher in Grade 1, conducted a creative visualization lesson with Matt, Danielle, Amber, and Daniel. Ms. Smith, the second-grade teacher, drew on art and music resources in lessons with Klay, Blake, Lindsay, Valeisha, and Alex. And Ms. Montgomery, the fourth-grade teacher, tried out dreamwork and meditation with Erik, Seth, Katie, and Aisha. Although each lesson was suitable for implementation with an entire class, a subgroup of 4-6 children was randomly selected for detailed observation. In each case, the students were part of an intact heterogeneous group who met regularly during the reading and language arts period.

Five lessons, in all, were conducted, each ranging from 15-30 minutes. The researchers selected the prewriting invitations, but the teachers developed and carried them out. During a lesson, the researchers observed and took field notes of classroom interactions and writer behaviors, particularly those occurring between prewriting and first drafts. First drafts and informal writings were analyzed for fluency as measured in T-units and mean number of words per T-unit (see numbers in parentheses). A T-unit, first identified by Kellogg Hunt, is defined as all independent clauses and their dependent clauses. Simple and complex sentences would be 1 T-unit; compound sentences, 2 T-units. Because the number and length of T-units did not provide the entire picture of children's competence, drafts were also examined for quality of ideas (content and word choice). These analyses, along with classroom observations, were verified by the teachers.

Beyond interest in the prewriting invitations, we were curious about the catalysts for changing nonverbal thoughts into words, that is, how writers bridged one literacy to another, say, from art or music to written language. To that end, we considered the concept of transmediation, a process of expressing ideas in one system and transforming them into another (Suhor 250-52).

Writing Lessons

The lessons that follow shed light on the potential for using certain prewriting invitations in classrooms. Because their implementation raised more questions than they answered, we are optimistic about their promise in future research.

Creative Visualization in First Grade Character Sketches

Creative visualization, sometimes referred to as "guided imagery," is an invention technique that invites writers to form impressions, concepts, or feelings by constructing images, not really visible, but played out as motion pictures of the mind. It involves intensified listening for descriptions, actions, and events to make associations or reinvent selective details in writing.

First grade teacher, Mr. Nolan, read aloud Jack Prelutsky's poem "The Creature in the Classroom" to a small group of students: Matt, Danielle, Amber, and Daniel. After listening to repeated readings of the poem, the children wrote character sketches of the creature. Prelutsky details how the creature invades the schoolroom, consuming everything in sight, but doesn't describe the creature.

Instead, he refers to it, 13 different times, as either "The Creature," "The Thing," or "It".

Immediately after listening to the poem, Matt begins a written draft, leaving the observer to guess at the invisible transmediation process. In his six T-unit (4.6) text he writes: *It's a monster./ He is yellow and orange./ He came from the mirror./ He ate the mirror. And my dad./ I was mad/ and he swallowed my teacher.* While the words of the poem scaffold the visualization, the description of the creature is entirely Matt's own invention. Perhaps his constructed image originates from pictures seen previously on TV or in print.

Danielle also goes directly from the poem to writing, describing the physical characteristics of the creature in four T-units (4.2): *He is very tall /and he has spiky things. / Boogie monster and has toes./ He is whitish.* Like Matt, Danielle uses a vivid imagination to mediate between the poem (catalyst) and the draft.

Amber, on the other hand, approaches drafting via a drawing that is quite complete: a wall clock with all its numbers, a monster eating with one hand and holding a ruler in the other, a teacher shouting "out," and frightened students standing on top of their desks. Amber sees, in her mind's eye, not just the creature but the entire scene. Her mind images and drawing become the transmediating vehicles between Prelutsky's poem and the written descriptive piece. The drawing, however, is far more detailed than her draft of six T–units (3.6): *He gobbled up the blackboard./ He was fat./ He has hair./ He has blue. /He get the homework./ He get the apples.*

The creative visualization assignment is difficult for Daniel, who is unable to get started writing or drawing. Hence, Mr. Nolan asks three questions: What does the creature eat; is it fat or skinny; what color is the creature? Although the questions mediate written description, Daniel sees them as requests for correct answers and completes a draft that represents a simple response: *he eats toes. / he is fat./ he is red.* (three T-units, 3.0). It is quite likely that if more questions had been asked, the length of Daniel's text would have equaled those in his group.

In these examples, children move from words (poem) to written description by means of visual imagery, prior knowledge, questions, and/or drawing. Whether the transmediation from oral to written was influenced by a linguistic catalyst (the poem) remains a mystery. We do know, however, that relative to the other prewriting invitations, the poem offered no substantial advantage.

Art and Role Play in Second Grade Story Writing

It is common for children to rehearse writing through drawings. But viewing an art print, illustration, or photograph is another inspirational channel. For instance, children find narrative in art (e.g., through color, shape, size, texture, relationships, point of view) and use it as a prompt or model for writing (Dyson, "Negotiating" 356; Siegel 455-56).

Ms. Smith conducts a small group writing lesson with five second graders—Klay, Blake, Lindsay, Valeisha, and Alex—using an art print for inventing and sustaining a character role. The art print titled *If Balloons Were Wishes* by Kathryn Freeman portrays a park scene in which familiar activities seem to come alive: grown-ups are holding the hands of small children, an adult and child are riding a two-seat bicycle, people are walking dogs, a young girl is feeding some pigeons, a young boy is skateboarding, and a man, surrounded by children, is holding a bunch of balloons. Perhaps the most striking and attractive aspect of the piece is a child being carried off by a balloon that is floating above a small pond. With

this, the scene takes on an imaginary quality.

Students assume the role of a character or "thing" in the painting. A few questions are given as a guide for viewing the art print:

- What are you looking at?
- What are you thinking? Doing?
- Who or what is around you? What are they doing?
- What are you feeling?
- If you are talking, what are you saying? If someone is talking to you, what are they saying?
- What do you hear?

Immediately after answering the questions with one or two words, Klay begins to write, becoming the skateboarder and sustaining an invented voice with first person, "I." With four T-units (8.2), he answers two of the questions and quickly ends the piece. *I am skateboarding on the sidewalk,/ I saw this kid float up with a balloon,/ And then I said he is definitely nuts,/ And they are going to eat when they get home*. Although he fulfills the task, neither the art print nor the questions seem to inspire an engaging text.

Blake, on the other hand, answers all the questions but incorporates only one of them before making a connection between the art print and a social studies topic, the solar system. *I am a dog who is thirsty./ I see a kid riding a balloon./ I barked at him./ He went so close to the sun he went out of earth's atmosphere./ His balloon popped./ He started to float to Mercury.* In his six T-unit draft (6.6), he adds sophisticated vocabulary, such as atmosphere, balloon, and Mercury, copied from the word wall.

Lindsay considers sensory questions about what she "sees," "hears," and "does" to create a rich twenty-two T-unit draft (5.8) in her role as a dog taking a walk in the park.

> *Once I went to the park. / There were lots of people. / My owner took me for a walk./ On the way we saw a lot of birds. / We heard lots of sounds,/ there was a pond and a bench./ We sat on the bench/ and saw a fish pop up./ We had a picnic there, /we had jelly sandwiches./ After we had our sandwiches we walked some more./ On the way we saw a icecream stand icecream 10 cents./ We bought some. / I got vanilla with sprinkles. / Then my owner went to get popcorn./ I snuck off./ I walked around./ Then I saw something I never saw before. A plane./ It was so big./ Then my owner found me/ and we went home/ and had tea and biscuits.*

Her action sequence, from start to finish is filled with details such as *jelly sandwiches, sprinkles on vanilla icecream, 10 cents,* and *biscuits*. Short and long sentences bring a pleasant flow to the work, and the spellings of complex words show remarkable skill (*sorinkills*/sprinkles; *venla* for vanilla; *picknick* for picnic). For Lindsay, the artwork and questions provide an exploratory and kinesthetic space to identify a personal experience and enter the draft.

Valeisha incorporates the viewing questions as dialogue to scaffold her thoughts as she begins her narrative. Like Lindsay, personal interests and values mediate the draft while multi-syllabic words in invented spelling (*butifull*/ beautiful; *meracole*/miracle) help produce a detailed storyline of forty-nine T-units (6.0).

What are you looking at asked the little girl asked?/ I am looking at a lot of kids./ What are you thinking about?/ Who is around you?/ There are little kids around me. / What are they doing? / Well, they are asking for a balloon. / Someone has put something in the balloons./ It was a kind of thing in the air./ Everybody had starred at it /then rain came down/ and everybody did not have a umbrella/ but the balloon man did./ It wasn't just rainy/ but a bird and something./ It can't be God, because God is even brighter then that./ It was a beautiful cloud/ and a sparkle with a twinkle. / A beautiful rainbow appeared./ It was a gift of God./ Another one./ I want you to go to the people/ and give them a balloon / Why asked the little boy?/ Because, I want you to. /Ok. Said the boy./ So he went./ And want the dog to have this balloon/ so he can pop it./ Everybody had wondered why he was doing this./ He got up on a chair/ and put all of the balloons /and a miracle had happened./ It was so pretty./ Birds had sung/ and dogs barked. / What are you feeling./ I am feeling voices, air, and Jesus./ I am asking questions to little kids like you./ They are saying what will I do./ What do you hear./ I hear voices and skateboards./ You can have a balloon/ but I want you to keep a hold on to it./ And here is one for you./ I want you to keep a hold to it./ I want you to fly with yours./ And then the balloon will pop./ Then I will give you another.

If Valeisha finds a way cleverly to include the questions to pursue her own topic, Alex simply gives them cursory attention as he assumes the role of partial omnipotent narrator, looking at the skateboarder rather than becoming the skateboarder himself: *One day a boy skateboarding./He did a trick./It was so cool./then he did it again/ And he did it./Then he went home*. Of the five children, Alex is the only one who is unable to enter the picture and see the world from another's point of view. His six T-unit draft (4.3) is as long as the other boys but it falls short of fulfilling the task.

If it is true that role-taking occurs at a very early age with pretend play (e.g., using brooms as horses or role-playing fire fighters and doctors), then the reinventing of role play for purposes of fiction takes practice and developmental readiness (Jorgensen 70-71). Inventing character descriptions and role-taking are essential strategies to practice. However, in the context of prewriting, these strategies might have been more effectively framed as idea "seeds" for future writing.

In the art invitation, the girls (22 and 49 T-units) clearly outperform the boys (4 and 6 T-units) in terms of fluency. For Klay and Alex, the art print inspires few ideas, and the questions, intended as a mediating device for transferring visual images to a draft, instead, frame the activity as an academic exercise. On the other hand, the girls and Blake view the questions and art print as an opportunity to free associate and make connections. Blake draws on the social studies unit he is studying, Lindsay unleashes a personal experience that parallels the one in the art print, and Valeisha changes the guiding questions into dialogue for conveying her personal and moral message. Not only do these students use the art print to stimulate ideas, but they also draw on their experiences to mediate the writing. They are, at once, personalizing the draft and fulfilling the assignment, or what Anne Dyson refers to as "doing school" ("Learning" 258-60).

Music and Inventing Story Plot with Second Graders

Another communicative medium for exploring the world of happenings and feelings is music. Children draw on sounds, rhythms, or harmonies to explore free associations, moods, or ideas. Music, although unfolding in actual time, transcends single sounds to assemble whole ideas and evoke spatial and kinesthetic communication. Music inspires story scenes and characters or serves as a prompt for an entire story line.

The same group of second graders, Klay, Lindsay, Blake, Valeisha, and Alex, listened to music to discover topics and content for writing. Because this group participated in both the art and music experience, we were able to compare responses to different prewriting invitations. The piece chosen for this activity was *Ride of the Valkyries* by Richard Wagner. The score starts off very softly and then builds to an allegro pitch. Its crescendo makes use of the brass section of the orchestra, resulting in a bold and spirited effect. Because of this, it invites the listener to imagine scenes and events. Students jot down words and sentences, draw pictures, or just scribble movements on the blank page. The piece is played several times as the children freely associate.

Not surprising, the boys respond with pictures and words about armies and war (Dyson, "Ninjas" 227-29). Klay hears trumpets in the piece and associates this with men in battle. He states: *Me and my friends were in a battle./ And it was dark and raining./But we were tough because we were army men./ And the guys behind us were playing trumpets./ We were all dressed in blue./ We would be shooting guns.* His draft, six T-units (7.0) in length, is longer than the one based on the art print, and, because there is not a set of mediating questions, the resulting draft is more coherent with feeling and details.

Blake's twelve T-unit (4.2) draft, based on music, shows a great deal of imagination and specificity. *A army had come./Everybody rushed in there homes except the soldiers./ One of them said ready our men./ He did as commanded./ Then the enemy came./ There were more bad than good./ Then guns fired./ They good people won./ Everybody went home./ We won/ they cried./ The battle is over.*

Even though there are fewer words per T-unit, Blake's story is cohesive, focused, and uses advanced vocabulary such as *commanded, enemy,* and *soldiers*. Blake also attempts difficult spellings such as *eminey*/enemy, *camandid*/commanded, and *ecsept*/except.

Unlike Blake, Alex does not describe men in battle, but writes a nine T-unit draft (5.0) about a competitive horse race. *One day I was at a horserace./ Number 25 was in the lead./ And it was in the 2 round./ They where running fast./ There was music playing/ it was a rap./ We were going for number 14./ And number 14 won./ Then we left./* Although not much longer than his art-inspired piece, this draft develops a scene and is imbued with voice.

If the music conjures up war and competition for the boys, it evokes personal experiences and emotional content for the girls. Lindsay describes an event in which she is nervous about skating in front of crowds of people. In her short eleven T-unit piece (6.0) with accompanying drawing, she produces a snapshot of her skating experience. *Once I went to skate./ Coach told me I had to skate in front of people./ My mom and dad and my friend would be there./The time had come./ I was nervous./ The person called my name./ I was up./ At first I heard music,/ when I was done I heard people cheer./ I was glad./ I also saw my favorite*

colors blue and white. Although the average words per T-unit is equal to her earlier piece, she writes only half as much.

Valeisha, on the other hand, writes as prolifically as she did in the previous art-based draft, this time making detailed sketches and writing a twenty-three T-unit (7.3) account of the tragic period of slavery. Slaves are *being whipped* and this, she says, reminds her *of the whipping of Jesus*. She relays that *over half of the slaves died and God doesn't like it because we are his creation*. In her story, people fight with swords to free the slaves while a man *plays a trumpet and people cheer*. Again, she reiterates her moral theme, and again she manages to use the prewriting invitation to suit her sustained topic of interest. Her detailed sketches and experiences provide a transmediating avenue for the fluent draft she develops.

Overall, the music had a direct influence on the students' writing topics and content. Because the music prewriting invitation was open-ended, without a specific teacher task associated with it, the students were able to incorporate their own personal interests and experiences. While fewer words were written than in the art invited draft, the content was noticeably more authentic and heart-felt. Drawings, personal experience, and social knowledge further mediated the music. Whereas the boys wrote more during the music than during the art print activities, the girls wrote less. The nature of the musical piece and the images it evoked (action and combat) may have favored the boys over the girls.

Dreamwork with Fourth Graders

In contemporary life, daydreams and reveries often go unnoticed or are dismissed as irrelevant. Yet they can open up the intrapersonal realm of human desires, fears, goals, and relationships to promote a type of incubation and pondering encoded in spatial, kinesthetic, and symbolic form.

Two boys (Erik and Seth) and two girls (Katie and Aisha) participated in an activity that built on dreams as the resource for invention. Ms. Montgomery shared the Native American legend of the Dreamcatcher, a spirit who catches in a web all the bad dreams that occur during the night, allowing the good dreams to fly away to reach the sleeping person. Ancestors of Native American made dreamcatchers from twigs or pieces of jute, twisted into a circle and hung over places where they slept. The students prepared for the writing session by making dreamcatchers. Because the students recorded dreams outside of school, the transmediation process was not observed. However, Erik, Seth, and Aisha brought in snippets of paper from their dreamcatchers. A simple line from each student's dreamcatcher offers examples.

Erik: *Playing baseball. Winning a baseball game. Me and Bryan. We won.*
Seth: *I think my dog dreams about being a person so he can get into the refrigerator.*
Aisha: *I dream of being a winner someday. I dream of winning at swimming. Doing New York model contracts, running, fishing, horseback riding, saving animals.*

In class, when given time to elaborate on these ideas, Erik writes a fifty-eight T-unit draft (9.1) about baseball, Seth writes a forty-two T-unit draft (12.6) about his golden retriever, and Aisha talks about her swim team in a thirty-seven T-unit (11.3) draft. In all three cases, the drafts represent personal narratives that are fluent, detailed, and imprinted with voice. An excerpt from Erik's baseball draft in which he talks about the coach and his position playing left field serves to illustrate.

> *Our first game started./ To start off with my coaches were pretty strict./ I tried to ignore them./ I got up to bat/ and the coach was being nice then by saying "come on watch the ball". / Well I struck out./ And the coach was mad/ and yelled at me. / Then it was time for us to take the field./ I played left field./ A person got up to bat / and hit it to left field where I was./ It went high in the air./ I took a few steps back /and caught it./ Everybody was screaming and yelling.*

Although Erik, Seth, and Aisha talk about actual experiences, Katie chooses to write a 26-word statement about a bad dream: *I dreamed there were a bunch of monsters and creepy animals hiding in my room. Every time I turned off my lights they would attack me.* She chooses not to write about this further.

In all but one instance, the dream invitation inspired, and provided a means for, topic selection and ideas. Because it elicited personal experiences and, in turn, directed the narratives, the drafts were remarkably fluent and substantially rich in both number of T-units and mean words per T unit. It would seem that the informal dream "snippets" were prewriting in the true sense of the word.

Meditation in Fourth Grade Journal Writing

As was the case with second graders, we followed the same fourth grade group in the meditation prewriting experience. Meditation is a silencing of the self for ultimate concentration and focus. Although often associated with Eastern religions and spiritual enlightenment, meditation draws on experience, feelings, and inner solitude. For example, writers such as Ray Bradbury and Natalie Goldberg have adopted Zen principles to promote the hidden potential of the human mind and release the power of synergy and extreme watchfulness. Stretching, breathing, physical movements, or music also elicit a state of receptivity, establish mood, or bring out ideas from the subconscious (Oates 170-71; Walker). Meditation, it seems, integrates all of the intelligences—through feeling and body essence—into an experience that is harmonized and unified all at once (Caudwell 17-42).

Ms. Montgomery provides many kinesthetic/spatial opportunities. Her schedule regularly permits interludes in which students stand up and stretch, or do cross-lateral movements and deep breathing to increase oxygen flow. During a relaxation exercise, Erik, Seth, Aisha, and Katie sit quietly and let their minds wander as meditative music plays softly in the background. A couple of students close their eyes, put their heads on their desks, and relax while the music, soft and soothing—in adagio—plays on. The CD recording, *Surf Sounds*, is filled with sounds from the ocean. After a minute of listening, the students do a five-minute freewrite. Erik simply reports an association created by the music: *The music made me think of my friends./ I have a friend that died in 1999./ His name was Ryan./ He was my best friend. /We would play a lot together./ We would play tag./ He loved to play tag./ I had a lot of friends/ but they moved away./ I miss my friends.* The draft, which is ten T-units long (5.4), focuses exclusively on the topic of friends.

Seth picks up on the theme of the music—sounds of water—and drafts a verbal brainstorming list about his personal trip to Abacos Island in the Bahamas. He likes to go there for many reasons (boat rides, play in the beaches snorkeling, swimming, fishing, laying on the sand, enjoying the sun and breathing fresh air). Even though he has written only four T-units (14.7), each sentence has many

words. Aisha connects the sounds of water with the general topic of nature and writes her thoughts in a poem of four T-units (7.0). *Pitter patter goes the feet of a little animal./ Whish goes an animal over head./ Crack goes the snap of a branch./ Rustle goes leafs in my path.*

Katie writes a thirteen T-unit (10.1) draft on feelings evoked by the soft music: *The music makes me feel peaceful, calm, and tired. It makes me want to waltz around the room or play in the sand at the beach [. . .] . The music makes me think of a beautiful flower meadow with me prancing around like a unicorn.* Her brainstorming of free associations inspires dreamy images that come to her as snapshots rather than as a cohesive topic.

Each of the students proceeds from meditation to the written draft in different ways. Aisha and Seth begin with themes evoked from the kind of music selected (nature, the Bahamas), while Seth and Katie brainstorm in lists and associations. Erik draws on the melancholy sounds and the mood of the music to think about a specific incident—his deceased friend—Katie uses the soft music to inspire disparate images of many kinds. The students take what they hear and translate thoughts and feelings into words, disregarding the meditative intent of quiet concentration. In each case, the music conjures up personal experiences through associations, content, and topics. Only Seth and Katie use informal writing (lists and associations) before drafting their narratives.

Lessons Learned

This article presents an array of prewriting invitations that collectively represents multiple ways of knowing and thinking. To be sure, these invitations encouraged children to take compositional risks, spell difficult words, and pursue personal themes. However, the function of each prewriting invitation, as framed by the teacher and interpreted by the student, affected fluency. The invitations to creative visualization and art work, for example, were highly structured, with teacher questioning playing an important role. Questions were essential for first grader Daniel in getting words on paper and for second grader Valeisha for shuttling between the art work and the draft. However, when students perceived prewriting as a way of demonstrating writing competence rather than generating ideas, they often wrote fewer words (e.g., Alex's description of the art work). As they adapted the task to fit their interests and experiences (e.g., Valeisha's moral message and Blake's solar system link), the number of words increased. These findings suggest to us the following lesson.

Lesson #1: Fluency appears to be contingent not only on what prewriting invitations are used but also on how they are used. If prewriting is done in the service of finding personal topics and purposes and if questioning is presented and interpreted as a way to direct attention to new ideas rather than as a perceived call for correct answers, students will, in all likelihood, write longer and more engaging drafts.

Finding topics and expanding subject matter were the purposes of the music invitation. Music was probably the only prewriting experience in which all the students moved directly from sound to a topic. The music conjured up war and competition for the boys and social activity and emotional content for the girls. Compared to the art print, the music motivated the boys to write more T-units even though they actually wrote fewer words per T-unit. While all the children

favored this prewriting invitation, wrote more cohesively, and demonstrated personal voice, the music selected may have inadvertently advantaged one gender over the other or may have directed the nature of the subject matter in gender-specific ways. Two implications seem pertinent to the music invitation:

Lesson #2: Music appears to speak directly to writers, fostering fluency without intervention or direction. As such, it is ideal for inspiring ideas and fostering writer commitment and ownership.

Lesson #3: Music choices should increase the potential for a wide array of topics and associations. It is wise to sample many types and styles of music, keeping in mind the preferences of both boys and girls.

Music inadvertently played a key role in the meditation experience. Although students in the fourth grade class were given time to engage in introspection and reflection, the music playing in the background significantly affected their thoughts. The students invented a serious topic, a poem, a series of images, and a thematic topic based on the music, and these different forms may have accounted for the wide range of T-units (4 to 13) and words per T-unit (5.4 to 14.7). The lesson learned here is as follows:

Lesson #4: In many writing classes, students are not given enough quiet time just to think. If meditation were incorporated into the writing lesson prior to free writing, students might learn to treasure this space and time as many expert writers do.

As for the dreamwork invitation, fourth graders easily captured and recorded personal experiences and fleeting thoughts. Yet, unlike the other invitations in this study in which ideas led directly to a first draft, the dream memory served merely as a trigger for developing and expanding a delayed draft of the students choosing. Once again, this brings up an important lesson about the function of prewriting.

Lesson #5: If, across grade levels, we consider the words children write not as drafts but as "captured moments, insights, or ideas" made visible through writing, then we heighten the potential for building on these to enrich future work.

As we have shown in this article, the prewriting invitations appear to foster fluency along developmental lines (as evidenced by numbers of T-units and mean words per T-unit). However, whether the more influential factors in student responses were due to the type of invitation, the age of the student, the function of prewriting, or the teacher's instruction could not be ascertained. In addition, there were no definitive explanations for a student's transmediation process. Each was quite personal and depended on the nature of the prewriting experience, its purpose, and the preferences of the writers involved. Sometimes children advanced directly from one medium to the other, without providing a visible transfer mechanism, while at other times, picture drawing, visual images, personal experiences, and informal writing appeared to bridge one literacy to another. In future observations, individual writers will need to be followed over many tasks, on many occasions, to discover the specific bridges that they need to make the transition from nonlanguage symbols to print. Finally, it should be mentioned that noticeably absent in this process was interaction among peers. This, we believe, had less to do with the writers and more to do with the fact that three adults hovered over the small groups during the lessons.

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Community, Spirituality, and the Writing Classroom

W. Keith Duffy

$4,200. As best as I can calculate it, that's the amount of money I've spent over the last 10 years on potato chips, lollipops, bagels, pretzels, and donuts for my writing students. If I walk into class on a peer review day and don't have a bag of hard candy to share, I feel like I'm not doing my job.

Many of you know that feeling—the need to "break bread" with students, the desire to have them feel at ease, to bond. But why do we need it do it? After all, on a poor teacher's budget, it can become a very expensive habit. For me, the answer is community. I've discovered the best way to get the challenging work of writing done is when students feel as if they are part of a productive writing community in a safe atmosphere that values critical feedback and intellectual risk-taking. For some inexplicable reason, food seems to be the shortest route to that communal state of mind.

Of course, the topic of community in rhetoric and composition isn't a new one by any means. Over a decade ago, scholars in this discipline were consumed with the idea of community and its impact on writing pedagogy. As social constructionists began to take expressivists and cognitivists to task, ideas regarding the function and form of community in writing classrooms abounded in many academic journals. Conference presentations and writing textbooks offered teachers and students innumerable community-building techniques, from sharing food to collaborative learning. All the while, experts (many of whom were polarized on the topic) argued over the definition, usefulness, and universality of the term. Clearly, in the late 1980s, talk of community within the discipline had become so ubiquitous that it attained the status of lore.

Unfortunately, like many once contentious issues, the scholarly debate over the definition of community has passed into obscurity. Those participating in the conversation reached a theoretical stalemate, and the discussion more or less petered out. Thus, while academic debate highlighted the potential benefits of community building, leading to the centrality of community in writing classrooms, it left unresolved crucial issues about that community.

As a teacher who has spent some time investigating the spiritual dimensions of teaching and learning, I believe that spirituality plays a role in further deepening our theoretical understanding of community. Frankly, when I revisit the earliest scholarly discussions about community in rhetoric and composition, I find them lacking: the arguments being offered at the time often suffer from binary thinking, and that extreme polarization prematurely closed off an exciting, multi-faceted

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story. I believe spirituality, particularly the ways that spiritually-based communities embrace paradox, can break through the theoretical impasse that has characterized our academic conversation about writing communities and reignite conversation about classroom community building. To this end, I will examine the evolution of the scholarly debate about community, complicate it from a spiritual perspective, and offer an alternative way to explore and discuss community as it applies to the discipline of rhetoric and composition.

The Evolution of "Community"

In the late 1980s, the term "discourse community" suddenly appeared in our disciplinary lexicon. Scholars in rhetoric and composition appropriated and altered the phrase "speech community" from the field of linguistics and used "discourse community" to explore concepts of community in writing environments. Clearly, the acquisition and widespread use of such discipline-specific terminology helped to professionalize the burgeoning field of composition studies, and many authors worked diligently to define the term in its new context. In a 1986 article titled "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community," James Porter explained that a discourse community is "a group of individuals bound by a common interest who communicate through approved channels and whose discourse is regulated" (38). In "Approaching the Concept of Discourse Community," John Swales expanded this definition by telling us that members of a discourse community possess "an embedded dynamic towards increasingly shared and specialized terminology" (1). Perhaps one of the better known theorists regarding community was David Bartholomae, who used the term academic discourse community in his article "Inventing the University" to characterize the multifaceted college or university environment that all first-year students are attempting to join (4).

Though these selective, simplified definitions have individual nuances and sometimes conflicting foci, there is a common denominator present: each relies on the core idea that members within a community are, at base, similar, in some way. Members of a discourse community are drawn together because they have "shared goals" and "a common interest." And it is precisely the similarities among them that allow discourse to be produced—hence a "shared terminology." Indeed, prior to 1989, there was consensus among many scholars that community implied a togetherness—a cohesion—and this cohesion was predicated on the inherent, or "embedded," similarities of community members (linguistic or otherwise).

It didn't take long, however, before new voices entered the conversation to expand and complicate this definition of community. First, these individuals focused less on the linguistic properties of a narrowly defined discourse community and more on the larger, more dynamic notion of community and how the concept manifested itself in our discipline and classrooms (Harris). Second, these individuals argued that differences within a community, and not simply similarities, played important roles in blocking and producing discourse. Focusing primarily on the inherent differences and inequalities that exist among members of any community, some scholars argued that the term was better defined as a polyphonous chorus of voices simultaneously speaking in unison and at cross purposes. For example, Marilyn Cooper and Michael Holzman's *Writing as Social Action* argue that community should be defined heterogeneously, and that generic notions of community—such as an "academic discourse community"—were too

simplistic: "Our students' purposes in coming to college are various. Except at an extremely general level, it is hard to discern a shared purpose and shared values of what is called the academic discourse community" (217). In "Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning," John Trimbur states that there is great validity in analyzing not simply how shared goals help to produce discourse, but also how "differences in interest produce conflicts that may block communication and prohibit discourse" (611). Contrary to earlier notions of community, scholars demanded that we, as representatives of an academic discipline, pay attention to the intrinsic differences—and the inequities and exclusionary forces—found in nearly every community. The function of similarity within communal settings seemed to become a much less important topic of discussion and one that potentially ignored the messy reality of communities in our world.

Unfortunately, due to this polarization, a number of scholars eventually suggested a dismantling of the term altogether. For example, Thomas Kent contends that the concept of community unnecessarily imprisons speakers and writers and encourages skepticism and relativism (425). David Foster questions how the term has been used by scholars:

> Deep inequities of race, gender, and class still exist. The world is fragmented into many contending voices which cannot be reconciled or communalized, [and] efforts to soften or harmonize voices of anger and frustration by invoking a woolly liberal vision of communal harmony just doesn't cut it. (8)

Though I am simplifying a rather complex academic discussion, I do so in an attempt to show its general trajectory: researchers initially focused on the inclusive nature of communities and the form and function of similarity within them; this was eventually problematized by a call to examine the inherent differences among members of any community and the exclusionary forces that communities can sometimes exert; finally, due in part to this polarization, the issue of community within the field of rhetoric and composition reached a critical impasse.

Despite this impasse, community building activities within the writing classroom continued to be a widely accepted practice. A quick perusal of writing texts over the last decade suggests that a healthy sense of community—and a healthy dose of collaboration among students and teachers—leads to a more productive learning environment. While there may be some disagreement among teachers about how to best build a community, most are convinced that the classroom should be a safe, secure environment where students feel comfortable taking risks (Bushman; Calkins; Dale; Gere; Koch). Further, many teachers believe in the importance of engaging in routine community-building activities of some kind, such as sharing writing, co-authoring, collaboratively designing class syllabi, and cooperatively choosing texts. Although the pros and cons of collaborative pedagogies have been discussed at length by teachers and researchers, I raise the issue of community-building activities in the writing classroom for one purpose only: our emphasis on doing things to create a sense of community in our writing classrooms is at odds with some spiritual approaches to community that emphasize being over doing.

What Can Spirituality Teach Us About Community?

Clearly, our communal debate raised many questions that remain unanswered. Are members of a community distinguished by their similarities or differences? Is the primary function of a community to include or exclude? Do communities encourage relativism? Should we actively create and maintain community within the writing classroom, or is community building a practice that needs to be problematized?

While wrestling with these rather large questions (that clearly have multiple answers), I wondered if authors outside the discipline of rhetoric and composition might expand my understanding of community. And because of my interest in the spiritual side of writing and learning, I decided to consult a source that has had a profound impact on my own spiritual development: *The Spirituality of Imperfection* by Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketcham. Kurtz and Ketcham discuss the idea of community in ways not broached by scholars of rhetoric and composition—a discussion that, I believe, greatly expands the binary positions presented in the academic debate so far.

Before entering the particulars of that discussion, however, it would be prudent for me to explain the basic principles that undergird a spirituality of imperfection. It is not itself a religious movement or doctrine; instead it merely suggests a particular kind of orientation or attitude that makes us available to our spiritual selves. A spirituality of imperfection, according to Kurtz and Ketcham, is based upon the idea that we are flawed. The source of our humanity is our very ordinary and imperfect nature. Though many of us strive for perfection, such striving keeps us separate from our humanity, hence, our spirituality. Perfection denies the reality of our humanity, and it is within our human-ness as flawed beings that our spirituality (and ultimately community) finds its home. A spirituality of imperfection requires that we come face-to-face with ourselves as flawed, and through this admission we find not despair but the freedom and peace to be imperfect, always with an attitude towards "getting better." In addition, Kurtz and Ketcham believe it is this common, shared acknowledgement of flawed-ness that creates mutuality, the condition that allows people to come together without fear or facades.

In essence, a spirituality of imperfection rests upon the paradoxical statement that people can be "made whole by the acceptance of limitation" and that they are able to participate wholly in community (Kurtz 197). To further describe this idea of a spiritually-sensitive community, the authors present four key components: (1) Community is dis-covered, or uncovered, when we (2) allow ourselves to be found by others who are (3) different, or limited, in the same ways we are. Finally, (4) because human beings are essentially imperfect and limited, any relationship we enter into with other human beings can only ever be limited as well. For this reason, communities are limited, and this means they are inclusive and exclusive simultaneously. Belief in community requires embracing the paradoxical nature of them as both inclusive and exclusive (Kurtz and Ketcham 229).

The best way to understand the relevance of this definition is to apply it to our disciplinary concept of community. For example, the pedagogical emphasis in rhetoric and composition over the past 20 years has clearly been on creating community. In our teaching tradition, classroom exercises are designed to help bring people together to solve common problems. As teachers, we do things, and

ask our students to do things, in order to build community. Large projects are created in ways that the entire community can share in their completion. Various routines are established, and language is shaped, to help promote and nurture a communal identity. But what about the importance of being? The first two statements made by Kurtz and Ketcham clearly emphasize being over doing; community is dis-covered when we allow ourselves to be found by others. From this spiritual perspective, being becomes a kind of bridge that draws humans together. These authors suggest that community is uncovered, not made; additionally, members of a community allow themselves to be found by others, instead of actively, or in some cases willfully, joining in. Indeed, an exclusive focus on doing is precisely what can thwart a spirit of community; paradoxically, finding our "fit" in a particular community may require a certain passivity on our part.

Following this reasoning, community is not something that can be planned; it is not something we possess. Nevertheless, community is absolutely something we can experience if we adopt a certain attitude. A community is always there, but it needs to be dis-covered, somehow brought into our experience. Such a place, the kind of community we call home, is discovered rather than created, found rather than made. Too many speak too glibly about creating community by 'sharing thoughts, feelings, stories.' But community requires more than the sharing of stories—true community requires the discovery of a story that is shared. (240)

Kurtz and Ketcham suggest that community is best realized when there is, at least, a balance of being and doing. Generally speaking, I believe that mainstream pedagogy in the discipline of rhetoric and composition has not attempted to strike this important balance.

The third statement above—members within a community are different, or limited, in the same ways we are—speaks to the issue of similarity and difference among members of a community. As previously discussed, scholars initially focused on how similarities among members of communities helped to produce discourse; in essence, shared goals and interests lead to a shared terminology. The locus of this discussion then shifted to an examination of the inherent differences among members of all communities, and how an imbalance of power or authority can inhibit discourse. These arguments, when juxtaposed, represent either/or thinking; it's either similarities or differences. Personally, I always felt trapped by this binary. This is one of the reasons why Kurtz and Ketcham's definition (which embraces the paradox instead of pushing against the binary) is so appealing. According to them, communities are discovered when, paradoxically, similarities and differences are in play simultaneously. When individuals acknowledge their own limitations and the ways they differ from others, they can finally find their "fit" in a community with others who are also different. In a spirituality of imperfection, polar opposites converge; similarity and difference become interrelated in a way that they no longer make sense individually. Our differences allow us to identify one another and come together as flawed members of a flawed community. Ultimately, the focus is not on similarity or difference but on similarity in difference.

Related to this issue are the ideas of inclusivity and exclusivity. Do communities inherently act to include members or exclude strangers? In other words, do the boundaries between communities function to keep members in or keep foreigners out? Some scholars (Foster; Kent) have argued that if the primary

function of a community is to exclude, then this has no place within our pedagogy. On the other hand, if the purpose of community activity building is to provide a feeling of inclusion, we will claim it as a pedagogical tool because a feeling of belonging can enrich the classroom experience. However, as Kurtz and Ketcham's fourth statement above illustrates, this too is a binary that can be dismantled. Within a spirituality of imperfection, communities are comprised of imperfect human beings; they are, therefore, inherently flawed. And, because communities are flawed, they are both powerfully inclusive and exclusive; paradoxically, boundaries act to keep us together and keep us apart. Although many see boundaries as a de facto negative force, Kurtz and Ketcham argue that boundaries are important for their positive function: They define us. By setting limits in a way that gives identity, telling us who we are and who we are not, they make it possible for us to fit, to belong, and so to feel—and be—good. Without boundaries we would not exist. Boundaries establish space, that internal quality that is the capacity of letting some reality be present to us and for us. In this ancient understanding, boundary is not that through which something ceases to be, but rather that from which something begins to be what is, is free to be what is. (237)

From this perspective, boundaries, and the communities they establish, are protective rather than limiting. Indeed, the exclusive nature of communities allows them to be inclusive, protective; a boundaried community provides members with a place to seek sanctuary, to hide if need be, to heal. In a sense, exclusivity begets inclusivity; both parts of the equation are necessary to discover a community. By acknowledging the essential paradox that undergirds community, we open up community building in our classrooms.

Community, Spirituality, and Donuts

Embracing these sometimes paradoxical ideas can be challenging; putting them into practice in the writing classroom even more so. While I can confidently say spirituality has enriched the way I think and feel about community in my own classroom, I don't believe my teaching routine has changed in dramatic ways because of these connections. I chalk this up to the fact that, in my opinion, the spiritual and material worlds are sometimes incommensurate with one another. Indeed, the word spiritual was originally coined to denote "that which is not material" (Adler 1). Fashioning a concrete curriculum from these spiritual insights, in one sense, flys against the ephemeral nature of the spirit. Many teachers and researchers have confronted this paradox. For example, in "Grace, in Pedagogy," Richard L. Graves discusses this struggle, and he suggests that spirituality cannot be planned—for him, it is essential that we relinquish our impulse to "curricularize" spirituality: "It is not something that can be called up at will, planned on, or included in a syllabus[. . .] . Grace cannot be formally included or incorporated into a curriculum or mandated into a school system" (16, 20). This clearly problematizes any efforts at designing a formula for creating spiritual communities within our classrooms. Kurtz and others would suggest that any kind of classroom-community-formula is simply anathema to spirituality because "spirituality is, always, beyond control. We can't hold it in our hands, or touch it, manipulate it, or destroy it. Because it is beyond control, it is also beyond possession: We can't own it, lock it up, divide it among ourselves, or take it away from others" (31). A similar caveat is offered by Mary Rose O'Reilley in *Radical*

Presence: Teaching as Contemplative Practice. She emphasizes the importance of realizing the divide between technique, which is located in the "utilitarian world of what works and doesn't work," and spirituality, which addresses the much more ephemeral question of who we are (14). O'Reilley's distinction illustrates how spirituality and material pedagogy can be incommensurate: pedagogy is driven by our want, as teachers, to "do" something to make our classrooms better places to live and learn, and spirituality asks us to listen, to be present, to be open, and to be still in order to learn how we can best participate with and be present to those around us.

On the other hand, I realize that teachers still have practical concerns: "What activities might help to dis-cover a community? How do members of a community allow themselves to be found? How do I distinguish between being and doing? How do I strike a balance between the two?" Indeed, I've asked these questions of myself repeatedly, and I continue to do so. Over time, I've attempted to shape a personal pedagogy that responds to some of them; unfortunately, my spotty success makes my classroom approach a questionable model. After all, as O'Reilley warns, "Please don't try anything I've done and don't try anything that the Board of Education or the latest *College English* recommends: rather lie down in the Lamb's patience and follow the deepest leadings of your own heart and your own tradition" (14). By following this excellent advice, I can honestly say I have learned one lesson worth passing along: my own attitude toward openness is more important than any spiritually-sensitive curriculum I might create. My own willingness as a teacher to be dis-covered and allow my differences, my weaknesses, to be revealed to my students is central to nurturing community in my classroom. I have learned that if I am on guard, my students will be on guard; if I am ruled by a fear of being found, my students will sense this and respond by closing themselves off to community. If I am a whirlwind of activity, I may be distracting others from realizing a mindful community. In other words, my first steps toward uncovering community are to face myself squarely, to relinquish my own fear, and to acknowledge and release my facade. This risky, challenging attitude allows me to be present to opportunities for community as they arise in the classroom, while allowing my students the space to dis-cover the ways they might "fit" together. It provides me with a lens to see when I am talking too much, when I am not listening enough, when my assignments or directions are too prescriptive, when my own willfulness is in full swing. Adopting such a mindful attitude, and allowing change within, takes courage for both students and teachers; it requires an unconditional "letting go" of control, of ego, of fear—and embracing the terrifying reality that there is no guarantee of success.

Unless, of course, you bring donuts.

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Connecting

Section Editor's Message

Dear Readers,

I especially love the pieces for this issue of "Connecting." They speak of the fragile, complex, impossible teaching task with the eloquence of the survivor, of the barefoot traveler who has seen too much to turn back despite the thorny path. Hope and inspiration peek through these narratives of "doing what is necessary to do" and point to the paradox of making possible the impossible.

I have heard Jim Super's high school teaching stories in person for years, so I was pleased when he sent me one to include for you. It is entitled "Fearless." Pamela Hartman's story is the flip side to Jim's. She presents her own student narrative of encountering school literature, allowing us to realize how forcefully our choices affect our students. Thank God for the Jim Supers of the world and the Pamela Hartmans too because, instead of dropping out of school English, she is currently teaching English methods classes.

Nancy Myers complicates this learning-game portrait even further. Her nightmare memories of a graduate class end up showing us the power of literature, the same power that Jim Super gave as "the reason why I had become an English teacher in the first place."

Andrea Siegel's "Walking the Talk, Breathing the Breath" suggests that the demands on teachers are even greater than pursuing our academic passions against great odds. We should practice integrity and "walk our talk" outside the classroom.

"The Day Jenny Died" by Traci L. Merritt reminds us that teaching means sharing our human-ness and that, when we have the courage to do so, the reward is healing and lasting.

Susan Schiller's narrative about her composition pedagogy class speaks strongly in support of the work we are about as practitioners beyond the cognitive domain. She recounts what we all surely dream of: "a perfect collaboration of people touched by grace."

Our final "story," this time in the form of a poem, presents the impossible magic we ask of ourselves. Our students lead us, need us, and we with feet of clay can choose to walk the hero journey—and reap the reward. Please read this poem and be inspired as I was.

Fearless

Jim Super

Helen,

You ask for chatty detail about teaching moments. For thirty years I have been building a stock-pile of chatty details. Unfortunately, few of my memories are preserved in writing. Perhaps the sheer volume of paperwork that crosses my desk determines that sad fact. And, with the current "no child left behind" legislation, I'm afraid that the skill building demand may negate any significant education. We'll be back to "back to the basics," and then my teaching stories won't be worth preserving.

As for my current circumstance, I am in the beginning stages of a poetry investigation with my juniors and an impassioned leap into the waters of British Romantic poetry with my seniors. With the budding of spring, I once again feel the necessity of pouring sand into the proverbial rat hole. Yes, I know that a continued assault on subject-verb agreement and thesis statement building might be more skill oriented, but, for my own peace of mind, the quest for opening access into poetry sings like the sirens. My ears are wax-free, and I refuse to be lashed tightly to a mast.

With my juniors, the question arose today, "Will this be fun?" Perched on my tongue, ready to leap with reckless abandon, was the reply: "Compared to watching reality television, *Married by America, American Idol,* Springer, or the war, this could be the defining moment in your life." But I resisted, choosing instead to offer that this project would allow them to explore a single poet with depth, passion, and earnestness. They stared back mouths agape. Undaunted, I continued that they would be experimenting with five distinct kinds of writing, with deductive and inductive reasoning, with research, with critical analysis, with persuasion, with cultural archetype, with criticism, and with the very heart and soul of the poet. Two asked to go to the bathroom, one for a pass to the nurse; the rest just sat there while visions of prom danced in their heads. Tomorrow we begin in earnest, and, when we finish, most every student will have completed this task with considerable success. I am left exhausted, a wasted man.

Yet, the greatest task remains: to engage my seniors with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Keats, and Shelley. Springtime with seniors is a memory that I had chosen to put aside seven years ago. I had had my fill: from the whining parents to the beer-crazed, preoccupied, spiked, pierced, tattooed, tanned students who wandered into my class without regard for bells, decorum, or good sense. But here I am once again trying to fit 1,000 angels on the head of a pin. Me, the man who had sworn off, who had given in, who had succumbed to the casual life with juniors—who have yet to discover the facts that they know everything and

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Jim Super, a 30-year veteran of the "English Wars," teachers English at Olathe East HS in Olathe, KS. His realm of influence includes two college prep English IV classes (British lit) and three English III classes (American Lit).

high school is a mere exercise to keep me busy in their spare time. What the hell was I thinking? How had this happened to me again?

Today I drifted back into "A Preface [Pre-face, as Mike read] To Lyrical Ballads," and I rediscovered why I had become an English instructor in the first place. I'm far too old to remember for certain when it happened, but it must have been somewhere between 17 and 23.

Yet the unmistakable "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" flashed into me like a thunderbolt. Here I sit, planning for tomorrow, immersed in the Romantics, fearless as I prepare for my seniors. Will I be able to engage them for a lifetime? I don't know. Yet the effort is worthy if one student discovers the magic of poetry. I gotta go. I look forward to hearing from you. I doubt that I will make it to Ithaca this summer. The money for high school teachers has dried up like a well during a drought. —Jim

English? I'd Rather Read A Book

Pamela Hartman

When I was young, I called two activities in my life "reading," one having very little to do with the other. One activity included snuggling with my mom and little brother, traveling to strange and colorful places with other children, and drinking red Kool-Aid. The other involved sitting in hard-backed chairs, wading through uninteresting stories with underlined words that must be used in complete sentences, and agonizing that the teacher would correct my pronunciation again. Which memory was first? I'm not sure. They happened simultaneously in my mind. I loved the time I spent in my mother's room, Dad away on his weekly business trips, listening to my mother read books that my brother and I picked ourselves off the library shelf. I dreaded the time I spent at school in my "reading group," mainly because I always knew there was the threat of being moved down to a lower group (or "nest," since the reading levels were always disguised with bird names). Being a "Robin" wasn't much, but it was still better than being a "Buzzard" or a "Dodo."

I resisted reading alone for a while but soon found a friend I wanted all to myself. Her name was Laura Ingalls Wilder, and I couldn't wait until the next birthday or Christmas to receive another book. I thought her family was wonderful and her life full of adventure. I remember wanting to be her, to receive tin cups and peppermint at Christmas, and to see Indians on the hill outside my front door.

In the eighth grade, when I started taking English instead of Reading, we read novels, poetry, short fiction, and drama instead of stories in Readers. I was put into "Advanced English," a fluke I still credit to my ranking high on a national

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math test, which instantly placed me in all advanced courses. Although we read better literature in junior high and high school, I never lost my aversion to being told what to read and considered English my worst class only after phys ed. I found little interest in sitting through lectures about the lives of men long dead, memorizing lists of disconnected literary and vocabulary terms, or matching Greek gods and goddesses to their domains and heroic deeds.

Still, I enjoyed hiding away in my room to read the latest book that my mother had forbidden. I poured through *Flowers in the Attic, A Tunnel in the Sky, Go Ask Alice,* and *Sybil* only to search for more books hidden in the hall closet. My reading materials were also supplemented by my monthly selections from the grocery store, the one "extra" my mother never said no to. My friends and I shared these books and debated the motivation of the characters and the styles of the authors. We looked for the "truth" between these covers, and we applied this knowledge to our lives. We owned these books and the knowledge that we made from them.

It was not until college that I began to find meaning in school literacy. In college, I was required to take Literature Interpretation. This sounded suspiciously like English to me, but there was no getting around it. To my surprise, this class was actually interesting as well as challenging. There were no vocabulary lists, matching or multiple choice tests, reading groups, or book reports. The teacher actually seemed to want to hear what I had to say, and, if he didn't understand what I was saying, he didn't shake his head and move on to the next student. Instead, he asked questions as if I had some insight into the piece that he had never encountered before. This man built up my confidence and made me understand the connection between the reading that I loved and the reading I was required to do. I could read for different purposes yet enjoy the experience. I would again find pleasure out West, driving cattle with Gus in *Lonesome Dove*. I would also find pleasure and satisfaction in finding meaning in the works of Shakespeare, Margaret Atwood, and Zora Neale Hurston.

Through my experiences, both inside and outside of English class, I learned that powerful reading happens when we are allowed a space to talk about and negotiate the meaning of the texts. I think this is particularly important today in the light of high-stakes testing and "accountability," when teachers too often feel pressured to provide knowledge and to teach skills. In both my literature and English methods classes, I want my students to go beyond lists of standards and skills. Instead, we work towards thoughtful reflection and understanding of ourselves and the world we live in as well as the literature that we read. In this case, what is important is not what we are told is knowledge, but instead the knowledge we are able to make for ourselves and carry with us beyond the classroom walls. I want my students to make connections between home and school literacy and to value challenging the texts they read and choosing the focus of discussion, if not the actual texts that we read. I want them to recognize the power of human interaction and connection in our learning. These are the challenges that I contemplate as I sit down at night to finish planning my classes, a glass of red Kool-Aid sitting nearby.

B

Nancy Myers

I hit the top of the third flight of stairs, veered right down the hall, trying not to slip on the freshly waxed tiled floor in my 2-inch heels. The door was open, so I knew I wasn't late—yet. Bad form to be late on the first day of a graduate seminar. I had stopped to chat with a friend I had not seen in two months, so here I was racing to make that open door. I almost collided with the professor outside the classroom. Secure in my arrival, I smiled.

"Why are you taking this course?" he queried me in the hall.

"Because I want to read Melville and Hawthorne," I replied a bit confused.

"Well, you'll not get better than a 'B' for your time." As he strode in preparing to set his materials on the lectern, he commanded, "Close the door behind you."

I had not looked up or into the room in my haste to get to class. But, when I did, I recognized that all of the other graduate students were quiet and looking down at their desktops. They had heard everything. Like Hester Prynne, I walked into the classroom a marked woman, only my scarlet letter was a "B."

Like many other students in that course, I had had this professor in the previous semester's seminar on Faulkner and Hemingway. I had loved the reading. We had read all of Faulkner and all of Hemingway in one semester. I was reading three novels a week. The man's pedagogy consisted of lecturing and weekly essay exams with regurgitated answers that we had to guess at since he did not tell us in advance. We learned his agenda only after the exams, as he read from the essays he liked and read from the ones he did not. My writings and Socratic responses were either ignored or ridiculed. But I loved the reading. Class time was hard because he was brutal and mean, particularly to women. Each semester he gave a speech about how women had no place in higher education. That statement, of course, came the first day in Melville and Hawthorne, and, of course, it was aimed directly at Hester with a "B."

I had been anxious about each class session on Faulkner and Hemingway, but being labeled before we started this course changed my educational life radically. While the professor was trying to run me off, I chose to stay. While he worked to show me my place, I wallowed in the ecstasy of the readings. The he-man-teacher who so tried to discourage me taught me-woman-student in one short semester the difference between working for a grade and learning. Yes, I got the "B." And I am very proud of it.

Nancy Myers is an associate professor of English at the U of NC at Greensboro, where she teaches composition, linguistics, and the history of rhetoric. Along with Gary Tate and Edward P.J. Corbett, she is an editor of the 3rd and 4th editions of The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook. *Most recently she published "The Slave of Pedagogy: Composition Studies and the Art of Teaching" in* Teaching Writing: Landmarks and Horizons (SIU P 2002).

Walking the Talk, Breathing the Breath

Andrea Siegel

I find it pretty easy to tell students what to do. In the classes I offer through the continuing education departments of Barnard, Hunter, and Borough of Manhattan Community Colleges, I teach techniques from behavioral psychology which cut right through the terror that can accompany public speaking. The students are happy because the techniques help them overcome what had been a humiliating problem. I'm happy because I see dramatic, sustainable improvement in their performance. I certainly think it is important that I take the advice I give my students; of course, I must "walk the talk." No matter how challenging, if I have any integrity at all, I must use my methods when I am afraid. However, this is not so easy. First of all, I'm the teacher, so I think it's ridiculous that I'm having a problem. (I'm pretty hard on myself.) Second, when I feel my life is in danger, the last thing I want to try is some weird exercise from my pedagogy . . .

Last June, my boyfriend Al decided to give me a treat for my birthday—he would take us on a sunset sailboat cruise. Al did not know that twenty years ago my friend Vicky had taken me out on Long Island Sound in her sailboat. When the sail knocked me into the water, she sailed circles around me teasing me about sharks in the water. After that afternoon, I decided I never needed to get on a sailboat again. And I hadn't.

Now I had to be gracious. "Besides," I thought, "I'll be fine sailing with Al. It's been twenty years. I was a kid."

When we got to the dock, the couple ahead of us was telling the captain that they'd decided not to go. "I can't give you your money back," the captain said, "Please come." The captain looked about seventeen. She was cute.

The woman in the couple said she was so scared that she knew she'd throw up and she didn't want to do that. I didn't want either. They left. I told AI I was nervous. "Relax," he said. "It'll be fine." This didn't make me feel better.

When we got on the boat, the captain told us (we were sitting in a cushioned seating area) that we could sit there for the whole cruise, that she'd never turned the boat over, and that it was a beautiful night. She also mentioned that the boat would tilt a little once we got our sails up.

After we left the harbor, the boat tilted a lot. I'm not a mathematician, but I'd say the sail was roughly just above horizontal with the water. I clutched Al and thought, "I can just white-knuckle it for the whole hour, and then I'll never have to get on a boat again."

There are times when reminding myself that I am a feminist has no effect. This was one of those times. I closed my eyes. I tried telling myself that if I fell out of the boat, I knew how to swim. I was a trained lifeguard. I had just finished

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drafting a book about swimming. Sometimes the truth doesn't help.

I clutched Al some more. Then I thought, "I won't be able to face my students next week if I don't at least try some of the relaxation techniques that I teach them in class." I reminded myself that the fear was being produced by my brain: it was coming as a result of adrenalin, and I knew how to stop it. I tried to do the breathing technique. I could not get myself to breathe. "OK," I thought. "What can I do? Maybe if I start pumping my stomach in and out, start the motion, then the breath will follow."

I gently pulled my stomach in and then released my stomach muscles four or five times, and my breath started working again. I started relaxing. By the end of the trip, I was completely relaxed, and I had something even better; I understood why people love the sea. I could see that it was hypnotic and beautiful sailing through blue grey waves.

When my students start to use this "belly breathing" technique to turn off anxiety, I see an immediate change in their demeanor. Their brows unwrinkle. Their shoulders relax. They move with more awareness and grace. They tell me the technique makes a huge difference. I wonder if their world changes as abruptly as mine did . . . to a place far more peaceful and centered.

The Day Jenny Died

Traci L. Merritt

As teachers in the United States, we are trained to do many tasks. I have been through countless fire drills, tornado drills, and nuclear disaster drills, preparing for the worst scenarios. I did not realize that none of my training would assist me in dealing with the situation I would soon face. Last March 19, 2002, I became a paralyzed victim unable to remedy a situation, unable to fall back on my experience, unable to remember any portion of the emergency plan that would give relief—the day that Jenny died.

Jenny Melton, our beautiful, vibrant Homecoming Queen, was applying for colleges and looking forward to wearing a bikini at the state National Honor Society Convention at the beach in April. Her intelligent mind, beautiful smile, zest for life, and love of Spanish made her a wonderful friend to everyone in our school. On the morning of March 19th, Jenny ran her car off the shoulder of the road. Through overcorrecting then slamming on her brakes, Jenny spiraled headlong into a telephone pole on the opposite side of the road. She was killed instantly.

The morning of her death is nothing but surreal to me as the horrific news came via an assistant principal who called me outside my classroom to explain what had happened. None of the students was to find out until an announcement was made. When I walked back into my room, my eighteen honors English Seniors

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read my face and began asking questions: "Have there been more terrorists? Did someone call in a bomb threat?" As much as I wanted to respond, I was desperately waiting for the announcement. It never came. After many minutes that seemed an eternity, we all heard a scream, the most mournful sound I shall ever hear. At that second, my class with pleading looks demanded that I tell them. I said as matter-of-factly as I could, "This morning, on her way to school, Jenny Melton was killed in a single-car accident." At that moment my life changed.

All of my students began to cry—the boys and the girls. Jenny's best friend screamed then began flailing and shaking violently, rocking back and forth. I simply did not know how to deal with such a traumatic event. I instinctively held onto Lara, hoping to comfort her struggling body. I held on and could not say a word, hearing the cries and sobs of my students. A knock at the door came, and the students were told to go to the cafeteria where grief counselors were waiting. I walked with them into a room filled with grieving and crying students, teachers, and other adults. I sat in disbelief with my students—none of us knowing what we were supposed to do next. No one had an answer. We stayed there, trying to comfort each other, trying to bear each other's agony. Finally, many of the students located their parents who had rushed to the school to pick up their grieving sons and daughters. I don't recall how that day ended. I just know how empty and inadequate I believed my words and actions had been.

I anticipated an empty classroom for first period the next morning. I was wrong. All of my students came to school except Lara. Naturally, we were all extremely worried about her. After about twenty minutes of blank stares with no one talking, Lara walked into the room with an envelope full of pictures of Jenny: Jenny with her friends at the beach, Jenny and her family, Jenny at birthday parties, a close-up of Jenny's ugly teeth! The pictures broke the ice, and talking with a few laughs through the tears began; each of us, in little baby steps, began the grieving process, climbing out of a black hole back into the land of the living. The days that followed were long and difficult, but by the end of the school year, those eighteen students and I had developed a special bond. We were there together when Jenny died, and that experience gave us a unique strength, the power to live each day to its fullest, day after day.

As I reflect upon that day, I realize it had important implications for teachers. When tragedy strikes, I learned that being brave and strong may be the wrong reaction. While I truly wanted to maintain a guarded front and not break down in front of my students, I learned that breaking down with them and for them was key. I realized that as a teacher, I am first and foremost an individual with feelings too. I believe my response to join them in their tears kept us close and created a sense of trust. The tears that my students and I shared, the moments of pain and hurt we carried to the Junior/Senior Prom, and the bittersweet knowledge of an empty chair at graduation allowed a healing to transpire. For those eighteen students that were with me the day that Jenny died, I have more than love and admiration. When I see them now or hear from them as they have moved on to college, I am constantly reminded of the vulnerability of human life and how precious each life is.

Touched by the Spirit in AEPL Topics

Susan A. Schiller

During fall 2002, I taught English 519: The Teaching of Composition, which generally features an overview of theory and practice in composition studies. Most of us who teach it focus on college composition, but we sometimes require readings relevant for the elementary and secondary level depending on the student enrollment. The course is open to undergraduate seniors and graduate students. In past years, it filled mostly with graduate assistants who were required to take it, but since that requirement has been dropped, the course has had trouble filling. This particular semester four graduate students, Monica, Crystal, Angie and Jane, and one undergraduate student, John, enrolled. John was the only student who lived close to campus. Everyone else commuted from a ten to thirty-mile distance.

My plan was to begin with a motivational view of writing and progress through controversial topics JAEPL readers investigate in their research. We read, in this order, Maisel's *Deep Writing*, Dick Grave's *Writing, Teaching, Learning*, Anson and Beach's *Journals in the Classroom*, Starkey's *Teaching Writing Creatively*, Foehr and Schiller's *The Spiritual Side of Writing*, and Anderson and MacCurdy's *Writing and Healing*.

Most JAEPL readers have probably witnessed student resistance, mistrust, and even fear when students are asked to move beyond the cognitive domain in the classroom.

Tension usually arises when we ask them to consider seriously the theories and practices JAEPL readers and contributors study. My students in the fall felt the usual responses but used their responses as signals to pursue in-depth intellectual inquiry about these topics.

From the start the students in 519 were eager participants. Monica and Angie had taken undergraduate courses with me, and, as graduate students, they entered the course with a certain comfort that led to stimulating and fearless discussions. They set a tone that the others quickly embraced, not just with me but with each other. By the third week, it was common to engage in intellectual argumentation without fear. Collaborative support of one another and for a wide range of ideas and questions replaced competition. It became our standard practice to explore topics as they arose and to follow any inclination for discussion that our reading material might invite or that our thoughtful meanderings might lead to. Most of our questions invited contemplation and reflection rather than right or wrong answers. Classes were intense, exciting, and energizing. The three hours whizzed by, and we usually left before completing our topic explorations.

By the time we began to discuss *Writing as Healing*, everyone had selected a

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research area and was engaged in writing an annotated bibliography about it. Jane had chosen spirituality in the classroom. Monica was curious about integrating literature into a standard composition course. Crystal needed to satisfy her interest in creative nonfiction, and John investigated meditation practices for classroom application. (Angie had reached a point in her pregnancy that required her to withdraw from the class, taking an incomplete.)

To begin our exploration of writing as healing, a guest, Ed Comber, spoke to us. He essentially repeated his session from AEPL's summer 2002 conference. Ed's work features a practical taxonomy that is used to recognize what he calls Emotive Response Discourse (ERD) in student composition. The students saw this as provocative work. His expansion and practical application of ideas found in Anderson and MacCurdy's book, *Writing as Healing*, helped the students to move beyond theory. It also helped them see how theory can lead to research and professional growth.

Our animated discussion that evening kept Ed in class for about two hours, twice the time I had allotted him. The hour remaining then became insufficient for us to complete our inquiries, and we all agreed to pick up where we had left off when we next met.

Nearing the end of the semester, we all felt the fatigue common to everyone just before Thanksgiving (classes run from late August straight through to Thanksgiving without a break). With this in mind and since most of these students were commuters, I thought they might need to replace two hours of class time with library time. As expected, they welcomed this opportunity, so we decided to finish our discussion of the week before and then head for the library. It seemed as though it was only a minute or two before the time showed six o'clock. No one wanted to leave. We ditched the library visit and continued through the next two hours deeply involved in discussion.

This was a first time experience for me with students. I have never had students prefer a two-hour discussion in class to free time for homework assignments. I know Dick Graves would say that we had responded to an act of grace as it appeared. Others might mention flow or spirituality. A more traditional view might posit that intellectual stimulation was at its highest. I like to think that it was a spiritual moment of flow created by the perfect collaboration of people touched by grace—and by AEPL topics.

When I knew I would be writing about this class session for *JAEPL*, I emailed the students to share what they remembered about that class. Crystal emailed:

> I remember that day's discussion being especially interesting . . . that class period was intense. I remember walking out of class at the end of the night, gratefully! Not because I was sick of being in class, but because we had been so intense and so focused and into what we were discussing that my muscles would go so tight. . . the walk out to my car after class was the aftermath therapy I needed. I haven't had that kind of an effect from any class . . . I have nothing but positive things to say about that class, and would welcome the chance to further that kind of experience for both teacher and student.

John, now assisting in teaching a freshman speech course, answered:

> It's kind of ironic I received your e-mail today, because yesterday I was thinking about the experience in my SDA 101 class. . . . One of the students mentioned how she was able to sit down and churn out an entire speech outline in what seemed to her little time at all. I told her I knew the experience, and thought of that day you referred to in 519. If I recall correctly, we were talking about writing and healing, and by some spiritual force everyone began disclosing some real heartfelt information. Well, I told my student what she experienced is a concept I have read about called "flow" in which the mind loses itself in facing a challenge, and our concept of time becomes blurry or nonexistent. In all honesty, after the intrigue I felt that day in 519, I couldn't help but share a small portion of that day's experience with the class.

Crystal and John reaffirmed what I thought about this event in 519. It was special, made special by the way we collaborated, by the people we read, and by the provocative ideas that moved us beyond the cognitive domain of learning.

On The Delicate Art of Teaching

Wilma Romatz

Dangling quietly by a
Surprising thread,
Her body is so fragile
A single twist could crush it;
Her delicate brown skin
Offers scant protection
From the elements.
Legs poised carefully
As if on a high-wire,
She weaves back and forth;
Silent threads are her voice,
Her paint, her ink—
The air her loom,
Her parchment.
Passion is her energy,
Her motive.

I, earthbound, heavy-footed,
Am astonished by her work,
[cont., no stanza break]

Wilma Romatz teaches writing and children's literature at C. S. Mott Community College in Flint, MI. Her recent dissertation (Michigan State U) examined the role drawing played in the writing process of 6 non-traditional freshman students. She has just completed teaching a class on Writing/Art/Healing at The Creative Spirit Center in Midland, MI, inspired by the 2002 AEPL conference.

Drawn closer.
I spin a coarser fabric,
Limited
To second-hand filaments
Spun unnaturally
With bent back,
Aching fingers.
The spindle rises and falls,
The rhythm and pulse
Inside my body
Spiraling, spiraling,
As I breathe
In and out,
And in again,
Opening
More fully
Deeply
Into myself.

How can I keep on,
Piled around with
heaps of straw,
Playing out words,
Extracting from
The meager stuff
Of my universe
Garnered bits of wisdom?
How can I
Endlessly,
Willingly,
Open
Even wider?

And yet,
When each breath is spent
Space opens for another;
Each strand spun tight,
Wrapped and
Cast through the warp,
Plays from the shuttle,
Spirals into living cloth
In its own time, its own pattern.
And all I need to know
To perform this alchemy
Is how to call it
By its name.

Reviews

Graves, Donald H. *The Energy to Teach*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

Dale Jacobs, University of Windsor

It was nearing the end of the semester as I read *The Energy to Teach* by Donald Graves. I was reading it for a review I had agreed to write early in January, at the *beginning* of the semester, when my energy was still high and adding another task to an already busy term seemed more than possible. As the end of the semester approached, however, this additional task seemed more and more onerous, an energy-draining item on a to-do list that seemed to grow by the day. A funny thing happened, though, as I read *The Energy to Teach*; I began to think about why I was feeling so drained. Such reflective thinking, encouraged by Graves throughout the book, led me to consider not only what I could do to remedy the situation for myself, but also what I could do to extend and connect this very necessary conversation about teaching and energy to similar dialogues occurring elsewhere in the profession. Suddenly this review seemed much less onerous, moving from the category of energy-draining to that of energy-giving.

Aimed mainly at K-12 teachers, *The Energy to Teach* is built around the premise that teaching is emotional work that demands high energy. As Graves puts it, "Emotional roller coasters demand energy—high energy—and you need to know how to maximize what gives you energy and minimize what takes it away. You need the energy to teach" (2). The rest of the book, then, is an attempt to help teachers think about "what gives you energy; takes it away; and what for you is a waste of time" (4). After outlining his general ideas about energy and teaching in Chapter One, Graves moves on in Chapter Two to a series of reflective activities designed to help teachers think about the key questions of what gives and takes away energy. For example, Graves suggests that teachers keep a week's log of what gives and takes away energy and then write reflectively on their findings. From these kinds of activities, Graves moves on to Chapter Three in which he suggests that teachers set clear personal and professional goals to help them manage the relationship between energy and teaching. Graves's points, though couched in self-help language that is too often reductive of the complexities of teachers' lives within specific material circumstances, offer an important invitation to reflective thinking. In this way, it is an important book for teachers and an important spur to further conversation and thinking about the relationship between emotion, energy, and teaching.

Graves begins a conversation that needs, I think, to start with some further exploration of the concept of energy, an idea that is never fully defined in *The Energy to Teach*, and that needs to be theorized in ways that can productively help us to move forward in our thinking. Are there fruitful ways in which some attention to other disciplines such as psychology, sociology, or even physics might

help us to think about this concept? Does Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's work on flow, which Graves briefly mentions, give us a potential way to think about energy? How has this concept been defined in other disciplines and can those definitions be used either literally or analogically as an aid to our own thinking about energy? Would such thinking give us ways to think about energy as a contextual concept? The salient point is that in further defining this important term, we can provide ourselves with ways of thinking about energy and its relationship to both teaching and emotion. In fact, recent work in emotion studies provides an important means of thinking about the issues that Graves raises in *The Energy to Teach*.

Drawing on work from other disciplines has been one of the most important ways in which people in both composition and education have begun to think about emotions in new and important ways. As we have learned from our colleagues in sociology, for example, we experience emotions as individuals, but our experiences of those emotions are embedded within social structures and constructed within those structures; in other words, we cannot think about emotions outside of their social contexts. This kind of theorizing—moving beyond common sense definitions—is essential when thinking about emotion, especially in its practical connections to teaching and energy. By thinking about the ways in which emotion, energy, and teaching are imbricated within specific social contexts, we can begin to think about how to promote the kinds of fundamental change that Graves points towards in *The Energy to Teach*, thereby providing us with ways to think collectively about institutional change within our professional contexts. As Laura Micciche and I note in *A Way to Move: Rhetorics of Emotion and Composition Studies,*

> in addition to its conventional understanding as a term that denotes expression of feeling, or affective response to a situation, we want to suggest that emotion also enables and disables change. In particular, we are interested in emotion's capacity to construct a culture of movement in opposition to one of ossification . [. . .] How does emotion shape the work of teachers and administrators in Composition Studies? How are we schooled to use emotion in our professional lives? What is the place of emotion, for example, in our various professional relationships—with students, colleagues, research subjects, administrators, and/or advisees? (2-3)

In focusing on energy, Graves tackles similar questions that serve as reflective starting points for important conversations about teaching. The relationship between energy and emotion that Graves touches on in the book is an incredibly productive site for future research and thinking.

For the most part, the remainder of the book explores specific sources of energy creation and drain in relation to teaching. Such chapters include classroom structures (Chapter Four), curriculum (Chapter Five), colleagues (Chapter Six), learning (Chapter Seven), assessment (Chapter Eight), parents (Chapter Nine), and principals (Chapter Thirteen). Reading these chapters provides the opportunity to reflect on the impact each of these elements has on one's teaching life. In addition, each of these short chapters has the potential to act as a starting point from which further research and conversation about these important issues can be generated. In Chapter Six, for example, Graves discusses the energy-giving and energy-draining potential of relationships with colleagues. Graves writes,

> Strangely, the less time we have, the more we ignore emotions and stick to facts rooted in either policy, or "this is the way we've handled this in the past." Policy and history are important and do help us in making decisions. Still, we need to identify and share the feelings attendant to a decision. When people walk away from a meeting carrying unresolved feelings, they begin to know firsthand what it means to be personally and professionally isolated. (60)

He goes on to say that "teachers expressed how draining professional isolation felt for them," but how "clear emotional exchange brought renewed energy" (61). In reading this passage, I was struck by the clear connections that could be made between Graves's argument and Alison Jaggar's idea of "outlaw emotions." Jaggar writes,

> When unconventional emotional responses are experienced by isolated individuals, those concerned may be confused, unable to name their experience; they may even doubt their own sanity [. . .] . When certain emotions are shared or validated by others, however, the basis exists for forming a subculture defined by perceptions, norms, and values. By constituting the basis for such a subculture, outlaw emotions may be politically (because epistemologically) subversive. (180)

Jaggar's text gives us the language of intervention that can help us to move beyond the damaging situation that Graves outlines and towards a situation of not only "renewed energy," but also fundamental change. Using theoretical ideas such as those found in Jaggar's work, we can use *The Energy to Teach* as a productive starting point from which to work on further questions regarding the relationship among emotion, energy, and teaching. In thinking deeply about these questions, we can work collectively first to define the term "energy" and then to build energy, as Graves outlines in the book.

The Energy to Teach is a book that all teachers should read, particularly when they are feeling without energy, perhaps even perilously close to burn-out. In its invitations to self-reflection, every teacher will benefit from thinking about his or her own teaching practices and teaching conditions and how they relate to both emotion and energy. Just as importantly, however, *The Energy to Teach*, in its examinations of the variety of institutional contexts and relationships involved in teaching, provides a much needed spur towards more research and conversation into important collective issues in our profession with regard to energy, emotion, and teaching.

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This collection of perceptive essays, though uneven at times, contributes to a strong current of progressive thinking that Peter Elbow's work has come, over the past thirty years, to symbolize. In her Foreword, Ann Berthoff defines Elbow positively as a Romantic Pragmatist, whose work "can help us to defend ourselves against gangster theories" (ix-x). And in a reprinted review, Ken Macrorie comments that Elbow's *Embracing Contraries* (1986), beyond its announced intention to explore the nature of learning and teaching, is really "a manual on how to be wise" (qtd. in Belanoff xiv). In pursuit of such an undercurrent of wisdom, Elbow borrows from William Blake the principle that "without contraries is no progression." For Elbow, contraries such as spontaneity and discipline in the writing process are elements of a rich "dialectic of experience." And, as all readers of Elbow know, he defines the intellectual enterprise itself as a dialectic of the "doubting game" and the "believing game," which we "play" by engaging in "binary thinking"—the ability to balance spontaneous "first-order" thinking with "second-order" analytical or critical thinking. Success is attained, as the essays in this book testify, by engaging with each element separately at first (e.g., doubting then believing) before attempting to integrate them in the processes of writing and thinking. Divided into four "Clusters," each introduced by an editorial "Intersection," the book reads like the proceedings of an exhilarating symposium on Elbow's influence on education.

In "Cluster I: Contextualizing and Categorizing," introduced by Pat Belanoff, Richard Boyd deconstructs the growing criticism that Elbow's thought is apolitical. In the context of a century of authoritarian educational practices that preceded it, *Writing without Teachers* (1973) is a radical document, originating from Elbow's work in the 1960s as a draft counselor advising young men about conscientious objector status. To write convincing applications, draft-eligible men needed to become aware of their real beliefs. Because Elbow's methods helped them to articulate these beliefs, their letters to draft boards were acts with profound political implications. In another act of contextualizing, Thomas Newkirk argues that the culture of English studies implicitly "creates its own sense of elitism [. . .] by treating as a defective 'other' the popular discourses [. . .] in the wider culture"(28)—discourses which Elbow's methodology seeks to cultivate. By placing him in the context of larger movements in English studies—modernism, antimodernism, and postmodernism—Elizabeth Flynn, like Boyd, sees "Elbow's earlier work [as] radical" adding that "his later work parallels the autobiographical and postmodern turns within composition studies, feminist studies, and the humanities as a whole" (77). A dialogue between Edward White and Shane Borrowman has some of the virtues as well as inchoate qualities of live conversation, making the point that Elbow's status as an icon of expressivism can be helpful as well as limiting to practitioners.

The essays in "Cluster II: Exploring Contraries," introduced by Charles

Moran, are of focal importance for the book. In an astute defense of critical pedagogy, C.H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon argue that Elbow himself is inconsistent with his own principles in his critique of the American followers of Paulo Freire. Critical pedagogy ought to have "its half of the bed" with social expressivist theory, they argue, in the practice of education. Countering Elbow's own argument in "Pedagogy of the Bamboozled" (in *Embracing Contraries*) they propose a holistic balance of the two theories, which Elbow himself seems to disallow. In an essay that most explicitly supports Macrorie's claim about Elbow as a guide to wisdom, George Kalamaras forms an analogy between Elbow's theory and the meditative traditions of Eastern thought, where "embracing contraries yields a consciousness nonattached to either pole of an apparent contradiction [e.g., yin and yang in Chinese philosophy], but, rather, a deepening attentiveness to their reciprocal interaction" (64). By analogy with ordinary language philosophy, in what is perhaps the most abstract essay in the volume, Thomas O'Donnell explores "new uses of doubting," claiming that "doubt need not unleash efforts to disprove" someone's argument, but can instead play "a phenomenological role" in responding to another's words. In exploring Elbow's "uneasy debt" to philosopher Michael Polanyi, M. Elizabeth Sargent points to Polanyi's concept of "indwelling" as a key to Elbow's advocacy of freewriting. According to Polanyi "we pour ourselves into [our tools]" and "accept them existentially by dwelling in them," so for Elbow freewriting is "pouring yourself into the act of writing, indwelling the tool" (101). For Polanyi "our use of language is itself sufficient to reveal that belief is the crucial and primary power of the human mind" (96). Though he appears to place belief on an equal footing with doubt, in practice (particularly his articulation of the way freewriting works to liberate creative impulses) Elbow implicitly accepts Polanyi's vision of belief as the central power of the mind. According to Sargent, by interpreting believing as merely a "game" and the "tacit dimension" of experience as a kind of "magic" opposed to rationality, Elbow misrepresents Polanyi. But in practice, Elbow's attempt to balance the doubting and believing games is primarily a way of arriving at belief.

Sheryl I. Fontaine introduces "Cluster III: In the Classroom" in the form of a "found conversation"—combined excerpts from the five essays in the cluster. It's an interesting and valid experiment in the context of this book, like the White-Borrowman dialogue, and later examples of "collage" by Sondra Perl and in the book's "Coda." Exemplifying something like Bakhtin's theory of "heteroglossia," these essays may be highly engaging to some readers; others, I suspect, will find them uneven or less satisfying than essays centered in a single thesis. In this Cluster, Keith Hjortshoj argues that the "illusion of academic writing" is "the main obstacle Peter Elbow was trying to move beyond" and "creates some of the most common difficulties student writers encounter" (131). Defending Elbow's "'frontier' pedagogy," Kathleen Cassity insists that despite his emphasis on "de-centered authority" in the classroom, Elbow really "exerts considerable authority and influence [. . .] but he chooses to exert it over how students behave [. . .] instead of using his authority to 'rank' student writing by assigning reductive grades or restricting students to a singular writing style" (129). Irene Papoulis, countering the view that Elbow's pedagogy is apolitical, argues that, by effectively encouraging the development of personal voice, "Peter's ideas help countless people deal with their own powerlessness, yet he gets criticized for being less

than political" (171). In the spirit of Elbow's concept of responding to student writing by giving "movies of the mind," Jeff Sommers proposes offering spoken comments on audio tape, an idea that many teachers may find very effective. And, finally in this cluster, Kathleen Blake Yancey explores the difficult problems of writing assessment in the light of Elbow's belief that assessment should always be subordinate to learning.

In "Cluster IV: Voice and the Personal," with an "Intersection" by Marcia Dickson, Kate Ronald and Hepzibah Roskelly examine Elbow's use of metaphors like embodied "voice" and numerous references to erotic experience in his "physical rhetoric." "Elbow's connection between the unique individual body and the writer's voice [. . .] seems to insist that a writer must show herself, expose herself, give herself" (212). The satisfaction Elbow wishes his students to have in writing "involves merging, especially in terms of feeling the skin or being inside the skin of another" (217). Exploring further the theme of voice and the personal, Anne Herrington argues for the legitimacy of what Elbow calls "discourse that renders experience," that tells "what it's like to be me or to live my life" (224). Counter to most current trends in academic writing, Herrington advocates "rendering" (as distinct from explaining) personal experience as a legitimate and vital part of research. Implicitly supporting Herrington's view, poet Wendy Bishop insists on embracing the contraries of the creative and the academic. And Sondra Perl presents a collage of personal letters to and from Peter, on such topics as "process," "sexuality," "agency," and "condescension." In her informal essay, Perl articulates her own and Peter's affinity with philosopher Eugene Gendlin, the author of *Focusing*, arguing that "language and meaning arise together by paying attention to felt sense" (261).

This volume appeared the year before the thirtieth anniversary edition of *Writing without Teachers* (2003), testifying to the nearly unparalleled reach of Elbow's influence in the field of writing instruction. Though I suspect few readers will find equal satisfaction in all of the eighteen essays in this book, writing instructors with a natural affinity for the Elbow school of expressivist thought, among whom I count myself, will eat its words with relish, learn a great deal about the theoretical background of Elbow's germinal ideas, and pick up numerous useful tips for teaching practice. Opponents of the Elbow school will find fuel for more grousing about its counter-cultural approaches to academic standards and academic discourse. But, if the essays in this book are a testament, the usefulness and legitimacy of Elbow's theories for student development and teacher formation are subject to little real dispute.

Hocking, Brent, Johnna Haskell, and Warren Linds, eds. *Unfolding Bodymind: Exploring Possibility Through Education*. Foundations of Holistic Education 4. Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal, 2001.

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Unfolding Bodymind consists of 17 expanded conference presentations, the proceedings of the 1999 Bodymind Conference, which involved 70 attendees from Europe, Australia, Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Held at the Botanical Gardens at the University of British Columbia, the conference featured an opening address and blessing by Elder Vincent Stogan, Sr. (Tsimalano) from the local Musqueam Nation and keynote speeches by David Abram and David Jardine.

The conference presenters in this collection challenge four major trends in education: Cartesian dualism, which advocates bracketing out the body in order to minimize its corrupting influence on the mind; education as a closed, hermetically sealed system whereby students' learning can be most effectively maximized through direct and linear instruction; teachers' tendencies to treat knowledge as a stable, fact-driven commodity that can be isolated and transferred; and the goals of education that privilege instrumentalism (learning must be useful and relevant) and progressivism (learning must lead to tangible, measurable improvements).

The essays, both individually and jointly, explore education as an ecological, holistic, and embodied process. Learning, then, consists of an "unfolding" or emergent process, so that knowledge is created when students come to, not an understanding, but an interstanding. These essays, about half of which are written by doctoral candidates, resist mainstream processes and practices of learning by experimenting with narratives, anecdotes, analogy, and poetry to argue the importance of "knowing in action." Some authors also emphasize the illogical nature of emotions and senses through imagistic, performative, and expressive writing styles, eschewing the restrictive, traditional conventions of writing. In addition, some contributors challenge the accepted formats of codex books, experimenting with the arrangement of words on a page, font size, and various type styles, investigating how these might contribute to alternative epistemologies.

The essays in *Unfolding Bodymind* draw from an assortment of theoretical frameworks and intellectual traditions, ranging from philosophers John Dewey and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, anthropologists Gregory Bateson and Mary Catherine Bateson, cognitive biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, and Buddhist spiritualists Ted Aoki and Deepak Chopra. The essays also address a variety of disciplines, including second language acquisition; nursing; contemplative philosophy; teaching; and science, civic, environmental, and moral educations. The book is divided into four sections, each beginning with a framing "conversation" among the three editors that seeks to create a coherence among the essays within that section. Also, each essay is prefaced with a biography of the author, essay abstract, key terms, and acknowledgements.

Much to my disappointment, these conference proceedings fail to contribute to an existing body of rigorously conceptualized scholarship on embodied, material learning. By over-emphasizing the emotional, ecological, and performative styles—a limited and limiting formulation of embodied learning—these essays do not establish a robust reciprocity between bodies and minds, emotions and reason, materiality and discourse. Yet, I have provided a detailed summary for readers who might enjoy this imagistic, anecdotal, and associative collection of essays.

In Section One, "Turning Together on Paths of Awareness," the four contributors explore learning as a process of "unfoldment," enabled through diverse modes of interaction including drama exercises, scuba diving, and Japanese proverbs. Emphasizing the importance of risk, fear, and improvisation as a fundamental characteristic of learning, these primarily descriptive essays allude to some ways in which performative forms of knowing can challenge conventional learning boundaries and structures. These essays are primarily descriptive, relying on the authors' experiences to demonstrate the importance of connecting body and mind in education. Through his experiences with the Theatre of the Oppressed, Warren Linds, in "Wo/a ndering through a Hall of Mirrors… A Meander through Drama Facilitation," argues Merleau-Ponty's concept of embodied action, an emergent, kinesthetic learning that occurs spontaneously "as people play and interplay with each other, finding and filling spaces for dialogue and interaction" (26). In an argument by analogy, Frank Bob Kull, in "A Scuba Class Holistic Teaching/Learning through Lived Experience…or how I dove into the sea and surfaced in academia," describes how his experience of teaching scuba diving underpins his investment in a pedagogy through modeling. By mimicing Kull's example, students gain "street knowledge," a knowledge developed through experience and trial-and-error, thus constituting a new way of being and behaving. In "Co-emerging in the Second Language Research Process: What It Means to Research What It's Like," John Ippolito explains how his study of second language acquisition in a particular ESL conversation activity was "productively derailed," not only because he failed to take into account the role of the discoverer in the data collection and interpretation processes, but also because a study is necessarily shaped by its research participants. In "When the Wind Blows, the Barrel Maker Gets Busy," Marylin Low and Maria McKay anchor their perspective—education is ecological—in an ancient Japanese proverb about the interconnectedness of seemingly unrelated events. They share four separate anecdotes concerning the tensions American teachers experience in soliciting input on assessment from Japanese students.

In Section Two, "Embodying 'Pedagogical Possibilities': Teaching Being, Being Teaching," four contributors explore the languages of embodiment, particularly mindful relationships, placefulness, and embodied awareness. Here, embodied mindfulness underscores how teachers' and students' bodies change as they teach and learn, and, through those changes, call forth new worlds. In "Beyond the Educated Mind: Towards a Pedagogy of Mindfulness," Heesoon Bai draws on Buddhist meditation techniques to resist education's ritualized form of pattern-recognition-naming, which preempts a sensuous contact and engagement with the world. Rather, mindfulness helps students recover the non-conceptual awareness of the world, illustrated in Bai's discussion of environmental and civic education. In "How Do They Learn to Be Whole? A Strategy for Helping Preservice

Teachers Develop Dispositions," Genét Simone Kozik-Rosabal describes a Personal Process Transformation Exercise, through which student teachers develop a reflective professional conscience, grounded in a reciprocity between their professional and personal lives. Ronald L. Burr and Sherry L. Hartman, in "Bodymind Learning: Interdisciplinary Conversations on Campus," record a written conversation between a comparative philosopher and a professor in nursing about how tai chi encourages reflection in two classes—Holistic Nursing and Contemplative Theories and Practices. Alison Pryer, in "Breaking Hearts: Towards an Erotics of Pedagogy," defines eros as the fecund, nontechnical-rational energy that creates and maintains strong human bonds required for people to survive individually and collectively. Pryer concludes by calling for "an ecological, non-dualistic ethic of embodiment and holistic educational theory and practice" (141).

In Section Three, "Education and Culture: Experiencing Im/Possibility," four presenters critique the general propensity for pedagogy to be disembodied, articulating an enactive approach of "enfleshment," where bodies shape and are shaped by their learning environments. These essays are grounded in the belief that becoming a "member of a particular culture means embodying a certain sort of body" (147). Pille Bunnell and Kathleen Forsythe, in "The Chains of Hearts: Practical Biology for Intelligent Behavior," extend Maturana's work to a Canadian environment, arguing for a homo sapiens amans, a loving human being, where teaching intelligence is teaching love. In "Creating a Space for Embodied Wisdom Through Teaching," James Overboe, who suffers from cerebral palsy, describes how his body's spasms disrupt the ordered, controlled normality of social identity and systems of educational assessment. In "Merleau-Ponty's Work and Moral Education: Beyond Mind/Body, Self/Other, and Human/Animal Dichotomies," Darlene Rigo uses her own past experiences of being forced to eat meat to examine the empathic feelings some children have with animals. She criticizes conventional moral pedagogy for indoctrinating in children a false hierarchy of value and use of animals. In "Educating Nature: On Being Squeamish in Science," Sonia MacPherson begins by describing how she was forced in a sixth-grade biology class to witness a praying mantis devouring a live butterfly. Just as Buddha taught respect for all sentient beings, MacPherson proposes a woman- and nature-friendly education that does not normalize human violence.

In Section Four, "Ecological Interplay—Humans/Nature in Freefall," five ecologically based contributions encourage teachers to stop separating theory, practice, and real-life (228). Here, the metaphor "freefall" is used to eschew the familiar so that a fresh and creative perspective can be achieved. Franc Feng, in "Etude in Green Minor: On Expanding Ethics, Of Being, Wholeness, Sentience, and Compassion," memorializes his gentle, respected scholar father through a narrative methodology, which he proposes might yield a holistic education. By contrast, Lyubov Laroche, in "Back to the Future: Holography as a Postmodern Metaphor for Holistic Science Education," uses the metaphor of a holographic universe, a model of reality derived from avant-garde science, to imagine a nonmaterial world. In "Unable to Return to the Gods that Made Them," David Jardine explores experience-as-suffering in ecology, Buddhism, and Gadamer's hermeneutics. In "Experiencing Unknown Landscapes: Unfolding a Path of Embodied Respect," Johnna G. Haskell recounts some unexpected moments from an outdoor adventure education classroom to underscore the importance of teaching embodied respect and awareness. Brent Hocking, in "Touched by Gentle

Breezes in Spring: An Ecological View of Renewal in Teaching," connects notions of embodied cognition with landscape renewals, highlighting how learning is influenced by time, place, and bodies. This anthology concludes with an email correspondence between David Abram and David Jardine, titled "All Knowledge is Carnal Knowledge: A Correspondence."

Unfortunately, *Unfolding Bodymind* is too narrowly focused on anecdotal personal experience with minimal theoretical conceptualization to offer a constructive proposal for systematically revamping pedagogy and curriculum from a holistic perspective.

Easthope, Anthony. *The Unconscious*. London: Routledge, 1999.

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Why are the British so good at the admirable and under-practiced art of clarifying the abstruse? Anthony Easthope's *The Unconscious*, a timely and succinct guide to critical theory on the unconscious, exemplifies this apparent cultural gift. *The Unconscious* surveys, and occasionally critiques (in a section on reconciling Freud with Marx), critical theory's treatment of the unconscious. Fair-minded, knowledgeable, and concise, filled with humorous and poignant examples from personal life and popular culture, Easthope's book will garner acclaim from graduate students, conference presenters, academic interviewees, intelligent laypeople, and anyone wishing to brush up on Freud, Lacan, Kristeva, and so forth. Easthope is to be commended and recommended for his engaging and lucid treatment of these influential and sometimes notoriously difficult thinkers—not least because he helpfully points out some translation errors.

Easthope's book is a wonderful work to inspire discussion. Its 178 pages, beginning with the question of the existence of the unconscious, extending to Freud and Lacan, and, in successive chapters, considering the unconscious with respect to the "I," sexuality, text, and history, is further subdivided and well-indexed. It is a pleasure to read. If his approach were more widely followed in academic writing, critical theory might gain a broader readership.

Obviously in a book covering so many contributors to modern thought on human identity, reduction is unavoidable, and specialists will quibble. Easthope's clearly non-American perspective will be refreshing to some, possibly offensive to others: he offers the Declaration of Independence as a thought-provoking example of narcissism (157-58), and lists the American bombing of Tokyo and Dresden with Nazi concentration camps among the horrors of the 20th century (165-66). Regardless, most will want a copy of this book.

So What's Not to Like?

The Unconscious, however, is missing something, an oversight that is not Easthope's in particular, but critical theory's in general. What's missing is a

Jungian perspective, whose loss I can't help but feel is costly and noticeable at this time when, in more than one international arena, actions could well be labeled insane. Like Jung, critical theorists recognize crises like these, but often Jung offers a deeper perspective and more profound suggestions about how humans might endure and confront these horrific challenges. Though no easy panacea, a Jungian spiritual perspective (not a simplistic or anti-scientific one) affords a conception of the unconscious, not just explained and analyzed but felt and experienced. Crucially, Jung offers a model of psychic development—individuation—that I have not found discussed much in critical theory. A Jungian perspective contributes to a more comprehensive, whole-person wisdom—with respect to relations between the sexes, with respect to relations between the ego and the unconscious, with respect to the creative arts, with respect to dreams, even perhaps with respect to the relationship between teacher and student—which critical theory seems to lack.

Readers of *JAEPL* may be surprised that Jung appears nowhere in the bibliography of *The Unconscious*, though he is briefly mentioned in the text (136). For the most part, critical theorists have discarded Jung, much as the social sciences have discarded psychoanalysis, as Easthope points out (143). One major reason may be that they believe, as Easthope says, that Jung saw the psyche as "ahistorical and universal" (136). With regard to universality, we have heard bogus "universals" claimed despite the most obvious race, class, and gender blindness, and we are rightly skeptical. Our differences comprise one truth. However, a certain measure of universality is indisputable, especially at the most basic levels. Jung investigates the ways we are connected and similar as well as the ways in which we differ, which surely gives us a greater panorama than an investigation only of the ways we are disconnected and dissimilar. True, like Freud, Jung often views change in "species time" (Easthope143) rather than from decade to decade, century to century, or millenium to millenium, but this has some benefits. Jung is not the absolutist he is said to be. The Jungian model deserves more credit for flexibility than it receives. Jung also leaves room for future developments in the relationship between conscious and unconscious. I don't think the description "universal and ahistorical" accurately captures Jung's thought.

A Jungian Perspective Offers a Richer Construction of Unconscious Processes

Returning to Easthope, a contradiction crops up in *The Unconscious* that is undoubtedly one of the pitfalls of discussing the unconscious rationally: a tendency at times to deny "reductive causalism [. . .] outmoded rationalism and scientific materialism" (Jung, *Memories* 4) and yet, at other times, to drift into them. Reading those sections in particular, I felt the lack of a Jungian-like perspective. Easthope critiques "treating anything that is not part of consciousness as physical" (5), but, in an example that arises from his discussion of Darwin's influence on Freud's drive theory, the explanation seems pat and mechanistic: "A human infant shares with other mammals an instinct to seek nourishment at the nipple. [. . .] An idea of or image of the nipple (along with associations of fulfillment) becomes remembered, a signifier which can become pleasurable in its own right—the symbol of the breast"(6). Though none of this explanation is false, it doesn't seem to capture sufficiently experiences of desire or the tremendous impact of

symbols. Similarly, the Oedipus complex, a cornerstone of Freudian and neo-Freudian thought, offers valuable insights but at other times falls woefully short. Easthope suggests Jesus as "The great archetype [of the son] [. . .] subservient to his father," an undeveloped personality who "never wins through to get another adult woman for himself" (77). Perhaps that is a workable critique for a privileged Westerner living an easy life, but in extreme times many men offer their lives and don't get to have adult women for themselves. To dismiss human agony and sacrifice with this triviality suggests that, at the time of writing, the writer was disconnected from human suffering.

Compare this to Jung's much more thoughtful treatment of the Christ myth as a model for the individual's path to psychic wholeness. He includes a sense of the mystery and awed regard many feel when encountering a Christ myth by portraying it as something serious and numinous: "The Christ symbol is of the greatest psychological importance insofar as it is perhaps the most highly developed and differentiated symbol of the self, apart from the figure of Buddha" (*Basic Writings* 557).

A Jungian Perspective Offers a Deeper, More Convincing Picture of the Relationship between the Ego and the Unconscious

A Jungian perspective offers greater depth when we look at the relationship between ego and the unconscious. Easthope states, with Freud, that "the unconscious seeks pleasure wherever it can [. . .] though it has the problem of finding its way around the surveillance of the conscious mind" (7). Here we have a model of the unconscious as a naughty child, inferior to the conscious, looked down on by the conscious, either indulgently or judgmentally. The conscious, in this model, is always on the lookout for misbehavior in the unconscious, always ready to say "Oh, no, you don't!" yet always doomed to be duped. Easthope explicitly discusses the extraordinary power of the unconscious, yet this recognition isn't always sustained. The critical theory paradigm described in *The Unconscious* shows the psyche at war. Easthope tells us the ego is "opposed to the unconscious" (49) and that the ego must "defend against the unconscious, against drives which menace its stability by getting it too excited" (50). In the Freudian model and in several critical theory models, we must never have what we want, or civilization will fall apart because what we want is anti-social.

The Jungian paradigm of the unconscious describes it not solely as a monster to be feared (despite undeniably fearsome qualities and potentials) but also as a guide and partner. He does not deny the anti-social aspects of the unconscious, but he sees its other aspect as well. Perhaps most importantly, Jung offers a model for psychological development. In our potential for individuation, we have a chance of maturing past the "psychic one-sidedness [. . .] typical of the normal man of today" (*Basic Writings* 98). Jung's model offers the potential for help from the unconscious, the possibility that our limited free will could align with ancient wisdom available to us through the mysterious processes of the unconscious.

Critical theory focuses on change, distortion, misrecognition, and these are important aspects of the human psyche and human interactions. But there are other truths we should not overlook. When a person chooses to speak a dangerous truth rather than the kind of convenient and ego-beneficial lie he or she has been

accustomed to, we need to talk about growth. When therapy helps a person take responsibility and gain a more truthful picture of herself to attain a fuller, yes, more authentic life, I think we can talk about maturation, individuation. Critical theory doesn't address these phenomena enough—or, in many cases, at all. Certainly all of the insights of critical theory hold true with respect to the "fragile, provisional, and unstable" (Easthope 145) nature of the ego self, but there's more picture outside this frame, and we could go further in connecting with it, however imperfect our attempts at description may remain.

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