

1997

Reviews

Carolyn E. Hill

Michael Kuhne

Felicia M. Briscoe

Hanna Berger

Candace Walworth

Follow this and additional works at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jaepl>

 Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#), [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#), [Disability and Equity in Education Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), [Educational Psychology Commons](#), [English Language and Literature Commons](#), [Instructional Media Design Commons](#), [Liberal Studies Commons](#), [Other Education Commons](#), [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hill, Carolyn E.; Kuhne, Michael; Briscoe, Felicia M.; Berger, Hanna; and Walworth, Candace (1997) "Reviews," *The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning*: Vol. 3 , Article 11. <https://doi.org/10.7290/jaepl3wcun>
Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jaepl/vol3/iss1/11>

This article is brought to you freely and openly by Volunteer, Open-access, Library-hosted Journals (VOL Journals), published in partnership with The University of Tennessee (UT) University Libraries. This article has been accepted for inclusion in *The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning* by an authorized editor. For more information, please visit <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jaepl>.

REVIEWS

Sosnoski, James J. 1994. *Token Professionals and Master Critics: A Critique of Orthodoxy in Literary Studies*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Carolyn Ericksen Hill

Reading James Sosnoski's *Token Professionals and Master Critics* was an experience I wasn't prepared for. From a quick earlier glance I'd expected only an interesting intellectual analysis of critical practices in the field of literary studies. What I got instead, though indeed including that critique, was a much grander and more inclusive look at the way the institutional discipline of English tends to cut us off from the heart of ourselves when it values texts and disciplinarity above the persons who read and write the texts and work in the discipline. As Sosnoski turns toward those of us who do this work, he is relentless in unearthing the web of assumptions we make about our professional lives; the dig seems to bottom out in a life space for us that is barren of coherence.

Yet the barrenness leaves us a clearing for self-reflection too. We in mainstream colleges and universities, Sosnoski believes, are not who we may have thought we were, not like the "master critics" (p. xv) from elite universities we strive to imitate, not like those who are able to keep up with the intricacies of scholarship in their fields, and not, finally, like our idealized selves, able to balance gracefully the many roles required of us. Rather we are token professionals striving to attain what is unattainable for most of us: a career of major accomplishment and successful scholarship. "Token professionals," says Sosnoski, "are professors who teach in mainstream universities, disproportionately evaluated on scholarly contributions while working mostly in service capacities" (p. 3). And although he focuses on the literature professor as token professional, the sweep of his argument reaches into the field of rhetoric, composition and cultural studies as well, with the claim that many of us in English departments do, after all, teach both literature and composition.

We token professionals, Sosnoski claims, believe we live in a field of intellectual rigor and impersonal judgments, whereas we actually work in fields of emotion *and* intellect inseparable from the institutions that debilitate both. What we need to do is change our view of our professional selves to include the emotions and a full humanness in our day-to-day lives with our students. We can adopt the goal of "helping persons reach their full potential as human beings" (p. 214), and we can rewrite the scripts by which we teach and by which we carry on our inquiries. Sosnoski traces paths we might take with our rewritten scripts, ones that will help us become more articulate within our institutions and find ways to create genuine change. I could *almost* imagine, by the end of the book, beginning such a process, ambitious and daunting though it still seems to me.

The impressiveness of *Token Professionals* comes at least partly from Sosnoski's ability to reach beyond ordinary ways of arguing into what he calls

“configuring” (after Kenneth Burke). He uses analogies at a fairly high level of generality, abstractions that assume inclusion of an “us” in their sphere of influence (Sosnoski mentions Foucault’s Panopticon as a similar device). The result of this tactic is that I—and I’m sure other readers—found myself easily recognizing my school, my department, my self in his words. Throughout my reading, though, I often felt at least mildly discouraged at the stark recognition, I just as often felt an energizing clarity when the intricately woven argument rang true. I could make new connections, light up old murky places in my thinking that had until now lain almost asleep.

For me the argument’s core is for me its insistence on a rigorous kind of theorizing that involves self-reflection and a full recognition of the personal and emotional roots of academic life. So often in professional circles I hear either-or talk of soft thinking or hard; whether the talk be of pedagogy or scholarship, the assumption seems to be that those of us in these circles tend either to think along lines of feelings (the “warm fuzzies of the 70s”), or to maintain a more rigorous kind of impersonal thinking (whether with and about students, or with materials at hand). And indeed we often *do* meet walking embodiments of one or the other tendency. Sosnoski refreshingly undercuts the impersonality of hard reasoning and humanizes it for a field that supposedly has been devoted all along to a more spacious, heartfelt way of thinking about the world. He cannot, he says, “dissociate the interior emotional life that motivates our actions from our disciplinary practices” (p. 43). But when we subject ourselves in those practices to the agnostic habits of one school of thought against another, and to the master critics who themselves cannot live and practice within the straitjacket of a single school, we place ourselves in the arms of orthodoxy, forming emotional links to an exemplary authority whose thinking we try to imitate. It is an illusory ideal, one that disciplines our thinking and our feeling, and positions us “where fears, feelings, anxieties, and ambitions lurk” (p. 43).

Sosnoski gives us an alternative, a way to break old boundaries that begins with redefining literature as acts that produce texts, rather than as the texts themselves. We thus immediately undercut the authority of the discipline as a respository of texts/things by giving attention to the workings of minds and emotions within certain cultural frameworks. Theorizing then becomes not a reasoning about texts so much as a practice of self-reflective reading in which readers examine their own practices, changing habits to meet new challenges in the reading of, understanding of, acts that produce texts. “In my view,” Sosnoski says, “theorizing is a way of world making that in making explicit the conditions of critical reflection. . . brings to light the *comparability* of our own and related forms of inquiry about the world” (p. 177).

Habits of critical and self-reflective inquiry are problem-solving habits, believes Sosnoski. They lead us finally to a kind of thinking linked to action: “Rather than disseminate information, we can disseminate cultures, however minuscule, that are healthier environments” (p. 220). ☺

Greene, Maxine. 1995. *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Michael Kuhne

As an undergraduate English major, I used to sit in the back of the classroom, listening to my English professors use New Criticism to explicate the hermetically sealed beauty of the text. Disenchanted, I remember thinking that so much of the academic approach to literature and the arts wrung every last ounce of lifeblood out of both the work of art and the viewer or reader. My act of resistance was to keep a running list of books in the back of my course notes that I would read when it was *my turn* and *my time* to decide. This small protest was the only way to keep my imagination active and free.

I found myself doing a similar activity while reading Maxine Greene's *Releasing the Imagination*, not because I found her tedious or removed, but because her analysis of how the arts can be meaningful and potent led me back to the old habit of making a list of things that I must read or see. Her words and allusions prompted me to start my summer reading list six months in advance. (It has been too long since I have read anything by Toni Morrison, and those paintings by Cezanne I vaguely remember from an art history course I took almost two decades ago; I didn't enjoy Thomas Mann fifteen years ago, but maybe it is time to try again, and I remember something blue and beautiful in a Matisse painting) For that impetus and ray of hope, I am grateful.

Greene, long a voice for the place of the arts and literature in teacher education, divides the fifteen essays included in this work into four parts: Introduction, Creating Possibilities, Illuminations and Epiphanies, and Community in the Making. Throughout the text, her premise is that our culture has done little to tap the potential of our imaginations. She argues that imagination "makes empathy possible . . . [and] permits us to give credence to alternative realities." If imagination is the means, the end for Greene is "some sense-making that brings us together in community" (p. 3). Drawing from her impressive reading and viewing list, Greene ably connects educational theory and practice, with arts and literature serving as the metaphorical bridge between the two.

She is persuasive when it comes to arguing for the imaginative possibilities offered by the arts and literature. Her argument is a refreshing contrast to William Bennett's, most recently articulated in *The Book of Virtues* (1993). Interestingly, the goals for both theorists are not that far removed from one another: both see literacy as a means to create community (though their definitions differ). However, for Bennett, the works themselves somehow contain timeless messages of truth and values; for Greene, the message is always in the interaction between the person and the art, between that relationship and the world surrounding it—that is what makes for the liberatory power of one's imagination.

At times, however, Greene lacks clarity in connecting imagination (as means) to community (as an end). One is left asking oneself exactly how imagination (especially in educational settings) leads to community, or what that community might be. Nevertheless, this omission does not diminish the book's richness, since

Greene is asking the reader to imagine and create that community alongside her. Another flaw, which is more annoying than anything else, is Greene's repetition of certain themes, arguments, and ideas. That said, Greene does justly reward a reader's persistence and patience.

She draws from a wide array of theorists as she creates her argument, but the primary source is John Dewey, to whom she returns time and time again. This is a pleasing repetition, because Dewey's progressive approach to education is never far beneath the surface of Greene's words. Equally satisfying is Greene's use of a multitude of artistic and literary pieces to support her claims. Whether she incorporates the notion of big view and small view of Thomas Mann in *Confessions of Felix Krull*, *Confidence Man* (Chapter One, Seeking Contexts), or unfolds the beauty and tension of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* to plumb the depths of a mother-child relationship (Chapter Five, Social Vision and the Dance of Life), or reflects on Paul Cezanne's multiple renderings of Mont St. Victoire to argue the capacity of art education to promote multiple perspectives (Chapter Ten, Art and Imagination), Greene's lively mind and lucid prose compel the reader to listen and think carefully.

The most compelling essays are "Teaching for Openings" and "Texts and Margins" (Chapters Nine and Eleven). "Teaching for Openings" is a literacy narrative wherein Greene explores the literacy and aesthetic development of her past with her present pedagogical and philosophical commitments. She writes lovingly of "pedagogical things, liberation education things" and her attraction to "the timelessness of what I have come to love over the years" (p. 109). Her education shaped her in ways that she found exhilarating, "immersed as I was for so long and immersed as I wanted to be" in Western canon. For Greene (as it has been for many of us), the attraction of the Western canon was that it seemed as if she were becoming a part of a tradition of great ideas that somehow transcended her life and all of its boundaries. Her epiphany occurred when she realized "that what I had believed was universal, transcending gender and class and race, was a set of points of view" (p. 112). Greene's commitment to inclusivity, expressed clearly when she writes that "literacy is and must be a social undertaking, to be sought in pluralist classrooms where persons come together . . . to create something in common among themselves," places her at odds with an educational background that taught her a very different perspective (p. 121). What is most exciting about this essay is not the linear movement from one way of thinking to a new and better way (a sort of postmodern enlightenment, as it were), but how honest Greene is about the temptation to return to past philosophies and attitudes, what she calls "the pull of my old search for certainty" (p. 114). This tension between what she was taught and what/how she wishes to teach now supplies the energy for not only this chapter but also the entire book. This energy is best summarized when Greene invokes Martin Buber's admonishment to teachers to keep pain awake. Greene interprets the pain thusly: [T]he pain [Buber] had in mind must be lived through by teacher as well as student, even as the life stories of both must be kept alive. This . . . is when real encounters occur—when human beings come together as beings living in time. (p. 113). At the risk of sounding sadomasochistic, I believe this pain is what it means to be wide awake in the classroom to the students' lives and to our own. This state of alertness

allows students and teachers alike to speak and listen, to grow and learn, in ways that can transform not only the classroom but also the communities of those people and—by extension—the world.

“Texts and Margins” articulates Greene’s position that educators committed to emancipatory education, especially in the arts, “need to learn a pedagogy that joins art education and aesthetic education so that we can enable our students to live within the arts, making clearings and spaces for themselves” (p. 135). Of all of the essays in this book that attempt to conjoin liberatory pedagogy and the arts, this one is clearly the most persuasive. Greene repeats a theme common in her other essays, that “the arts offer opportunities for perspective, for perceiving alternative ways of transcending and of being in the world, for refusing the automatism that overwhelms choice” (p. 142), but the reader sees this idea phrased and re-phrased throughout the text; there is nothing new there. What is different, and in the end most exciting, is what Greene envisions an emancipatory arts education can do:

Yes, it should be education for a more informed and imaginative awareness, but it should also be education in the kinds of critical transactions that empower students to resist both elitism and objectivism, that allow them to read and to name, to write and to rewrite their own lived worlds. (p. 147)

In this statement, Greene emphatically aligns herself with Paulo Freire (and others) who ask that students and teachers read the word and the world, claim their naming powers, and write their lives anew. It is about critical thinking and understanding, about one’s voice, about listening, about doing and transforming. Toward the end of the essay, Greene writes, “At the heart of what I am asking for in the domains of the teaching of art and aesthetics is a sense of agency, even of power” (p. 150). This “sense of agency” in relation to what happens in schools is absolutely critical if our students and our teachers are to thrive at a time in our collective political life when funding for schools is threatened, and when both teachers and students are perhaps more embattled than ever.

Releasing the Imagination asks some very important questions of its readers, and it offers some provocative proposals for changing education. However, what is most valuable about this book is the author’s unrelenting hope and faith in the human imagination. On the one hand, not to invoke imagination (teachers’ and students’) is to neglect humanity’s greatest resource. On the other hand, to nurture and use imagination is to open doors to new ways of learning, seeing, thinking, and being. Imagination and hope are inexorably intertwined. As Greene writes in the final essay of the book, “More and more of us, for all our postmodern preoccupations, are aware of how necessary it is to keep such visions of possibility before our eyes . . .” (p. 197). *Releasing the Imagination* supplies its readers with some of those visions, and it provokes those same readers to imagine other possibilities for themselves and their communities. ☺

Murray, Mary M. 1996. *Artwork of the Mind: An Interdisciplinary Description of Insight and the Search for it in Student Writing*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Felecia M. Briscoe

As a college sophomore taking a literature class in Celtic mythology, I received a less than satisfactory grade on a paper. I approached the professor to find out what I could do to improve my writing. He floundered and handed me another student's paper to read, saying, "I expected something more like this."

After reading her paper, I asked, "What is the significant difference between the two essays?"

The professor explained that one was simply better. Frustrated, I asked how I could be expected to improve my writing if he could not tell me more exactly what it was that I needed to change. He had no answer. Mary M. Murray in *Artwork of the Mind* has the answer that we both sought that afternoon—insight. Not only does Murray answer my question, but she also suggests how one might encourage students to write with insight. Additionally, she provides a rubric for recognizing the various levels of insight in a student's paper.

Artwork of the Mind straightforwardly sets out to explain what insight is; how one comes to develop insight (hard work mostly, not a flash of brilliance); who can have insight (almost anybody); how to determine the degree of insight found in students' writing; and what learning environment and method are most conducive for students' development of insight through their writing. To accomplish this seemingly heroic task in less than two hundred pages, Murray draws from the fields of philosophy, theology, cognitive psychology, and composition. Her work encompasses perspectives of notables such as Peter Elbow, Matthew Fox, Jerome Bruner, Paulo Friere, and Mary Belenky. Murray's interdisciplinary approach, however, relies most heavily on cognitive psychology and composition. Perhaps because *Artwork of the Mind* is primarily a *how-to* manual, she draws least from philosophy.

I must admit that once I understood the author's intent, I read the book with a heavy dose of skepticism. How could you *teach* someone to have insight? Wasn't this something that you either developed on your own or not at all? Was it not a personal epiphany? While Murray's approach is more scientific than artistic, it presents a means of encouraging student insight. Her work is a step-by-step pedagogical tool kit for inculcating insight into student writing. Don't expect any epiphanies while reading this book. Do expect an algorithmic approach to teaching students how to write essays with insight. I believe that this book would be a help for a teacher in any discipline whose students write essays. It would certainly benefit any beginning teacher or professor whose students write essays.

Murray generates a multidisciplinary definition of insight:

It is a radically new vision [for the person involved] that is a simple and permanent solution to the preceding dissonance. Insight involves the full human person (intellect plus emotions,

attitudes, intuition, experience, and culture) and displays some of our deepest values. . . . It exposes our limits of knowledge: Insights frequently point to areas we need to develop in order to more fully resolve a concern of ours. (p. 4)

Operationally, according to Murray, students exhibit insight in their writing only when they portray dissonance, they confront it, and then they resolve it. Murray's pedagogy involves selecting readings that are likely to result in dissonance. Discussion follows with students confronting what they read and their reactions. This sets the stage for insightful writing. Murray then guides readers through its validation, demonstrating how student papers begin to show insight as she defines it.

Perhaps the only drawback to this book is Chapter Four, a lengthy dissertation about constructing a questionnaire. This chapter adds little to our understanding of insight. Rather it is a prolonged account of how Murray developed the questionnaire to produce evidence that her method of teaching insight works with the students. It is an attempt to validate her research instrument; however, the details she provides concerning construction and validation of her research instrument are more appropriate to a social research methods book.

Nevertheless, the remainder of *Artwork of the Mind* is well worth reading and certainly would be beneficial to those wishing to understand and teach insightful thinking through essay writing. And, unlike my sophomore class professor, I can now help the student who approaches me with a paper that is competent but lacks insight. ☺

Ueland, Brenda. 1997. *If You Want to Write: A Book about Art, Independence and Spirit*. Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press.

Hanna Berger

Brenda Ueland's *If You Want to Write* contains a chapter titled, "Art is Infection." This small book, originally published in 1938, reissued in 1987 and again in 1997, embodies the spirit of that Tolstoy-inspired chapter title. It is delightful to read and reread for inspiration, encouragement, and a reminder of some deep truths about writing or any creative endeavor—about teaching, indeed, about living a true-to-self life.

This is not a book in which to look for a logically laid out comprehensive theory of composition or a balanced and reasoned pedagogy or new approaches to teaching and writing. It is rather a book from which to draw renewed spirit and the courage to write with honesty and depth and to help others do the same.

Ueland begins with the thesis that "everybody is talented, original, and has something important to say" (p. 3), and that speaking or writing or painting one's truth will evoke that talent. She writes of ten-year-old children who can concen-

trate for hours as they write and prepare their original plays for presentation. They work for fun. And she is scathing about critics, whether teachers, family members, or friends, whose discouraging comments can kill the spirit of aspiring writers, both children and adults. She states forthrightly that she hates orthodox criticism “which thinks it can improve people by telling them where they are wrong and results only in putting them in strait jackets of hesitancy and self-consciousness, and weakening all vision and bravery” (p. 8). She dismisses most critics, again using Tolstoy’s metaphor: “You cannot move people by second-hand infection” (p. 119). She admires the great Russian writers for their lack of “pretentiousness and attitudinizing. . . . Life is more important to them than literature” (p. 113).

William Blake is among Ueland’s mentors. She quotes him frequently, centering at least three chapters around his ideas. Like Blake, she believes that the creative impulse is central to the spiritual nature of human beings. The more we exercise it, the happier we are and the better we fulfill our true purpose in life. She anticipates the development of the therapeutic writing and integrative medicine movements, urging us to use the imagination at least some part of every day: “You will become happier, more enlightened, alive, impassioned, lighthearted, and generous to everybody else. Even your health will improve. Colds will disappear and all the other ailments of discouragement and boredom” (p. 14).

My favorite chapter title in the book, the one that first grabbed my attention, is, “Why Women Who Do Too Much Housework Should Neglect It for Their Writing.” Ueland anticipates Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) with statements about women’s lives being “vaguely unsatisfactory” (p. 99), with the assertion that “inwardly women know something is wrong” (p. 99), and a footnote that “[m]enial work at the expense of all true, ardent, creative work is a sin against the Holy Ghost” (p. 99).

Given the vigor and drama of Ueland’s style as well as her beliefs, I was at first surprised to see a chapter entitled “The Imagination Works Slowly and Quietly” (p. 28). I rather expected her to describe flashes of inspiration exploding above the writer. Instead, she writes of the slow, quiet process, the sitting, doing little: she calls it “moodling—long, inefficient, happy idling, dawdling and puttering” until the ideas well up (p. 32). She takes once more an idea from Tolstoy: “What we write today slipped into our souls some other day when we were alone and doing nothing” (p. 36). So she prescribes long, solitary walks, as much as possible “living in the present” in a meditative state of mind (p. 43). Then, when the time is right to end the “moodling” and do the writing, “express it quietly . . . not by will so much as by a kind of faith” (p. 40).

Ueland learned as a teacher to help her students, people of all ages and backgrounds “feel freer and bolder” and write more honest, more interesting pieces by providing “weeks of a kind of rollicking encouragement” (p. 64). One approach she used to embolden them was what contemporary therapists call paradoxical intention. She told them to “see how badly they could write” a particular assignment (p. 65), thereby freeing them of the need to worry about whether their work was good enough. Even her timid and stilted writers would break out of their shells. Comparing writing to playing the piano, she contrasts

“playing *at* a thing” with “playing *in* it. When you are playing at it, you crescendo and diminish, following all the signs . . . Only when you are playing in a thing do people listen and hear you and are moved” (p. 57).

Ueland’s grounding in mystical thought permeates this book. She defines spirituality as living in the present and being absorbed in work that we care about, taking from the philosopher Plotinus the idea that, “when we really enter into our work, we leave it behind . . . This is the experience of Pure Spirit when it is turned toward the One” (pp. 58–59).

That pure spirit must, however, be concretized in writing. She reminds us, as do all who teach writing, “the more you wish to describe a Universal, the more minutely and truthfully you must describe a Particular” (p. 104). Although this advice is by now almost a cliché, it is still good to see that someone who makes so many sweeping philosophical generalizations about the art of writing does recognize the need for details. She also emphasizes timing and suggests reading aloud to test it. “The secret of being interesting is to move along as fast as the reader (or listener) can take it in. Both must march to the same tempo . . . As soon as your voice drags, cross that part out” (p. 138).

Ueland cannot be tied long to giving specific process advice. She quickly moves back to concerns about the writer’s need for true knowledge of and deep, honest writing from the self. She asserts, “The only way to find your true self is by recklessness and freedom. If you feel like a murderer for the time being, write like one” (p. 110). This correspondence to subpersonality or shadow work in psychology again connects her to the development of the therapeutic writing movement.

What a person believes and values, according to Ueland, determines to a large degree the quality of that person’s writing. No matter the specific words or style, the character of the writer will shine through. Therefore, she comes to believe, “the only way to become a better writer is to become a better person” (p. 129). It is a circular process. By writing continually and honestly and by examining our own work, we can improve ourselves as people. And the more we improve our character, the better will be our art. It is a continuing transformative cycle.

If You Want to Write is obviously not a scholarly work. It does not add something substantial to the body of knowledge about composition or any other subject. Formal scholarship seems far from the author’s mind. It does, however, inspire. It reinvigorated my determination to write from my core, and I think it can do the same for other aspiring writers as well as experienced ones and for teachers of writing in different settings from workshops to elementary schools to universities. It is one of the most delightful books I have read in a long time. ☺

Bly, Robert, Hillman, James, and Meade, Michael, (Eds.) 1992.
The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart: Poems for Men. New York: HarperPerennial.

Candace Walworth

Last year my seventy-five year old friend June invited me to Sunday evening poetry potlucks in her living room. Her inspiration was this: to invite a few friends together to share the news of our hearts through poetry. To enter June's living room, a poem needed only one credential—that it flourish in at least one person's heart. No leftovers, please, her invitation stated. No poetry you once loved but no longer do. We agreed to liberate ourselves from the discussion of what constitutes "good poetry" for the evening and committed ourselves instead to offering one another the truths of our hearts through poetry. It's no coincidence that many of the poems collected in *The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart* have been read at the Sunday evening poetry potlucks. June's invitation was similar to that of Robert Bly, James Hillman, and Michael Meade, co-editors of *The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart*. The intention of their collaboration was to collect the poems which "moved men the most in gatherings over the last ten years" (p. xx). The volume ranges from ethnopoetics (tribal and oral poetries) to Emily Dickinson, Antonio Machado, Anna Achmatova, Sharon Olds, William Blake, and Pablo Neruda, among others. The poets you might expect to find in such a collection—Kabir, Rumi, and Rilke—are here. And for me there were plenty of surprises, poets and poems I had never heard, or heard of, before.

The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart traces the vital ear-heart connection that brought groups of men in the late twentieth century together to explore concerns such as work and community; earthly love; sadness about destruction of the earth; Mother and the Great Mother; zaniness and wildness. Each of the 330 poems included takes up residence in one of 16 chapters, each naming a *concern* of the heart. An Introduction precedes each chapter, stoking the theoretical fire of the book. The prose style is irreverent, exuberant, and playful, scouting out edges whenever possible. Err on the side of outrageousness rather than correctness, the editorial motto might have been.

The subtitle of *The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart* is *Poems for Men*. In the foreword, the editors note that "[b]y calling it *Poems for Men* we don't mean that this collection is not to be read by women; we would rejoice if women read it" (p. xxi). Though HarperCollins earmarked this book for Poetry/Gender Studies, I would cast my vote for Poetry/Soul Studies if such a category existed or could be invented. The editors emphasize not the differences that *separate* men and women but the differences that add a mystery, a spice to life. In chapters such as "Father's Prayers for Sons and Daughters," "Mother and the Great Mother," and "The Naive Male," we're asked to look where gender issues are pointing, not at the finger pointing! For me—as a woman reading this book—the hum of gender throughout was not much louder than my refrigerator. It went on and then off, often fading into the background.

"We live in a poetically underdeveloped nation" (p. ix), write Bly, Hillman, and Meade in the Foreword. The editors remind us that, while many of us learned

to criticize poetry, in other parts of the world people learned by listening to and reciting poetry. The elegant weave of poetry and social commentary throughout raises the question: Where does one end and the other begin?

The heart of the book is a street smart heart, a heart that isn't afraid to face difficult truths, to haul language up from the bottom of the psyche. A strong current of archetypal psychology runs through the book, especially in the introductions to chapters that focus on personal and collective shadow material. There are several such chapters. One is simply called "War," which includes Carolyn Forché's "The Colonel" as well as Mark Twain's classic "The War Prayer." Familiar poems often find homes in unfamiliar places. For instance, Gwendolyn Brooks' "We Real Cool" shows up in a chapter called "Making a Hole in Denial" while Nikki Giovanni's "Ego Tripping" appears in the chapter "Mother and the Great Mother." Many, but not all, of the poems are accompanied by an introductory gloss. James Hillman introduces Nikki Giovanni's "Ego Tripping" in this way: "The poem raises the spirit by exaggeration, extending the imagination to the four corners of the earth and the farthest reaches of history. It says, Your mother isn't just a me; she's a myth. Of course, she's too much!" (p. 410).

Storyteller and mythologist Michael Meade introduces a way of listening to shadow poems: "Unpleasant ideas and words inhabit each of these poems. They don't seek agreement or approval. They permeate the history of poetry the way that dark and fierce emotions permeate our lives" (p. 288). Meade takes us further into the domain of the shadow in a chapter called "The Second Layer: Anger, Hatred, Outrage." He describes the First Layer as consisting of "surface courtesies"; the Second Layer "bubbles with feelings, emotions, and indelible attitudes we'd rather not have, wouldn't choose, and shouldn't express"; while the Third Layer is home to our fundamental sense of "union and connection with all things" (p. 287).

Once we have made it through the "giants, hags, trolls . . . and outraged motorists" who populate the Second Layer, what about celebrating the vast landscape of human loves? The editors include varieties of love not often celebrated in American culture, for instance, a chapter called "Loving the Community and Work." "Earthly Love" is given a place of honor, as is transcendent love in the chapter, "The Spendrift Gaze toward Paradise." And what about the bridge between earthly and transcendent love? Kabir, mystic poet of Northern India, responds: "If you find nothing now, / you will simply end up with an apartment in the City of / Death. / If you make love with the divine now, in the next life you / will have the face of satisfied desire" (p. 369). I discovered no shortage of love poems in this volume, which takes advantage of the opportunity to redefine what a love poem is: "All good poems are love poems—not because they tell of love and lovers, but because they reveal the poet's love of language. Not about love, the poem *is* love" (p. 158).

I appreciated the emotional ecology of the book, the balance between hard-hitting critique and the soft touch of the wise-fool. As in a medicine forest, where trees with poisonous bark and seeds grow next to trees with the antidote, here, too, poisons and their antidotes live side by side. "A question painfully put in one poem is answered in another" (p. xx). The poisons named range from denial and war to inflated jargon and the loss of animals from our lives. A partial list of

antidotes prescribed by the authors includes the following: "getting used to having that flavor of bitter truth in the mouth" (p. 199); "extravagance for breaking through used language" (p. 137); "the practice of the wild" (p. 4), "memory images" (p. 473); and cultivating the heart, what Antonio Machado calls working with "your old failures" (p. 372).

Zaniness is such an important antidote that an entire chapter is dedicated to it: the human impulse to play with language, to party with words. Lewis Carroll's "Father William" opens the chapter, followed by contributions from Langston Hughes, Louis Jenkins, and Bob Dylan, among others. What does it take to master zaniness? There's not much to go on, but here's a tidbit: You must preserve "the zaniness without collapsing into banality or meaningless" (p. 450). Funny thing about the zany chapter, there's no poetry by women here. This omission inspired me to begin a search for writing by women that touches the chord of zaniness. Suggestions, anyone?

David Ignatow's poem "I should be content / to look at a mountain / for what it is / and not as a comment / on my life" (p. 471) serves as a gateway to the final chapter, "Loving the World Anyway." The central question here is: How do we move beyond self-enclosure? Hillman begins the investigation of "loving the world anyway" by describing an all too familiar attitude of irritation: "Rain is a bother; winter nights come too early; things break down and require attention. How can I possibly love a world that consists so largely in Muzak, traffic, and bad coffee?" (p. 473). Then, Hillman pushes a button beyond complaint and tries to answer the question: What does it mean to love the world anyway? We love the world anyway by keeping our eyes and ears, nose, tongue, and skin awake, by careful attention to the ordinary delights of daily life (as in Neruda's "Ode to My Socks"). In this chapter, we're challenged to ask ourselves: What keeps us from loving the world unconditionally? And, what's the difference between our experience of romantic (individual) love and our love for the world? W. S. Merwin's "West Wall" is noted as a poem that merges "love for a person with love for the world; both ripen together" (p. 493).

Along with June's poetry potlucks, this volume reawakened my love of being read to. If this book has a secret, unstated mission, it is to seduce us into reading it out loud to friends and lovers, cats and dogs, trees, mountains, and rivers—to those we unabashedly love. Here's Hillman: "Good language asks to be spoken aloud, mind to mind and heart to heart, by embodied voices that still retain the animal and by tongues that still delight in savoring vowels and the clipped splitting of explosive consonants" (p. 159). As you read this book, you may want to experiment with "retaining the animal" in your voice. A good poem to practice with, I found, was Robert Frost's "Wilderness," included in the final chapter.

The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart is one among many recent writings that challenged me to reconsider my relationship with poetry. In *The Heart Arouse & Poetry* and *The Preservation of the Soul in Corporate America* (1994), David Whyte tells what it was like for him to bring poetry to corporate America. Where there's loss of soul, offer soul-medicine, says Whyte, who burns through the attitude of superiority toward those who live and work in corporate America. If poetry has anything to do with awakening our hearts—why not corporate America's, too? If poetry is (among other things) a path which leads to greater compassion and

insight—why exclude anyone? The theme of inclusion/exclusion is also raised by Dana Gioia, who challenges the image of poet (and poetry) as outsider (*Can Poetry Matter: Essays on Poetry and American Culture*, 1992). Jane Hirshfield's recent anthology of spiritual poetry by women (*Women in Praise of the Sacred: 43 Centuries of Spiritual Poetry by Women*, 1994) could be considered a companion volume to *The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart*. The main difference in approach is that Hirshfield's anthology focuses on the poetry and spirituality of affirmation, while *The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart* takes the Via Negativa (the shadow) as its spiritual and psychological point of departure. On the local front, I wonder whether June's poetry potlucks might be one tiny indicator of what's happening among small groups of friends in unknown living rooms across the country.

The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart begins and ends with the poetry of William Butler Yeats. The title is from Yeats' "The Circus Animals' Desertion" and the farewell poem of the volume from Yeats' "Vacillation." As I turned over the last page of the book, it seemed as if Bly, Hillman, and Meade had rented Yeats and were now returning him to the nonanthology of the world where he can be rented again and again and again. How many times can the same poem be rented before it's worn out? Plenty, this volume suggests. By loving a poem, by committing it to the heart, you don't deprive anyone of anything. And thank goodness, copyright laws have no jurisdiction in matters of heart. Kinko's can't stop you from committing Yeats (or anyone else) to heart. Make the poetry you love yours. Make from scratch what you can't find in a box or a book. Then give it away. Love the world anyway. Know that you are blessed and can bless. Here's Yeats, with a closing note of the book: "My fiftieth year had come and gone/ I sat, a solitary man, In a crowded London shop,/ An open book and empty cup/ On the marble table-top./ While on the shop and street I gazed/ My body of a sudden blazed;/ And twenty minutes more or less/ It seemed, so great my happiness,/ That I was blessed and could bless" (p. 507).

As I write, the Sunday evening poetry potlucks (so named because we share poetry as food) continue to thrive, now in our second year. We're going deeper now, moving more freely between layers, with a greater capacity to listen through (as in "to see through") words to the space from which they arise. Last Sunday evening we got on a roll of "Second Layer" poetry. Alone, I would not have been able to sustain the descent. Some places it's best not to travel alone, and some things can only be learned in the company of friends. No wonder this book reeks of collaboration! The joy of exchange I feel with the Sunday evening group is, I think, the same spirit of exchange that generated this book. Regarding their collaboration, the editors note: "These poems have been argued over, repeated, mixed with tears and laughter, and required to end events that didn't want to close" (p. xx). For me, they created a book that belongs in the stay-up-late-to-read category. As I did, I shed my own tears and laughter. Later, I decided to write this review as a way of continuing the conversation I, as reader, was invited to join. ☺