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JAEPL, Vol. 3, Winter 1997-1998

Alice G. Brand (Editor)

State University of New York (SUNY) College at Brockport

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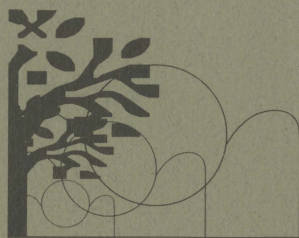
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J A E P L

The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning

Resistance and Rewards
Beyond the Cognitive Domain

Volume 3 • Winter 1997–1998

The Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning

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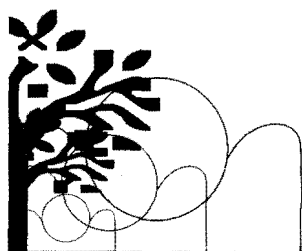
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J A E P L

The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning

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Volume 3 • Winter 1997-1998

J A E P L

The Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning (AEPL), an official assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English, is open to all those interested in extending the frontiers of teaching and learning beyond traditional disciplines and methodologies.

The purposes of AEPL, therefore, are to provide a common ground for theorists, researchers, and practitioners to explore ideas on the subject; to participate in programs and projects on it; to integrate these efforts with others in related disciplines; to keep abreast of activities along these lines of inquiry; and to promote scholarship on and publication of these activities.

The *Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning, JAEPL*, meets this need. It provides a forum to encourage research, theory, and classroom practices involving expanded concepts of language. It contributes to a sense of community in which scholars and educators from pre-school through the university exchange points of view and cutting-edge approaches to teaching and learning. *JAEPL* is especially interested in helping those teachers who experiment with new strategies for learning to share their practices and confirm their validity through publication in professional journals.

Topics of interest include but are not limited to: intuition, inspiration, insight, imagery, meditation, silence, archetypes, emotion, attitudes, values, spirituality, motivation, body wisdom and felt sense, and healing. Articles may be practical, research-oriented, theoretical, bibliographic, professional, and/or exploratory/personal. Each issue has a theme. The theme of the 1998–1999 issue is Mind, Body, Spirit: Teachers Making Connections.

Membership in AEPL is \$12. Contact Bruce Ardinger, Columbus State Community College, 550 E. Spring St., Columbus, OH 43215. e-mail: bardinger@compuserve.com. Membership includes that year's issue of *JAEPL*.

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Editor's Message

This is the last issue of my three-year term as inaugural editor of the *Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning*.

There is something fine for me in starting something from nothing, so to speak. What is it about the mystery, doing the truly active research that does not require a library or the internet? I always feel the fun, the risk of doing things other people do not do. That does not necessarily make me popular. But it does make me strong. Then it makes me scared which also makes me vulnerable to criticism. At the same time, maybe because the journal is new, I figured I would be less vulnerable to it. After all, I needed time to work out the wrinkles. Fine tuning would come later. I am competitive. I like being first. I also like the idea of making a modicum of difference. It may make me a curiosity. *JAEP* was, for me, after all, a kind of solution to a benign problem.

The capacity for us to change our mental lives, the lives of our students, is not a bad thing—even though, in so doing, we discover nothing that wasn't already there in books and in our bodies. Like the chemical basis for the salutary effects of chicken soup, we are discovering a scientific basis of some very old ideas and practices. It has become our charge, in a way, to inform the profession about how ideas in the corners of the academy (the physical and metaphysical, spiritual, emotional, therapeutic, advanced work in medicine, states of mind/consciousness) that have not been admitted to the pedagogical mainstream in composition studies pertain to the work we do. In so doing, we honor the complexity of our subject and its beginnings.

I hope we continue to pursue goals of looking inward into the mind and body and outward to social and cultural experience. I hope *JAEP* continues to attract not safe but innovative papers that centrist editors marginalize. I hope that our reviewers continue to focus not on what doesn't work in manuscripts but on how they might be improved; that they do not reject a paper that makes them (or the editors) uncomfortable; but rather that they recommend good ones they don't necessarily agree with.

With my term as editor at its end last Spring, 1997, I wish to thank my exhilarating contributors and understanding authors of rejected manuscripts. I owe my sanity to an exceptional staff who kept things running smoothly. I was enriched by P. J. of Louis Heindl and Son Printers and his staff Art, Lynn, Paul, and Vicki for making my visits to the shop fun and productive, and especially typesetter Sue Schmidt for her irrepressible good will.

I hope the talented staff will continue: Anne Mullin and Sharon Gibson-Groshon who I am pleased to say have an eye for quality thought, promising thought, and the aesthetics of the journal.

I pass along the torch to co-editors Kristie Fleckenstein and Linda Calendrillo, both charter members of AEPL who come to the journal after having published in it. So, as not to lose momentum, I give them space to talk about their charge. ☺



It is with pleasure and honor that we begin our tenure as co-editors of *JAEPL*. During the past three years, Alice and her staff have maintained high standards of editorial and scholarly quality, standards that we hope to preserve. They have also trailblazed new territory, inviting explorations of new connections, always centered by the belief that “the point of the probe is always in the heart of the explorer” (Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, 1979). We hope to travel the path broken by Alice and by the many fine contributors to the first three volumes of the annual; we also hope to maintain the tradition of pushing the boundaries of that path a bit more, not so much to colonize but more to incorporate the power of margins into our thinking.

To begin that endeavor, we have chosen “Mind, Body, Spirit: Teachers Making Connections” as the theme of *JAEPL*’s fourth annual and our first issue as co-editors. By intellectual and spiritual training, our Western culture is a dualistic one. Culturally reified with Descartes’ differentiation between mind (*res cognitans*) and body (*res extensa*), the division between mind, body, and spirit has consistently privileged rational mind over unruly body. Through that discrimination, however, Western civilization has also split fact from value and warranted a scientific agenda that justifies the control of all things physical. Now, in the midst of ecological devastation, cultural inequities, and individual pathologies, we in the western world and in the educational community are slowly waking to the limitations of that dualism. We are coming to see the necessary unity of mind and nature. As Gregory Bateson says, “There is no mind *separate from* the body, no god separate from his [sic] creation.”

The theme of *Mind, Body, Spirit: Teachers Making Connections* invites further speculations on the ways in which mind, body, and spirit unite. We urge teachers to envision connections among mind, body, spirit, and their teaching and scholarship. Possible areas for consideration include such questions as:

- What does the healing power of writing, especially narrative, suggest for the connection between word and flesh?
- What are the strengths or the weaknesses of poststructuralist orientations, currently dominant in composition studies, that transform mind, body, and spirit into textualities? What do we lose or gain from such a perspective?
- What insights into the mind/body/spirit connection are provided by women’s spirituality, especially ecofeminism?
- What are the methodological as well as the pedagogical implications of connections among mind, body, spirit?
- What are the possibilities of an embodied discourse, and what are the concomitant challenges to traditionally rigid genre demarcations?
- How might schema theory, the dominant paradigm in cognitive science and in reading theory, incorporate the body? Frederic Bartlett, the father of schema theory, asserts that schemata are made and unmade on

the basis of a “feeling.” “Feeling” is also the means by which we “turn around” on our schemata to achieve consciousness. Therefore, what role does body play in our constructions of knowledge?

As always, the theme is intended to initiate thinking, not limit it. Each of the areas listed above, as well as many other topics such as ethics and kinesthetic knowing, fall within the theme of mind, body, and spirit. We urge you to consider the nature of the connections in your lives, your teaching, your writing, and respond to our call for papers at the back of this issue. 🏠

A Tribute to James Moffett

Regina Foehr, AEPL Chair

Introduction

A visionary and trailblazer, James Moffett recognized and wrote about trends in education long before others even considered their possibilities. With sterling scholarship he bridged learning theory and common sense practice. He helped us to see how ancient wisdom and modern philosophy can inform each other and teaching and learning, and he articulated concepts that we knew to be true even though we were unable to articulate them. A master at seeing connections and helping others to see them, he changed our thinking about education and our professional and personal selves.

In his typical trailblazing fashion, James Moffett was AEPL's very first member. A member of the AEPL Advisory Board, he also served as featured speaker at the first AEPL conference and at other AEPL events. It is, therefore, a special honor and privilege to devote this opening section of *JAEPL* to pay tribute to James Moffett, our *original* member, colleague, and friend.

Each of the writers in this tribute to James Moffett knew Jim personally and professionally. Each was invited to contribute an informal article or personal narrative about him.

Remembering James Moffett

Miles Myers, Past NCTE Executive Director

The news was a shock. I had talked to Jim about two weeks before, and he seemed much better. Then about a week before he died, he left a phone message asking me to call. He had missed the NCTE convention again. I had heard his name for the first time many years ago when Tom Gage suggested, "You should read Jim Moffett's monograph, *Drama Is What Is Happening*." This monograph, which later evolved into *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* and which changed my teaching of composition, was my introduction to James Moffett. I met him sometime in the 1960s after he left Phillips Exeter, when he came to Oakland High School to watch me teach. He was working on his *Interaction: A Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading Program* series, later putting one of my classrooms in a movie describing this series. The series, which was published as a collection of large activity cards, irregular sized books, games, tapes, all sorts of classroom materials organized around the principles of his *Student-Centered Language Curriculum, K-13*, was disliked by textbook

salesmen because it was too heavy to carry around. I still remember an *Interaction* salesman huffing and puffing up and down the steps of Oakland High to deliver two sets of the *Interaction* series. (My principal looked at the pile of stuff and asked, “I thought you were getting an English series, Miles.” “Well,” I said, “Let me get back to you after we figure it out.”)

When Jim and Jan moved to Berkeley, Jim was a regular at writing project institutes (We taught together one summer.), a participant in our battles over behavioral objectives in PBS (Program Budget Systems, not Public Broadcasting Systems), a contributor to numerous CATE and NCTE workshops, and an off-and-on member of Berkeley groups of school reformers. In the 1970s, Jim got interested in silencing the mind as a way to enrich what one knows. It’s as if he got all that talking going in schools, both internally and externally, and then decided enough is enough. He and Jan started a sort of ashram at his house on Spruce Street in Berkeley, and Celest and I would go there every Saturday morning to do our Prana Yoga exercises, led by Jim and his co-teacher, Pingula. We were meditating, turning, breathing, stretching, sitting yoga style, standing on our heads. Jim could stand on his head for thirty minutes, I swear. (Celest asked me, “Why can’t you do that?”) I was always behind in my breathing homework (Miles, did you finish 2 repetitions of 20 breaths? No! I answered.), and Jim kept pushing books in my direction (“Jim,” I stated, “those yogis in those books do not seem to have to work.”).

His last NCTE convention was in 1994, the last of our three public conversations at the NCTE convention, sponsored by NCTE’s Commission on Composition. For my generation, Jim Moffett was our most important thinker about the teaching of writing in K-12 schools. Today, he is a very important thinker about new directions in K-12 school rethinking—harmonic learning and the relationships of body and mind, an emphasis on the individual, the internal, the space away from work and politics. He is, finally, a deeply missed friend.

Reading Jim Moffett

Donald R. Gallehr, Director,
Northern Virginia Writing Project

When I first read “Writing, Inner Speech, and Meditation,” I knew I needed to reread it to understand it. It is a rich essay, with one embedded sentence after another and numerous connections to composition theory and literature. The 52 footnotes alone constitute a course of studies in writing and meditation.

I was intrigued by the first sentence of the essay: “Writing and meditation are naturally allied activities.” I, and a number of others, used this essay as a map to explore this alliance further. Particularly helpful to us was Jim’s description of how we watch, direct, and suspend inner speech:

Both writing and meditating *watch* inner speech. We see this in the gazing of children, and later in their journal writing, mapping, and free writing. In meditation, this is called witnessing.

Both writing and meditating *direct* inner speech. We see this when we narrow and develop a subject. In meditation, this is bringing the mind back to a point of concentration.

Both writing and meditating *suspend* inner speech. After focusing on one point, we suspend inner speech to relax the mind—to give it a rest. In meditation, this is silence.

We all know that education fiercely separates “church and state,” and Jim could easily have written about meditation from a secular point of view, the way many do in such fields as sports, drama, music, business, and medicine. Instead, he acknowledged his own training in an Ashram and described the mystic traditions, both ancient and modern, that gave birth to meditation. This essay is a rock-solid theoretical foundation, and Jim helped us to build on it through his work with AEPL—through his work on the Advisory Board, as main speaker at the first AEPL Colorado Conference, and through the publications of AEPL members, including *JAEPL* and *Presence of Mind*.

I, like many others in AEPL and NCTE, came to know Jim also as a friend. In 1985 he ran a Writing and Meditation Institute at George Mason, and in 1991 an Institute on School Reform. Both times he stayed with my wife and me at my home in Warrenton, Virginia. All who met him know that, in addition to being a courageous scholar, he was a wonderful human being—just as straightforward and compassionate in person as he was in his writings.

In “Writing, Inner Speech, and Meditation” Jim wrote: “Teachers can give no greater gift to their students than to help them expand and master inner speech.” He inspired many of us as individuals, and our profession as a whole, to develop our own inner speech and to make the connection between writing and meditation. We are indeed fortunate to have known him.

Jim, We Hardly Knew You

Richard L. Graves, Professor Emeritus,
Auburn University

Jim, we hardly knew you.

You were taken from us before we were ready. So much more we could have learned from you. So much more you could have taught us. We listen for the sound of your voice, but all is still. Now we ask ourselves: What are those unspoken truths that remain with you? We listen and wonder.

Morning: A thin yellow finger moves across the horizon. Darkness is everywhere, but now it recedes before the coming light. Here in this sandy land, among these trees, in this silence, which is broken only by the sound of birds, the light awakens all. Light defines the landscape and warms the earth. This is a sacred moment.

When we get together it should always be like it is in Colorado. Everything is informal. Our words are honest. We listen with open hearts and open minds. You were there, Jim, and we listened to you. We heard your words, but more, we sensed a presence beyond the words. One morning you taught us how to go beyond words, how to enter another world, in the purity of sound. We remember. We remember.

The healing. The laying on of hands. The sacred oil, from a holiness church. The words. The prayers. The spirit that moves in this place, invisible, like unseen fingers. . . . Who is the healer? And who is being healed?

Did you know, Jim, that you were the first member of our assembly? When the announcement was made, you were the first to send a check, the first to enroll. Sometimes I think we ought to call ourselves the Jim Moffett Society, for you embody all that we stand for, all we believe in. You really are our Number One member. Always will be.

What is the spirit that creates a man like Jim Moffett? When he was a child, could anyone have predicted the pattern and direction of this life? Were the seeds of his spiritual depth present even then? What is this spirit that moves among us, moves within us, connecting, guiding, bringing energy and light into our lives?

Jim Moffett spoke the truth of his heart, even though in speaking he risked misunderstanding. He was a giant among us, an explorer who blazed new trails into uncharted worlds. We knew Jim Moffett as friend, teacher, and spiritual guide. We honor a man whose influence will live on long past his lifetime. We honor a wise and gentle man who willingly shared his gifts with us.

We grieve his passing, but the celebration of his life is so much larger than our grief. He would want it this way.

Thanks, Jim. You have blessed our lives. Your words and your spirit live in ours still. You will always be a part of us.

Memories of James Moffett

Regina Foehr, AEPL Chair

The week Jim Moffett died I received in the mail a manuscript he had sent of his latest book, one he had spent most of a lifetime writing. In telephone and electronic mail conversations Jim had asked me to read his manuscript and serve as agent for its publication. This book, he explained, was his metacognitive analysis in recent years from his writings of a lifetime. And, although as I write this article, I have only just begun to read the 425-page manuscript, I can see its initial title, *Writing to Heal*, he has changed to *Growing Up Sober*.

Though Jim and I had talked by telephone several times earlier in the year, our friendship began at the 1994 NCTE Convention in Orlando. Our previous telephone conversations had been initiated by an article he had submitted to *The Spiritual Side of Writing: Releasing the Learner's Whole Potential*, a collection that I coedited with Susan Schiller (1997). These conversations quite naturally always turned to other topics—to our shared Mississippi heritage where I had grown up and Jim had spent several formative childhood years, to views on spirituality, to his deep concern about the universal neglect of children in our world. But at this convention, our paths crossed rather frequently because of Jim's leadership and high visibility. And visible he was. Tall, California suntanned, and wearing a rust Indian suede leather vest over simple blue, cotton shirts, he cast a rare and curious mystique, which became more present to AEPL as the week progressed, allowing us a glimpse into the mystery and paradox of Jim.

Jim exemplified paradox; he was simultaneously simple but complex, innocent yet wise, playful and serious, shy but courageous, and reticent though bold. In one of his presentations his amusing stories of his friend and mentor, an East Indian yogi, made us laugh out loud. Then midsentence, he'd turn our laughter and our consciousness upside down, spinning us into sudden insights with their poignant truths. He tricked us, at one level made his friend seem foolish, then showcased his genius in brilliant simplicity, raising our consciousness in the process. His friend was the classic "wise fool." So was Jim.

When I say Jim Moffett was an archetypal fool, I'm not being irreverent. I mean it as the highest compliment. I am, however, aided in this insight about Jim by Carol Pearson's discussion of archetypes in *Awakening the Heroes Within* (1991). Pearson discusses archetypes as the ego states from which we operate at different times in our lives: "warrior," "caretaker," "orphan," "fool" and so forth. Although we move in and out of these various states as circumstances and our moods call us to do, we tend to function primarily from some dominant states. When Jim attended a convention workshop I gave on archetypes, took Carol Pearson's archetypes test, and scored high in the archetypal "fool," I suspected then the potentiality for a friendship with Jim—after all, who doesn't like someone who's willing to risk looking foolish. Not surprisingly Jim also scored high in archetypal "sage." As all of us workshop participants shared our dominant archetypes, Jim openly shared his, too, and gave me permission to do so.

The archetypal fool within is the playful part of the self, the ego state that thrives on self-expression, whose desire for self-expression outweighs the fear of "looking like a fool." The internal risk-taker, it is also the part of us that likes to have some fun. It's the court jester in ancient kingdoms who gets away with what others would be hanged for. It's a shape shifter, seeing and presenting the world through new eyes. Jim's internal fool, it seems to me, gave him originality and the courage to publish his ideas which leaped beyond canonical boundaries of their day. His *Universal Schoolhouse*, (1994) offers a re-conceptualization of education as both a catalyst and an oasis for spiritual awakening and transformation within the student and society. But this concept was no more outrageous when it was released in 1994 than was his groundbreaking integration of "Writing, Inner Speech, and Meditation," in 1981 (*Coming on Center*). Jim's example evokes the internal "fool" or "clown" or "natural child" in others, giving them

the courage to express their original ideas and to explore the unconventional.

In academia, we too often take ourselves too seriously and don't look at the lighter side, sometimes even fear reprisal if we explore the unconventional or write what we really believe. We favor instead the safety of tradition. When Jim and I talked about his willingness to follow his intuition beyond the safety of established boundaries--to write, for example, on unconventional topics--he always modestly downplayed any particular courage. He seemed to think he simply enjoyed a freedom of expression as an independent writer that institutional affiliation would have denied him.

Sometimes I watched Jim appearing to suppress laughter when there was no obvious reason for laughter. (The archetypal fool within is irrepressible.) As Langston Hughes reminded us, though, sometimes we laugh to keep from crying, integrating the tragic and sublime. As any wise fool would do, Jim seemed to integrate it all.

Jim's humorous side made correspondence with him and his wife, Janet, fun—not that any of us pursued lengthy correspondence, just notes and letters here and there, and then e-mail in the last year. Jim's handwritten notes on Jan's hand-made stationery showed her whimsical side, too, and always included his appreciative commentary on her art. I've heard him tell with a smile of how they had met on the steps of the Harvard School of Education. Together the two of them reminded me of two kids—in bright-eyed exhilaration eager to experience life. At least, that's my image of them the last time I saw them together in seemingly boundless energy dashing out the cabin door after our first AEPL conference in 1995. They were on their way back down the mountains to catch their flight—their early morning freedom and lightness of heart, the prize for a rigorous but successful conference that had featured Jim.

Jim was able to laugh at himself too, for example, in his story about himself as a high school English student in Ohio where his family had moved from Mississippi after the war. He chuckled as he told it, still amused these many years later at the memory of it and his behavior at the time. He told of how he used to gaze deliberately out the window seeming indifferent during class. Then when called upon, he would spin sharply around to face the teacher, giving the right answer. We both laughed at his adolescent behavior, recalling our own students' transparent games in our classes in subsequent years. Then at my query regarding his journey from simple roots to an ivy league education, he told of how as a high school senior he had been awarded one of Ohio's two Harvard scholarships from a Harvard recruitment program extended to every state.

But it was after sharing a panel on Spiritually Open Pedagogy at this conference that I came to know another side of Jim, his prophetic side. After the panel, he made a simple prophetic statement to me in the most direct but natural way, followed by the words, "But you know that." Earlier in the week, he had done and said the same thing, spoken the same words, followed by "But you know that."

Though I had heard his words but forgotten them the first time he said them, the second time, he had my attention. And though I had no intellectual reason to know the truth of his words, somehow, at some deep internal place, I knew the truth of his words. Seeing Jim's way of honoring his own intuition or inner know-

ing and expressing it personally and in his writing has given me the courage to honor intuitions, particularly in professional matters and choices.

Jim's example has opened doors for all of us within the academy. A revered scholar on mainstream educational issues, Jim also courageously opened and led the way for further exploration through his leading-edge writing and thinking on topics far from mainstream. Jim Moffett was truly a hero on a difficult journey into uncharted territory. And even though I have shared some memories of him primarily through the mono lens of only one archetype, Jim's complexity was obvious. Fortunately for us all he has left yet another legacy, his awaiting manuscript, promising to shed more light on his many dimensions—and vicariously our own—as he made his way through the journey of *Growing Up Sober* and *Writing to Heal*.

On Jim Moffett: A Reflection and Memoir

Sheridan Blau, NCTE President-Elect

One of the most embarrassing features of professional life as an educator is that of having to endure the great changes in fashion that sweep through the educational community and dictate teaching practices and curriculum content for a few years, until one fashion is replaced by another. The changes are embarrassing not because they represent change, but because the changes they embody so clearly represent mere changes in fashion or opinion or swings in a pendulum of sentiment rather than any real progress in professional knowledge or insight into the way learning takes place. In fact, the one constant in the educational fashions to which school policy makers regularly try to submit teachers and curricula is that no version of reform or return to basics (for that seems to define the swing of the school pendulum) ever calls for any teaching practice or curriculum content that would demand anything like authentically intensive and focused thinking about substantive matters.

Jim Moffett's theory and practice, on the other hand, never changed with the fashion of the times. He never swerved from a focus on thinking, and on a curriculum that demanded increasingly sophisticated thinking on the part of students within every program of study and from grade to grade. Not that he participated in any way in the recently fashionable critical thinking movement (though people interested in critical thinking could look to Moffett for a theory of thinking) nor made the mistake ridiculed so soundly in Hirsch's most recent book, calling for a curriculum that would teach ways of thinking in place of intellectual substance. No, Jim's articles and books advocated for thirty years or more an approach to teaching the English language arts that called upon students to engage in reading and writing and speaking tasks through which they would learn the *processes* of effective composing and for which they would conduct the

investigations and research—acquire the substantive knowledge—that would allow them to read, write, and speak knowledgeably.

Jim's work constitutes the best refutation I know of to Hirsch's half-baked assertion that an interest in intellectual processes entails a de-emphasis on content knowledge in a discipline. Jim's first principle in teaching writing, for example, using workshops to help students produce satisfying and rhetorically effective pieces of writing, was the principle of plenitude. Students should never be asked to write for publication or for the submission of a complete paper, until they know more about their topic than they could cover in a single writing assignment. The problem for any real author, he often reminded us, is to select and order what he knows from a body of knowledge much more vast than can be communicated in any single piece of writing. Writers write from plenitude, from an abundance of experience and knowledge, not from scarcity. Only in schools are writers expected to produce written documents from scarcity. Jim's workshop approach to teaching writing therefore emphasized the role of investigation and research or "looking it up" as the key step to be taken before "writing it down."

I was about to say that we need Jim's wisdom now more than ever, when the best ideas of progressive educators are under attack, merely for their association with progressivism. But the truth is that the ideas that Jim spent his professional life adumbrating and illuminating for language arts educators have always been the ideas we have most needed as correctives to educational trends and fashions that pose simplistic answers, slogans, and teacher-proof techniques for problems that demand no less than the most thoughtful, creative, and intellectually well-informed responses on the part of classroom practitioners. No one was a stronger advocate than Jim for the principle that writing teachers must first be writers, just as literature teachers must first be powerful and experienced readers. His attention to method in teaching was always exploratory and the outgrowth of inquiries he urged all of us to conduct on how we might classify the actual kinds of writing that are read by readers in real communities, and what sorts of investigations had to be conducted in order to produce an instance of each type of writing that a reader would value reading.

Jim was, of course, himself, encyclopedic in the range of discourses he commanded. He was thoroughly conversant with the canonical texts of the British, American, continental, and classical literary traditions and read widely in science, philosophy, linguistics, and religion. I was always surprised by how much he kept up with current literary theory and how masterful he was in appropriating, explaining, and challenging contemporary theoretical formulations. He was also exceptionally ready to read new ideas and encounter new theories, about literature, about learning, about history, linguistics, science, the arts, and religion. His books reflect the breadth and depth of his learning and offer entirely original and generative perspectives on the English language arts curriculum, on teaching writing and literature, on the nature and goals of education and the aims and obstacles to learning, on cultural conflict in education, on educational policy and the education of the soul, and so on.

Whenever he visited our Writing Project in the summer (and he did so virtually every summer for 18 years), he would do a workshop in two parts. The first

part addressed the perennially refractory problem of helping students move across the gap that divides personal or expressive writing from expository or transactional writing, while the second half of his presentation was focused on whatever new book he was writing or new topic he was exploring in his own research and thinking. Our teachers found both parts of his presentation equally valuable, and I personally found every one of his presentations over the 18 years of his annual visits to be a cherished moment in my own intellectual life and in my own development as an educator. For his part, he always found something new to learn while he was here. In the early years of his annual visits he became an expert on Chumash Indian cave paintings (of which we have excellent examples in the mountains above Santa Barbara), and then on Chumash culture and religion and California mission history and so on. He loved to hike in our mountains, and even in the last visits—even after he was weakened by illness—he managed to take hikes with me down the canyon behind my house to see the rock formations and examine the varieties of plant life native to the hills and canyons of the particular micro-environment where I live. No companions for a hike were ever more interested or companionable for me on the trails I love to hike than were Jim and Jan Moffett.

Outliving Jim Moffett

Betty Jane Wagner, Director,
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I never thought about outliving Jim Moffett. My most salient impression of him was as a man of great strength. He gave up smoking and drinking long before most of us in my generation gave a second thought to health, and he and Jan were vegetarians and meditated and practiced yoga decades before it became fashionable, at least here in the Midwest. He lived as he thought and taught—with stalwart integrity.

Jim was indeed a paragon of integrity, but, in my experience, he was full of contradictions: His mind was sinewy and rugged, but his manner unassuming and almost bumbling. Wise, but off-hand in his dictums. His views iconoclastic, but his response to the clichés and conventional thinking of his students, warmhearted and generous. Unmoved in his convictions, but a good listener. Unbending, but willing to negotiate. Walking away from offers for professorships that most of us would have leapt at, yet forever committed to changing the climate of intellectual life in schools at all levels. Serious of purpose, but full of wit.

The summers he came to the Midwest to conduct Chicago Area Writing Project Summer Institutes, he arrived not with an academic's but rather with a rancher's hands and tan; and his laconic, unpretentious leader's stance quickly settled the more jittery of the teachers who were our summer fellows. Jim simply amazed

them with his power. Typically, by the middle of the first morning, the teachers were awe-struck with the quality of the writing they had already produced, and several of them called me to exult over the miracle that had occurred. The second summer one of them begged me to let her come back and visit the first day of the institute to see what in the world it was that Jim did. She watched closely, but she still didn't know how he got such good writing to happen. She did know that in his quiet, almost clumsy, way he communicated without question his unswerving faith in the participants' ability to produce powerful writing. And produce they did.

I first knew I was in the company of an original and ground-breaking thinker when I got my hands on the 1968 edition of a *Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum, K-13: A Handbook for Teachers*. At the time, I was pretentiously teaching a course called "Theory and Methods of Teaching Language Arts" at National College of Education, now National-Louis University. This required preservice course for elementary teachers paradoxically defined *language arts* as everything but reading. All of the texts of the era were prescriptive with obligatory chapters on handwriting, spelling, grammar, punctuation, book reports, and sometimes speech training.

In Jim's *Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum* I found the first comprehensive text I could use. As I read it, I recognized how oral language was the basic saddle or ground that connected all of the peaks around me—writing, reading, thinking. So I wrote this Mr. James Moffett, who was then at Harvard. And, to my amazement, he wrote back. And I wrote again. Before I knew it, I was part of the dialogue that resulted in the *Interaction* curriculum; then, before I had time to catch my breath from that overwhelming project, he asked me to help him revise *A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum* for the 1976, then the 1983, and finally the 1992 edition. This quarter-century dialogue with Jim has profoundly shaped and sharpened my thinking.

Jim was constantly talking about his vision for the future. He was always on a quest for a better society. Like Thomas Jefferson, the great visionary who conceived of this nation, Jim Moffett invariably had his sights on the culture we *should* create. Jim's vision of *the universal schoolhouse* reminded us of Jefferson's original vision of the University of Virginia, an academic village paid for by the public where the best minds of the age would be gathered to talk about ideas. He did not want any religion to control the curriculum, nor did he believe in matriculation or graduation or degrees. Anyone from any walk of society could simply come and freely learn.

Jim also dared to look into metaphysics that were not part of the established paradigm. As he put it, it is now *au courant* to talk about paradigm shifts, but it is still taboo to create one. Jim reminded us that "the very founders of modern science—Newton, Bacon, and Descartes—were so steeped in the esoteric doctrine that half of what they said has been passed over in embarrassment by those moderns who do not realize that physics cannot be disembedded from metaphysics" (1991, p. 835). There is more to be discerned from the nonmaterialist world than we have dreamed of, and Jim never wanted us to forget it.

Jim's abstract for the talk he had planned to give at the NCTE Research Assembly on February 23, 1997 in Chicago began:

The state should no longer determine curriculum. Instead, public education should show learners how to customize each [one's] own curriculum by choosing what and how to learn from the total array of resources throughout a whole community, which becomes a universal schoolhouse for all ages and purposes and at all times.

What started 25 years ago with *Interaction* (1973) as a way to organize schools to allow for maximum student choice and ownership, became in Jim's vision a way to organize a society so maximum learning occurred. Because the whole community was the schoolhouse, learning could happen in any venue: offices, labs, farms, shops, factories. Opportunities for apprenticeship, internship, community service, job training, retraining, cross-age tutoring, and continuing adult education were automatically fostered. His vision was to decentralize teaching, so that literacy was a one-on-one, self-perpetuating culture that was not dependent on the professional, except in the role of setting up programs run by nonprofessionals. Like Jefferson, Jim wanted pedagogy to be thoroughly populist. Only *that* was consistent with a thorough-going democracy.

Jefferson wrote in one of his hundreds of letters to his colleague and antagonist John Adams, "I believe in the dream of the future more than the history of the past." Jim had the same belief. Like Jefferson, Moffett was a visionary and a prophet. Both turned their backs on institutions and power and returned to the land. Without the trail that Jim hacked out, I doubt we would have had by now the robust movement within the NCTE that's reflected in the *Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning* (JAEPL).

Jim's greatest contribution to our profession was his intuitive perception of the wider context in which any discussion must be couched. He illuminated: 1. the concept of writing as a revision of inner speech; 2. reading comprehension in the context of a broader connection with the world; 3. the rise of the Christian right as a manifestation of the nation's spiritual hunger; 4. the world of school in the broader vision of a society where school as a separate locale for learning does not exist; and 5. the universe of discourse in language in the context of the direct knowing that transcends words. Working with Jim was like following a dance partner whose right foot firmly kept the beat of the rhythm of teachers everywhere while his left was kicking wildly into outer space!

Whenever, in our profession, developments emerge that have integrity and cause learning to happen, you will find that Jim was there first. All during the dark days in the '70s when behavioral objectives dominated the curriculum, we were always heartened by the knowledge that somewhere in the world Jim Moffett was tirelessly urging us to resist this trivialization of learning. What he told us resonated deeply with our own experience as teachers and with our dreams for our students. He fearlessly forged ahead and also graciously watched our profession struggle to catch up with the sheer sanity of his vision.

It is hard to imagine wandering into the darkness of the future without his light to guide us. His death is an immense loss to our profession. I know I shall miss him very much. If there is a dimension in the cosmos where spirit transcends body and language, I'm sure Jim's consciousness is there communing with all of us teachers on this side of the dark veil that separates us. ☹

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Doubting and Believing: The Hermeneutics of Suspicion in Contexts of Faith

C. Jan Swearingen

Religious and cultural conservatism currently enjoys much press and some praise. In contrast, many corners of our intellectual and academic worlds promote what Stephen Carter (1993) has termed a "culture of disbelief." Current practices of teaching writing and interpretation in the academy exemplify this culture. Academics in several fields focus on unmasking hidden and illusory meanings, on revealing private personal pathologies and larger cultural wrongs. Some literary theorists openly recommend avoiding conviction and propose only hesitant, qualified modes of reasoning and writing lest conviction lead to dogmatism (Hartman, 1991). "The best lack all conviction; while the worst/ Are full of passionate intensity" (Yeats, 1986, p. 91).

The current academic "doubting game" (Elbow, 1986) is sustained by the practice of "interrogating" cultural values and paradigms. The doctrinaire quality of this belief system confronts students when they arrive at colleges and universities with diverse convictions that—despite their differences from one another—differ even more radically from the skepticism that is the required mode of thinking, reading, and writing in many universities' English curricula. Because the relationship between the life of the mind and the resources of belief has received so little attention in academic and scholarly circles, and because a diversity of cultural values and beliefs about learning are manifest among today's college students, I propose that it is time to renew our attention to the relationships among belief and knowledge, skepticism and learning, education and obligatory doubt.

Rightly and wrongly, students reject or are confused by academic pedagogies and scholarly goals that focus relentlessly on skepticism and adversarial debate. As writers and readers, as teachers of writing and ways of reading, how should we expand the repertoire of analytic methods and practices that we employ? How can we reintegrate the valuable rigors of the life of the mind with the ability to read with the eyes of faith? The renowned Marxist teacher and activist Paolo Freire, for example, was also a committed Jesuit missionary. Can we not continue to applaud his liberatory pedagogy and begin to remember the religious convictions that inspired his teaching? Peter Elbow (1986) has defended the "believing game" alongside and in dialectical relationship with the "doubting game" familiar to academicians, as a more comfortable starting point for many student

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readers and writers. Similarly, Mary Belenky and her colleagues (1986) noted that a certain loss of faith accompanied the entry into the college classroom culture of the working class women they studied. Many of the students, upon learning to reject received and previously unquestioned authority became for a time radical skeptics and individualists, “separated learners.” In Belenky’s account, some never recovered from this radical epistemological isolation, from the loss of faith which is also a loss of self.

Blind faith in religious or political doctrines should not be conflated with faith in oneself, one’s activities, and the formation of a self that ground education, writing, and reading for many teachers and students. Can we improve on the crude understanding of religious belief and conviction as somehow indelibly anti-intellectual that is, itself, too often an unexamined article of faith within the academy (Carter, 1993; Holmes, 1993; Wills, 1990)? Can we develop related insights that will help us dismantle the political dogmatism of the left and the right that within and outside the academy increasingly foreclose discussion of diverse views, even while claiming to defend diversity? I turn to a investigation of how we might begin to answer such questions.

Lead Us Not into Conclusion: The Academy’s Paradoxical Faith in Skepticism

Literary critic Gerald Graff (1990) defends “the culture wars” and propounds “teaching the conflicts.” Others ask whether recent critical theories—the hermeneutics of suspicion, deconstruction, and postmodernism—mean that the discovery and articulation of truth and meaning is no longer a valid aim of interpretation (Torgovnick, 1993). Should criticism and interpretation, the guiding forces behind the teaching of reading and writing, be so singularly devoted to questioning all bases of judgment and to a hermeneutics guided by suspicion of discovered or constructed meaning, indeed, of concluding anything at all? Concerns about the perils of negative dialectics, aimless deconstruction, and an unrestrained emphasis on abstract and analytic thought have been advanced by critics from unexpectedly different camps. Feminist scholars, postmodern theorists, and multiculturalists have converged on one point. For very different reasons they warn that outside of carefully defined purposes—such as criticism that is clearly directed at improved understanding—the relentless interrogation of received beliefs and the practices of skepticism, debate, and negative dialectic can lead scholars and students alike to become “expressionless, pitiless, unteachable . . . incapable of belief” (Wolf, 1984, p. 136). Like the separated learners that Belenky et al. (1986) characterize, such individuals in their radical skepticism can become alienated from the larger communities, including communities of belief, in which they might renegotiate themselves and their futures.

Further compounding the emphasis on doubt rather than on belief, the individual rather than the collective, the legacies of Marx and Freud have left us with a hermeneutics of suspicion, the habit of interpretive skepticism that questions any apparent or received meanings as possibly and even probably illusory. Marxian and Freudian theories guide practitioners in cultural studies, where approaches to race, class, and gender, alongside deconstructionist readings of texts, assume

that the culture, the author, or the reader have something deep to hide. The reader in these models of textual interpretation becomes the analyst of a situation that is assumed to be pathological from the onset. We have observed how easily such readings erode into victim narratives: stories of how an individual character or author or ethnic group was oppressed by an elitist culture, sadistic parent, or evil overlord. Freudian theories of individual identity and Marxist theories of cultural structure have, since early in this century, advanced the views that religion is delusory and narcotic, that belief is illusory, and that hope is naive.

These not-so-old hermeneutic habits die hard; the cultures of disbelief still outweigh the cultures of belief within the academy. But they are being countered in debates about academic personality styles, models of consciousness, ways of knowing, and ways of writing. Reappraisals of academic modes have in turn sparked renewed attention to the nature of argumentation, conflict, and controversy—extending the ongoing dialectic between controversy and dialogue within philosophy and philosophical hermeneutics (Maranhão, 1986; Swearingen, 1990). By the individualist measure of intellectual rigor, dialogue and reading for understanding are typically deemed “soft” and epistemologically incorrect. Why? Because notions of classroom dialogues and of the reading of literature as dialogic assume that there can be authentic exchanges between individuals, that there can be edifying discourses (Marino, 1993). Such models have been repeatedly questioned and even scorned in postmodern theory. Nonetheless, as an instrument of classroom learning and discussion, the dialogic paradigm is far more comfortable than debate and programmatic skepticism to many students, to many women in Western culture (Belenky et al., 1986), and to many non-Westerners (Gates, 1993; Ong, 1992; Said, 1991).

As the academy becomes increasingly multicultural and interdisciplinary, it is expanding and realigning its repertoire, and diversifying its models of thought, identity, ways of thinking, knowing, interpreting, meaning, and writing (Gates, 1993). Jerome Bruner (1986) observes that the Western educated self is only one among many possible “canonical images of selfhood” within as well as outside the academy (p. 130). The traditional Western individualist model of self and voice contrasts sharply with the social, collective phenomenology of knowledge, thought, and composition that many nontraditional students bring with them into today’s classrooms. Individuals from cultures where learning takes place in groups tacitly believe in themselves—and in their learning—partaking in a shared consciousness and pursuing a collectively acquired wisdom. Such learners believe themselves to be inheritors of a legacy rather than as forgers of new, original revolutionary thinking. These are not simply *nontraditional student* beliefs and practices; they are evidence of intellectual traditions that are entering into today’s academy and changing it. Even among the oldest Western traditions can be observed similar beliefs in collective knowledge alongside the more familiar and more emphasized paradigms of individual autonomy and analytic thought. Socrates’ “know thyself” came to mean “separate yourself from the Other” (Kierkegaard, 1966, p. 202). Socrates’ contemporary Epictetus (1962) understood the same enjoinder in an irreducibly collective sense: “Bid a singer in the Chorus ‘know thyself’ and will he not turn for the knowledge to the others, his fellows in the chorus, and to his harmony with them?” (3:14).

Alternatives to individualism and skepticism may be found in Western academic paradigms of Socratic dialogue (Kierkegaard's portrait of Socrates notwithstanding) and in hermeneutic practices directed at constructing collaborative meaning. These practices of thought and language have long emphasized interactional and collective models of mind, discourse, self, and meaning. However, these collaborative practices have often held a minority position in relation to the programmatic doubt and to the analytic modes that, since Descartes, have dominated the Western academy and its values.

Despite its reputation for spawning culture wars and promoting skepticism, the current multicultural academic setting can be particularly hospitable to dialogue and dialogical hermeneutics, ways of knowing and learning in the academy that have long provided alternatives and complements to skepticism, analytic dialectic, and doctrines of linguistic contingency (Gates, 1992). Truth-building modes of discourse have never been entirely absent from academic models; indeed, they illustrate that belief, and even faith, need not and should not be regarded reductively or as enemies of reason (Carter, 1993; Ong, 1991). Reading with the eyes of faith is an activity that secular Romantic aesthetics borrowed from Protestant hermeneutics in the late eighteenth century. The ability to read *with*, and *as*, is a believing game (Elbow, 1986) firmly grounded in literary aesthetics such as the Romantic poet Coleridge's notion that reading and appreciating poetry requires a willing suspension of disbelief, an edifying suspension of skepticism. Dialogue, thus understood, has long functioned as a classroom paradigm without diminishing or impeding the merits of skepticism and analysis. The academy's modes of thought and language can and should be renewed by rehabilitating a positive, constructive dialectical relationship between belief and dialogue, on the one hand, and the discourses of analysis and debate, on the other. Orchestrating diverse academic models could lead to intellectual multiculturalism in place of culture wars. If the academy's models were realigned to become less hostile to the worlds of belief, conviction, and reasoned action where most people spend most of their time, we might experience less difficulty, for example, in apologizing for or defending academic writing.

Reading Literature Through the Eyes of Faith Writing In Hopes of Becoming

Literary study is rapidly changing, both as an object of classroom and scholarly interpretation, and as a repertoire of models for classroom and scholarly discourses. How we teach reading and how we teach writing are firmly linked in this movement. As literary, social, and cultural studies mingle in a multicultural academic environment, reading with the eyes of faith—faith in what we will become and should envision—can perhaps become a more acceptable epistemology. Such reading, in turn, has the potential to create writers and writings that begin to generate new canons of self and knowledge.

Serious attention to literature as a guide to intellectual and moral development is a belief-guided interpretive practice as old as the English and German Romantic concept of the *bildungsroman*—the novel as a paradigm of character development. The notion of literature as model and guide to the development of

identity is assuming renewed importance in a multicultural academy striving to define common grounds and values among its diverse constituencies. Although recent literary theory and aesthetics have often emphasized literature's strategic indeterminacy and status as beguiling fiction, it has also been approached in many times and places as a vehicle for making cultural and personal meanings by both readers and characters. Through their stories and through adult models all cultures present children with "canonical images of selfhood" (Bruner, 1986, p. 130). In the first classrooms of modern Western democracies, literary study was defined as an equalizing curriculum—a set of models of character and voice that would be shared by all students.

In the classrooms of the first Western democracies literary study was defined as an equalizing resource for the formation of self. Recuperating this model of literature as a model for identity can help extend the academic selves and voices we already propound to larger and increasingly diverse college student constituencies. Approached as a source of images of self and as a representation of intellectual discourses, literature, and the talk about literature modeled by teachers, becomes more than mere fiction, more than a trivial diversion or belletristic entertainment, and more than a ruthless exercise in cynically dismantling meaning and authorial personality. Literature, and the teacher's modeling of talk about literature, can also assume the roles of supplements to identity, training grounds for thought, models for language, and sites for reviving belief.

An ancient defense of belief working in accord with intellect posited that intellectual activity is, and should be, faith seeking understanding, belief creating a space conducive to thought and insight: *credo ut intelligam*. Such a model presents faith—in a higher being, or God—and belief—in commonly held doctrines, concepts, and values—as working hand in hand with reason and the intellect. In the Prometheus and Faust legends it is faith—in the gods, in the shared, constructed, common values of tradition—that must temper the potential arrogance of unguided rationality and excessive anthropocentrism.

We need not persist in treating faith as blind and belief as a primitive age of innocence—as stages in a developmental continuum in which true advancement is marked by the abandonment of belief and superstition, and the triumph of pure rational analytic thought. Compulsory skepticism, promoted as an end in itself, is perceived by many students as mystifying and repressive by many inside as well as outside the academy (Gates, 1993; Murphy, 1993; Phelps, 1992). Doctrinaire skepticism should continue to be tempered by the recuperation of belief-grounded learning based on collective social values. As this happens, the roles played by character, speaker, and author in literary study will be illuminated by new lights and seen through new lenses. Reprisals of the relationships among belief, collective social values, and the many roles of character, speaker, and author that we find in literary representations can help in the process. Recent pedagogical applications of this defense of skepticism have been challenged on the grounds that denying epistemological and social agency to groups who have long been marginalized is hardly an acceptable academic purpose (Gates, 1993; Murphy, 1993; Phelps, 1992). As writers, as readers, and as characters in recent literature, women and minorities seek to be more in the picture, more in the text, and more part of the discussion, not less so.

Alternative models of metacognitive and metalinguistic self-consciousness are often only implicit in cultures and literatures. Of the priestess's voice that speaks out of and to a collective culture, Christa Wolf's (1984) Cassandra says, "We have no name for what spoke out of me" (p.107). Western philosophy and language theory have made names for what speaks: explicit, mandatory vehicles of thought and instruction. The Western separated self is able to refer explicitly to *my* identity, *my* position, but it is becoming increasingly clear in cross-cultural studies of identity and intellect that this self is only one among a number of possible selves, voices, and self images. The proximal learning accomplished by identifying with models that has been observed in early childhood development is true of identifying with literary characters and with teachers as well. Classical rhetorics, in their own multicultural milieus, were well aware of this when they emphasized imitation and mimesis as primary vehicles for learning ways of thinking, ways of speaking, ways of reading, and ways of writing. Jerome Bruner (1986) observes, "An *Anlage* of metacognition is present as early as the eighteenth month of life. How much and in what form it develops will depend upon the demands of the culture in which one lives—represented by particular others one encounters and by some notion of generalized other that one forms" (p. 67). Studies of proximal learning, identity formation, belief, and faith enhance a growing understanding that selfhood and agency are best developed—by many individuals in many different cultures—from within the circles of community and belief, contexts that should never be forcibly removed.

What uses can the academy make of these insights drawn from cross cultural studies of development? The academy has already begun to benefit from an expanded repertoire of models of selfhood, identity, and intellect as it becomes increasingly multicultural. However, an overly literal-minded, reductive panoply of canonical selves and identities—*women*, *Black/African/African American*, *Asian*, or, all lumped together, *nontraditional*—has already produced a fissured politics of identity that is troublingly conducive to a "self-esteem school of pedagogy, a view of education as a sort of twelve-step program for recovery" (Gates, 1992, p. 36). Edward Said (1991) warns against the dangers of reductive essentialism along similar lines. "To say that women should read mainly women's literature, that Blacks should study and perfect only Black techniques of understanding and interpretation, that Arabs and Muslims should return to the Holy Book for all knowledge and wisdom is the inverse of saying along with Carlyle and Gobineau that all the lesser races must retain their inferior status in the world" (p. 17). Newly formed cultural identities that are being shaped within revised academic curricula have been defended primarily on the grounds that they promote belief in oneself, defined as self-esteem. This basis for curricular revision confuses the strong evidence that school achievement is causally related to self esteem with the paucity of evidence that self esteem is related to school achievement. "When Laotian students in California ace their exams it isn't because the curriculum reinforces a rich sense of their Laotian cultural heritage" (Gates, 1992, p. 36). The development of new curricula in writing and literature should be given goals in addition to self-esteem. Multicultural curricular reform needs no further defense, but it begs for orchestration.

Libretto for a New Canon

Proponents of various writing pedagogies, critical thinking models, and literary critical theories have recently engaged in disputes concerning agency, epistemology, and the nature and value of controversy within the academy (Graff, 1990; Holmes, 1993; Marino, 1993). This is potentially refreshing and illuminating, a reminder that teaching the conflicts, after all, is hardly a new idea. Observing contrasts, differences, and dialectical oppositions has long been a staple of Western academic practice, especially in the liberal arts and philosophy. With this in mind, I invite a reconsideration of how the commonplaces of ancient rhetoric were regarded as artificial but useful common grounds for discussing and debating wildly disparate materials, issues, and beliefs. Reappraising the rhetorical commonplaces of classical rhetoric included, however, not just difference and contrast, but similarity and comparison, not just dialectic understood as opposing propositions, but dialectic understood as dialogical truth seeking. The value of common places—in the larger cultural sense—cannot be underestimated in today's academy. The commonplaces of antiquity can help nurture this belief. They are ancient and were at their inception understood as artificial; they have already proven themselves in the long test of time, amid the constantly shifting cultures and languages of the academy.

Humanistic education has since the time of the first rhetorical commonplaces been based on the belief that learning critical thought through skepticism and debate prepares individuals to prove, perfect, and defend their views and beliefs in an ongoing dialectical examination. John Henry Cardinal Newman's 19th century essay, "The Idea of a University" (1982), extended this concept for one of the first times in modern times to incorporate the reading of modern literatures as part of a larger process of criticism directed at humanistic understanding throughout the university. Newman's discussion is a welcome reminder that humanistic study and education have been considered cultural criticism for well over a century. Criticism should be taught and learned, he proposes, through reading literature as itself a criticism of culture. The canonical literary authors many would dispense with today—Dickens, Eliot, Twain, Thoreau—were in their own time political activists, critics outside the academy of the dominant culture that the academy in their day did not address. Newman and others defended the study of the literature of diverse cultures within the academy as a way of reinstating humanism's role as cultural criticism that would promote values—beliefs about what it is to be human—from within an academy that had become desiccated by other kinds of criticism, science, and philology.

The political and ethical beliefs defended in Newman's "Idea of a University" clearly hearken back to his classical training but are adapted to modern goals. For a multicultural (as we say today) society to exist, both differences and commonalities among peoples must be recognized. Education should seek to re-comprehend the diversity of human cultures in order to promote a belief in tolerance and respect. And it should establish as a basic premise—a fundamental intellectual axiom and belief—that tolerance and respect are impossible without knowledge (Gates, 1992, p. 37). Said (1991) defines this double purpose of the academy as a dialectic in which discovery is directed at transformation: "In the

joint discovery of self and other, it is the role of the academy to transform what might be conflict, or contest, or assertion into reconciliation, mutuality, recognition, creative interaction" (pp. 17–18). These are noble, decidedly attractive, familiar, and even pious goals. They are not, however, goals or activities that conform to today's paradigms of academic skepticism and programmatic doubt. On what basis can reconciliation, mutuality, recognition, and creative interaction be established as common ground in the midst of contemporary literary and epistemological theories that regard common ground and its pursuit as politically outdated and ethically incorrect? The most recent movement in the academy, observed by many with dismay, is a concerted movement, often under the aegis of multiculturalism and teaching the conflicts, toward balkanizing academic disciplines and cultures into smaller and smaller warring factions.

Is there room in the decidedly Western elite civic and academic tradition for both forging and discovering the common beliefs on which goals like mutuality and creative interaction can be pursued? I hope we can begin to ask this question without apology. What does it mean to read with the eyes of faith—in this sense—in the academy, and what can the academy teach the eyes of faith? Liberal arts humanism and a civic-minded academy have often manifested a certain tension between the roles of paragon and gadfly, exemplar and cultural critic, between the aspirations to teach creativity and originality and the responsibility to define standards of taste and correctness (White, 1985). Similarly, the academy and culture alike have tolerated a commendable range of styles and goals among writers, artists, and critics, some of whom define themselves as makers and readers of literary art and others who define themselves as exponents of particular political agendas. I advocate the study and production of literary and critical writing that directly addresses social issues as well as that which does not. However, current practice seems to be a bit more polarized and doctrinaire. Some critical voices teach partisan political commentary; in other quarters critical and theoretical equivocation has led some of the best and brightest critical minds to retreat from commitment to specific positions, and to refrain from morally based action on theoretical grounds. "It is as if someone in a position of power were to issue a policy statement focusing solely on the difficulties of arriving at a policy or to decline doing anything because any action, might, in certain instances, be doctrinaire" (Torgovnick, 1993, p. 54).

Where Marxist cultural critics such as Gerald Graff have erred in confusing the *description* of partisan, reductive, and polarized academic theories with teaching to *theorize* (Phelps, 1992), cautious deconstructionists such as Geoffrey Hartman (1991) err with similar effect by creating a false dichotomy between deconstruction and political or engaged criticism, as if to say that these two very different activities cannot occupy the same academic space. Graff's (1990) practice exemplifies what Hartman (1991) thinks of as theoretical fundamentalism.

I have proposed that a larger, dialectical relationship can be resuscitated to help redefine such oppositions, a double vision of their nature and value. One less reductive, less polarized alternative resides in the model of the mind as spirit, and of belief as the result of reasoned conviction (Kinneavy, 1987). Belief and faith-sustaining practices of knowing, learning, and teaching provide antidotes to overly psychologized notions of writing and textual interpretation

as inevitably fragmentary, eternally incomplete, merely personal, and exclusively therapeutic. Intellectual practices guided by belief, for example, enhance the ability to comprehend diversity as a unity, just as the quest for difference inevitably succeeds. The most dispassionate analysis, Kierkegaard and for that matter Plato long ago recognized, is in the end always directed by interests and purposes, passions and beliefs. Kierkegaard's deliberately personal forms of philosophizing (Mackey, 1971) were designed to provide instructive, edifying examples of philosophy as comprising multiple genres and fostering tolerance for many varieties of self while still retaining a common language and common goals. One of his titles, *Either/Or*, emphasizes that we choose to believe, in different situations and with different purposes, in the disjunctive *either* or the potentially less divisive conjunction, *or*.

Skepticism, criticism, and debate, regardless of the value that is assigned them by their diverse reformers and adversaries, remain distinctly Western. Definitive of academic discourse, these modes of knowing and speaking evolved from agonistic male-to-male rhetorical traditions within the academy and on the platforms of public political debate (Ong, 1992; Wills, 1990). It is increasingly clear that debate in this *liberal* and *humane* tradition has been sanctioned primarily for and by those in positions of power (Holmes, 1993). Women and minorities have until recently not been permitted to dispute, to debate, or even to speak on the public platform. Oddly enough, through similar rules of enfranchisement, particularly in the U.S. where church and state are so rigorously segregated, religion has often been excluded from public debate and indeed has been cast as the enemy and not as the ally of education, liberal humanism, and the pursuit of knowledge (Carter, 1993; Holmes, 1993; Wills, 1990).

It is a great irony that the denunciation of secular humanism currently propounded by the religious right necessarily appeals to the larger humanist value of open public debate. The irony is only compounded by a doctrinaire denunciation of any and all religion in the public place by academicians who want their doctrines of culture, society, and identity to receive equal time not only in the academy but in the public sphere as well. The conventions—the values and the beliefs—that govern the public presence and power of alternative voices is slowly changing. Let us continue to broaden the bases of tolerance and understanding for the many kinds of voices that are now seeking to sing together, to forge common values out of newly discovered common beliefs, and together make just a few simple leaps of faith. ☺

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Active Receptivity

The Positive, *Mindful* Flow of Mental Energy

Terri G. Pullen

In order to demonstrate two points—what energy following attention means and what the physical sensation of being truly still and focused feels like—I taught the students in my composition classroom how to use make-shift pendulums (Brande 1934/1981). As a class, we had been struggling over an idea in a particular essay. What William Stafford called “just plain receptivity” (1979/1992) was actually not so simple a concept to demonstrate without confusing the idea with the *bolt-from-the-blue* school of invention. The pendulum exercise seemed an appropriate way to demonstrate this activity.

Crystal, a talented and curious premed student, was so intrigued by the exercise that she cornered one of her biology professors in an attempt to understand physiologically how what she had experienced was possible. How can a pendulum swing in the intended direction if the hand holding it is still? The answer was easy, according to the biology professor: Electric impulses in the brain communicate very subtly with the skin, and eventually, enough energy is communicated to the string through the hand that the ring or key on the end begins to swing in the *intended* direction. Students were amazed that they could make the pendulum swing along a bull’s-eye pattern I had drawn for them on paper. With their minds they could actually trace the circle and the cross-hair design before them. There was no trick, and this exercise required no special talent. Everyone was able to swing the pendulum again and again.

I had tried this exercise for the first time, and because of no particular precedence for such a thing in classroom pedagogy, I was more than a bit unsure. Despite my initial concerns, however, I considered the exercise to be a huge success: I had demonstrated what I felt were essential principles about focusing before writing through experientially accessing sensations characteristic of an active state of receptivity. I felt that I had created an important experience for myself and my students.

Yet, there was more to come from this exercise. An unusual question from Crystal followed close on the heels of the pendulum exercise. “Why are you in composition?” she asked. In the pause, I entertained the fear that the exercise had caused a breach and in some way had been too New Age. Worse, I found that I had no answer to what sounded like a rather simple question. But the pull of something—that felt sense—was too strong. I decided to pursue the question. As for Crystal, I saw no contention in her face. Instead, I sensed she was so

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impressed by the exercise that she had ultimately concluded I was a misplaced soul of sorts. Her biology professor failed to explain this incident away neatly. Instead, Crystal seemed even more intrigued by the idea that this physiological principle could demonstrate something about writing. I ran the mental gauntlet of responses before speaking, responses ranging from the initial canned phrases about the importance of communicating successfully to silence. And it was in that silence that I finally had to surrender to the idea that Crystal was asking me a question that it was time for me to answer.

"I don't know, Crystal. Why do you ask?"

"Well," she paused, "it's just that you're always talking about something else . . . psychology, medicine, Eastern philosophy, art. . . . We are always working on writing, but it's never *just* about writing." Just as the pendulum demonstrated active receptivity and helped us all to focus, Crystal's inquiry did the same for me as I set about answering the question that in some way has come to frame every day I enter the classroom. What was it I was trying to understand through incorporating this array of perspectives into my classroom approach? Crystal's question drew into focus the fact that I was attempting to define for myself a sense of personal vision in my relationship to the composition classroom, a sense of vision that would privilege the exploration of composition as a learning act, with a particular interest in the mind states involved in actualizing more and more of our potential. I was seeking to know more about the mind states we all employ as we compose knowledge and manifest this exploration in its various forms. My answer to Crystal's question was eventually this: I was in composition because I *could* bring into play all of these seemingly divergent areas, all toward the purpose of studying in some way this incredible, dynamic use of energy that we rather nonchalantly encapsulate in the word *thinking*.

Since Crystal's question, every day in the classroom seems to be a variation on this theme. My goal is to understand thinking as the flow of energy and attention. And, as a teacher, I seek every day to understand better the patterns that are most conducive to the positive flow of this mental energy. How can I beneficially work with the subtle energies demonstrated by the pendulum? How do I draw into play this effective, focused, engaged thinking? How do I create an appropriate environment for this active receptivity? Obviously, I continue to explore any avenue that might inform my responses and answers to these questions. In my search, I have found one researcher in particular who has served as an amazing springboard into constellations of beneficial areas of inquiry, all in some way focusing on this idea of understanding and cultivating the most active and beneficial mind sets.

Research psychologist Ellen J. Langer (1989) has investigated this state of active receptivity, which she terms *mindfulness*, as well as its counterpart, *mindlessness*. The latter seems the most prevalent as well as the easier one to define. According to Langer, mindlessness is the result of limiting mind sets or "premature cognitive commitments" (p. 19) that we allow to rule our thinking, resulting in ineffective emotional and behavioral patterns. Langer names the prevalent patterns of mindlessness: categories, automatic behaviors, and actions based on a single perspective. Categories that trap us are those from our pasts on which we over-rely. Categories such as young/old, success/failure, and so on represent some

of the limiting pairs. Overuse leads us to forget these are only constructs and are therefore open to question. Automatic behaviors are repetitive behaviors that we indulge in to the point of negative automaticity. These need not be simple tasks, either, and Langer points out that complex skills such as reading and writing are not immune to this negative repetition. Finally, actions based on a single perspective or a recipe approach to thinking involve solving a problem from a prelearned perspective, again forgetting that variations can be both necessary and desirable.

But rarely is it simply enough to create a typology of problems. Langer goes deeper into persistent, destructive beliefs that underlie these inefficient behaviors. Apparently, on a more intuitive level, we are initiated early into constraining beliefs. First, we learn that our resources are limited, and, as a result, we assume we are caught within categories and are blocked from seeing the world as dynamic in nature. In a sense, we are controlled by a focus on limitations as opposed to an awareness of alternatives that could widen the horizon of problem-solving. This perspective mandates that energy as an end is not renewable, and therefore, must be conserved from the outset. This conservation of energy leads to the second set of problematic beliefs, those of entropy and linear time. The belief that energy must be conserved is based on the idea that our limited energy resources are nonrenewable and will eventually run out. This assumed progression toward entropy is encased in linear time as a concept. As a result of these beliefs, we operate on the expectation that events will occur in a neat progression and when events do not fit, frustration sets in. Ironically, this frustration leads to a greater waste of energy and is rather inefficient by most standards.

What is important about these ideas is how they relate to our educational environments and behaviors within those contexts. Obviously, if mindlessness permeates all areas of life, our classrooms then are no exception. According to Langer, our early education contributes significantly to mindlessness (1989). The educational focus on outcome instead of process allows the success/failure dichotomy to rule our perspective as we are evaluated on the product. Furthermore, this education reinforces the beliefs in linear, limited time frames, and nonrenewable energy. This educational view also stipulates that since energy is limited, we must disregard learning opportunities that might not have a direct or immediate bearing on the impending outcome.

Conversely, mindfulness is a more flexible mind set marked by the perspective that change is a positive inevitability. This positive, more energy-efficient mind set involves the perpetual creation and refinement of new categories based on continuous labeling and relabeling that requires consistent reflection on ideas and experiences. The categories themselves are not inherently negative; instead, it is the over-extension of these categories that can represent mindlessness. However, if categories are used in an exploratory sense, *re-creation* becomes *recreation*. By breaking down categories into more precise distinctions, we can begin to find new openings in our work. As a result, categories are *not* viewed as limitations or unquestionable boundaries; rather, categories represent opportunities to raise questions and challenge demarcations that might otherwise have been perceived as limitations. This positive mind set is marked by a sense of discov-

ery, a directed playfulness that brings with it renewed focus and energy. This part of the dynamic requires us to be attentive and engaged. But before discovery can occur, mindfulness also involves an openness to new information. Such openness creates the opportunity for discovery and adds to the dynamic of situation-monitoring and category-refinement. Again, discovery brings with it personal involvement, investment, and, consequently, more energy.

Langer briefly notes that her collage of information concerning mindfulness parallels three large areas of inquiry into creating and sustaining high-vibrational contexts for personal energy and its manifestations: current studies in physics, focusing on refinements concerning our ideas of energy, time, and relational dynamics; creativity studies, emphasizing questions as to the role and development of intuition and contexts for innovative thinking; and Eastern philosophy and religion, forefronting meditation, visualization, and reassessment. Though Langer taken alone represents a valuable resource for re-envisioning classroom design and pedagogy, the directions she indicates for further study collectively constitute nothing short of a gold mine on two levels. From New Physics and creativity studies, we can draw positive and challenging ways in which we can re-envision the composition classroom dynamic. Additionally, methods from Eastern philosophy represent immediate and practical applications for helping our students to focus and center their energies around the tasks at hand.

Quantum physics offers one of the richest veins for new metaphors through which we can define consciousness, or the animating energy of our beings and environments. Primarily, these insights allow us to conceptualize thinking as patterns of energy, vibrating in various frequencies with our environments instead of mere machinations of the brain. Stanislav Grof (1993) recognizes the implications of the shift away from Newtonian science toward a sense of the quantum field theory of energy:

Up to now, Newtonian science has been responsible for creating a very limited view of human beings and their potential. . . . [Our mental functions] are limited to taking in information from our sensory organs, storing it in our "mental computer banks," and then perhaps recombining sensory data to create something new. . . .

Instead of there being discrete objects and empty spaces between them the entire universe is seen as one continuous field of varying density. . . .

Now we have a universe that is an infinitely complex system of vibratory phenomena rather than an agglomerate of Newtonian objects. These vibratory systems have properties and possibilities undreamed of in Newtonian science. (pp. 5-7)

In *The Quantum Self*, Danah Zohar (1990) demonstrates that this sense of "vibratory systems" has already established a stronghold in how we metaphorically represent the energy patterns of our thoughts: "Consciousness is, in its essence, relational, and it can arise only where at least two things come together" (p. 104). This action of coming together automatically creates the sense of movement, of momentum where the two spin, change each other in the process and attract other

elements into the dynamic. This description of the new vision of consciousness closely parallels the one noted by Langer as the positive readiness to new information and multiple perspectives in a mindful state.

What's more, this idea parallels the creative tension between two entities that is one of the major features characterizing creative persons and creative mind sets. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) notes ten sets of "apparently antithetical traits" that in fact exist in a "dialectical tension" time after time in the personalities of those considered to be innovative or creative. For example, Csikszentmihalyi notes that such persons often exude a sense of physical endurance though they are frequently at rest or sleeping for long periods of time. The distinction to be made here, according to Csikszentmihalyi, is that

the energy of these people is internally generated and is due more to their focused minds than the superiority of their genes. . . the important thing is that the energy is under their own control—it is not controlled by the calendar, the clock, an external schedule. (p. 58)

In this sense, the entropy that Langer views as a negative factor is transformed into a natural downtime or creative dormancy period in the dynamic, a part of the cycle that is similar to a change in density in the continuous field of energy. This perspective on entropy as downtime is necessarily based on the perspective that energy is a renewable resource, and that the periods of lesser creative density are opportunities to recharge.

Other tensions that are of interest here are playfulness/discipline, fantasy or imagination/reality, extroversion/introversion, masculine/feminine, and suffering/enjoyment. At first, these tensions sound uncomfortably like the categories Langer warns against; however, in his descriptions, Csikszentmihalyi depicts a circular, dynamic stance rather than an oppositional, either/or perspective. As a result, these tensions support not the constraining categories of mindlessness, but the constant re-creation that Langer supports as part of the positive, mindful direction of thought energy. According to Langer, categories can be positive entities when they are used not as limitations but opportunities to make further distinctions. Each turn to the polarity is a checkpoint in the cycle and each represents a mutually renewing counterpart for the other.

Renewal is exactly the basis on which the third aspect that Langer notes comes most directly and practically into play. Eastern philosophy and methods are inundating the West on an unprecedented scale, affecting everything from our views on medicine and aging, to relaxation and stress management and performance enhancement in any activity. All these areas have one thing in common—the emphasis on the mind/body relationship, a concept difficult to express in Western terms because the two have so long been dichotomized.

Though Langer is hesitant to recognize more fully the connections between her research and certain Eastern concepts, her conceptualization of mindfulness directly relates to the Buddhist practice of *Vipassana*, or mindfulness meditation. In this practice, the meditator consciously detaches from thoughts as they pass through the mind during the meditation experience. Ultimately, meditation

exercises are meant to demonstrate the impermanence of mental states and thereby allow the meditator to recognize greater distinctions and relativity within the physical world experience. This rejection of solidity and permanence is what connects *Vipassana* practice with the principles of physics, according to Buddhist Master Mohnyin Sayadaw (1996):

By discarding the concept of solidity, scientists have analyzed all matter into more than 100 elements. Ultimately, even these elements and atoms when examined become waves of energy in largely empty space. The particles/waves are always dynamic so that modern physics points to the basic impermanent and soulless nature of all matter. (p. 196)

Vipassana practice involves starting with a close observation of everyday physical movement in order to understand these actions as mind/body energy in an ever-changing dynamic relationship. Sayadaw describes this process:

[E]ach moment old “groups” of energy-physical matter arise and vanish yielding place to new ones. . . . Moving his hand from one position to another *again and again* he contemplates the impermanence of form and sensation. In the ultimate sense the diffusion (the process of oscillation or vibration born of mental activity) gives the appearance of a hand moving. (p. 200)

Many other sources springing from Eastern traditions currently exist, holding as a common thread this emphasis on a greater understanding of mind/body energy in order to counter current inefficient, ingrained assumptions concerning limited energy resources, linear time, and impending entropy. Handbooks and videotapes abound for those concerned with discovering the *ki* or *chi* energy, this unlimited, renewable life-force animating us all. Many of these sources attempt to counter the Western mind/body division for the sake of health and performance enhancement. For example, Chungliang Al Huang and Jerry Lynch (1992), in *Thinking Body, Dancing Mind*, offer alternatives to the destructive mind set that the fracture between mind and body creates: “If you soften and relax your mental approach to athletics, . . . you reduce the anxiety, tension and stress that could inhibit your success. . . . Relax in order to max” (p. 46). Huang and Lynch reveal ways in which we can continually renew mind/body energy, and, intrinsically, that renewal involves rejecting the concept of entropy as the end of energy and de-emphasizing linear time and progression. These writers stress repeatedly the importance of self-aware, relaxed participation in the process, the role of intuition, and a circular, rather than linear, progression toward a goal.

By incorporating these and related ideas, are we suggesting the possibility of a complete restructuring of classroom experiences? The goal here is to augment and refine our implementations of current methods, not to displace them. These ideas can serve as theoretical underpinnings that help us extend and invigorate approaches already in place. For example, on an immediate level, we can help our students become mindfully present in the classroom with activities

similar to the pendulum exercise as we help our students to center and focus. Who among us has not wished for a way to help a student through a case of writing trepidation?

Such fears are not specific to writing and Huang and Lynch present numerous "relax and max" meditations for performance enhancement that are applicable to any situation. One such meditation involves flooding the mind with all sorts of worries and fears, recognizing them, and then turning to a focusing meditation that requires one to visualize a simple action—peace and calm in on the inhalation, tension and anxiety out on the exhalation. By simply implementing this meditation in a classroom context, we demonstrate to students that they indeed have a source of empowerment readily available. Similar meditations emphasizing centering or regaining an equilibrium in the mind/body dynamic demonstrate that one can also become much more tolerant of what initially is perceived as adversity and remain more effective during periods of stress and distraction. Centering recognizes the cyclical nature of our existence. Centering meditations where one breathes, relaxes, and then visualizes pro-active instead of reactive behavior help to create positive, mindful behaviors.

Furthermore, the efficiency of these meditations can be augmented with a layperson's knowledge of acupressure points. For example, Michael Reed Gach (1990) demonstrates a cycle of point stimulations for the head and neck area that are designed to increase memory and concentration, and this session is quick, unintrusive, and perfectly suited to a classroom setting. By massaging the *Gates of Consciousness* at the base of the skull and the *Heavenly Pillar* one inch below, students can relieve neck and shoulder tension while increasing circulation in the brainstem area. The *Sun Point* at the temples and the *One Hundred Meeting Point* just before the hollow at the top of the skull increase memory and concentration. All points should receive a firm but gentle pressure for the best effects. And if one is short on time, simply pressing on the *Third Eye Point* in the center of the forehead at the indentation above the nose "clears the mind and uplifts the spirit" (p. 163).

These meditations can be important because they demonstrate to students an efficient means of accessing a mindful state. Immediately students can become positively self-aware. This self-awareness need not be merely a backdrop for classroom activities; it can also be an integral part of assignment design. Journal activities currently in place can be used to encourage an engaged state during the writing process. Students can use these writings as an opportunity to describe and monitor their thinking processes, record images, and recognize lateral ideas as they occur and change the process. Also, I have found it valuable to build self-awareness through the process journal, a running log in which students record their thinking about a particular writing assignment. As a result, I have a record of the students' particular energy patterns during composition upon which we can all reflect.

Just as we can attune to our students' energy patterns during a single task, we can use the ideas from quantum physics and creativity studies to enhance our thinking about sequencing assignments within broader frameworks such as portfolio-based course design. This represents another point to which Langer again contributes directly. The portfolio is a perfect vehicle to recognize the students'

work for the course as a continuous field of energy made up of various densities. Also important to the portfolio implementation is this idea that the positive use of periods of entropy can actually serve to renew energy.

Downtime can be overtly recognized as a range of energy within this field, one which is serving a particular purpose in the cycle as opposed to the blank or empty space it is often viewed as being. As Langer points out, recognizing periods of downtime can reduce the incidence of overload and burnout, two features of an over-adherence to a linear mind set and repetition. By allowing portfolios to represent a variety of tasks of varying density in terms of energy and attention required, we can deepen the portfolio experience with creative tensions and task switching between various writing-to-learn activities as well as within the drafting process. In this way we satisfy the need for both structure and variety with a greater sense of balance. Variety, according to Langer, allows us the renewal of energy that is often called a second wind as we briefly shift focus. It is important to remember that doing so does not take us off task; instead, it allows us to participate in the same dynamic at a different vibratory intensity in another aspect of the portfolio. This shift in focus can renew energy and this renewal hedges energy lags and overall burnout, and if planned carefully, the task shifted to can possibly be exactly the sort of lateral shift/new idea creative tension so highly valued as a part of creative behaviors.

Through an acquaintance with Langer's ideas and continual study in these related areas, we can build for ourselves a fountain of energy with which we can renew ourselves and our pedagogies. With more exposure to studies in consciousness and creativity, and their subsequent applications in the classroom, we can perhaps more readily assure that we are having a greater impact on our students' energy levels and thinking patterns. We have tremendous resources at our disposal to better insure that we can demonstrate thinking as movement of energy and a positive avenue of change in an ever-shifting, synergetic fashion.

As for the rewards of active receptivity and greater awareness, suffice it to say that no one is immune to this energy, whether the vibration is negative or positive. Fortunately, I am finding that the positive mind set seems not so hard won, for these and other methods are progressively becoming options in the classroom on a more consistent basis. Here is a recent example:

It was another Georgia day of drenching rain in January. Students were grumpy and distracted. Some sighed. Others slumped in their chairs. I decided to guide them in a breathing exercise, invited them to visualize a mental piece of paper and pencil and asked them to see themselves writing all their worries and concerns on the page. Then we created the "mental trash can," wadded up the paper and threw those distractions away. I guided them back to an awareness of their breathing, and as they opened their eyes, their presence filled the room around me.

"How do you feel now?" I asked.

I was met with smiles.

"Good." I answered. "Welcome back! I am so glad to have you here. Now we can begin" ☺

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Julia Kristeva and the Psychological Dynamics of Writing

Janet M. Ellerby

By tapping into latent emotional dynamics, Julia Kristeva's poststructuralist psychology offers a provocative means to modify the emphasis of academic discourse on cognitive order.

Cognitive psychology has provided us with protocols and processing models that examine the diverse ways writers solve problems. Recent sociocognitive orientations continue to identify observation-based discourse patterns that writers use to construct meaning within "the broader context of a social and cultural context, of language, of discourse conventions" (Flower, 1994, p. 52). With sophisticated conceptual maps and experimental savvy, sociocognitivists adeptly investigate interacting subprocesses in constructing negotiated meaning. Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) demonstrate with precision that "microlevel studies of . . . *individual processes*, can also be interpreted (from the macrolevel) as *communicative acts within a discursive network or system*" (p. ix). Moving beyond the controversy over the value of these findings, I would like to counterpose organized sociocognitive psychology with the poststructuralist psychology of Kristeva.

Most humanists believe that writers are more than serial processors. James Berlin (1988) argues persuasively for a social-epistemic rhetoric, within which language is recognized as a "social phenomenon that is a product of a particular historical moment" (p. 488). Berlin critiques the attention cognitivists have paid to mapping the heuristics of writing while regarding the mind as a straightforward "set of structures that performs in a rational manner, adjusting and reordering functions in the service of the goals of the individual" (p. 482). Berlin is right to see that "[t]here is no universal, eternal, and authentic self"; instead, "[t]he self is always a creation of a particular historical and cultural moment" (p. 489).

Clearly we create meaning through a complex synthesis of history, culture, and intellect. However, by widening our investigations to psychoanalysis, those of us who theorize about and teach composition may come to understand more fully that writing emanates not only from the intellect and ideological situatedness, but also from deep-seated emotions and fantasies. Writing theorists need to take a more comprehensive look at the ways personal casting and emotional tonality influence writing. Kristeva's reconfiguration of symbolic discourse offers us one provocative way to look beyond cognitive, sociocognitive, and social epistemic boundaries to new ways of understanding the mysteries of composing.

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Kristeva critiques the concept of *language* as a monolithic structure, focusing on a *speaking subject* that is divided, decentered, heterogeneous. As a member of the *Tel Quel* group, a political circle of emerging poststructuralists in 1960s Paris and publishing in the journal *Tel Quel*, Kristeva came to an understanding "of writing (*écriture*) as *production*, not representation" (as cited in Moi, 1986, p. 4). Kristeva observes: "[W]e can adopt the term of *writing* when it concerns a text seen as production, in order to distinguish it from the concept of . . . 'speech'" (1986c, p. 86). Writing theorists recognize that writing is a complex signifying *process* rather than a monolithic *system*. However, Kristeva helps us recognize the subject who writes, who produces text, not only as a social agent and a social product, but also as a psychologically complex subject with rebellious impulses—a *writing subject* who consciously and unconsciously evades rubrics, intentionally and unintentionally disrupts and destroys them.

Before postmodernism catapulted into intellectual parlance, we believed the autonomous individual was an intentional author of his or her words. Writers, we thought, could represent their experience—could know it and express it truthfully. Then, as we assimilated Freud's and Lacan's theories of the unconscious—that unknowable site harboring our most trenchant desires, fantasies, and self-projections—we established that not only does the subject become plural, indeterminate, even illusionary, but the *writing subject* also loses autonomy and intention. Writers are no longer the captains of their souls.

Herein lies my interest, within the situated, intuitive process of the *writing subject*. To act responsibly on our professional truism that all meaning is contextual, we might take seriously Kristeva's idea of *intertextuality*, a complex interpenetration of drives, emotions, ideology, politics, and culture. According to Kristeva, a writer's consciously comprehended and intended meaning determines only a part of this complex intertextuality (Morris, 1993, p. 138). Kristeva asserts, "Writing is upheld not by the subject of understanding, but by a divided subject, even a pluralized subject, that occupies . . . permutable, multiple and even mobile places," (1980, p. 111) as the unconscious attempts continuously to disrupt the writer's attempt to control meaning. Repressed feeling is *condensed* in language, and words suddenly become uncontrollably loaded with ambiguity and emotion. What we write is rarely what we mean. Rather than relying on the social-epistemic model that locates the writer in a dialectic between time and culture, or on the sociocognitivist model that posits consistent structures of the mind and equates goal-directed writing with technical rationality, we might recognize the irrational, the unrehearsed, and the unresolved. The writer unconsciously rejects and disrupts convention, hence limiting forms of discourse—all as a normal part of writing.

This theory, then, suggests that within the writer, there is a continuous tension between repressive social control and disruptive excess. Foucault (1973), for example, has demonstrated how language functions repressively by putting us in our place within the conceptual order, but he also notes how language also contains an excess of meaning that constantly threatens to disrupt defined identities and expose the fiction of imposed truths. To explore the revolutionary potential of an excess of meaning, we might eschew academic conventions and experiment with a discourse that refuses to settle into unitary meaning, a discourse that

destabilizes its repressive foundations.

Kristeva revises Lacan's distinction between the imaginary and symbolic into a distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic. The interaction between these two processes constitutes the signifying process from which writing emanates. To explain the semiotic, Kristeva appropriates the term *chora* from Plato who refers to it as "an invisible and formless being which . . . partakes of the intelligible, and is most incomprehensible" (as cited in Moi, 1985, p. 161). Kristeva (1984) redefines the *chora* as a provisional articulation that is neither a model nor a copy, but linked to the preOedipal rhythms of heartbeat and pulse, dark and light, hot and cold, food and feces (chap. 2).

Kristeva (1984) follows Lacan in positing the "mirror phase" as the first step that "permit[s] the constitution of objects detached from the semiotic *chora*" (p. 46), and the Oedipal phase as the period in which the process of splitting is fully accomplished. Once the subject has entered into the symbolic order of language, the *chora* will be repressed and will be perceived not as language, but as "pulsional pressure" on symbolic language: as contradiction, meaninglessness, disruption, silence, and absence. The *chora*, then, constitutes the perpetually disruptive dimension of discourse (Kristeva, 1984, chap. 6; Moi, 1985, p. 162).

All language always contains within it the two dispositions—the semiotic and the symbolic. The symbolic is master and control, and it disposes us toward the fixed, the unitary, the systematic, the linear. The semiotic, with its origins in the preOedipal phase, encourages us to identify *with* rather than separate *from* the Other. Writing, then, is a dialectic: The symbolic imposes uniform meaning and structure while the semiotic continually destabilizes that urge for fixity. Furthermore, "since writing breaks the 'subject' apart into multiple doers, into possible places of retention or loss of meaning within 'discourse' and 'history,' it inscribes, not the original-paternal law, but *other* laws . . . its [writing's] legitimacy is illegal" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 113). The writing process—a pluralized, fragmented, conflicted, divergent undertaking—is epistemic, for it always includes the generative potential for synthesizing new meaning as the writer struggles for constancy and originality.

To conceptualize the semiotic is to be caught in the paradox of both retaining and subverting the ordering presence of the symbolic. Without the control of the symbolic, writing is overwhelmed by unconscious drives and becomes psychotic babble. It is the symbolic which allows us to communicate in society discursively. "There is no *other space* from which we can speak" (as cited in Moi, 1985, p. 170). Since writing is inevitably implicated in the social, political, and historical, if we are to speak seriously, it must be within the framework of the symbolic order because we are involuntarily sutured into the assumptions and values of patriarchy. But we also inhabit in discourse an unstable and threatened subjectivity continuously pressured by the illogical, drive-governed psychological negativity of the semiotic "which rends and renews the social code" (Kristeva, 1986d, p. 33). Although an ethic of subversion clearly undergirds Kristeva's theory of language, she also posits an inexorable subjectivity situated in the symbolic order. Paradoxically, without structure, subversive writing is impossible.

Likewise, the subversive writer is able to allow the *jouissance*, or plenitude

of the semiotic, to disrupt the symbolic order. *Jouissance* endangers the symbolic resources of the writer, challenging what may be structured, contesting representation as it "makes the real loom forth as a jubilant enigma" (Kristeva, 1986e, p. 230). However, as the plenitude of the semiotic *remodels* the representation, the plenitude must be tailored by restraint: "Indifferent to language, enigmatic and feminine, this space [the semiotic] underlying the written is rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgment, but restrained by a single guarantee: syntax" (Kristeva, 1984, p. 29). Kristeva foregrounds expulsion, disruption, *jouissance*, rather than organization and solidarity. The semiotic fosters unfettered, disruptive texts—which obscure clarity as they achieve rhythm. Such texts prefigure cultural transformations. "[P]recisely through the excess of the languages whose very multitude is the only sign of life, one can attempt to bring about multiple sublations of the unnameable, the unrepresentable, the void. This is the real cutting edge of dissidence" (Kristeva, 1986b, p. 300). Since the writer is motivated not only by the conscious desire to make meaning, but by the unconscious capacity to splinter and revitalize social codes, systematic control might not always be what we want to encourage, especially since we often find the intertextual power to expel the old and imagine the new on the threshold of indeterminacy.

Kristeva's consistent and fundamental project has been to produce a discourse that always confronts this impasse—that it is both subject to and subversive of the law. Such a discourse dares to think language against itself. And so Kristeva expects political writing, be it liberal, socialist, or feminist, to reveal itself as yet another master-discourse, since the sway of even a counterhegemony commands, given its frame in the rational/cognitive realm. Since the 1980s, Kristeva has thus distanced herself from theorists who see all discourse as political, as implicated by ruling ideology. Taking the unfashionable position that love or desire cannot be adequately understood in terms of the political, Kristeva maintains:

If we stay with only a political explanation of human phenomena we will be overwhelmed by the so-called mystical crisis, or spiritual crisis Every bourgeois family has a son or daughter who has a mystical crisis So my problem is: how . . . through . . . discourse can we try to elaborate . . . these critical points of the human experience. . . . (as cited in Moi, 1986, pp. 8–9)

Not only do our students experience such mystical or spiritual crises, we all do. How can we allow for the kind of discourse that might explore these critical points of human experience? First, we can recognize writers as neither fixed and stable nor unstable and unfettered, but as writers-in-process within the symbolic. This means not exclusively immersing student writers in highly volatile political issues where they must negotiate difference, take a stance, and follow argumentative models. Instead, there might be opportunities to explore discursively the spiritual, the personal, the emotional, opportunities to resist the political, the contentious, and the public. I am not suggesting here that traditional discourse and the semiotic be reduced to binary oppositions between which we should choose; the semiotic, identifiable by slippages, is present in all languages. Nev-

ertheless, by way of a latitude which allows impulsiveness and fantasy, we can create meaning not rigidly fixed in formulaic discourse. The composing milieu for academic writers should animate the free play of the imaginative and the imaginary. Furthermore, the imaginary should not be considered just a frivolous hiatus from *serious* composition modes, but as a profound space from which to compose.

Kristeva associates the imaginary with transference, the process whereby the analysand transfers early relationships into the analysis. The concept of transference originated with Freud and has been reinterpreted by psychoanalytic theorists in myriad ways. One method (often caricatured today) is the silent, blank-walled analyst who becomes the object of a transference brought entirely from the analysand's past experiences and relationships. The analytic technique here consists of analyzing the resistances and defenses that keep the client from acknowledging transference feelings. Such transference is entirely one way. Nancy Chodorow offers another interpretation—one that complements Kristeva's own interpretation. Chodorow characterizes transference as "a 'therapeutic' or 'working' alliance between analyst and analysand, . . . an agreement made with the analysand's ego to work on change, in tandem as it were" (1989, p. 160). The analyst's strong feelings about the analysand or about particular moments in the analysis were always an unwelcome intrusion for Freud. However, for Chodorow and Kristeva, the analyst, as an empathic Other, handles the transference lovingly, for it is the idealizing space that can yield the healing discourse. Transference love becomes the indispensable element of the cure. (This conception of love is *not* to be confused with primary love, the prototype of genital love.) The created loving space of transference helps the analysand to focus the imaginary, allowing him or her to become a subject-in-process in the symbolic order (Kristeva, 1986a, p. 248).

Can this approach, presumably remote from our discipline, be of use within the academy? Though the profession might be uncomfortable because transference love is introduced into the writing apprenticeship, I propose that it supports writers-in-process within the symbolic order while also modulating the traditional emphasis on clarity, logical analysis, and correctness.

Such a suggestion seems an intimidating step away from traditional pedagogies based on the technical predictions of cognitive psychology, the rational components of the sociocognitive process, and the "interpellations of subjects within the always already ideological" (Berlin, 1988, p. 490) of social constructionism. Nevertheless, I want to encourage a kind of enabling transference between teachers and writers-in-process. Such an alliance is risky for both. Still it is just such a connection that could allow the writer-in-process and the teacher-in-process the trusting locality in which to explore, experiment, and push beyond the boundaries of academic discourse that neutralizes resistance. If we are to follow Kristeva's notions all the way, we must furnish the writer-in-process with the imaginary space where the heterogeneous "pulsions of the semiotic" (Kristeva, 1984, chap. 6) can intrude upon and even disrupt the limiting forms of symbolic language and university discourse.

Lynn Worsham (1991) sees the dichotomy between *écriture féminine* (for Kristeva, postmodern discourse) and American university discourse as a "battle

royal" (p. 83). For Worsham, *écriture féminine* cannot be freely imported into the writing classroom to work alongside academic discourse because the predominant goal of literacy is "aligned with the ideology of the clear and distinct, the transparency of communication, the overriding need for consensus and communication" (p. 93). Worsham claims that although *écriture féminine* cannot be incorporated into composition studies and pedagogical strategies, it can contribute to "an examination of how composition conducts itself as a theoretical enterprise" (p. 98)—an enterprise that reproduces ideology as it "promises to empower students to (re)produce the 'proper' kind of discourse" (p. 100). Unlike Worsham, I believe there is and should be a place for postmodern discourse. By creating pedagogical strategies and teacher/student relationships that invite the interpenetration of the social, historical, emotional, and imaginary, that entice the semiotic to surface, we can practice modes of communication that resist and refuse homogeneity, neutrality, and phallogentrism.

The relevance of Kristeva's insights on intertextuality emerged when I recently worked with a graduate student. Tina had been greatly moved when we read Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping*, a novel about a mother's suicide and its long-term effects on her daughters. At the time of Tina's first reading of the novel, she was also writing an autobiographical account of her own mother's suicide for another course. The simultaneous immersion into the real and the imagined was so intense that Tina wanted to write about both the fictional and real maternal suicides for her master's thesis. It is instructive that she first approached a creative writing professor to direct her thesis, thinking this was the only way to gain the imaginative leeway that would permit her to undertake her project. However, this first relationship did not provide her with the sustaining alliance she needed to examine deeply the emotional turbulence that engulfed her. As a relatively new teacher, Tina's first advisor was not yet able to negotiate the tangled nuances of such guardianship and erred on the side of amity, offering the rapport of a friend while overlooking the professional support a teacher and mentor must preserve. For this kind of exposure, a student and teacher must establish a subtle relationship that allows for emotional intimacy while still maintaining professionalism.

Tina came to me, and I believe we achieved a kind of enabling transference such as I have described. But what can we, as teachers, offer Tina that her first advisor could not? First, as guides through students' psychological writing journeys, teachers can make a significant place for self-reflective autobiography. Personal, emotional engagement is at the heart of penetrating prose and is integral to the adventurous writing I ask students to undertake. We have all read too many vacuous student essays that demonstrate polished critical technique and clear, concise syntactical skill but have no vigor, no soul. Teachers need to be prepared to conduct students through emotions that will range from joy and wonder to despair and anger, through responses that are daring, through writing that will shake us all up.

Second, as teachers wishing to allow for the semiotic to bubble up and invade academic discourse, we can prepare for students' resistance to unruly prose. Stoically socialized into what counts as real writing, students may be hesitant to embrace the broad parameters that resist codes and rupture expectations. Many

students may ask for carefully delineated guidelines, formulas, or models, for they simply have not been allowed since grade school to exercise their imaginations and emotions in their writing tasks. They may, at first, founder in this discomfiting exploration of the heartfelt and mysterious. To elicit postmodern prose is not to say anything goes; it is to ask for thoughtfully passionate prose that students can and, I think, want to produce when many of the strictures of traditional academic discourse are relinquished.

Third, teachers need to remember that by helping students reflect on the spiritual, the emotional, and the imaginary, we are asking them to represent the psychological entanglements of their lives. We can help them describe their unique perplexities, but we are not our students' intimate friends; we are not their counselors; we are not their therapists; and we must resist all invitations to take on such roles. Indeed, it is important to remember that resolution is not our job; as teachers and learners, we have learned from the classicists to respect the enigmatic, the unknowable. It is not our place to counsel our students toward revelation and resolution, but to help them have a tolerance for the unresolved, for partiality, for the mystery that persists at the core of our most personal selves.

Tina and I agreed to work on her ideas in tandem, and as teacher and student, we built a fellowship from which Tina's work progressed. In a spirit of trust, Tina was able to write courageously about the psychological impact that *Housekeeping* had on her understanding of her mother's death. Our relationship gave Tina a position within the symbolic from which she interwove the fictional and the real by blurring the boundaries between poetry, autobiography, and critical analysis. However, like Kristeva, Tina and I grew to accept that, although her writing competently adjusted to the symbolic's demand for coherence, absences and ambiguities remained. These persisted not only in Tina's work but in Robinson's *Housekeeping*; they mark where the symbolic is inadequate to explain the fervent irrationality of a mother's suicide and a daughter's troubling memories and unresolved emotions, where the "pulsional pressure" of the semiotic refuses the neat categorizations familiar to us in academic essays.

If we hope to encourage transformative writing which imaginatively *rends and renews*, we might consider moving the emotional and the ambiguous to the center of appropriateness rather than relegating them to the margins. Have we not already taken steps in that direction by encouraging journal responses, brainstorming, and personal interaction, modifying our obsession with control and precision? Surely, there are still other strategies that responsibly can be employed to tap the potential of the semiotic.

Unlike many poststructuralists, Kristeva sees ethics as central to her work. As an analyst, she is under the ethical obligation to try to cure her clients (as cited in Moi, 1986, p. 17). We do not want to deploy such medical analogies, but we might imagine sustaining approaches that help writers-in-process see the interpenetration of the social, the cognitive, and the psychological. And in so doing, give a force and a commitment to the composing enterprise that is often missing when their writing is one dimensional. To operationalize transference means to build empathic alliances with our students, whether they be graduate students like Tina or first-year writing students. Such alliances can yield the trusting locality from which students can experiment with the historical, social,

and psychological facets of their unique writing selves. In fact, as Chodorow (1989) points out, this practical activity, the empathic involvement with others and the taking account of one another's anxieties, interests, and pursuits, exemplifies a social objective (p. 160). By providing empathic guardianship, we can better assist our students in experimenting with the imaginary as a means of resisting conformity, revealing difference, and producing provocative discourse. Within such creative relationships, we can better tap the intertextual power that can balance our symbolic urge for cognitive order with our semiotic need for emotional freedom. ☺

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The Osmotic Self and Language Arts Pedagogy

Kristie S. Fleckenstein

Despite the influence of constructionist orientations in educational philosophy, mainstream American pedagogy continues to conceptualize identity and development predominantly as the individual or autonomous self. Evolving out of Cartesian rationalism, the autonomous self is one in which ego boundaries are perceived as rigid and mature individual consciousness is understood as detached, isolated, and essentialized. Thus, the idea of an autonomous self implies a reality that separates facts from values, privileges scientific detachment, and justifies the domination of nature (Berman, 1981; Keller, 1985/1995). Learning based on an autonomous model focuses on mastery. Meaning-making is centered on separation—separating the subject/text from the writer, the writer from the reader. Writing and reading are taught as a process of decontextualizing writers and readers so that they can envision a rhetorical situation as separate from self. Students are trained to organize the elements of their particular rhetorical situation in a manner best suited to achieving an individually conceived goal. In view of the social nature of all learning, the isolation of an autonomous student is in itself troubling. But even more disturbing is that school curricula and methodology based on the mastery model of autonomy tend to disadvantage young girls and reinforce limiting stereotypes for young boys. Educators need to evolve language arts pedagogy that privileges an osmotic, rather than an autonomous, view of self.

The Osmotic Self

In *The Reenchantment of the World*, Morris Berman (1981), an historian of science, charts the historical and cultural significance in Western society of the osmotic or participatory self, one in which the ego boundaries are permeable. The idea of an osmotic self, evolving out of animistic beliefs during preHomeric Greece, flourished in Europe until after the Middle Ages and the reign of alchemy. From an osmotic perspective, self and other are perceived as physically or somatically linked, as manifested, for instance, in the medieval doctrine of signatures. During the Middle Ages people believed that eating walnuts enhanced mental abilities because of the physical resemblance between the nutmeat and the human brain. Likewise, mining for minerals was perceived as invading the earth's womb, so the process was treated cautiously, with respect and reverence. Reality that now seems outside of self was, then, physically linked to the self. Eventually, in the wake of cultural movements culminating in Cartesian rationalism, the osmotic self and its world view virtually disappeared from

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Western society. Berman argues that to counter current ills, both cultural and individual pathologies, we need a twentieth century manifestation of osmotic consciousness. That consciousness builds on the somatic nature of knowing—knowing that takes place at least initially on a physical or visceral level—and the interconnectedness of all things.

A twentieth-century osmotic self and consciousness imply a holistic reality. In an osmotic reality, a thing (or a self) can be and *not* be at the same time. In fact, it usually is. So an osmotic reality is guided not by the linear, critical logic characteristic of modern scientific thought and ego autonomy (Keller, 1985/1995), but by a sophistic dialectical reasoning in which opposing concepts (men/women, love/hate, up/down) are simultaneously the same as reflected in the alchemical symbol of the hermaphrodite. Reality/knowledge/self is first a process of embedding or situating, then a process of categorizing or creating taxonomies.

Because reality itself is paradoxical, knowing by accepted means—i.e., the rationalism and empiricism privileged in Western culture—can only be partial, especially if the preferred tool to mediate reality is language. More highly textured, multileveled knowing results from the “union of subject and object, in a psychic-emotional identification with images rather than a purely intellectual examination of concepts” (Berman, 1981, p. 73). Knowledge, Berman contends, is initially imagistic, not conceptual, so reality is mediated imagistically, as well as linguistically. Plato’s attack on preHomeric animism, the root of osmotic consciousness, was heavily linguistic in nature, Berman argues, an effort to substitute a conceptual discourse for an imagistic one (pp. 73, 105). The rationalists’ attack on alchemy—the medieval equivalent of the preHomeric animistic world view—was also linguistically based. But, regardless of the historical efforts to oust imagery as a means to construct knowledge, imagery is currently reemerging as an essential mode of coding reality (Paivio, 1986; Sadoski & Paivio, 1994).

Creating reality/knowledge/self through “a psychic-emotional identification with images” (Berman, 1981, p. 73) requires that as knowers we strive to merge with the thing to be known—to identify with it psychically and emotionally. We do not, as Descartes urged, separate ourselves from the thing to be known. We construct world and self-consciousness through a transaction with an other that is perceived as not self, but knowable only when penetrated by self. We and the world are what Berman (1989) calls a selfother, and the paradoxical reality ensues from the selfother fusion. From this view, we do not dominate in order to learn; we permeate. Thus, any rhetorical act—reading, writing, listening, speaking (and, according to poststructuralists, being) initially arises out of empathic identification with a reader, writer, or text world as an *other* which is knowable by the osmosis of self: a selfother. Neither readerly nor writerly *identity* disappears in this process. We do not lose *self* in the process of knowing other; we lose *consciousness* of self. Ego *awareness* disappears in the act of knowing. Similarly, meaning is not reified or commodified as an entity to be possessed. Instead, meaning is something to be experienced emotionally and psychically, as well as intellectually. One manifestation of osmotic consciousness in reading and writing is the experience of immersion, when self-consciousness disappears in the doing and all that remains is the absorption

in that doing.¹ So, from an osmotic stance, we initially learn for the joy the process of knowing (or writing or reading) brings us, not merely because we wish to take something away from the learning. The joy is primary, the taking away secondary.

The osmotic self holds the potential to address problems, especially concerning gender identity, created in our school systems by an over-reliance on the mastery model of education.

The Mastery Model and Gender

American school curricula, structured with traditional pedagogical techniques, emphasize autonomous, competitive learning aimed at mastery of a body of knowledge or set of skills, what Harry S. Broudy (1977) calls "what and how learning". The goal of the mastery model is to create citizens possessing the qualities Western society deems desirable: rationality, analytical abilities, intellectualism, and independence. Humanists argue that such an agenda is laudable, serving Western culture's best interests. However, if we examine its implications for young girls and boys, we can uncover the ways in which the mastery model damages children.

The general failure of the mastery model to serve young girls has been chronicled by Myra Sadker and David Sadker (1994) in *Failing at Fairness: How Our Schools Cheat Girls*. According to them, gender bias and gender reinforcement in public schools continue to privilege the intellectual and psychological development of young boys. Despite progress since the institution of Title IX legislation within public school classrooms, girls remain silenced, overlooked, and under instructed (Klein & Ortman, 1994). Focusing on science education, Eileen Bryne (1995) in *Women in Science: The Snark Syndrome* describes the ways in which schools indirectly prevent girls from participating, let alone excelling, in the sciences. Even our methods of teaching language awareness as early as preschool tend to reinscribe injurious gender practices, prevalent in the society at large, that disadvantage the educational development of young girls (Orellana, 1995). For instance, choosing boys to make statements (i.e., to answer questions) and girls to ask questions indirectly sets up literacy roles that frame boys as those who possess knowledge and girls as those who lack it. Barbara Guzzetti and Wayne Williams (1996) conclude that these gendered literacy practices are at least partially responsible for girls in high school science classes being informally judged as less knowledgeable than their male peers. Because girls asked more questions and made fewer statements than boys, they were rated by classmates and instructors alike as less well versed in the subject matter than their male counterparts.

In addition, girls are further hindered academically by the contradictory messages they receive from school and the larger culture. Western thinking is dominated by the ideals of rationalism and ego autonomy. But as Andrea Nye (1988) and others have argued, Cartesian rationalism, the philosophical founda-

¹ See M. Csikszentmihalyi (1976, 1993) and flow; R. Spiro (1980) and reading immersion; L. Rosenblatt (1978) and the aesthetic experience.

tion of the autonomous self, is a male-marked philosophy. The intellectual and emotional qualities valued by rationalists are those qualities marked as masculine in our western culture.² Men are gendered as rational, intellectual, autonomous, and analytical (Lerner, 1986); cultural protocols—those unwritten rules about how young men are *supposed* to act, feel, believe, and behave—and academic curricula aim at the development and reward the display of those qualities in all students. To achieve academic success, boys merely need to be in school as they have been taught to be in the culture at large. But girls are not so lucky. The West has marked as feminine those qualities deemed the antithesis of rationalism: intuition, integration, body mystery, nurturing and spiritual concerns. So, to be gendered feminine, girls are supposed to focus more on relationships than on autonomy, resulting in ethical stances (Noddings, 1984), thinking processes (Chodorow, 1989; Gilligan, 1982), and spirituality (Spretnak, 1994) differing from those marked masculine. An inevitable outcome of such a distinction is that girls usually flourish in a learning environment based less on competition and mastery and more on cooperation and negotiation (Belenky et al., 1986)³. These qualities in and of themselves are not the problem. The problem for girls is that schooling, aimed at developing the Cartesian prototype, continues to base pedagogy on the competitive mastery model and assess girls' success on the basis of their ability to acquire qualities culturally marked male (Flax, 1995; Guzzetti & Williams, 1996). The school system implicitly preaches and awards autonomy, while the culture sends the message that girls should not be autonomous. They should not compete, they should not win, but to succeed in school they must do both. To win culturally, they must lose academically, with all the economic and social implications of that loss.

This double bind costs girls psychologically as well as intellectually. And the price they pay is devastating. Adolescent girls growing up in our culture, spending much of their days in our academic system, lose both a sense of self and an esteem for self (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Pipher, 1994; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Behaviors such as anorexia, bulimia, and self-mutilation indicate a growing pathology among adolescent girls in our Western culture. Psychotherapists working from a feminist perspective argue that self-destructive behavior among women is a direct outgrowth of the contradictory messages our culture sends to women. Successful therapy requires that women reeducate themselves

²I am not trying to essentialize either men or women here. Neither women nor men are innately rational versus innately intuitive, etc. Culturally, however, both tend to be socialized into certain identities, roles, and attributes. And for women, it tends to lead them into devalued positions.

³This is not to say that girls *cannot* flourish in an aversive learning environment. Many can and do. Thus, those who advocate excluding women from institutions such as the Virginia Military Academy and the Citadel argue from erroneous premises. If such an argument were true, women would not continue to succeed in academic (and military) environments which are already contrary to gender constraints. My concern is not with women's successes in the academy, military, or corporate world. My concern is with women's failures. Merely because women have the ability to make a poor system work for them is not a legitimate argument for supporting that system.

to counteract the cultural double bind that traps them (Mitchell, 1992).

Boys, less obviously, also pay a price. Education based on the autonomous self reinforces injurious stereotypes, particularly reinscribing men in an oppressor's role (Keller, 1985/1995, chapter 4 on the dangers of autonomy). The competitive and autonomous nature of the mastery model of education fosters the attitude that a man should master all he surveys. Control, essential to Cartesian rationalism, is the basis of the mastery model: control of mind over matter, man over his environment, objectivity over subjectivity. Thus, to be successful men, boys must win—at whatever they do. They must be on the top of the hierarchical structures they create, which means that in winning they end up alone at the top. The one in control doesn't share the position. In her study of informal conversation, sociolinguist Deborah Tannen (1990) notes that a common conversational turn for men is oneupmanship. Men use conversation with other men as another means of competition, as a way to score points and establish ascendent power positions. The psychological and spiritual impoverishment of such positioning (Bly, 1990; Keller, 1985/1995), as well as the social and environmental dangers (Berman, 1981), is devastating to both men and culture.

By restructuring classrooms, especially language arts classrooms that deal with core questions about the nature of meaning, we could help offset these pernicious trends. An osmotic approach to knowledge is based on the interrelationship of all things. Knowledge is not reified into a commodity, but accepted as a process of selfothering (Berman, 1989) because we cannot know until we are linked psychically and emotionally with an other. Such an approach emphasizes cooperation before competition, caring before mastery.

Language Arts Pedagogy and the Osmotic Self

Pedagogically, teaching for and with the osmotic self means teaching sensuously, emphasizing somatic knowing: the complex transaction of body, emotions, and intellect with physical implements and motion (book, pen, paper, keyboard, marks on the page); our physical environment; our visceral reactions and state of body; and the self in the not-self of the text world. Contextualized within the classroom, somatic knowing might translate into two general goals: 1) incorporation of mimesis, or constructing knowledge through identification, and 2) immersion, or fostering absorption in language tasks.

According to Eric Havelock, the major mode of instruction in preHomeric Greece was mimesis, where individuals identified emotionally with the speaker or a chorus. In a state of autohypnosis, the audience memorized the poetry spoken by the chorus, and knowledge was passed on by this method (as cited in Berman, 1981, pp. 72-73). The point about mimesis for our twentieth-century classrooms is not the memorizing of poetry, but the emotional identification of the learner with the material being learned, using language as vehicle and catalyst. Learning becomes inseparable from emotional involvement.

As teachers we need to consider mimesis from two angles: identification *with* our students and *for* our students. Transforming ourselves as teachers in the process of teaching must remain an integral part of osmotic learning. To make our classrooms sites of transformation, we need to make our students subjects,

not objects. Too frequently, we automatically assume that the interpretation of reality we bring with us into the classroom is the *right* one, the one shared by everyone. So we uncritically impose that interpretation on our students and use the extent of our students' assimilation as a measure of their (and our) success. But the starting point for our pedagogy should not be our interior life, but that of our students. We can't engage them in the reciprocity of teaching without understanding their interior reality, the reality that they believe is shared by everyone. Paul Cobb (1990), a social constructionist in math education, argues that we all carry with us an expressionist, subjectively real, vision of reality. It is both a Platonic reality—in that truth is experienced as inner—and an Aristotelian reality—in that truth is experienced as *out there*. The Aristotelian reality is our *taken for granted* reality that we share without question (Berger, 1969). Unfortunately, neither a student's Platonic nor her Aristotelian reality necessarily matches ours.

To even begin teaching, we must engage in mimesis. We need to *know* our students' realities, and, thus, know how those realities diverge from our own. We need to stand in their shoes, or, as Scout Finch does, stand on their front porch and experience the world through their eyes. We need to sit in their worlds and listen so that we hear their hopes, pressures, fears, and values. Such a position is by its nature transformative. By identifying with their worlds we inevitably change our perceptions of our worlds; our starting point as teachers shifts. So if we suffer the hubris of wishing to change their world views, we are obligated to transform our own, learning first hand how that process undermines and challenges everything we hold dear.

For our students, we need to help them learn mimetically, fostering identification in their interactions with the world. The "route to true understanding is to be found in absorption, in the loss of psychic distance," Berman says (1989, p. 112). "Who knows more about medieval sainthood—the historian who compiles data on age and nationality, or the one who goes to a monastery and sits in a cell for several months" (p. 115). The major goal of a participatory classroom is to help our students dissolve that psychic distance, achieve the selfother state through the temporary loss of self *consciousness*. Part of the answer may lie in encouraging empathy.

Psychologist Martin Hoffman (1984) claims that empathy, the sensation of experiencing another person's feelings or reactions, at its most sophisticated, is achieved through either a *self* focus or an *other* focus. With a self focus, we picture ourselves in another person's place and imagine the situation as if we were personally experiencing it (p. 117). With an other focus we visualize another person's situation and responses, imagine how he or she is feeling, and respond as if we were there actually observing the action. With both methods, our awareness of our own ego consciousness is reduced (although our ego identity remains intact); we identify with the other. Such empathic identification is the key to aesthetic reading (Poulet, 1980), teacher-student interactions (McLeod, 1995), and various writing choices (Teich, 1994).

Barbara McClintock offers an example of the power of empathic learning. As described by Keller (1983) in *A Feeling for the Organism*, McClintock, Nobel laureate in corn genetics, evolved her revolutionary theory of transposition (the idea that genetic structures change in response to the ambient environment of the

plant) by developing an *intimacy* for the plants she was studying. As Keller, paraphrasing and quoting McClintock, describes, we “must have the time to look, the patience to ‘hear what the material has to say to you,’ the openness to ‘let it come to you.’ Above all, one must have a ‘feeling for the organism’” (p. 198). McClintock’s ability to *see* complexity missed by her fellow plant geneticists was a direct outgrowth of her intimate knowledge of her subjects. McClintock’s feeling for the organism, Keller says, reflects a desire to “embrace the world in its very being, through reason and beyond” (pp. 198–199). Such a desire yielded a “sympathetic understanding” (p. 200) in which self *awareness* was subsumed in the emotional-intellectual fusion of identification. In a flight of poetic fancy, McClintock says that she feels sorry when she walks on grass because she knows that the “grass is screaming at me” (as cited in Keller, 1983, p. 200).

The second goal—immersion—is an outgrowth of the first. We need to teach so that students experience flow. According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1976), a psychologist who has studied the exhilaration of “pleasure pursuits” for over 20 years, flow is a subjective state in which the actor is completely absorbed in her actions:

[A]ction follows upon action according to an internal logic that seems to need no conscious intervention by the actor. He [sic] experiences it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which he is in control of his actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment, between stimulus and response, or between past, present, and future. (p. 36)

Without flow experiences in the classroom in the process of learning, Csikszentmihalyi argues, children work for the grade, not for the learning itself, thus gradually coming to believe that the work itself is negligible; only the grade is important. When the extrinsic reward (or threat) of the grade is removed, i.e., after graduation, there is no motivation to continue learning. However, with flow, learning becomes a lifelong endeavor.

Flow experiences can occur anywhere at anytime doing anything (Csikszentmihalyi, 1976); they are not limited to pleasurable activities. We can experience flow mopping the floor, mowing the lawn, or making puzzles with our children. Likewise, flow can become an integral part of our classroom methodology. In *The Evolving Self: A Psychology for the Third Millennium*, Csikszentmihalyi (1993) describes the characteristics of a “flow personality,” a person who has learned to control consciousness in such a way that flow experiences become a way of life. For instance, 1) they can match their skills to their opportunities; 2) they set doable goals; 3) they are sensitive to the feedback from the activity; 4) they concentrate easily; and 5) they don’t fear losing their self-awareness or self-consciousness.

We can help our students develop these flow characteristics in reading and writing by helping them match current abilities to opportunities (i.e., Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development), by helping them set personal goals (instead of merely instantiating institutional goals for writing and reading), by helping them develop metacognitive and reflective monitoring (Brown, 1994), by helping them

learn how to concentrate (as a mother of preschoolers I have discovered that this is a tough proposition), and by seeing that loss of self *awareness* is not a loss of self. Part of the answer may lie in asking students to examine flow experiences outside the classroom, writing narratives of those experiences—engaging in what Britton (1989) calls “constructive reflection,” and trying to incorporate the resulting insights into their language activities. Another strategy may rest with helping students evoke mental imagery both as they read and as they write. In reading, Mark Sadoski, Ernest Goetz, and Susan Kangiser (1985) suggest the connection between the evocation of mental imagery and emotional interaction with an evolving text world, while my work (1991; 1993) in writing correlates mental imagery to text engagement and writing frequency in proficient and under prepared college writers. The possibilities are legion, and the potential of flow worth our effort.

Beyond Pedagogy

Classroom and world implicate each other. How we create self and reality in our classrooms will automatically impinge on our students’ self and reality outside of the classroom. So an interiority and a world view arising out of identification, selfothering, and flow holds the potential of transforming our social reality. It is difficult to lash out—physically and emotionally—at an other when we define self by means of other, when self and other interpenetrate. When we conceive of self and reality as a web of *being*, as well as a web of *meaning*, we will inevitably be more careful about maintaining the fragile threads that constitute and bind us. Basing our language arts pedagogy on the osmotic self may be one way we can preserve our children’s well-being and preserve the world for our children. ☐

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The Pedagogy of Place: Re-valuing Environment and Community in Education

Thomas K. Dean

The collapse of our civil society and our natural environment is due in large part to a lost value that our educational systems are complicit in: the value of place. By *place* I mean the complex of environments—natural, constructed, and social—institutions, behaviors, and expressions that constitute the particular localities in which we dwell. Place is undermined in a culture that defines its educational mission as cultivating students' self-interest. According to the government report, *A Nation at Risk* (1983), the goal of education is: "the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of the society as a whole" (as cited in Smith, 1992, p. 13). This produces society's insistence on corporate profits and an international competitive edge.

The main function of places in this global market is to supply a labor pool for a factory or company. What we tend to have today are *not* places to value: regions, towns, and villages where, by employing local labor and exchanging money, goods, and services, residents support each other; where residents express their community relationships through civic involvement, care for neighbors, and unique artistic and ceremonial modes; and where residents enjoy the unique natural environment and care for the delicate interrelationships of their ecosystems. Instead, we *do* have towns and villages where multinational corporations employ a labor force (not people) at their whim, where the monetary fruits of that labor are circulated among corporate giants like K-Mart and Wal-Mart, and where culture is expressed and consumed through profit-oriented media also originating many miles from home. When the rationale for daily life becomes participation in this mass economy, educational systems become producers of compliant workers and consumers (Teachers teach so kids can get jobs.).

The De-Valuing of Place

In *The Rediscovery of North America*, Barry Lopez (1990) traces this economic attitude toward life, land, and community back to Columbus. Explorers came to this continent to pursue a "narrowly defined wealth. . . gold and silver, title to land, the privileges of aristocracy, slaves" (p. 15). Lopez urges us to redefine wealth away from exploitation and to look for things of greater value in our lives and places—"sanctity, companionship, wisdom, joy, serenity" (p. 21). A search for such wealth is the process of communion with place.

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The centralized economic model of life, where value and achievement are measured in dollars, forces us to see land as a possession, not a companion, and that separation from place leads to its exploitation and our disconnection from it and from one another. A centralized economy seeks to add profit value to resources by marketing them on a national and global scale, but the result, as Lopez describes it, is "the physical destruction of a local landscape to increase the wealth of people who don't live there, or to supply materials to buyers in distant places who will never know the destruction that process leaves behind" (p. 41). Thus, educators must seek to re-connect individuals with their environments and with alternative values.

I envision a pedagogy of place that is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, and that has as its goal the re-valuation of the specific places in which we live. The outcome of this pedagogy of place would mean that we become intimate companions of our neighborhoods, our regions, and our ecosystems. Some eloquent voices have been raised to support this kind of education. Wendell Berry (1990) views the centralized economy as "ruinous" (p. 12), and he fears that the destruction of community, nature, and local economy that results from such ruin is "now looked upon not as a 'trade-off,' a possibly regrettable 'price of progress,' but as a good, virtually a national goal." Berry suggests that we stop thinking of our economies nationally and globally but look at "the economic functions of communities and households." We need, says Berry, to understand "the long-term economies of places—places . . . that are considered as dwelling places for humans and their fellow creatures, not as exploitable resources" (pp. 110–111). Berry's goal of a pedagogy of place is "to give affection some standing in our thoughts" and to "discuss the *best* uses of people, places, and things" (p. 113).

Our schools—from kindergarten through Ph.D. programs—share in this dis-affection for place. As Berry says of his Kentucky community:

Increasingly the ablest young people of this place have gone away to receive a college education, which has given them a 'professional status' too often understood as a license to become the predators of such places as this one that they came from. (p. 110)

Without a stable, intergenerational community with affection for particular places, our lives are lived either dis-placed or not placed at all.

Our universities provide human as well as intellectual models for disaffection from place, for they often studiously avoid hiring faculty who have any particular connection or devotion to the local region, opting instead for an idea that prestige is acquired from highly desirable job candidates from other places, preferably (in Michigan) the coasts. As a result, professors teaching our young men and women, says Berry, themselves view career as "a vehicle, not a dwelling" (p. 148). We teach our children to devalue place.

The career vehicle for most students is literally on a trip to nowhere. The *homes* (and I use the term facetiously) of our corporate headquarters are even less and less in traditional urban centers, having been abandoned as expendable. Their new suburban "homes" tend to be the apotheosis of American placelessness:

native landscapes bulldozed over and replaced by vast tracts of only slightly differentiated housing and peppered with franchises: McDonald's, Builder's Square, Circuit City. The goal of the urban or rural poor who gain entry to higher education is also to escape the economic blight of their home places and ensconce themselves in the safety of American suburban corporate life. Again we teach our children to devalue place.

Paul Gruchow (1995), another eloquent spokesman for a pedagogy of place, notes how "we raise our most capable rural children from the beginning to expect that as soon as possible they will leave and that if they are at all successful, they will never return. We impose upon them, in effect, a kind of homelessness" (p. 99–100). And, again, our colleges and universities are guilty parties. As Gruchow says, "A friend of mine who teaches at a rural university says that the institution ought frankly to offer a class called 'How to Migrate'" (p. 98).

Wes Jackson also expresses this idea in his book *Becoming Native to this Place* (1994):

We are unlikely to achieve anything close to sustainability in any area unless we work for the broader goal of becoming native in the modern world, and that means becoming native to our places in a coherent community that is in turn embedded in the ecological realities of its surrounding landscape. (p. 3)

One of Jackson's favorite phrases, and the principle on which his work with The Land Institute is based, is "nature as measure," an idea he traces back to Virgil and Biblical times. Place-based pedagogy is founded on the ecological principles of interconnectedness, interdependence, and sustainability, all of which depend on the health of the part to nurture the whole.

Re-Valuing Place

Perhaps the best model for a pedagogy of place is bioregionalism. Bioregionalism is an environmental movement that seeks to preserve the integrity of ecosystems. The essential concept is the watershed, the complex of systems bounded by where rain falls and is separated into water systems. Thomas Berry (1993) offers a succinct description of the bioregion:

A bioregion is an identifiable geographical area of interacting life systems that is relatively self-sustaining in the ever-renewing processes of nature. . . . Such a bioregion is a self-propagating, self-nourishing, self-educating, self-governing, self-healing, and self-fulfilling community. Each of the component life systems must integrate its own functioning within this community to survive in any effective manner. (p. 188)

But bioregionalism goes beyond a concern for natural resources, recognizing that humans and their societies are integral to these systems. "It is a mindfulness of local environment, history, and community aspirations that leads

to a sustainable future" (North American Bioregional Congress, 1990, p. 170). Bioregionalists believe that human needs—food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, government—should be provided for locally and provided responsibly. Likewise, the uniqueness of regional arts is celebrated and supported, and knowledge of local history is essential. Thus, bioregionalism is a environmental and social antidote for a centralized economy.

If we develop this "sense of responsible residency," as Lopez would call it, or "give affection for place some standing," as Wendell Berry would say, the bonds of care that would characterize our relationships with environment, economy, and culture would be easily extended to social bonds. In other words, abiding connections to land and community are all part of the same "moral universe" (Lopez, 1990, p. 32).

When value and success are defined by individual economic status, the incentive for civic participation, a piece of the residency puzzle that Lopez and other bioregionalists embrace, erodes dramatically. One of the major voices in the call for stronger social bonds is Amitai Etzioni, the founder of the communitarian idea, expressed in such books as *The Spirit of Community* (1993) and *New Communitarian Thinking* (1995). Etzioni believes that eroding community bonds result from an over-emphasis on individual rights. He defines community as "a shared set of social bonds or a social web, as distinct from one-to-one bonds. These bonds, which are in and of themselves morally neutral, carry a set of shared moral and social values" (p. 17). Civic engagement by its very nature must begin, and, according to the bioregionalists, should remain at home, and it is here where bioregionalism and communitarianism meet—satisfying the obligations of caring for our homes through cooperation and companionship, not competition, possession, and exploitation. A pedagogy of place, then, cultivates sensitivity to local natural environments, economies, and cultures and social responsibility through civic involvement.

So the question then arises, *how* does one develop a pedagogy of place that has as its source interdependence, interconnection, cooperation, and responsible companionship in the context of one's local place? I cannot tell you how to infuse these values into math and biology courses, for example, but I *can* tell you how I have infused them into my teaching of writing.

Using Pedagogy of Place in the Teaching of Writing

I teach in the American Thought and Language (ATL) program at Michigan State University, a unique first-year writing program that integrates freshman composition with the study of American cultural materials chosen from American history. The course I wish to talk about is called *The Evolution of American Thought*, and faculty are free to structure it thematically.

This past year I organized the course around the themes of bioregionalism and communitarianism. With course goals of learning something of the sweep and diversity of American culture, this focus works well. For we coherently examine American relationships with land and community that have defined our culture for centuries. Lopez's *The Rediscovery of North America* (1990), for example, contributes a bioregional perspective on the Columbus expeditions. We

examine the political thought of Thomas Jefferson in which the rights and freedoms of the republic grow out of relationships to the soil, as well as the social debates of Thomas Paine and James Madison from the viewpoint of communitarian theory. Westward expansion is an obvious theme to critique under the rubric of bioregional relationships with local landscapes. And, of course, these ideas provide opportunities to explore relationships with the land and definitions of the American experience by different ethnicities, and the ways in which conflicting visions led to major cultural conflicts—e.g., the Ghost Dance Wars of the late nineteenth century.

Beyond providing a thematic framework through which to view historical and cultural texts, however, I do wish for students to put into practice the principles of place-based and community-based thought and activity. One of the major goals of the ATL program is to help students understand what it means to live in a democratic society. In general, I have always approached the writing mission of ATL as integral to this task. The course encourages students to become not merely recipients of American culture, but active participants in it.

Language has great creative power. The historian Calvin Luther Martin (1992) calls words “forces that mold the space around me” (p. 2). In reaching beyond ourselves as “engineer[s] of space” (p. 3) through the creative act of language, we construct “hinges” (p. 15), as Martin says, with the world outside ourselves. I see the writing we do as helping shape that world by shaping students’ perceptions. I tell my students that their writing may not create world peace or affect the outcome of a presidential election, but the world about them *will* be affected in some way, perhaps in surprising ways. The reading and writing for the course, then, are meant to *connect* students to their places, the bedrock of freedom, responsibility, and sustainability. We start off with some of the theoretical writings that I’ve mentioned so that students may grasp the principles of bioregionalism and communitarianism: Wendell Berry, Thomas Berry, Amitai Etzioni, Aldo Leopold, Barry Lopez, and so forth.

Bringing Theory Close to Home

Then, for an understanding of ecosystems as fundamental to the bioregional ideal, I use a book called *Cold Running River* by David Cassuto (1994). This book provides an environmental and cultural history of the Pere Marquette River watershed in Michigan, a place that many students have visited. Even if they have not, the book is about a place close to home. Through this work, students are walked through the ways in which the environment has been treated, exploited, altered, and preserved through an historical obstacle course of fishing, logging, and vacationing, as well as efforts in recent decades to resurrect the integrity of the river. Students are able to see how both the economic exploitation and applications of care that Lopez talks about have occurred here at home.

Caroline Kirkland’s *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?* (1839/1990) depicts the establishment of a small town in what was then a Michigan wilderness, about fifty miles from East Lansing. Mrs. Clavers, the main character, is an Eastern woman who comes to Michigan with her husband to industrialize the town of Montacute. Students and I discuss the impact that Eastern seaboard colonizers

and economic exploiters had on the wilderness as well as Mrs. Clavers' adjustments to the landscape and community. The novel also provides opportunities for discussing gender differences in attitudes toward land and community, where men seek profit and women seek homes. Mrs. Clavers complains that men esteem land ownership as "the possession of simply 'an article of trade.'" Furthermore, the "habit of selling out so frequently," she says, "makes that *home* feeling, which is so large an ingredient in happiness elsewhere, almost a nonentity in Michigan" (p. 22).

We also read Gordon Henry's novel, *The Light People* (1994). The author is a professor of English at Michigan State, so at the very least we experience the cultural products of our home institution and region. But the novel also offers alternative visions of living in place, for it concerns a young Ojibway man who seeks his heritage through the stories of his people. And relationships with land and community are paramount. Because, in a pedagogy of place, it is essential for students to experience culture as living as well as local, I invite Professor Henry to speak with the class about his novel and his experience as an Ojibway storyteller. The main character of *The Light People* even attended Michigan State University for a while, and students are almost giddy at reading about Beaumont Tower and "the Rock" in a "real book." While reading a selection from *Schoolcraft's Narrative Journal of Travels* (1992), a student marveled at the fact that the Schoolcraft expedition to explore the Northwest Territory in 1820 originated five minutes from her house. Not only was the link to history dramatic for her, but it surprised her that something "important" happened in "her place."

Students were excited as well about readings on the land grant mission and campus history and architecture. When they learned about the mission of land grant institutions to provide for the health and well-being of their regions—including democratic access to education—they very much come to appreciate the academic enterprise that suddenly seemed more significant because of its heritage. Our carillon tower, Beaumont Tower, is replete with philosophical significance. The Tower is meant to inspire and lead in the academic mission of the institution, and it is gratifying to have students report to me that they think about the meaning of this place as they pass it: they think about their own educational goals, and appreciate the people, thought, and labor that make up the university's heritage.

Real experience is important in a pedagogy of place, and so we tour a campus building, such as our Alumni Memorial Chapel, which most students do not even know exists. Pieces of bombed European cathedrals planted into the walls of the sanctuary that are also covered with names of the war dead are powerful and palpable links not only to this place, but to history. Coming away from that visit, students gain a solemn reverence for the sacrifices historically made for place. They also experience remote and abstract concepts—such as World Wars I and II—as having very real ties to the ground they stand on.

The writing assignments are experiential. Most of them ask students to interact with our local place in some way—not only to have them dramatically learn about place, but to put into practice the bonds central to a communitarian and a bioregional ideal. A first assignment asks them to discuss how they have inhabited a place (usually their home town or a vacation cabin) and what the

place means to them. I have discovered that this task is often difficult, for students have never been asked to think so consciously about their relationships to places, even ones so close to them.

Mapping is another effective way for students to conceive and perceive of places in new ways. Again, it is surprisingly difficult to break students out of traditional notions of road maps, whose purpose, I believe, is to encourage tourists to consume fuel, food, and lodging. But, as Doug Aberley (1993) says, maps "are models of the world—icons if you wish—for what our senses 'see' through the filters of environment, culture, and experience" (p. 1).

One semester I split the class into groups. Each one was assigned an aspect of our campus to represent on a map (sports, the arts, nature, etc.). Maps were distributed to the class, and the students were asked to write about how their understandings of our campus changed by these partial glimpses. This semester, I asked students to focus their papers on a specific place of their choice and map it in new and unusual ways, then to write about how their understanding of that place changes as a result. Other activities included visits to local museums to experience how knowledge and understanding is gained through such alternative means to a material culture. Oral history allowed students to practice interviewing skills, but also literally connected them with individuals.

While I have not made service learning mandatory in this course, it is one of the most powerful and popular ways in which the ideals of responsibility to one's place may be realized. Service activities provide both social and cognitive benefits. According to I. M. McGuiness (1995), "The service component pushes [students] to think through their beliefs about the nature of social justice, about equality, about the possibilities that are and are not available to the various kinds of people who make up the fabric of American life. . ." (p. 8).

Teaching a pedagogy of place in a large university is crucial because students can easily become anonymous. I have done my job well when students feel they are part of this educational enterprise and natural whole that depends on their presence and talents. Fortunately, I am not the only voice in the wilderness. Movements across the nation that seek to infuse place with values of care and affection have not entered mainstream curricula yet, but they are burgeoning. Here in Lansing, Michigan, for example, there are plans for a charter school that focuses on community-based education. People like John Elder (1996), through the Orion Society, are developing programs like the Watershed Partnerships, where universities place education majors in public schools for the express purpose of doing place-based education. Service and service learning are becoming ways of life for students. A recent UCLA survey indicated that "seventy-six percent of this year's freshman class nationwide reported that they have community service experience" (Brunt & De La Cruz, 1997, p. 1).

Students are more ecologically aware than previous generations, though this cuts two ways: My students tend to fulminate at irresponsible environmental destruction, yet they are unaware that their efforts to recycle, the extent of their action, are hardly adequate to the task of ecological restoration. Even more disturbingly, students usually express a fatalistic attitude, believing that the environment is about to collapse, but there's nothing that can be done about it. Similarly, my students often see the bioregional ideas we study as nice ideas, but

ultimately impractical on a national or international scale.

Yet bioregionalists insist that their way of thinking is both practical and necessary. Wendell Berry (1990) states:

Unless I take measures to prevent it, I am going to hear somebody say, "All that would be very nice, if it were possible. Can't you be realistic?" My intention, above all, is to be realistic; I wish to be practical To me, an economy that sees the life of a community or a place as expendable, and reckons its value only in terms of money, is not acceptable because it is *not* realistic. (p. 113)

What I have said here runs counter to practically everything we value in our culture. A departmental colleague who works in local history laments a phrase that is all too common: "the local is yokel." Yet, a pedagogy of place values the local, the small, the intimate. In a world where even the conglomerates merge, where competition defines culture, and where anything of artistic or cultural value certainly doesn't happen at home, a pedagogy of place can be a tough sell. But as the environment, economy, and culture collapse, as they ultimately must, students honestly know that their participation in this new/old way of learning lays the groundwork for a world of interconnectedness, responsibility, and care. ☺

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How Many Students Does it Take to Write a Joke?

Humor Writing in Composition Courses

Paul Lewis

As writing teachers we have serious objectives. In a limited number of weeks we want our students to feel more comfortable with the writing process, more aware of language, more flexible in the way they engage ideas, and more attentive to audience. Insofar as humor depends on unusual combinations of ideas, insofar as it hinges on unexpected meanings and associations of words and phrases, insofar as it both reveals and conceals values and triggers instantaneous responses (laughter, groaning)—it can advance these pedagogical goals. Given the widely shared interest in comedy among our students—a generation that grew up on sitcoms, standup routines, and infinitely recycled jokes—the wonder is that humor writing is not common in composition courses.

Indeed, if composition pedagogy were rooted in student interest, every first-year course and advanced writing elective would include humor writing. Ask our students whom they admire more—John McPhee or Jim Carrey, Annie Dillard or Dana Carvey. And, even after we have explained who McPhee and Dillard are, most will not hesitate in choosing Carrey and Carvey. Still, rather than tapping into this energy, many English instructors tend to regard it as part of the problem—a sign of poor taste or cultural poverty—or simply as a matter that is irrelevant to academic writing. Perversely, many writing teachers behave like the unsympathetic potential lovers in Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* (1977). Noting a pun or witticism in a student paper, these chilly evaluators pause only long enough to jot a question in the margin: "Pun intended?" or "Are you trying to be funny?"

Similarly, humor is ignored, discouraged, or barely tolerated in many composition texts and in much scholarship in the field. A survey of current texts reveals a seriousness of tone, a style characterized by projective and vigorous determination. Texts such as *Writing as Thinking* and *Writing in the Disciplines, Strategies: A Rhetoric and Reader* have no heading for humor in their indexes. No wonder this is so, since their titles appear to announce military campaigns or profound philosophic inquiries that, however unintentionally, bring the macho lumberjacks of the Monty Python sketch or Jack Handey of Saturday Night Live's Deep Thoughts gag to mind. In the same way, the text, *Rhetoric and Style: Strategies for Advanced Writers* seems to assume that advanced writers do not need to work on humor, while *Writing as Revelation* suggests by way of omission

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that one can reach the promised land of prose style without laboring in the fields of wit.

Some writing texts that do discuss humor tend toward the perfunctory by implying that using it may not always be a bad idea.¹ In *The Riverside Guide to Writing*, for instance, D. Hunt (1991) concedes that humor helps engage readers but notes that “in public discourse, every departure from . . . [an] earnest, distant, deferential tone is risky” (p. 523). Similarly, *The Writing Process* (Lannon, 1992) offers a couple of pages under the heading, “Inserting Humor Where Appropriate,” in which the author observes that “a bit of humor can rescue an argument that might otherwise cause hard feelings” (p. 373). What would the Church Lady say about so guarded a license to amuse: “Isn’t that special?”

This grudging acceptance of humor is unfortunate not only because it leaves a potential source of energy and enthusiasm untapped, but also because collaborative work on humor writing can provide opportunities for achieving objectives that are often seen as incompatible by composition theorists: writing as personal expression and writing as critical response to cultural and social conditioning. Describing the goal of getting beyond this expressivist/social constructivist dichotomy, Linda Flower (1989) has asked, “Can we . . . reconcile a commitment to nurturing a personal voice, individual purpose, or an inner, self-directed process of making meaning, with . . . the more recent assertions that inquiry in writing must start with social, cultural, or political awareness?” (p. 282).

To develop practices for such classroom reconciliations, we should bear in mind the profoundly personal and social qualities of shared amusement. As for this overlap, a century of social science humor research (Fine, 1983; Keith-Spiegel, 1972) has both confirmed and elaborated on the pioneering insights of Freud (1905/1963) and Bergson (1911). For the former, humor, like dreams, expresses repressed desires; for the latter, humor is a mechanism of social regulation of deviant behavior and thought. Because of this interplay, every written or recounted joke can tell us a good deal about its creator or teller: revealing the current state of his or her knowledge of the joke’s subject, his or her disposition to the norms, expectations, or cognitive patterns apparently violated in the joke, and her level of sophistication. In listening to jokes and critiquing them, each of us works through a set of values that we may or may not have been consciously aware of. Similarly, the act of writing a joke brings us to a charged intersection of social and individual motifs of identity—allowing for the possibility of self-encounter, a potentially expansive revisioning of the self.

In the flow of social dialogue, the implicit values of humor frequently operate too fleetingly to be observed. But in the writing classroom, we can slow down these exchanges, and—by making them topics for analysis—see how they come into (our) play. If students can become more aware of the values that inform their most spontaneous—that is, least restrained or comprehended—responses, they may be able to transfer this sensitivity to the other moods and tasks of prose composition.

¹A notable exception may be found in Lynn Z. Bloom’s *Fact and Artifact*; Chapter 7 Writing Humor, provides an introduction to comic purposes, structures, language, and forms. See also sections on humor in Collette and Johnson (1993) and Miller and Webb (1992).

Perhaps instructors are reluctant to include humor writing in composition courses because they suspect that humor creation cannot be taught or that, even if someone named Allen (Woody or Steve) might be able to do this, they certainly can't. While it is no doubt true that comic genius is as unteachable as any other miracle of human development, it is also true that we know enough about humor to guide students through the process of creating it. Cognitive and linguistic studies (Raskin, 1985; Suls, 1983) have confirmed the ancient view of a humorous text or stimulus as one that associates ideas or images usually considered separate. In this way puns rely on phonetic overlap to call attention to connections between, for instance, nakedness and pandas (barely linked) or prostitutes and hobos (both called tramps).

Studies of professional comedians (Fisher & Fisher, 1981; Fry & Allen, 1975; Janus, 1975) suggest that—as a result of unusual childhood relationships (with nonnurturing parents who insist that they grow up and stop acting like children)—many future comics are sensitized to incongruity (that is, a sense that no value or norm is absolute, no idea fixed) as a ruling principle of life. This mind set supports the comic's unconventionality: his or her willingness to play with words, question authority, doubt piety, and reject obvious truths. To the extent that our students should think for themselves, we need to consider having them spend a few weeks on assignments that shake up the ordinary arrangement of their ideas.

Reading and Writing Jokes: Word Play and Audience Response

Just as our students need to study logic to write stronger arguments, so they need to attend to the structure and functions of jokes to become humor creators. For this reason, students should be asked to read classic and contemporary works on humor and to engage in the simple ethnographic project of collecting a few (five or ten) jokes currently being told. One useful source for classic humor texts is John Morreall's anthology *The Philosophy of Humor and Laughter* (1987). The short sections in this anthology by Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Kant, and Spencer clarify the structure of humorous texts, as should the chapter on humor by Jerry M. Suls (1983). Selections in the Morreall anthology from the work of Bergson, Freud, and Joseph Boskin, and readings from contemporary humor researchers—for instance, Alan Dundes (1987) on ethnic jokes, Gary Spenser (1989) on JAP-baiting jokes — also establish a basis for discussing how jokes operate.

Collecting current jokes allows writers to apply what they are reading to the present cultural and personal moment. It develops a set of texts and contexts for an analysis that asks why these texts are jokes (rather than serious narratives) and why they are circulating now. Discussion of the structural properties of jokes highlights the multiple meanings of words and phrases and, therefore, of the importance of the most precise and economical prose style. "Cut these words and they would bleed," Emerson said (as cited in Murray, 1968, p. 234), sounding grim enough about the need for care when editing serious texts. But comedians take an even dimmer view of revision, since they know that cutting or moving a single word in a joke can lead to hemorrhaging and death. Because people who cannot tell jokes effectively lack the sensitivity to language that writing cultivates, they miss just this point: that every word counts.

Analyzing and creating jokes, even cheesy puns, calls attention to the complexity and richness of language—of words and phrases—by bringing their range of potential meanings to consciousness. Linguistic comprehension requires a largely unconscious sorting out of significance, a quick selection of the point intended in an utterance or written text. Someone asks, “Are you feeling a little stiff today?” and you instantly infer from the context (you were stretching or groaning) that he is using the word *stiff* to inquire about your physical flexibility. A serious question requiring a serious response. But a humor creator approaches this language exchange with a more expansive set of possible meanings and objectives, as even a casual consideration of other associations of the word *stiff* can demonstrate.

Consider the waitress who complains about the fact that her boss often seats a corpse at one of her tables. “Every time they put him there,” she laments, “he stiffes me.” Although an obsessive interest in punning suggests a low level of humor creativity, raising awareness of the opportunities for joke writing inherent in multiple meanings (*stiff* and *stiffs*) slows down the process by which we move past alternative meanings to get the point. A rich prose style requires this higher order of awareness of the ways words and phrases resonate.

Student prose often seems unsophisticated because it lacks just such an appreciation of words chosen for the sharpest, most telling effects of both connotation and denotation. A sense of weakness in this area convinces too many novice writers to hunt for vocabulary in a thesaurus, to search for a fancy cousin of a word like *stiff* with no fear that their prose may sound unmoving, rigid, even dead. Writing humor can help students see that—just as no word related to *stiff* (for instance, stubborn, unbending, awkward, uncompromising, and tense)—can take its place in the punch line of the waitress joke. So there are no perfect synonyms. Every word has its own a cluster of associations.

To draw students to such associations, I have found that students writing jokes collaboratively in response to specific exercises helps reduce both their competence and performance anxieties. Creating jokes and comic sketches helps students see how they can succeed by slowing down the familiar but unconscious process that underpins spontaneously generated wit (teasing, punning, clowning). Just as memories that may inspire an autobiographical essay are always percolating into and out of consciousness, so jokes or joke fragments (perceived incongruities capable of being resolved) are often present in the mind. To the extent that creating humor tends to affect consciousness, it does so by making students more aware of such opportunities in ongoing thought.

Striving for spontaneity, I tend to design in-class exercises just before a class starts; for the same reason, I rarely use the same one more than once or twice. The point of generating jokes quickly is quantity not quality, silly puns being not only acceptable but also the most common. In the process of explaining the exercises, I provide examples both to demonstrate that at least a rudimentary joke can fit into a given format and to allow for groaning at my own expense that suggesting that anyone, even the instructor, can do this. Insofar as designing exercises is one of the delights of teaching humor writing, the examples below are offered as illustration:

- Write about an unusual marriage: either a description of the relationship or a brief conversation between the bride and groom.

Examples:

The Pope marries Mother Teresa. "Quite a sacrifice," he says.
"Oh, don't be such a martyr," she replies.

A cannibal canine marries a sadomasochistic feline.
"It's a perfect union in a dog-eat-dog world," he says."
I love it when you're vicious," she replies, lashing out with her
cat-o'-nine-tails.

The Little Mermaid marries Moby Dick, and they have whale of a
time under the sea.

- Pick a kind of fruit and write a joke about an unusual childhood experience it once had, like the grapes who always bunched up or the cherries who grew up thinking life was the pits.
- Think of an unusual restaurant and its name or main dish.

Examples:

Have you heard about the sadist who opened a Cajun restaurant?
The specialty of the house is blackened bluefish.

Have you heard about the new health food restaurant for masons?
It's called Grouts 'n Sprouts.

Writing jokes on demand requires students to take words and expand out from them into associated ideas and images. "Right," one student might say, "What do we know about grapes? That they live in clusters or bunches, are used in juice and wine, that they hang around." "And," another student might add, "there are raisins and jam and the expression 'sour grapes.'" In moments of discovery, jokes appear.

Another opportunity presented in both the reading and writing of jokes becomes clear when we think about how the word *stiff* popped up in jokes about John Wayne Bobbitt, the unfortunate husband who received anything but a stiff sentence for his role in severing his . . . marriage. That many people would be amused while many others would be repulsed by this joke (and by jokes about such figures as Michael Jackson, Jeffrey Dahmer, Hillary Clinton, or JonBenet Ramsey) calls attention to issues of audience response. Because it is easy for students to see how a joke can strike readers as inappropriate, differences in humor appreciation can be used to demonstrate what attending to audience response is all about.

Using contemporary jokes and humor controversies can help ground this

discussion in the present cultural moment. Were I using this approach today, I might call attention to jokes about such subjects as the O.J. Simpson civil case, President Bill Clinton and campaign fund raising, or AIDS treatment, all subjects in the news. Questions about audience and function would help shape class discussion. For example, if, as opinion polls suggest, views of O.J.'s innocence tend to correlate with racial and economic affiliation, would different O.J. jokes tend to appeal to different audiences? What do particular jokes assume in the way of information and values shared by tellers and listeners? How do particular jokes convey information, imply value judgments? How do they seek to define/construct their audiences? I would not expect composition students (or anyone else) to arrive at definitive answers to such questions. But I would expect that collecting and analyzing provocative jokes would sensitize them to the complex relations among writers, texts, and audiences.

By way of illustration, I might invite students to compare a joke told by President Ronald Reagan in the early days of the AIDS epidemic with jokes told recently by HIV-Positive Comedian Steve Morse (as cited in Richards, 1997). According to Kitty Kelley (1992), "Reagan enjoyed mimicking homosexuals" and telling jokes about AIDS victims:

He loved to tell the one about two doctors at the medical convention talking about treating AIDS patients. . . . One doctor said to the other: "I've got the solution. I serve them a special dinner of crepes and filet of sole." "What does that do? It's not a cure." "No it's not," said the doctor, "but the advantage is that I can just slide it under the door, and I don't have to touch them." (p. 497)

It is instructive to contrast this joke, told at a time when a conservative administration was keeping the disease at a distance and resisting the idea of mounting a program of AIDS education, with the kinds of jokes Morse tells:

Notice how there's always a cure for AIDS? Did you hear about the one that says you drink peroxide? It oxidizes your blood and kills the virus. And it's only 99 cents. That was the cure two years ago. Well, I drank that [expletive] for two months. My T-cells didn't go up, but my hair looked fabulous! . . . People are always saying, 'I can't believe you've been exposed to the AIDS virus. You've never looked better.' I figure, hell, pretty soon, I'll be drop-dead gorgeous." (Richards, 1997)

Unlike the doctor/dinner joke that laughs about trying to avoid AIDS patients, Morse's jokes humanize them by helping us glimpse their experience or point of view. Different purposes, different audiences.

The study of jokes both as texts and as social and psychological events draws students' attention to the critical (but often difficult to perceive and understand) relation between writer and reader (teller and audience; individual and society; culture and sub-groups). Readings on such theory and research as Morreall (1987), J. H. Goldstein and P. E. McGhee (1983) and P. E. McGhee (1979) can help

prepare instructors to discuss the varied functions of humor: from instruction to ridicule, anxiety reducing to hostility, venting, nurturing to attack. Seeing this very range of functions not only of different jokes but also of the same joke when told in varying situations can heighten student awareness to the subtleties writers should bring to their work.

The study of humor controversies—of outraged readers and outrageous jokes—can also sensitize student writers to the need for not only intelligence but also clarity and generosity in their responses to writing. Just as humor can be nurturing or threatening (Norman Cousins versus Freddy Krueger), so student writers should learn that what they say to someone else matters in many situations no more than how they say it. I want students to bring this enhanced appreciation of audiences not only to the humor but to everything they write—and to the tone they use in responding to the work of others.

Writing Skits and Parodies

Just as joke writing can heighten awareness of linguistic opportunities and audience response, so writing skits and parodies can lead students to greater subtlety in their treatment of ideas. Every skit is a pun more or less richly elaborated; every parody turns an established work or genre on its head. Ordinarily, like a British butler, we keep our ideas in order, neatly arranged: the impressionists were not dentists, the Spanish Inquisition no longer reigns, and so on. But to the humor writer the overlaying of these generally separated frames of reference has vast potential. If the impressionists had been dentists, then, as Woody Allen's Van Gogh writes, the following possibilities exist:

Toulouse-Lautrec is the saddest man in the world. He longs more than anything to be a great dentist, and he has real talent, but he's too short to reach his patients' mouths and too proud to stand on anything Meanwhile, my old friend Monet refuses to work on anything but very, very large mouths and Seurat, who is quite moody, has developed a method of cleaning one tooth at a time until he builds up what he calls "a full, fresh mouth." It has an architectural solidity to it, but is it dental work? (1972, pp. 201–202)

Writing these sentences required knowledge of both nineteenth-century European art and dentistry and the willingness to loosen up about these subjects. While we want our students to take their ideas seriously, at least some of the time, we also want them to expand the way they entertain thoughts and opinions: to consider that any view can be contradicted, that every idea needs to be tested by logic and evidence. And that they therefore should be willing to subject even—no, especially—their most firmly held convictions to reevaluation. What students need is not primarily the satirist's instinct for using wit to ridicule the views of others but the comedian's freely flowing sense that every idea in some context can seem absurd.

One of the most important benefits of humor—recognized in studies of comedy going back at least to Henri Bergson (1911), Northrup Frye (1957), and

C. L. Barber (1957)—is the temporary liberation it offers from habitual convictions. The business of classic comedy is the overthrowing of world views (as embodied in characters like Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* and Egeus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) that seek to block new ideas or social relations. And what comedies do for audiences or characters, humor writing can do for our students. In working on such assignments, students can happily discover that not that everything is a joke but that they can expand emotionally and intellectually by playing with ideas, by asking the potentially hilarious *if* questions of comedy: if a man wore an ass's head, if a woman were attracted to another woman disguised as a man, if there were an unofficial cheer-leading squad that showed up to root for high school chess and swim teams—what comic potential could be tapped? And in the process how might we come to a more expansive view of serious topics concerning, for instance, power relations, gender politics, or social conformity? For example, we can ask students to:

- Take a literary character or film actor and place him or her in an unlikely alternative work. Then have the character tell the story from his or her point of view.

Examples:

Woody Allen as the Terminator

Beavis and Butt-head in a detective movie

Evita as a character in a slasher film.

- Pick a famous or infamous person and imagine that he or she has a syndicated advice column. Now write a few sample letters and responses.

Examples:

Ask Baron von Frankenstein

Dear Howard Stern

Tips from Prince Charles

- Write a comic skit and a TV commercial using the three randomly selected objects you were asked to bring to class. The skit should be set in a department store, classroom, or job interview. The commercial should have a satirical object like gerbil blush or Liz Taylor sandbags, perhaps because it targets foolish consumerism or unscrupulous advertising.
- Write parodic versions of a few college course descriptions, working to make fun of both the form they take and the academic topics they advertise and describe.

I save about fifteen minutes at the end of classes for exercises or presenting their work. As groups watch and listen, the room fills with laughter and applause.

At the end, groups compare notes and experiences. A student might say something like, "It was neat the way the first group worked with Evita as a psychopath by rewriting the lyrics for 'Don't Cry for Me, Argentina.'" Another student might return the compliment, saying, "Right, but your indecisive, self-doubting Woody Allen cyborg was hilarious."

Humor Projects

Given the generally high level of skepticism about humor in the profession, I hope that instructors intrigued by such humor writing will experiment with the kinds of exercises and assignments described above. To begin, one could take a day or week to look at humorous prose and work on a few in-class exercises. The enthusiasm of students will, I predict, stimulate greater efforts with this project.

If instructors decide to devote a bit more time to humor-writing, they can ask students to work outside of class, alone or in groups, to create more ambitious projects (longer skits or parodies) as homework for eventual presentation to the class. If students are allowed to pick their own subjects, we can expect a wide-ranging but energetic response to the task. In both first-year and advanced writing courses, some students have dealt with local or campus issues (for instance, "Reversal of Genders" [a skit based on the premise that female students in a dorm act and think like male students and vice versa] and "The Depths" [a parody of the Boston College student newspaper, *The Heights*]). Other projects have dealt with broader social, political, or psychological matters (e.g., "My Life as a Sock" [a skit narrated by a sock about the difficulties encountered in one day: rolling in the dryer, getting separated from its proper mate, and so on]; "Relaxing the Inner Nerd" [a parody of meditation tapes]; "Frankie Conatra: Politically Correct Lounge Singer"). Working together, students come to see that humorous prose is far from frivolous; they can use it to create vivid images, tell compelling stories, reach specific audiences, and advance ideas persuasively.

Or instructors might consider a bolder full-class collaborative project based on the model of Ken Kesey's fiction-writing course at the University of Oregon (Knox-Quinn, 1990) in which the students work with Kesey in and out of class on writing a novel. It would be interesting to pick a well known publication—the hometown newspaper or the college catalog, perhaps—and generate a parody of it. Just as Kesey works with the whole class on outlining chapters and then assigns sections to individuals, so too the class working on the catalog parody might divide it into small units and then assemble the whole together. Because parody-writing requires a thorough understanding of the rhetoric, purpose, and style of its target, the enterprise should begin with careful reading of the catalog with an eye toward seeing the way it conveys its ideas and impressions. Does the catalog ever discuss problems at the school? Does it honestly describe campus life? What is the comparative importance to the administration and alumni of academic and athletic programs? By highlighting the limitations of the target (and, more generally, the constraints of all writing), such questions draw attention to potential sources of parodic thrust.

Because humor is one of three primary responses to the incongruous or unexpected (the others being curiosity and fear) (Rothbart, 1976), humor is too

important to be merely inserted into writing. Far from being a matter only of style or ornamentation, humor rearranges ideas, conditions feelings, and provides perspective, distance, and detachment. It highlights contradictions, hypocrisy, false piety. It provides the rapier of satire, the pratfall of farce, the stunning deflation of mockery, the sudden rush and revelation of the well-delivered punch line. No attendant lord in the court of prose writing, humor is a peer to other luminous sources of energy: honesty, skepticism, conviction, intensity, and insight. It should, as Thoreau said of poverty, “be cultivated like a garden herb, like sage” in our students.

At the end of Woody Allen's *Stardust Memories* (1980), Sandy Bates, the neurotic film director played by (and more than a little like) Allen, has a close encounter of the hilarious kind. Throughout the film, the depressed and beleaguered Bates flees from his numerous fans who function as a comic version of Eumenides—comic because their adoration of the famed *auteur* never prevents them from offering him the same advice: Stop making serious pictures. Go back to the mood of your early comedies. The extraterrestrials that Allen encounters offer the same wisdom, when they urge him to “tell funnier jokes.” Like the Allen character who literally runs away from humor, some writing instructors assume that labor and pleasure, serious purpose and comic mood, wisdom (or honesty or depth) and kidding are incompatible. These dichotomies are unfortunate, for, by tapping into students' enthusiasm for humor, by helping them find comic themes and voices, we can help them become more flexible, joyful, and sensitive writers. ☺

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Happiness and the Blank Page: Csikszentmihalyi's Flow in the Writing Classroom

Gina Briefs-Elgin

*If, then, there is some end of the things we do,
which we desire for its own sake (everything else
being desired for the sake of this) . . . clearly this
must be the good and the chief good. Will not the
knowledge of it, then, have a great influence on life?*

Aristotle
The Nicomachean Ethics

In his *Letters to a Young Poet*, Rainer Maria Rilke (1908/1993) advised his disciple to "hold to the difficult." If he did this, what he most feared would be transformed into great happiness: "How should we be able to forget those ancient myths that are at the beginning of all peoples, the myths about dragons that at the last moment turn into princesses . . . ?" (p. 69). Rilke's advice to this young writer is not new. Throughout time, teachers have tried to convince young people of the apparently absurd and certainly unsettling proposition that happiness lies in seizing the difficult. I would like to suggest that recent developments in psychology may help us as writing teachers (particularly as developmental composition teachers) in this struggle.

For a long time, psychology wasn't much interested in happiness. The study of mental illness preempted the study of mental health. But in the past two decades interest in the phenomenon of happiness has blossomed (Swanbrow, 1989, pp. 37-38). At the center of this endeavor is University of Chicago psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "the father of flow psychology." In *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1990) which crystallized for the lay person twenty years of research in the field, Csikszentmihalyi used the tools of modern psychology to provide statistical evidence for what thoughtful people have generally maintained: that happiness may be found not in relaxation and freedom from difficulty but in growth-producing encounters with difficulty. He examined what happens during individual encounters with difficulty: episodes of "flow," an enchanted state we enter when we engage in any meaningful, difficult activity that stretches us to the limits of—but not beyond—our skills so that we

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are poised perfectly between boredom and anxiety. He demonstrated that, while some activities, such as rock-climbing and chess-playing, are naturally conducive to flow, any activity, through our decision to make it our own and to tease meaning from it, can be transformed into a flow activity, and he invited us to create the conditions of flow in work and in leisure.

Because the theory of flow involves issues at the heart of teaching—difficulty and mastery—its interest to educators should be obvious. Reed Larson (1985), Csikszentmihalyi's coauthor of studies on adolescent development, demonstrated that students in flow write better than students who are anxious or bored and that successful student writers instinctively monitor their processes to achieve a flow-producing balance between anxiety and boredom, and S. McLeod (1987) called for research into the ways Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow can guide writing task design.

I would like to suggest that flow theory can also be valuable to improve student motivation to write. I believe emphasis on the rewards of engagement with difficulty can be useful to all teachers and particularly to those who teach English composition, the subject many students consider most difficult.

What has composition got to do with happiness? Students would no doubt respond, "Very little." Recently, I surveyed my basic writers on their attitudes towards writing papers. One question had them number these activities in order of preference: writing a five-page paper, painting five rooms, digging a ditch, or undergoing root canal. Writing a five-page paper came out first on only 17 of the 71 surveys. Painting five rooms beat writing a five-page paper 33 times. Digging a ditch beat writing a five-page paper 28 times, and at least 10 students chose the root canal over the five-page paper.

We don't need surveys to tell us that many students don't enjoy writing papers. They dread it because writing can be a laborious task involving complex performances and—worse—riddled with unknowns. "The maker of a sentence," wrote Emerson (1834/1960), "launches out into the infinite and builds a road into Chaos and Old Night" (p. 59). Surely, since time immemorial students have approached writing assignments unhappily, scowling over their clay or wax tablets, making despondent ink blots in their *cahiers*. But in the late twentieth century there are new wrinkles. Because they live in the thick of consumerism, students are less experienced in the challenge of making things from scratch than were young people formerly; what's more, our consumer culture actively discourages them from including "difficult-making" in their definitions of happiness.

Our country's success has depended on each individual's energetic productivity. Children were raised with the uncomfortable notions that idle hands were the devil's workshop and that happiness lay in accomplishing difficult tasks. They learned from their parents the rewarding work of wrestling raw matter and data into shape—often into complex patterns. Jefferson's Monticello, at the plutocratic level, and the *Foxfire* series, at the popular level, remind us that our predecessors were intimate with difficulty and with the exhilaration of difficult making.

But contemporary culture affords scant opportunity for what Irving Stone once called "the agony and the ecstasy" of creating. The Industrial Revolution took away our need and ability to create manually—our own houses, furniture,

food, clothing—and the media revolution has virtually taken away our ability to create mentally—ideas, music, stories, images, entertainment, adventure. In a society where agribusiness, corporations, and the media meet every need, making is severed from any relationship to necessity and reduced to mere hobby. Our country's economic success seems to depend on passive consumption and has redefined it as happiness. We are assured that if we are free of the labor of making things (not just dinner but plans and love), if we are carefree, we will be happier. And so, as Charles Reich notes in his perennially relevant *Greening of America* (1970), we are “sold artificial pleasures and artificial dreams to replace the high human and spiritual adventure that had once been America” (p. 40).

“We have a new joke on the reservation,” the shaman tells author Richard Erdoes (Fire & Erdoes, 1972), “What is cultural deprivation?” Answer: “Being an upper-middle-class white kid living in a split-level suburban home with a color TV” (p. 110). Our adolescent students are particularly bombarded with the media credo that happiness lies in consuming someone else's products, images, dreams.

Besides disparaging hard work and promoting consumption, TV swallows the hours students might otherwise dedicate to the pleasures of carpentry or gardening, of making models, clothing, poetry, or art. A 1995 government report on adolescent use of time offered these statistics: “American adolescents aged 12–17 spent an average of two-and-a-half hours per day watching television, but only 27 minutes a day doing homework, . . . and 9 minutes a day pursuing hobbies or arts and crafts . . . weekday and weekend days combined” (Zill et al., p. 7).

For students with little experience in creative difficulty and ample experience with passive consumption, it is easy to understand the misery of freshman writers, slumped like a question mark at midnight over the white page of an open notebook. That blank white page might as well be a blank cassette or a TV screen with snow—because composition, more than most other college subjects, requires the anguishingly difficult and ultimately exhilarating creation of something from nothing, the very opposite of consumption.

Unless we're sadists, we don't enjoy this image. We want our students to want to write, to be happy, that is, motivated to write. We find some useful methods to ease students into writing: journals, prewriting techniques, engaging topics. But no matter how valuable, such strategies for easing the writing process ultimately hit a brick wall. We can't eliminate the difficulty—but by taking a page from Csikszentmihalyi, we can tackle the other end of the problem: helping our students reject “the strongly rooted cultural stereotype” (1990, p. 160) of happiness as ease and redefine it to include difficulty.

Let us take a closer look at Csikszentmihalyi's research. He began in the seventies to look for the answer to a simple question: “When do people feel most happy?” He felt that if people knew the answer, they could shape their lives in more satisfying directions. With the help of an international network of colleagues, he interviewed people from dozens of countries and every walk of life—collecting over one hundred thousand records—to discover when they felt happiest. From this data, Csikszentmihalyi composed the first scientific profile of happiness (or as he also calls it, “optimal experience” or “flow”). His central findings (1990, 1994) were:

Contrary to what we usually believe, moments like these, the best moments in our lives, are not the passive, receptive, relaxing times—although such experiences can also be enjoyable, if we have worked hard to attain them. The best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is thus something that we make happen. (p. 3)

Regardless of circumstances or background, people all over the world—chess players, telephone operators, shepherds, CEOs, weavers, pilots—offered descriptions of their flow experiences which Csikszentmihalyi found astonishingly similar. Using their reports, he compiled a list of the major components of enjoyment:

1. Tasks are manageable
2. Environment is conducive to concentration
3. Goals are clear
4. Feedback is immediate
5. Involvement is deep but effortless
6. Individuals feel in control
7. Individuals are free from sense of self
8. They lose an awareness of time
9. A stronger self emerges after the experience.

(p. 49, 71)

These optimal experiences “are not necessarily pleasant at the time they occur,” wrote Csikszentmihalyi:

The swimmer's muscles might have ached during his most memorable race, his lungs might have felt like exploding, and he might have been dizzy with fatigue—yet these could have been the best moments of his life. Getting control of life is never easy, and sometimes it can be definitely painful. (pp. 3–4)

We see how different this definition of happiness is from the definitions of many of our students (and even our own!). This happiness has nothing to do with ease. Rather, it has difficulty at its very heart. And yet, it is crucial that our students understand this: that the happiness Csikszentmihalyi is talking about is no sacrifice-and-struggle-someday-you-will-thank-me sort. No, this is upfront happiness, happening as they do an arduous, perhaps even painful, thing—or immediately after—like the runner's high.

The issue is how to achieve the biggest rush of happiness, or, in Csikszentmihalyi's term, flow:

In fact, when we struggle against entropy, we do get an immediate and very concrete reward from our actions: we enjoy whatever we are doing, moment by moment. The self is flooded with a sense of

exhilaration In those moments we feel that, instead of suffering through events over which we have no control, we are creating our own lives. (1994, p. 175)

Csikszentmihalyi believes this sense of exhilaration is one “that becomes a landmark in memory for what life should be like” (1990, p. 3).

And the most enduring rush of happiness. As did Maslow (1968), Csikszentmihalyi pointed out that pleasures as food, drink, shelter, and relaxation do not satisfy for long because they do not lead to the growth of self. Homeostatic experiences merely eliminate an organic need and restore the self to its previous condition. But the happiness that arises out of our conscious engagements with difficulty endures, according to Csikszentmihalyi, because each occasion of flow adds “complexity to the self” (1990, p. 46). What Csikszentmihalyi’s research thus demonstrates is that difficulty is, in fact, an essential condition, which, over a lifetime, add up to self-actualization.

An exploration into the paradoxical inner workings of happiness can help students discover its rich realities. But we must clear the air of a question. If flow occurs naturally when human beings engage with difficulty in a personally meaningful endeavor, what does it matter whether students learn about the psychology of happiness? What does it matter whether or not they redefine happiness to include difficulty? A good question, particularly since writing assignments based on sound composition theory meet all of Csikszentmihalyi’s conditions of flow: they challenge students to nudge what Larson (1985) calls their “performance envelope” (p. 40).

Not necessarily. According to Csikszentmihalyi, being involved in a flow activity is no guarantee of a flow experience: “How we feel at any given moment of a flow activity is strongly influenced by the objective conditions; but consciousness is still free to follow its own assessment” (1990, pp. 75–76); a professional football player, for example, might be bored in the middle of a game most people would rank high among flow activities.

No matter how carefully we design for flow, many students may fail to experience it in writing because the powerful myth prevents them from noticing the evidence from their senses. People’s workday experience exemplifies this phenomenon. Certainly, one reason people are reluctant to get out of bed on Monday mornings is because many jobs are neither self-generated nor personally meaningful. But Csikszentmihalyi noted:

On the job people feel skillful and challenged, and therefore feel more happy, strong, creative, and satisfied. In their free time people feel . . . their skills are not being used, and therefore they tend to feel more sad, weak, dull, and dissatisfied. Yet they would like to work less and spend more time in leisure. (1990, pp. 159–160)

An observation of Maslow (1968) further illuminates this point. He described the central role of perception in a person’s ability to have “peak experiences”:

My experience is that whenever I have lectured approvingly about

peak-experiences, it was as if I had given permission to the peak-experiences of some people, at least, in my audience to come into consciousness. (pp. 88–89)

What I am recommending, then, is a little benign tinkering with our students' definitions of happiness. By sharing Csikszentmihalyi's findings with them, we can help students recognize what actually does make them happy rather than what their cultural programming tells them will make them happy. Csikszentmihalyi can teach them to anticipate flow in their laborious work so that they will embrace rather than dread writing assignments and (using Alice Brand's apt term) "recruit" (1983, p. 441) emotion into their encounters with the blank page.

Each of us can think of ways to include these new/old discoveries about the nature of happiness in our pedagogy to help our students approach even the most arduous project as a source of happiness. What follows is a miscellany of projects that I have used in basic writing, freshman composition, and research classes.

The first has students examining media definitions of happiness, thinking about their elders' definitions and articulating their own. Later projects introduce students to Csikszentmihalyi's findings on happiness and ask them to examine their own lives in light of flow psychology.

As classes began, I told my students that happiness would be a recurring topic during the semester. I made Aristotle's point, in Book I of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, that happiness is the mother of all motivations, and added that for this reason I consider it a central educational issue. In another project, I asked my students to bring in and present three images or artifacts representing aspects of the media's definition of happiness. Among their exhibits the following week were Bud bottle caps, copies of *Sports Illustrated*, dollar bills, Marlboro and Camel coupons, autographs of sports heroes, a *Star Wars* video game, CDS, and ads for a wedding dress, a strip club, and Absolut Vodka.

As students presented their items, I asked them to look for recurring themes. For example, advertising images mimic sensations in flow—the refreshment of novelty ("NEW!"); heightened senses of color (camera/film ads) or sound (stereo ads); and the sense of being lighter than air (bubbly soft drink ads and those using images of sailing and ballooning). Advertisers market sensory simulations of flow/happiness in lieu of the Real Thing, which, of course, is not for sale but can be obtained with ease by engaging with difficulty. This assignment prepared students for further discussion of the idea of happiness by making visible the narrowness and easy glitz of the media's definition.

Another definition exercise provided a sharp contrast. One day I put two columns on the board: "happiness for our elders" and "happiness for us." Then I asked students to compare the way they and their grandparents find happiness. After filling the two columns, my students concluded that for the older generation central ingredients for happiness were work, family, religion, cultural traditions, and patriotism. An important insight was the connection between happiness and work. "In our free times, we watch TV," commented one student. "But my grandpa, he'll go to work. He loves to work." When students recognize how free the elderly can be from media stereotypes of happiness,

it may be easier for them to relinquish these stereotypes.

After my students had examined their definitions of happiness and those of their elders, they write their own. Most felt happiness lay in loving relationships, financial security, relaxation, entertainment, and sports. A large number defined happiness as the absence of difficulty: happiness was having “no worries,” “no troubles,” “no problems,” “feeling carefree.” Certainly, loving relationships are central to happiness and the “no worries, no problems” definitions might reflect the serious health, family, and financial crisis our students so often face. The disheartening thing is that of the 67 students responding, only 17—one quarter—included challenging themselves or pursuing goals anywhere in their extended definitions of happiness. And yet we’d want every university student to say, I feel like I’m walking on air when I take on a really laborious project, struggle with it, and make it my own. What is a university if not a place for people who find happiness in the rigors of discovery and creation?

Once my students had consciously defined where in their lives they expected to find happiness, I hoped that exposure to Csikszentmihalyi’s *Flow* would help them expand those definitions. At every opportunity I brought into the classroom—under the guise of diagnostics, essay prompts, exercises, and even grammar drills—passages from Csikszentmihalyi that addressed the connection between difficulty and happiness. Productive essay prompts may be found throughout *Flow*, for example: “Periods of struggling to overcome challenges are what people find to be the most enjoyable times of their lives” (p. 6) and “[e]njoyable events occur when a person has gone beyond what he or she has been programmed to do and achieved something unexpected, perhaps something even unimagined before” (p. 46).

A unit on paraphrasing and summarizing provided an occasion for students to work closely with important passages from *Flow*: I teamed Csikszentmihalyi’s “contrary to what we usually believe” (p. 3) quotation with Rilke’s on “dragons that in the last moment turn into princesses.” Students paraphrased the passages and then wrote about times in their own lives when they had experienced its truth (sports excluded!)—a job, volunteer work, a chore, or a challenging project they had set for themselves.

Like much of the wisdom we wish to pass on to young people, the truth of this unglitzy message may not be immediately apparent. It may be years before students actually stretch to experience this truth. Or it may be the next day. Or it may never be. As composition teachers, we can only remind students, over and over again and in different ways, of this expanded idea of happiness, give them opportunities to push their performance envelopes, and wait.

The research paper class may be what we wait for. The terrifying rigors of this first serious, professional paper, the sense of its importance, the terrific sense of accomplishment any student even half successful feels on printing out the crisp white final pages—these make the research paper a perfect candidate for a first conscious experience of flow in writing. In the first weeks of this class, I reiterated the formula: At the thought of this paper you may experience terror and despair; but you will seize the bear by the ears and you will be surprised by happiness, flow. I alerted them to all the masks their fear would take: the sudden domestic obsession that leads to starched tablecloths or investments in semi-gloss

paint, the compulsion to crawl under the bed with a quart of Chocolate Death Ripple. And I used their dry-run papers, written from controlled sources, to immerse them in the new findings on the psychology of happiness. I provided them with excerpts from, and reviews of, *Flow* and articles on the psychology of happiness, drawn from *The New York Times*, *Psychology Today*, and the *Utne Reader*.

As students began their work, they kept process journals, recording not only their discoveries and library strategies, but also their emotional states as they worked their way through their laborious project. And I entertained them with purple passages from my own process journals.

Process journals are useful for drawing students' conscious attention to their emotional states during writing; surveys are useful for drawing attention to their emotional states after writing is over. We think of surveys as serving the survey-giver; but it's likely that they serve the respondents more. What is a survey if not an invitation to examine and reflect on one's experience? Students completed surveys at two points during the research paper class. I gave them an informal survey the day they handed in their first draft and a formal survey the day they handed in their final paper. With their first drafts, I wrote these survey questions on the board: "During the days before you started writing, how did your body/mind feel? During the writing process, did you experience any strong positive feelings like excitement, exhilaration, happiness? Did you ever experience any of these eight characteristics of flow that Csikszentmihalyi identified?"

Eighteen out of twenty-three students reported feeling flow¹. Typical before-and-after responses were

During the days before I started writing, my body felt anxious...
My mind felt overwhelmed, disorganized... During the writing
process I felt. . . overjoyed, . . . I lost track of time;

Before I started writing, my body felt very horrified . . . I felt so
weak . . . Yes, I did experience 'flow—I felt very challenged and I
feel a great sense of accomplishment now that I've met my
challenge;

[Before writing I felt] submerged in an Arctic-like body of
water . . . When the words . . . began to just fly right out of my
head, down to my hand and onto my paper . . .

The day my twenty-five researchers turned in their final papers, I passed out an anonymous survey that I would see only after grades were in. I introduced several survey questions with key passages from *Flow*. The survey opened with the already-familiar passage about the best moments of our lives occurring when our minds or bodies are voluntarily stretched to their limits. "Does this passage relate at all to your experience working on your research paper?" I asked. Three

¹Two prep school students showed some pleasure at the prospect of the research paper, suggesting that their backgrounds had programmed them to anticipate happiness from laborious encounters and supporting my belief that exposure to the psychology of happiness has particular utility for developmental students.

students responded No, and 22 students responded Yes: “Yes, it comes very close to what I was feeling”; “Yes, . . . when I accomplished what I thought was difficult, I was proud of myself”; “Yes, I feel like this is the way I see life, so I am rather enthused by this passage.”

“Overcoming a challenge inevitably leaves a person feeling more capable, more skilled” wrote Csikszentmihalyi (1990, p. 41). I asked my students if they felt stronger, more skilled having completed their research paper? Twenty-one out of 22 responded Yes. I then asked, “As a result of our study of flow/happiness, do you feel that you are more aware of your feelings before, during, and after writing than you were before you took this class?” One said No; 19 said Yes. One wrote, “I have more courage now.” I asked, “In the future, will you approach difficult writing projects with less dread and more anticipation?” One student responded No and 18 responded Yes.

The purpose of these surveys was not, of course, to gather data demonstrating to me that arduous writing brings happiness. The purpose was to demonstrate it to my students. Reading these results to students—how one writer after another began in misery (the termites, the horrified body) and ended in elation—is perhaps the best way to drive home the point that difficulty and happiness go hand in hand.

Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of flow can unmask the fraudulent images of happiness foisted on our students. Such an act is liberating for all students: our poor students, humiliated by the media equation happiness = spending power, and our affluent students, surfeited and betrayed by material possessions and consumer entertainments. Csikszentmihalyi can help our students experience the existential difference between consuming and making, between the shopping mall and the blank page. The mall offers unnumbered products, experiences, and emotions to consume—none of which requires a spark of creative spirit or effort. The mall says, “You can relax. I have everything. Everything depends on me.” But the destructive subtext is “You are nothing.” On the other hand, working on a difficult writing project is anxiety-producing. “You better worry,” says the blank white page. “I have nothing. Everything depends on you.” But the constructive subtext is “You are everything.” ☹

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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 Spondrift 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. ☺

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CALL FOR PAPERS

Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning (JAEPL) solicits submissions for the fourth annual edition. The theme of this issue is *Mind, Body, Spirit: Teachers Making Connections*.

"There is no mind separate from the body, no god separate from his [sic] creation," Gregory Bateson asserts. Mind and nature form a necessary unity. The theme of *Mind, Body, Spirit: Teachers Making Connections* invites further speculations on the ways in which mind, body, and spirit form that necessary unity. Possible areas for consideration include:

- writing as healing
- poststructuralist textualities
- ecofeminism
- silence
- ethics
- schema theory as body based

As always, the theme is intended to initiate thinking, not limit it. We urge you to consider the connections in your lives, your teaching, and your writing, and respond to our call for papers.

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