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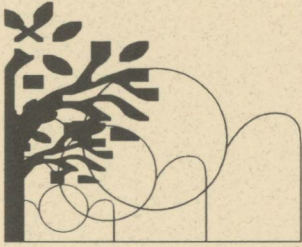
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J A E P L

The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning

**Leaping into Uncertainty:
Teaching and Learning
beyond Logic and Reason**

Volume 12 • Winter 2006-2007

The Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning

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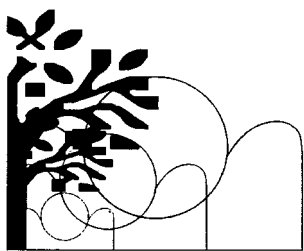
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J A E P L

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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.

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Editors' Message

In 1846, Søren Kierkegaard set forth the limits of logical systems and objective truth, neither of which can shed light on the important questions of life. "In logical systems," the nineteenth century Danish philosophy argues, "nothing may be incorporated that has a relationship to existence, that is not indifferent to existence" (141) because a logical system is purely speculative. Existence is an actuality, a doing. Logical systems cannot account for the necessary leap in life between almost doing something—thinking about doing something (and Kierkegaard's example is taking the bar exam)—and actually doing the thing. Similarly, objective knowledge "goes along leisurely on the long road of approximation" but never hurries to grapple with the material enactment of its contemplation. Unlike Socrates, Kierkegaard says, who posits the "if" of immortality and then, by drinking hemlock, leaps into the uncertainty of that "if" to plummet its possibilities, logical systems and objective truth never confront the "if."

However, subjective truth can inform questions of existence because, spurred by passion, it "contend[s] with uncertainty" and focuses not on the object of inquiry but on the relationship between the inquirer and the object of inquiry. It focuses on the space between, on the necessary leap between. Here is where we can find answers that will shed light on the important questions of our existence.

The essays in this volume align with Kierkegaard and embrace the possibilities of "if"; they emphasize in various ways the vitality and vitalness of leaping into uncertainty for it is here that marvelous learning potential and teaching moments exist.

We open with Lynn Z. Bloom and Carla Hill, who, in "High Stakes Gambling in the Master Class," chart the risk and rewards of "if." From the perspectives of a honors thesis advisor and an advisee, the authors examine what they call the "unarticulated intangibles" that enable a student to produce quality work seemingly out of "thin air." At the heart of this process is a high stakes gamble where teacher and learner both "play their hunches" and thus plunge into uncertainty. By trusting to a belief beyond logic and reason, they both "hit the jackpot."

Bloom and Hill provide a template for leaping into uncertainty and demonstrate its importance—the leap and the uncertainty—for teaching and learning. Our remaining authors also explore the rewards (and the fears) of diving into the possibilities of "if," and they do so from perspectives that privilege, in turn, the uncertainties of bodies, emotions, and creativity, all realms that align with and exist beyond logical systems and objective truth.

Judith Beth Cohen and Carolina Mancuso, in separate articles, focus on the role of what Cohen calls the "missing body" in education. In "The Missing Body: Yoga and Higher Education," Cohen claims that student passivity is one of the greatest obstacles to learning; such passivity results in part from teaching strategies that treat students as "talking heads" rather than learning bodies. Cohen proposes that Yoga can combat student passivity through "kinesthetic, somatic, and cognitive integration." Also concerned with the Western division between mind and body, Carolina Mancuso in "Bodies in the Classroom: Integrating Physical Literacy" argues for the importance of leaping into the body to learn with it instead of in spite of or against it. She says, "It is as if a shroud covers the depth

and breadth of the body's capability, and we fear its power over us." Mancuso advocates helping students access and explore their "body stories" as an essential move in tapping the richness of uncertain knowledge that can lead to Kierkegaard's subjective truth.

Hildy Miller and Stephanie Paterson shift attention from the body as a whole organism to one aspect of bodies: the domain of emotions. Both zero in on the importance of emotion in teaching and learning, the former arguing for a rhetoric of desire and the latter exploring the lash of fear. In "Writing Aphrodite: Imagining a Rhetoric of Desire for a Feminist Writing Course," Miller identifies a nagging problem with students' academic writing: "a lack of feeling and aesthetic qualities, a general joylessness in its language, and a repetitiveness in its worn out discourse forms." Such writerly ennui especially affects women who continue to feel displaced in the academic milieu. Her response is a rhetoric of desire which can reanimate student, especially women's, writing. The vehicle of that reanimation is the archetypal image of Aphrodite, who, because she stands for "the most audacious creativity," can serve as an "image for a feminist rhetoric of desire."

In "Lashing Out at 'Intellectuals'": Facing Fear on Both Sides of the Desk," Paterson adds another dimension to emotions. She explores the way in which fear of intellectual confusion—engendered by the "opacity" of academic prose—can motivate a student to attack through writing a teacher's agenda. Reciprocally, Paterson explores her own fear—a panicked reaction to what was initially perceived as a personal attack—that guided her response. In a student-teacher dialogue, both explore the terrors of learning and teaching so that they might discover not how to avoid fear and uncertainty but how to learn from and in the midst of both.

Finally, Rich Murphy and Susan Schiller return us to questions of curriculum. How might the leap into uncertainty be codified through a curriculum or a course syllabus? Murphy in "McLuhan's Warning, Frye's Strategy, Emerson's Dream" offers a curricular vision based on writing poetry. He argues for the place of poetic writing in all English classes, from literature to WAC programs. Such writing, Murphy contends, requires students to engage in associative and inductive thinking, leading to realization of the "dream of the citizen-poet," an individual who can shape a creative life that contributes to the civic good of the community.

Susan Schiller in "Uniting Creativity and Research: A Holistic Approach to Learning" advocates a sea change in the traditional approach to the research paper. Creativity—grappling with chaos and uncertainty—has been stripped from conventional research writing pedagogy. The goal is not to separate research and creativity but to balanced them. One way to do this is through a holistic pedagogy that engages the learner's intellect, body, spirit, and social being in the research enterprise. She demonstrates the possibilities of such an approach with examples of her students' work in two courses based on holistic pedagogy.

That which is certain, the OED tells us, is "determined, fixed, settled; not variable or fluctuating; unfailing." So a certainty is a truth that is likewise determined, fixed, and settled. It is a truth that is done, bereft of possibilities. An uncertainty, however, is ripe with potential, ripe with learning, ripe with insights into the issues that continue to beg for our attention. The essays in this volume of *JAEPL* invite us to leap into that uncertainty and find there moments of learning and teaching.

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High Stakes Gambling in the Master Class

Lynn Z. Bloom and Carla Hill

*You gotta know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em,
Know when to walk away and know when to run.
You never count your money when you're sittin' at the table.
There'll be time enough for countin' when the dealin's done.
—Kenny Rogers, "The Gambler"*

Focus: This essay explores some of the unarticulated intangibles in a relationship calculated to produce a distinguished thesis—sometimes out of thin air—that between Master Teacher and Honors Student. What a gamble! During the first semester of low key, high pressure Master Class tutorial sessions very little appears to be going on; during the second semester the work looks dull, derivative, disastrous, and the students—with grades hanging in the balance—get depressed. Yet the results, during the final semester, are often spectacular. What's going on? Why does this process so often work? What enables students to stop taking baby steps and to tap dance up the walls and across the ceiling? This process is a challenge to describe because most of what's happening is hard to articulate. It's felt, not spoken, an improvisatory dance with subtly changing melodies, overtones, undertones; unexpected rhythms and surprising dynamics. So after proffering my own analysis, I let the experience of my most recent advisee Carla Hill serve as a case study of a new-writer (and exemplary student)-at-work, and a commentary on the efficacy of two gamblers at work, playing their hunches. I conclude by examining two recent studies that show experts at work by the seat of their pants, playing their hunches.

Old Honors Students Never Die

I am not a gambling woman, by temperament or inclination. I love and indeed count on the comforts of a tenured professorship, steady publication, happy and nurturing family and friends. My house is alarmed (boo!) against fire, flood, freezing, carbon monoxide, and intruders. I drive a Volvo. I don't buy lottery tickets, fall (so far) for internet scams. Though I've flown over Everest via Buddha Air, snorkeled with seals in the Galapagos, and spent an energetic research month in high-tension England in the aftermath of the Lockerbie bombing, I have never been to Vegas or set foot in the Indian casinos right here in River City.

Lynn Z. Bloom, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor and Aetna Chair of Writing at the University of Connecticut, has published over one hundred personal/academic essays, including "(Im)Patient" (2005) and "Voices" (2004), some collected in Composition Studies as a Creative Art (1999). Her other books include a biography Doctor Spock (1972), editions of two American women prisoners' diaries (1980, 1989), composition studies works, and numerous essay textbooks.

Carla Hill graduated from the University of Connecticut summa cum laude in art history in May 2005. As a result of research for her novella, she plans to study art restoration in Florence, Italy beginning in January 2007.

They've enjoyed collaborating—as teacher and student and as authors.

Nevertheless, “Question Authority” reads my ideal bumper sticker—the motto of my Inner Gambler. One reason I’m so cheerful as a faculty member now is that long ago I developed the life-saving ability to ignore advice I didn’t want to hear. As the University of Michigan’s Outstanding Honors English Major, I dismissed the recommendation my advisor routinely gave to all graduating women, “Get a teaching certificate so you’ll have something to fall back on.” Every undergraduate paper I wrote deliberately challenged the professor’s views or the field’s conventional wisdom. I got my comeuppance only once, arguing that Milton’s Eve did too have some redeemable virtues. “You can’t say that!” said my pre-feminist professor, tattooing the paper with a C, though he gave me a wary A for the course.

I disregarded as well the graduate director’s fusillade, “What right have you to take a man’s seat? You’ll probably marry and have children, and that will destroy your chances in the profession. Every child a man has is an incentive for him to strive harder. Every child a woman has is an albatross around her neck, an encouragement to drop out.” Reader, I married just before grad school began (sssh!), took the seat anyway (humble furniture which eventually morphed into an endowed chair), and wrote my dissertation on literary biography, a subject so far out in left field that most faculty couldn’t see that mote in the distance. Within five years I finished the PhD with a baby on my knee, two book manuscripts at the publishers, and another baby forthcoming.

Those two children followed their humanist parents’ footsteps with straight 4.0 averages for four years, undergraduate honors projects in mathematics and cell biology, a Churchill fellowship, and later, two MIT PhDs. Though we are in very different fields, I have learned, up close and personal over the years as a parent and as a lifetime teacher of honors students, to appreciate the values of my children, their qualities of mind, and the—often unconventional—ways they learn.

They Just Live to Teach

In every honors student I recognize the honors student I once was, still am, and might be—eager for the life of the mind that also engages heart and soul. However, only during the writing of this essay have I consciously analyzed my implicit understanding of where these students live and what they live for. Because of my affinity for honors students, I trust them as I trust myself. I also realize that I could be way off base, or simply misled by my own romantic good will. Yet if there are numbers of students bright but disengaged, resentful, indifferent to academic life, I haven’t met them—they’re not the honors students I know and love.

Here’s what I’ve been able to count on in over forty years of living with and teaching honors students. What follows is an obligato to the observations of Lewis Terman, Howard Gardner, Joseph Renzuli, Sally Reis, Denise Noldon and William Sedlacek, and other analysts of the gifted and talented.

- 1) Honors students are smart.
- 2) They love to learn; when they’re interested in a subject, they’ll spend incalculable amounts of time and energy to understand and explore not only its essential domain but unanticipated byways.

- 3) They are creative from the get-go; they inhabit a universe that they configure, reconfigure, and invent.
- 4) Consequently, they learn as they think, in unconventional and unorthodox ways. They love to challenge authority, defy conventional wisdom.
- 5) They are independent and want to be left to their own devices to figure things out, to solve problems.
- 6) They think they can do anything they put their minds to. They are not humble.
- 7) They are not always right.
- 8) Fortunately, most have the grace to admit this, and, as the wicked wits of the west, most have a sense of humor. These qualities help them learn from their mistakes.
- 9) They set high standards for themselves, often much higher than their mentors or their schools expect. They are not content with less than excellence.
- 10) They expect—and are accustomed to—rewards for their efforts and achievements.

Honors students and their teachers, I believe, are saved from a sense of earned entitlement and priggish rectitude by two paramount qualities. They are enormous risk-takers, gamblers ready to go for broke with every new idea, every major project. Consequently, they are also willing to make colossal course corrections—to revise, adapt, change direction entirely if necessary. I love this sense of adventure as my own, for beneath my bourgeois exterior beats a gambler's heart which leaps up with pleasure when students approach me with unusual, unlikely, even weird undertakings. Just for the fun of it I'll accept, well, almost any honors student with an independent study project, just to see what will happen and what I can learn as well as teach. For I expect us both to learn a lot as the student pursues what begins as a gleam in the eye and occasionally threatens to overwhelm both of us. My optimistic trust may be the biggest gamble of all.

Master Class: The Dynamics

Thus my resulting Master Classes are highly unconventional. Unlike the advanced music class taught by an eminent performer who shows a select group of prodigies how to do it his way or an advanced creative writing workshop where a literary hotshot clones copycats of style or point of view, my students do not emulate my work. Indeed, they may be unfamiliar with it, arriving in my office primarily because the word is out that I'm available and that I'll trust them. The only work of mine I require them to read is *Fact and Artifact: Writing Nonfiction*, for any independent study in English will inevitably involve a lot of writing. No matter what the student decides to do, we become not Master and sophisticated pupil, but two gamblers in league with one another and pitted against the house. Of course, the student has the most to lose; a senior thesis could crash and burn during the last semester, too late for resuscitation. Though I try not to let that happen, I am reminded of Macbeth's cautious query to his Lady as they are plot-

ting Duncan's murder: "If we should fail—" and her reply—fatalistic, realistic, or incredulous, as you will—"We fail!" Followed by her exhortation, "But screw your courage to the sticking place,/And we'll not fail" (I, vii, 57-59).

The Big Gamble, A Novel Honors Project

University Scholars are, in my experience, a lot of fun. These highest-achieving undergrads essentially have free run of the curriculum, graduate as well as undergraduate, during their last three semesters, and are expected to invent and complete a significant scholarly project by the time they graduate. Indeed, working with these Scholars, though anomalous to most undergraduate teaching, resembles the process of advising graduate students on theses or dissertations—free-ranging, interactive, generative of new ideas—and fast paced because of the degree's time constraints.

Students majoring in a variety of fields sometimes arrive at my office eager to write historical novels—an ideal way to combine scholarly research and creativity, but a huge gamble if the prospective author is a novice at creative writing. Any prudent English professor would advise them to take some courses in fiction writing before embarking on such an enormous task, but they have no time during their last two years to bother with the prerequisites, so I just say "Sure. What do you want to do?" And they're off and running. Even if they don't come up with the Great American Novel (and who could, in such a short time?), I am confident that they'll learn a lot and produce a manuscript that is competent, at worst; inspired and engaging, at best.

How much advice and assistance I offer depends on the individual student's needs, desires, and temperament. My research on the writing processes of anxious writers has led me to believe that less is usually more; I don't want the students to get overwhelmed with too much advice too soon or bogged down in revising and editing—concerns that should come with later drafts, not first. So first I ask them to tell me what they intend to do and have them sketch out an overall plan for their opus, if they can. If they can't, they'll need to freewrite large and long until they find a focus. We arrange for weekly meetings and a weekly amount of writing, say ten to fifteen pages. I read it, we discuss some general issues: why this character? That theme? Where is this line of action going? What was happening in history in the time and place you're talking about? I never line-edit and rarely ask them to rewrite anything during this warm-up period of generating text, which may last an entire semester. My major advice is threefold: keep writing; keep reading—one or two novels that do what you're trying to accomplish, as well as background material in your subject; and, most importantly, Be of Good Cheer.

Enter Carla Hill, art and art history major, University Scholar, exemplary model and gambler extraordinaire.

Carla Hill and *Ritratto di una donna*

Late in the fall semester of her junior year Carla approached me about being her advisor on a proposed novella to be set in Florence, where she was spending the spring semester. She planned to learn the language, bask in the art, soak up the history, and explore the territory, returning at the beginning of her senior year to write. "Sure," I said. "Why not?"

Carla's writing during the first semester reflected both her art history background and her total lack of experience as a creative writer. Carla wrote excellent description—long, lush passages brimming with sensory details—architecture, scenes, people, clothing, paintings, fabrics, floor coverings, textured walls—treats to the eye. She put her readers in Florence, walked us around and through the city, chronicling its ancient art history and recent military history when occupied by the Germans in World War II. But her characters were wooden. Though their costumes were gorgeous, their motivation was ill-defined, their dialogue stilted, their actions went nowhere. The Carla-analogue character seemed out of place; we learned a lot about the arrival in contemporary Florence of a young art student, short on sleep and on Italian vocabulary, but why was she in the story?

However, by the semester's end shards of a plot had begun to emerge: an Italian Renaissance painting (I suggested Artemisia Gentileschi) overpainted during World War II to preserve it from Nazi looting. A young American innocent abroad, Persephone, in whose hospitable relatives' house the painting resides, having been deposited there by Persephone's grandmother during her escape from Nazi-occupied Florence. A shady art conservator. His disaffected colleague, a woman art professor who befriends her student, Persephone. Fast cars (Italian, of course), dark streets, strange neighborhoods. So, on the strength of the number of accumulated pages, the research required to document the art and art political history, and my own combination of faith, hope, and generosity (along with the sense that Carla would not be happy with a B, which her work actually merited at that stage), I gave her an A-.

By return e-mail she requested an A in order to maintain her straight 4.0 average, which both of us understood would have gamed the system; I may be a gambler but I'm not a liar. We settled on an Incomplete, to be reviewed after the novella was completed; the spring semester would be taken pass/fail, to remove the pressure of a grade. I told her not to write anything for a month, but to read novels about artists such as *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and *Lady with a Lapdog*. Although I was on leave in the spring, I was happy to continue the independent study. However, early in the new year I—ordinarily very healthy—caved to an assault of bad germs, did time in the hospital, and when I tottered to consciousness in early February Carla came over for lunch, bearing seventy-five new pages. Although pentimento fragments appeared intermittently in the new version, the new emphasis was on the complicated double plot (preserving the Gentileschi painting during World War II and recovering—and rescuing it—in contemporary Florence) and equally complex characters. The action was clearly motivated, fast-paced, engaging, with dialogue to match. "Just keep going," I said, and a month later another hundred pages appeared that required minimal tweaking, buttressed by a ten-page bibliography. Though the gamble had paid off, handsomely, for both of us, I couldn't claim any credit for the completed novella.

Nor could I explain why this combination of my benign neglect and Carla's independence had worked so well; a writer's desire for perfection is no guarantee that she'll come even close to attaining it. So I decided to ask her to explain how and why she worked as she did. A few months after she graduated, 4.0 intact, from the University of Connecticut in May 2005 I emailed the following questions to her, and she replied by email. The transcript, unedited except to remove a couple of repetitions, appears herewith.

The Dialogue: Gamblers at Work—and Play

Why did you decide to write a novel(la) for your honors thesis?

Writing a novella appealed to me because it was inherently more creative than some of the other pieces of work I had done. Through some more traditional academic research in my major, I had begun to rediscover my capability for creativity, and writing a novella seemed like the next logical step. It is part of my personality to be attracted to change and challenge, especially those challenges I create for myself. I suppose I crafted this project partially as a test. People had often told me that I was a good writer, but writing an academic paper is not quite as glamorous as writing a story that non-academic people can read for enjoyment. I thought that if I could write a novella then I would deserve the distinction of a good writer.

How did you expect to learn to write one?

Honestly, it never occurred to me that I would have to learn to write a novella. I had done a great deal of reading, especially of historical fiction, and, with the exception of calculus in my senior year of high school, I had yet to find something I could not do. I saw my hypothetical novella as a creative presentation of traditional academic research instead of a work of creative writing. From that perspective, I felt that my experience with academic writing and research was adequate preparation. It would need only a little modification. I was not writing fiction of my own fabrication but borrowing actual historical moments and events to create something new. The fact that my final product would be fictitious gave me some freedom. It also allowed me to invent plausible scenarios for gaps in the historical record or historical understanding. I could posit solutions under the protection of creative writing without the limitations of evidence and primary sources.

Why did you make no advance preparation (via writing courses, for example) for undertaking such an ambitious project?

That is exactly the question put to me by the creative writing director at UConn—who refused to work with me—and my answer is that I did not feel unprepared. In my own mind I was not embarking on a creative writing project, but a research project whose final form would be creative writing. I understood that what I was proposing would be difficult, but I did not see it as impossible.

What did you want to learn from writing your thesis? Did you have any intermediate goals? Long term goals?

I began my thesis with no expectations. It was an obstacle that I had erected and then had to overcome. I suppose that I wanted to learn something about myself from writing. By the beginning of my senior year, it had also been a while since I felt truly proud of something I had completed. I wanted a project that was enough of a challenge so that when I finished it would feel like something significant. Although I felt the skills were somewhere inside me, the actual writing of fiction was something I had never done, especially on such a large scale. I wanted to see if I could do it.

What did you expect or want from a thesis advisor? Did this change during the course of your project? If so, try to identify the pivotal points and analyze these.

My only qualification for an advisor was a reasonably accessible person who would sign the approval forms I needed without asking too many questions. What I found in Dr. Bloom was something much more. She regarded me as a whole person, asking about my future plans within the first five minutes of our first meeting. I never felt as though there was a hierarchical division between teacher and pupil. Dr. Bloom deferred to my knowledge of the historical facts in my piece, and I took her advice in regard to my writing. She let my project develop at its own pace. Her role was truly advisory; I never felt as though I had to apply a suggestion or face dire consequences.

Why did you choose LZB?

I would like to say that it was her excellent credentials that led me to choose Dr. Bloom as my advisor, but the truth of the matter is that no choice was involved. There simply was no one else who would agree to do it.

What did you know about Dr. Bloom in advance, and from what sources did you get your info?

All I knew about Dr. Bloom before I met her was that she had agreed to help me. I did search the English department website under faculty before I met her. My real purpose was to find a photograph so that I would be able to properly identify this woman in case I had to search for her in the English building. I skimmed some of her curriculum vitae and scrolled through the long list of her publications. None of it mattered to me because I was so grateful for the support. Dr. Bloom's extensive experience, if it even registered, was an added bonus.

Why did you think we could work well together? Was this reaffirmed during the course of the year? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?

I knew that I would work well with Dr. Bloom from the first meeting. She offered me tea and gave me her full attention instead of treating me as an unwelcome interruption. My first impression was reaffirmed at each of our weekly meetings during the first semester. She read the writing I gave her without leaving it bleeding red pen. I always left her office feeling excited about writing again and energized to produce a new batch of writing for the next week. The advice she gave was always relevant and manageable.

Where did you expect to be as a writer at the end of the first semester's work? By the time you'd completed your thesis?

I never considered myself, nor do I now consider myself, a writer. The same way that two photography classes do not make a photographer, two semesters of writing do not make me a writer. I am at best an amateur and at worst a complete fraud. My only goal for the first semester was to be halfway done with a readable piece of work, and my final goal was to drop a completed something at the Honors office so that I could graduate. Somewhere in the back of my mind I nurtured the long term goal of publication, and I suppose I still do, but I never expected seven months of writing to result in something up to that standard.

Why did you scrap the entire first semester's work and start over? What did you learn from your writing during the first semester? During the second semester?

Simply put, I scrapped the entire first semester's work because it was unreadable, and I was embarrassed that I had written it. I think my biggest problem the first semester was the romantic notion that the story would reveal itself to me

if I just started stringing words together—a Michelangelo-esque belief that the story was hidden somewhere inside my computer, and if I hit the keys in just the right way I could free it. The fact of the matter was that by the end of a semester of writing I had only created a series of disjointed vignettes that could never be a complete novella. My idea for a plot was simply too vague. I would begin to write with every intention of furthering the plot line only to encounter a difficulty. Instead of thinking through it and continuing to write, I would simply start writing somewhere else in the novella. Even this approach could have been successful if there existed some skeletal plot of the entire novella somewhere, but there was no such foundation. Another serious problem with the first semester's work was my main character. Dr. Bloom assured me that with all first novels the main character is somewhat autobiographical, but my autobiographical main character was stunted. I am a private person and in creating a character based on myself I was reluctant to reveal some of her characteristics in order to protect my own personality. The result was a constantly embarrassingly two-dimensional character.

I still blush when I think about some of the things I wrote first semester, and, although it is all saved in a folder on my computer, I will probably never read it. The writing I did at that time, however, was an essential part of the development of my thesis. I found about a hundred ways that did not work and a way of working in general that would not be successful. I learned that a well-developed plot line with all the kinks already resolved was an essential first step for me. I had to write through the difficulty in order to continue because an unresolved issue early was a symptom of a more fundamental problem that would continue to affect my plot.

The second semester I learned the value of writing nearly every day and working from beginning to end. I also learned that by observing people I knew well I could fashion my own characters. My main character became less autobiographical and more an amalgamation of people I knew well, including myself. It gave her much more flexibility. I also learned that deadlines, something I did not consider that much in the first semester, are a fantastic motivator. I set word goals for each week and month and kept a running tally of the number of words I had written.

Why did you ask for an A grade first semester, in light of the unspoken understanding that the A- you received was in itself a gift?

This is an embarrassing question, but the grade itself and the end of the first semester together constitute an important turning point in my project. I asked for what I could do to earn an "A" because I entered college with the ridiculous and somewhat meaningless goal of finishing with a perfect grade point average. I figured that some class during freshman year would make that impossible and I could forget about it, but by my junior year I was still on target. I knew that the work I had completed for my thesis by the end of the first semester was not "A" quality, but the effort it represented certainly was. The "A-" I received felt like punishment for doing something different [i.e. creative writing instead of an analytic paper]. I questioned the grade because if I did not say anything I knew it would poison my outlook on completing my thesis. It was as if I had failed already, and I was less than halfway done. It was Dr. Bloom's idea to give me an incomplete for the first semester and then reevaluate the completed project at the

end of the year. I thank her for this solution and also for demonstrating no ill-will after I questioned a grade I knew to be a gift. At that point, Dr. Bloom never promised to give me a better grade, but what she gave me was the time I needed to prove that I could not only give "A" effort but could also produce an "A" product.

With the incomplete, Dr. Bloom also gave me the best piece of advice of all: to take a break from writing. It is also significant that this break corresponded with the break between semesters. All my courses from the fall were complete, and, with the exception of the holidays, all I had to occupy me was my thesis. I used the time to complete much needed historical research, as part of my difficulty stemmed from unanswered, but answerable, historical questions. I also read some books on writing, namely John Braine's *Writing a Novel* and Janet Burroway's *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*. I do not think that reading these before I began writing in the first semester would have been helpful. It was after struggling without any formal instructions that advice in this form meant something to me. I wrote a complete summary of my novella in a page and a half and used this as a guide. Starting again in January, after a break of about a month, gave me only about four months to write 200 pages, so I knew that quantity was also important. I wrote feverishly in the weeks before the spring semester started so that I would both have something to give to Dr. Bloom as evidence of my good faith effort and also to have a running head start before the responsibilities of other classes crowded my schedule.

I know that my concern over my grade forced Dr. Bloom to tell me to stop writing for a time, but I am glad for that. Things would have ended completely differently had Dr. Bloom given me an "A" initially or had I allowed the "A-" to stand without comment. I knew what I had written was not up to standard, but in the same way that a deadline is an effective motivator, so is a bad grade. It made me angry that I had failed to achieve at the highest level, and I put all my energy into ensuring that it would not happen again. Which is not to say that I can only be motivated by grades; I always try to do my best. Usually, however, my best is an "A" and this time I had to find a new best, I had to extend myself to reach "A" level. Dr. Bloom handled the situation beautifully and turned what could have been a disaster into an opportunity for remarkable improvement.

Were there any points at which you felt particularly discouraged or dissatisfied with your work (as all writers-in-progress do)? Where did these occur, and how did you either overcome them or work around them?

No, there were not any points at which I felt more discouraged or dissatisfied than others. A low level of frustration always buzzes in the background of everything I do, and writing my novella was no different. In retrospect, my writing during the first semester was dissatisfying, but, when I was writing it, it was the best I could do. I was trying too hard and forcing things, and the results reflected that. Things that could have been discouraging, such as difficulties with plot or the discovery of an historical reality incongruent with my plan, were not. Instead, I enjoyed working through these puzzles to create a stronger, more coherent piece. The most discouraging thing about my project was having to attend other classes and fulfill their requirements at the same time. I think that I became most discouraged when other obligations robbed me of time to work on writing. I overcame these through planning and complete hermitage in my dorm room.

What was the effect on your growth and development as a writer of being allowed to find your own way into the project and to become a writer on your own terms? What would the effect of too much (in my opinion) advice too soon have been on your work?

Dr. Bloom allowed me to teach myself with the understanding that knowledge accumulated through trial and error is often the most potent and long-lasting. My writing from the first semester, which I regard as unreadable, was not an unmitigated failure but a much better teacher than a series of exercises from a creative writing book. If Dr. Bloom had heavily edited that writing, I know that I would have spent my time polishing something hopelessly tarnished instead of forging ahead with the learning process. Too much advice too soon would have made me doubt my ability to write at all. I would have felt attacked, become stubborn, and defended my earliest writing on principle. Instead, I was able to see its flaws myself and correct them. I think Dr. Bloom's style of advising was suited perfectly to me. If I had initiated my thesis with a strong creative writing background, earlier and more thorough critique would have been appropriate. Dr. Bloom understood that I was finding my way in writing as much as I was working towards a completed piece.

Did reading analogous fiction help?

Reading analogous fiction was an indispensable tool in my writing. Once I began writing myself, I saw other writers as potential teachers. I ceased being able to read a book without evaluating what the author was saying and how he was saying it. I took notes on techniques that seemed effective and flinched at those that failed, often ones that I had used unsuccessfully myself. Seeing professional writers do things that I was doing gave me confidence that I could complete my project. The most significant piece of analogous fiction that I read was *The Virgin Blue* by Tracy Chevalier. The story is about a woman who moves with her husband to a small town in France. While there she not only struggles with the customs and language, of which she has an elementary command, but also with her own family history. The chapters in the book alternate between this contemporary woman's story and that of a distant relative. This organization I found very effective and my decision to utilize it in my own writing gave me a solid foundation when I began to write again.

Anything else you want to say?

I want to say that completing my thesis with Dr. Bloom was one of the most rewarding experiences of my undergraduate career. It was most certainly difficult at times, but I could not have scripted it better. Without the setbacks the results would have been much less valuable. I hope someday to turn my novella into a novel.

Playing the Hunches, Hitting the Jackpot

Well, there you have it. Two gamblers, one novella, a happy story. I trusted Carla to be highly motivated to do the best job she could, to be concurrently reflective and self-critical while writing ten-fifteen pages a week, to focus on the big picture throughout most of the process, and not to get bogged down in the minutiae of text-editing until near the end. Her work verifies my experience in directing other long term projects—honors and master's theses and doctoral

dissertations. I always gamble that the students will win—that they'll do good work and finish their projects. And I hedge my bets with time-tables, substantive advice, occasional nagging, pots of tea. Though the students don't always agree, I regard the semester's inexorable march, the registrar's inevitable reckoning, as implicit allies in the process.

But what's going on here? My review of the extensive academic literature on mentoring—there are thousands of articles and books theoretical and practical—reveals no explicit discussion of this intuitive process or its dynamics as applied to students working on large, long projects, though what Mary Belenky and her co-authors say about *Women's Ways of Knowing* is of relevance. Yet to the extent that teaching is a lively art rather than a codifiable science, I suspect that most teachers work intuitively with their students some of the time—perhaps all of the time with creative writing students, whose work-in-progress requires continual fine-tuning.

So why don't teachers talk much about the role of intuition in teaching? As with talking about love, the subject may seem too ineffable, too student- or situation-specific, too touchy-feely. Might good teaching lose too much in the translation if we try to codify intuitive knowledge into plans or rules for action? Yet, if we look in different places, illustrations of analogous processes abound. Space does not permit here an analysis of numerous biographies and autobiographies of how high achievers get results in a variety of fields. But consider, for example, George Washington's invention of brilliant, unorthodox battle strategies derived in part from his surveyor's intimate knowledge of the literal lay of the land, traversed—as his diaries reveal—on horseback in all kinds of weather. Or examine Nobel prizewinner Barbara McClintock's intuitive discovery of "jumping genes," brilliantly documented in Evelyn Fox Keller's *A Feeling for the Organism*.

Two current books, both by *New Yorker* staff writers, are of particular contemporary relevance: Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* and Atul Gawande's *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science*. Both illustrate the ways in which experts gamble on intuitive hunches, with extremely high stakes—life and death being the highest—etched against the possibility of enormous failure. That I say "illustrate" rather than "provide a step-by-step analysis of a rational process" is in itself telling.

Blink opens with an illustration that epitomizes the expert at work. In 1983 the Getty Museum wanted to make a major purchase, "a marble statue dating from the sixth century BC," a seven-foot, glowingly beautiful kouros "sculpture of a nude male youth," which unlike most of the two hundred other extant kouroi, was "almost perfectly preserved"(3). Before making such a major investment, experts engaged by the Getty spent fourteen months authenticating the statue's provenance (when and where was it found?), design (did it resemble other known kouroi?), and age (how old was it, according to the most accurate measures of electronic spectrometry and microscopy?). Satisfied of its authenticity, the Getty paid \$10 million and put the kouros on display—to the surprise of still other experts. Thomas Hoving, former director of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, took one look at it—it "didn't look right," it appeared too "fresh." Making an immediate judgment, he asked the Getty directors, "Have you paid for this?" "If you have, try to get your money back. . . . If you haven't, don't" (6).

Concludes Gladwell, summarizing the immediate reaction—"intuitive repul-

sion”—of Hoving and other well-informed skeptics, “In the first two seconds of looking—in a single glance—they were able to understand more about the essence of the statue than the team at the Getty was able to understand after fourteen months” (3-8). Gladwell devotes the rest of *Blink*’s 277 pages to exploring how experts make instant, generally accurate decisions. As a rule they do not proceed deliberately, “logically and systematically” comparing “all available options”—a process which, in fact, might lead them astray, as it did the willing believers at the Getty: “That is the way people are taught to make decisions, but in real life it is much too slow” (107). Instead, as on the battlefield, they shoot first and ask questions afterward; they “size up a situation almost immediately and *act*, drawing on experience and intuition and a kind of rough mental simulation” (107). Analyses and explanations follow, rather than precede, the actions.

Gawande, too, addresses doctors’ uncertainty, and its relation to intuition. Doctors are “supposed to have the answers. We want to have the answers,” but “the core predicament of medicine . . . is uncertainty” (228-29). Successful diagnosis and treatment indeed rest on a reservoir of knowledge that continues to expand as the doctor learns from experience with lots of patients with a variety of problems.¹ Nevertheless, in life-threatening situations, decisions often have to be made in a “blink” moment, based on hunches, suspicions, guesses, inferences, derived from this knowledge base but not articulated. Here Gawande draws, as does Gladwell, on Gary Klein’s analyses of the ways firefighters make decisions in *Sources of Power*: “Human beings have an ability to simply recognize the right thing to do sometimes. Judgment, Klein points out, is rarely a calculated weighing of all options, which we are not good at anyway, but instead an unconscious form of pattern recognition” (Gawande 248).

To illustrate the making of a “decision under uncertainty” Gawande, at the time a senior surgical resident, anatomizes the case of Eleanor, a twenty-three-year-old woman with “a red and swollen leg.” Was it cellulitis, a “simple skin infection,” though “a bad one”—and therefore treatable with antibiotics? Or was it necrotizing fasciitis, a much rarer but “highly aggressive,” “rapidly invasive” streptococcus infection, impervious to antibiotics, that “kills up to 70 percent of the people who get it”? (229-33). He had seen such a rapidly escalating case a few weeks before, and—despite extensive and repeated surgery to remove the infected areas—the patient died. When two days of antibiotics failed to affect Eleanor’s infection, the only accurate way to diagnose her disease would be to biopsy the site. Was this the right thing to do?

Had time permitted, Gawande could have spent a “couple of days” employing a methodical, rational approach using “decision analysis,” common in business and the military, to lay out all the options, “and all the possible outcomes of these options.” He could have consulted colleagues and the literature, weighing the probability and desirability of the options and choosing

¹ “Three decades of neuropsychology research have shown us numerous ways in which human judgment, like memory and hearing, is prone to systematic mistakes. The mind overestimates vivid dangers, falls into ruts and manages multiple pieces of data poorly. It is affected by the order in which information is represented and how problems are framed. And even if we doctors believed that, with all our training and experience, we escape such fallibilities, the notion was dashed when researchers put us under the microscope” (Gawande 238).

“the one with the highest calculated ‘expected utility’”—the best outcome for the patient. “The goal is to use explicit, logical, statistical thinking instead of your gut” (241). That analysis, Gawande determined after the fact, would have argued against a biopsy, because “the likelihood of my initial hunch being right was too low, and the likelihood that catching the disease early would make no difference anyway was too high” (241-42). But Gawande had minutes, not days, to decide. Trusting his intuition, and reinforced by two other physicians’ views that they couldn’t rule out the unlikely though rare possibility, he chose the biopsy, which revealed necrotizing fasciitis. His instant decision to treat medicine as an art imposed on a science was right; immediate and later surgery saved Eleanor’s leg, and her life.

Still Rolling the Dice

Hoving, Gawande, and I could have been wrong—each or all of us—every time we make a professional judgment, however well-intended, however well-informed. If Gawande had practiced prudent rather than intuitive medicine and Eleanor had died—as she would have without the biopsy—would he have told the story beyond the confines of the hospital’s routine weekly Mortality and Morbidity in-house conferences? I doubt it. For professional literature in general, like autobiography and biography and most teacher narratives, abounds in success stories; failure is the essence of fiction, which believing that “happy families are all alike,” has a profound distrust of the cheerful. Would I have spent this much time telling you about Carla if her thesis had been only a B, which for an honors student is equivalent to failure? Probably not—although I have, in fact—with embarrassment—analyzed my worst class ever in “Subverting the Academic Masterplot.”

For when my students fail, I believe I’ve failed as a teacher. With every student, honors or not, it’s a roll of the dice; the possibility of failure keeps us ever humble—the odds of success, ever hopeful. ☐

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The Missing Body—Yoga and Higher Education

Judith Beth Cohen

When I practice Yoga, I imagine a female serpent awakening at the base of my spine. My breath moves her slowly upward to the crown of my head where she will emerge to unite with her spouse. This erotic metaphor of mind/body integration helps me to experience breath as a form of thought linking me to invisible sources of energy. After half a life as a fairly sedentary academic, I'd become a serious student of Yoga. Skeptical of New Age fads, I was reluctant to plunge in, but after months of practice my energy level increased, my concentration deepened, and my mental acuity sharpened. Hatha Yoga's relative absence of dogma and its rigorous mix of breath-work, strength, and flexibility training helped to demolish many assumptions about my aging female body. In a strange reversal of time, I'd become physically stronger and more flexible at sixty than I'd been in my youth. Yet in class I continued to behave as if my students and I were no more than talking heads. During one day long seminar, I noticed many of them sprawled on the floor in various postures as if their bodies were crying out for movement even if it wasn't on the syllabus. So I posed myself a challenge. If I was serious about mind/body integration, why did I continue to operate like a Cartesian dualist in my classroom? This led me to explore the body's role in development and learning and to change the way I teach.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to educational engagement is our student's learned passivity, the result of years spent watching television or sitting in school. When their bodies are not engaged, they easily tune out or turn off. Yet they willingly pay for dance, martial arts, or Yoga classes as extra curricular activities. These body-based practices are most often sought for reducing health problems, lowering stress, or meeting spiritual needs, but I was curious about the overall cognitive advantages that come from somatic engagement. Beyond the obvious benefits of harnessing attention and relieving stress, such activities promote the kinesthetic, somatic, and cognitive integration that most accurately reflects the way our brains operate. When I coordinate inhaling and exhaling while moving, simultaneously attending to breath, balance, and alignment, I harness my energy for a single purpose. My thoughts scatter less, and my concentration deepens. This inward focus does not lead to self-obsession; in fact, bringing the body into the classroom makes us better observers of the plight of human bodies, whether the issue be prisoner abuse, starvation, terrorism, or war. The educational fragmentation that leaves the body out of learning, despite ample evidence of its centrality, is more likely to produce further such abominations.

In this essay I hope to provoke many ideas about ways to actively engage the body in learning.

Why Yoga?

Yoga philosophy has much in common with the educational theories that

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have influenced my pedagogy. Like progressive educational practices, Yoga promotes major life changes through a continuum of theory and practice. Scholar George Feuerstein describes Yoga as “a gradual process of replacing our conscious patterns of thought and behavior with new, more benign patterns . . . expressive of the higher powers and virtues of self-realization” (“Ten” 3). Similarly progressive and liberatory pedagogies strive for deeper self-awareness and freedom from entrenched patterns of behavior. The Sanskrit word *yoga*, “to yoke,” encompasses both the physical discipline and the spiritual concept of union or wholeness, but one need not be a supernatural seeker to reap its benefits. Though traditional Yoga sought to overcome the body’s limitations by reaching toward a higher spiritual state, our current understanding of mind/body wholeness allows us to reject this binary, hierarchical view. In its non-theistic forms, Yoga envisions liberation taking place in ordinary life, with no ascetic behavior required (“Ten”). Though Yoga’s roots go back 2000 years to Hindu, Buddhist, and Jainist traditions in India, today it has become a transnational phenomenon, shaped by the cultures in which it lives (“Yoga” 2).

Hatha-Yoga, one of seven branches, uses the body as a route toward fuller human development (Feuerstein, “Ten” 1). *Ha* (sun) and *Tha* (moon) represent a balance between opposites: day and night, light and dark. Improved balance as well as greater physical strength and flexibility results from an integration of breath work, physical postures, and meditation. Eventually the qualities of strength and flexibility become embodied at an unconscious level and begin to infuse my life. As I maintain a tree pose, standing on one leg with my arms outspread, I am enacting both balance and stability. Strength acquired through repeating these poses or asanas decreases my sense of vulnerability and gives me a greater ability to focus and concentrate. Indeed, flexibility becomes more than a physical attribute; it is transformed into a living metaphor for accepting change and tolerating ambiguity, deepening my ability to deal with complex issues whether they be personal, political, or academic. Like Buddhism, Yoga offers a way to balance our high tech culture’s constant distractions. Agonizing over one’s appearance, possessions, or relationships only causes suffering, for we cannot control these aspects of our lives.

Research on the bodily basis of cognition supports Yoga’s ancient insights about the body/mind connection. Convincing evidence for acknowledging the body’s role in pedagogy comes from the neurologist’s laboratory. Antonio Damasio argues that consciousness originates in a pre-linguistic core self that maintains survival by taking its cues from the body. He pictures the brain as “the body’s captive audience” (150). The emotions and feelings that consciousness is based on emerge from bodily encounters with external objects. As Damasio so cleverly puts it: “Body-minded minds help save the body” (143). Without mental images drawn from these physical experiences, survival and human consciousness would be impossible, for we would be unable to connect “the biological machinery of life regulation and the biological machinery of thought” (304). Because we are drawn to focus outward on the external environment, this internal process remains hidden by a metaphorical veil, yet “I am, therefore I think” is a more accurate statement than Descartes’s “I think, therefore I am.”

Damasio’s research supports the argument of philosophers George Lakoff and Mark Johnson who remind us how outdated our current discourse remains. Whether we assume Descartes’s notion of the body as a machine, independent of

reason, or the more ancient image of a homonculus, a little man living in our heads, our concepts have not kept pace with science's discoveries (5). Despite the persistent denial of our bodily reality in intellectual discourse, these authors insist that our rational faculties emerge from the structural "details of our embodiment" and that reason itself "is shaped by our bodies' peculiarities, our brain's neural structures, and our everyday functioning in the world" (4). Such fundamental concepts as up and down, near and far, more or less depend upon images derived from our bodily experiences. Even our intellectual discourse is shaped by the material world of architecture for we speak of arguments as "constructed" or "built" upon "foundations" (Johnson 102-107). If emotion, reason, and consciousness are deeply rooted in the body, then leaving the body out of education is all the more irrational.

Yoga and Pedagogy

John Dewey implicitly included body-based learning when he urged pedagogues to make experience central to education. As early as 1898 he argued against the dualistic notion that thought and action or theory and practice could be separated, thus challenging the prevailing belief that theorizing was the superior endeavor. Dewey envisioned the university as a bridge between the mind and the material world (Hein). Building upon Dewey, Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, especially influential in adult pedagogy, likewise refuses to divorce learning from direct experience. Mezirow argues that education should lead students away from their old habits of mind and outmoded assumptions to a wider array of choices. This happens when they reflect critically upon their own lives and analyze their underlying assumptions. Educational paths to transformation must encompass more than the cognitive realm since experience includes our corporeal lives as well as our thoughts and ideas.

Feminist theorists also envision self-knowledge as a path toward liberation. Developmentalists like Mary Field Belenky and her collaborators stress the relational aspects of epistemology, often overlooked in studies based upon male reasoning. The women she and her colleagues interviewed construct knowledge by making connections between their personal experiences and abstract ideas, a process similar to that described by Damasio, Lakoff and Johnson, Dewey, and Mezirow. Feminists go further when they point out how cultural attitudes about women's bodies inscribed on our psyches and our institutions limit us and often produce pathologies like anorexia nervosa and self-harming. Philosopher Susan Bordo highlights the danger of denying the materiality of human experiences and critiques postmodernist and feminist thinkers who dismiss the body as simply another text. She reports on a personal encounter with academic prejudice when she learned of her failure to get a position because she "moved her body too much during the interview" (284). Bordo reminds us that we cannot take the body out of human history, whether we're talking about Nazi crematoria or contemporary events like suicide bombs and hurricane disasters.

Central to Yoga practice is pausing to notice what the body does and feels. "Reflection," sometimes called "critical reflection," has been identified as central to significant learning by a number of educators, notably Mezirow, Donald Schon, and Robert Tremmel. In our rush for "coverage," we often deprive students of the time to look back and make meaning of their studies. Just yesterday a colleague was told by the department chair to add two more books to an

already packed syllabus; the only rationale was that requirements should be consistent across sections. Clearly, asking students to reflect upon their reading is not a high value in this department. Schon, whose work focuses on professional education, defines reflection as “knowing-in-action” (*Reflective* 72). It’s possible to be both thoughtful and active at the same time; one need not be sitting in silent meditation to be reflective. As teachers, we’re used to enacting three functions simultaneously: attending to classroom reality, accessing our intuitive responses, and examining alternative ways of proceeding. Like Dewey, who called for melding theory and practice, Schon regards teachers as researchers whose laboratory is the classroom. In that sense, educators are like Yoga practitioners who regard their bodies as the research site.

Building upon Schon’s work, Robert Tremmel reminds us that genuine reflection involves more than thinking about something; it must be cultivated (442). For that he turns to eastern teachings like Zen Buddhism. Buddhism defines mindfulness as intentional, non-judgmental, moment to moment awareness (Kabat-Zinn). Since mindfulness asks that we constantly call our attention back to the here and now, Tremmel finds this metaphor of returning again and again to express accurately the purpose of reflection. Ideally, one brings awareness to an action as it is taking place and stays attentive, rather than using a pat response (449). Jon Kabat-Zinn’s Center for Mindfulness (CFM) at the University of Massachusetts Medical School was originally designed for patients dealing with chronic pain and life threatening diseases. Using mindfulness practice as a basis, CFM has spawned two hundred new programs and is increasingly being applied in educational settings (Waring 21). For those who find disciplined attention difficult to maintain, Yoga poses and breathing exercises offer tools for deepening one’s ability to pay attention and reflect on what one notices.

Yoga and the Schools

Yoga has been introduced into the elementary school curriculum in many parts of the US, Canada, Europe, India, Australia, and South Africa. Advocates make impressive claims about its positive effects, such as better concentration and test performance, decreased Hyperactivity, and relief from asthma, but these accounts are largely anecdotal. Medically based research studies on Yoga and education coming from India tell us about Yoga’s positive effects on muscle power, dexterity, and visual perception in young girls (Raghuraj and Telles). Girls who have engaged in Yoga solve puzzles faster than girls who haven’t (Manjunath and Telles), and medical students who practiced Yoga before and after taking exams showed measurable psycho-physiological changes (Malathi and Damodaran). Such “hard” evidence may help persuade skeptics that Yoga is more than a New Age fad, but these controlled studies seem paradoxically reductionist in light of Yoga’s doctrine of wholeness (Feuerstein, “Yoga”). Some American elementary schools are beginning to acknowledge the body’s place in learning (though the recent emphasis on standardized testing is threatening these innovations). James Zull and Eric Jensen both urge elementary educators to include the body in academics rather than relegating it to athletics or extra curricular work. Citing research from brain studies, human development, and ergonomics, Jensen argues for the inclusion of activities like stretching and walking in the learning process (34). Using Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence theory, which identifies kinesthetic, musical, and spatial intelligences as important, educators have designed curricula

for teaching academic subjects using movement, music, art, and other active forms of learning (*Frames*).

When it comes to body awareness, the business world is ahead of universities. Readers of *Training and Development* are told that a three-minute breathing exercise can change group interaction more effectively than a thirty-minute presentation on organizational behavior (Weiss 67). We may acknowledge that our students' bodies are more than inconvenient baggage needing bathroom breaks, yet the universities I searched address the active body only in physical education or health studies departments. In our own Interdisciplinary Studies Master's program (Lesley University), students can combine subjects like writing and environmental studies or art and technology to create a unique degree focus, yet their bodies move only if they elect classes devoted to dance or drama. Theories of gender, race, and disability may have moved discourse about bodies onto the syllabus, but discussants sit passively, often uncomfortably, and it's rare to find the actual bodies of students engaged in a college classroom.

The Language Problem

The term "embodied education" has multiple meanings, and it's difficult to find a shared vocabulary on this topic. In a review of higher education literature on embodied learning, Tara Amann (herself a Yoga teacher) found an assortment of definitions. "Somatic" refers to experiences like role-playing or art-making; "Kinesthetic" involved moving muscles, joints, and tendons; "Sensory" includes activities which involved sight, hearing, taste, and touch; "Affective" deals with emotions, and finally "Spiritual" encompasses notions of transcendence and philosophy. Despite these discrete labels, the categories contain many overlapping activities (Amann). If we reject the mind/body dichotomy, we need a unified way of describing what we mean. A group of Canadian educators have chosen the word "bodymind" to capture the integration of thinking, being, doing, and interacting. To them, "knowledge does not reside in body or mind but in interactions with world" (Miller vii).

Composition theorist Kristie S. Fleckenstein has a similar suggestion. For her, the concept of "somatic mind" recognizes the fluidity of boundaries between the material world and discourse with each one influencing the other in a continuous process (286). Just as our cellular DNA operates from a back and forth flow, our somatic minds can change our corporeal situation (288). Fleckenstein's notion of somatic mind resonates with Damasio's view of consciousness and Lakoff and Johnson's image of reason emerging from bodies interacting with objects in the environment. To address this body/mind problem, Fleckenstein advocates a form of writing in composition studies that is simultaneously immersed and emerging. As she puts it: "the writing figure cannot be separated from the figure writing . . . both are immanent in the other" (296). Like Bordo, Fleckenstein criticizes postmodernist approaches that reduce everything to discourse; if we remove bodies thus "denying the language of blood and bone," we cripple and undermine the potential power of discourse to transform our pedagogies (283).

As a writing teacher and thesis director, I encourage students to include personal narratives in their academic work, and I reject polarizing expressive and cognitively based writing as distinct genres. Elsewhere, I have argued that

examining one's own story can lead to livelier research papers, since students are motivated to answer their own burning question (Cohen). With mature students, personal narrative writing can reveal unconscious assumptions and unquestioned cultural scripts, leading to reflection and deeper critical thinking. Narrative writing can be a powerful container for experiences that involve the body, leading to real life changes. When Nancy, an adult student, embodied her learning by narrating her experience of sexual abuse, she became curious about its causes and prevention. Her research led from an academic inquiry to action when she became an advocate for battered women. Sequenced assignments that move from personal stories to research help students connect theories, experiences, and action ("to immerse and emerge" in Fleckenstein's words). As a result of writing, reflecting, and revising, I've seen women who doubted their intellectual ability reclaim their intelligence, and men whose identity was based on "macho" silence become more flexible thinkers (Cohen; Cohen and Piper).

Still, my Yoga practice continues to raise questions about the sufficiency of language for fully capturing the bodily elements of our lives. Combining Yoga exercises with writing can help address the language gap since the process of movement, breathing, and self-observation requires simultaneous immersion in internal experience and emergence through external observations. Two of my recent graduate students tried to bridge this language/body barrier. Sara Latta, working on an MFA in creative writing, developed a Writing/Yoga retreat to fulfill an interdisciplinary requirement. At the end of a challenging Yoga class, she'd solved a problem she'd been wrestling with in her novel: "It was as if the asanas or poses had . . . liberated this knowledge trapped in my body." To share this process with other writers, she and a colleague designed a retreat they co-led with a Yoga instructor. Using selected concepts of Yoga philosophy (called Yamas), they generated writing exercises to go with the physical postures. For example, focusing on Ahimsa or non-violence, they asked participants to abandon the separation between themselves and a character they disliked in their work, then spend ten minutes writing from that character's point of view. In another session, the class focused on poses that required twists (intended to turn the mind inward and encourage self-study). Then they asked the group to freewrite in response to a list of prompts intended to elicit vivid, emotional responses. Finally, students listed specific writing projects and reflected on ways Yoga insights might apply to them. In this workshop, movement, discourse, and reflection are seamlessly combined so these artificial categories disappear. In the more linear college classroom, such melding offers greater challenges.

Dunya McPherson, a professional dancer in Lesley's Independent Study degree program was writing her master's thesis on dance as a spiritual practice. She searched the dance literature for literary models. After extensive reading in dancer's memoirs and spiritual autobiographies, she was disappointed to find "the narration located in the disembodied mind. The body was an object and the dance existed as an abstract subject." In her search for writing that "initiated somatic resonance in the reader," she discovered clues in the literary memoirs of Harry Crews, Vivian Gornick, and Tobias Wolff: "Their ability to move fluidly through time and jump realities illuminated my interior space, much in the way I wanted to illuminate my reader's somatic field" (McPherson). Gretel Erlich's *This Cold Heaven; Seven Seasons in Greenland* resonated for her. Erlich's travel memoir reveals scant personal material about the writer, yet her evocations of the land-

scape made Dunya “feel the text” in her body (McPherson). Images such as “my eyes had been smeared with ground glass” (Erllich 194) or “ice pinched and pocked like old skin” (310) were especially powerful for her. As she revised her memoir about her long career as a dancer and Sufi teacher, Dunya continually sought to “substitute my body for Ehrlich’s Greenland.”

Yoga in the Classroom

Inspired by both my students and my budding Yoga practice, I now incorporate many Yoga-based mind/body strategies into my classes. Since I teach in a variety of formats including week-long intensives, weekend sessions, and day-long sessions geared toward adult graduate students, I have much time flexibility. However, the following ideas could be easily adapted to more traditional class settings. In a core requirement for the Master’s program (*Ways of Knowing: How We Make Meaning*), a course that examines and critiques the western paradigm, I ask students to identify their strongest “intelligence” using an inventory based upon Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence theory (*Frames*). Their first assignment is to engage in an activity in their weakest domain, record their observations, and then share their discoveries with the class. Half the students select body-based activities, further evidence of their yearning to integrate somatic experiences with their academic work. For her project, Sarah Warren, a preschool teacher passionate about her inner city children, reluctantly signed up for Yoga classes. Though she appeared to be fit and agile, Sarah was frank about her bodily discomfort:

I consider my body to be a heavy jangle of parts. It seems to get in my way of knowing the world, causing embarrassment. . . . My body has failed me before . . . my mind has too, but it’s hard to hold your brain in contempt the way you can your body.

Sarah’s image of her body and brain as distinct entities illustrates Lakoff and Johnson’s point that our linguistic concepts lag behind what is known about body/mind integration. When we address this contradiction directly, we begin to notice changes:

The teacher comes over during the downward facing dog routine and tells me to stick my butt in the air more and to bend my knees a little. Something changes, something serious. I feel this whole other kind of stretch happening. She asks me to focus, to really focus on what I’m about to do before I do it; I try again; I hold the tree pose. . . . I begin to carry the teachings to the rest of my life. I pay attention to my shoulders and what their position tells me about my stress level and mood, I tell myself to breathe more . . . it seems to take a great deal of awareness to help the body be integrated with the mind (Warren).

Sarah moves toward integration as she “pays attention” to stress in her body and connects this with her mood, an observation she did not make before her Yoga experience.

Mary Sheys, an academically oriented scholar, chose to embark on a weight loss/exercise program which lasted the entire semester. She wrote: “When pro-

cessing through experience of the body . . . the intrinsically valuable outcomes are not recognized in traditional academic contexts. . . . This knowing is new—I think it will allow me to synthesize thought more easily as I learn how to produce through process, not just product.” Though we use the notion of process often, especially in regard to writing, it is easier to grasp with bodily engagement.

Fatma, a woman from Egypt, chose to take Swing Dancing lessons. She told us that women in her culture cannot be touched, that dancers are considered “bad women.” Her self-image was that of “a brain on a stick,” but the experience of moving her body made her feel alive in a new way. Other activities students have chosen for this assignment include studying meditation, kick boxing, and practicing Japanese swordsmanship. The challenge to engage bodily and then reflect on the experience could be integrated into any number of writing exercises.

In addition to these “homework” assignments, I also bring body-based activities into real class time. The changes are small, but I try to model the observation, reflection, and critical thinking that I wish students to practice. During a discussion, I remind them to listen without judgment before leaping into a defensive position or a rushed response. When discourse is the dominant mode, silence can be welcome. Before turning inward, students can observe the absence of noise. What do they notice? How unusual is it to be silent in a group? Moments like these can disrupt patterns in which the same people jump in with answers. Those who tend to be quieter or less articulate may feel a space opened for them.

When using freewriting, I add some breathing. If we stop and pay attention to our breath before we write or speak, our minds return to the present moment. Unlike silence, breathing gives a focus to emptiness. A further instruction would ask them to try a three-part breath: consciously breathe in to the count of three, hold the breath for three counts, then exhale for three. (A longer count can be added each time.) For students who may be resistant to “writing on command,” breathing allows time for images and thoughts to form and offers a strategy they can use when feeling blocked.

To create a transition from one topic or activity to another, I engage students in a simple stretching and breathing exercise. Yoga movement is different from exercise, for in Yoga you breathe before moving while in exercise you breathe after moving. Asking students to squat after sitting or stand balanced on one leg brings their wandering thoughts back to the present. Even simple movements done in a chair can harness the breath to enliven the body. After they notice how their bodies are feeling, I give them time to make themselves more comfortable. They may simply stand with eyes closed sensing their feet on the floor. They might do a more energizing stretch such as “breath of fire,” which involves inhaling, bending with head to floor, and exhaling in rapid succession. I might invoke the Buddhist image of our minds as naughty, distractable monkeys and invite students to tame the wild creature by trying a more challenging pose like the dancer or tree that involves standing on one leg for several breaths. Participation is voluntary, and anyone who prefers to watch is free to do so.

These exercises model a form of inquiry based upon observation. Information gathered from our somatic laboratories can help us to become more sensitive observers of other phenomena. Since most Yoga postures (or asanas) are repeated on one’s left and right sides, the practitioner will notice subtle differences in her body. Working with sensory evidence builds the habit of collecting data without prejudgment then drawing conclusions. Contrasting our personal observations with

dominant knowledge claims can lead to questioning them when appropriate (Kerka). If my own body tells me that my left side responds differently than my right, perhaps I should also question generalizations made about women's bodies or menopause or ethnic traits. Discourse about our own bodily responses in a non-competitive learning environment shows that human diversity is more complex than categories like race and gender imply (Barlas, Gustafson, and Todd, ctd. by Kerka). Noticing our somatic changes from day to day undermines the outdated Platonic notion of essentialized identities and challenges the doctrine that human nature is fixed and unchangeable. The more fluid, scientifically sound view that posits culture and identity as complex, dynamic processes becomes visceral as well as theoretical. Finally, we might experience media images of torture or death with less desensitized indifference.

During longer classes, I add activities that require movement and make use of the entire room as well as the hallways. For one assignment students create a visual representation or poster instead of a paper. We then hold class in a conference format in which students move around the room in small groups and talk with the presenters. For visually oriented students, this provides an alternative way of processing the material. Though some use PowerPoint or video, most construct old fashioned posters out of art materials. After ten or fifteen minutes, I call time, and they move on to the next presenter. If Howard Gardner is right, this classroom activity should create optimal conditions for brain functioning since it involves interacting physically with materials, asking questions, and using dialogue (*Disciplined* 82).

While practices such as Tai Chi Chuan and Karate similarly promote body/mind integration, Yoga movements need not be carried out in a fixed sequence. Once learned, the rather simple acts of breathing, stretching, and attending can be done almost anywhere. Yoga offers many benefits, ranging from a stronger body, a calm demeanor, increased concentration, sharpened perception, and possibly greater spiritual development, but most compelling for me are the potential cognitive advantages that come from engaging the body in learning. When we engage our body/minds in class, our entrenched patterns are revealed, making them more accessible to change. An ecstatic union between Yoga and academic inquiry may be asking too much, but perhaps a courtship is possible.¹ ☐

¹A useful reference for combining writing and Yoga is Jeff Davis's *The Journey From the Center to the Page: Yoga Philosophies and Practices as Muse for Authentic Writing*.

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Bodies in the Classroom: Integrating Physical Literacy

Carolina Mancuso

I actually enjoyed acting like a five-year-old. I found myself exploring my environment, slowing down, remembering. When I was five, it took me over a half hour to walk three blocks to school. I miss having the time to really enjoy and appreciate everything around me. I already find that my second grade students do not have the opportunity to enjoy and see what is around them.

It is comical to walk around and be extremely disgusted with regular everyday things. For example, saying the words “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” in my classroom leads to a chorus of “EWWS.” It also didn’t feel natural, because I was being obnoxious and annoying, and realized that I was that way. It also let me see that the children may not realize how annoying they can be at times.

Personally, it wasn’t very strange to try to move like my students. I guess that’s because I try to always put myself in their shoes, meaning I am always thinking of how I would respond to something if I were four or five years old. This makes it easier to understand them instead of looking at their world through my eyes. If I did that, I’d go crazy.

Walk Through Your Life

The reflections above were written by in-service K-12 teachers in a masters program in literacy following an exercise called “Walk Through Your Life.” It is one of several Memory Search activities I designed to enable research into the knowledge we carry in our physical movements and postures. At first I tried it as a guided pre-writing exercise in writing classes. Later, I began to use it in education classrooms where graduate students have found it helpful to recall their own child-like physicality in order to relate to the physical and emotional states of their young students.

We begin by clearing space in the room. Students stand and stretch as needed, then move randomly. I caution them against making eye contact or directly observing anyone else’s movements, and I encourage them to make safe spaces for themselves and others. They usually need some time to dispel their initial awkwardness until they feel more comfortable meandering about. It is then that I describe the intention of the activity: to allow their bodies to move as they did

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in their own early lives. I ask them to trust the postures and movements that arise from inside them despite the fact that few of them have ever been taught that their bodies carry physical knowledge and memory. In this exercise, they will focus on recalling how their bodies maneuvered at different ages in their lives.

As they become a little freer, I offer the first number reflecting a chronological age, for example, twelve. Then I briefly model by engaging in the activity with them and remind them to grant each other privacy as I will for them. For a few moments, I urge everyone to search within themselves for the physicality of being twelve years old and connect it with their particular movements. After allowing themselves freedom to recapture a marker of that time of life, someone else locates and calls out another chronological age to mimic. From then on, they continue, urging others to “be yourself at five,” “move like you did at eight,” and so on. While they roam, I ask that they observe changes in their mobility, posture, feelings, attitudes, focus, strengths or weaknesses, and so on, as the physical memory of each particular age is allowed to emerge. Given time and trust, incidents and experiences embedded in the body will surface into the present.

Eventually, I guide them toward focusing only on the age group they currently teach and to attempt to internalize characteristic body movements and emotions as well as typical verbalizations of that age. I allow the exercise to continue as long as it seems useful, e.g. before it edges into silliness, and then ask students to sit and record as much as they can of the experiences and memories that arose.

Next, they share their writings aloud, connecting with observations of their students and links other teachers have made. It is fascinating when teachers of the same grade find themselves sharing common movements or verbalizations emanating from their students. In debriefing, they discover that this activity has engaged them in research and play at the same time. Their writings unearth the similarity—and wonder—that emerges when two or more teachers find mind-body connections between themselves but also from themselves toward the minds and bodies of their students. They also express surprise that movement can be used like this in a graduate classroom.

Catching Hold of the Body's Knowledge

Discussions of physical knowledge rarely occur in classrooms, much less the conscious expression of that knowledge. It is easy to imagine why it remains a rare venture in general education, but much more difficult to understand why it does not appear in teacher education curricula. When we do allow its expression, we are able to catch glimpses of how physical memory affects us both internally and externally. Consciousness may open to surprising places. We are faced with how our bodies have greeted, processed, and locked in experience, information, and knowledge in our early lives and continue to do so. The inevitable recording of what the body learns and remembers occurs continuously, autonomously—a simple and unconscious process. Most of us are not even aware of it. When awareness dawns, our reactions may include suspicion and disbelief, even if we accept the reality of mind, body, and spirit working holistically. It is as if a shroud covers the depth and breadth of the body's capability, and we fear its power over

us: fear what, why, and how our bodies know and protect that knowing, even without our conscious perceptions. We barely even learn the correct names and locations of our inner organs, much less what they do or how they interact with the rest of our being. What's worse is that our image-conscious society contributes greatly to that ignorance, transmitting so much useless information and instruction about the body's appearance and so little, if any, about the depth of its interconnections with mind and spirit.

What if schools had taken seriously the Delphic Oracle's dictum to "know thyself"? What if students in all grades could learn and understand their internal workings as carefully as they do some of their external ones? What if they learned early in life to observe and research the interactions of how and why we are constructed as we are and how consciousness oversees our every holistic experience? Awareness of the body's capacity to receive and remember learning could generate a profound consciousness if taught directly in schools. Instead, it is greeted with skepticism and doubt. A classic and ridiculous example of the way the body has been used in schools comes from an early era when Dewey observed young students being trained to swim by learning strokes on dry land, never allowed to practice in water (14). No mind-body-spirit training there. If only, among the moral principles Dewey believed in, teachers who were his disciples across the decades could have instilled a practice of meditation into the curricula to unify our beings.

In a similar vein, gym classes—for so many decades relegated to games, rules, regulations, and exercises meant to build health—often merely increased aversion in many female students (like me) whose interest in competitive sports was/is nil. Today gym classes are replaced by Physical Education (PE) classes. Renamed and revamped, PE includes not just physical training but greater connections with health and nutrition and, in some places, careful study of the total self. Nonetheless, the realm of consciousness often remains merely an intellectual pursuit, not a holistic avenue worthy of classroom study.

There is another aspect of how bodies should and could be attended to in schools: i.e. the critical need to heal young children. Yet, in the richest country on earth, this need is routinely ignored, despite its potential to change lives. The Molly Stark School, for example, a private elementary school in Bennington, Vermont, does attend to children's physical and mental health, taken as seriously as any subject matter students learn. There, on-staff physicians, dentists, and psychologists attend to the diagnoses and treatments of the students to bring them to the highest functioning holistically. Without such institutional efforts to detect and cure disease, physical and psychological problems easily go unnoticed, particularly in families unable to afford health care. The findings at the Stark School are striking: in the few years since the program began, the test scores and the children's evaluations have soared astonishingly. In more and more schools, healing must surely be viewed as using the body to learn and learning to care for the body.

Learning and Teaching the Whole Self

My kids are very hands-on. They are infants and toddlers. They like to hug a lot and pull on you. I enjoy hugs and it would be nice to have someone attending to your every need. It would be great to be two again. (Pre-K-12 Teacher).

My interest in health began at an early age. As the youngest child in my family, with siblings quite a bit older, I became aware of my mother's multiple sclerosis and other related disorders. As the last child at home each day, it was my task to dress her in the morning and gently move her arms and legs to bring them to mobility before I left for school. As her illnesses worsened, I spent a great deal of time in doctors' offices, and my parents, fearing other diseases, carefully maintained their children's health.

In the Catholic schools I attended, I dreaded gym classes where I rarely got chosen for a team and just as rarely won points. Further, my siblings had sports accidents, and my immigrant parents did not even encourage them to help me learn to toss and catch a ball, skills not considered necessary for a girl. I did manage to learn some sports and games through a limited repertoire of backyard and sidewalk activities. I learned to ride a bicycle, took swimming lessons briefly, had a short sojourn as an ice skater, and as an adult spent a few years embarrassing myself on tennis courts.

In spite of it all, I sprouted an undying passion at the age of five to fulfill my yearning to dance. No matter how obsessive my longing, my parents refused. I knew that other immigrant families also refused their children's—my friends'—craving for dance lessons. The closest I came to dance in public as a child were the years when the nuns tried to teach my Italian legs to dance the Irish jig on St. Patrick's Day. My parents insisted on piano lessons, and soon I was chosen to play for the glee club.

Not until two decades later did I enroll in jazz dance classes and experiment with improvisational dance. Eventually, I organized and led dance workshops in various settings and styles, continuing for many years. I saw how difficult it can be for some who are new to dance and movement classes to move freely in front of others whether by improvisation or with choreography. I had struggled to learn choreography but, like any new language, my efforts should have begun in childhood instead of adulthood. As both student and teacher in dance sessions, I learned the importance of incorporating "safe space" for those who need it. Sadly, in our culture, many people feel so removed from physicality that even common responses are filled with hesitation and embarrassment.

My early shyness gave way to engagement with music and dance, visual arts, theatre, and writing. Over the years, my mind-body-spirit connections deepened through the practice of Yoga, karate, Tai Chi, and meditation. Eventually, as a teacher, I knew I wanted to bring bodywork to others, especially to my education students whose schooling had not experienced it. But our society remains a great distance from cultures where dance and movement are a central part of the healing arts, both physical and mental.

The Fractured Body and Spirit

There are many reasons in our society for the long-term aversion to bodywork, not least among them our reliance on the Cartesian dichotomy of mind over body. Luckily, research on the brain, the body, and consciousness is gradually entering the curriculum, with numerous theorists and practitioners reshaping our understanding of who we are and how we function. Body-based education has gained credence in recent decades. Though some educational conservatives have sought to re-assert the Cartesian model, modern science has conclusively

demonstrated a different model, informed by and working in partnership with the body—along with the spirit.

In the following section, I review applications of mind-body-spirit theory to indicate some of its range of thought and possibility and to examine how to use them within different modalities. I will briefly describe some of the research of psychotherapist Dr. Eugene Gendlin and educational psychologist Julie Henderson and follow with activities and applications I have developed for the classroom enhanced by their work and that of others.

Theory and Practice: Psychotherapy and Educational Psychology

I tried to relax my body [into the age of thirteen] and create a sense of irresponsible feeling. I walked around the room, touching things and other people. I allowed myself to giggle a lot, finding nothing in particular to be funny (K-12 Teacher).

Gendlin, whose work concentrates on the body and provides an alternate approach to traditional psychotherapy, developed a process/practice called “focusing” which relies on bodily awareness to enable people to break through complex emotional-psychological problems, even without professional counseling. In his practice, he observed that some patients appeared able to access bodily responses revealing additional data on psychological-emotional issues. Years of such observation enabled him to analyze and sort the stages of a process that allow people, in effect, to engage in self-therapy or with another person practicing “focusing” in her or his life.

Gendlin's technique of “focusing” relies on “felt sense,” a phrase he coined to describe the body's awareness that is capable of changing in reciprocity with another individual and profoundly influencing both lives. A “felt sense” is a physical—not mental—experience of a situation, person or event, that is “[a]n internal aura that encompasses everything you feel and know about the given subject at a given time—encompasses it and communicates it to you all at once rather than detail by detail” (32). Many language teachers will recognize the concept of “felt sense” through the work of Sondra Perl who explored its connection to writing, especially in her new book which includes a CD and is called *Felt Sense: Writing with the Body*.

The phases of “focusing” briefly suggest ways to 1) ask ourselves what interferes with feeling well and wait for the body's answers, noting and setting aside concerns one by one; 2) select a particular issue to concentrate on and allow its related physical state of discomfort or unclarity—its “felt sense”—to emerge; 3) search for a word to name and define the body's experience of the problem; 4) alternate between word/image and felt sense until finding an appropriate match; 5) ask questions designed to connect with the whole problem, analyze aspects, and imagine changes in the body if the problem disappeared; and 6) become aware of change/release in some aspect of the problem and the possibilities for protection from critical voices and for returning to use the process to release even more of the problem (177-78).

Henderson—an educational psychologist who combines aspects of bodywork, psychotherapy, relationship counseling, Yoga, meditative practice and mind training into a new field called Zapchen Somatics—also seeks to bridge the rift of Cartesian dualism in Western thought which disconnects the humanistic from the

biological view of humans (15-16). Somatics seeks to understand, both subjectively and objectively, “the mystery of being body that is aware, mind that is embodied” (16).

Her research proved instrumental in demonstrating a new understanding of the relationship between emotion and physiological change. As psychologist Paul Ekman explains:

The traditional view, which is correct, but not the only way things happen, is that an emotion is generated by a perception of some event, or a memory, and changes occur in the brain which then direct changes in the bodily organs, such as the heart, and in facial expression. Facial expressions are the end result of the emotion, a manifestation of the emotion. (qtd. in Henderson 7)

However, Henderson's findings have shown that the process also works in reverse, that “[m]aking the face can produce the physiological changes in the body” (7).

Particularly enlightening for educators, Henderson notes numerous studies confirm that remembering something depends upon re-entering the state in which we learned it. Surely that resonates with our common experiences of searching for a lost item or forgotten thought by re-tracing steps to the place/moment where we can consciously reconstruct what happened. Often, she suggests, poor conditions in schools create unpleasant states of being in students, thus accounting for the fact that much schooling is forgotten in the body's reluctance to recall uncomfortable moments. She recommends alternating “doing and resting” in the teaching/learning process, thereby allowing the necessary physiological mechanisms to bring the experience into longterm memory (97-98). She concludes that teaching well-being through physical exercises, many of which are embodied in childhood, needs to be part of schooling (10). When—beyond kindergarten—have we been urged as teachers to incorporate “resting” after a learning experience in the classroom?

Theory and Practice: Neurology, Brain Science, and Psychology

At seven years old, I just wanted to touch, see, and try out everything I saw. I was curious, and always got myself into trouble that way. I remember being sort of a tomboy. Then, I wasn't afraid to act like a boy, climb, run fast and show off. Now I feel I have to be conservative. I even find myself thinking about how a woman should behave. Have I become a stereotype? (K-12 teacher)

Antonio Damasio, a physiological psychologist and neurologist researching consciousness, suggests that at times we use our minds not to discover facts but to hide them, using part of the mind as a screen to prevent another part of it from sensing what is going on elsewhere. The screening is not necessarily deliberate, but nonetheless it does hide, and one thing it hides most effectively is the body. Like a veil thrown over the skin to secure its modesty, but not too well, the screen partially removes from the mind the inner states of the body, those that constitute the flow of life:

The alleged vagueness, elusiveness, and intangibility of emotions and feelings are probably symptoms of this fact, an indication of how we cover the representation of our bodies, of how much mental imagery based on nonbody objects and events masks the reality of the body. Otherwise we would easily know that emotions and feelings are tangibly about the body. Sometimes we use our minds to hide a part of our beings from another part of our beings. (28-29)

Psychologist William C. Schutz noted that body-function and emotional states were beginning to be widely acknowledged, with language used to describe emotion and behavior translating closely into terms used to describe physical conditions. Further, he acknowledges that this translation process has a powerful effect on dealing with emotional states:

A method for helping a person act out and deal with the sense of being immobilized by others, for example, is to put him in a tight circle of people and ask him to try to break out, physically, thereby transforming the emotional feeling of immobilization in the physical experience of it, allowing him to break what he feels are unbreakable bonds. (25)

Close connection between the emotional and the physical is evident in the verbal idioms common in social interaction. Feelings and behavior are expressed in terms of all parts of the body, of body-movement, and of bodily functions, for example, "lost your head," "heads up," "save face," "shoulder a burden," "get it off your chest," "lot of gall," and "no guts" (Schultz 25-26).

A Taste of the Body Learning: Setting the Scene

I have found myself leading bodywork such as stretching, sighing and yawning, Yoga, Qi Gong, and the like designed to trigger relaxation, encourage alignment, release tension, and generate well-being, alertness, and centering. I use breathing meditation in class when re-focusing may be crucial. I use exercises from Henderson's *Embodying Well-Being* and favor drama-in-the-classroom projects in part because they can include the activities above as well but more so because, as critical releases in understanding occur, students easily become comfortable with them. Viola Spolin and Augusto Boal, both of whom advocate drama in the classroom, are especially provocative. The dramas we work on emerge from critical incidents in teaching which students first write about as homework or in class. One of Boal's most powerful techniques offers the opportunity to change the situation being improvised by classroom audience members entering and replacing characters to change the scene. The union of mind, body, and spirit here can be quite palpable, inducing deep reflection on the self and self-in-context. Once again, Damasio's configuration of the emotion, feeling the emotion, and knowing we have a feeling of that emotion offers many possibilities for expression by students (8).

In experiential or embodied learning, memories emerge which are critical to record and explore. The knowledge our bodies carry may not be readily accessible because we rarely receive instruction in reading our bodies, and, if any, far less instruction than in reading our minds or emotions. Thus, the practice

of doing and writing is ideally suited to sounding out our bodies. Writing, after all, is a physical-mental-spiritual activity, and physical awareness, as we know from kinesthetic intelligence, is in itself a kind of literacy. I suspect we actually have greater capability than we know for locating the grammar and vocabulary of the body—extending as it does from experience with our own physicality to reading that of others. Facial expression and posture can reveal much to the practiced eye. We may notice ourselves slip unknowingly into a kind of mirroring, taking on facial and bodily characteristics, watching and feeling a transformation in ourselves which synchronizes with that person's state of being.¹

Reading and Writing the Body: Growing Consciousness

Damasio views consciousness as a turning point in the history of life, not as the pinnacle of biological evolution. Even through a standard dictionary definition—as an organism's awareness of its own self and surroundings—it is easy to envision how consciousness has opened human evolution to a new order of creations not possible without it, i.e. religion, social and political organizations; art, science, and technology. Further, consciousness is the critical biological function that brings sorrow or joy, suffering or pleasure, embarrassment or pride, grief for love or for loss of life. We would not know these without consciousness. Yet Damasio suggests that we should not blame Eve for knowing but should blame consciousness, and thank it, too (4).

The key to a life examined, consciousness endows us with a beginner's permit into knowing all about hunger and thirst, tears and laughter, kicks and punches, and all the flow of images called thought, feeling, words, stories, beliefs, music and poetry, happiness and ecstasy. Consciousness, at its simplest, allows us to recognize an irresistible urge to stay alive and develop a concern for the self. At its most complex, consciousness helps us develop concern for other selves and improve the art of life (Damasio 5). According to Damasio:

In the very least, then, the neurobiology of consciousness faces two problems, the problem of how the movie-in-the-brain is generated, and the problem of how the brain also generates the sense that there is an owner and observer for that movie. The two problems are so intimately related that the latter is nested within the former. In effect, the second problem is that of generating the appearance of an owner and observer for the movie within the movie; and the physiological mechanisms behind the second problem have an influence on the mechanisms behind the first. (11)

According to David Best, lecturer in philosophy, aesthetics, education, and human movement, writing and discussing the contribution that sports and physical education have made to the development of the intellect frequently reveal two common and usually closely related misconceptions. The first misconception is that “the intellect” is equivalent to “the mental,” and refers to some general capacity for thinking. The second is that the intellect is a distinct, inner

¹ A longer description/discussion of mind-body-spirit activities I have created for teacher education classes and for my students' use in their classrooms, adjusted for age level, can be found in my article “Teacher Growing Pains” in *JAEPL*.

faculty which causes thoughtful actions, i.e. that this is part of a dualistic conception of the body and mind as separate entities. Although they are not necessarily related, in practice these misconceptions are usually to be found in conjunction, since the former leads naturally to the latter (50).

Best emphasizes that confusion on this issue must be eradicated not only for the sake of clarity per se but also because of the practical damage it can effect in discussion and formulation of degree proposals in human-movement studies. Statements are often made which explicitly claim, imply, or are commonly taken to imply, that the activities which comprise sport and physical education or human movement contribute to the development of the intellect. Such a conclusion is also frequently taken to be implied by claims made about "education through movement." He goes on to note that Morgan et al. wrote that a well-conceived program of physical activity is critical to "exercise the intellect" and "influence the minds as well as the bodies of pupils, i.e. the aims of physical education as intellectual . . . development through physical activities" (50-51).

In addition, Alice Brand, a founder of NCTE's Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning (AEPL) and author of *Therapy in Writing: A Psycho-Educational Experience* indicates that teacher education experts in the 30s and 40s "were convinced that education and mental hygiene were one and the same thing" and that in the 50s humanistic psychologists believed that "therapy could take place not only behind closed doors . . . in school and community settings as well" (31-32). Brand, intrigued by the brain research of Joseph Ledoux and as well by Redl and Wattenberg, regarded teachers as responsible for unifying emotional and intellectual development, including physical health as well (31-32).

What Will the Cognitive Do Now

Observing students' responses to mind-body-spirit activities has enabled me to understand Damasio's suggestion that

[overcoming] the obstacle of self, which meant, from my standpoint, understanding its neural underpinnings, might help us understand the very different biological impact of three distinct although closely related phenomena: an emotion, the feeling of that emotion, and knowing that we have a feeling of that emotion. No less important, overcoming the obstacle of self might also help elucidate the neural underpinnings of consciousness in general. (8)

Alternative theory and practice have already set the scene in recent decades for shifts in classrooms at all levels, emphasizing learning-centered places where teachers are part of the classroom community rather than its central figure. Students may be accustomed to desks in large circles, U-shapes, or small groups; they expect eye contact and direct interaction with their peers. My students, aware of my reputation with mind-body-spirit activities and aesthetic education, come into my classroom already willing, persuaded by those who've gone before, to stand up and move around the room, hallways, and even outside. I gratefully recognize that this small step which remained for ages a monumental challenge to me now represents teachers, men and women, walking on the moon.

Recently, when students are engaged in art projects and other activities,

I have begun to notice a rich texture of silence—a lovely hum—taking over their small groups and soon enough, the whole room. And their voices, in the reflections written after the exercise “Walk Through Your Life,” have indicated their effort to shift away from mind-only education.

When The Body Finds Its Popular Voice

In researching this work, I have found numerous theoreticians in the field of mind-body-spirit (actually too many to incorporate in this essay) and surprisingly also stumbled upon a lengthy article in the popular magazine *Body & Soul*. The piece, “Every Body Has a Story,” was a survey of body psychotherapy by Portland Helmich. I was fascinated by the long list of more than 60 different approaches loosely referred under that term as “body psychotherapy.” Among the modalities mentioned in the article were Rubenfeld Synergy Method, Bioenergetic Analysis, Core Energetics, Hakomi Method, Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy, Body-Mind Centering, most of which are devoted to unifying treatments such as talk therapy and emotional release. I was particularly taken in by the question, “If your hip had a voice, what would it say?” The therapist speaking presumably was assisting clients in techniques which might open areas of inner exploration. Thinking back to the classroom, I found myself amazed at how quickly interest in mind-body-spirit unity has risen in just a few years. Just as the K-12 teachers who assisted in this research hope to find openings in their days to carry on this work/play in their classrooms, so am I deeply grateful for their willingness to take a chance on something unusual. Who knows? Perhaps some of those teachers and their growing students will find ways to tap our body's stories more acceptably in the very near future beyond the classroom and into the mind-body-spirit research we very clearly need. ☞

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Writing Aphrodite: Imagining a Rhetoric of Desire for a Feminist Writing Course

Hildy Miller

For a long time it has seemed to me that much of the academic writing our students do has something missing; at its worst, it can have a sameness, a lack of feeling and aesthetic qualities, a general joylessness in its language, and a repetitiveness in its worn out discourse forms. Many of my students agree: "After you've written for a couple of years, you get the forms—introduction, ideas, and conclusion. That's all you can really do. . . . I always read a page and think, 'God, this is really boring.'" Another one characterized her academic writing as "conveyer-belt" papers. She preferred the first drafts that she habitually concealed from teachers: "I like to save my first drafts because I find them interesting. I don't think teachers would share my appreciation of them!"¹ Certainly, we have a contemporary tradition of varying academic writing, which can potentially enliven it, beginning perhaps in 1980 with the insights of Winston Weathers. Since then, rhetorical scholars have retheorized a place for style in the classroom (Johnson, *Rhetoric*; Johnson and Pace; Williams), proposed alternative discourses (Bishop; Bridwell-Bowles; Starkey), revalorized personal writing (Harris; Holdstein and Bleich; Nash; Spigelman), rethought the role of emotion in writing (Brand; Davis; Jacobs and Micciche; McLeod), and revised historical views of western discourse so that it appears far less logocentric than it once did (Glenn; Jarratt; Poulakos). However, very little of this work has actually transferred to the average college classroom.

What's more, I have also noticed the continuing difficulties that many women students have in doing academic writing and participating in the writing classroom. Cultural feminists such as Cixous and Clement, Irigaray, Lorde, hooks, and Daly once theorized alternative discourses that drew on women's ways of knowing as a means both to enable women to speak and write more fully and to rebalance a discourse gendered male. Of course, feminist theorists (and rhetorical theorists) were not the only ones attempting to describe alternative rhetorics. Diane P. Freedman summarizes a confluence of similar propositions:

[B]lurred or mixed genre texts have been "produced and theorized by feminists, deconstructors, French psychoanalytic critics, reader-response critics, and composition teachers, not to mention past poet-critics from Sir Phillip Sidney and Walt Whitman to W.E.B. Du Bois, Gertrude Stein, and Charles Olson

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¹Quotations from students come from interviews conducted for "Design for Writing: Image and Metaphor in Cognitive Processes of Writing." They have given me permission to cite their responses anonymously.

along with anthropologists Clifford Geertz, James Clifford, Renato Rosaldo, George Marcus.” (Freedman, *Alchemy* 83 qtd. in Freedman, “Life” 204)

But these cultural feminists were concerned not just with changing discourse forms, but with nothing less than transforming the way we conceive writing, writers, teachers, and writing classrooms. These scholars, each in her own way, called for a feminist rhetoric of desire to transform existing writing practices.

Subsequent scholars, including Susan Kirtley, Kerry Burch, and Jim Garrison, have echoed their call—mythologizing that rhetoric of desire—by identifying Eros as a missing but powerful force in the classroom. Kirtley, drawing on Plato’s *Symposium*, hypothesizes Eros as a daimon who acts as a messenger between gods and people and who facilitates erotic exchange between people; he represents dialogue, movement, and the involvement of the passions (60-61). She says, “I like to think that Diotima had it right all those years ago, and that if we are willing to mindfully embrace eros in our classrooms, it will guide us to traverse boundaries, coming to a place where wisdom leads to desire” (66).

However, for women in a feminist writing classroom, it seems to me that the mythical figure of Eros might not be so apt a choice to stand for a rhetoric of desire to balance academic writing, since, in Eros, desire is gendered male. According to Gisela Labouvie-Vief, in her study of the role of mythos in cognitive development, early on, Eros was appropriated by masculinist values. A masculine erotic of “phallic intrusion” supplanted a feminine erotic of desire and connection. She goes on to say: “The fact that historically Eros became associated with desire is interesting in itself, since it indicates that neither the Greeks nor most of subsequent Western intellectual tradition acknowledged female passion and desire as a positive principle” (31). Nor can the writer’s Muse, as she is currently figured, be of much help to women writers. Like Eros, she inspires creativity—beautiful verbal expression, access to feelings, and a physical sense of well-being. But, the Muse, as Toni Wolff characterizes her, is a hetaera or “a sexual and spiritual confidante to a man” (Woolger and Woolger 142). She is illusory and quixotic; at one moment, she may appear as an inspiring projection onto a mundane woman, while, at another, she may refuse to appear at all when most needed. Though at least she is female, whereas Eros is not, the Muse is traditionally defined by her service to men, so it is hard to imagine how women writers could commune with her unless she were radically reinterpreted.

That is why I have long been intrigued with the possibilities of the goddess feminist interpretation of the myth of Aphrodite and wondered if she might not be used to address that missing element in academic writing by personifying a feminist rhetoric of desire. In order to recover this goddess, is it necessary to step back into an older cultural feminist paradigm little used nowadays.

Reclaiming Aphrodite from Past Feminist Theories

From the late 1970s through the early 1990s, cultural feminists in many fields were exploring the ramifications of the then-current concept of gender as a binary construct consisting of “male” and “female” sides. The masculine (or masculinist) was seen as the better known and more valued dominant side of the binary with the feminine (or feminist) side likely to be either denigrated and distorted or unknown and suppressed. Much of the cultural feminist project of

the time elucidated the feminine by identifying and often celebrating its “difference.” It was in that era of feminist thought that “goddess feminists” were particularly prolific; they retold myths—often theorized from a feminist Jungian perspective—of goddesses who embodied energies that redeemed and revalued the feminine side of the binary in some way. Among the many books on goddesses, which were particularly influential when written in the 1980s, and which are still read today, are Sylvia Perrera’s *Descent of the Goddess*, Christine Downing’s *The Goddess*, Marion Woodman’s *The Pregnant Virgin*, Nancy Quallis-Corbett’s *The Sacred Prostitute*, Anne Baring and Jules Cashford’s *The Myth of the Goddess*, and Jean Shinoda Bolen’s *Goddesses in Everywoman*.

This extraordinary flowering of interest in goddesses in that feminist period has been viewed, in retrospect, as resulting from the impact of matriarchal prehistory theories, which were then in circulation. Though the notion of an idyllic matriarchy had appeared over the years from time to time in accounts by such figures as Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Sir James George Frazer, it was the publication of Merlin Stone’s *When God Was a Woman* and the claims of folklorist and anthropologist Marija Gimbutas during the 1970s that seemed to trigger immense interest in the subject (Eller 32). Cynthia Eller explains the connection between the two: “Goddess worship itself is sometimes taken as a shorthand for matriarchal myth: goddesses are proof of matriarchy, reminders of it, and calls to recreate it” (36). Such ancient Camelot-like matriarchies held enormous appeal, in part, because they contrasted with the bleak political situation of the day. Then, as now, there was an apocalyptic sense that, culturally and politically, we were coming to the end of a cycle. This cycle was viewed as patriarchal and seen as tilted too far to the qualities coded as “male” in the gender binary. Therefore, matriarchy “was a myth that, however recently created, wielded tremendous psychological and spiritual power,” since its values might save western culture at its eleventh hour (5).

Moreover, explorations of goddess myths made it possible to hear what cultural feminists would call women’s “different voice.” As Susan Rowland explains, “In goddess feminism, the metaphysical feminine principle is mapped onto pre-Christian-mythologies in order to seek out non-patriarchal narratives and ways of thinking” (61). For post-Jungian goddess feminists, these myths could be used to repolarize the human psyche (Woolger and Woolger 148). As they saw it, if “masculine” and “feminine” stand metaphorically for opposing binary values—passive and active, love and war, light and dark, Eros and Logos, and so on—then, ideally, both must coexist consciously in ever changing dynamic tension. But if one of the polarities is repressed—submerged and trapped in the unconscious—eventually, the imbalance must right itself, perhaps violently, when what is repressed explodes into conscious awareness. Walter A. Shelburne describes the process: “The unconscious supplies contents that compensate the conscious attitude by representing features of the person’s total situation which are overlooked, repressed, or undervalued by the conscious personality” (60). This rebalancing process, then, was thought to apply both to individuals and to entire cultures; contemplating powerful myths and archetypal images and thereby developing “recessive potentials” was key to undertaking any creative effort (Lauter and Rupprecht, “A Proposal” 221). James Hollis describes the imagistic process by which it was said to occur: “Underneath these cultural splits, the archetypal imagination seeks, through affectively charged images, to connect us to the flow

of energy that is the heart and hum of the cosmos" (10). Parting company with Jung, post-Jungian feminists saw goddess myths and figures simply as "recurrent images, symbols, and narrative patterns rather than as transcendent absolutes" (Pratt, "Spinning" 107) or as "categories to contain women" (Lauter and Rupprecht, "Introduction" 7). Goddess myths, in fact, were seen as potentially helpful not only to women but also to men; for everyone, "raising the unconscious" was a major priority (Lauter and Rupprecht, "A Proposal" 231).

Such mythical forays may seem foolishly romantic, idealistic, and theoretically dated today. As Rowland says, "Goddess feminism is not fashionable in today's capitalist, materialist, non-religious culture" (62). A bigger problem for many of today's academic feminists are the tenets of cultural feminism which underwrote it. Many postmodern feminists now find the very notion of gender constructed as a binary of "male" and "female" an essentialist assumption that ignores a wider spectrum of gender possibilities. Further, in the contemporary postmodern view, to explore women's "difference," unwittingly reinforces the binary and, thus, all the attendant oppression associated with "female" qualities. And, finally, much of the purpose for exploring goddesses is rooted in Jungian theory, and, for many postmodern feminists, Jung remains a problematic figure. Rowland sums up the most common objections: "Jung's reductive and misogynistic language, the slippage of gender into biological sex and the equation of women, the feminine, Eros and diffuse consciousness" (67).

I share some of the *theoretical* reservations about the underlying binary of cultural feminism, both in itself and in the way it is used to support post-Jungian feminist interpretations of goddess myths. Certainly, our contemporary constructions of gender as more fluid and less essentialist than was previously thought provide a more complex and nuanced basis for theorizing. And I too sometimes flinch at Jung's more misogynistic and essentialist statements. But I am less inclined than some scholars simply to reject all this material entirely and prefer instead to extract what still might be of use. As I have said, my experiences with my own classes (and in working with faculty with their classes) have convinced me that, *in practice*, much of the academic writing our students do can still aptly be described as lopsidedly "masculinist." And many women students, in particular, continue to struggle with academic writing and the academic classroom as it is currently figured. So it is from this older feminist tradition that I have extracted an interpretation of the function of Aphrodite in order to mythologize a feminist rhetoric of desire.

Aphrodite is, after all, a figure of mythological significance: "Aphrodite is a goddess born of the sea; she is primeval, oceanic in her feminine power" (Johnson, *She* 3). The post-Jungian feminist interpretation of her birth myth goes as follows: For years the sky god Ouranos oppressed his wife, family, and kingdom by brutally suppressing "feminine" energy in many ways. Most notably, he tried thrusting his wife Gaia's children back into her womb in a forceful attempt to deny feminine creation and procreation. Eventually, with the feminine principle so suppressed, the masculine principle increased until it was so out of balance that it turned destructive. Hence, Kronos, the son of Ouranos, whirled on his father in a destructive range and castrated him. Kronos' genitals, flung into the sea, were instantly transformed into the goddess Aphrodite, who then re-introduced to his kingdom the missing feminine qualities of love, desire, laughter, beauty, and human connectedness.

Woolger and Woolger remark, that, inevitably, this myth “also means that the patriarchy cannot hope to control the essentially expansive nature of feminine energy. Suppress the fecundity of the earth (Gaia), and it will spring up again in time (Kronos) as joyful erotic energy (Aphrodite)” (148). It is these qualities, as they appear in Aphrodite, rather than in Eros or the Muse, which post-Jungian feminists might say could transform “phallogocentric” writing, figured as the severed genitals of Kronos, into something more balanced and whole.

Certainly, Aphrodite has accrued much power over the years, if, as Jung believed, some archetypal images become more energized from widespread use (Myss 8). Even so, at first glance, she is an unusual female image to associate with writing. The more likely feminine image might be Minerva, the scholarly woman who speaks and writes in measured tones. Or patient Griselda, the good girl who plods along trying to please her readers, might be a less attractive but more common image (Bolker). Perera concurs: “In the West, women have too often been defined only in relation to the masculine as the good, nurturant mother and wife, the sweet, docile, agreeable daughter, the gently supportive or bright, achieving partner” (“Inanna” 141). Aphrodite, however, is not known for her goodness, her diligence, or her scholarly interests. On the contrary, she stands for the most audacious creativity and can therefore serve as an image for a feminist rhetoric of desire.

How Aphrodite Presided Over My Feminist Writing Class

It was with Aphrodite’s myth in mind that I developed a feminist writing class in which fifteen students, all women from a variety of majors, read feminist theories of writing and wrote several papers. In cultural feminist fashion, we were trying to balance out learned approaches to writing with new ones. For us, Aphrodite became a kind of presiding mythical figure, giving us a shared sense of understanding or purpose. We were a group that truly “constellated on an archetypal image”; that is, everything we did referred back to her in some way, in order to do our exploratory work with writing (Gray 203). The sections that follow highlight the qualities that made Aphrodite such a powerful image for what we were trying to do by using examples of student writing from the course.²

Beauty and Style in Writing

Aphrodite is, most of all, the goddess of beauty. The pleasure she takes in finery and ornamentation is well known. She wears precious jewelry and the most sensual of clothes—all of which enhance her natural beauty. As a result, she is much admired by everyone who sees her. Such an emphasis on the creation and appreciation of beauty suggests attention to style in writing. Throughout much of the rhetorical mainstream in the twentieth century, what was once considered style became mostly a matter of adhering to set discourse forms and following grammatical and stylistic conventions. Even the once-revolutionary process movement did little to change this perception when it conflated style with “surface correctness” and “mechanics,” thereby replicating an earlier rhetorical attitude of abhorring ornamentation in language. Nor has most of the contempo-

²Examples of texts come from papers submitted by students in a course on feminist writing. They have given me permission to quote their work anonymously.

rary social epistemic movement reconciled it with the rest of writing and rhetoric in any meaningful way. Though scholars have rethought both the role of style and the shape of traditional discourse, my students tell me they have seldom experienced these theoretical innovations in their assigned writing. Candace Spigelman agrees: “[T]his ‘blended genre’ is starting to appear in our professional literature, although it has not made its way into many college classrooms” (2-3). Instead, many seem to be left feeling as one student did who explained forlornly to me how she truncated any stylistic inclinations in order to meet the demands of the academy: “And then I cut out all those wonderful words that I love so much.”

In the feminist writing class, we explored different possibilities for exercising stylistic options. For example, one student writing an essay about the pressures of college chose to organize her paper by returning cyclically to the word “college,” placed in bold print before each section detailing the stresses:

College. A time of stress, a sense of recklessness as I work to make ends meet, struggle to keep up with assignments, papers, due dates, due dates, due dates. Always changing, always lagging over your head, keeping your mind in a constant frenzy, rarely able to relax. So many aspects of your life pulling you in every direction, everyone, everything demanding your undivided attention.

College. A campus full of nameless faces, racing in every direction, lines of worry sketched upon foreheads as thoughts of grades, classes, money and lack of it, schedules, GPAs, tuition, flash through them mirroring my own thoughts. As I cut across campus, on my way to yet another class full of due dates and a teacher who seems to be under the impression that this is the only class I am taking this semester, an acute sense of stress finds [its] way along my spine until it creeps into my head, splitting it apart with a pulsing ache.

College. Full of time consuming projects that seem to continue, to pile up, in a snowball effect, one after the other. Two tests tomorrow, one on Wednesday, another on Friday.

The stylistic choices this student made—using one descriptive clause after another to suggest the pressures literally multiplying and piling up, before she returns again to the concept of “college” and relentlessly repeating the word to suggest a mind returning to an obsessive thought—are stylistic options usually found in creative or nonfiction writing. Here, they function effectively not simply as stylistic ornaments, but as ways of substantively shaping the meaning of her essay.

Writing as Pleasure

Aphrodite, as the goddess of pleasure, enjoys life and is always ready to laugh. One of Homer’s epithets for her is, in fact, “laughter-lover” (Friedrich 60). Her many romantic entanglements with Ares, Adonis, Hephaistos, and others and the many tricks she engineers, such as influencing Helen of Troy to seduce Paris, are for her a source of amusement. Rhetorical scholar D. Diane Davis theorizes a joyful and uninhibited rhetoric in which laughter is key to resisting patriarchal discourse. However, in the academic work our students do,

writing is too often a solemn endeavor instead. Peter Elbow illustrates the way many instructors regard student attempts at wit:

In a workshop with teachers not long ago I was struck with how angry many teachers got at a piece of student writing. It was not particularly good (it was about falling asleep while writing an assigned essay and waking up on a Greek island with ‘topless maidens’), but what infuriated these teachers was not really the mediocre quality but that the writer said in a piece of process writing that most people in his group liked it. I sensed resentment against the most basic impulses that are involved in being a writer: to have fun telling a story and to give pleasure to others. (“Reflections” 136)

In my writing class, students experimented with integrating humor of all sorts into serious pieces. One student, for example, wrote an essay on why she disliked poetry, ironically fashioning her opening “thesis” into the shape of a poem:

*Supposedly Poetry is a luxury for those
who read it.
My opinion of poetry is that it is hard
to need it.
Such metaphors and similes are only best
For avoiding reality and leaving out
the rest.
Poetry is only inspiring to [those] who
wrote it.
And for those that read it and do not
understand
It is hard to interpret just what the
author has planned.
I am confused and curious at the idea of
a poem.
Maybe they are too deep for me or not
deep enough.
But using a few words for a complex thought
is tough.
That was my attempt to explain why I do not like poetry, which
was written in poetic form. It is ironic and nonsensical, just
like poetry in general, right?*

Her essay went on to point out the problems she saw in poetry and to raise serious objections to it, yet throughout she retained an irreverent tone. In fact, it was a daring paper for her to write for an English professor, given its stance. Laughter—and humor, in general—is typically reserved for people who are socially powerful, and not encouraged in others, such as women or students, for instance, who are likely less powerful. Yet laughter is associated not only with power but with creativity, for humor loosens up the mind to become its most inventive; so the women in my class often laced their essays with humorous insights or commentary.

Writing from Bodily Experience

Aphrodite symbolizes the feminine erotic experience—both in the sense of “procreation and verbal creation” (Bolen 233). One of her many magical acts was to bring to life an ivory statue of the perfect woman sculpted by Pygmalion (236). What was for Pygmalion an abstract lifeless ideal, became, under Aphrodite’s influence, the real flesh-and-blood woman, Galatea. Aphrodite is the principle of transformation with the power to make the inanimate animate by the force of her creative energy. Indeed, much of the feminist enterprise during the cultural feminist era was to humanize what had been made mechanical (Goldenberg). “Writing the body” and writing from personal experience, both grounded experientially in the senses, are still concepts at odds with much contemporary academic writing in practice. Though the bodily nature of writing has been explored (Brand; Ochsner; Perl) and personal writing has been theorized into academic writing (e.g. Harris; Holdstein and Bleich; Nash; Spiegelman), my students tell me that they have rarely encountered either concept in their courses. In our class, they often chose to render bodily experience into words. For example, one student told a story about intervening in a cat fight only to be attacked herself by the animal:

His beautiful blue eyes bulged with rage. He stared right through me. I had become prey. . . . His invincible jaws clamped down on my right hand, embedding his fangs in my tender flesh. Every muscle in my legs forced my body upward in [an] attempt to flee from the pain. However, upon standing, I discovered that the source of this agony remained attached to me, suspended from my hand. What had previously been my poor helpless kitty was transformed into a demon. . . .

My left hand kept a steady grip over the wound. A surge of nauseousness arose in my stomach. The pain began to creep down into my fingertips and up into my shoulders. I decided that I had better go inside.

The entire paper, in fact, described the physical effects of the attack and its aftermath. Not just a personal experience, her paper was insistent in its focus on actual physicality. Like this student, many women in the course wrote about their bodies, including experiences of physical abuse, menstrual problems, and rape. The bodily experiences they rendered so visibly were not always positive, but, more often, physical violations that they had survived. Their bodies were shown not as ideal objects to be acted upon, but as flesh-and-blood, both vulnerable and strong.

Writing from a Stance of Love and Connection

Aphrodite is the goddess of love, and, as such, values the human relationships she so magnetically attracts. Many of her connections are sexual liaisons, but these by no means represent her entire scope. It has been said of her: “Above all, Aphrodite wants relationships to be loving, whether they be amicable, social, physical, or spiritual. Relationships where there is *heart*” (Woolger and Woolger 136). She reaches out to others by listening empathically—recognizing conflicts but sidestepping them with her tolerance, understanding, and appreciation of human differences. This temperate stance suggests the sort of rhetoric-audience relationship that some cultural feminists once advocated as an

alternative to the traditional model of forceful persuasion (Gearhart; Meisenhelder). Here, too, rhetoric scholars have proposed other forms of argument—Rogerian argument, for example. However, again, students tell me they have not experienced these alternatives. Under Aphrodite’s influence, rather than developing stratagems for disproving an opponent’s position, a writer might flow empathically in and out of different views, though still retaining her own. Within Aphrodite’s fluid model of connection, a writer can be simultaneously solitary and still united with others.

Two students in the class explored differences in their views of how to reconcile their religious background with their emerging feminist political awareness. One wrote:

For Angela, it is OK to disagree with the Church on such issues and still maintain your faith. She likens it to voting for a politician. Even though you might not agree with him or her on all issues, you can still think they are the best person for the job. She thinks of these as mere side issues, not something to abandon your faith in the Church as a whole over. For some reason she has been [able] to maintain peace with her own ideas, and still be a part of the Church. Maybe it’s because while she agrees with me that there are many conflicts in the Church that need changing, she feels this change should come from the inside. She is willing to be patient as the change comes “a little at a time.” An admirable quality, indeed, as long as the change is taking place. But in the two decades we’ve been caught in this cycle, I have not seen that change, and I’ve lost my patience.

The two writers disagreed, but demonstrated that they understood and respected one another’s point of view.

Writing Classroom as a Salon

Aphrodite charms and captivates and reflects positive images of everyone she encounters. Those who fall under her spell find themselves magically able to accomplish far more than they had imagined. Cultural feminists once posited a feminist pedagogy in which an instructor is figured as a mother, a nurturer of students. In contrast, Aphrodite offers a different kind of encouragement to others (Wehr 32). As Johnson characterizes this capacity: “Aphrodite is the principle of mirroring every experience back into our consciousness. As man is occupied with expansion and exploration and finding that which is new, Aphrodite is reflecting and mirroring and assimilating” (*She* 4). Whereas mothering contains an inherent imbalance of power between teacher and student, Aphrodite runs her classroom and responds to writing from a position of a knowledgeable and empathetic equal. Peer writing groups, too, can model after Aphrodite. In the ancient world, a woman might be a “femme inspiratrice” to men (Woolger and Woolger 142). In the writing groups in our course, students transformed this one-way inspiration into mutual encouragement for one another’s writing. Of course, Elbow has theorized a similar form of response through “the believing game,” in which readers are totally receptive rather than critical (*Writing* 270-72). But my students tell me that they have not experienced this kind of receptivity in most of their writing classes. Our feminist writing class

wound up becoming a kind of salon in which we celebrated the beauty of one another's writing efforts.

Conclusions: Aphrodite and a Feminist Rhetoric of Desire

Goddess feminists tried to reclaim Aphrodite by reinterpreting the sacred significance of her erotic qualities. In the tradition they were resisting, Aphrodite was denigrated, seen as a debased woman, whore, or harlot. She fell into this state, Pratt claims, because "[a]n integrated feminine self, particularly when it includes full-fledged Eros, is frightening to society" ("Spinning" 103). Yet, it is particularly those female images reinforcing negative cultural stereotypes that should be transformed (Lauter and Rupprecht, "Introduction" 14). And, for Pratt, this particular goddess is an especially important one to reclaim. She says, "Aphrodite's interbraiding of immanence, spirituality, and sensual and political powers in a holistic paradigm of feminine possibility endows her archetype with an integrative feminist empowerment" (Pratt, *Dancing* 119). In connection with writing, goddess feminist interpretations of Aphrodite's birth myth suggest that invoking her can heal dismembered masculinist discourse. The objective of such a change would not be "Logos-bashing" (Labouvie-Vief 269), but rather a rebalancing of Logos and Eros and a reintegration of masculinist and feminist discourses.

For my students, the course Aphrodite inspired helped them to break out of previous constraints, to experiment with new discourse forms, and to try out new voices in a new pedagogical space. For me, she provided an alternative image to the cultural feminist "teacher-as-mother" and a different stance toward students and their writing. Aphrodite enabled more of the sort of "erotic exchange" that Kirtley identified with Eros: "There is an intimate, alluring element in the composing process—isn't writing an attempt to seduce readers, to entice them to see and feel the world as you wish them to?" (65). So, as I have asserted, I think today's women students may still benefit from a feminist writing class grounded in the cultural feminist conception of discourse as a binary gendered male and female, in which qualities associated with the feminine side are foregrounded.

Why step back into this previous feminist approach? I think that if we could track how feminist awareness happens in our women students today, we would discover that it is a developmental process. Women may pass through stages of awareness, though in no particular order, very like those that feminism collectively has passed through in recent decades. At various times students may construct feminism through a media stereotype such as bra-burning; as a matter of fundamental equality; as an experience of sisterly solidarity perhaps through consciousness-raising; as a suppressed social and cognitive alternative to a patriarchy out of balance; as valorizing "difference"; as foregrounding the identity marker "woman" out of other markers such as race, class, or sexuality; as a matter of performing one's gender; as a matter of constructing gender as a spectrum of possibilities rather than as a binary; as "power feminism" rather than "victim feminism"; and on and on. Any one of these constructions can serve what bell hooks calls "an important stage in the liberation process" (qtd. in Lloyd 63). For that reason, it seems important not to narrowly reject the insights of feminisms past, to make "straw feminist[s]" out of them (Rhodes 10). Rather, for pedagogical purposes, we can continue selectively to make use of them all. In that spirit, reaching back to goddess feminism, with its "opportunities for feminine fictions

of empowerment and agency” (Rowland 68)—and particularly calling up the figure of Aphrodite—can still provide an antidote to academic discourse as it appears in practice and an evocative image for an alternative rhetoric of desire in a contemporary feminist writing classroom. ☞

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“Lashing Out at ‘Intellectuals’”: Facing Fear on Both Sides of the Desk

Stephanie Paterson

*So I've been thinking about this business of intelligence for a long time:
the way we decide who's smart and who isn't.
— Mike Rose*

The Background

The assignment was to write a one-page reading response in a graduate seminar I was teaching in the History and Research Methods in Rhetoric & Composition. That term, we were looking at how and why key theorists and practitioners in the field of composition seemed to disagree on what counted as knowledge and as research, as well as on what pedagogical practices should be implemented in a writing classroom. This gateway class was aimed at challenging and acclimating new graduates to the field. I guess it's not insignificant that I centered the course around the theme of “cross-talk” in composition theory because this essay is a mediation of the ensuing cross-fire between a teacher and her student sparked by these readings.

Many of the students complained of a dizzying array of cross-talk. How could so many people in the same field see the world so differently? But as Villanueva writes,

[C]omposition studies has divided itself, either to find out what writing is, or how to teach it better, or to discern the degree to which it either removes or bestows power. Composition studies finds its historicists, current-traditionalists, cognitivists, expressionists, social-constructionists (who tend to be epistemicists), empiricists, anti-foundationalists, and leftists, among others. Academic books on composition studies tend to historicize, theorize, polemicize, or synthesize, as well as proselytize. Composition is complex and diverse. (xiv)

My education had taught me to favor the great chaos, but I will introduce a student who detested the confusion. Perhaps both the scope of the course and the repetition of the concept of cross-talk played a role in my student's response. Who wouldn't bristle at polemics and proselytizing? We read with different agendas. I return to her paper now in hopes of remembering my own fear at entering into a graduate level conversation for the first time and in hopes of better understanding how to be an inclusive educator in an exclusive environment.

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The Student's Reading Response

I received more than I asked for (or bargained for) in a one-and-a-half page harangue with the title “Lashing Out at ‘Intellectuals.’” I include both Amber's full reading response to the week's reading on Cushman's article and my full teacher feedback to illustrate a class that alarms and puzzles me still today.

Lashing Out at “Intellectuals”

. . . the future of our ability to produce new knowledges for and about ordinary people—and the availability of education to ordinary people—may well depend on how effectively we can . . . make our work intelligible to nonacademics. (Berube qtd. in Cushman 821)

It seems a simple practice to me. If you're trying to sell something, develop the biggest market of consumers possible to ensure your success. Make a cookie that many people like, write romance novels, create a gadget that no one can live without. So why don't “intellectuals” do this? In our readings, I see a scene from *Star Wars*. Darth Vader and Obi Wan are dueling it out with their light sabers. One author attacks the other. Swing after swing of the weapon, but at the end of the fight in *Star Wars*, one walks away and the other grows stronger. The authors are left with nothing. Their long, complicated, and often pretentious attacks upon one another have only resulted in killing them both. There is no truth left.

Not only is there no truth, but there aren't many readers. I don't know many people who willingly submit themselves to this type of textual violence on a regular basis, and certainly no one outside of the “academy.” Most of the authors alienate themselves from the reading public because their writing is just not comprehensible. They deliberately exclude the public from the ideas they are trying to promote. But, especially in the field of education, doesn't it make sense to create an educated public on the relevant issues in education so that change can be implemented? If some “intellectuals” are calling for radical changes within the educational and societal systems, shouldn't they put that spark of revolution in the hands of those who might actually be able to push and make it ignite? What sense does it make to exclude the majority of those whom these ideas would affect?

I am a storyteller. As a storyteller, my object is obviously to tell my story. To do this effectively, I have to be understood. Simple concept, no? I guess not, because if everyone saw it my way I wouldn't have to be writing this response. I am trying, really forcing myself this semester, to read the assigned essays for this class. I agonize over almost every single essay to try and understand it. I sit with a dictionary by my side, even though it goes against my principles, to try to get through the complicated language that I am trying to acquire. I hope that, if

nothing else, I will become a better reader by the end of this course. At this point, I don't really know how much progress I have made.

You'd think that by half-way through the semester, I would be able to tell you how much I have improved. I'm not saying that I haven't, but I definitely think that my progress is overshadowed by the resentment I feel towards authors who have deliberately written to be inaccessible. Well, maybe that wasn't their conscious goal, but I can't believe that their writing style and word choice weren't influenced by a perceived “status” or “authority” that had to be created or maintained. Whatever happened to gaining status because of overall comprehensibility? Wouldn't you have more “status” if you were read by a larger audience, an audience that could hold you as an authority? But no, the barbarians must be held at bay. If they can understand you, you have become a “nonacademic.”

I actually freewrote about this today during a break. I am trying to get past the mounting frustration and resentment I feel. I realize that most of this is self-inflicted. I knew when I signed up for my classes that this semester would be hell. My premonition was uncannily accurate. I knew that I would have no time for anything but reading, pumping out responses, and producing projects and presentations. What I didn't know when I started out was that I'd be learning a completely new language and be exposed to a completely new culture this semester. I am currently in a severe state of culture shock. I am lashing out at my readings. I cannot play the “believing game” because I am too busy hating the author for being so damn boring.

I am the perfect example of why “intellectuals” should be writing for a broader audience. I will one day be in a classroom, and I have the power to institute, spread, and market the ideas of “intellectuals.” I will never do that if I can't understand them.

Teacher Response

Her paper felt like both an attack *and* a plea. What strikes me in retrospect, with the distance of two years between me and this writing, is that I got stuck in the attack and didn't adequately address the more important plea. What happens when a student assaults the teacher on the page? What happens to the student-teacher relationship when the professor responds in kind? My aim in reflecting on the reading response “Lashing Out at ‘Intellectuals’” and how I handled it is to expose the recursive work involved in processing personal attack. In the same way Elisabeth Kubler-Ross maps out stages of grieving, I am attempting to articulate the not-so-fluid stages of processing student hostility and teacher hostility. The verb *handle* is no accidental choice. I suppose that is exactly what I did. I took care of her. I “told her” by typing a response that was just about as long as her writing assignment. I wonder about this now, just as I wondered how to proceed then. Was I teaching her? Was this act opening a space for learning to occur? Was I defending something? Who was lashing out at whom? Here is my response:

The Gospel According to Amber

I realize that most of this is self-inflicted. (excerpt from student's paper).

I read your last RR differently in different moments.

I can empathize with your frustration at writers who write in ways that are unnecessarily complicated and “showy” and offer no sustenance. In fact, I just recently received a book I had ordered that I have been looking forward to for a long time. Ten pages into it I have to put it down because the academese seems so gimmicky and strained and I have to work so hard to make meaning. I will come back to this book later. Like you, there is too much to read and too little time to really process the material.

It is easy to rail against “impenetrable” readings. It is harder (but more worthwhile) to read for what is useful, valuable, insightful, or provocative. The writing teacher-self wants to comment on the shape of your argument—developed through ad hominem attacks and generalizations. There is a flawed logic built into an argument against writing that replicates a *Star Wars* sword fight and then inflicts the same “textual violence” on its reader.

In another moment, I want to commend you for including a reflective self-assessment: “What I didn't know when I started out was that I'd be learning a completely new language and be exposed to a completely new culture this semester. I am currently in a severe state of culture shock.” Your awareness of this state is A+ work. To enter into our weekly readings and encounter the historical (perennial) debates in the field of Composition and Rhetoric is to wade into the center of the stream of “culture.” Each week reveals a new kind of “cross-talk” & this only occurs when there is a clash of cultures on multiple levels.

Blau's seven habits of mind would help you in this work but each “habit” requires solitude and time for reflection. You stack the deck against yourself by carrying such a heavy course load that affords no time to play “the believing game” (which takes considerably more time than the doubting game). These reading responses should be 50% textual analysis (close reading of our required text) and 50% personal reflection (narration, questions, connections to personal experience). You could avoid the trap of creating a series of verbal fallacies by sticking closer to Cushman's article on “The Public Intellectual” and service learning.

Thanks for sharing with me your recent insight into your Myers-Briggs typology and your accompanying prayer: was it “grant me patience NOW?!” Sharing this with me shows me that you are reflecting on how you learn. It helped me not to take your RR so personally.

Dr. Paterson

Currents of Cross-Talk

Her title is still like a yellow light to me, cautioning me to slow down and read warily. Since it is both my profession and my nature to be intellectual, my mind did an immediate transmutation of her title to read simply: “Lashing Out at You, My Professor.” While she describes academic reading as assault, I’m writing about her writing which felt like an assault. It’s disappointing to me now that I took this multi-layered attack on my text selection, on my field of study, on my profession, and on my own desire and compulsion to wrestle with difficult texts personally. Ironically, and sadly, my reply was largely just another attack. I “lashed out” in the guise of instruction. While the attack is apparent, her plea was less explicit.

Perhaps she was a reckless writer.

I am less sure of this now.

There have been fantastic articles and whole books written on the subject of attack in the writing classroom. I think of Lad Tobin’s “Car Wrecks, Baseball Caps, and Man-to-Man Defense: The Personal Narratives of Adolescent Males,” or collections like *What To Expect When You’re Expected to Teach*. I receive these works like life rafts thrown out to the weary swimmer just before she lets go and sinks. I appreciate those in the field of composition who have dared to highlight and study the underlife of teaching and the complexity of the personal-social issues that crop up in the course of teaching (Goffman).

It’s a rather recent realization to learn that what irritates me may not irritate others at all. There is a nexus of old hurts that have formed a swirling formation of sensitivities that are (and I am loathe to acknowledge this) particular to me. One instinct is to look away. The proverbial ostrich approach is to sense calamity and to bury one’s head in the sand. I am not immune to this strategy. It’s another realization that my student has her own nexus of hurts, and, somehow, for some reason, in this exchange we’ve entered a dance in which our separate hurts somehow got activated, or engaged, or explosively fueled.

I have also turned to the Buddhist Pema Chodron in her book *The Places That Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times*. Chodron and Tobin, in different but complementary ways, work to discover how to move productively through fiery points without getting burned or annihilated, or without unintentionally annihilating others in return. They both remind me there is a certain amount of shadow work we must all do as teachers because “until each of us owns our own power (negotiates our own identity), we cannot be part of empowerment (negotiating identities with students)” (Wink 173).

What occurs to me now is that I may have chosen to fall back on my education. Instead of compassionately overlooking the attack and focusing on her legitimate fear, I pointed to all of the holes in this already fragile writer’s argument. I think of a Tony Hoagland poem, “When a beast is hurt it roars in incomprehension/When a bird is hurt it huddles in its nest./But when a man is hurt,/ he makes himself an expert” (15). Instead of pointing to a string of illogical fallacies and her damaged ethos (“I sit with my dictionary by my side even though it goes against my principles”), what would have happened if I had taken my own advice and followed Sheridan Blau’s habits of performative literacy, specifically, “a willingness to suspend closure” and “a tolerance for ambiguity, paradox, and uncertainty”? (18-19). What if I had taken a celebratory stance and

commended her for taking a stand and speaking the “I” with conviction?

Instead, I got stuck in my history. I am perhaps too sensitive to this species of attack. I have a history of enduring others’ unpredictable rage, and so the very phrase “lashing out” calls up a background of unsolicited emotional assault at the hands of others’ selective focus. It’s my assumption that most people who enter academia aren’t as riled by attack as I am, but instead thrive on this sort of intellectual challenge because of the opportunity it presents to strengthen the edges and limitations of thinking. I watch colleagues literally puff up. Voices rise audibly. Words are used to fortify positions. This is not my bag. Of course, I realize some may consider this reading to be too black and white, and there are always many shades of gray. And perhaps even I am just fooling myself because this short paper written by a new grad brings out a fight in me that I hadn’t realized was there. I experience the tone of my student’s writing as both patronizing and whiny, and I feel called somehow to defend my profession. I am irritated that “intellectual” is placed in quotation marks to question the intelligence of intellectuals. How do other writing instructors keep the lines clean when autobiography and history bleed together in teaching?

At first I think my irritation stems from the fact that my student does not speak from an informed position with compelling evidence. I want to rail against creating gross generalizations stated with factual certainty. She writes of Cushman’s article, “Not only is there no truth, but there aren’t many readers.” Says who? But the issue for me really doesn’t turn out to be a matter of documentation at all. It goes deeper into existential territory. She seems to be saying, “What are you really teaching me and why?”

“Lashing Out at ‘Intellectuals’” triggers self-doubts about the effectiveness of my teaching as a composition and rhetoric instructor on a number of levels. If I was teaching in the “right” way, could I somehow avoid these sorts of verbal attacks either in prose or in the classroom? This is an old default question that Peggy McIntosh describes well in “Feeling Like a Fraud.” In fact, McIntosh’s work undergirds my thinking in this article because she suggests, “[women ought to] trust feelings of fraudulence . . . and analyze them more closely” (1). She believes “that many of our feelings of fraudulence come from deep and wise sources. The trick is to trust the very feelings of discomfort that are giving us the most trouble, and try to follow them where they lead” (1). The discomfort comes from the inherent hierarchical structure and imbalance of power. To “trust a feeling of fraudulence” is to trust that this is not the only way to live or be. However, in this instance with this particular student, I bypassed “the trick,” responding defensively and moving directly to self-annihilation of my sense of self as an effective teacher: “Perhaps I do not spend enough time explicitly teaching about illogical fallacies.” Or, “Perhaps I don’t spend enough time doing audience analysis activities.” This is the self-doubting mind that rushes in to “fix” a difficult situation.

At the same time, I wonder if there are gentle, non-alienating ways to celebrate, even encourage “cluelessness” in our pedagogy? Gerald Graff notes, “Given the inherent difficulty of academic intellectual work, some degree of cluelessness is a natural stage in the process of education. If cluelessness did not exist, there would be no need for schooling at all” (1). I forget my own deep trepidation and angst as a new graduate student. In fact, I forget that I was a practically voiceless, near-mute graduate student. Once, having to write a “talk

autobiography” in a graduate seminar, I titled my paper, “I Choose the Fifth on the Grounds That I Might Incriminate Myself.” While my reputation was that of a predominantly publicly quiet student, I privately cracked self-deprecating jokes to preserve a sense of self that I felt was diminished in this new setting.

There is something built into the nature of graduate school that triggers that paradoxical syndrome that recovering alcoholics call “the egomaniac with the inferiority complex.” The egomaniac thrived on the prestige of graduate-level study. My inferior sense of self was sure they sent the letter of acceptance to the wrong person. On the one hand, it is a great honor to have this time for sequestered study and intense interaction with self-identified “good students.” On the other hand, the whole thing rests on a competitive, scarcity model of the world in which there are limited resources. In my Introduction to Graduate Studies seminar, we got the old “look to your left, look to your right” speech about how the odds of the person sitting on either side of us would ever graduate. I forget.

So perhaps I can’t blame my student for trying to bypass the stages of intense resistance and bewilderment in equal measure. Two themes emerge out of these states of mind and are indicative of a way of looking that is so familiar among the students I work with on a regular basis. Theme #1: Don’t Make Me Work: “I sit with my dictionary by my side even though it goes against my principles” (“Lashing Out”). Amber argues that she shouldn’t have to work so hard to comprehend the text at hand. She feels Cushman intentionally obscures her meaning. Big vocabulary words slow her down. Theme #2: The Need for Sudden Outcomes: “You’d think that halfway through the semester I would be able to tell you how much I have improved” (“Lashing Out”).

No doubt she has been schooled in the “dogma of transformation” or what Thomas Newkirk calls “the expectation for transformation, a goal that is, ironically, shared by both the expressivists and socio-epistemic cultural studies ‘camps’ in composition studies—though the means of transformation in both is different” (263). There is an expectation that growth should be immediately apparent. And in a sense, she’s right. I would expect her to articulate how she has grown in her thinking at the halfway juncture in the semester. I would expect her to tell me how much she has improved. But then there is this other voice that knows better. Because I am a gardener, I am aware that things take time to grow. You don’t just toss seeds and expect germination to occur overnight. Nevertheless, my student illustrates what to her is a seemingly straightforward situation:

It seems a simple practice to me. If you’re trying to sell something, develop the biggest market of consumers possible to ensure your success. Make a cookie that many people like, write romance novels, create a gadget that no one can live without. So why don’t ‘intellectuals’ do this? In our readings, I see a scene from *Star Wars*. Darth Vader and Obi Wan are dueling it out with their light sabers. One author attacks the other. Swing after swing of the weapon, but at the end of the fight in *Star Wars*, one walks away and the other grows stronger. The authors are left with nothing. Their long, complicated, and often pretentious attacks upon one another have only resulted in killing them both. There is no truth left. (“Lashing Out”)

Her simple line of argumentation is both attractive and appalling to me.

There's something quintessentially American in her argument. She has reduced complexity to bite-sized pieces. If you want _____ (blank) outcome, do _____ (blank). It is interesting that she points to cookies, romance novels, and gadgets. These three consumer items are marketable outside of the realm of academia. One follows a recipe, another a predictable plot, and the last item is designed to make life easier. They are all purchasable products. I think she shows what David Bartholomae calls "the pressure of language to be pat, complete, official, single-minded" ("Against" 196). My goal: An RR that is less pat, less complete. I see part of my work as helping this new graduate student celebrate and embrace "complexity, uncertainty, idiosyncrasy, [and] multiple-mindedness" (196).

My student's point: In her reading response she argues that academic writers ought to write in such a way that others (academics and non-academics alike) will both be able to comprehend what they read without a great fight, and to feel eager to read what the author can share. Who can blame her for feeling this way? I have my own history of railing against writers whose prose seems intentionally impenetrable. It is telling that she chooses this epigraph:

the future of our ability to produce new knowledges for and about ordinary people—and the availability of education to ordinary people—may well depend on how effectively we can . . . make our work intelligible to nonacademics (Berube qtd. in Cushman 821)

She is making a case for inclusion and against exclusion and continues,

I don't know many people who willingly submit themselves to this type of textual violence on a regular basis, and certainly no one outside of the "academy." Most of the authors alienate themselves from the reading public because their writing is just not comprehensible. They deliberately exclude the public from the ideas that they are trying to promote. But, especially in the field of education, doesn't it make sense to create an educated public on the relevant issues in education so that change can be implemented? If some "intellectuals" are calling for radical changes within the educational and societal systems, shouldn't they put that spark of revolution in the hands of those who might actually be able to push and make it ignite? What sense does it do to exclude the majority of those whom these ideas would affect? ("Lashing Out")

She argues that the writers we'd been reading give her "no place to stand." The specialized language of academic discourse communities is felt as exclusionary. She points to a perceived social violence brought about through words. Wendy Bishop says, "I teach myself theory—or at least voluntarily take myself by the scruff of the collar into deeper conceptual waters" (22). But Amber is baffled by the self-sponsored intellectual discomfort brought about when one enters deep conceptual waters.

Two years after this exchange, Amber agreed to join me in revisiting this teaching moment. I asked her to write what she remembers about "The Gospel According to Amber." At the time of this writing, she was two weeks away from graduating with an MA in English with special concentrations in TESOL and Rhetoric and Teaching Writing.

When I wrote that reading response, I felt angry, alienated, and excluded. I had entered the Composition classes as part of my degree requirement and had decided to pursue a dual concentration, not because I had any intention of teaching Composition but because I realized that the degree would make me more marketable in an unstable job market. I did not identify with the new discourse community in which I found myself immersed. I had easily assimilated in the TESOL community; my language and teaching backgrounds provided me with a point of understanding and common goals, and my experience allowed me to easily and quickly rise to the level of my most competitive peers.

I had none of this understanding, commonality, or experience to share with my peers in Composition. Most of these students had been in classes together before, and they spoke a different language. They spoke in jargon and of concepts that I couldn't understand because 1) I'd never taught writing or (composition) in an institutionalized classroom setting. 2) I had not had the opportunity to read a wide array of literature in Composition studies. 3) I could not imagine myself as their (colleague). They seemed unwelcoming and elitist to those of us from TESOL, and I was intimidated because most of them were at least ten years older than I was.

Her argument and subsequent reflection actually echoes the same claims Graff makes in *Clueless in Academe: How Schooling Obscures the Life of the Mind*. Graff begins, “This book is an attempt by an academic to look at academia from the perspective of those who don't get it” (1). He explains, “The subject is cluelessness, [or] the bafflement, usually accompanied by shame and resentment, felt by students, the general public, and even many academics in the face of the impenetrability of the academic world” (1). Graff's argument is Amber's argument, namely, that “academia reinforces cluelessness by making its ideas, problems, and ways of thinking look more opaque, narrowly specialized, and beyond normal learning capacities than they are or need to be” (1). This is a valid complaint. She challenged what she regards as unequal power and privilege, and I unwittingly lashed out at her.

Unsent Letters

This student cried on several occasions. She cried when she received my typed response. She cried again when she read an early draft of this article. In fact, she uses the word *devastating* to describe reliving this exchange. I'd like to believe we both are stronger and braver than we initially may have thought. I would like to believe next time I will respond differently. This writing provides an essential critical distance. When this happens again, and this will happen again because so many students struggle to acclimate to the new norms of academic culture, I'm not sure it will have the same negative charge for me.

I keep looking hard at this scene of teaching, and she miraculously joins me in this process. Her analysis of what happened intrigues me. She tells me now that she wrote me the following letter to process my response to her writing.

She shares this unsent letter now in an effort to offer a fuller picture of her experience of this exchange of words.

Dear Dr. Paterson,

I would like to take some time to address you in regards to the letter that you attached to my response.

In my response, I intended no attack on your authority. I regret that you have taken my response as such. More accurately, I would classify my response as the unfortunate and poorly placed reaction to a mixture of hurt feelings and frustration that stem from your commentary and my own interactions with the texts.

I am aware that you may not have consciously insulted me, and so I think it only fair to share my interpretation of the situation. Although the fact that I got a check instead of a check plus smarted, this was not the source of hurt feelings. In that first “check” response, I knew when I turned it in that it was not as well written as usual, and I anticipated a lessened grade. It was not the check, but the commentary that upset me. By your pointing out my use of the “chummy we” and then systematically removing the word “we” from other responses, I received two messages:

1. You do not wish to be considered part of a “we” with me.
2. I am not in the position to consider myself part of any “we” within the academy or society as a whole.

As we are studying Freire and the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, I see my frustration with some of our texts as the beginnings of the rejection of the complacency that has previously plagued my education. I would like to think that I have the opportunity and the right to question the supposed authority of the authors who seem to prize their elevated status and limited readership. I appreciate the comment that you, too, have experienced this frustration.

I would like to add that although I chose to “rail against ‘impenetrable’ readings,” I have neither ceased to read them nor carry away useful ideas; I have only failed to focus on that aspect of the readings in my response.

I believe that I have altered the approach that I previously used in writing my responses, which you liked, in the attempt to experiment with my writing. I had hoped that you would allow me to experiment with ideas, opinions, and styles, and that I would not have to lock myself into a specific format to make you happy.

This clash that has occurred between you and me was not intended on my part. I hold a great respect for you but feel that you have interpreted my response otherwise. Likewise, I may have misinterpreted some of your comments that have left me feeling ashamed, alienated, frustrated, and extremely disappointed. I hope that by facing this problem directly we can move past this point in our relationship.

Sincerely,
Amber

Amber now offers the following retrospective:

I am very embarrassed about the response I wrote. I’m still not sure what reaction I anticipated or what good I thought submitting that response would get. I now think that maybe I unconsciously wanted to get back at her because I did not understand why considering myself a part of “we” was so wrong. Gee says that at any moment we are using language we must say or write the right thing in the right way while playing the right social role and (appearing) to hold the right values, beliefs, and attitudes. Thus, what is important is not language, and surely not grammar, but saying (writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations.

At that time, I did not share any of these aspects of behavior with Dr. Paterson. Maybe, having felt excluded from the discourse community she represented, I wanted to show my complete rejection of it. Maybe I wanted to express that when someone is excluded from a group, they leave, give-up, and refuse to play the game. I felt that I was not allowed to experiment and try to identify with this new community, and so I chose not to engage at all. Envisioning myself as an outsider prevented me from engaging with the community.

Reading Through Fear(s)

The central question of a warrior's training is not how do we avoid uncertainty and fear but how do we relate to discomfort? How do we practice with difficulty, with our emotions, with the unpredictable encounters of an ordinary day?
(Chodron 6)

I think this investigation of student writing is really more about the teacher. I want to highlight the need for more teacher research inquiries into the powerful emotions of educators-under-attack, and specifically, the lifetime work involved in taking care of one's psyche so as not to lash out unconsciously at students who are struggling with change. Chodron calls this “training in the middle of the fire” (5). To be what Chodron would call “a warrior” teacher, one has to be “willing to cut through personal reactivity and self-deception” (6). It is easy to look back and to see that the common denominator we both shared was fear. As a teacher-researcher drawn to study these sorts of moments of tension in the writing classroom to see what they can teach me, I gravitate to the advice of Chodron’s *The Places That Scare You*:

Confess your hidden faults.
Approach what you find repulsive.
Help those you think you cannot help.
Anything you are attached to, let it go.
Go to the places that scare you. (opening epigraph)

This is why I have to recognize, in the middle of a fairly uninterrupted

attack, my student's implicit plea, "I am trying to get past the mounting frustration and resentment I feel. I realize that most of this is self-inflicted. . . . What I didn't know when I started out was that I'd be learning a completely new language and be exposed to a completely new culture" ("Lashing Out"). Perhaps this is the crux of the matter. "Lashing Out at 'Intellectuals'" is a poignant salvo about preserving a sense of self that is suddenly diminished and challenged in an unfamiliar and uncomfortable graduate setting. She shows what David Bartholomae outlines in "Inventing the University"—the great struggle that so many students feel trying to enter a stream of discourse that feels distant and alienating. In hindsight I realize she wasn't aiming at me necessarily; I just happened to be in the way.

My opening epigraph asks, "who's smart and who isn't." Now I wonder why we both seemed wrapped up in this question when I'd rather be involved in a different set of questions. My new questions revolve around how to cultivate the kind of emotional intelligence needed to confront new paradigms, new languages, and perceived attack without retaliation from the student or the teacher. Wise teachers cultivate a critical intelligence without fear, but how exactly do they do this? Chodron says, "The main point is always how we work with our minds" (116). I think this is what "intellectuals" do. Perhaps Amber and I got stuck working with emotion without meta-cognition.

I offer this as a cautionary tale for other teachers to be on guard against the tendency to "click into solid views of justification or blaming, [because then] our minds become very small" (Chodron 116). My experience with this student reminds me that learning "is or should be both frustrating and life enhancing" (Gee 6). The challenge "is finding ways to make hard things life enhancing so that [we each] keep going and don't fall back on learning and thinking only what is simple and easy" (6). For me, "engaging in the struggle to understand more is the heart of responsible pedagogy" (Wallace 23). Positioning myself as a teacher researcher who studies these sorts of molten moments in writing and in my relationships with students has been instrumental in providing a creative way of going to the places in teaching that, quite frankly, scare me. ☹

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McLuhan's Warning, Frye's Strategy, Emerson's Dream

Rich Murphy

*Who knows but if men constructed their dwellings with their own hands,
and provided food for themselves and families simply and honestly enough, the
poetic faculty would be universally developed, as birds universally sing when
they are so engaged?*
—Henry David Thoreau

*So I cracked up. My brain, literally, snapped under the weirdness of being a
Poet, a successful one and being BECAUSE OF MY JOB (which all agree is
noble and good and all that) an outcast.*
—Lew Welch

*The end of human activity is not rest, but rather richer and better human
activity.*
—Richard Rorty

I have two old friends of thirty-five years. For the last twenty years the only time we see each other is on New Year's Eve when we go out to dinner and back to one of our homes. They have been married since I first met them; I have been through a few marriages, periods of celibacy, relationships. To them my life has been "crazy" and often a source of vicarious entertainment because of the stories I would bring to the impending new year. At best one of them may have seen me as a clown twisting conventions into balloon animals. They have lived their lives within the social conventions of late twentieth-century America, returning to the same vacation spots, following the same rituals of daily life, and remaining at the same jobs. They view change with suspicion and fear, a source of depression. One had a computer on his work desk for ten years before he turned it on. The other can't sit quietly in a room for more than a couple of minutes, so there is no opportunity for reflection or self-conscious decision making, never mind creating. Both have been relatively successful men living middle class lives. Both men have played by the rules and will retire early. They have lived the mass media's American dream and have only woken to pull the blankets tighter to the chin. In the richest and freest country in the history of the world, a country at the height of its powers, this is the best that our higher education system can do in a democracy where each individual is said to be most valued.

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In literature and even in film there are plenty of examples of protagonists living a different American dream or living the negative to the American dream, a kind of warning for those reading. The American dream in literature is one where the character takes his/her life with all its foibles and problems and creates a life that is his/her own on the margins of society. College graduates, even high school graduates, have read many of these novels and autobiographies. What keeps students from embracing the creative function in these characters is a misunderstanding of the relation of fiction and someone's personal story to their lives. Perhaps they don't know how to read or watch a film. Perhaps the circumstances of their lives seem too frightening. In any case, being an audience to the rich examples in literature and film isn't enough for citizens to stop being audiences to their own lives. Attempts at meta-literature during the last half of the twentieth century invited the audience to involve itself in interpretation. So, in the spirit of postmodern theater and fiction, perhaps it is time to bolster college-level literature courses with literary writing and give the writing programs equal legitimacy in a further attempt to involve potential audiences.

I am writing this essay as a poet and instructor, and I will attempt to explain the value to the college curriculum of poetry as literary writing. My audience is made up of faculty who teach writing in the arts and humanities, faculty who teach writing as an art, faculty and administrators interested in the place of poetry as literary writing in "writing-across-the-curriculum" programs, college graduates who have had the opportunity to take courses in poetry, and folks who haven't taken those courses but who read and write poetry or other kinds of literary writing.

I will be referring to poetry in this essay. However, all literary writing (whether fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or writing about literature) practice the same associative and inductive reasoning skills. Literary writing gives students practice using associative and inductive thinking skills necessary for creative lives. I wish to help bolster the legitimacy of poetry and other forms of literary writing in academic and nonacademic cultures by calling attention to how they are tools for citizenry.

Though in "The Poet" Ralph Waldo Emerson calls out for the first American poet, he also sets the bar for the citizenry suggesting that the impressions of nature on all citizens should make them artists: "Every touch should thrill. Every man should be so much an artist that he could report in conversation what had befallen him" (249). Here and elsewhere in his essay, Emerson is suggesting that in a democracy everyone could be, should be, a poet. I think that he would even have been satisfied with each citizen being "of subtle mind, whose head appeared to be a music-box of delicate tunes and rhythms, and whose skill, and command of language, we could not sufficiently praise" (250). Given his numerous essays that call the American citizen to the poetic task, I believe that he hoped that someday every citizen in a democracy would have enough of a "subtle mind" to recognize and remember that he or she mediates his or her reality. He wished for each citizen to be a "contemporary" poet, to remember to always be open to the awe of living life, and open to the sensibility of a poet. From his first essay, Emerson tells us this. In "Nature" he states that it is up to every man to find his own truth. In fact, the essay is a call to Americans to do just that, find America's own truth as a nation:

We must trust the perfection of the creation so far, as to believe that whatever curiosity the order of things has awakened in our minds, the order of things can satisfy. Every man's condition is a solution in hieroglyphic to those inquiries he would put. He acts it as life, before he apprehends it as truth. In like manner, nature is already, in its forms and tendencies, describing its own design. Let us interrogate the great apparition, that shines so peacefully around us. Let us inquire, to what end is nature?

That dream of citizen-poets has been lost to American society.

Joseph Brodsky calls attention to the ever growing divide between poet and citizen when he reminds society of its responsibility:

the social function of a poet is writing, which he does not by society's appointment but by his own volition. His only duty is to his language, that is, to write well. By writing, especially by writing well, in the language of his society, a poet takes a large step toward it. It is society's job to meet him halfway, that is, to open his book and to read it. (qtd. in Stephenson)

He takes for granted the gap between reader and writer, and the "duty" and "job" recall labor instead of the sense of play found in literary writing. In fact, there seems to be something desperate in Brodsky's placing responsibilities. American culture seems to have come to validate Marshall McLuhan's speculation that it fosters "a conspiracy to make the artist a frill, a fribble, or a Milltown" (66). I don't believe the literary arts or any other art form was ever popular in the United States. However, I am attempting to affix to literary writing greater value than it has had, even in the academy.

The divide in book culture between literary writer and reader is assumed and supported in the academy. In *Differentials*, Marjorie Perloff also assumes that there has been a decline in the arts and humanities and attributes the problem at least partially to curriculum changes over the past few decades: "without clear cut notions of *why* it is worthwhile to read literary texts, whether by established or marginalized writers, in the first place, the study of 'literature' becomes no more than a chore, a way of satisfying distribution requirements" (15). Perloff urges a change in pedagogy in literary studies. She suggests, "What is urgently needed . . . is a more 'differential' and inductive approach to literary study, indeed to the humanities in general" (16). Though I think the problem for the arts and humanities is one that has its roots deeper in our history, I agree with her thesis in its focus. However, I am interested in "*why* it is worthwhile" and how a teacher of literary writing brings about its value to students so that its legitimacy may be secured.

McLuhan had insight into the predicaments of the artist and audience (literary writer and reader). He rightly defined the artist broadly: "The artist is the man [sic] in any field, scientific or humanistic, who grasps the implications of his actions and of new knowledge in his own time. He is the man of integral awareness" (65). His definition is in keeping with Emerson's poet as the man who "announces that which no man foretold . . . the true and only doctor" and fine tunes Northrop Frye's notion that the poet doesn't make any particular or specific statements (63). He or she tells us not what happened, but what usually happens. While Aristotle refers to the difference between fact and that of universal truth, McLuhan suggests that the poet perceives new patterns of understand-

ing. Neil Postman, one such "artist," refers to the arrival of 'new knowledge' as "great media-metaphor shift[s]" (16). These new patterns that at first disturb older patterns of understanding become conventions that are lived by.

McLuhan assumes there is much one can do about those social mythologies. Later in his book, McLuhan argues the value of the artist as the "man of integral awareness" (65). He says, "The artist can correct the sense of ratios before the blow of new technology has numbed and subliminal groping and reaction begin," and adds, "in experimental art, men are given the exact specifications of coming violence to their own psyches from their own counter-irritants or technology" (65). McLuhan is referring to the process of the creative act that allows the artist to stand outside the conventions that engage the rest of the society. The attributes he gives the artist are those of knowing how to live among old, new, and future conventions, using the attributes to think outside conventions' boxes whether they be social or academic, using the conventions to create his or her life. He writes, "The ability of the artist to sidestep the bully blow of new technology of any age, and to parry such violence with full awareness, is age old" (65). McLuhan suggests that all creative people have this ability which allows them to avoid becoming irrelevant by new technology or lost in it.

He goes on to state that artists have the "exact information of how to rearrange one's psyche in order to anticipate the next blow from our own extended faculties" (66). McLuhan is explaining the functioning imagination and its ability to anticipate change and wonders "if men were able to be convinced that art is precise advance knowledge of how to cope with the psychic and social consequences of the next technology, would they all become artists? Or would they begin a careful translation of new art forms into social navigation charts?" (66). Teachers whose lives involve the arts can use McLuhan's remarkable insights to their advantage because he adds legitimacy to their work. However, to use his insights to validate poetry, teachers need first to recognize it and then to call students' attention to it. They need to allow students to discover ways into art. Teachers who teach poetry writing will find Frye a good guide to this end.

By explaining literary writing, Frye moves us beyond McLuhan's implicit goals to practical strategies. In *The Educated Imagination*, Frye reinforces McLuhan and Emerson. He states, "The literary writer isn't giving information, either about a subject or about his [sic] state of mind: he's trying to let something take on its own form, whether it's a poem or play or novel or whatever. . . . The writer of literature can only write what takes shape in his mind" (46). Frye is explaining the concentration that allows form and content or that allows content to determine the form of the student's writing.

For writers to concentrate on the shape of a piece of literature, they will need to put aesthetic distance between themselves and the conventions about which they wish to write. Once aesthetic distance is achieved, they may also achieve integral awareness or the ability to recognize the possible contexts for the conventions that they will be using. The awareness allows writers to live and work outside, among but not within conventions, or at least not immersed in the conventions upon which writers wish to concentrate. By working outside conventions, writers control their use, which ones are used and to what extent. This effort creates new *possible* conventions, from which derives the cry "make it new." Integral awareness becomes an experience of the sublime when writers, working among the conventions, recognize that the only conventions they have are the

ones they make. Student writers will soon want to learn how to use references to the sublime in their writing. Presenting the unrepresentable in poetry is the distance a poet travels within a poem.

I explain how to live among conventions with integral awareness to students using my version of *Alice in Wonderland*. When Alice is very small, she is a mouse in the house, lost in the convention of home or perhaps marriage. McLuhan and Quentin Fiore put it this way: “One thing about which fish know exactly nothing is water, since they have no anti-environment which would enable them to perceive the element they live in” (175). My Alice is unaware of the water, that she is McLuhan’s fish. When Alice is larger than the house and wears the house as a garment, her head out a chimney, her arms out windows, the house’s peak rests along her shoulders as though it were a dress, and, her legs through the house’s floor, Alice is using the convention of home or marriage as a tool. She is well aware of her environment and is making it her own. The difference is one of control and lack of control of those conventions. In a world where new knowledge creates the crisis of the day, students need to learn how to use old conventions as tools so that the crisis of tomorrow doesn’t overwhelm them but rather is anticipated. After all, from the crises of the day come the conventions of tomorrow.

Once students understand how to give shape on the page to what takes shape in their minds, the teacher of poetry or other literary writing then focuses students on bringing each of what Frye calls the two dreams of literature (wish fulfillment and anxiety) into conscious visions and letting their ideas take shape on paper. By helping students focus in this way, the teachers invite students to experience McLuhan’s integral awareness in multiple ways. Students also begin to obtain a sense for the exact proportions necessary to prepare their psyches and prevent their reacting to each new knowledge and their own extended faculties. Student writers get this practice first by writing each kind of dream and integrating it in their writing of one work. The practice allows students to imagine how the next blow or paradigm shift might impact their worlds and how to adjust successfully to maintain their lives as creative project. Living among and not in conventions is what should be expected of an educated person.

When students take time to explore metaphor, they are given permission to resist the coercive cultural performative impulses while concentrating on allowing their topic (in relation to the context to the world around it) to take on its shape in their minds. When students work with metaphor, they begin exploring and inhabiting other worlds, other possible worlds whether those worlds are anxiety ridden or ideal or somewhere in between. What students discover is that this exercise is play and that the play of childhood is not alien to the adult world; in fact, it’s integral to it. Play becomes their work, and work becomes play in that a poet takes words seriously to have fun with them. The development of the imagination isn’t simply for children. Once the ambiguity of possibilities is arrived at in writing, students may also be led by language play to choose or create career paths and lifestyles that resist coercion, intimidation, and alienation.

Instructors who move beyond metaphor do students the greatest service by also introducing them to postmodern poetics, and they will continue to find Emerson a guide. When students understand Emerson’s poet as “namer” (“Poet” 249) and recognize that “we live amid surfaces, and the true art of life is to skate well on them. Under the oldest mouldiest conventions a man of native force pros-

pers just as well as in the newest world, and that by skill of handling and treatment" (275), they become empowered and may begin to understand what Ferdinand de Saussure meant by signifiers. They realize that art may be created to illustrate the alternative possible conventions to those provided them through social "reality." Students are empowered to create their own poetry and reality for themselves. When we take the idea of naming seriously, we move beyond symbolism into the world's mystery that we have been a part of all along, or, as Wallace Stevens instructs, "Phoebus was/A name for something that never could be named" (381). Now, to use words to communicate in a world without names, the writer must abandon the names of the English language and create temporary names for the subjects and objects around them. The empowerment of naming when composing a poem aids students because they are composing their own reality.

In *The Poetics of Transition*, Jonathan Levin illuminates the linkage between Emerson and postmodern poetics. He explains the imagination's function in "naming" or what he calls the aesthetics of pragmatism as follows: "The pragmatist imagination is the site where this reincorporation is endlessly negotiated. For the pragmatist, imagination is exercised in full awareness of its limitations. Pragmatists posit the ultimate value of imaginative activity even as they underscore the inadequacy of any metaphor or narrative that activity might produce" (196).

The practice of a "poetics of transition" brings students into the world of wonder that is the one they inhabit. It allows them to remind their readers of the sublime that is with them always. The pragmatist imagination is one integrally aware. Students also then create their own conventions by picking and choosing among the various parts of them. When writing poetry using symbolism, writers take it as far as the metaphysics of creation mythology. When writing postmodern poetry, writers take it to the more epistemologically honest edge of knowledge and conventions where they might find the "unpresentable" sublime, the experience of being alive. The creative experience of the postmodern writer is sublime because of the terror of no logos and because of the possible worlds this allows the writer to suggest. The experience is one of Nietzsche's cosmic dancer turning work into child's play and of Sartre's "condemned to freedom." It is also Jacques Derrida's aporia, McLuhan's integral awareness, as well as Emerson's skater confronting the surfaces of things.

The benefits of students writing a postsymbolist poetry using a "poetic of transition" are clear. Not only do students write poetry that confronts the conventional names of things and avoids symbolism which requires interpretation fixed by culture, but they also learn more easily the relation between art and their lives. The idea of the sublime becomes accessible in each of their realities day to day because the students must consider the conventions before treating the subjects and objects they are writing about. The writing is more genuine. It becomes experiential. The writer and reader may come away with the experience of being alive. Each line of poetry reminds the reader and the writer of the limitations of language—the limitations of convention—and points to the sublime.

Mark Federman, Chief Strategist at the McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto, may help clarify the experiential nature of literary writing to students and may clarify how the practice resembles the students' world. In "The Cultural Paradox of the Global Village," in referring to contemporary art, he explains:

It is experiential, as opposed to prescribed, pre-scripted and

doctrinaire in its constructive chaos. Previously, physical objects in relation to local geography allow us to determine much about identity. Now, in an age of instantaneous communications that eliminates the effects of geographical distance and time zones, the identity is oriented by means of “scapes” that juxtapose multiple diverse environments from around the world. Thus the future, especially for emerging societies, is always elsewhere, constantly in flux, formed according to relational, as opposed to regional, patterns. Transnational traffic of ideas and experiences that are now abstract, form a new order that is ironically and paradoxically unstable, irregular, incomplete and undefined relative to our historical and physical experience. This is the new norm to which we are slowly becoming socialized. It is “broken” in our conventional sense, but that is its virtue in the reformation of the global society. In this case, the state of being broken is not a destructive force but a liberating one. As McLuhan said: “Breakdown is breakthrough.”

In his explanation Federman articulates the correlation between the world within which the writer writes and the kind of writing students would be attempting. The writing responds to the postmodern world, preparing writers for the kind of thinking they will need to do today and tomorrow. By implementing educational strategies for a postsymbolist literary writing, instructors are giving students the courage to create their own lives. By augmenting the value of literary writing throughout the educational system, we also heed McLuhan’s warning, practice Frye’s implicit strategy, and fulfill Emerson’s dream. What better mission for a democracy.

As a professor teaching literary writing at a small liberal arts college that is becoming more and more practical, more and more vocational, I see my job as becoming more and more difficult and more and more important. I am “the little old man who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he[sic] is about to pass” (Campbell 69). As in the Joseph Campbell’s chapter “Supernatural Aid” in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, I dispense a possible antidote to the wasteland that students will engage upon leaving college (69). I am comfortable with my efforts with those students whose concentration is Writing and Literature. However, the prognosis for general education students attending a class of literature or a class of literary writing seems poor to me. I doubt whether any of them have been able to use the medicines of aporia to create their own lives. I don’t know whether the vaccines have inoculated anyone from the mass media world of advertisement. I do know that many of our students who are Writing and Literature concentrators and general education students from other majors long to fill job openings in the marketing career path, so the chances of any of these graduates deliberately creating their own lives looks dismal from this vantage point. I cannot report that a cadre of students is out there reshaping the world in their images. I’ve been teaching twenty years.

Instead, I continue to loaf and invite my students “to lean and loafe at [their] ease and observe a spear of summer grass” (Whitman 63.) For many students this will be the last time they will have the opportunity to resist the coercive social forces of convention that motivate them to be useful in established ways. For

others, they will return at forty on Sunday afternoons after cutting suburban lawns to enrich sick souls with efforts in writing, a brave gesture against the overlapping conventions imprisoning them. Perhaps when my beard is whiter, I will learn of a former student or two who wrestled the dragon forces of the mundane death march to create an original life. Perhaps writing would no longer have had anything to do with that life. That would be fine. That would be a start, a citizen making a stand in integral awareness to become the poet of his or her life. Emerson would love it. ☺

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Uniting Creativity and Research: A Holistic Approach to Learning

Susan A. Schiller

In a standard liberal arts education, we have a long history of assigning more value to research than to creativity. When I use the word “research,” I am referring to the process of gathering primary and secondary sources that will support a hypothesis and/or that will be used to persuade others to a particular point of view. This process is seen in most disciplines except those such as art, music, drama, photography, and the like, where the creative process and the product arising out of it are valued for their freshness and newness. Aside from the so-called “artistic disciplines,” the high value for research is pervasive, and objective writing based on research tends to saturate the curriculum in a variety of forms. Although creative facets, such as idea generation and discovery of information, are embedded in research and typically occur in the planning stages, they are overshadowed by a goal to produce objective academic discourse as an outcome of the research process. Objectivity in written voice and information dominates the research process, and the use of creative elements is undervalued, discouraged, at times even penalized. Creativity becomes separated from research because of the way logic and objectivity are privileged. Such a separation creates a false dichotomy because research *requires* creativity.

The curricular design of required courses and elective courses further supports the separation of creativity and research. For example, in English departments composition is a university wide graduation requirement; creative writing is an elective (except in creative writing degree programs). The research process and/or the need to produce objective academic discourse drives composition courses, while the process of creativity drives creative writing courses. Within this standard curricular design, students learn to place a higher value on research than on creativity or on professions within the arts.

American culture generally perceives artistic careers to be less financially stable than careers in law, medicine, or business, choices that typically rely on linguistics and logic as the primary way of knowing. Logical ways of knowing are creative to a limited extent, but when logic is emphasized to a point that allows little or no space for other ways of knowing, students lose out. Over the years, their ability to rely on inner knowing or on intelligences other than logic is weakened or even lost. They lose their ability to be creative and misperceive creativity as a mysterious something or other that only a few gifted people display. Unfortunately, information, logic, and persuasion, the essential modes in research, still receive more value than creativity despite the work of Howard Gardner. Gardner’s work in multiple intelligences and in creativity studies is well established and has received general acceptance, but mainstream education still relies primarily on linguistic and logical mathematical ways of knowing (Noddings 31).

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We have yet to move closer to a holistic form of education, one that values creativity and research equally. An imbalance exists, but this can be changed through a holistic approach to learning. In this essay, I challenge educators to balance the scales between research and creativity, to embrace a holistic pedagogy, and to create opportunities for students to draw from the types of intelligences that best suit them.

Holistic educators believe that activating the whole person is necessary to initiate deep and permanent learning experiences. The learner's intellect, emotions, physical body, spirit, and social being are developed together rather than independently. An imbalance occurs in our development if we use one part and not the others. Inherent social and spiritual characteristics create context within which the mind, emotion, and body are integrated. Holistic educators use wholeness as a means through which to teach, and they create methods through which wholeness fosters our full awareness. Our inner and outer lives are no longer isolated but integrated so that we come to a meaningful understanding of our spirit, our soul. Within the rich context created by wholeness, one's spirit assumes a central and vital role because it is the source of motivation for growth and learning. It is no surprise then that the learner is not seen as an independent agent but rather as a part of the greater whole that includes the family, the community, the natural environment, and the universe (Rocha xi). All around the world today, explorative educators are turning to holism as a means to evoke and recover the spiritual center in learners—the center that motivates, awakens, enlivens, and instigates creativity, compassion, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect (Lantieri 6). The word “holistic” in this paper refers to this rich interconnected view of learning and being.

Activity in the field of creativity studies (what it is and how it works) has increased over the last 70 years and is generally dominated by psychology. Social, psychological, emotional, cultural, and biological factors are most often featured. Studies tend to fall into two categories: idiographic research that relies on individual case studies and nomothetic research that seeks discovery of general or universal laws that can be applied to all (Gardner, “The Creators” 143).¹ Howard Gardner's writing, attempting to construct a bridge that spans idiographic and nomothetic research, presents a more holistic perspective although he never explicitly accounts for the spiritual side of knowing. He stresses cognitive and developmental psychological frames that take into account social and motivational aspects of creativity, and he utilizes multiple intelligences he previously identified in *Frames of Mind* (linguistic, logical mathematical, spatial, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal). His creativity theory as articulated in his later book, *The Creators of the Modern Era*, is “inherently interdisciplinary” (“The Creators” 145), a feature that leans into holism. About his definition and approach, Gardner says:

1. I focus equally on problem solving, problem finding, and the creation of products, such as scientific theories, works of art, or the building of institutions.
2. I emphasize that all creative work occurs in one or more domains. Individuals are not creative (or noncreative) in

¹For a fuller view of creativity studies than this space allows, see Maragaret A. Boden's *Dimensions of Creativity*.

general; they are creative in particular domains of accomplishment and require the achievement of expertise in these domains before they can execute significant creative work.

3. No person, act, or product is creative or noncreative in itself. Judgments of creativity are inherently communal, relying heavily on individuals expert within a domain. (145)

Gardner's definition requires a broadening of perspective that lets us see that "creativity emerges in virtue of a dialectical process among *individuals* of talent, *domains* of knowledge and practices, and *fields* of knowledgeable judges" (146). His work further relies on two general positions: one, that people can develop all seven intelligences he has already identified, and, two, that creative people "are characterized particularly by a tension, or lack of fit, between the elements involved in a productive work" (146).² He labels this tension *fruitful asynchrony*, and says that it is "the conquering of these asynchronies that leads to the establishment of work that comes to be cherished" (146). In other words, fruitful asynchrony provides the initiating impulse for creativity.

Within my subject areas of English education, composition, and American literature, I design assignments that unite creativity and research because I see a reciprocity between them that is both complementary to and/or required by one another. I also believe that creativity can occur with or without assistance from research. When research is applied in creative endeavors, creativity is enhanced. However, research *cannot occur* without a degree of creativity.

I teach in a mainstream public state institution. Certain constraints are attached to this context. For example, I must use a syllabus, design assignments, evaluate students, assign grades, and so on. I am expected to achieve the teaching goals as stated on our departmental master syllabi. Fortunately, the institutional culture I am in encourages innovative teaching, and some of the master syllabi provide teachers with sufficient autonomy when designing pedagogy. Although I am not in a holistic school, I have been able to introduce holistic assignments with some success.

About six years ago I began replacing the standard research paper that typically ends a course with public presentations of creative projects. The three aspects in Gardner's definition for the creative process are met in the following ways:

- These assignments ask for a creation of a product, a work of art, or a pedagogical lesson plan (in other words, a solution to the problem of teaching a particular subject matter).
- The domain must remain within the subject matter of the course. The outcome of the project must demonstrate expertise of that domain. A synthesis of course material occurs, and its manifestation and demonstration are the primary goals of the project.
- The judgment of the product is controlled by the field—that is, by the audience, the teacher, and the institutional standards of excellence.

²In this study, Gardner goes on to use well known creators Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, Pablo Picasso, Igor Stravinsky, T. S. Eliot, Martha Graham, and Mahatma Gandhi, each exemplifying at least one of the seven intelligences Gardner identifies.

Based on the products and assessment arising out of these projects, I have come to believe that a creative project teaches to the whole person in ways a standard academic prose essay or test cannot and that the learning is organic and holistic. It is also clear to me that holistic teaching fosters creativity and that creativity is easily accessible within mainstream approaches. When teachers assign anything that requires creativity, they are naturally leaning toward holism even if they are uninformed about holistic education or choose not to classify the assignment as holistic.

The creative project is holistic in a way the standard research paper is not because the project puts the whole person into relationship with the emotional, the physical, the intellectual, the social, the aesthetic, and the spiritual. Through these ways, according to John P. Miller, "if we can work with the Self, we can facilitate development for ourselves and our students" (*Holistic Teacher* 36). Combined, these ways bring about inclusion, balance, and connection. They bridge polarities and dichotomies commonly found in mainstream education today.

To complete a creative project with expertise, students naturally combine analytic thinking, critical thinking, research, creativity, and reflection. They must imagine their project completed and then attempt to reach the image they have mentally created. As they reach toward completion, they participate physically and socially when choosing collaboration with peers and then again during the presentations of their completed projects. Their spirits and souls are engaged with work they choose, create, and design, and their intellectual abilities are stretched with the challenge of synthesizing course material into a creative artifact that they judge to be aesthetically pleasing. A transcendent unity occurs when, through the creative impulse, these parts of the learner are integrated and harmonized within their expressive project. Through these projects students develop a holistic worldview, one that provides "an ability to see connections between diverse things and see the bigger picture" (Zohar and Marshall, qtd. in Lantieri 17). Students also have an opportunity to develop spiritual intelligence which Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall define as

intelligence with which we address and solve problems of meaning and value, the intelligence with which we can place our actions and our lives in a wider, richer meaning-giving context. It is the intelligence with which we can assess that one course of action or one life path is more meaningful than another. (qtd. in Lantieri 18)

According to the research completed on imagery and creativity by Sylvia Ainsworth-Land as discussed in John P. Miller's *The Holistic Curriculum*, the relationship between creativity and imagery can be understood as developmental. The first order is sense related and arises out of physical need. The second involves improvement of an idea or artistic product through analysis and evaluation. The third order requires synthesis, not just revision or modification. Something new or novel must be discovered through the synthesis before there is a breakthrough to new knowledge or understanding. The final level, Ainsworth-Land states, occurs when "one's whole being comes into play with the conscious and unconscious minds, reason and intuition, inner and outer, subsumed into a kind of meta-consciousness. . . . The self is seen as part of a larger reality. [Here,

one is] building new perceptual order” (qtd. in *Holistic Curriculum* 94). I have seen students building new perceptual order as a result of the creative projects they complete in my courses.

While I use holistic assignments within most of my courses, this paper features two courses: English 460, Current Issues in English, a senior capstone required of our English majors and English 345, Studies in Authors, a requirement for our major. Students in both classes are mostly seniors about to graduate.³

English 460: Current Issues in English

My section of English 460 introduces the field of holistic education and explores the role English has within it. We read approximately seven textbooks that present histories, philosophies, and profiles of existing holistic schools. Students research up to ten holistic schools selecting one for extended use in their creative project. This establishes the domain for their creative projects. They then create an interactive holistic English assignment to fit that particular school. During the final three weeks of the semester, students facilitate the assignment with their class members who assume the role of the students attending that school. These interactive presentations are generally designed to use 45 to 60 minutes of class time as determined by class size, and they tend to be highly social and communal events. Students have demonstrated visualization, drawing, dance, song, music, poetry, writing, drama, fiction, cooking, sewing, group collaboration, reflection, logical reasoning, emotion, silence, smell, taste, and felt sense.

A few brief summaries of student presentations can give an idea of what these assignments aim for. Consider Derold Sligh’s project titled, “Finding Meanings in Native American Poetry and Nurturing the Inner Self.” It was developed for fifth graders attending a Waldorf School in Idaho. It required a prerequisite of an introduction to poetry analysis and aimed to connect Native American culture to the personal culture of the student. Students were asked to write a poem using an Indian symbol such as an element (rock, water, fire) or an animal, then to create an illustration representing the ideas of the poem, and finally to present (on a volunteer basis) the poem through chanting, movement, dance, or dramatic gestures. Derold provided three incomplete prompts for students to finish as similes that would become stanzas in the poem. For example, “my body is like (choose a symbol) because. . .; my soul is like (choose a symbol) because. . . and my spirit is like (choose a symbol) because . . .” Derold also provided samples of Native American poems as models. Derold’s project demonstrated ways research and creativity can be combined so that research supports creativity.

Clint Burhan’s project, “Write Your Own Ending,” featured a small segment of a multi-disciplinary, semester-long course for high-school aged students attending Windsor House Alternative School, located in Vancouver, British Columbia. Students would choose a play or write their own to produce and perform at the end of the semester. In the class presentation, Clint divided the students into groups of four. Two students assumed the role of characters, one the director, and one the playwright. He then provided plot details, but not the ending. The stu-

³A special thanks goes to the students of English 345 and 460, but particularly to those cited in this article: Clint Burhans, Amy Conger, Carrie Jones, Caroline Lake, Jared Nagel, Derold Sligh, and Martin Trent. These seven students gave permission for me to use their work and their real names.

dents discussed the plot, wrote their own ending, and performed it for the class. To develop this assignment, Clint searched for a play that would serve his purposes. He spent a significant amount of library time in his search and finally selected "K2" by Patrick Meyers. The plot in this play forces one character to decide whether he is to die on a mountain top with his friend who suffers a broken leg during their climb or to leave his friend to die alone. If he stays, he too will die from extreme cold and exposure. If he leaves, he probably will survive. Through this assignment students understood a moral dilemma presented through drama, examined their own values, and expressed their own solution to the problem posed in the dramatic text. Clint was willing to spend the library hours because he valued the connection his research and creativity shared.

Amy Conger and Jared Nagel wanted to teach literary elements to eighth graders in a Waldorf School. Following the Waldorf schedule, they planned on using the two-hour morning block of time over a five-day period. Their project, "Literary Elements from Dreams" asked students to work from a sample "dream" of their own, complete a worksheet on literary elements, draw representations of each element contained in their dream and then discuss with one another the elements and the drawings created. Terms such as personification, conflict, symbolism, characters, and setting were exemplified, and the assignment met six main principles of holistic education (spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, social, and physical). Creativity, individual expression, and sharing with others were encouraged, and the literary elements were not taught solely as an intellectual or linguistic item. The assignment also invited students to utilize their most effective way of learning whether it is visual, spatial, or linguistic. Their project, like the previous two, blended research and creativity.

In written self evaluations of their project, students indicated a higher level of enjoyment, a more meaningful way of finishing a course, an appreciation for the opportunity to be creative, and a new confidence in their abilities to create effective holistic activities for future students.

When asked how the class changed their opinions about education, almost all said that they had not been aware of holistic education or specific holistic principles that can guide methodology, but now they knew education went beyond textbooks and tests. They began to see students as "individuals who need to be part of a community," and they stated that "holistic education should be implemented into the public school system."

English 345: Studies in Authors

English 345: Studies in Authors is presented in a more standard format than English 460. The department syllabus allows teachers to select one or two authors to feature in depth. When I teach the course, I design a series of holistic activities for students to experience. I assign a creative project to be presented at the end of the course. This does not have to be an interactive project but has to synthesize the ideas and learning experiences from the course material. It aims to provide a balance between linguistic/logical ways of knowing and non linguistic/logical ways of knowing. Such a balance helps students "to find their special talents and also to develop a healthy respect for talents they do not themselves possess" (Noddings 43). The students' projects need to "represent" the author's scope in a creative way that draws from a wide range of examples from the written works. Library research is not required, but students often use it to expand

their work. A written description of the project accompanies the project. It lists the ideas the project is presenting, including quotes, titles, and page numbers from the various texts that are synthesized in the creative representation. It describes the creative process the student used to complete the project. It evaluates the project and asks the student to reflect on their learning experience during the creative process. Finally, students briefly contrast and/or compare the creative projects to traditional assignments such as research papers or essay tests. During spring 2004 we read the works of Willa Cather. Motivated by Satish Kumar's call for holistic education to organize around the trinity of soil, soul, and society, we used this trinity as a theme for discussing Cather's works.

During Spring 2004, student projects included: poster board collages, quilts, poetry, creative nonfiction essays, clothing design, oil paintings, art analysis, maps, ethnic food preparation, scrapbooks, analysis of cultural wedding practices, minicomics, analysis of folktales and their origins, abstract sculptures, and a survey of land use including field size and crop rotations as inferred by textual references. These self-selected projects demonstrated ways students, motivated by various textual content, use their existing talents to create expressions of their understanding of course material.

Carrie Jones decided to make a quilted wall hanging depicting various textual scenes. She included 16 panels that synthesized 10 novels and multiple short stories. She chose scenes that "stuck out in my mind/imagination and/or because of their underlying meaning/symbolism, but also those that matched my level of skill" (this being only the third quilt she had sewn).

Taking more than 30 hours to complete, Carrie was very proud of her work and thanked me for an assignment that was fun but also rewarding. As she compared this assignment to a more traditional assignment, she said:

I really enjoyed this project! It offered something different! It forced us to use our imagination and to be creative! Also, given that I am a graduated senior working on a second degree and have written papers upon papers upon papers, that task has gotten very monotonous and I have come to resent it GREATLY! Another "also" . . . Elaborating on that theme (i.e., writing paper after paper), we are expected to write those in an academic voice and I, emotionally, CAN'T take that level of stuffiness anymore. Believe me! My Shakespeare teacher believes me ignorant because of my tone; that which is not ignorance, but sarcasm and punctuational idiosyncrasies to show the personal thought(s) and emotion(s) going into my response(s)—to show that I am really, sincerely, interested. Just, thank you so much for giving us something F-U-N to work on!

Carrie then continues to define F-U-N.

If questioned, consider this: fun = a willingness to participate; fun = the possibility for a greater interest/energy/involvement; therefore, fun (willingness+interest/energy/involvement) = greater retention of information and connections/syntheses (i.e. as opposed to research papers, and/or essay tests, which immediately following such you seek to dump the information as soon as it's no longer required).

When a student is deeply connected to course work, they experience a holistic learning that lasts beyond the last day of class. This was definitely Carrie's experience, as it was for other students in the class.

Martin Trent, an urban, African American student, struggled all semester with enjoying Cather's work; he could not identify with many of the characters or with rural settings that dominate her literature. However, the creative project let him eventually find a way into her work. He wrote twelve poems from which he selected five ("Manuelito," "Love," "Wicked," "Frank," and "To My Brothers") and one rap verse ("Under the Tree") to present. Despite severe nervousness over reading his work, he responded well (and with great satisfaction) to an encore performance of special requests from his classmates.

In his creative writing, Martin concentrated on characters from three of Cather's novels voicing "alternative perspectives" from characters. For example, in *O' Pioneers*, Frank is presented by Cather to be a jealous, harsh husband. Readers do not find him to be a sympathetic character, especially after he shoots his wife, Marie, and her lover, Emil. Yet Martin felt sympathetic toward Frank and wanted his classmates to reconsider Frank's position. Basing his responses on textual elements found in the novel, Martin represented Frank in a kinder light. From his poem our view of Frank was then reconstructed and expanded. Another poem, "To My Brothers," allowed *O' Pioneers* protagonist Alexandra to express her feelings toward her brothers in a more dramatic manner than what Cather chose. And delving deeper into the characters of *O' Pioneers*, Martin wrote a rap, "Under the Tree," for Emil to use on Marie because rap is a traditional African American linguistic form men use with women when they want phone numbers or attention.

When reflecting on this assignment, Martin said,

the most challenging aspect of this assignment was trying to create something based on someone else's creation. Also the presentation will be a challenge. As an artist, you are always super worried about how well the audience will receive what you have to offer—sometimes even more than the grade. The most rewarding aspect was finding out that I'm capable of capturing an essence of a character already in existence, and being able to see things from their point of view. The easiest part was writing the rap verse that was based on Emil and Marie. When you rap, you're usually slipping into some other character anyway. At the very least, you have to become an exaggerated form of yourself. As compared to a research paper, the creative project definitely was more fun. It was so fun because it allowed me to incorporate two of my favorite art forms into a classroom assignment. It was fun to push myself at times. It gave me the opportunity to make Cather enjoyable to me on some levels. I would trade in the anxiety that the presentation brings out in me. If you fail a research paper, at least only a couple people will know about it.

The benefits of this assignment were not only academic. Martin demonstrated involvement on the social, intellectual, spiritual, aesthetic, physical, and emotional levels. When writing a standard research paper or essay test, his experience would have been limited to an intellectual experience only. The holistic

assignment provided a pathway of self discovery and aesthetic expression that bound him to the culture of English 345 in a more holistic and meaningful way, in a way that let him learn and succeed.

A final example illustrates how students might rely on visual intelligence to modify a linguistic text into a visual text that speaks to them. It also demonstrates how students can rely on what they know and love while expanding on what they are learning in a class.

Caroline Lake compiled a twenty-page scrapbook. Each page displayed one to three pictures that were accompanied by a quote from Cather's work. At first, Caroline had wanted to build a Cather website, but she decided that would be too time consuming and beyond the range of this assignment's guidelines. Then she wanted to create a collage, but a single collage didn't seem to appeal to her, so finally she selected a scrapbook so that she could create multiple collages. She got this idea while working on her wedding scrapbook. Since she "loves" scrapbooking, she decided to incorporate Cather's work into something she loves. When describing the process she used to complete this work, she said:

My first step was to re-read or scan-read all the assigned Cather novels and short stories and highlight passages which I found to be emotionally impacting, interesting, or characterized the theme of soil, soul and society. . . . the next step was to search for pictures and images that integrated the "feeling" of the quote into colors and images. . . . I printed all the pictures onto photo-paper and then cut and cropped them to my liking. . . . When I scrapbook, I do "marathons"—I'll sit for 6-8 hours and work until my eyes hurt. I cannot help it. I get so into "the zone" that the passage of time is irrelevant to me. I did four marathon sessions of scrapbooking and spent an odd hour here and there working on bits and pieces. All in all, from the beginning of actual work to the end, I spent about 38 hours on this project—this doesn't include the acquisition of the quotes; add another 6 hours reading. The time was well spent and enjoyable . . . was well used because I was doing something I enjoyed. It was fun to search for images to match my feelings and even more fun to make those pictures and quotes mine.

When comparing this to traditional assignments, Caroline said:

The idea of a "creative project" in lieu of formal testing is wonderful. Instead of concentrating on what is going to be on the test, the student is forming personal connections to the text because their creative project is centered on them and what activities they like to do in connection to the author's work. When a student is intent on forming personal connections to the text, they retain the information longer because it is tied to something personal. I believe that if anyone didn't like the creative project idea, they were not true to themselves—the whole idea was to pick a project that was near and dear to you. What makes this idea hard though, is that every project is different; I like the idea of an accompanying "write-up" in order to see what steps the student took in order to reach their end-point and what their thought process was. All in all, I could have done a Willa Cather test, but I enjoyed this so much better.

Although the students did not read Sylvia Ashton-Warner's *Teacher*, when Caroline writes that "when a student is intent on forming personal connections to the text, they retain the information longer because it is tied to something personal," she echoes Ashton-Warner's philosophy for "organic learning"—a philosophy that is well known and accepted by holistic educators. As Ashton-Warner says, learning becomes organic when it is self-selected; "the more it means to [a student] the more value it is to him [sic]" (54). Caroline's opinion that if students did not like the creative project assignment they were not being "true to themselves" again underscores the core of organic learning. Holistic learning is organic precisely because it provides learners with a path for permanent learning—permanent because it is intrinsically connected to self.

The experiences of the six students profiled in this essay are common when research and creativity are united. Even students who resist reading and writing are able to complete a creative project when they are allowed to use their own talents and interests. Moreover, students can draw from whichever intelligence suits them as they go about the process of creating their project. They seek out research when it becomes necessary to meet the goals of the project that they have selected, and in such a situation they begin to perceive research as part of their "choice" rather than as an academic "requirement." Creativity refreshes their soul and then ignites cognition; objective data simply functions to support and supplement the creative impulse. Suddenly, creativity and research are complementary to the goal, interconnected, and no longer dichotomous.

A fusion of creativity and research does not neglect the intellect; it simply creates opportunities for a more holistic, organic learning experience—one that lets students have fun as they gain permanent knowledge. This fusion offers a holistic way of learning that values multiple intelligences, includes a broader field of rhetorical and social choices, and connects learners to them. Students learn to value creativity as highly as, or even more highly than, logical and linguistic ways of knowing. As a result they inculcate a reliance and dependence on their ability to be creative, and the creative process becomes a routine natural way of learning. ☐

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Connecting: This Listening Thing

Section Editor's Message

By far the majority of narratives that come in for “Connecting” are stories about teachers’ perceptions of something important happening when they *listened* to a student. The point, I suppose, is that they actually *heard* the student, which is what listening really is, isn’t it? How perfect a theme for “Connecting,” then: teachers sharing about connecting to their students through listening, or, in one case, what happened when he did not listen.

This “listening thing” keeps coming up. We had a symposium, “Peace Making and Poetry,” at my college in April. Someone said at a luncheon that she thought the world was evolving toward world peace because of the increasing recognition of global interdependency and complementarity not just among poets but also among scientists and politicians. One of the panelists, poet Julia Kasdorf from Penn State, took the microphone and said, “But people would have to listen to each other.” That is all she said. It was a big “but.”

The stories that follow of teachers’ lives—lives with breakthrough insights and watershed moments—show the dramatic nature of what can happen when listening occurs.

Just today I got another valuable perspective on listening in our end-of-the-year writing faculty workshop. We ended our two-day sessions with a panel of senior students, all excellent writers. The one thing that all four mentioned is that their writing got better when teachers and peers listened (deeply) to them during their writing process. Ironical, isn’t it? Both partners in the teacher-student relationship need the same thing to create a high learning curve.

Listening seems a simple act. We have ears; we hear constantly. So what makes this reported “special listening” unique? We can do it; surely all of us have deeply listened to someone sometime. This proves our capacity for it. Should we intentionally teach listening skills so we get better at them? Maybe many of you do. Does it work? What if Kasdorf is right and deep listening is the necessary skill for world peace? Perhaps this can be the topic for JAEPL’s next “Connecting.”

And a note about what follows: I have deviated from the typical collection of teacher narratives. I asked one of the college students I mentioned above, Danina Garcia, to write up the comments she shared, and she happily complied. Her name for listening is “deep conversation.”

Message from a Student Writer

Danina Garcia

Without a doubt, the single most important thing I learned in four years of studying English at Messiah College was this: writing is conversation. Most of us literary types reach college not having thought of that. Writing is that thing you do alone (preferably in a damp, romantic garret) to communicate your own thoughts to the world; it's always perfect—or nearly perfect—the first time through, and all you worry about after that is tweaking (sentence structure, word choice). I'll never forget the shock I had when I handed a draft to a peer editor, expecting suggestions for a stronger topic sentence, perhaps, and maybe a comma or two. She handed the paper back to me with a single sentence written above the title: "Why is this important?" I'd never had to explain that about a paper before, but she wasn't going to let me keep writing until I could.

The most effective writing assignments I was given were those where I as a writer was taking part in a conversation. This might have been a conversation with an author, other scholars, fellow-students, or a professor. Before college, I was accustomed to professors seeing my work at most twice, in rough draft and final form. In college, for the first time, I found myself expected to write papers that I could defend fluently and easily when I sat in a professor's office with draft two or three or four. Professors' comments, whether delivered after class or scribbled in the margins, reflected the idea that scholarship was dialogue, not monologue.

It wasn't only professors who taught me that. In many classes, I worked closely with groups of other students, "peer groups," who carefully reviewed each others' writings. Sometimes this backfired, and groups ended up as little more than fan clubs or grammar checkers. Frequently, however, I discovered how exciting and thrilling (and challenging) it could be to tackle my writing on a deep level. The peer groups that worked forced me to move beyond changing a word here or reorganizing a paragraph here. I needed to think about what I truly wanted to say on the deepest level, and so I rewrote and rewrote and rewrote, each draft drastically different from the one before. If writing was like building a castle, I had been accustomed to fret about the towers and the turrets; my fellow writers would pack me off down to the cellar to explore the foundation, and I wasn't allowed to come back until it was perfect. Meanwhile, I was forcing them to do the same with their work, inspecting the deep structures of their writing. By the end of the assignment or the course, we had all been irreversibly influenced by each other in the best of ways.

One class I remember primarily because of my peer group; Dr. Walker sent us off to write a "group paper." No sweat, I remember thinking. I'd written group papers before. "You take paragraph 1 and 2 . . . I'll take 3 & 4 . . . and she can

Danina Garcia, a native of Philadelphia, has just completed her degree in English and French at Messiah College. She student taught in an inner-city Harrisburg high school and found the challenge exactly what she was hoping for. She will spend the next year with Real Change News in Seattle, Washington, an organization for homeless empowerment and advocacy. After getting more life experience, Danina wants to teach the kids in whose lives she can make a big difference.

write the conclusion and type it up.” Instead, however, Dr. Walker insisted that the paper reflect a “group voice.” More than a little apprehensive, we took a laptop and five sodas to a picnic table on a warm Indian summer afternoon. Then I learned what writing could be like when five minds were delving into a subject, lobbing ideas back and forth like tennis balls, the shape and concept of the paper changing under our fingers like clay until slowly it began to settle definitively into something that none of us could have written alone, something more than just the sum of its parts.

Perhaps this is a problem unique to me, but I’ve never been very good at seeing beneath the surface of my writing. The kinds of conversations I was forced to have in college took me above and beyond that—or maybe beneath and beyond it. Writing was no longer just words on a page; it was actual ideas, beliefs, thoughts, concepts that I had to find from the deepest part of myself and somehow render into two-dimensional print. If the thoughts were going to come from that deep, the writing process itself had to be willing to go that deep. I couldn’t go there alone, but I learned you’re not really supposed to. Writing, after all, is just language, and language is about communicating. The other writers I dealt with at college forced me to think about what I really wanted to say—and to go deep enough to say it. ☐

Anger in the Teaching Life

Libby Falk Jones

I’m a seasoned teacher. For nearly 40 years, I’ve experienced the joys and frustrations of my vocation, working—and usually succeeding—at embodying what Parker Palmer terms good teaching’s two essentials: love of learning and love of learners. I am though, even now, even with all my experience, sometimes an angry teacher.

What is it that makes my blood boil? Let me tell you about Jennifer. Jennifer’s a bright, motivated junior taking my upper-level journalism class this term. Jennifer speaks up in class, volunteers to drive the van the Friday we attend a play in nearby Lexington. Exuding enthusiasm, Jennifer is the sort of learner it’s easy to love. At least she was. Two weeks ago, I sat in my office holding Jennifer’s mid-term journalism portfolio. She had turned it in late. The “portfolio” was a mess—a clutch of disorganized papers without even a paper clip, violating just about every stipulation of content and process. So out of whack it was—what was supposed to be a three-page place story on the college’s beehives was half a page, a single paragraph!—it was easy to feel it as a deliberate affront. Had she even read the syllabus? Her introduction, supposed to be two-three pages describing and analyzing her growth, was a single page, a long vent about her frustrations. I had

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just read and evaluated the twenty portfolios from Jennifer's classmates. Some were less strong than others, of course. But none evidenced such disregard of both the letter and spirit of the writing and portfolio requirements.

Sitting in my office flipping through those disorganized sheets, I could feel my heart speed up, my breathing quicken. How many times had we gone over news style's need of short paragraphs? How many times had we reviewed the portfolio's requirements? I stood up and walked to my window. Sure, Jennifer was frustrated—but she wasn't even trying. I was the one who was trying. Didn't she see that? Twenty other students were catching on. Why wasn't she? Then followed the bottom-line conclusion: how could she do this to me? I reached for my pencil, ready to retaliate, to demolish. I wrote Jennifer's name on the top of the feedback sheet, then scanned the categories of reporting and writing skills, mulling over the best place to start, nursing, even congratulating myself on, my righteous indignation. I was, as Mary Rose O'Reilley writes, "hooked" on my anger (18).

But this story has a happy ending. Of course I paused. Of course I say, in that pause, that nothing I could write, especially at that moment, would be helpful. Of course I realized that to vent my anger, no matter how justified I perceived myself, against this student writer would shame me, would violate my integrity as a teacher. I knew I had to "unhook" myself from my emotions, to reach beyond my human responses for wisdom. As teacher, I have knowledge; I have power. In a contest with an undergraduate, I'm the automatic winner. I can and should be generous, should assume—until proved otherwise—that a student's actions, however egregious and insulting, emanate from error, not from malice. My job here was to listen beyond the surface, listen to Jennifer's need, try to understand her behaviors from within her frame of reference. My job was also to assess my own role in Jennifer's performance. Setting aside her portfolio, I tallied up her grades. I was surprised to see check-minuses and zeros accumulate. I'd known she'd missed some assignments but hadn't attended to the pattern. Why hadn't I noticed the extent of her struggles?

Despite these realizations, I still wanted to hang onto my anger. When Jennifer came in—she had accepted my neutral invitation to make up the required conference she'd missed the week before—it was all I could do to keep my voice calm, to will away the red blotches threatening to rise to my cheeks. My heart pounded a little, though I don't think she heard. I was able to ask about, not sneer at, her processes in preparing her portfolio. We looked together at the assignment guidelines, at the textbook's description of the news story.

And of course she had a point of view, one I needed to hear. Jennifer's beehives story was short because "you're always telling us to condense," she said. And condense she had, omitting substantive details and jamming what was left into that one paragraph to claim less space on the page. Good impulse, wrong application. Easier to correct that application than the impulse! As I looked beyond form to content, I saw that my anger at the fact of that paragraph had actually prevented my reading her words, words that turned out to be orderly, lively, and direct. "I love writing," Jennifer told me. "This style cuts out everything I love."

I told her I understood. I suggested that, if she gave this tighter form a real try, she might see some creative possibilities—much like a poet who chooses to write a villanelle. Then I stressed that though I could see her viewpoint, her work

at this point was not acceptable. No, I hadn't succeeded in banishing my self-righteousness—it felt good to say that. I offered Jennifer a chance to revise and resubmit her portfolio. More work for her, of course, but a promise of redemption. And penance for my own blindness to her needs. She walked out silently. I brooded—had she heard me?

She must have. Jennifer's portfolio came back in: still no paper clip, but some genuine revisions, at least now a passing effort. I could even find some things to praise. I passed Jennifer in the hall. "The conference helped a lot," she told me. Two hours later, she emailed me some of her poems—a clear act of trust.

To reach serenity as teachers, writes O'Reilley, we must stop denying our anger and instead experience it, "sitting with it in a kind of mysterious love, knowing it like a beloved, naughty animal" (19). My dance with Jennifer hasn't ended. Nor, no matter its outcome, are its patterns likely to reshape my teaching world. I'm sure I'll feel anger again. I may respond in ways that are better, or worse, than these. I'm setting down this small experience so I may acknowledge and inhabit my feelings and thus honor the shadow side of the teaching life, a shadow side that deepens, rather than lessens, the longer we walk.

But still we walk. ☐

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Connections of a First-Year Teacher

Ryan Skinnell

Last semester I taught my first section of first-year composition, which also happened to be the first class I'd ever taught. I was nervous and exhilarated before I walked in the first day, and, if it weren't so clichéd, I'd consider recounting the wide-eyed dewiness of my students. If it weren't so clichéd, I'd also consider talking about the dismay I felt at having not planned in detail any of my opening comments, or I'd consider describing the conviction that I'd come to about being a compassionate authoritarian: a professor who demanded respect while encouraging personal connections.

I began class with a lecture. I started by informing my students that we would be investigating some pretty heavy topics in our time together: race, gender, sexuality, politics, religion, etc. I also gave them some background information about my views of a student-centered classroom. We discussed (actually I discussed) student responsibilities such as being prepared, giving input in classroom instruction and assignments, posing problems instead of being passive learners, and taking a proactive role in their educational pursuits beyond the classroom.

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They sat quietly, blankly, staring at me as if I were speaking another language. After a brief pause, I took advantage of their quiet and launched into my expectations of their classroom behavior, attendance, participation, etc. I pointed to applicable portions of my syllabus, gesticulated wildly, and raised the timbre of my voice to preacherly proportions. Finally, I finished and put them to work writing a short theme while I tried to recover from my zeal.

I was physically shaken after this first day of teaching. I left feeling as if I were recovering from a particularly bad hangover. I had a headache, felt jittery and overwhelmed, thinking that I'd somehow missed the right words that would have wooed them into action.

Five weeks later, I finally had my first student come to office hours. In fact, I'd been incredibly disappointed in how my students responded to the call to take control of their lives as evidenced by how few students had come to visit me. We'd read Paulo Freire, discussed media manipulations, deconstructed gender and religion, all with little enthusiasm beyond my own. Owing in part to my vanity, and in part to my insecurity, I took the opportunity of asking this student, one of my average students, why people weren't taking advantage of the problem-posing style of classroom management that I'd instituted to give them some authority. Want to know what she answered?

"It's just hard sometimes because there's a lot of homework and essays and stuff."

Connection: I gave my students the directive to make educational choices to benefit themselves, and then I complained when the choices they made ran counter to my ideals—even as I assigned "a lot of homework and essays and stuff," stifling their authority.

Connection: You can lead a student to enlightenment, but it's a lot harder when you're going the opposite direction. ☹

Guiding the Passion

Lee Roecker

I have never felt a student's pain so acutely. As I lecture about evolution, Jimmy's face contorts as if he is possessed by a demon. My words cause his pain.

"You claim that the earth is about 4.5 billion years old. Is this with or without God?" he asks on the second day of class. I reply that if I were a scientist who *did not* believe in God, after looking at the evidence, I would conclude that the earth was this age. If I were a scientist who *did* believe in God, after looking at the evidence, I would arrive at the same answer.

"Do you believe in God?" another student asks. This is a common question, but I disappoint many in the class when I reply that my beliefs are immaterial to this course:

Lee Roecker was a professor of chemistry at Berea College from 1988-2005. His narrative comes from a general education course called "Natural Science" that all students at Berea College are required to take. He currently lives in Chicago and is writing about issues relating to science education. Lee will be teaching at Gettysburg College for the 2006 school year.

My faith has nothing to do with my interpretation of scientific evidence. My goal in this course is to enable you, no matter what your religious beliefs, to better understand how science operates. I want you to understand that scientists have evidence that supports their beliefs. I want to show you a very small part of that evidence and to help you understand how this evidence is interpreted in the manner that it is. Your goal, as people seeking a liberal education, is to understand the arguments of science and to be able to interpret the world through that lens. The reply, “because God made it that way,” will never be an acceptable answer to any question I will ask.

I read the answers to Jimmy’s first exam. The question asks to describe how scientists interpret the fossil record as providing evidence of evolution. Jimmy responds, “God made us. God is love.”

When he sees that he has earned no points for many of his answers, he challenges me in the classroom. “This is about faith,” he says loudly. “You have faith in what you believe as a scientist, yet you have never seen an atom or an electron. You have never seen a dinosaur in the flesh. Yet you have faith. What is the difference between your faith and mine?”

I believe that faith is personal. I believe that faith is not based upon evidence. I only want to talk about science but know that he has raised an important question. It deserves an answer. I break my rule about discussing matters of faith in class:

Jimmy, here is the difference. Your faith is unchanging and needs no evidence to support it. My scientific faith, however, is subject to change. What I teach this term will be different next term if evidence is presented, and confirmed, that tells me I should change my beliefs. Being human, I might resist that change, but eventually the weight of evidence will lead me to a new view. No matter what I tell you, however, your faith has a right to be immovable.

After class, he asks if I will listen to his view of the world. I sit down in the front row and hand him my chalk. He fills the board—God and creation are on the left. Moving to the right, humans and dinosaurs appear. Then a cataclysmic event occurs—original sin. After that event, all hell breaks loose. Jimmy tells me that humans and dinosaurs walked the 6000-year-old earth at the same times. All dinosaurs were vegetarian until original sin made some of them carnivorous. He describes the great flood and how it scoured the walls of the Grand Canyon. As the result of 90 inspired minutes at the chalkboard, he is drenched in the perspiration of passion. I have countless objections to his presentation. Evidence does not support any of his contentions, but I know that evidence will not matter to him, and I keep my critique silent. I have given him his chance to speak: unchallenged and uninterrupted.

Jimmy never stops asking questions the rest of the semester; he never stops challenging me to support my statements. The biting edge, however, disappears after his day at the board. From that point on, we have conversations daily after class. We get to learn a little more about each other. I guess that he just needed to make himself heard.

Despite that turnaround in our relationship, however, I know that I failed him as a teacher. I was not able to guide his passion. I also know that he failed himself as a student. He was resistant to enlarging his view of the world. I wish that I could have opened his eyes, not to defeat his faith but to enrich it. ☺

Emails to Blow Off Steam

Louise Morgan

Editor: Louise Morgan writes me of her perplexity about how to reach these kids at this last-ditch-effort high school in Harrisburg, PA. Their next step is adjudicated residence homes or, if they are too old, out on the streets. She tells me writing emails to me helps and my listening helps. Her job this year is setting up projects mostly with seniors who still need credit to graduate, who are sometimes very close and yet too far if they can't motivate themselves to earn some education credit. Sometimes, too, the counselor brings in students who aren't close to graduation but have a spark that could be fanned into flame. Here are parts of two emails, the first about her listening to Cory and the second about her listening to Rosalie.

Email #1:

A young man comes into my room. He walks in with his head sort of down, not focusing on me. I say, "Well, let's start with introductions. I have learned it is really best to shake hands upon meeting and even every day." So then I find out it's . . . he is a senior. He picks up my drum and talks about it, what it's made out of, and starts sort of playing it. Then he lets me in on his agenda. He says this generation is the worst generation of African Americans.

He says youth are on the verge of extinction. They are the "Fearless Generation." He feels they could destroy themselves. He knows he is one of them. He says, "Look, I'm here, aren't I?" Meaning ACTS [this high school]. He says this generation has not been part of anything.

I say, "You mean like a movement?"

He says, "Yes."

That's what he wants to do. Start a movement. He isn't looking around now. He is focused, sitting several feet away and telling me, "I think that could be good." He says he has been writing a mission statement for his youth movement. He thinks the time is ripe.

I am sitting there thinking, "I am overwhelmed." Could I, a white, middle-aged, middle-class woman, possibly be one of the foot soldiers for this young man's movement? Wouldn't that be amazing?

So, he leaves . . . and I am sitting here in silence waiting for the orders.

Louise Morgan, M.M.C., teaches in an inner city school, writes plays, and is finishing up a second masters in education. She hikes the Appalachian Trail and currently performs Theatre for Personal Transformation—New Life Scripts.

Email #2:

She is brought to me by Ms. Smith, the homeless student coordinator. She must be Puerto Rican. She is nervous. Ms. Smith loves her and sees the beautiful person that she is. She tells me about herself, that she has decided that no matter what she goes through, she will always try to help others. She would like to maybe be a counselor for (then she listed the issues) domestic violence, rape, drugs and alcohol, homelessness, depression leading to suicide. And you know, looking into her brown eyes, with low lids and painful expression behind a slow smile, that these were all her issues.

She shares with me the contents of her little bag . . . so surprising, a Japanese language book. Then she says good morning in Japanese.

When I tell her I do drama, she says that she does, too, when she is lonely with her stuffed animals.

She looks over my list of assignments for portfolio work. I give students lots of choices, and one is “Find out about a school with a Diversity Club. Would this be good in our school? Why or why not?” She wants to know more.

As she is leaving, I hear her say to Ms. Smith, “I can’t wait. I’m so excited.”

Our work is forwards, backwards, try and fail, and then . . . ☹

REVIEWS

Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition. Ed. Anne Frances Wysocki, Johndan Johnson-Eilola, Cynthia L. Selfe, and Geoffrey Sirc. Logan: Utah State UP, 2004.

Mary Pettice, Lebanon Valley College

When I was in graduate school in the early 90s, the professor under whom I taught undergraduates decided that we should incorporate computer technology into the teaching of writing. So, instead of receiving a stack of papers from the students in my section, I received a computer disk onto which people in the campus computer center had put my students' work. I'd grade in the computer lab since my home computer was a PC and the school used Macintoshes; the high-tech assessment methods I was asked to follow basically amounted to jumping into a line of student writing, **in a bold font, to point out errors in syntax, logic, spelling, and grammar**, and writing notes at the end of the essay that attempted to summarize the sorts of observations that I would ordinarily have introduced in the margins of the paper. The system worked, I suppose. But using computers in this limited application was a little like writing while wearing a blindfold or forcing my right-handed self to use a left-handed mouse. I could do it, but the effort at duplicating my normal practices by using a limited alternative medium seemed needlessly great.

When I assisted another professor the next semester, I gratefully returned to accepting stacks of stapled papers and enjoyed the freedom of letting my pen communicate my corrections and suggestions directly to the student in a way that made spatial sense to me. Sure, my handwriting was inferior to crisply fonted phrases, but I was able to easily denote the different levels of assistance and evaluation I offered each student through the use of copy editing marks, arrows and stars, and marginalia that seemed unmistakably targeted to the matter at hand.

And so my first exposure to the concept of using new media technologies in the teaching of writing merely focused on the scribal nature of the computer. At the same time, of course, in my theory and literature courses, I was developing a postmodern engagement with which I now greet the advent of new media technologies and the recognition that academic culture unfairly privileges alphabetic texts. I went on to teach composition, literature, journalism, and even new media as a generalist at a small liberal arts college, but the concepts I championed in literary, cultural, and media studies were displaced when I taught freshmen to write; for me, the teaching of composition remained off by itself, stranded on a Greek peninsula of time, championing my genuine fondness for 2,500-year-old tropes.

Looking back after reading *Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition*, I give myself a small amount of credit for beginning to prepare myself for its message, however slow my process. My discomfort with bland PowerPoint presentations emanated both from my initial rejection of these clumsy efforts to unite attractive copy and higher thought, and

a nagging feeling that glorified outlines couldn't possibly be the end of uniting technology and communication. In my New Media course, students created final projects in HTML, exploring specific issues in journalism as they applied to new technologies, exploiting possibilities of arguing through presenting ideas in a multi-layered format, documenting sources through links to pages in a pop-up window. In my journalism and editing courses, we endlessly talk about interactive blogs and the balance of political power, the achievements and failures of online newspaper design, and the elegance and power of databases. In composition courses, we study evaluation and documentation of online sources, but I continue to require written assignments that haven't materially changed in two decades. In short, nothing I did in my other courses rubbed off on the teaching of composition. (I don't award myself any points for allowing students to e-mail me their Word documents or hand in work via Blackboard's digital dropbox.)

In *Writing New Media*, the authors remind the audience that we have already bought into contemporary theories of text; in the introduction, Anne Frances Wysocki writes:

But we do understand, now, that writing, like all literate practices, only exists because it functions, circulates, shifts, and has varying value and weight within complexly articulated social, cultural, political, educational, religious, economic, familial, ecological, political, artistic, affective, and technological webs (you can name others, I'm sure). (2)

Indeed, each of the book's four authors affirms the audience's collective understandings of cultural and literary theory, and the importance of this knowledge leads the authors to their next assertion: that it is therefore rather surprising that many embrace these theories everywhere but in the composition classroom.

The authors then make the case that we're doing our students a disservice by focusing their compositional efforts in the medium we have mistakenly labeled as timeless—that what is essential about the arrangement of persuasive text is not alphabetic text essay structure but, in Geoffrey Sirc's words, a process of “research, selection, arrangement, expression” (126) that can just as easily incorporate visual and other digital media as it can topic-sentence paragraphs. Cynthia L. Selfe emphasizes the ethical dimensions for a marked shift in our pedagogy, asserting that:

if we continue to define literacy in ways that ignore or exclude new media texts, we not only abdicate a professional responsibility to describe accurately and robustly how humans communicate, and how they compose and read in contemporary contexts, but we also run the risk of our curriculum holding declining relevance for students. (55)

While we, as writing instructors, are being recruited for this task, however, we're also being told that we're the last best hope. Indeed, this point—that we must challenge ourselves to re-construct the idea of written text for our students' sakes—accompanies two reassurances: that writing teachers already possess the critical methods by which to alter their approach to the teaching of writing and that perhaps no one is better prepared to address the subject of new media communications than writing teachers. Wysocki claims, “I want to argue that writing

about new media needs to be informed by what writing teachers know, precisely because writing teachers focus specifically on texts and how situated people . . . use them to make things happen" (5). The authors' reassurances suggest that the process of adapting new media theory to the teaching of writing can be, and should be, done on terms set forth by the experts in the field of composition.

Furthering the book's main argument, Selfe assures the reader that she understands the reluctance to consider other kinds of literacies because of how much we've invested in this form. "Teachers continue to privilege alphabetic literacy over visual literacy," she notes, ". . . because they have already invested so heavily in writing, writing instruction and writing programs—and because we have achieved some status as practitioners and specialists of writing" (71). One benefit for overcoming this reluctance, she argues, is that "we may also extend the usefulness of composition studies in a changing world" (72). The ideas of extending and expanding our repertoire offer both challenge and assurance throughout the book, and this necessarily introduction-heavy text clearly lays out the need for new practices and the theory supporting it—and then the text goes on to offer us many detailed applications for use in the classroom. Selfe encourages us to explore these ideas without the pressure to be experts; the applications are presented as opportunities for students and teachers to be co-learners.

The chapter entitled "Box-Logic" by Geoffrey Sirc illustrates some of the charms of these applications. Sirc offers us the example of the artist Joseph Cornell's boxes as a visual representation of the selection, arrangement, and presentation processes that we use in alphabetic communication and that can easily be applied to a multimedia environment. One of his research-oriented assignments capitalizes on the curatorial role of the writer and requires a survey of Internet sources, both text and image, to pull together a Web page that demonstrates "how well-chosen text and imagery can combine to form an interesting, informative, oftentimes delightful narrative" (136). The detailed assignment emphasizes familiar data collection and annotation strategies; Sirc writes, "I like a mix of summary, quotation, pithy analysis, and personal/reflective writing" (134) and encourages teachers to cover basic research concepts and practices, perhaps with the guidance of a campus librarian.

As part of the book's emphasis on affirming and expanding on the skills we already possess and teach, Sirc argues that his "Research Box" assignment can help students to better understand the requirements of academic prose. Parts of the Web-based assignment, he explains, "have academic cachet and can serve as the seeds for a more polished, self-contained prose genre (an analysis, reflection, narrative, or some mixed genre), which can be a required component of the assignment" (136).

The book offers workable activities clearly echoing the structures that alphabetic composition values while at the same time offering the new media contexts in which we must now teach composition. Throughout, the assignments are familiar in concept if not in execution, and the authors continue to remind the audience that we already possess the skills to master new technologies and integrate a thorough understanding of new media into the teaching of writing. ☐

Miller, Richard E. *Writing at the End of the World*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2005.

Kerrie R. H. Farkas, Millersville University of Pennsylvania

September 11, 2001. Most Americans know not only where they were but also what they were doing when newscasters aired the first plane crashing into the World Trade Center. I was in my townhouse in Ohio, getting ready to teach my composition courses, when my mother-in-law called and told me to turn on the television. As I watched the scene of the first crash play over and over again, I experienced both shock and disbelief. A few minutes later, as I witnessed the second plane flying into the South Tower, shock and disbelief turned into fear.

Everyone has a story and a connection to 9/11, and my story involves my sister and a postcard that she sent to me in 1997, a postcard that is still fastened to the bulletin board in my office, thumb-tacked initially as a source of pride for my sister and now as a reminder of how quickly life can change. The postcard, which features a picture of the World Trade Center, contains a written message with an arrow pointing to the 70th floor that says, "I am here," with the "here" referring to the floor on which my sister would be working in her new position at Morgan Stanley. My sister sent such postcards to everyone in the family after she landed this career-changing position in the accounting field. On September 11, 2001, when I watched the first plane crash into the North Tower, mixed in with the shock and disbelief, was relief that my sister had decided, just a year prior and against common sense and friend and family advice, to leave the field of accounting to pursue other interests. Part of me is unreservedly thankful that she made that decision, and the other part is guilt-ridden for feeling this way. The weeks following 9/11 are a blur. The fear, the doubt, the sadness, the emptiness consumed me. I cannot imagine how those who lost someone felt. When life-changing events like this take place, it is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid questioning whether what one is doing in life is meaningful.

In his book *Writing at the End of the World*, Richard Miller questions the point of teaching reading and writing in a world where unspeakable events such as 9/11, Columbine, and the Oklahoma City bombing occur and asks how reading and writing might be made to matter in such a world. The answer, for Miller, lies in what he calls the institutional autobiography, the intersection of the personal and the institutional and the place where writing can be used to determine how institutions simultaneously inspire, endorse, control, and prohibit discourse. The book itself is a manifestation of Miller's own autobiographical journey, illustrating how the institutional autobiography might work and also pointing to ways in which those in the humanities might provide students with genuine opportunities to read and write in ways that matter. Although the numerous threads of individuals and events woven throughout the text are sometimes difficult to connect—for instance, Chapter Seven discusses at least nineteen stories, some about Miller's father's suicide, some about the 1998 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, some about a well-known essayist that visited his campus, and some about T.S. Eliot's biography—such a method does allow readers to see the difficulty inherent in revealing private history in a public realm as well as the complexity involved in such a brave endeavor.

In Chapter One, Miller begins his story by depicting a number of catastrophic events that have occurred in the last decade and by successfully illuminating the bleakness and the hopelessness that many people experience when such events occur. In fact, Miller does not allow his audience merely to *read* about the devastation of these events; he makes them feel the loss and the powerlessness, and he also makes it impossible not to question the relevance of teaching reading and writing in the wake of all the destruction. For instance, when discussing Columbine, Miller claims that the two students who were responsible for the massacre were enrolled in school, read numerous texts, and wrote and produced countless documents for all types of media: “they read, they wrote, they talked. And at the end of the process, they tried to kill everyone they could” (5). In illustrating the impossibility of discovering the reason, the cause, and the justification for such extreme horrors and in conceding that these horrors will inevitably happen again and again, Miller skillfully compels readers to reexamine the goals of the humanities in general and of the teaching of writing in particular.

In the second chapter, Miller sets his proposed *institutional autobiography* in the context of the field and distinguishes it from the 1990s turn to the personal movement by claiming that he is interested specifically in the interplay between the personal and academic rather than just in the personal. In fact, according to Miller, he is primarily interested in the institutional forces on personal experience or the “allocation of cultural capital in the academy played out at the level of experience” (41). As he suggests in the book, for him, the teaching of reading and writing is tied up in the need to be seen and heard; thus, he argues that teachers might see their work as learning how to speak and write so that others can see and hear them and to teach their students how to do this as well. According to Miller, this is the only approach for making the classroom a possible resource for hope.

In order to illustrate the importance of being seen and heard and to show the necessity of this approach to writing, Miller devotes Chapters Three and Four to debunking any notion that writing is transformative, to underscoring the significance of the more modest, subtle changes that reading and writing can produce, and to emphasizing the importance of the relationship and the connection between individual writers and the world. In a clever move, Miller argues that being seen and heard are that which makes us human: “being human allows us to be able to step out of the moment, to be able to represent oneself to oneself and to others, and to be able to reflect on what has been and to consider what might be” (111). That is, Miller argues that our job as teachers of writing is to examine how we can make ourselves seen and heard (i.e., representing ourselves to others) and to show students how to connect their individual lives with “the history, the culture, and the lives of the institutions that surround us all” (25). In constructing a syllogistic argument in this way—if all humans need to be seen and heard, and all students are human, then all students need to be seen and heard—Miller almost obligates his readers to acknowledge and accept his pedagogical approach to writing.

In Chapters Five and Six, Miller problematizes two existing pedagogies—Freire’s liberatory pedagogy and James Scott’s resistance pedagogy—and argues that between these two extreme representations of schooling lies the complex world of the classroom, a world where teachers need to find ways to help students develop understandings of bureaucratic discourse and to identify moments of potentially successful discursive interactions. For Miller, a pragmatic approach to teaching writing would allow students to identify such moments and

would offer the possibility of a classroom environment where both education's public transcript and students' hidden transcripts are heard. In tandem with such a pragmatic approach to writing, Miller advocates the institutional autobiography, a genre that unites the personal and the institutional and that allows students to find their own narrative to acquire "the skills necessary for persisting in the ongoing project of navigating life in a bureaucracy" (138).

In the final chapter, Miller concludes his argument by reiterating the importance of a pragmatic pedagogy—an approach to teaching writing that acknowledges the complexity of the institution, a place where student voices can be lost and silenced—and by underscoring the value of the institutional autobiography, which provides students with an opportunity to use writing as a "vehicle for arriving at nuanced understandings of a lived reality" (196), connecting both the individual and the institutional. Thus, according to Miller, the institutional autobiography offers students occasions to retrace their histories in relation to their encounters with the educational system, and the pragmatic pedagogy offers students a method by which they can learn to speak in ways that others can hear.

In advocating as well as using the institutional autobiography, Miller makes a strong case for his approach to teaching writing. In fact, by implementing the institutional autobiography and by "smudging, interrogating, and peering across the boundary separating these two realms" (169), Miller successfully makes his private world public and also shows how such a method can work for both students and teachers of writing. ☐

Barasch, Marc Ian. *Field Notes on the Compassionate Life: A Search for the Soul of Kindness*. New York: Rodale, 2005.

Edward Sullivan, Lebanon Valley College

In *Radical Presence: Teaching as a Contemplative Practice*, Mary Rose O'Reilley tells a story about a student who was having difficulty completing a writing assignment in her course. In class, he looked miserable and rarely spoke. One day, he came to her office, and they talked for two hours. He revealed that several years ago his mother died suddenly and his father became a virtual mute. Worse yet, his father's silence had now gripped the entire family. At the end of their meeting, O'Reilley notes, nothing seemed to change. In fact, the student went on to drop her class. A few years later, the student came by to see her. He told her that on the day of his visit he was on his way to commit suicide (26).

That story has had an enormous impact on me. As a professor with several decades of experience, students have offered me many explanations for late assignments or missed exams. Over time, I had become quite callous and cynical about student excuses. In fact, I had lost much of my compassion—at least as it pertained to my teaching. So it was with great interest that I approached Marc Ian Barasch's foray into the heart of compassion and kindness. Are these qualities that arise naturally in all of us or, perhaps, only in some of us? Can these virtues be cultivated? These are several of the fundamental questions and answers Barasch explores in his book, one of the most provocative spiritual texts I have read in many years.

In his study, Barasch encounters theologians, therapists, neurobiologists, philosophers, and, most interestingly, seemingly ordinary people who embody this elu-

sive trait we call compassion. But what does compassion really mean? The author offers us a useful, working definition: kindness without condition. In the first chapter, Barasch introduces us to a married couple, Paul and Alicia, who have perfected the art of compassionate living. Paul claims that he learned compassion from his wife, who, in turn, learned it from her mother. Alicia recalls that her mother said "life's greatest joy was to 'pull the beauty out of people'" (21), a goal akin to that of our diverse pedagogies. Her eighth-grade educated mother continued that "the secret was just to take a genuine interest in others—just ask them questions, want to know how they are, really" (21). Listening as a compassionate act is a difficult practice, especially for those in the teaching profession where silence is too often equated with ignorance and not wisdom. I suspect that whatever transpired between O'Reilley and her suicidal student involved some very deep listening.

Is there an evolutionary basis for compassion? In Chapter Two, Barasch learns of numerous instances where apes and chimps "exhibit what we think of as human values: aid to the weak, sharing of resources, social rules that reward good citizen" (33). Apparently, life in the animal kingdom is not quite as nasty and brutish as one might expect. Then, in Chapter Three, Barasch explores the gateway to compassion: empathy. Some individuals, like mystics, are empathic geniuses, while others, like those with autism or Asperger's syndrome, appear oblivious to sensing the mental states of others. Assuming one does not fall into the latter category, can an individual become more empathic and, in turn, more compassionate? This is the subject of the fourth chapter, where the author does his field work by living on the streets of Denver for a week. Street retreats are the brainchild of the American Zen teacher Bernie Glassman. What better way is there to learn about compassion than by living among the homeless and destitute? Barasch's retreat is led by a former convict and current Zen student named, improbably, Fleet Maull. In this memorable adventure, the author encounters contempt, indifference, and startling acts of generosity. Reading this chapter one might conclude that compassion can be developed—if we are able to relinquish our preconceived notions and viewpoints.

Chapter Five, entitled "The Good Eye," further supports the theme that compassion requires a change in perception. Barasch takes the title of this chapter from the Rabbi of Berditchev, a nineteenth century mystic, who could not see the sins of others; he saw only their virtues, hence the "good eye" (101). The author interviews several people he feels possess this trait and solicits some practical suggestions on how to acquire it. The reader should be forewarned that no quick fixes are offered, just advice on establishing a lifelong practice, and it does take *practice*.

In the previous chapter, Barasch mentions a friend who says that whenever she sees any human suffering, "My mind drops into my heart" (77). She describes it as an acute physical and emotional response. Well, does the heart have a mind of its own? This is the question that forms the basis for the next chapter. Rather than consulting poets for an answer, Barasch once again finds himself in the company of scientists. While the heart receives impulses from the brain, current research suggests that a feedback mechanism may exist. In other words, the heart seems to send information to the brain. The author discusses some remarkable research that indicates that the meditation practices of Hindu yogis and Tibetan lamas provide a portal to greater compassion.

The next two chapters are essentially paired together and deal with "do-gooders." For example, Chapter Seven introduces us to a 46-year-old man

who donates a kidney to an Ethiopian refugee whom he doesn't know. What compels a person to do this? Once, I worked with a woman who made a similar donation to someone who was, at best, a bare acquaintance. I was awed by her generosity. As another colleague said to me, "I *might* give a kidney to a family member, but that's where I draw the line." Further, the same colleague wondered if the donor simply craved attention. Apparently, Barasch notes, the charge of grandstanding is often (quietly) leveled at these donors. Well, maybe, but surely there must be an easier way to curry fame. More insightful is a comment by another kidney donor who said that the whole issue of giving centered on "dealing with the fear of not having enough" (157). Perhaps, that says it all.

In the following chapter, the author moves from the particular to the general by examining altruism. Even as a reasonably informed member of the academy, I was surprised by how many disciplines weigh-in on this subject. For example, biologists interpret altruistic behavior as a way to improve the likelihood of passing on our genes. (We are more likely to do something nice for a relative than a stranger.) Psychologists point to the narcissistic rewards of our noble deeds. (A kidney, anyone?) Economists, however, couch such actions in terms of costs and benefits. (Remember, there is no such thing as a free lunch!) Perhaps most intriguing is the newly emerging field called the sociology of compassion, pioneered by the Holocaust survivor Samuel Oliner and his wife, Pearl. The Oliners began their research by investigating why some people were willing to risk everything in order to hide Jews from the Nazis. I'll give you a tidbit: these people were "unusually empathetic" (175).

All right, so some of us are truly remarkable people, capable of exhibiting unnerving compassion. Suppose you are not one of them. Suppose you have a hard time turning the other cheek and forgiving others or, maybe, yourself. These are the issues considered in the next few chapters. Interviewing victims of embezzlement, infidelity, rape, and murder, Barasch wants to know how some individuals transmute their rage into forgiveness. While the author does not completely succeed in his quest, he uncovers a tantalizing clue: "it is not the wrong-doer's repentance that creates forgiveness, but the victim's forgiveness that creates repentance. This is where forgiveness enters the realm of paradox and panacea; becomes a mysterious gift offered to one who does not merit it; becomes the essence of compassion itself" (239).

Throughout the book, there is a theme that what we do affects all of us. Hindus refer to this inter-connectedness of being as Indra's Net; Buddhists call it codependent origination; the Lakota Sioux say *mitakuye oyasin*—all beings are my relatives (308). In the final chapter, Barasch explores the scientific basis for this belief. His research suggests that such a basis may exist, although the evidence appears tenuous. Nonetheless, given such a tentative conclusion, I was still sorry to reach the end of this book.

Well, are there any firm conclusions to be wrought from these field notes? On his deathbed, Aldous Huxley was asked what he had learned about life. He said, "It's embarrassing to tell you this, but it seems to come down mostly to just learning to be kinder" (340). I'm thinking about putting that quote on my desk, facing me. That way, I can read it whenever a student drops by my office. ☐

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Mayers, Tim. *(Re)Writing Craft: Composition, Creative Writing, and the Future of English Studies*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2005.

Brad Lucas, Texas Christian University

I started reading this book while my department was searching for an endowed chair in creative writing, a rare position and one new to our university. Like any search for new colleagues, this one raised the expected questions about the role of the English department and the future of the discipline, but issues also surfaced about the role of creative writing in the curriculum—and, of course, the affinities, boundaries, and tensions among rhetoric, composition, and creative writing. Such concerns are commonplaces in the history of writing, and Tim Mayers addresses these issues—and many more—in *(Re)Writing Craft*, showing readers not only how creative writing and composition initially parted ways, but how the two can be brought back into a productive alignment that could benefit us all.

While Mayers focuses on several threads of inquiry, two stand out more than others: his concept of “craft criticism” and his ideas for institutional reform. The book is organized around five chapters that highlight these two trajectories. The first chapter lays out the problems, tensions, and historical rifts that plague the landscape of literary study, composition, and creative writing. The second and third chapters focus on craft criticism, situating it in historical context and explaining its theoretical potency for crafting an alliance between composition and creative writing. This new alliance as “writing studies” has been growing in currency over the years, but Mayers does much more than just champion terms or proclaim rising movements. Instead, in his fourth and fifth chapters, Mayers articulates the ways of thinking that might promote reform, and he sets out a “blueprint for change” that identifies specific areas where work can be done: in the classroom, the curriculum, our hiring practices, and our professional organizations. While it can be perfunctory for a book review like this one to map out a book’s architecture, I want to underscore that this book’s organization and approach are outstanding, inviting readers to retain and remember the shape of his productive discussion—perhaps so we can replicate it in our home institutions.

Chapter One charts the “shifting boundaries” of English, identifying literary studies as “an institutional wedge” that separates creative writing from composition, but Mayers makes it clear that he’s not aiming to unify the two against a common enemy in literature. Instead, he approaches his task with respect to an audience that might not be familiar with the long-standing debates and problematic hierarchies in English studies. Indeed, another strength in Mayers’s book is its accessibility, prompting me to recommend it to several of my colleagues. Being trained in composition studies, I cannot speak to his treatment of creative writing, but Mayers clearly understands the disciplinary life and folkways of composition studies, which he claims “has reached an important stage in its development and is possibly ready to expand its scope to encompass territory commonly thought to belong only to creative writing” (10). But, as with the other tensions negotiated in the chapter, Mayers does not suggest that the one co-

opt the other. Instead, he explains the institutional logics of both areas so we can see the tensions more clearly and understand the points of resistance on each side. Through concepts like “the institutional-conventional wisdom” of creative writing, Mayers distills the notion of “craft” as something that is teachable (unlike “natural” talent), and, in doing so, offers us useful terms for considering change.

Mayers first coined “craft criticism” in the early 1990s, and in Chapter Two, he posits craft criticism as an emergent area of work in the creative writing community. It would be an injustice to distill his definition to just a few sentences, but in general terms craft criticism is a form of critical-pedagogical work focused on the production—and evaluative formation—of text, rather than its interpretation (34). Mayers provides a historical overview of this genre, tracing its lineage in the scholarship of literature, creative writing, and composition and rhetoric. Clearly, Mayers has read carefully through the works of these writing communities, and, although he makes no claims to exhaustive coverage, he provides a textual roadmap to support his claims that craft criticism has thrived under various names and guises for decades. To help us recognize craft criticism when we see it, Mayers explains four categories that craft critics generally emphasize—authorship, composing processes, genre boundaries/definitions, and institutionality—and then demonstrates “how craft criticism exists across the entire range of the contemporary landscape of creative writing” (47–48). The chapter is not merely a retread of discussions that have circulated since the New Critics; instead, Mayers provides an understanding of craft criticism that has its roots in such work but enables us to think forward. For example, at the end of Chapter Two, he introduces the work of Charles Baxter, who aims to situate fiction, narrative, and stories in our contemporary cultural milieu, wherein the violence of information-flows overshadows the “stillness” of traditional narratives (61). After all, digital media will continue to challenge English studies, and Mayers invokes contemporary concerns without belaboring their implications or repercussions.

In Chapter Three, Mayers takes us into deeper theoretical terrain by situating Martin Heidegger’s work as the axis for a discussion of craft criticism. Heidegger’s juxtapositioning of poetry with instrumental-material technology offers Mayers a way to frame our thinking about the turf-battles and ideological gray areas among creative writing, literary studies, and composition and rhetoric. It also opens possibilities for seeing how coalitions and conscious alignments can prepare us for the future of English studies which, by all indicators, will continue to be enveloped with questions and concerns about technology and materiality. In this chapter, then, we can easily see one instance in which craft criticism can provide a common conceptual vocabulary for the disparate and diverse stakeholders in English. Mayers does not stop there, however, as he brings his ideas through the work of Sherod Santos, Paul Kameen, James Kinneavy, Wayne Dodd, Joe Wenderoth, Heather McHugh, Judith Halden-Sullivan, Ann Lauterbach, and Lynn Worsham. Mayers’s even-handed treatment of these writers from an array of writing studies is a credit to the importance of “cross-over” scholarship and the need for increased exchanges among us.

At this point in *(Re)Writing Craft*, I would have been content to read two more chapters that explored and explained the importance of craft criticism. While such an approach certainly could have worked for Mayers, he chose the more difficult (although more alluring) option of proposing reform. It is a difficult

shift, particularly in the wake of his provocative ideas in the preceding chapters, and there is a palpable change in energy and tone. But with Chapter Four, Mayers offers the intriguing possibility of an alliance between composition and creative writing, which is no easy peace to entreat. As is the case throughout the book, Mayers offers a clear historical context, showing us how creative writing diverged from composition's process theories in the 1960s and 1970s; more importantly, he identifies the operative terms that stand as obstacles or challenges for the joining of the two fields. He contends that an alliance will require "strategic territorial thinking" and attention to the "unconscious bias toward interpretation" that permeates English studies (104-106). At a crude, reductive level, the problem is one of perception: differences between the "naive, anti-intellectual romanticists" of creative writing and the "dull academic drones" of composition (111). Mayers is careful to describe—not fall into—such counter-productive binaries, but he outlines them clearly for anyone new to the debates or new to the discipline. Ultimately, he contends that institutional barriers pose the greatest obstacle for a new alliance under the heading of "writing studies" (114).

The final chapter, "Starting Somewhere," draws attention to itself almost as an introduction, a commencement piece that could—and perhaps will—inspire the beginning chapters of other books or the first tremors of an institutional reform movement. Mayers proposes that we create new courses, modify introductory creative writing courses, reform required composition courses, and revive writing-about-literature courses (132-53). We can do even more by altering the English curriculum as a whole and recreating the criteria by which we hire new colleagues (153-63). More broadly, the CCCC and the AWP can form a coalition, merging their common interests and, perhaps, set a goal to "wrest one of English studies' most cherished and dreaded rituals—the annual publication of job announcements and the subsequent massive job interviews at an annual convention—away from the MLA" (165). There are many other beneficial outcomes that could result from such an alliance, and, while they are not all easy, or extreme, they are all possible. And the clarity of Mayers's vision is enough to encourage us to think strategically about our own institutions and to form productive coalitions with our colleagues. It is possible, after all, to initiate changes that will not only benefit our students, but also create healthier environments where we work—and where we share our work with others. *(Re)Writing Craft* is, in many ways, the place to start. 

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