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Correspondences Eight **Broadside opinions and conversations al fresco**

Dear Reader,

This issue of *Correspondences* is given over entirely to a dialogue of a somewhat different sort: James Zebroski, who commented on Vygotsky in *Correspondences Four,* and Nancy Mack wonder if they haven't actually invented a new genre. You can see best if the claim is warranted by reading straight through and then backwards, another time, watching the perspectives shift. Jim's and Nancy's dialogue represents, I think, the kind of thoughtful exchange which our conferences should foster as the means and to the end of liberating ourselves from the non-panels to which we seem chained. We teachers must/should/can/will invent new formats which disdain disputation and merely rhetorical adversarial presentations, while avoiding cheerleading and abstruse argumentation.

Continuation of this dialogue will be welcome in next year's issues. Beginning in the Fall, please write me at the address noted below. In May, I'm retiring just short of forty years of classroom teaching, but I remain a zealot and will therefore continue to argue the merits of a view of the linguistic process as never merely personal, as always heuristic, as necessarily social; to growl at old pedants and young fogies, alert meanwhile to the dangers of self-righteousness; to proclaim the doctrines of Thirdness, critical consciousness, and "the holiness of the heart's affections."

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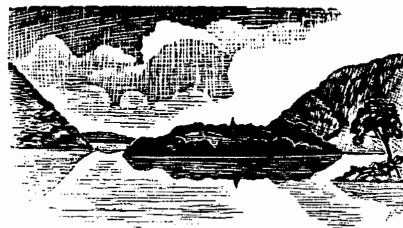
P.S. Some people still think that *Rhetoricke* is *ye Arte of Persuasion:* would you please demonstrate your skill as a Rhetorician by persuading two friends to add their subscriptions to your renewal? Or you could make them each a present. We need further subscriptions in order to break even. We want to offer further philosophical perspectives on the teaching of writing with comment on Whitehead, Richards, Polanyi, and Langer; with discussion and argument about writing with and without confidence; about what dialogic action means in the classroom. We plan dialogues on Freire and Bakhtin and further demolition of syntagmatic shibboleths and paradigmatic ruses of one kind or another. People say that the winds are shifting and that there are signs that something new is really starting to happen. *Correspondences* will report the slow-breaking news and help you understand implications. We need Five Dollars from a lot more people. We can gain momentum if you do more than your part this time.



A Dialogue on Composition: A Composition on Dialogue

James T. Zebroski and Nancy Mack

Part One: We Define Theory

J: Rhetoricians sometimes say that composition cannot hope to become a credible discipline because classroom teachers are atheoretical—that to become a mature discipline, we need to have "theory for theory's sake." I would counter that this type of thinking itself perpetuates the dichotomy between theory and practice. One of the worst side-effects of this false assumption is that teachers become disenfranchised from theory. Thus, the disparity grows between those who contemplate theory from on high and those who labor in the classroom below.

N: And, of course, teachers are anything but atheoretical. Even unconsciously, a teacher's action or inaction serves to support a particular theoretical stance toward a discipline. Everyday acts such as the selection of a textbook or a particular method have theoretical associations. In this way, even the smallest classroom decision is a political act because it aligns itself with a particular theoretical perspective which in turn is in harmony with a particular worldview. All textbooks, curricula, and teaching materials come prepackaged with various theories and worldviews.

J: But it seems to me that there really isn't much choice when it comes to different types of textbooks, methodologies, curricula.

N: I'm afraid I would have to agree with you. Composition teachers constantly decry how the textbooks for the most part are carbon copies of each other. I doubt that what passes for the new "composing process" is actually any different from the old "composition product" merchandise.

J: We need some specifics here.

N: Peer editing is a good one. Like most revision activities, it still focuses on the product. The majority of class time is not spent discussing each person's individual composing process but rather working on error reduction in the text. Worse, in those classrooms where process is discussed, the students too often are being indoctrinated into the official process sanctioned by the teacher.

J: Times have not changed much.

N: During my undergraduate days, I had to turn in mandatory outlines with each essay, while the composition students of this decade have to turn in "jot lists," "freewrites," "clusters," or whatever is currently fashionable. And prewriting, like revision, itself has become little more than another product which must be manufactured by the composition student.

J: In too many classrooms the new emphasis on "process" has served to increase the number of "products," usually four per essay (prewrite, first draft, revision, and edited final copy) while the old product camp only required one, the final draft. The difference between "product" and "process" then becomes more a matter of quantity than quality—just more of the same.

N: False consciousness makes the teacher believe there really is a choice to be made when selecting one textbook over another, and false consciousness may be making us believe that the composing process methodology is a radical improvement from the traditional product approach.

J: Can we say that teachers are not so much atheoretical as they are unconsciously theoretical? Any theory anywhere is to an extent shaped by the ideology of a given milieu. An individual's socialization into one or another order entails an internalization of the dominant worldview which maintains the staus quo. For a theory to gain widespread acceptance, it must be compatible with that worldview. Such theories are accepted uncritically and thus come to seem more a matter of common sense than of logic. In our culture, we prefer theories which maintain a view of reality that is static, "neutral," predictable and, ultimately, controllable.

N: This character of theory explains why worldviews do not change quickly; history documents that there are long periods between revolutions. Gramsci is helpful in understanding this point because he shows how hegemony subtly permeates every social institution; as Raymond Williams puts it, hegemony "saturates" consciousness. It's a little smug, I think, to suppose that a radical paradigm shift can be heralded every few years—as if such shifts were accomplished as simply as one shifts gears on a car.

J: Whether we wish to acknowledge it or not, the reigning worldview of this century is positivism. To assert that positivism is a philosophical position which died in Vienna almost fifty years ago is to take a positivistic stance toward positivism. Even those of us who desire changes can hardly conceive of those changes in any other than positivistic terms.

N: Gramsci knew that this was why language has so much to do with the very beginning of change. And Bakhtin stated that language is the site of class struggle, necessarily the seat of controversy. It's as if a competing worldview has to first change the meanings of the old words or coin new ones in order for revolution to take place. The true revolutionist also has to be a poet, in that sense.

J: We'd better be careful here because the word *revolution* is such an explosive one. As Bakhtin would say, it is charged with voices from the past.

N: I'm not so leery of the word *revolution* any more. After reading Vygotsky, Gramsci, and Freire, revolution almost becomes a commonplace. Take Vygotsky, for example. Even though Vygotsky could enter academia only because the Russian revolution for a time opened up positions for marginalized groups, in this case for Jewish people, revolution is built into Vygotsky's theory of learning and development. Vygotsky argues that learning results from the interaction between spontaneous and scientific concepts. In this dialectical struggle, learning itself becomes a revolutionary act of change rather than simply an assimilation of given facts. For me, this revolution can even be viewed as the development of critical thinking that Ira Shor talks about and that Freire calls *transformation*.

J: A reader may find it contradictory for us to talk one moment about how people are socialized into the reigning worldview and in the next to speak so easily about the ability to transform society.

N: This giant leap is the difference between despair and possibility.

J: To oversimplify, each individual is necessarily socialized into the dominant worldview by the simple act of living in a given society at a specific time. However, that individual's ability to reflect about his or her activity is the motive to act upon and change society. Again, the concept of hegemony is useful.

N: Yes. But we need to be careful. Hegemony is a complex concept that the new sociology of education people have run into the ground. Giroux and Apple consistently use hegemony in only a negative way to represent the subtle yet incomplete socialization of the masses into domination by the elite class. This interpretation is in direct conflict with Gramsci's major discussion of the potential of hegemony as a positive social process which

the working class could use to gain political power. Gramsci explained how an "organic crisis" could develop in the ruling class's hegemony which would set the stage for the construction of an alternative hegemony by the working class. In order to succeed, the working class would have to build a more representative form of consensual rule. Gramsci outlined three clear steps in this process: the first is a form of economic affiliation, the second is the development of class consciousness, and the third calls for affiliation between classes because of mutual intellectual and moral concerns. For Gramsci, social change could only be reached through the development of the working class's critical consciousness. Gramsci's more militant critics parodied him as believing that the workers could think themselves into a revolution. The misinterpretation of the social process of hegemony ignores Gramsci's dedication to change through education. Gramsci felt that it was necessary for every person to be a philosopher.

J: Then theory is made in the streets?

N: The issue really isn't where theory is constructed but rather the relation any theory has to the reigning worldview.

J: Then theory building should be a necessary part of being an active member of society? Ah. . . , I can imagine the curriculum now: the students memorize a new theory every week!

N: There's a significant difference in the mental activity needed to memorize someone else's theory and that needed to create and contemplate one's own theory.

J: It's exactly this type of thinking that generally is absent from student writing. They find reflection so hard.

N: Are you surprised? In our culture, a child's first exposure to "serious" writing is copying. The student is later directed to copy longer pieces from encyclopedias. These pieces are then labeled "reports." It's no wonder that the conscientious student adopts the voice of the encyclopedia as learned writing.

J: We have been discussing a competing worldview here without naming it. Positivism makes writing into a skill, and the skill of skills is copying, be it words out of an encyclopedia or "forms" like the five paragraph All-American-Flag-Waving-Theme or ideas. In contrast to the positivism stands a dialectical worldview in which the world is seen as historically in continual flux and development. It's the historical and social characteristics of the dialectical worldview which are probably least understood, least understandable in a positivistic culture.

N: For one thing, considering the historical nature of reality does not restrict analysis to what has transpired in the past: on the contrary, by acknowledging the historical nature of human beings, the dialectical worldview opens up the possiblity that we can create history. The dialectical notion of praxis underscores the active role of the individual in society. Praxis is only possible when all societal relations are made problematic. We can transform society by means of authentic action, guided by critical analysis.

J: That's why theory-building is part of the individual's process of seeking praxis. *Theory* comes from the Greek root implying spectacle, view, or, better, vision. And *praxis* names the dynamics of the process, the interdependence of theory and practice, of action and reflection.

N: This connection between theory and everyday life is an important one to you.

J: Yes, it goes back to that false assumption that theory is different from practice, that theory is icing on the cake, or a fashionable outer garment, something supplemental to the "real world," something extra, something only academics are concerned with. But theory is a necessary part of our dialogue with the world.

Part Two: Student Ethnographers

N: Tell how you incorporate theory-building from everyday life into the classroom through student ethnographies.

J: I think of students as theorists, first of all. If we view students as being theoretical by nature, then the job of the composition teacher is to help students see more consciously what they have already long intuitively known. That is why learning, as Plato argued, is a form of remembering. That is why Freire's peasants were amazed that they could learn to read and write so easily. Freire's method does not divorce theory from practice, literacy from life.

N: Yes, Freire was one of the first people who clearly saw the relationship between what we are calling "ethnography" and literacy. Long before Heath or even Wigginton's *Foxfire* project, Freire's literacy teams were using ethnographic methods to encode and display the life of the people.

J: Students don't need to be "given" wholesale theory; they need to be offered the chance to speak their word.

N: How does this make a difference in what you do?

J: I try to get students to develop their spontaneous concepts through their scientific concepts, to use Vygotsky's terms. Activities like writing and close reading—which are already a part of the relations of power in our society—can really help us make sense of our community and our world.

N: Then ethnography isn't for you quite what it is for the anthropologist?

J: Right. Most ethnography is phenomenological: it may be dialectical but it rarely is critical. Contradictions and gaps, especially when they concern power relations, are avoided or papered over in this more traditional ethnography. The focus too often is on what Laura Nader has called studying down rather than studying up. "Let's study those poor people and maybe we can help them" rather than "Let's study the power relations in this community so we together can help ourselves." I am interested in a more critical, rather than phenomenological, ethnography, one more concerned with critical thinking and less concerned with the niceties of applying methodologies.

N: Explain the dialectic here between the individual and society.

J: Writing is always *both* an *individual* and a *social* act. And I mean social in the broadest sense of community power and class struggle, not simply some pretend audience that the teacher concocts for the students to consider in a pre-packaged, pre-formed writing assignment.

N: So every act of composition is an act of ethno-composition in the sense that it is both individual and social?

J: Writing is in fact individual precisely to the extent that it is social. Bakhtin calls this "philosophical anthropology" and that is how I am thinking of it. A voice is raised—can only be raised—with the Other, on the borders of discourse. It's not a matter of writing being individual *versus* social. That's a dangerous positivistic notion that leads to "expressive writing" being separated from "referential writing." And it's not a matter of writing being individual sometimes and social at other times. Rather at the very moment that writing is *most* individual, it's that way because it's *most* social. Think of style. We've made that idea into an individual concept. But who are the writers who "have" style, who raise their voices? They're the very folks who locate themselves in society. They create a style because they've listened to the conversation and because they've insisted on inserting *their* word into the dialogue. Style, then, is necessarily social since it's a matter of a writer "pulling" her or himself out of the Other. Bakhtin says the writer gradually "wrings" his or her words out of the words of the Other.

N: So "I" speak, through others, to others and to myself?

J: Precisely.

N: Are students really able to become "philosophical anthropologists"?

J: I try to encourage students to see that they already have a theory of writing which is part of a theory of the world and they're capable of reflecting on it. As philosphers they're capable of considering present writing activities and composing processes. The class as a community talks a lot about writing experiences, current and past.

N: Students are not dummies. They have internalized a theory of writing from their previous school experiences and from their writing teachers. The moment they begin to reflect on it, they're engaged in praxis. Especially when that theory doesn't really fit with their own experience. For example, students may believe that learning grammar will make them better writers, but if they think about their own experiences with grammar study and drills, and they consider their own writing, there often is a felt contradiction.

J: Yes, and it's exactly this kind of contradiction that furthers critical thinking—real critical thinking, not this gibberish that is today passing for it.

N: This current fad for "critical thinking" in the narrow sense makes a problem-posing method into a problem-solving methodology. But where does ethnography enter?

J: Ethnography is "people writing." It ties together life and literacy. Students write about the community that itself produces the cultural activity of writing. In my writing courses, I talk very briefly about ethnography, of its tradition in anthropology; we read a few short articles about it and then I send the students out to find a site, a group of people that views itself as a community. I ask students to participate in that community—watching, listening, asking questions, and keeping records of all of this. Students find it relatively easy to generate ten pages of notes a week, after spending at least three hours in the field. Then I ask them to respond/reflect on the opposite page across from the original notes. The double entry notebook is inserted into ethnographic research.

N: So how long do students do this fieldwork?

J: It varies. I've gone from three weeks to six weeks; it could easily become a semester long project in a research writing course. Currently I find about five weeks of field research to be about right.

N: And what do you do when they're doing their fieldwork?

J: I meet with each student in conference, checking their notes. The best method I've discovered for quick and accurate evaluation of student progress is the double entry notebook. By especially reading over the reflection pages, you can tell immediately what level the student is at. I encourage them to do more reflecting and wondering. I listen to the problems they have. Basically I'm there if they need me.

N: How much instruction on field methods do you give students?

J: Hardly any at all. I'm very suspicious of researchers who make ethnography into a series of steps with given procedures. I tell students that the point of ethnography is to try to see the world from the point of view of the insider, the community member. The people in the community become the teachers. They are the experts. The students are to try to understand the community member's perspective and then try to capture that life in the word. A tricky transition, to be sure—from life to word. But the one central to writing.

N: So you teach by the total immersion method?

J: Yes. I want the students to teach themselves, as much as possible. And technically speaking, the first "rule" of ethnographic writing is that the form and substance of the final report is dictated first of all by the way things are at the site. I'm not at the site; I don't know it as well as the ethnographer. The students are the experts. It's they who need to determine what is important and how to say that and how to put it together into a paper.

N: Doesn't this cause student anxiety?

J: Some. But I try to monitor things through these weekly conferences. If anxiety is too high—students are blocking, feeling paralyzed; if they can't observe or write, then I intervene. But I really try to weather the storm. My experience has been, the less I say at this point, the less I tell students what their final papers should look like, the better those papers turn out.

N: Our students' heads are so filled with the voices of authority and those voices sometimes are so strong, they make *us* do things that we really do *not* want to do. Those

authoritarian voices force those latent voices within us to take over, if we aren't vigilant.

J: One compromise measure—I put several years' worth of student ethnographies on reserve in the library, as well as a few books about ethnographic fieldwork.

N: So you keep all of these final papers?

J: Oh yes. As a matter of fact, the ethnographies from each class are gathered into a class book and that book, titled by the students themselves, becomes our textbook for several weeks. We all read all of these papers. We discuss the field experience that went into them. We discuss the themes that arise—and these vary each term, which is good for me! Still, some themes are constant. For example, students are amazed to discover, once people understand the nature of the project, how talkative most "informants" are. There almost seems to be a national deficiency in dialogue. People need to talk, they want to talk. People are hungry for dialogue. Yet there are so few opportunities.

N: After you discuss such themes, what happens?

J: I ask the students to write a paper about these papers, citing them and quoting them as sources of information.

N: So you legitimate student knowledge?

J: I try to. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. But I think we writing teachers need to become more comfortable with struggle in our classrooms and in our own heads.

N: There's always a danger in saying what we do in the classroom. Other teachers might do *exactly* what we say when, in fact, we never do the same thing twice! And often by external criteria, a class may appear a failure. But you just never really know for sure. Teaching composition is less a matter of conducting specific exercises in a specific sequence than it is developing an awareness. Just as our words tell us where to go next when we write, so too the response to the activity tells us where we will go next in the classroom. It's a dialectic. Teaching writing is as much a forming/thinking process as writing is.

J: I find that especially interesting considering the present situation in our discipline. We find a good deal of what amounts to syllabus exchanging. I suppose that's legitimate if it's done in the right spirit. But many "establishment" compositionists seem to have suddenly gotten very concerned about all the new directions the field is taking. The continual debate about whether or not composition is, or can become, a "discipline" usually signals this concern. Also the interminable argument about whether some writing—grocery lists, business letters, memoranda—might entail only the encoding rather than the making of meaning is one more sign of the discomfort some compositionists seem to feel. They seem worried about what might happen when we discover that *all* writing is heuristic.

N: Increasingly, I get the feeling that the composition establishment senses that things are getting out of control—which means getting out of *their* control. So much is going on in so many directions, some feel the center—if there ever was one—is not holding.

J: Bakhtin would see things differently. Teachers are raising their voices. The lively forces of dispersion, dissemination, diffusion—the forces of life—are beginning to counterbalance the prevailing monologue.

N: Dialogue perhaps is beginning.

J: And Bakhtin says, "If we anticipate nothing from the word, if we know ahead of time everything that it can say, it departs from the dialogue and is reified."

Part Three: Teachers as Ethnographers

J: I often wonder why teachers sometimes allow themselves to be excluded from the pursuit of theory.

N: There are many reasons for this, but perhaps one institutional reason is that the privilege to do research has traditionally been bestowed on one elite group. It almost seems inconceivable to me that this power to be a researcher will ever be given to the classroom teacher.

J: This separation of roles puts the university researcher at a great disadvantage. The researcher must gather data from a totally unfamiliar context. Without everyday experience in the classroom, the researcher can't even begin to formulate useful research questions. The researcher can do little more than fictionalize the classroom experience. Classroom teachers find such studies unconnected with their everyday reality, useless.

N: An interesting aside to this point is that the words "teacher" and "researcher" are mutually exclusive in our culture. In order to discuss the teacher doing classroom research, one must speak of "teacher-researcher"...

J: . . . which still carries the connotation that the teacher is doing something which is not normally a part of the teacher's role.

N: Currently the term "action research" is being used to designate studies that are conducted by classroom teachers.

J: And many "researchers" are greatly opposed to action research. They argue that the results are often insignificant at best, wrong at worst.

N: But to be significant, a research study must be conceived out of the everyday, classroom life of the teacher. The teacher's personal motive for conducting the study is what can make all the difference. A research study will only be an act of praxis if the teacher determines what is being studied and what the desired transformation will be. That difference is largely one of power.

J: We tend to overlook the politics behind what is and what is not researched. Certain groups receive specific benefits if a topic is viewed as a problem.

N: For instance, whenever declining writing abilities are labeled as a crisis by the media, certain groups stand to profit. More specifically, if a major oil company funds a college composition research project, what will be studied? To whose advantage would it be if writing sentences could become a binary science of selecting an answer rather than the complex art of making meaning?

J: But how are the results different when teachers do the research? Why don't you tell us about your work with action research? Tell us about your experiences working with teachers who design and conduct their own research studies.

N: For four consecutive quarters, I had the great good fortune to work with a group of Columbus (Ohio) public school teachers who were interested in doing research about the language of middle school students.

J: How much preparation in research methodology did the teachers have before they started their studies?

N: Not much. We read Heath's *Ways with Words* and a short monograph Heath did about a collaborative study involving letter writing. These readings encouraged insightful thinking about language study and provided an introduction to ethnography as a methodology. We also read Dixie Goswami's article about action research. The teachers then considered what type of project they wished to study with their own students.

J: What types of topics did the teachers explore?

N: There was a wide range of topics. Everything from raps to suicide received attention. Several teachers modeled their studies after Heath and Branscomb, using a student-to-student pen pal context. However, each teacher had a different motive for research. One wanted her students to correspond with older students in order to study how the younger students might model the rhetorical strategies of oral composing while letter writing. Still another had his students correspond with students from a higher social class in order to study his students' perceptions.

J: Some teachers asked their students to do ethnographies?

N: Yes. And they were fun. Some teachers had their students do simple folklore collection projects on raps. Some created slang dictionaries. The quality of the work was impressive. One teacher revealed a vast knowledge of the cultural background of her students. Another discovered raps and jumprope songs as rich language activities. One teacher found that though she had to deal with suicide among middle school students, she was not getting adequate support from the administration or from the counselors. Sharon Dorsey worked with English teachers for her dissertation research, and I was particularly impressed with her insights about revision, computers, student ownership of texts.

J: *Ownership* was a key word. Ownership makes all the difference for the student when writing and for the teacher when researching.

N: There's an interesting connection between the two. For the students writing their own ethnography, there was a dramatic point when they assumed ownership for publication. Dorsey relates an incident during a class meeting when the students fought to investigate certain topics and not others. And remarkably, while looking at a typed copy of the final draft, one student had a tantrum about a missing comma in his text, while previously this particular student would never have cared whether he even had one comma on any of his papers.

J: Was the question of ownership important to teachers, as well?

N: Yes. When the writer or researcher both assume ownership for a particular task, then that task can become part of that person's struggle to reach praxis. In other words, writing and researching can be liberatory acts. It isn't just a matter of getting a sincere motive before one begins, because the motive for the task itself evolves or even grows from the task itself. In order for writing and researching to be liberatory, there has to be a dialectic between action and reflection. I really began to understand this when I tried to determine how the movement goes back and forth between the two. Through rereading Freire, I found that his personal efforts to reach praxis began first with an action. He readily points out that his first actions were failures, as when he tried to teach his cook how to read. Through reflection upon this action, he was able to formulate a plan for revised action and that was the seed of his literacy program.

J: Is the relation between action and reflection always this cyclic: action, reflection, action, reflection, and so on?

N: Not quite. The movement is never this simplistic or this organized; it is constant, jumping back and forth within seconds. The reflection seems to be more definitive and deliberative in the person who is new to this process. It becomes more rapid as one learns to analyze the significance of one's own actions.

J: Then reflection is not a simplistic skill that one can easily teach someone. What activities seem to foster the teachers' reflections?

N: This critical reflection seems to be fostered by talk, by dialogue in the deepest sense of that word. When the

teachers truly talked with one another, both formally and informally in the seminar group, the dialogue was always problem-posing, tentative, exploratory.

J: Didn't the teachers direct the dialogue to you rather than toward each other?

N: Yes, sometimes. Their old need for an authority figure again. The teachers often wanted me to tell them exactly what to do, how to do it, and what it all meant. But this insecurity was soon transformed by their excitement about what was happening in their own classrooms, and true dialogue emerged.

J: Well, what did you do?

N: Of course I was supportive. But more importantly I wanted them to see themselves as a source of answers. I found my greatest value to the group was to continually point out to them how significant their insights were. I'd be jumping in my seat saying "Write that down! Put that in your study!" It's as if these teachers would share these anecdotes and insights privately, but they never saw them as valuable to others.

J: To use Bakhtin's language, these teachers discovered that "The Other is my friend." Through the Other, I come to know myself. In fact, we construct our Self and our world in and through Dialogue.

Part Four: Writing Dialogically

J: This composition was a bit trickier to put together than I had first anticipated.

N: It certainly would have been easier if we had simply tape recorded, and then transcribed, spliced and cut.

J: Or we could have written separate monologues and cut and pasted. Sort of monologues in twos. That is what is normally done in so-called collaborative projects.

N: But I think by our attempt to write dialogically, we accomplished much more than we would have if we had taken an easier route.

J: That's for sure. This dialogue, immersed as it is in fifteen years of community and study, and arising out of a dozen meetings and a hundred pages of text and notes, is historical and dialectic itself. We sure didn't know exactly how it would turn out when we started it.

N: In a way, you might say we were attempting to create a new genre—one that goes beyond the old oral versus written, or monologue versus dialogue, dichotomies.

J: Yes, and whether or not we achieved that, I have learned more about language in doing this than in any other writing project. We could almost write a book about our writing of this dialogue!

N: Yes. For one thing, I think we discovered that even on a personal level, dialogue is a lot more involved with power than most of us at first believe.

J: That certainly was evident when we went through this dialogue, line by line, in what amounted to negotiations. "I will accept this line if you allow me to have that one." Or "This has got to stay. It is really *very* important to me."

N: It was fascinating that we had so much difficulty at the very first dividing up the voices. We finally agreed to temporarily just write "I" and "Other." Then towards the end we made the voices more consistent with who we are as well as with our overarching themes. Sometimes the process was a bit painful, but it was always interesting to see what one person found problematic or liked and what the other didn't—even after all those talks and notetaking sessions. It was always new. I particularly liked the way that talk generated ideas that re-emerged in the writing which, when read, generated more ideas for our talks.

J: It was curious that we often had more difficulty with single words than with entire sections. We both learned more about each other's style in this process than we did after reading hundreds of pages of other writing.

N: As an attempt at a new genre, this dialogue has helped us redefine our idea of unity. I liked the way, almost without effort, that themes naturally arose and key repetitions came about almost as if there was also unconscious collaboration, which I suppose there was. No one that I know has even begun to look at these kinds of issues in "composition research."

J: The "clicking" was almost palpable when it occurred.

N: And the dialogue goes on. This is just a temporary stopping, certainly not an ending. Other voices are already being raised. I hear them quite clearly. This "ending" is actually just a pause...

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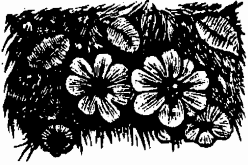
For those interested in joining the dialogue (and in tracking down some of our voices in the process) we recommend the following: M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas P., 1986); *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971); Nancy Mack, *Action Research: Example Research Projects by Columbus Public Teachers with the Ohio State University* (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University, Education Theory and Practice, 1985); Ira Shor and Paulo Freire, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey, 1987); Lev Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1986).



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