Journal of Basic Writing

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Crossing Academic Cultures:
A Rubric for Students and Teachers
Mark T. Williams and Gladys Garcia

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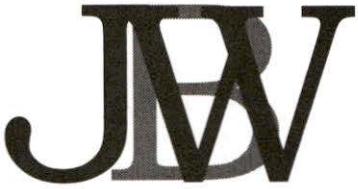

Journal of Basic Writing

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 1 SPRING 2005

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CALL FOR ARTICLES

We welcome manuscripts of 15-25 pages, double spaced, on topics related to basic and ESL writing, broadly interpreted. Submissions should follow current MLA guidelines. Manuscripts are refereed anonymously. To assure impartial review, include name(s), affiliation(s), mailing and e-mail addresses, and a short biographical note for publication on the cover page *only*. The second page should include the title but no author identification, an abstract of about 150 words, and a list of 4-5 key words. Endnotes should be kept to a minimum. It is the author's responsibility to obtain permission for including excerpts from student writing.

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All manuscripts must focus clearly on basic writing and must add substantively to the existing literature. We seek manuscripts that are original, stimulating, well-grounded in theory, and clearly related to practice. Work that reiterates what is known or work previously published will not be considered.

We invite authors to write about such matters as classroom practices in relation to basic-writing or second-language theory; cognitive and rhetorical theories and their relation to basic writing; social, psychological, and cultural implications of literacy; discourse theory; grammar, spelling, and error analysis; linguistics; computers and new technologies in basic writing; assessment and evaluation; writing center practices; teaching logs and the development of new methodologies; and cross-disciplinary studies combining basic writing with psychology, anthropology, journalism, and art. We publish observational studies as well as theoretical discussions on relationships between basic writing and reading, or the study of literature, or speech, or listening. The term "basic writer" is used with wide diversity today, sometimes referring to a student from a highly oral tradition with little experience in writing academic discourse, and sometimes referring to a student whose academic writing is fluent but otherwise deficient. To help readers, therefore, authors should describe clearly the student population which they are discussing.

We particularly encourage a *variety* of manuscripts: speculative discussions which venture fresh interpretations; essays which draw heavily on student writing as supportive evidence for new observations; research reports, written in non-technical language, which offer observations previously unknown or unsubstantiated; and collaborative writings which provocatively debate more than one side of a central controversy.

EDITORS' COLUMN

In its first issues, more than a quarter century ago, *JBW* was organized by theme: "Error" was the very first, followed by "Courses," "Applications," and "Programs," among others. "Uses of Grammar" proved so popular that it sold out, and even our own archive has a gap where that issue belongs. These early issues convey not only the excitement of a new and challenging enterprise offering the compelling possibility of genuine social change, but also a sense of solidity now long gone from most serious work as the field has moved from basic skills through process to post process. For nearly twenty years, *JBW* editors have eschewed pre-determined themes and have instead used this column to trace connections among essays that were randomly submitted and randomly selected.

This enterprise is not entirely haphazard, however, for particular questions, terms, and concepts have currency in the field at any one time. Key authors and writings provide a conceptual framework or set of touchstone references that recur again and again. Although a verifying search has not been conducted, it seems entirely safe to claim that no issue of *JBW* has been without at least one essay that cites Mina Shaughnessy. Indeed, the first issue of *JBW* that fails to have any reference to *Errors and Expectations* or "Diving In" will mark a milestone not only in the history of this journal but in the field of Basic Writing. Similarly, Mary Louise Pratt's "Arts of the Contact Zone," a touchstone since it first appeared in *Profession 91* in 1991, continues to speak so tellingly that four of the five articles in this issue cite it. Bartholomae, Bizzell, Bishop, Smitherman, Villanueva, and a list of other familiar—powerful—names provide language, concepts, or images that authors continue to quote, stand on, or contest.

Moreover, submissions to journals are often prompted by questions or concerns that arise contemporaneously across colleges and universities. In rereading the essays to prepare these introductions, we sometimes feel as if we are checking the pulse of the field: Where are the tensions? The complacencies? How have the lines shifted? Writing critically about critical pedagogy, fluid contact zones, and shifting political fortunes, authors sometimes convey the impression that the only certainty in Basic Writing is that everything is at all times contested. A more accurate statement, however, might be that everything will at some time be contested. This interest on the part of authors, who are after all academics, in the evidently problematic—or the about to be problematized—masks the presence of the currently uncontested, the sometimes unacknowledged common ground.

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One speaks of common ground only with considerable trepidation, though, lest that bit that currently provides a toehold should suddenly become the field upon which the next contest rages. Still, the interest in cultural contexts of literacy in some way connects all of the articles in this issue, as it continues to be a major preoccupation in the field. So too, whatever their interest in the matters of language, convention, and academic discourse, the authors represented here all clearly fall within the group of compositionists who view writing less as a set of skills than as a critical and communicative act mediated in contexts of cultural complexity.

Both Wendy Ryden and Caleb Corkery focus on the literacy narrative, a current pedagogical staple in many BW classrooms. In "Conflicted Literacy: Frederick Douglass's Critical Model" Ryden challenges readings of Douglass that place his story in the genre of "literacy myth," in which the acquisition of literacy inexorably leads the protagonist to success, respect, and perhaps fame. She argues that a critical reading of this central literacy narrative must consider "the conflicted conditions under which [Douglass's literacy] was acquired." Douglass, argues Ryden, illustrates quite deliberately that "literacy devoid of a critical dimension is insufficient to produce the liberatory effects often attributed to it." Caleb Corkery, in "Literacy Narratives and Confidence Building in the Writing Classroom," reviews the potential pedagogical benefits of reading and writing literacy narratives, but provides a significant caveat about students, especially those from cultures celebrating orality, who may find the literacy narrative alienating both because of the insider status of the narrator and because speech so often is reduced to being merely a springboard for writing.

Jeffrey Maxson also addresses the distance between students and academic discourse and the power dynamics of the classroom in "'Government of Da Peeps, for Da Peeps, and by Da Peeps': Revisiting the Contact Zone." Using assignments requiring translation and parody, Maxson invites students to reposition themselves in relation to the contact zone, academic discourse, and their instructors.

In "Not Just Anywhere, Anywhen: Mapping Change through Studio Work" John Paul Tassoni and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson examine a different set of power relationships, as they recount an attempt to redirect the way that basic writing instruction takes place in a large state university. Struggling to secure a place in the complex and far from transparent structure of writing at their multi-campus institution, Tassoni and Lewiecki-Wilson are witness to the confusing and even confounding situations experienced by the students they encounter through their studio work, who labor to construe ambiguous assignments, vague or contradictory expectations, and incomprehensible teacher comments.

Mark T. Williams and Gladys Garcia attempt to map a different kind of change in "Crossing Academic Cultures: A Rubric for Students and Teachers." Their project is to move students from unexamined "commonplaces" to increasingly complicated and critical assessments, aided by a rubric that can be used to represent either multiple factors in a single student's performance or a range of possible student positions in the process. At the same time, the rubric traces an arc connecting Basic Writing in its agenda and its methodology to all of the writing that follows it.

That Basic Writing is, in fact, of a piece with the writing to come, rather than its prelude, has been—to borrow a phrase from Williams and Garcia—a "commonplace" since Shaughnessy. It is hardly a matter for complacency, however. So much of the work that we do is laboring to uncover all that is happening when a writer produces a text—the unacknowledged dialogues, the veiled contexts, the protean process(es), the tacit conventions of form and language and logic. And "Error," this journal's first theme, which seemed so solid and clear to *JBW*'s early readers, strikes today's readers (and editors) as perhaps the most contingent and contested ground of all.

— **Bonne August** and **Rebecca Mlynarczyk**

Conflicted Literacy: Frederick Douglass's Critical Model

Wendy Ryden

ABSTRACT: Literacy narratives have been pedagogically important in writing instruction, particularly in the basic writing class, as a means for students to interrogate the politics of language and education and thus to establish a critical connection to writing. But the literacy narrative as a critical genre is problematic. Such narratives often are absorbed by and promote the "literacy myth," a culturally conservative belief in the unqualified developmental power of literacy. Frederick Douglass's 1845 Narrative *is often a major textual site of perpetuating such ideology. Minority and working class students especially are asked to understand the importance of reading and writing to their own intellectual and cultural development by absorbing the "lesson" of Douglass's fight to acquire literacy. But a close reading of his text reveals a more complicated, radical notion of literacy acquisition than is often credited to Douglass. This essay explores the rhetoric of literacy narratives and the critical model that Douglass offers.*

> . . . I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out.
>
> —Frederick Douglass (42)

> I feel education is important. Everyone should do good and also try their best. Nobody should not take advantage of education. Some people want to go to school, but they can't. Education is important for our future.
>
> —A high school student after reading *Narrative of the Life of Douglass* (quoted in Adisa 42)

The literacy narrative, as a college writing assignment, especially in basic writing and ESL classes, can help students interrogate the public placement of their private selves through a critical examination of literacy and educational practices. According to Wendy Bishop, composing such narratives can provide "a place where you can look at and critique your schooling and challenge your education" (67). Students may not only arrive at a more critical understanding of these practices through a reading of

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their own literacy acquisition, but they may also come to see their literate selves as socially inflected and thus determined by or resistant to prevailing standards of literacy and education. Advocates of the literacy narrative, such as Mary Soliday, for example, attribute critical pedagogical properties to the first-person narrative investigation of language and literacy, as students create representations of their experience for analysis and location in a greater cultural narrative. Pursuing this line of narrative inquiry can lead students to a critical appreciation of the political and social role of language in general. At its best, the literacy narrative assignment can accomplish what Mary Jane Dickerson holds out as possible for student autobiography in general:

> when students develop a voice they can identify as their own through its embodiment in a piece of writing that recreates their world and those voices that inhabit that world, they are well on their way toward the empowerment that enables them to meet the constant challenges of reading and writing their own histories and those written by others. (140)

But literacy narratives produced by students can certainly fall short of this ascribed potential. As Smit points out, the literacy autobiography is chiefly a school genre, insufficiently modeled outside the classroom in professional works except as portions of larger developmental narratives. Instead of critiquing the structures in which literacy acquisition is embedded, students, in an effort to decipher this genre, graft their stories onto an existing cultural narrative with which they *are* familiar: what Eldred and Mortensen call "the literacy myth" and the "romanticized power of education" where "a flower girl can become a duchess through education" (515). Defining the literacy myth as "the easy and unfounded assumption that better literacy . . . leads to economic development, cultural progress, and individual improvement" (512), they observe that the cultural "promises of literacy are so great and so compelling that it seems impossible to argue against it" and that "Like many other professions, ours (English studies) is inspired by a certain kind of disciplinary romance" (515). Daniel J. Royer, building on the work of Harvey Graff and especially Deborah Brandt's emphasis on literacy as a communal, intersubjective activity, adds that "the myth includes not only the mistaken assumption that literacy begets economic freedom, but also the fallacy that literate persons think better than do non-literate persons" and that literacy is largely a matter of individual development. Through the literacy myth, we place faith in the abstraction that language, like knowledge,

is empowering without asking how, for whom, and at whose expense this empowerment occurs.

Students, in an attempt to read their teacherly audience, may produce narratives that reaffirm this belief in humanistic development through writing and reading. Wendy Bishop's volume *The Subject Is Reading* provides examples of literacy narratives that illustrate how college students often interpret the genre. For example, one student concludes her story about her educational development with:

> Since I have started reading more, I have found that reading makes me a more intelligent person and has helped improve my writing skills. I feel that reading, depending on what type of reading it is, makes me think and be more creative with my mind.... I have now learned that reading is not something to be afraid of because I can be taken into a whole different world with reading. (25)

Another student, who is diagnosed dyslexic, observes that "Looking back on the days I had to learn to read, I realized that I learned a lot more than just reading. I learned to struggle and survive" (35). Even a student who has irreverently written of his hatred for reading writes of his redemption:

> Now I've come to realize that reading, as well as studying the text, is the only thing that can help me succeed on the tests. This is not to say that my avoidance of reading did nothing for me. On the contrary, I believe it has helped me to achieve the level of reading that I now enjoy. I just realize that now it is time for a completely different approach: doing it right the first time. (13)

Among the texts that may serve as models for literacy and educational narratives in the classroom is the 1845 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, a favorite reading selection of multiculturalists and compositionists who wish to draw students' attention to the importance of literacy in intellectual development.[1] Indeed many teachers credit Douglass's 1845 text with enormous pedagogical and self-actualizing potential, seeing it as a means to bring out for their students "the best of who we are and what we can become" (Brown x). The *Narrative* is undoubtedly an extraordinary text and students certainly benefit by being acquainted with Douglass's work, yet I believe that Douglass's critical presentation of literacy acquisition is often obscured and absorbed by the larger prevailing cultural narrative of the

literacy myth as identified by Eldred and Mortensen and others. Specifically, I question the representation by teachers and students alike of Douglass's account of his attainment of literacy. Simplifications and misreadings of these crucial passages, I maintain, attest to the pervasiveness of the literacy myth and its coloring of our interpretive lenses with regard to this text. Looking at the way instructors teach and students respond to Douglass can provide insight into the way students experience requests to write about their own literacy and education.

While in general as scholars and teachers we must always contend with the gap between what our scholarship unearths and what we are able to help students understand in the classroom, the teaching of Douglass seems in particular to exemplify this pedagogical problem as instructors work towards problematizing the rhetorical construction of Douglass's autobiographies. In the MLA volume on *Approaches to Teaching Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, James C. Hall tells us in his introduction that he is "interested in getting students to experience the narrative as a language act grounded within a complex cultural history and subject to a particular set of material and interpersonal relations" (15). Indeed much of the critical work on Douglass has focused on just how linguistically complex and contradictory his autobiographical acts are. For example, building on the seminal criticism of Houston Baker and Henry Louis Gates, who identified the paradoxical attempts of Douglass to author himself through appropriation of the Master's language, Goddu and Smith sum up Douglass's dilemma: "The linguistic and expressive situation of Douglass's self-writings produces a peculiar form of bondage and freedom. As in any scene of writing, language can betray" (840) for "by seizing the white word, does Douglass become inscribed in it?" Douglass's work is a testament to "the difficulty of retaining his autonomy in a world ordered by an alien word" (823), where he attempts to comply with the dialectical and sometimes conflicting rhetorical purposes of creating the literate self and representing that self to an abolitionist audience through the genre of the slave narrative. In his autobiographical endeavors, "Douglass is placed as speaking subject and replaced, displaced as speaking subject and placed again" (Wardrop 657). Lisa Sisco describes Douglass's "definitions of literacy" as "shifting" as he demonstrates an "understanding of literacy as a system of self-representation . . . and as an avenue for political representation as he attempts *to speak and write* for an oppressed people without alienating his white readership" (213). Other critics, such as Leverenz, Bergner, and Wallace have further identified the overdetermined nature of Douglass's self-representation in relation to language by excavating the connection

between identity formation and gender in the construction of masculinity under the slavocracy.

The critical studies underscoring the complexities that propel the *Narrative* are myriad, yet teachers find that students tend to read the work transparently. Lindon Barrett, in his discussion of Douglass, describes the difficulty of teaching the slave narrative: "Expecting to hit experiential bedrock, students overlook the acts of textual representation with which they are confronted" (31). Indeed many of the essayists in the MLA *Approaches to Teaching the Narrative* emphasize teaching Douglass's rhetorical complexity (such as Keith D. Miller's and Ruth Ellen Kocher's urging that "in approaching the *Narrative*, teachers and students must consider its resplendent place within Douglass's larger rhetorical tapestry and its interargumentative relation to the rest of that tapestry" [81-82]) even as they acknowledge the difficulty of doing so. "One problem the teacher of Douglass's *Narrative* faces," writes John Ernest "is that many students are all too ready to believe that they can understand both the book and its world" (110) and that there is a temptation on the part of teachers to "present Douglass's *Narrative* as a book that speaks for itself" (111). Although not a contributor to the MLA volume, Mark Higbee echoes the above observations in his "Frederick Douglass and Today's College Classroom" when he writes that "Most of my students have real difficulty recognizing that the *Narrative* . . . is constructed to tell a story that serves specific purposes" (47) and that the "accessible and passionate prose can induce readers to overlook the book's full complexity" (46).

Higbee and the contributors to the MLA's *Approaches* (Hall) are largely concerned with the pedagogical issues that arise when teaching the *Narrative* as a literary text. Barrett, for example, sees the teaching of the slave narrative as an opportunity for readers to "consider race on some level as a discursively mediated phenomenon and apparatus. Students must be led to understand that a central lesson to be gleaned . . . is the way in which race 'organizes a range of discursive practices' [Chay 639]" (31). But as critics have argued that race and gender are important constructs to understand in Douglass's work, so have they argued for a similar treatment of his relationship to literacy. It follows, then, that when emphasized as a literacy narrative, we should have similar expectations of theoretical richness.

To provide a glimpse into how Douglass translates as a literacy and educational narrative in our students' understanding, I turn to *The Teachers and Writers Guide to Frederick Douglass*. This volume, edited by Wesley Brown, contains descriptions of a range of classrooms in which the *Narrative* is the featured text. Brown tells us in the preface that "Our thinking [in assembling

the collection] was that Douglass's story of 'how a slave was made a man' and the importance of literacy to gaining his freedom might prompt visually oriented young people to look upon the written word as more worthy of their attention" (ix). Elsewhere in the volume Meredith Sue Willis reports that, in a classroom situation, Brown wanted to have a discussion with a group of students of the importance of reading and writing in the life

> of someone to whom it was prohibited—the great value of writing and reading, and how Douglass did it under enormous pressure and at risk of life and limb." He [Brown] wanted to jar the students a little, to have them look at literacy not as a chore, but as something precious, a gift. (92)

Brown evidently sees in the text an occasion for didacticism that is no doubt appealing to many educators and part of their motive for bringing Douglass into the writing class: students who take literacy for granted will read about a man who had to fight for it and, as a result, will be roused from their complacency regarding the written word and its power to uplift. Figured in this way, Douglass's literacy narrative becomes a morality tale, a way of shaming lackadaisical pupils, especially African American and other minority students, into an appreciation for what they have, and at the same time reaffirming our cultural literacy myth.

Many of the essays in Brown's collection stress the importance of reading and writing to personal development, both moral and intellectual. As Alfred E. Prettyman states in his chapter called "Frederick Douglass: A Developing Self," "The ability to write was essential to his [Douglass's] self-development, essential to his true freedom" (83). There is no question that in this text Douglass does indeed configure literacy as essential to his idea of freedom, and certainly this construction warrants scrutiny. In fact, I am suggesting that such scrutiny will yield a more complicated view of literacy and freedom than is often gleaned in the classroom, one that challenges in certain respects the dominant literacy myth. By way of contrast to this more complex reading of Douglass, I now take a closer look at some of the chapters in Brown's collection to further elucidate the way teachers deploy Douglass and the way students receive him. By so doing, I hope to show that we are as often as not working with a truncated understanding of Douglass that is both a reflection and reinscription of dominant views of literacy where "Too often, readers conceive literacy . . . as an emancipating skill which leverages the slave out of bondage and into freedom" (Royer). These views, as derived

from Douglass and other sources, may impede students' ability to adopt critical stances towards literacy in their own narratives.

In a chapter called "Knowledge Is Power," Lorenzo Thomas describes his successful experiences using the *Narrative* with college students. He tells us that he presents the book to his students as a "gift" that "is precious" in its "ability to whet the appetite for knowledge" (7). In this sentence and in his title, Thomas makes clear that he sees Douglass's text as a celebration of the salubrious effects of literacy and education on the individual. He elaborates:

> [C]ollege students marvel that a man sentenced to illiteracy, a man who literally stole his education, can send them to the dictionary on every other page and startle them with the beautiful logic of his phrasing. This last reaction is the reason that I assign the book. Indeed the appetite for knowledge is the subject of this book. . . . the work is a narrative of self-discovery. Compared to that theme, the author's graphic account of "the gross fraud, wrong, and inhumanity of slavery" is secondary. (2)

I don't think Thomas is wrong in seeing Douglass's story as being about self-discovery or as exceeding the generic boundaries of abolitionist propaganda. As indicated above, literary critics have said as much in their discussions of the relationship between Douglass's self-representation and language. Donald Gibson, for example, has made precisely this claim, noting that Douglass's account is indeed in the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*. Douglass's representation distinguishes itself from other slave narratives, according to Gibson, through its added psychological dimension and, as a result, achieves a breakthrough literary status. Likewise, in his discussion of Douglass's problematic transcendentalism, Terry J. Martin emphasizes the importance of identity formation in the *Narrative* as he sees Douglass coming to the conclusion that "the power of liberation resides essentially within himself alone" (3). Furthermore, the psychoanalytic readings of Bergner and Wallace, for example, implicitly contain Michele Henkel's assessment: "The *Narrative* is as much about identity formation as it is about slavery" (89). While much scholarship has emphasized representation and identity formation, Royer has called into question the tendency of "deep-text" (364) readings of Douglass to pit such formation against social context, as Thomas and others seem to do, and argues instead for "a revised understanding of literacy" in Douglass's narratives that "stresses community and context as essential

ingredients to becoming literate, not as forces that stand over and against an individual's personal authenticity, identity, and autonomy" (372).

What I particularly question in Thomas's identification of Douglass's psychological portrait is its reduction, in relation to conceptions of literacy and empowerment, to "the appetite for knowledge." In making this leap, Thomas elides the nuances in Douglass's portrayal and confines the narrative to the safety of the literacy myth. Thomas goes on to emphasize this view when he cites William McFeeley's description of the effect the *Columbian Orator* had on Douglass: "If he could say words . . . say them correctly, say them beautifully—Frederick could act; he could matter in the world" (3). Likewise in reference to the remediation of Douglass's "inadequate writing skills," Thomas quotes Benjamin Quarles: "this unschooled person had penned his autobiography. Such an achievement furnished an object lesson; it hinted at the infinite potentialities of man in whatever station of life. . ." (4). These assertions match the assumption of "economic development, cultural progress, and individual improvement" (Royer 265) that our literacy myth links to reading and writing, and thus, taken by themselves, such assertions limit the narrative's scope to a romantic homage celebrating the indomitable spirit of the individual against impossible odds.

The tendency in the lessons described in the *Teachers and Writers* volume (Brown) is to present Douglass's experience as universal and emblematic of the human condition in general, an experience that students can identify with by viewing Douglass's hardships metonymically in relation to human suffering and desire. The result is a dilution of Douglass's cultural criticism to favor a decontextualized, developmental narrative.[2] Using the 1845 *Narrative* didactically in the classroom, rendering it "an object lesson," accomplishes the appropriation of Douglass's story to the effect of bolstering liberal conceptions of literacy as a matter of individual struggle and reward. Douglass thus is a heroic figure with iconic status, an example to be emulated. As Charles Kuner writes in "Using Douglass's Narrative as Motivation for Student Writing" (his contribution to the Brown volume), "I show [the students] that they can have better control of their destiny by empowering themselves with better literacy skills" (70), and the *Narrative* "also shows them the link between literacy and personal empowerment, that they, too, can overcome personal obstacles and become the masters of their own fates" (72).

This view of the *Narrative* as "lesson" is underscored in a chapter by Opal Palmer Adisa. Adisa very usefully supplies high school students' written responses to Douglass's words that demonstrate the moralistic way students

receive Douglass as an embodiment of the power of education. Adisa states her purpose for teaching the *Narrative* as follows: "My major objective is to use literature to stir students to write about their own lives so that they might recognize their worth and find more meaningful ways to direct their energies, the way Frederick Douglass did" (35). One student writes the following after reading the *Narrative*:

> I think education is very important, and because my ancestors had to sneak to learn to read and write, I feel that as a young black person, it is my duty to learn everything I can and that people want to teach me. . . . But what makes me mad are those people who don't take advantage of what the teacher tries to teach them. I try to learn everything of whatever is being taught. I really believe that is the only way to succeed in life as a black person. Because one thing they were never able to take was our minds. (42)

That Douglass's achievement was enormous is of course not in dispute, and that he should serve as a role model for African-Americans or anyone else in and of itself is by no means objectionable. David L. Dudley in *Approaches* (Hall) declares that Douglass "is my hero. I invite students to make him their hero too" (137). However, here as elsewhere, a price is paid for the iconic status Douglass is granted, that price being principally the reduction (or perhaps expansion) of the *Narrative* itself to the figure of Douglass as representation of the power of literacy. Jeanne Gunner, building on Foucault's insight of the "author function," defines iconic discourse as operating conservatively "according to certain laws, always in relation to the iconic text and figure" (3). She juxtaposes "iconic discourse" with "critical discourse," deeming the latter to be transgressive and contrasting it with the former. Douglass's assumption of iconic status results in, I believe, a conservative absorption of the depiction of his relationship to literacy as represented in the *Narrative*. The discourse here surrounding Douglass's iconic figure both gives authority to and is bolstered by the literacy myth as defined earlier. This process occurs at the expense of unearthing the critical view of literacy that I believe Douglass's text exposes.

Certain aspects of the *Narrative* do seem in accordance with the cultural belief that equates literacy with unqualified moral and intellectual evolution. As many of the contributors to *The Teachers and Writers Guide* (Brown) note, Douglass grants a significant role to literacy in helping him conceive of himself as a free man. As a result of learning to read, Douglass asserts:

> The silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing. . . . I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm. (43)

Such passages lend credence to the grandiose claims of ennoblement and mind expansion made in the name of literacy. And such a view is consistent with David Leverenz's understanding of Douglass's Emersonian "self-refashioning" into the self-made man who espouses "belief in self-reliance and upward mobility" (126) and an "unswerving advocacy of middle-class individualism and hard work" (129). As Terry Martin notes, "Douglass comes almost literally to embody Emerson's trope of self-reliance" (3).

But despite Leverenz's and Martin's readings of Douglass's individualism (indeed, perhaps it is more accurate to speak, as Gwen Bergner does, of Douglass's "*Commandeering* American myths of self-reliance and heroic rebellion to describe his escape from slavery" [243 emphasis added]), I argue that Douglass's relationship to literacy and freedom, as represented in the 1845 text, is far more complex than what can be allowed for in the literacy myth, even if the "emotional power" of Douglass's prose "can induce some students to resist evaluating the *Narrative* critically" (Higbee 50). Preceding the above passage where Douglass equates literacy with the silver trump of freedom, Douglass describes himself, contrarily, as being in a state of existential despair: "that very discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable anguish" (42). On a psychological level, Douglass's literacy acquisition is an embattled and bittersweet process and a far cry from the liberatory discourse that characterizes popular understandings of knowledge and empowerment. Indeed, at this moment in the story, knowledge disempowers Douglass, as he tells us, "I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity. I have often wished myself a beast. I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile to my own. Any thing, no matter what, to get rid of thinking!" (43). Lisa Sisco, while arguing that for Douglass "literacy is not a monolithic thing" (197), notes at this point in the narrative that "literacy has only further enslaved him" (199). Ironically, by his own account, it is this sense of disempowerment that ultimately leads him out of slavery. Douglass's torment stems from his burgeoning understanding that reading alone is not enough to deliver him from slavery; reading provides "no ladder" (42). In this

sense, it is the realization of the limitations of literacy that spurs Douglass on to his quest for both psychological and material emancipation. Something else, he understands, must happen if he is to become free.

This lack is further emphasized in the recounting of his reading of the *Columbian Orator*. As previously mentioned, William McFeeley interprets Douglass's reaction to the *Orator* as: "If he could say words . . . say them correctly, say them beautifully—Frederick could act; he could matter in the world" (quoted in Thomas 3). Certainly Douglass does credit his reading here with expanding his understanding of the moral abhorrence of slavery. He states that "The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery. . ." (42). But once again Douglass expresses a contradiction in his attitude towards literacy and its effects. Among the *Orator* passages that Douglass refers to is one that describes a Socratic dialogue between a master and a slave: "The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master—things which had the desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary emancipation of the slave on the part of the master" (42). In this scenario, the slave, through the power of having been educated, is able to use words to effect emancipation. Of course, this state of affairs contrasts sharply with Douglass's own story, and he expresses his skepticism here about the "unexpected effect" of this "voluntary emancipation." While John Burt has seen this section as an example of the hope that the wrongness of slavery is subject to persuasion through language (340), Lisa Sisco's reading of the "horrible pit" into which literacy has cast Douglass seems a more apt interpretation: "The experience of reading provides Douglass with the language to argue on an intellectual and moral basis against slavery, but those arguments are useless in freeing him from his own horrible reality" (199). Thus from this perspective, the description of the master/slave dialogue at this juncture in the text speaks a wry commentary on the "power" of knowledge and words to end oppression.

And yet literacy is, without doubt, essential to ending Douglass's mentality of enslavement, for he clearly states, upon hearing Master Auld's prohibition on reading that "From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom" (36). But it is important here, I would argue, to understand this statement as applying to Douglass in his particular circumstances and not to the power of literacy in general. Not everyone who is literate in the text experiences the enlightenment that Douglass does. For example, literacy, paralleling religion, brings no enlightenment to the slave owners. And neither does it to the poor white children whom Douglass

bribes and tricks into teaching him his letters. Perhaps more importantly, knowledge does not bring these young people power. Douglass sets up an interesting comparison between himself and the children when he describes his encounters with these "urchins." In so doing, the text again calls into question prevailing assumptions about education and empowerment that are at the heart of our cultural literacy myth. Douglass describes the "bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me the more valuable bread of knowledge" (41). While Douglass deems knowledge more valuable than bread here, I again suggest that we can read this as applying to his particular case rather than a humanistic statement about literacy in general. For clearly according to Douglass's own description the actual bread is more valuable to the urchins than the knowledge they possess: they have knowledge but no food to eat. Knowledge, which is lawfully theirs, does not improve their condition; does not benefit them in the same way that knowledge, gained illegally, will ultimately benefit Douglass. Through this juxtaposition, Douglass poses the implicit question: What accounts for this difference?

"The answer to the puzzle of how Douglass became so masterfully literate with so little help from traditional, schoolbook pedagogy," Royer asserts, "lies in observing the power of involvement in the social practices that promote and sustain literacy" (372). In this case, an understanding of such practices requires an examination of the psychological and material conditions under which Douglass tells us he became compelled to discover his literacy. The *Narrative*, I have suggested, as sometimes used in classroom contexts, may induce an implicit shame in students who have taken for granted what Douglass so struggled for. The logic of the literacy myth suggests that if Douglass had to beg, borrow, steal to acquire his education, how much more should students be able to achieve when this gift of literacy has been so readily offered, if only they would take advantage of the given opportunities? Douglass's inclusion of the poor white children in the *Narrative* acts as a counter to such logic. An aspect of the critical view of literacy that the *Narrative* affords is that education in and of itself will not lead to psychological or material remedy.

This truth is further underscored in the description of the encounter with the slave-breaker Covey, where Douglass for the first time puts up physical resistance to his enslavers. David Leverenz has discussed this passage as important to helping Douglass define a masculine ethos implicitly contradistinctive to an identity of enslavement. But this section of the text is equally part of Douglass's literacy narrative, as its inclusion shows the

limits of literacy to self-development. Quite in opposition to a literacy myth that values words over violence, Douglass declares the importance of physical resistance to his developing consciousness. Unequivocally, Douglass announces that "This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning point in my career as a slave . . . and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact" (74). Douglass must add "physical mastery to that of literacy" in "pugilistic resistance" (Bergner 256). The *coup de grace* then in ending his mental enslavement is not literacy but in fact physical violence.

Certainly education helped prime Douglass for this pivotal moment, and he provides us with an answer as to why literacy did matter so much for him when it seemed to have such little effect on the consciousnesses of the poor whites. He makes a point of telling us that seminal to his literacy experience was the understanding that reading and writing were denied to him. Master Auld, upon hearing of Mistress Auld's transgression, proclaims, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. . . . Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world. . . . It would forever unfit him to be a slave. . . . It would make him discontented and unhappy." It is at this point that Douglass has his realization about "the pathway from slavery to freedom." He goes on to explain:

> It was just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I the least expected it. Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with a high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. . . . In learning to read, I owe almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master, as to the kindly aid of my mistress. I acknowledge the benefit of both. (36-37)

Here Douglass emphatically states that the progressive act of literacy instruction offered by the benevolently intended mistress would not have been enough to inspire the dramatic change of consciousness that was necessary for him to acquire freedom. Hence, once again, Douglass provides us with an example where literacy devoid of a critical dimension is insufficient to produce the liberatory effects so often attributed to it.

Instead, the outcome of Douglass's literacy is intrinsically connected to the conflicted conditions under which it was acquired. Before her corrup-

tion, Mistress Auld, in a paradigm consistent with the literacy myth, occupies the position of the liberal educator in relation to Douglass, bestowing literacy upon him as a gift in order to foster self-improvement in the unfortunate slave. But for Douglass the desire for literacy does not become connected to critical consciousness until he hears Master Auld's "inch/ell" pronouncement. Douglass later appropriates the master's figure of speech, both metaphorically and literally, to express his critical relationship to literacy: "The first step had been taken. Mistress, in teaching me the alphabet, had given me the *inch*, and no precaution could prevent me from taking the *ell*" (40). Douglass's ironic identification with and subsequent subversive owning of the trope is significant to understanding his relationship to literacy in general. For Sisco, this subverting is a key moment in readying Douglass to move from his "pre-literate" stage, where he accepts the master's authoritative binaries (197), to a critical literacy, where, as Royer describes it, he "comes to understand . . . that he is not expelled from the social system . . . but rather inside it and oppressed. This critical understanding, this overcoming of naivete is crucial to Douglass's immanent literacy" (365).

It is useful, I think, from the above perspective in understanding Douglass's critical representation of literacy, to consider the narrative itself as a product of "transculturation," as Mary Louise Pratt has used the term in her influential article "Arts of the Contact Zone." Pratt discusses the production of texts as they occur in "social spaces [contact zones] where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths . . ." (34). She employs the term "transculturation" from ethnographic studies, as distinguished from the terms "acculturation" or "assimilation," "to describe processes whereby members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture" (36). Pratt sees transculturation as resulting in the autoethnographic text

> in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them. Thus if ethnographic texts are those in which European metropolitan subjects represent to themselves their others (usually their conquered others), autoethnographic texts are representations that the so-defined others construct in response to or in dialogue with those texts. (35)

As Auld represents Douglass with his aphorism, Douglass *re-presents* himself, in a "dialogue" with that original representation (a dialogue that is very different from the rational master/slave dialogue of the *Orator*, which Douglass skeptically recounts for the reader). And so the *Narrative*, like the representation of literacy within it, is not assimilationist but rather autoethnographic, involving "a selective collaboration with and appropriation of idioms . . . to create self-representations intended to intervene in metropolitan modes of understanding" (Pratt 35).

This conflicted model of literacy, which Douglass's text presents in opposition to liberal, assimilationist conceptions of reading, writing, and education found in the literacy myth, is also understandable in terms of "crisis," as Shoshana Felman uses the term to describe her work with teaching Holocaust testimony. Felman asks, "Is there a relation between crisis and the very enterprise of education?" (13). She later answers this question by saying

> teaching . . . takes place precisely only through a crisis: if teaching does not hit upon some sort of crisis, if it does not encounter either the vulnerability or the explosiveness of an (explicit or implicit) critical and unpredictable dimension, it has perhaps not truly taught: it has passed on some facts, passed on some information and some documents, with which . . . the recipients . . . can for instance do what people during the occurrence of the Holocaust precisely did with information that kept coming forth but no one could recognize, and that no one could therefore truly *learn, read* or put to *use.* (55)

Douglass's story contrasts with that put forth in the liberal understanding of literacy because it occurs in the kind of crisis that Felman references. Without the crisis of interdiction, the embattled conditions under which the slave encounters education, Douglass might have acquired information, might have learned his letters from Mistress Auld, but without knowing how to *read* or to *recognize*, in the critical sense that Felman suggests. The autoethnographic text that Douglass produces is by definition a conflicted one that cannot be called forth by nurturance alone, as the pre-corrupted Mistress attempts to do in giving the gift of literacy. In effect, Douglass's model is telling us that literacy cannot be *given* in that sense; rather it must be *taken* if it is to produce the critical consciousness that leads to emancipation. While "giving" implies passivity, "taking" suggests an active, crisis-induced relationship to language and education.

Douglass's version of the literacy story then contrasts markedly with that contained in the iconic representation often offered to students. This conservative "misreading" by teachers and students alike of Douglass attests to the power of the literacy myth and its influence over the reception and production of texts concerned with representations of literacy and education. It is not surprising that students would reproduce this hegemonic version of literacy in their own narratives surrounding language and education. Those of us who teach literacy narratives can use Douglass's *Narrative* to help us understand under what conditions people and texts begin to interrogate prevailing assumptions about literacy. How can the literacy narrative help position the writer into a critical stance vis à vis the culture of language and education? On the one hand, at the risk of sounding pessimistic, I think one possible conclusion to draw from Douglass's model of conflicted literacy is that the classroom-spawned literacy narrative is subject to significant limitations in this regard, limitations that we should acknowledge rather than uncritically accommodate. As critical pedagogues have noted, the paradigm of oppositional, crisis-based learning is not one that can be easily transferred to the classroom, both for practical and ethical reasons,[3] and thus the likelihood of such writings producing the critical subjectivity modeled by Douglass is perhaps slim. But, on the other hand, I do think the scholarship on Douglass points us in some possible directions, especially where that scholarship intersects with rhetorical theorization of subject positioning.

One of the features of the *Narrative* that has drawn critical attention is the representation of Douglass's DuBoisian double-consciousness as he positions himself in relation to the discourses that interpellate him. While, as noted above, some critics have found problematic Douglass's ability to speak for an experience and people from which he, necessarily it seems, has distanced himself, these critics also see this as Douglass's significant strength. "The dual awareness, the ability to be located by two signification systems at once," writes Wardrop, "is what makes Douglass so crucial an American writer" (655) and what allows him to "jostle and disrupt the dominant signifying system" (649) as he attempts to solve the slave's ontological crisis of language. Indeed, Wardrop tells us that this kind of "dismantling," this critical entry into language, "is the only means by which Douglass can participate in the play of signifiers of the dominant culture" (653).

This emphasis on dual awareness coincides with what Soliday has identified as the critical feature of a successful literacy narrative. In her account of using such narratives in the basic writing class, she defines a "successful literacy story" as one that "goes beyond recounting 'what happened'

to foreground the distance between an earlier and a present self conscious of living in time" (514). While such a subject positioning does not necessarily imply a *critical* stance, it does lay the ground for an examination of "a crossing between language worlds" (515) similar to, as she notes, what is enacted in Douglass's account. Soliday provides an example of a student whose narrative "I" in an essay exploring questions of literacy "is not monological" (519)—that is to say, the student is able to arrive at the analysis that she "speak[s] many Englishes" (517), a conclusion that is more complex than the simple assimilationist model contained in the literacy myth. Soliday encourages literacy narratives where

> movements between worlds take on a liminal rather than a dichotomous character. If students and teachers begin to see their languages as mutually shaping, they also recognize their double-voicedness and, in so doing, can see the self as rooted in other cultures yet also belonging to, becoming transformed by, and in turn transforming school cultures. (522)

While this expectation for the literacy narrative is admirable—and indeed perhaps most possible for many of the students placed in basic writing classes whose subject positions in relation to dominant discourse might begin to approximate Douglass's—the "lesson" of Douglass advises us to proceed cautiously in our endeavors. We should be careful not to overstate the claims for the critical awareness engendered through this classroom genre and, more importantly, to be wary of the power of the literacy myth to absorb and appropriate critical models in a way that does disservice to the potential of critical literacy.

Notes

1. In his preface to the MLA's *Approaches to Teaching Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, James C. Hall contextualizes the volume by reminding us that Douglass's work "is available in many affordable paperback editions and is regularly excerpted in introductory American literature and composition anthologies" (xii). David L. Dudley cites such ubiquity as "evidence . . . that instructors who might never have the opportunity to teach an American or African American literature course are nevertheless teaching Douglass in other settings and that thousands of students—most of whom are not literature majors—are reading it" (133).

2. Lester Faigley describes a parallel dilution in his discussion of a writing textbook's treatment of a John Edgar Wideman essay. Wideman talks about his still unabated anger regarding a conversation he had in college with a white student who criticized his taste in rhythm and blues. The textbook gloss tells students that the selection leads "us beyond Wideman's personal story, helping us to generalize from his particular experience. Indeed, autobiography should not only provide insight into one person's life but also teach us about human experience in general" (Faigley 160). But Faigley asks:

> What is the universal lesson to be drawn from Wideman's questions? . . . Translating Wideman's rage into a lesson on human experience in general becomes a way of avoiding his particular experience and of not seeing the pervasive racism he encountered. Allowing students to respond, "Yes, I've been angry too, and that's a universal emotion" permits them not to examine why Wideman's anger is so debilitating . . . why he still carries that anger after many years have passed. If there is a universal lesson to be drawn from the treatment of Wideman's narrative . . . , perhaps it is how easily the experiences of those who are different from us can be appropriated. (160)

3. See, for example, Fishman's and McCarthy's discussion of "safe" versus confrontational pedagogy inspired by Pratt's contact zone theorizations. They argue for an alternative "Deweyan" model to confrontational pedagogy, one in which students are gradually introduced to cultural critique.

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"Government of da Peeps, for da Peeps, and by da Peeps": Revisiting the Contact Zone

Jeffrey Maxson

ABSTRACT: In this article, I review contact zone pedagogy from a perspective of discursive positioning and with attention to two assignments that ask basic writers to play with the conventions of academic language. The first requires them to translate a passage of academic prose into a slang of their choice; the second, to compose a parody of academic style. Their responses afford these basic writers new, unusually powerful subjectivities: as deflating formality and pretension, as mocking those in power, and as de-naturalizing everyday texts and discourses to render them newly problematic. And they serve as counterpoint to studies that present the contact zone as opening up the classroom to the appeals of all parties, sexist, racist, or homophobic as they may be. Ultimately, I challenge an unspoken assumption of much writing pedagogy—that teaching on current social issues will eventually bring students around to their instructor's point of view—instead holding out the promise that in the contact zone, a teacher is just as likely to be moved and changed as a student.

> I dunno it was something like eighty seven years ago when these old guys brought here in dis country a new place that began bein free and were sayin all dis shit that all da people in dis fuckin country are all equal or some shit like dat. . . . But yo we cant dedicate, declare, or take away disground yo. . . . This speech aint gonna be remembered but all this dying shit aint gonna be forgot. . . . We take da courage of dese guys and say dat dese fuckas did not die in vain and dat dis nation we be in right now is where da freedom was born and that da government of da peeps, by da peeps and for da peeps will not go away from earth.

The above was produced by a student in a first-year writing class at a medium-sized state university. The class is a basic skills/first-year hybrid, a 4-credit course with the same completion requirements as the existing 3-credit first-semester course. The hybrid has all but replaced the not-for-credit basic skills course on campus, and accounts for more than one-fourth of all sections of first-semester writing there. Students are placed in the course

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based on their scores on the SAT II: those with 580 and above go to the 3-credit course; those with 510-570, to the hybrid; and those with 500 and below, to the non-credit basic skills course.

In the sections of the course I teach, I take the circumstances of students' placement there as an opportunity to focus the reading and writing on the difference between students' informal vernaculars and the formal languages of the academy. In class we talk about how academic culture privileges scientific ways of knowing, and how this leads to a peculiar kind of writing: full of discipline-specific jargon and concepts, hedging of statements (to pre-empt attacks from critics), statistical rather than anecdotal evidence, an almost obsessive documentation (ostensibly so that readers may arrive at the same conclusions as the writer), etc. And we discuss how this can militate against a reader's engagement with such texts, especially for those unaccustomed to such special features. Meanwhile, we read stories of linguistic dislocation and struggle from Gloria Anzaldúa, bell hooks, June Jordan, Min-Zhan Lu, Mary Louise Pratt, Richard Rodriquez, Mike Rose, and others. And in addition to translating from formal to vernacular languages as illustrated by the student quoted above, students explore the characteristics of formal and scientific language and arguments, comparing them with informal varieties; compose parodies of formal language; and tell the stories of their encounters with formal language and how they have or have not made places for themselves in settings where formal language is the norm.

These classroom practices are inspired by Pratt's "Arts of the Contact Zone," central to which is her example of Incan scribe Guaman Poma's 1,200-page letter to the Spanish king. In it, Guaman Poma draws on conventions of Spanish language and culture—e.g. systems of orthography and representational drawing—in order to express indigenous values and aspirations, ultimately condemning Spanish governance of the conquered.

For me, this is the most compelling insight of Pratt's work: that language users write (or talk) themselves into and through unfriendly language environments by combinations of assimilation and resistance. As I see it, a contact zone pedagogy should induce students to draw on resources from their home languages and cultures, combining these with resources from school languages and cultures, to perform a critique of the latter.

This focus on what could be called creative misuse foregrounds the material and discursive regimes which both constrain and enable people's speech and wrting.

In what follows, I'll demonstrate how two contact zone assignments I've created can afford students new, more powerful, more critique-laden

subjectivities. In fact, when students create texts that don't afford easy subjectivities for their instructors to inhabit, these texts challenge some of the notions we as teachers and as engaged citizens hold most dear. And they can open up spaces where instructors and students can be written into new configurations, reorientations of power and authority that can benefit both sides.

Soliciting Oppositional Discourse

In the decade-plus since their introduction, contact zone approaches have come to complicate, and even supplant discourse community approaches within the field of composition (Harris, Horner). On the other hand, several studies demonstrate how contact zone approaches may open up clashes between teacher and student cultures, as students challenge their instructors' commitment to such progressive values as cultural diversity and gender equity. Representative is Miller's example of an essay written by a student in the class of an openly gay instructor that relates how the student and his comrades in a night on the town harass men they presume to be gay and beat a homeless person. Miller presents this and other examples as opening up "fault lines" in the contact zone: as points where "unsolicited oppositional discourse" (Pratt 39) treads uncomfortably close to hate speech. Peele and Ryder also address a student text that is anti-gay, though perhaps more troublingly so because of its author's ambiguous relationship to the ideas he puts forth. By attending to "belief spaces"—points at which a writer makes explicit his stance relative to the ideas he presents—Peele and Ryder are able to explain how this student hedges his affiliation to Eminem's "heteronormativity," though they are not successful at getting the student to revise the essay so as to make his own views more explicit. Finally, Murray describes a student essay culminating a study of diversity issues that re-codes white people's suffering under affirmative action programs in terms of racial discrimination. Murray calls the student Jean's effort a sort of perverse version of Guaman Poma's reappropriation, as calling on the conventions and discourses of civil rights to present an argument that upholds racist representations. These three studies can leave us wondering what sort of Pandora's box we open up when we commit to pedagogies of the contact zone.

In contrast, my "solicited oppositional discourse" has not evoked the sort of spectacular confrontations between teacher and student ideologies these studies report. My approach is more narrow in that rather than issues

of racism, classism, sexism, or homophobia in the culture at large, it takes as its subject matter the situation of the writing classroom and its enforced formality of language. I find it's crucial to address the institutional conditions that place students in a class like my basic skills/first-year hybrid course. In such situations, a generative theme (Freire *Education, Pedagogy*) that's always in the air is what students are doing in such a class, what exactly about their language is not up to snuff, and what it is that makes academic English so great.

I'm referring to the generative themes that Freirean literacy educators in Third World settings sought to discover within the material conditions of the people they taught, and to re-present to them as the content of literacy lessons. A generative theme seeks to reveal a set of conditions which keep people in a position of submission to others. In the context of a writing class, the hegemony of formal language works as an aspect of racism and classism, making it more difficult for those who speak non-standard or non-prestige dialects to achieve success in education and careers, limiting their options in society. Further, it's the discourse of education (Brodkey, Brodkey and Henry) that classifies non-standard dialects as incorrect and that positions non-standard dialect speakers as not competent, uneducated, wrong, or even cognitively deficient. And this discourse is what employers and others rely on when making negative judgments of non-standard dialect speakers.

The devaluation of non-standard and the elevation of formal academic English thus becomes the subject matter of my pedagogy, as carried out particularly through two contact zone assignments, translation and parody.

Translation

In this assignment, I have students translate a piece of particularly knotty academic prose into the variety of slang most familiar to them (for about a page), and then go on to reflect on the translation process and the benefits and drawbacks of each variety (for two more pages).

The assignment is based on our reading of June Jordan's "Nobody Mean More to Me than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan," the story of a class of native speakers of African American Vernacular English studying how their language works, translating between standard and AAVE, and composing poetry and prose pieces in AAVE. In terms of the advantages of this variety, Jordan notes that it "devolves from a culture that abhors abstraction or anything tending to obscure or delete the fact of the human being who is here and now/the truth of the person who is speaking or lis-

tening. Consequently *there is no passive voice construction possible*" (129) in AAVE, and further, "[y]ou cannot 'translate' instances of Standard English preoccupied with abstraction or with nothing/nobody evidently alive into Black English. That would warp the language into uses antithetical to the guiding perspective of its community of users" (130).

Like Jordan, I use the translation exercise to help students recognize the conciseness, the verve of their native variety, whether it is AAVE, Spanglish, or the language of *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*. Jordan and her students go on to derive the rules of AAVE,[1] drawing on their own communicative competency in this variety. Likewise, I ask students in their reflective section to derive the rules they used to perform the translation (e.g., the rule governing *like*-insertion in a sentence—can it go anywhere, only before particular parts of speech, etc.?), to explain where and for what uses each variety is appropriate or inappropriate, and to note how others judge one who uses a variety in an inappropriate setting.

In response to this assignment, students submit, for example, the university course withdrawal policy translated into "North Jersey Italian Lingo," an excerpt from a biology text on natural selection rendered in the language of Instant Messenger, and the translation of the Gettysburg Address excerpted at the outset:

> I dunno it was something like eighty seven years ago when these old guys brought here in dis country a new place that began bein free and were sayin all dis shit that all da people in dis fuckin country are all equal or some shit like dat. Now we be in dis civil war shit to see how long we can keep up dis fighting shit. Dis right here on dis grass where da fightin was is where we be today. We gonna give dis shit to be the fuckin cemetery for the stupid motha fuckas who were stupid enough to come out here with guns and shit and start killin each other like it was some kind of gang war or some shit like dat yo. I mean, What da dilly yo, who wants to go out and shoot at each other, you know what I'm sayin? Yeah it be a good idea to put these pieces of shit yo six feet under right here on dis field. But yo we cant dedicate, declare, or take away dis ground yo. Dese guys who were brave enough to do dis stupid shit, wheter they be dead or alive yo, are better than us so we cannot add or subtract or some shit like dat. This speech aint gonna be remembered but all this dying shit aint gonna be forgot. We da people dat are living have

> to finish what dese dead guys here started yo. We take da courage of dese guys and say dat dese fuckas did not die in vain and dat dis nation we be in right now is where da freedom was born and that da government of da peeps, by da peeps and for da peeps will not go away from earth.

This rendition, authored by Phil (all students have given permission to quote from their work; they are referred to by pseudonyms), is humorous because it upsets our expectation that the linguistic register of a message will correspond to its content. It's the same funny bone that gets nudged when in Monty Python's *Holy Grail*, a serf grubbing in the dirt points out to the passing King Arthur the injustice of the feudal system and the violence inherent in the monarchy. In Phil's composition, Lincoln's formality gets brought down a notch, and Phil's status is elevated in the economy of the classroom thanks to his transgression: his breaking the classroom rule that proscribes (written) language in this variety (and cursing, as well). It places Phil in the position of a class clown, more powerful than a goody-two-shoes with respect to his peers, who as speakers or at least frequent hearers of this variety, are likely to be impressed by Phil's ability.

Further, in terms of the subject positions the discourse creates for the writer, we can see how Phil is both pulled by the discourse and does some pulling of his own. You'll notice that Phil misrepresents Lincoln's intent in the middle of the speech:[2] Lincoln didn't consider those who died at Gettysburg to be stupid m.f.'s, but rather "those who here gave their lives that that nation might live." Yet Phil's version does present a commonplace within public discourse on gang violence—that gang fighters are only hurting themselves, that their rage is misplaced, etc. The commonplace, however, seems to pull Phil away from Lincoln's intent in a translation that is otherwise fairly faithful to it.

But there's more going on here in terms of Phil's position in the text, including his reflective section. There Phil notes that this would be a good way of introducing a historical text to younger people, like those in high school, for whom "it would make the learning experience . . . more enjoyable." Interestingly, this statement positions the writer within a discourse of education on the effectiveness of particular teaching techniques, and ultimately of the ineffectiveness of techniques that are not congruent with the cultures—especially "youth culture"—of students. Further, he is posited as a mediator or broker between languages and cultures, rather than only as a student of, and aspirant to, the prestige dialect. This is quite

a new position for a student, one that only some teachers can inhabit. The exercise has offered up an authoritative new subjectivity—one of cultural mediation, in Pratt's terms—Phil can write himself into.

But if Phil is rehabilitating Abe Lincoln and revising the verities of American history instruction, then Lynette's translation takes on nothing less than male privilege. Here's the opening of her (450-word) translation of Romeo's lines from the balcony scene of *Romeo and Juliet*:

> Yo, Juliet Im peepin ya from da window and damn girl ya looking finer dan eva. You looking betta dan J-Lo and girl on da real you know you da shit! Juliet you know why Im here talkin to ya from da window, ma its just cause I'm feelin ya and wanna get to know what you bout. Girl, stop frontin on dat bullshit cause I know ya want dis irresistible papi. Juliet you a dime piece and I wish I wuz da durag that's wrapped round ya head, so I could be on ya sexy ass all night! Mami is ya gonna speak cause I know ya got dat angelic voice. Pleaze ma, let me hear whatcha gotta say cause you a bangin piece.

This is a significantly looser translation than Phil's. The line about the "durag" (or doo-rag) corresponds to Shakespeare's "O, were I a glove upon that hand, /That I might touch that cheek"; the following one is a translation of "She speaks. /O, speak again, bright angel." But other than these, there are few literal parallels with the original. Like Phil's translation, though, Lynette's is quite authentic sounding and manages to make Shakespeare's diction and syntax more accessible to a younger audience. As Lynette notes in her reflective section, "Modern Black English highlights and projects the voice, which is an advantage . . . when it comes to matters of the heart." It presents the balcony scene, that chestnut of the language arts curriculum, in a new light.

The new light, though, is not just the light of currency within youth culture, but the light of gender politics. Lynette or her acquaintances have apparently been subjected to the discourse of seduction enough that she knows it well. In Pratt's terms, Lynette's approach is autoethnographic: she takes the terms in which the dominant gender represents women, and the aspects of women—physical appearance—which it focuses on, and has her way with them, exaggerating them for effect. This parodic move positions her as a critic of such persuasive efforts, pointing to their deceptiveness, their greed, and their casual freedom from accountability; she notes in her reflective section, "Rule 1: Modern Black English is about a whole lot of bullshitting, at least for males talking to females, as Romeo emphasizes to Juliet."[3]

In terms of its audience, the text constructs different positions for readers depending on their gender. Women are welcomed into the text as confidantes to a discussion of "skanky-ass" men. The male reader on the other hand is given two options: either he recognizes himself in the New Romeo, and feels shame, or he doesn't identify with him and condemns him. For Lynette, this cross-gender performance posits her as a knowing critic in solidarity with others who have been subjectified by the texts of male seduction, and in opposition to the male privilege that supports men's facile ability to "love 'em and leave 'em."

Unlike Phil, Lynette does not invoke the discourse of educational effectiveness to justify the usefulness of her translation, nor does she grapple with Shakespeare's canonicity or the relative class status of the New Romeo's (and her own) language variety vs. the old Romeo's. Still, her achievement is to bring critical issues of language and power into the work of the classroom, ones that she and other students have a felt understanding of and a felt need to explore. In this sense, she resembles Sirc and Reynolds's basic writers insulting the quality (including the smell) of one another's footwear in an online conference devoted to workshopping each other's drafts:

> What gives you the authority to criticize [my writing] when you wear those kind of shoes, Nick is asking. That's the kind of question the upper division students [whose transcripts show them diligently "on-task"] would never dream of asking in one of their peer-response sessions, but it seems like one of the truest questions, one that strikes at the heart of cultural preconceptions inherent in interpretation, at the way ideology acts as the horizon against which language is articulated. Writing students should learn that readers often don't like one's text for a host of meta-textual reasons. (68)

Or in the present context, what is the writing classroom about if not to address issues of the power that language affords or disallows speakers and hearers? Unlike for Sirc and Reynolds's writers, the relevant "meta-textual reasons" are (more prosaically) related to what Lynette is actually writing about: her knowledge of women being hit on by insincere men and the relatively powerless position they end up in if men do love them and leave them. But again, what more critical topics for classroom writing could there be?

Still, if our progressive sensibilities are soothed by Lynette's and Phil's anti-sexist and anti-racist textual moves (that is, anti-racist with respect to the prestige dialect), then Kim's translation of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech,[4] offers a more difficult surface:

> Ok, like I know that some of you coming here today was like totally out of your way. But like I know a lot of you totally have been reaching for like freedom. Well Im telling ya to keep it up. Like don't give up now. Don't give up til like you finally get what u want.
>
> Go back to Mississippi, go back to where you came from and like show em where you're from. You like gotta keep on believing. You gotta believe that you're like totally gonna win.
>
> Im still totally believing and like I totally have a dream that everything is totally gonna come out perfectly fine. K?! I like have that American dream that like everyone talks about. I have that dream that, you know, slaves and like slave owners will like totally eat dinner together one day and like it will be totally cool. Yea and I like totally dream that Mississippi will totally give up separating people, you know segregation? Yea and I dream that my kids wont ever have to go through any of this. Im totally dreaming this. I dream that that Alabama guy will totally stop talking and just like totally let people be like totally equal. I dream today and like everyday. This is what I want, totally. I like dream that everything will be like the same and I like dream this to happen like all over the south. I like totally dream that like everyone will be happy and like no one will like never ever get hurt like ever again.
>
> Im like totally looking forward to the day that like everyone is singing. I mean like come on, if America was as great as everyone like knows it to be then like they really should get rid of this segregation thing like for real. Like come on, let freedom ring already. Let freedom ring from like every corner of the world. Totally.

First, Kim's translation is quite an accomplishment. She's achieved fluency in this dialect as well as a high degree of faithfulness to the original. And she has created an exalted place for herself and her readers in the text, namely one from which we can laugh at the dippy Valley Girl and how she's reduced King's powerful turns of phrase to trivialities.

Still, there's more going on here. As in Phil's Gettysburg example, Kim's Valley Girl vernacular deflates the seriousness of King's speech. And as in the *Romeo and Juliet* example, there is a distance between the author of the translation and the voice of the Valley Girl speaker. That is, in her reflection on the translation, Kim notes that while King makes the contemporary situation of the listeners of the speech seem serious and "negative,"

a Valley Girl tends to take things more lightly. Instead of "describ[ing] the negative aspects of what people were going through" (presumably, everyday life under racism) like King, a Valley Girl comes off as "uplifting and energetic," as "happy and a little clueless," or in other words, as smoothing over what's problematic for King.

What's different from the other translations, though, is that Kim levels no judgment here, either that King is too serious and negative or that the Valley Girl is too superficial. This seems not so much parody as postmodern pastiche:

> Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic. (Jameson 114)

In fact these issues of parody and its political relevancy arise even more prominently in the consideration of the second assignment. Meanwhile, I would note here that at a minimum the translation assignment establishes students' vernaculars as legitimate languages, participating fully in what Pratt calls the "redemption of the oral" (30). Whether this strengthens or enlivens students' writing in Standard English, I can't say. I don't have evidence either way. But at best, it seems students can do what Lynette does, bringing matters of compelling, everyday import into the classroom, where they might not otherwise be heard or written about.

Parody

In this assignment, I ask students to write a parody of academic language, blowing out of proportion those features that make it most difficult to decipher— specialized vocabulary and concepts, turns of phrase (e.g., "recent research has found . . ."), passive voice, hedging of claims, etc. In preparation, I show them several examples of parodies by professional writers. First, there's one from the Web zine *Suck* in which the writer describes a childhood pact with her sister to toss their unfinished dinners in the trash and agree that "I won't tell if you won't tell" (Esther). This is presented in an elevated style unsuited to the subject matter, a combination of pseudo-scientific and pseudo-legal language. Another example is Horace Miner's

"Body Ritual Among the Nacirema," a parody of an anthropological study describing the bizarre cleanliness habits of a culture, which it slowly dawns on the reader is North American (spell "Nacirema" backwards). I tell students to emulate these examples by taking an insignificant incident or process and write about it in high-flown style. And students compose pieces like one describing the preparation of the campfire treat s'mores in the language of a chemistry lab report, or of a day in the life of a college student (including a visit to a fraternity mixer) as observed by a travel writer/amateur anthropologist.

In another of these, James describes his own mythical/biblical quest to overcome the "Vortex of Boredom," as he titles this composition:

> I have cultivated a strong distaste for afternoon classes. Why? Because afternoon classes simply conflict with my diurnal siesta. And it seems like the professors gain some kind of sick or demented enjoyment from watching me struggle to comprehend their pretentious babble. Compelling myself to stay awake only vitalizes the hellish vortex sent to abolish my concentration!
>
> The vortex is not bias, either. As I endeavor to keep my eyes open, I glance across the room. And what do I see? Myriad's of eyes wondering around looking for relief from this abominable torture. . . . Striving to save my peers from an ill-suited fate, I beg the demon to leave us along. Yet, the vortex doesn't care that it's victims are young people in the bloom of their youth, and it continues to strike us all one by one. . . .
>
> Then I look up, and like a beacon of light the teacher stand before me. . . . [I hope] he will notice me, thus breaking the siren's destructive song. But alas, it is all a striving after the wind, all my attempts are in vain. He continues to speak nonsensical gibberish, and my hope starts to fade. . . . Then suddenly it comes to me.
>
> . . . I hang my head low in the form of obeisance, and I start to approach the Heavenly Father in prayer until the vortex senses apparent danger. Then suddenly the teacher bellows, "Mr. [___] are you sleeping?!" I hear the vortex wickedly laugh as my hopes to mollify my distress is annihilated.
>
> . . . [Finally] something like sweet honey filtered my hears, "And that will be it for today's class. I'll see you all here Monday." Tears of joy filled my eyes. . . . The illustrious words of Mr. Martin Luther King filled my head, "Free at last. Free at last. Thank God

> Almighty, free at last." Before leaving I look toward the sinister creature, signaling that I had won the battle. . . . [But] the vortex had a putrid smile on it's face signaling to me that I had won today, but there is always Monday.

James has written himself into a subject position like Phil's when he offers advice to educators. Though not in a language usually associated with educational discourse, the text still posits James as a satirist and critic of his instructor's pedagogy, particularly of the "pretentious babble" and "nonsensical gibberish" endemic to many college-level courses. And in comparison to Kim's version of the "I Have a Dream" speech, this is clearly not a pastiche: James has a preference for straightforward, unpretentious language that he upholds. The position of satirist and critic is one he can occupy since I have sanctioned it through giving him such an assignment, and since, after all, the essay is written in fun. And it's a position even more powerful relative to his professors than Phil's effort, which simply makes a suggestion for good pedagogical practice that others might or might not pick up on. Instead James employs an authorizing strategy of critique, which empowers him and disempowers those instructors who babble on pretentiously.

Of course, this critique is uneven. James struggles with mechanical correctness in this first draft; he draws from a supermarket of styles and languages—biblical/sermonic, mythic, gothic horror, civil rights—in choppy juxtaposition; and while the professor is the one babbling on and on, he is strangely disconnected from the vortex that draws the student toward sleep. Yet for me these problems render what James achieves here all the more remarkable. He manages to gently, self-deprecatingly poke fun at the pretensions of his "betters."

This is transgression, but of a playfully mild sort, especially compared to those Miller, Murray, and Peele and Ryder offer us. Apropos of this, Miller holds that in the contact zone classroom, "the teacher's traditional claim to authority is . . . constantly undermined and reconfigured" (407). Paradoxically, though, this "enables the real work of learning how to negotiate and to place oneself in relation to different ways of knowing to commence" (407). Murray, drawing on Freire (Pedagogy) and Bizzell ("Power"), concludes that in the contact zone students' consent to be taught is not a given and must be re-achieved in each new instance (162). Interestingly this assignment seems to sidestep such concerns. Here, James's challenge to my authority, the relatively powerful position his writing places him in, does not detract

from my authority, since my own ideology is not on the line. Instead, it is embedded in the assignment itself, so that his critique of pompous verbiage is my critique as well. Although I am complicit in the practice of using scholarly language in the classroom, his blows don't quite connect with my head, since I have devised the assignment to be critical in this way, and James's only resistance would be to fail to complete the assignment or to complete it half-heartedly, which would hurt his own grade more than it would resist my ideological position.

Jody's critique in the following parody, entitled "The Lost Sock Organization," is both subtler than James's and less clearly challenges classroom authority (though I will eventually return to it in this regard):

> A tragic epidemic is happening to me and I'm sure it is happening to you too. Are your socks disappearing? Mine are. They seem to leave one at a time, regularly. . . . [S]omething has to be done about it. Therefore, after much consideration and thought, I have taken it upon myself to develop the Lost Sock Organization, otherwise known as the LSO. . . .
>
> Our organization thinks the root of this problem begins in some household appliances known as "washers and dryers." . . . [Socks] must be cleaned . . . but in the process, we at the LSO believe these appliances sometimes keep the socks. . . . The organization just isn't quite sure yet [why socks disappear in these appliances].
>
> If it's the sock choosing to leave, as opposed to the dryer keeping them from us, there must be a legitimate reason. You must ask yourself if you are abusing your socks or treating them unfairly. The LSO has developed some guidelines you can follow to make sure you are giving your socks the treatment and recognition they deserve.
>
> First of all, make sure your hygiene is in check. . . .
>
> We have given you many guidelines to help keep your socks happy so they will stay with you always. I have begun to treat my socks better and have already noticed an improvement. Please don't wait; act now before this problem gets out of control. . . . Please feel free to contact the Lost Sock Organization with any questions, comments, or concerns. We can conquer this epidemic together, one small step at a time.

Here Jody lampoons popular reports of social crisis, e.g., the literacy, drug, or energy crises. And what must one do once the crisis has been declared, she asks, but start an organization—preferably one denoted by an acronym—to address it? She goes on in the fourth paragraph to satirize the rhetoric of special interest politics: even your socks have rights that must be respected.

It's not like these aren't important problems, Jody could (with only a little stretch) be saying, but the way that governmental bodies, together with the press, use calls of crisis to direct public attention and resources towards those who declare the crisis—this is suspect, a sort of power-grabbing at the expense of victims of the "crisis." And at the same time, Jody seems to be invoking popular accounts of scientific studies that serve to establish the intuitively obvious (for instance, that socks must be cleaned).

Looking further into such critique, Linda Hutcheon, citing Althusser, writes that postmodern parody "simultaneously destabilizes and inscribes the dominant ideology through its . . . interpellation of the spectator as subject in and of ideology" (108). In other words, readers are hailed by any text as particular types of writers or consumers of texts, of the items texts persuade us we need, or of the courses texts convince us to follow. Parody at least partially interrupts that positioning. So, in Jody's essay, the ideology that all "crises" are worthy of our concern, that all interest groups are equally deserving of accommodation, is critiqued, and the reader's inscription by earlier texts as prone to worrying over the state of the world is challenged. The parody points to reports of crisis which pander to our fears in vying for public attention and funding, much as Lynette's essay critiques the man who will say anything in order have his way with you. In terms of the writer's positioning, contrast her current stance with one she would occupy were the calls for action in earnest. Here she has written herself outside of and at a distance from this discourse, looking back on it with disdain.

Of course James's and Jody's parodies differ from the intentionally postmodern ones Hutcheon cites (e.g., Woody Allen's *Stardust Memories*, Cindy Sherman's elaborately staged self-portraits). They do little to foreground and undermine the conventions of artistic representation, the ideology of the unified subject, or the economics of text production. Still, these possibilities do bring us back to Kim's translation of the "I Have a Dream" speech.

Authority, Discord, Commonality

First, my—and I would assume others'—reaction of (bemused) shock at the Valley Girl's trivialization of King's solemnity points to our elevation of the original to the level of what Hutcheon calls *doxa* (Latin for "belief"). It is surprising to think of King's speech in these terms, as it worked at the time of its delivery to dismantle the *doxa* of "separate but equal." Yet since then, it has ascended to the point that we might regard it as a sacred text, as important not just for what it says, but for the manner in which it says it. And of course, representations of the civil rights movement play out on contested terrain, meaning the speech is held in higher regard by those who admire it than, say, the Gettysburg Address, the meaning of which is not a matter of current public debate. What Kim's translation does is, as Hutcheon says of postmodern parody, to " 'de-doxify' our assumptions about our representations of [the] past" (98), thanks to Kim's "unseemly comparison between elite and vernacular cultural forms" (Pratt 40).

But Kim is doing more than just offending our sensibilities. You'll recall her move toward pastiche—leveling no judgment, either that King is too "negative" or that the Valley Girl is too energetic and uplifting. Hutcheon, however, takes issue with Jameson's characterization of postmodern parody as pastiche; instead

> postmodern parody does not disregard the context of the past representation it cites, but uses irony to acknowledge the fact that we are inevitably separated from that past today. . . . Not only is there no resolution (false or otherwise) of contradictory forms in postmodern parody, but there is a foregrounding of those very contradictions. . . . [W]hat is called to our attention is the entire representational process . . . and the impossibility of finding any totalizing model to resolve the resulting postmodern contradictions. (94-95)

Again, the Valley Girl rendition of King's speech interrupts our unproblematic identification with it, reminding us that it belongs to another time and context, rather than ours. Further, it brings home to its (politically progressive) readers the indeterminacy of any author's intentions, the impossibility of locating a unified Kim who holds a particular view that is expressed here. In denying this univocal reading, it does "evoke what reception theorists call the horizon of expectations of the spectator, a horizon formed by recognizable conventions of genre, style or form of representation. This is then destabilized and dismantled step by step"

(Hutcheon 114). Among our expectations for the King text are that it will contain features of African American preacher style—repetition, biblical reference, and especially a formal, even archaic, register—expectations that Kim's piece destabilizes. In other words, if we are not afforded the comfortable position of laughing at the Valley Girl, we are left in an uncomfortable position, or no position at all. And this puts Kim in an authoritative position, challenging as she does the preconceptions of people normally considered more thoughtful and educated than her.

I'd contrast this denial of an easy subjectivity for the reader to inhabit with examples from Miller, Murray, and Peele and Ryder. Miller recognizes two possible responses to the anti-gay student narrative he describes. The instructor might take it at face value, and then find herself compelled to inform the appropriate authorities of the writer's alleged behavior. Or the instructor might read the essay as a fictional account, and recommend revisions as with any other essay. This however leads to the absurd scenario in which the student is encouraged to produce "an excellent gay-bashing paper, one worthy of an A" (394). In either case, the instructor's subjectivity as one who critiques student writing—a subjectivity that is afforded by the institutional setting—is interrupted by a text that seems to insist that it not be read conventionally, to be critiqued and set aside. Instead, it calls us to respond from our political orientation, as upholders of gay and homeless rights, and from our humanity, as protecting those unable to protect themselves. Strangely, this places us on equal footing with the writer rather than as superior to him, although with deep differences. In this light, those favoring the first response, that the instructor should inform the police and/or campus counseling unit about the content of the paper, seek ways of reinscribing the writer in a new sort of subservient subjectivity, either of law, as deviant, or psychology, as insane.

Current best practice, of course, entails responding to student writing as an attentive reader, establishing that equal footing on the ground of shared interest in the subject matter of the student piece. Yet how can we reach this sort of commonality between student and teacher orientations when our assignments highlight our political differences?

Take, for example, Murray's student Jean, who presents white people's suffering under affirmative action programs as an instance of racial discrimination. Murray calls Jean's effort "reconstitution"—a reverse version of Guaman Poma's creative misuse of resources from Spanish culture—which calls on the conventions and discourses of civil rights to present an argument that upholds racist representations. So, like Kim, Jean challenges

orthodoxies of her instructor and of progressive observers such as us. The difference, though, is that Jean is put in a position where she must either support or refute the teacher's position on this issue. Her views on diversity (a text woven by her upbringing and experience) do not fit within the authoritative ones in the classroom; instead, and quite reasonably given her less powerful position vis-à-vis her teacher, her essay aligns her with an arguably more powerful one from outside the classroom. In Kim's case, her point of view is not on the line, so she's able to be equivocal: the Valley Girl may be superficial or pleasantly cheery; King may be forceful and convincing, or he may be going a little overboard, especially on the negativity.

It's unfortunate that Jean finds herself in such a position, where she feels she has to defend her own point of view. Helpful here is Bizzell's ("Beyond") position that teacher authority should develop out of persuasion. Teachers and students must begin at some readily acceptable common ground, for instance that everyone in society should be treated fairly and equally. From there, the teacher/rhetor's task is to reveal to students the internal contradiction in their reasoning when they also accept, for example, sexist beliefs: "Don't believe in both equality and sexism [she must persuade them], give up the sexism" (673). In Jean's case, the assignment she was given not only has little provision for establishing common ground among unfriendly audience positions, but encourages agonistic struggle between competing points of view.

Take Jody's "Lost Sock" essay; though more mildly than Jean's, it does challenge convictions many of us hold dear. While her first knock—at declarations of crisis—could be seen as politically neutral, her second concerning interest group politics could not. This argument goes that special interest groups are all maneuvering to have their parochial issues heard and acted upon, at the expense of the interest of the whole. The problem here is that the whole is pictured as an undifferentiated mass with a shared common interest, which just so happens to correspond to the interests of the culturally dominant. In other words, this is a way of denying the rights of democratic representation to those whose interests aren't served by mainstream laws and institutions.

Still, this critique embedded in Jody's parody does not cancel out the linguistic work the composition accomplishes. At issue is not her political beliefs, but her praxis as a user of written language. This may seem evasive next to the classroom contact zones seen in recent research; after all, where is the potential that Jody may come into contact with a contrary view—especially from someone or ones who see their interests served by "special

interest" politics—and be transformed? This vision must be honored for its very utopian promise; but it doesn't tell me where to intervene as Jody's teacher. Instead, my instinct (and Bizzell) tell me to approach Jody on the same level her parody appeals to me and where we do hold common views: our frustration with bureaucratic machinations and with those who use big words to puff themselves up at others' expense.

And while my being less than forward about my own political views on gay rights, reverse racism, etc., may preclude a set of contact zone interactions, it may also help to avoid confrontations like those raised by Miller, Murray, and Peele and Ryder describe. It may be that the writers of such essays bridle at the power teachers with such alien political views have over them, so they strike out at what they see as misplaced authority on the grounds that are available to them, getting under the skin of the person in power by attacking their political beliefs. To paraphrase Sirc and Reynolds paraphrasing their students, "What gives you the authority to criticize my writing when you have those wacky political views?" And contention may make sense for students in a sort of classroom cost-benefit analysis, when as with Jean's above, students' more conservative views may be a part of a dominant ideology that holds a great deal more sway than their instructors' more progressive ones.

Indeed, how do instructors avoid retrenchment when confronted with students' seemingly reactionary positions? How do we avoid regarding them as reactionary?

Conflict Avoidance?

Our assumptions about the rightness of our own political positions are deeply ingrained, as Miller illustrates. Referring to how the teacher's authority must be constantly achieved in the contact zone classroom, he notes:

> This can be strangely disorienting work, requiring, as it does, the recognition that in many places what passes as reason or rationality in the academy functions not as something separate from rhetoric, but rather as one of many rhetorical devices. This, in turn, quickly leads to the corollary concession that, in certain situations, reason exercises little or no persuasive force when vying against the combined powers of rage, fear, and prejudice, which together forge innumerable hateful ways of knowing the world that have their own internalized systems, self-sustaining logics, and justifications. (407-408)

I wonder, though, why the academy should be immune from the use of reason and rationality as a rhetorical device. Don't we generally accept that scientific objectivity is just as problematic as its journalistic counterpart? More troubling, reason here seems very nearly equated with progressive politics, and rage, fear, and prejudice with conservatism. I'll admit that particularly among talk-radio conservatives this is often the case; yet I'm not willing to deny that a great deal of left-leaning rhetoric is likewise full of rage, originates from fear, and might even be seen as prejudiced (in terms of an individual predilection, as opposed to the social, structural, and cultural formations of racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia). Instead, it's more productive to see all positions as both contingent and interested. They are not irrational in any way, but make a good deal of sense in terms of maintaining existing structures of privilege. Miller acknowledges this, but only backhandedly in the last lines above. After all, don't left liberal ideologies also "have their own internalized systems, self-sustaining logics and justifications"? Clearly Miller sees some points of view as beyond the pale, as not worth the effort of trying to establish the sort of common ground from which Bizzell's ("Beyond") persuasive project begins.

I have to admit that my actions regularly betray prejudices just as troubling as Miller's, if not more so. But that doesn't stop me from wanting something more, something better than this. After all, isn't this the promise of contact zone pedagogy: that we all will not remain isolated, aligned with our own language/culture/interest groups? Instead, now that we understand how language encounters are almost always fraught with differential power relations attributable to race, class, gender, sexual preference, and other differences, now that we can see these lines of authority and their extension outside of the immediate context of the contact zone, there's a real chance that we may be able to realign ourselves—textually and physically, materially—in new configurations. First, this might mean that we learn something from our students, as Kim gets us to re-examine our attachment to a revered text. More ambitiously, it might mean that we'll be able to identify with students' struggles, join with them, however briefly and contingently, and help them to create powerful positions for themselves—in their texts and in the world as well. In the context of the translation and parody assignments, this could mean that they, and we, can take this chance to challenge notions about language that are keeping them from having as many options as others more oriented to the language expectations of the academy.

It's true these assignments ask students to traffic in stereotypes. This sort of caricature reduces broad variations in, say, Valley Girl to those most commonly perceived by outsiders, it ignores the differences among individual "Valley Girls," and it tends to associate less flattering characteristics with this variety. Likewise the parodies stereotype academic language as unnecessarily complicated and its users as pompous and pretentious—which of course is not uniformly the case. Still, it is the grain of truth here that resonates with students' experience and which can take students a long way toward understanding the arbitrariness of the elevation or denigration of particular language varieties, and the value inherent in those traditionally put down.

To repeat, these assignments differ significantly from Miller's, Murray's, and Peele and Ryder's, which encourage students to place themselves in relation to matters of public policy rather than in relation to the more narrow concern of the language used in academic settings. The contact zone my students enact through these assignments entails contest not within the classroom, but with the whole educational project, or at least that part of this project which dictates what variety of language one uses in its pursuit. As noted above, this critique is embedded in the translation and parody assignments, so that students are practically left without the alternative of challenge or resistance of the teacher's ideological orientation that these confrontational student examples exhibit. This is not to say that my students are not sullen and cantankerous, at times from early in the term to the very end, perhaps over just this issue: they disagree with the ideology implicit in the assignments, but to resist means to lose points for not having completed the course requirements. This puts them in a double bind that neither they nor I have successfully overcome. Still, throughout the fifteen sections of this course I have taught, I had not encountered a student who overtly contradicted the premise of the course until recently. Annelise believed, like Richard Rodriguez, that students not brought up conversant with Standard English need to abandon their home varieties and achieve mastery in the standard as quickly as possible. Still Annelise performed well on the assignments, producing a clever parody of a travelogue, a sarcastic account of the pleasures of driving on New Jersey's thoroughfares. This can be said of my students more generally as well, that despite their lack of engagement or alliance with the goals of the course, they have fun with the assignments. And especially on the final essay, a synthesis of the readings with their own lives, they discover striking parallels between their educational experience and that of Rodriguez, hooks, Lu, and others.

Again I'd note that this vision presents the contact zone classroom as domesticated—as sidestepping the more treacherous ground of competing discourses among students, or between students and teacher. Likewise the teacher's role is tricky, on the one hand encouraging alternative forms of writing, and on the other enforcing department and disciplinary standards of competence in academic expression. Yet, as I tell my colleagues when they review my students' portfolios, determining whether they should pass or fail, these assignments represent legitimate intellectual work, stretching students' abilities in directions they don't normally go. Nor, I believe, do they challenge the teacher's authority or the academic project except in ways that they ought to be challenged. Miller appears to disagree: "Reimagining the classroom as a contact zone is a potentially powerful pedagogical intervention only so long as it involves resisting the temptation to silence or to celebrate the voices that seek to oppose, critique, and/or parody the work of constructing knowledge in the classroom" (407). Yet in the contact zone classroom I've outlined, the voices that parody the work of constructing knowledge in the classroom (e.g., James's as well as the others') may in fact lead to further knowledge construction worthy of celebrating. After all, critiquing the modes of representation entailed by academic ways of knowing is valued within rhetorical studies, sociology of science, etc., at least when performed by credentialed scholars. So why isn't this a valid intellectual pursuit for basic writing students? And after all, isn't that the implication of the contact zone as well, that in order that our students gain, we and those of our station, might lose? We have to be ready to risk all to venture into contact zone exchanges. Because what are such exchanges worth after all, if they merely maintain our existing status and point of view?

Conclusion

In all of these compositions, we see students "strik[ing] at the heart of cultural preconceptions inherent in interpretation" (Sirc and Reynolds 68), working their way among layers of linguistic meaning to steal into authoritative stances. They open up new possibilities for students writing and being written into discursive spaces. They allow students to flex their discursive muscles, trying out their positioning among shifting and complicated domains of literacy.

Both these assignments are set up to invite students into the work of the contact zone: to draw on resources of academic English and various vernaculars to critique the standard. Indeed, the point of the parodies in the

first place is to critique the "pretentious babblers," as James would have it, who use language that's inappropriate to the subject matter just because it sounds impressive. Likewise, the translations challenge our reverence for the form of a text over its content, polluting the high with the low, calling into question even good liberals' consent to the process of canon formation.

Yet the student texts more than fulfill any promise inherent in the assignments. They show students gaining flexibility, moving in and out of linguistic registers, weighing the social freight they carry. (To echo Sirc and Reynolds, what more critical work is there in a writing classroom?) In them, students are seen to have consistently written themselves into authoritative subject positions. Their texts variously poise them as deflators of formality (and pretension), as mocking those in power over them (dead presidents, men, their instructors, etc.), and as de-naturalizing everyday texts and discourses to render them newly problematic. These compositions challenge the notion that only one linguistic register is appropriate in first-year writing classes, and that only one attitude towards that register—reverence—is appropriate, as well. And their writers critique the positioning of themselves within formal academic English texts as unproblematic readers of these texts, as people who have (magically) acquired the wherewithal to decode academic idiolects. They are saying this is not the case, that they, at least at times, have to struggle with them, and that here are alternatives that are more accommodating. They ultimately critique an ideology prevalent in school (and non-school) settings that the prestige form is easily acquired, or acquired as easily by non-native speakers or by non-standard dialect speakers as by those speaking the standard dialect from birth.

Finally, these texts at their farthest out there confront our own orthodoxies, challenging the idea that teaching on current social issues will eventually bring our students around to what we see as the most logical point of view. At the very least, they suggest that change has to start at a very fundamental place of commonality and move ever so gently from there. When this happens, a teacher is just as likely to be moved and changed as a student. Oughtn't this to be the promise of a principled pedagogical endeavor in the first place?

Notes

1. For students who resist the idea that AAVE has rules, I point to the example of the wannabe rapper from the suburbs, who speaks AAVE incorrectly, as those who have grown up speaking it can attest.

2. I tell students beforehand that their translation will be evaluated along two criteria: 1) how faithfully it presents the meaning of the original, and 2) how authentic it sounds ("like something that come out somebody mouth" [128], as Jordan and her students have it). Students who are native speakers of AAVE say that Phil's translation meets the second criterion fairly well, though at five years old now, it's sounding pretty dated.

3. The rule itself echoes Jordan's class's guideline, arrived at in response to one member's assertion that AAVE inevitably entails cursing: "Rule 1: Black English is about a whole lot more than mothafuckin" (128).

4. I've chosen these examples of translations of well-known speeches because the originals will be familiar to the reader. Just as likely, a student might choose to translate a passage from a reading I've assigned, from a text for another class, or a chapter from the Bible.

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Literacy Narratives and Confidence Building in the Writing Classroom

Caleb Corkery

ABSTRACT: The literacy narrative can make a unique contribution to composition studies, illustrating both how our culture inhibits literacy and how people overcome difficult obstacles in learning to read and write. Literacy narratives highlight for writing teachers the life lessons that have advanced people toward their literacy goals. These stories are often about the struggle for and triumph of confidence. Correspondingly, as a pedagogical tool, reading and writing literacy narratives may serve to build confidence in some of our least comfortable students. However, literacy narratives can present obstacles to school literacy as well. Some students are likely to have difficulty identifying with the narrators. Furthermore, when its characteristic values and conventions conflict with a student's cultural orality, the genre can have an alienating effect. This article discusses the advantages and disadvantages of using literacy narratives in the writing classroom. My intention is to provide an overview of how well literacy narratives can help students overcome cultural obstacles to writing in college.

Scholars devoted to multicultural education have made it their project to promote pedagogies that account for and appreciate the differences among those in the classroom. Students arrive on campus with many perceptions of how they differ from the school community. In particular, students may feel that their familiar use of language will not be valued by college professors. Pedagogies influenced by multicultural studies would ideally relieve this alienation by making students see how their differences fit into the course work. This attention to the student's perceived position in relation to the academic realm suggests that the beginning point for teaching is next to the student. Bonnie Lisle and Sandra Mano, in their vision of a multicultural rhetoric, argue that students should be given opportunities to write about their cultural heritages and identities to make them feel more comfortable writing in a college setting (21). Unavoidably, students must develop their "academic voices" out of the identities they bring with them to college; teachers who focus on the contexts that produce the students' voices gesture invitingly for them to find their place in classroom discourses. Denise Troutman finds much support among composition theorists for "encouraging

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students to discover, explore, and develop their authentic voices, because of the confidence and strength that result" (37).[1]

One of the most appealing features of the use of literacy narratives in a writing classroom is its witness to the process of making the transition into a new, more empowering linguistic community. These stories present the students with proof that the struggle to attain a desired but foreign form of literacy is manageable. The personal life overcomes the anonymous institution. The personal voice breaks through and makes a claim. Such authors can pull students magnetically with their hard-knocks credibility and educated polish. This ethos can be especially effective for students who are inexperienced and lack confidence entering into an academic writing setting.

For some students, literacy narratives provide examples not only of characters to model but also of techniques to emulate. If students are able to identify with the drama facing a character's move from one linguistic community into a more powerful one, understanding and practicing the author's methods may seem achievable. These stories confer upon students the importance and relevance of personal experience. They demonstrate how the individual voice can prevail over institutionally imposed forms of literacy. But certainly not all students will respond comfortably. The students perhaps least likely to identify with such stories are students who have the most trouble imagining themselves participating in schooled literacy, perhaps because of the influence of oral tradition in their backgrounds. Students who already feel "outside" of that new literacy are more likely to see the successful narrators as foreign, given the "inside" position from which the authors write.

In this article I will discuss both advantages and disadvantages of using literacy narratives in the writing classroom. Current work in composition studies supports the value of developing community and personal literacies as a way to bring students into academic writing (see Bishop "A Rhetoric"; Couture; and Mutnick). And literacy narratives are recognized for their ability to help students build on the communicative approaches they already possess.[2] I begin by examining this genre for the opportunities it presents for student writers; however, I also critique its effectiveness as a pedagogical tool. I am particularly concerned about the difficulty students are likely to have identifying with the narrators. An additional concern I discuss is the alienating effect this genre may have when students feel that its values and conventions challenge their own cultural orality. My intention here is to provide an overview of how well literacy narratives can help students overcome cultural obstacles to writing in college.

LITERACY NARRATIVES AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING

Asking inexperienced writers to read and write literacy narratives offers several possible benefits. Published literacy narratives provide examples of how one can move into a new language world. Through this movement, the narrator, rather than falling into stereotypical roles, demonstrates empowering ways to define oneself, paths students can use when drafting their own literacy story. The exemplary narratives model ways that one's personal use of language can make its way into the formal literacy of a published book. Also, literacy narratives bring into the readers' consciousness unexamined assumptions about their own use of language. Awareness of the choices one has made as a communicator in the past can help a student see the potential advantage in making other choices and still call them one's own.

Narrative genres in general offer students channels by which to import the meanings of their home cultures into the classroom. However, just as literacy narratives do not take for granted that assimilation into the academic culture is easy or without cost, neither should classroom teachers. Since teachers must respect their students' rights to privacy and their vulnerable positions as uninitiated academics, assigning literacy narratives requires revealing only those aspects of their students' lives that are relevant to the course. And by the time anyone has graduated from high school there are surely literacy experiences that would range from the classroom to the street. Assigning students to examine the ways in which their pasts have influenced the communicators they have become uncovers and points up the complex issues that accompany their move into higher education. But the portrait is, of course, in their hands. How they position themselves in relation to the literacies taught in school is up to them.

Mary Soliday has been a strong champion of literacy narratives, especially in regard to their ability to bridge student and school worlds. In *Writing in Multicultural Settings*, Soliday suggests the use of literacy narratives to "initiate" students into academic discourse (272). Soliday finds that reading and writing literacy narratives help students reveal how feeling different or feeling pressure to assimilate has influenced their learning experiences (261). Exposure to these stories, Soliday believes, will benefit both student and teacher by helping them to discover "generative points of contact between the life and language of school and that of work, family, church, and so forth" (270). Elsewhere, Soliday suggests the value of literacy narratives as examples of transition between language worlds: "Literacy stories can give writers from diverse cultures a way to view their experience with language as

unusual or strange. By foregrounding their acquisition and use of language as a strange and not a natural process, authors of literacy narratives have the opportunity to explore the profound cultural force language exerts in their everyday lives" (511). Through writing in this genre, students can interpret or translate their experience to suit their position as a student.

Soliday points out another important advantage to this genre, the opportunity it presents for revising and strengthening one's student identity. Observing how others use narratives to reshape their identities may also suggest ways to redefine oneself desirably. In a study of high school students who left and returned to school, Betsy Rymes found that the students reshaped their identities in narrating their "dropping out" and "dropping in" stories. The students' role in the story can be altered for their own benefit. They are "not immutable themes that necessarily or interminably dominate the lives of these young men and women. Rather, these themes, by virtue of the context of their telling, were essential to *these* stories, and the students' self-portrayals in these meetings. These portrayals, these lives, are always subject to change" (39). Storytelling provides a turning point in the students' identities. Rymes claims that former high school dropouts can re-script themselves through narratives that eliminate their past identities (91). Likewise, literacy narratives can offer students a chance to adjust their self-images to place themselves comfortably within their new academic community.

Since there are numerous types of literacies and countless events that relate to developing literacy, students should discover different possibilities in their portrayals. And given the opportunity to redefine oneself through narrative, the writer's depiction might gravitate toward identification with the academic audience she is trying to become part of. All students are likely to find comfort in presenting a portrait of themselves as communicators rendered from their vision of the world. But students from communities that traditionally have not had access to higher education are liable to benefit the most from a genre that presents non-traditional paths to schooled literacy. As Deborah Mutnick points out, such pedagogies can help students who might feel alienated in a school environment: "For students on the social margins, the opportunity to articulate a perspective in writing on their own life experiences can be a bridge between their communities and the academy" (84).

Though literacy narratives typically depict the connection between marginalized communities and mainstream literacies, they are not beneficial only to students who feel alienated in school, nor should they be conceived

of as assignments suited only for "at-risk" students. The concerns they address for how one "fits in" are appropriate for any collegiate newcomer. Some may just need more assurance than others. But there is benefit for all students in observing these differences. According to Mutnick, "Such student writing is . . . a potential source of knowledge about realities that are frequently misrepresented, diluted or altogether absent in mainstream depictions" (84). All students, regardless of background, can benefit from the cultural repository made available through such writings (85).

Viewed as moments of cultural expression, literacy narratives take on points of view in a dialogue, which can be empowering for students, as I pointed out earlier. Wendy Hesford also suggests that a dialogic approach to autobiographical writing can assist the student to "recognize [his or her] complex identity negotiations and discursive positions" (149). Hesford points out that since there is no true, essential self the student can reveal, the students' perceived "real" voices emerge out of the discourse communities they are most comfortable in (134). Hesford recommends that we "learn to focus on the discourses of our students" (135) by giving them opportunities to "negotiate their identities discursively" (135). As writers of literacy narratives, students need to negotiate the different life forces that shape their identities as communicators. Reading literacy narratives assists this dialogue by illustrating its universality. According to Caroline Clark and Carmen Medina, "Reading a text as a literacy narrative, the reader engages in the character's process of developing an identity and becoming literate. Narratives by women and people of color enable readers to understand their struggle; they are a means to negotiate the process of literacy and development of identity" (65).

Understanding how one is culturally scripted not only affirms one's identity but also critiques its limitations (65). Literacy narratives introduce in a concrete, familiar form many complex issues concerning the social construction of meaning. By putting the subject matter in the students' domains, this genre forces students into "understand[ing] their own histories and cultural practices within communities" as Michelle Kelly points out in her study of literacy practices among African American youth (246). This self-analysis can challenge students to see themselves and the people they have learned from in wider arenas of discourse. Such awareness can enable an individual to use this autobiographical form to shape new social spaces for the people he or she identifies with (Mutnick 82).

Imitation

As I have explained, literacy narratives play an important role pedagogically through the connections they offer to students' lives. The issues surrounding schooled literacy might be quite relevant for initiating identification with the narrator as well as pointing out the role of literacy in one's life. Either way, the lesson is personal. The text is seen within the context of the students' lives. Emulation naturally follows from close associations between reader and narrator. Developing college writers are likely to benefit by following the examples of literacy narratives.

Getting teachers to accept imitative practices in the classroom is not easy, though. Compositionists today are reluctant to use imitation. In 1980, Paul Eschholz's contribution to the widely distributed *Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition* states that "Writers can best learn from what other writers have done when they find themselves in similar situations. Teachers (as well as students) need to read with a writer's eye and to develop a file of models that can be used in their own writing as well as in their teaching" (36). But no echo of this advice sounds in the 2001 overview of approaches to composition, *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* (Tate et al.), which devotes no space to prose models or imitation. Frank Farmer points out in his latest book that imitation has long been discredited by composition teachers ever since "our wholesale rejection of formalism, behaviorism, and empiricism" (73). But he also notes that, ironically, many rhetoric and composition scholars champion the usefulness of imitation in the teaching of writing (73). For instance, contemporary proponents of imitation such as Charles Schuster claim that studying the choices of other writers can teach one more sophisticated uses of language: "style develops through the imitation of—and association with—other styles" (598). And as Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee point out in their textbook *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, "imitators may borrow the structures used in the imitated sentence, supplying their own material, or they may try to render the gist of the original passage in other words" (295). Bringing imitation down from the theoretical realm and into our classroom practices can assist students in numerous ways.

Much of the trust put into pedagogies that use imitation is indebted to the work of Quintilian, the important classical educator. In four volumes, Quintilian lays out detailed instruction on how to raise the perfect citizen-orator. His approach relies on the power of imitation. Because we learn how

to speak by modeling those around us, Quintilian gives careful attention to one's influences. Much of his curriculum focuses on deliberate imitation of great speakers.

Quintilian tells us that parents and teachers must be vigilant in exposing children only to the highest quality of language. His premise is that language skills are learned consciously and unconsciously from all contacts with language beginning at birth. These exposures beget habits, and from "such practices springs . . . nature" (20). For this reason, good speech must be cultivated because it can be so easily corrupted. Since "good [habits] are easily changed for the worse," he says that correct speech is of a higher quality and more difficult to learn (20). But following examples of the correct and beautiful creates its own excellence, he argues.

Teachers throughout the ages have been influenced by Quintilian's attitude toward students' skills and have used imitation as a standard part of instruction.[3] For centuries, teachers believed, like Quintilian, that to become an effective speaker one must imitate the greatest orators. This approach for training speakers transferred easily to writing instruction. Today, writing students are trained by the canonical works of such writers as George Orwell, Wayne Booth, and Maxine Hong Kingston found in many composition readers. However, these prose models are offered as correct examples to follow and as invention tools for engaging with issues. Quintilian's emphasis on infusing the student's language with the choices available through various models has been supplanted by a focus on the style and conventions appropriate in academic writing. Such views can be traced back to the formalist thinking Martin Nystrand, Stuart Greene, and Jeffrey Wiemelt describe in their account of the history of composition studies when "writing instruction focused on features of good ('model') texts, and much time was spent teaching students to avoid common, egregious text errors" (175). Today, countless composition readers present example texts to illustrate each chapter's rhetorical lesson. The model essays are rarely offered as exercises for practicing the author's style and technique.

Following prose models in a composition reader, however, is different from what many scholars see as the potential in imitation pedagogies. In addition to helping students understand and employ an accepted pattern, imitation can play a role in the way we develop our voices since the interactive nature of language makes imitation unavoidable. The influence of Mikhail Bakhtin upon composition theorists has helped deepen our understanding of the process by which we use the language of others to develop our own. As Charles Schuster explains Bakhtin, "Words come to us from

other speakers; our job is to lay claim to this verbal property" (596). We depend upon imitation not only in the sense that we learn from examples in context; we automatically use the language of those we engage with in order to communicate at any moment. Farmer explains that "the unconscious imitation of another's words is crucial to the continuance of any dialogue with those words. To maintain and to further dialogue, therefore, we must first know how to speak the words of another as a requisite for dialogue with the other" (76). There is always a simultaneous back and forth between the position one assumes and the way one's audience speaks: "The writer continually audits and pushes against a language that would render him 'like everyone else' and mimics the language and interpretive system of the privileged community" (Bartholomae 143). In establishing one's position within the discourse community, one "must come to know that word, as it were, from the inside out" (Farmer 91).

Though the dialogic nature of language causes us to borrow from others unconsciously, there are times when the difference between the speaker's language and the audience's is very apparent. This dissonance could make the speaker uncomfortable and unable to achieve the seamless integration of the other's language described by Bakhtin. Rebecca Moore Howard recommends overcoming the difficulty of entering unfamiliar discourses by appropriating new usages. Pointing out that "a writer's text *always already* functions as a repetition of its sources" (56-57), Howard suggests that teachers encourage their students to use blocks of other writers' words as a stage for developing their own use of the same language. Quoting from Mary Minock's work, Howard claims that students' imitation "is always creative, if for no other reason than that it places the passage of text into a new context. 'Repetition presumes alterity; the more a text is repeated and altered, the more it is committed to unconscious memory, and the more the power of its words and syntax is there to be imitated'" (56).

Imitation and Literacy Narratives

Literacy narratives prepare students well for practicing imitation. Not only do they offer models students might want to emulate, but they also point out the benefit of imitating others. Frequently, characters describe the explicit and conscious use of imitation to achieve their literacy goals. Students who see a character they respect practicing imitation might naturally see themselves as next in line.

Literacy narratives can inspire productive imitation since our aspirations to be like our models make us want to sound like them. According to Barbara Couture, "Writing as the expression of our agency reflects a purposeful design for living, realized through emulating others whose actions represent the persons we would like to be and whom we wish to recognize that identity in us" (47). James Williams also thinks modeling has potential for motivating students: "Students who are inspired by the potential effect of a piece of writing learn a most central tenet: the power of delivering one's meaning" (114). Students may well be unaware of how they have already absorbed the language of their models because, as Robert Brooke points out, we focus on the character of the person we admire, not their words: "Writers learn to write by imitating other writers, by trying to act like writers they respect" (23). Our admiration for someone naturally manifests itself through the way we try to copy that person. According to Brooke, "The forms, the processes, the texts are in themselves less important as models to be imitated than the personalities, or identities, of the writers who produce them. Imitation, so the saying goes, is a form of flattery: we imitate because we respect the people we imitate, and because we want to be like them" (23).

Since emulating is about developing character, one is less likely to notice linguistic and rhetorical appropriations compared to the sense of identity the new language affords. Nevertheless, such communicative influences can become deeply instilled and may represent the language one has most mastery over. Reading and writing literacy narratives can reveal the power our models have on the language we have developed. For students, this genre can help them see where they have used imitation and how they could exploit their models further. This could build confidence in that imitation is easy with familiar models. Also, when students are made aware of their past uses of imitation, they may appreciate their versatility in affecting different voices.

Working with one's literacy role models can also be empowering in the way it establishes community with respected company. Identification bonds are likely to come more easily with those whom one admires. Students form a group with the models they have adopted as influences and styles to be imitated. At the same time, students may begin to perceive the usefulness of their developing literacy to other groups with which they identify. Deborah Mutnick points out that when a group is historically marginalized, speaking for the group as a representative member can be strategic. "[T]hough identity is mainly constructed and always multiplicitous,

[many theorists] have nonetheless opted for a"'strategic essentialism' that recognizes the need to identify with and/or as members of groups struggling to speak and write themselves into history. The articulation of 'I' and the autobiographical impulse, in this sense, are never purely individual acts in that they insert the writer into public discourse, creating new social spaces for all group members" (81-82). Establishing identification with role models through literacy narratives allows for opportunities to advocate for one's marginalized group.

Imitating other literacy narratives generates writing strategies that can be easily accessible. Students usually seek out the teacher's example, if not for grounding in the classroom discourse, at least for the approbation that leads to high grades. But, as Nancy Welch points out, students need a "'third factor' of readings that supply other models [besides the teacher]" (44). Students who follow the examples in literacy narratives are likely to feel less pressure to please the teacher by affecting his or her voice. Models for "becoming literate" in literacy narratives, describe how people who, like the student, were outside of academia, brought themselves into it. These models would suggest different ways to bring the student's particular circumstances into an academic forum.

But imitation does not mean just trying to sound like someone else or even borrowing his or her strategies. Imitation can involve a more personal devotion to those being admired. Barbara Couture believes imitation is most valuable when it moves into emulation: "Writers need to know quite a bit about what it is that others *do* when they communicate in writing so that they can act like them and, perhaps equally important, *be* like them in order to occupy a common field within which each other's communications are heard and understood" (42). Couture suggests that by emulating other writers one can reach common ground with them. One's personal literacy, as a subject, makes such level ground attainable. Awareness of how other writers moved toward academic literacy places the student's stories in relation to the rest. Jacqueline Royster suggests in the "awake and listening" mindset, one should adopt an equivalent status to other communicators when writing or speaking (33). Following the examples of other literacy narratives can make the student realize how much better we communicate when we pay attention to others.

There is a strong case for using literacy narratives in the writing classroom. They model successful achievement of schooled literacy. They allow students who feel alienated by academia to identify with issues of disenfranchisement dramatized in the stories. They give a student examples of how

language can transform one's life, a model any student then has the option to follow. However, there are a number of ways that this genre can hinder student progress in the classroom. While many students might find comfort in this genre, others are likely to encounter distress.

LITERACY NARRATIVES AND STUDENT ALIENATION

Lack of Identification

There is an inherent problem in claiming the ability to help "new" writers from the position of an "experienced" one. Literacy narratives can offer a bridge for the novice writer by modeling different pathways into academic literacy. But for some learning writers, the persona of the newly arrived literate might be more off-putting than comforting. Literacy narratives are likely to be more meaningful to students who already feel the potential power of school literacy than to those who feel far from participating in it. One of the problems inherent in using literacy narratives is the lack of identification offered to students who see themselves as not fitting into the expectations of classroom English.

Educators might be well guided by recalling the historical skepticism of professional writers instructing novice writers. The specialized skill of persuading others has throughout history been viewed with mistrust, as a cunning "knack" according to Plato. The practice of manipulating words brings to mind self-serving ends in the author. Just as we view askance political "spin-masters" these days, Plato questions the motives of a famous teacher of rhetoric in his book *Gorgias*: "Will you [Gorgias] then, if [your pupil] comes to you ignorant of [knowledge on a topic] enable him to acquire a popular reputation for knowledge and goodness when in fact he possesses neither, or will you be quite unable to teach him oratory at all unless he knows the truth about these things beforehand?" (39). Plato implies that teachers of rhetoric pretend they have expert knowledge of a topic in order to demonstrate persuasive skills. Part of the student's educational task is to catch on to the game of acting as if he knows something he actually doesn't. But from the student's point of view, until you are on the inside, sharing your skills with the other pretenders, the teacher's discourse appears foreign in every way.

During the early development of composition instruction, such doubts were still frequently expressed. Richard Whately, an Oxford University

professor who published a widely read treatise on rhetoric in 1828, distances himself from composition instructors by claiming that essays meant to guide students "are almost invariably the production of *learners*; it being usual for those who have attained proficiency, either to write without thinking of any rules, or to be desirous (as has been said), and, by their increased expertness, able, to conceal their employment of art" (292). To Whately, the writing instructor is only slightly more trustworthy than Plato's Gorgias. Though perhaps not deliberately withholding information from their students, writing teachers are unable to impart their craft because the mark of their skill level is to bypass the helpful steps that might tag the text as written by a novice.

These days, skepticism about the writing teacher is framed in the context of power dynamics. Students who sit in class hoping one day to join the educated graduates must trust that the teacher has a genuine interest in letting them into that group. Such trust erodes quickly when students perceive teachers as erecting a foreboding barrier of "correct" academic standards. And holding the power to judge students can tempt teachers to see themselves as the guardians of an educated class rather than as guides for those still on the path to becoming educated.

Mina Shaughnessy validates the distrust students are likely to have of their writing teachers. She describes how teachers of basic writers are likely to view their students as "natives" needing"conversion": "Sensing no need to relate what [the writing instructor] is teaching to what his students know . . . the teacher becomes a mechanic of the sentence, the paragraph, and the essay." Shaughnessy suggests that the worse a student's skills are perceived to be, the farther the instructor will distance himself. And the teacher's cover comes in the form, once again, of demonstrated skill: "Drawing usually upon the rules and formulas that were part of his training in composition, he conscientiously presents to his students flawless schemes for achieving order and grammaticality and anatomizes model passages of English prose to uncover, beneath brilliant, unique surfaces, the skeletons of ordinary paragraphs" (292).

David Bartholomae describes the alienating lens through which students perceive teachers as even more insidious. The instructor may have all the best intentions of meeting students on their level by "diving in," as Shaughnessy recommends, but the divide is part of the structure of academia. Teachers may try to give assignments accommodated to the students' interests, but "what these assignments fail to address is the central problem of academic writing, where a student must assume the right of speaking to

someone who knows more about [the subject] than the student does . . . (595). The instructor is in the privileged position of presiding over the information. Or, as Plato might put it, appearing to know more. Bartholomae is bringing up a different point though. The writing instructor represents the possessor of the language of power. And the student must "see herself within a privileged discourse, one that already includes and excludes groups of readers. She must be either equal to or more powerful than those she would address. The writing, then, must somehow transform the political and social relationships between students and teachers" (594). Bartholomae points out the impossible position of the student: acting as if she is part of the group that–because of her apprentice status–she is separated from.

It is easy to imagine the novice student intimidated by the polished language of a published narrative. Instead of finding identification with the narrator, students might find confirmation for their alienated status. Narrators whom students might at first view as "just like me" trace a path in the story to becoming "one of them."

Students in my classes have had such a reaction to literacy narratives. Reading sections of Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, one student responded aloud shaking his head, "He was some smart, wasn't he?" Others concurred, nodding their heads, still looking at the text. After reading parts of Keith Gilyard's *Voices of the Self*, one student said Gilyard reminded him of his cousin who always got "A's" in school but never had to try hard. For insecure students, following the example of these authors could surely be daunting.

From the position of academics, literacy narratives highlight the multicultural, multi-vocal features of academic discourse. To students who feel judged as outside of the discourse, literacy narratives can nevertheless present an unattainable, monolithic school standard. And anyone speaking from the enfranchised side might be hard to trust, much less identify with.

Subordination of Cultural Orality

Literacy narratives treat the acquisition of school literacy as a goal, if not a triumph. The dramatic tension in these stories is driven by the desire or necessity of commanding the standard for writing correctly. These stories have set a precedent for venerating the culture of written communication. The importance of achieving schooled literacy, performed in both oral and written communication, has been narrated into the Western tradition as part of the individualist's drive for "making it." In George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Eliza Doolittle ascends from a lower-class flower girl to an up-scale

flower merchant by adopting the dialect of the literate British upper class. Countless American autobiographies describe education as a key component to becoming self-made.

Among African American writers, literacy has been equated with freedom, both spiritual and intellectual. Valerie Smith concisely depicts the meanings of literacy in several African American narratives:

> As early as 1829, in his *Appeal in Four Articles*, David Walker spoke of the transforming power of education: "For colored people to acquire learning in this country, makes tyrants quake and tremble on their sandy foundation." As if to elaborate on this notion, Douglass remarks that learning to read and write provides "the pathway from slavery to freedom." Almost a century later, Richard Wright attributes his resistance to authority to the fact that reading introduced him to alternate ways of living. Maya Angelou suggests that the discovery of literature freed her from the traumatic after-effects of an episode of sexual molestation. And Malcolm X links his mental acuity to his rediscovery of reading during his jail term. (2)

So, where does the esteemed status of written literacy leave the oral communication of one's community? Silenced, according to Ronald and Suzanne B.K. Scollon. These researchers, who studied interethnic communication in Alaska, find that Athabaskans have great difficulty responding to written literacy because of the different consciousness that accompanies an oral culture: "Because learning to read and write in the essayist manner is in fact learning new patterns of discourse, literacy for an Athabaskan is experienced as a change in ethnicity as well as a change in reality set" (42).

Similarly, Geneva Smitherman describes the distinct cultural mindset expressed in Black English as unrecognized in school tests of literacy: "[T]oday's most effective black preachers, leaders, politicians, writers are those who rap in the black expressive style, appropriating the ritual framework of the Oral Tradition as vehicle for the conveyance of they political ideologies" (66). Smitherman suggests that linguists and teachers devoted to black education should devise a test for the mastery of this performative tradition, "rather than establishing linguistic remediation programs to correct a non-existent remediation" (66).

Gilyard explains that the privileging of Standard English puts speakers of Black English in the supposed position of needing to learn the school standard for upward mobility. But this argument sets up a dangerous myth

of simple assimilation, according to Gilyard: "Social relations are a far more vital factor for Black students in school than differences of language variety. Black children, like all people, make decisions based on vested interests. If they were to perceive that the social dialectic were in their favor, learning another dialect could not be a major problem" (74). Adopting a Standard English dialect becomes a major problem when the cultural value of one's oral language goes unacknowledged. Quoting Smitherman, Gilyard writes, "teaching strategies which seek only to put white middle-class English into the mouths of black speakers ain' did nothing to inculcate the black perspective necessary to address the crises in the black community" (74).But Gilyard falls victim to the hegemony of written literacy despite his recognition of how the oral tradition has been unfairly devalued. Instead of regarding his oral skills for their distinct qualities, he sees them as funding for his writing skills. He explains how practicing his expression in conversation helped him with subsequent writings (108). He consciously developed his ability to write from the oral skills he possessed. This is the case throughout the genre. Repeatedly, these stories portray oral communication as a rehearsal for the more important written expression.

In literacy narratives, characters frequently sacrifice family and community relationships to succeed in school. Part of the trade-off for school literacy is the devaluing, or even loss of, one's oral literacy. As he progresses in school, Richard Rodriguez notices that the intimate language he shared with his family has disappeared (25). Keith Gilyard creates a school identity in "Raymond" for his teachers and classmates; his real name he saves for his familiar relationships in his community (43). Maxine Hong Kingston and Min-Zhan Lu become silenced, unable to bring the communicative practices of their homes into the classroom. Villanueva claims to have lost his kinship with Chicanos once he chose to learn school literacy (40).

Using the genre of literacy narrative to initiate students into an unfamiliar composition classroom risks further alienating students whose communicative skills come out of an oral tradition. Literacy narratives do not confirm the value of oral expression that does not convert into writing. Cultural influences that shape distinctly oral communicators are not of use when learning the school standard, according to this genre. Instead, literacy narratives air the cultural obstacles and sacrifices that come with learning to communicate in school, while reinforcing the belief that those consequences as inevitable to achieving literacy.

CONCLUSION

Among composition scholars, literacy narratives are often considered to be ideally suited to pedagogy for multicultural classrooms. They bring to light different cultural assumptions about what it means to be literate by demonstrating various paths toward that goal. Attitudes toward literacy, the meaning of being literate, the obstacles one faces in becoming literate–all change with each story about how this person has learned to read and write. Literacy narratives highlight the differences that undergird this common social goal. Though this genre may well suit the pedagogy needed to reach out to students from backgrounds distant from mainstream schooling, not all students will be comforted by such affirmation of their differences. As teachers, we should be careful about assigning a multicultural pedagogy to students we somehow divine as belonging to that category. Every student's cultural influences are multiple; as Esha Niyogi De and Donna U. Gregory point out, a student's culture "is a heteroglossic pastiche, a complex interplay of class; gender; geographic region; nationality; urban, suburban, or rural affiliation; and major socializing forces like popular culture, politics, and religion" (123).

Potentially, all students can benefit from observing the network of influences that produce an individual's view of being literate. The genre of literacy narrative puts rhetorical lessons into a wider societal context, a context in which students might be able to place themselves meaningfully. If the message comes through, in observing this genre, that literacy is ultimately shaped by the individual communicator, the pathway becomes open for the student's perspective. The school standard is likely to look less intimidating when seen as an element used to shape one's voice. Students become empowered when the lessons become personally useful. And since, as Lorri Neilsen points out, "most literate individuals will act out the remainder of their lives in contexts much broader than a schoolroom" (138), all students would benefit from genres that connect personal and social contexts. This is a key ingredient to successful literacy education, according to Neilsen: "When school literacy has little connection to literacy in the broader contexts of life, the chances are great that it cannot promote the development of self-understanding and self-control" (138).

Literacy narratives can provide a meaningful bridge into academic literacy in a number of ways. For those who can identify with the characters,

literacy narratives privilege individual experience, provide social context for personal experience, and empower personal literacies. However, they also devalue oral literacies. This genre presumes the hegemony of written literacy. Oral expression is subsumed into the written. The oral part of one's culture becomes annexed as the precursor to writing. Students who follow the examples of this genre must also therefore subordinate the contribution of orality to their sense of being literate. Though literacy narratives document what most schools hope to produce, this approach may not suit students who have a rich tradition in oral expression. One alternative might be to steer students into narratives of lessons learned, moments of communicative mastery—oral and written. Such an approach could more fully exploit the confidence-building potential of literacy narrative pedagogies while diminishing the barrier they pose in privileging written (school) communication over the oral communication learned in one's home and community.

Notes

1. Linda Brodkey interweaves a discussion of voice and authority in *Writing on the Bias*, highlighting the importance of writing from the authority of one's own experience. The collaborative essay by Beverly Clark (teacher) and Sonja Wiedenhaupt (student) ends with the student thanking the teacher for helping her write: "I don't think it is an easy task to make a student trust their own voice" (71).

2. In her chapter on literacy narratives in *On Writing*, Bishop explains how past experiences with literacy shape the communicators we are and will become. Scott claims that perhaps the most important benefit of excavating past literacy experiences for students is to validate their identities as writers. And Soliday argues that drawing from the students' everyday life through literacy narratives enhances their personal success as writers in the university (522).

3. The works of both Quintilian and Cicero dominated the teaching of rhetoric in English schools during the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries. Quintilian, who devoted his career to teaching rhetoric, believed that facility with speech largely depends upon the combined skills of listening and imitating.

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Not Just Anywhere, Anywhen: Mapping Change through Studio Work

John Paul Tassoni and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson

ABSTRACT: In this autoethnographic, institutional narrative, we describe the evolution of a Studio program at an open-access, regional campus of a state university. The Studio, first conceptualized by Grego and Thompson, is a one-credit writing workshop taken by students concurrently enrolled in a composition course. Developing this program necessitated incursion into an institutional landscape that we learned was not transparent, unclaimed, or uncontested. In remaking that landscape, we came to understand the crucial roles of space and place, power and colonization, in institutional change and in the teaching of writing. Institutional spaces are never transparent, unclaimed, or uncontested; thus remaking an institutional landscape involves issues of power and colonization. Postcolonial theories helped us think about the shifting and asymmetrical relations of power embroiling us as we struggled to bring about change in our campus's approach to at-risk students. We argue that the contradictions and confusions students experience in the university embody the work in Studio, and that these contradictions must not be smoothed out in any narrative we write or theorizing we attempt.

> We are never anywhere, anywhen, but in place.
>
> –Edward S. Casey

> [I]f we think of the university's institutional discourse as objectifying and decontextualizing, so our disciplinary practices also have a tendency to pull our thinking, writing, and talking out of specific places and into a kind of intellectual no-place, a Universe of Ideas.
>
> –Douglas Reichert Powell

Our story of the evolution of the Studio program at Miami Middletown, an open-access, regional campus of a state university, is a story about our

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coming to understand the relationship of space and place in working for institutional change and as crucial concepts in the teaching of writing.change and as crucial concepts in the teaching of writing. Since institutional spaces are never transparent, unclaimed, or uncontested, remaking the landscape of the university involves problems of power and colonization. Postcolonial theories—Mary Louise Pratt's notion of the contact zone and Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity—have helped us think about the shifting and asymmetrical relations of power that embroiled us as we struggled to bring about change in our campus's approach to "at-risk" students, and our mixed, and not entirely innocent roles as implementers of change. At the same time, postmodern geographer Edward W. Soja's rethinking of spatiality in terms of lived lives has helped us to see that the contradictions and confusions students experience in the university embody the work in Studio and must not be smoothed out in any narrative we construct or theorizing we attempt. In part, then, this article is an autoethnographic institutional narrative. As such, one of our aims in addition to describing our Studio program is to locate for readers various sites within a college or university that a Studio approach might impact and to elucidate how the struggle for this new space represents a struggle within a "configurative complex" of cultural, social, and institutional places, to use the words of phenomenological philosopher Edward S. Casey (25).

We began rather naively with the question: How could we change the entrenched practices of the teaching of basic writing at our university? After almost foundering amid conflict, we came across Rhonda Grego and Nancy Thompson's Studio model ("Repositioning"; "Writing Studio"). A small group workshop, the Studio provides a place where students, concurrently enrolled in different writing classes, meet once a week to discuss and question the demands of their various writing assignments. This model has shifted our attention from merely working to change composition pedagogies to asking more productive questions about relationships: How do students understand the rhetorical situadedness of writing and academic culture more generally, and how do teachers communicate (or not) their objectives to students and other teachers? Below we tell our story in greater detail. For now, we would just note that, rather than seeing the terrain of writing instruction as competing sets of pedagogies, contents, and assignments, our Studio experience has led us to believe that the single most important knowledge for students of writing (and for those interested in changing the university) is learning about contextuality—both how context impacts on a rhetorical project and ways in which rhetors engage with particular contexts in order to achieve their ends.

The Studio Model

> Asking questions not only helps clarify assignments but helps students develop a broader and richer vocabulary for talking about writing processes and products, and with more words come more ways of seeing the assignment and envisioning the writing processes and what the products might look like, more ways to imagine possibilities.
>
> —Rhonda Grego and Nancy Thompson ("Repositioning")

The Studio uses an interactive inquiry approach: Students and instructor work together in the workshop to examine individual, diverse writing curricula in order to uncover the rhetorical situation, including the contextual constraints and determinants, of particular writing assignments; teacher expectations; and social issues in students' lives at home, work, and in the university. All these form the "place" from which students must write. Understanding the "place" in which a writing task is embedded may be as trivial as understanding that a certain teacher wants the textbook formula for a paper and no other structure, or as complex as discussing various institutional and disciplinary ideas of "good" writing and the differentials of power that often remain hidden under the illusion of the transparency and uniformity of institutional space. The primary work of students and instructor in Studio is to engage these not-so-trivial realities and tensions of emplacement, and by bringing them to the surface and discussing them, together consider how they impact upon a writer's desires and choices. Following Grego and Thompson ("Repositioning"; "Writing Studio"), we call this process interactive inquiry.

Only when writers understand these determinants can they make choices that serve their own rhetorical ends. By learning how to inquire into the rhetorical situation that every writing task comprises—inquiring into contexts more deeply than merely naming the audience and purpose for a paper—students become more skilled agents[1] who can then decide how to use writing "skills" for the ends they wish to achieve (however differently skills are defined in different classrooms, which is itself a hot topic of Studio discussions). Although such knowledge is the most important lesson we can teach about writing, ironically it may be that it cannot be learned as well inside even the most pedagogically progressive classroom, since understanding contexts requires seeing the wide array of diverse and competing assignments, choices, and constraints, and listening to other students' and teachers' stories. In short, understanding "place" requires a "space" from which to view it that is both inside and outside its boundaries.

Setting Out: Utopian Dreams

> When a true dialogue between students and teacher occurs, rather than random associations between their scripts a new transitional, less rigidly scripted space—the third space—is created . . . . [I]n this unscripted third space. . . student and teacher cultural interests, or internal dialogizations, become available to each other . . . [and] actual cross-cultural communication is possible[;] . . . public artifacts . . . and even historical events are available for critique and contestation.
>
> —Kris Gutierrez, Betsy Rymes, and Joanne Larson

When we first read Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson's description of a classroom third space we thought we were reading a description of our composition utopia. This was the space we sought with our dialogic and democratic pedagogies and (in our most euphoric moments) hoped that we had created in our classrooms and student-teacher conferences. In our own classrooms, we listen carefully to student scripts and the underlife of our classes, and we set up our courses so that students can interrogate elements of society that affect learning. Striving to let go of standard teacher scripts and communicate with students about what really matters to them, we sometimes experience third-space moments in which students contest and even transcend the dominant institutional scripts—in one-on-one conferences, e-mail messages, small group workshops, class discussions, and sometimes even in student journals and papers.

As classroom teachers, we relish such moments, but we are not so naive as to think that in discussing institution, culture, and society, the constraints of institution, culture, and society have been surmounted. Script and counterscript persist and in many cases are the topics of third-space discussions: Students express concern that their efforts might not be understood in terms of our criteria; discuss economic hardships that have brought them back to school and, oftentimes, hinder their ability to keep up with classwork; lament the ways academic prose just does not seem to express ideas they feel need to be expressed.

Though we dream of utopia and may even steal glimpses of it from time to time, we face the fact that as classroom teachers our ability to move script and counterscript into mutually transforming dialogue is painfully limited. Teachers are themselves written by a powerful institutional script each time they pencil in student grades on a scantron sheet or click little boxes to submit them electronically at the end of each term.

Institutional demands—grades, class size, fifteen-week semesters, five major projects, attendance policies, due dates, office hours—remind us that the dream of third-space teaching may be transitory at best. This is not to say that dialogic and democratic pedagogies have no chance against the dominant scripts of the university, only that college classrooms as typically construed—individual kingdoms ruled by individual teachers—make the development and sustenance of third-space moments all the more unpredictable for the student. This is especially so for the "at-risk," open admissions students of our campus.

As opposed to the selective residential main campus in Oxford,[2] Miami Middletown is primarily a two-year commuter campus, admitting any student who has completed high school or a G.E.D. Miami Middletown's population consists of a mix of non-traditionally aged students who work and support families while taking classes, as well as recent high school graduates and post-secondary students. Most are first-generation college students, and many come from the local Appalachian and African-American communities of this working-class steel town. Students from this population identified as "at risk" often have a fragmented history of schooling, dropping in and out of the university for academic, financial, and /or other reasons related to life circumstances. Many have a history of lack of success in school; in high school they have often been relegated to "remedial" writing instruction and have been silenced, pacified, and made to feel inept at writing as a result. Unfortunately, our "at-risk" students may very well encounter similar treatment and attitudes in some college writing classrooms. We thus asked ourselves how we could create the institutional conditions for ideal, third-space interactions to take shape and flourish outside and across the cultures of such classrooms.

Then came Grego and Thompson's description of their Studio program at the University of Southern California. Having just read their 1996 "Repositioning Remediation: Renegotiating Composition's Work in the Academy" in College Composition and Communication, we attended their CCCC presentation and returned with the hope that the Studio approach could achieve the types of third-space encounters we wanted our students to experience. Hopeful that this approach might revitalize our campus's basic writing classes, we proposed to our department the formation of a Studio program and brought the idea to our campus's Office of Learning Assistance, which staffs and oversees the basic writing courses.

At that time, students who had been referred to basic writing enrolled in two 1-credit courses simultaneously, English 001 and English 002. We

proposed borrowing a few sections of these 1-credit courses to use as Studio workshops, which students would take concurrently with the regular first-semester college composition course. The Office of Learning Assistance rejected this idea, but instead agreed to pair sections of the basic writing and first-semester college composition courses. Students designated as basic writers could thus take both courses simultaneously rather than waiting until the second semester to take the first-semester College Composition course. Although this solution was a compromise, it had attractions. Since only about 65% of the students on our campus persist from one semester to the next, we suspected that students who were forced to wait to take College Composition until completing the basic writing class probably carried over little knowledge from one course to the next. Many students come for a semester and then leave for a semester, a year, or five years. When such students re-enroll they are likely to have forgotten what they had learned in the remedial course. Moreover, we hoped that pairing basic writing with a composition class might facilitate more collaboration between the instructors of the paired courses and influence changes in the way basic writing and composition were being taught on our campus. So we agreed to the compromise, and Cindy piloted one paired class in the fall of 1997.

The basic writing course, from what we could make out through syllabi and worksheets, functioned more or less like a current-traditional basic writing course. By this we mean that it emphasized surface correctness and final products. Students filled out decontextualized grammar worksheets, completed modes-based exercises, and produced five-paragraph themes. The syllabus offered a review of subskills (one week punctuation, the next transitions, etc.) and represented composing as a surface task of assembling words according to fixed rules rather than as a deepening process of inquiry and a fluid and complex rhetorical act. The basic writing course ran counter to the philosophy and practices in most of our college composition courses. Thus, the compromise version of Studio gave students identified as "at-risk" through our school's placement processes3 two courses at once, a "remedial" class latched onto a composition class stressing the writing process, revision, and (post)process critical pedagogy. By (post)process we mean a continuation and deepening of the teaching of the writing process through a critique of process as solely a matter of individual writers or as a knowledge wholly systematizable. (Post)process theory recognizes the importance of communicative interaction and conflicting interpretations in meaning making.[4]

In the two years during which we tried this paired version of Studio, the dream of collaboration between instructors never become a reality; the conjoined courses proceeded pretty much as two courses operating according to distinct, if not conflictual, pedagogies. Furthermore, the experiment could not expand beyond one set of paired classes a semester because of the difficulty of having the same students enroll for two linked courses, only one of which, College Composition, fulfilled degree requirements.

In the meantime, John, who was in charge of a faculty development workshop, invited Grego and Thompson to come to Miami Middletown in fall 1997 to discuss their Studio program. Their visits to our classrooms and their presentation on our campus that November laid the groundwork for the next step in our evolution towards a Studio program. During this visit, they planted the seeds of a shared vocabulary and the principles of Studio in the minds of faculty, staff, and administrators. The next year, the Office of Learning Assistance, with the aid of faculty at our university's other regional campus, created a new, 3-credit basic writing course called Fundamentals of Writing with a new course number. This move freed the former basic writing course numbers ENG 001 and 002 for our use. We seized the moment and asked to pilot a free-standing Studio program along the lines Grego and Thompson had described. At about the same time, English faculty on our campus created a new placement process with a range of referral options, including the recommendation that an incoming student enroll in both College Composition and Studio. The Office of Learning Assistance made some changes in its orientation program so that advisors had the option to refer students who were judged to be "at risk" (through the COMPASS diagnostic test administered by Learning Assistance and/or students' Writer Profiles, scored by English faculty) to the Studio program. Thus, in fall 1998, Middletown students enrolled in Studios based on the Grego and Thompson model for the first time. We each taught three Studios, with about four to seven students per class, for a total of six sections and about forty students.

If we were to continue this all too neat narrative of institutional transformation, we might conclude with some sweeping statements and some statistics: At the end of the first semester's piloting of the Studio program, 76% of Studio students completed both the Studio and their English class with a C or better. As Studio instructors, we helped students reflect on their assignments, spoke to composition teachers about students' progress, and invited classroom teachers into the Studio to participate and observe. We felt energized by the third-space moments that Studio work helped create, and we were excited by what students and faculty were learning about the culture of writing at Miami Middletown.

But while all this is true, it is also an overly general and optimistic description of events and aims. A deep description of what actually occurred reveals a much more complex story: of an institutional terrain already inhabited and functioning, although appearing opaque to us; of the two of us as aggressive, naive, or just plain bumbling interlopers; of less change than we had hoped for; and (where change did occur) of change as accidental or partial.

The Land Is Already Inhabited: Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony

> The idea of transformation from a "sheer physical terrain" and the making of "existential space"—which is to say, place—out of a "blank environment" entails that to begin with there is some empty and innocent spatial spread, waiting, as it were, for cultural configurations to render it placeful. But when does this "to begin with" exist? And where is it located?
>
> —Edward S. Casey

> At bottom, there is still hegemony.
>
> —Victor Villanueva, Jr.

On the one hand, a consideration of place means that we cannot envision the third space as "sheer physical terrain" (nor, to be fair, do Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson or Grego and Thompson suggest that we should). Rather, like Pratt's contact zone, the third space operates as a site where the habitual thoughts, practices, and feelings of students and teachers, held at bay through script/counterscript interplay, can "meet, clash, and grapple" (Pratt 34) and open themselves to critical reflection. The Studio itself represents an intersection of emplaced interests and concerns constitutive of our campus: those of our campus administration, particularly our Office of Learning Assistance; our predominantly working-class students, whose job and family obligations frequently demand they be in multiple places at the same time; our main campus in Oxford, with whom we must negotiate a place for basic writing instruction alongside the official curriculum; and other faculty, whose pedagogies are represented by those students who enroll in the Studio. To overlook any of these concerns as they intersect in the very bodies of students in Studio, and to consider the Studio to be sheer space—completely open or mobile—is to, in a sense, commit an act of hypostatization akin to the colonizer who sees a "blank environment"—an empty space—in which to found a city of his own design.

We say "in a sense," here, because our positioning in regard to structures of power tended to fluctuate in different institutional, social, cultural, and pedagogical contexts. Institutionally, socially, culturally, and pedagogically we tried to stake out counter-hegemonic positions. We resisted our selective main campus's attempts to ignore the particular needs of "at risk" students on a regional campus. We attempted to redress the education of our students, who had been inadequately prepared for college writing through policies of tracking, remediation, and unequal funding of public schools. We tried to provide a place for students of various races, ethnicities, (dis)abilities, and social classes to critically evaluate their relationship to an institution whose values and "norms" reflect the history—white, middle-class, and able-bodied—of those who created it. Studio pedagogy itself is counter-hegemonic, as well: Students set the agenda and receive no grades (just one hour of credit); teachers work with students "from the bottom up" to negotiate the demands of college curricula. Given such institutional, social, cultural, and pedagogical factors, it is hard to imagine the Studio instructor in the role of colonizer.

However, our consideration of the third space as place provides us with a view of ourselves as Studio instructors in which our alignment with democratic and dialogic aims emerges as more tenuous. As much as the Studio has an advantage over conventional classrooms in terms of its third-space potentials, to ever think of the Studio itself as sheer physical terrain, as a unified and transparent space, subordinates—without benefit of dialogic, democratic negotiations—the terrain of other institutional, cultural, social, and pedagogical places, on which our own aims encroach. As much as there are institutions in people, disciplining us and enabling us in various ways, there are people in institutions, people who embody the places a society institutionalizes. Each move we made within our institution toward a Studio program entailed a (re)placing of habitual institutional practices—borrowing the basic writing courses for the Studio workshops, referring new students to appropriate entry-level writing courses, changing faculty advising practices, revising English Department committee assignments, creating course schedules—each held in place by people already working within our school. Our movement toward a Studio program involved movement into places, not empty spaces, already peopled. To resist, as Bhabha urges, the "politics of polarity" (209), and yet to characterize ourselves politically in relation to these people, grows increasingly complex.

At times we've seen ourselves carrying the promises of democratic education on our shoulders, arguing on the side of compositionists like Tom Fox against narrow views that read the crisis of access mainly in terms of lack of skills (10). At other times, we've felt like imperialists, aggressively imagining and appropriating open space over the interests and concerns of workers already in place: As full-time members of the English Department and active researchers, we came armed with our "expertise" in composition theory to a place where people (Learning Assistance staff and adjunct faculty in particular) had labored (in several cases, long before either of us had arrived) on year-to-year and semester-to-semester contracts on behalf of underprepared students enrolled in our school.

We often found ourselves succumbing to a politics of polarity as we sought to engage with others in dialogue about the need for a Studio program. Sometimes we fell into script and counterscript, "us" and "them" (even when the "them" was a heterogeneous array of people in many different institutional sites spread over the main and two regional campuses of Miami University). In fact, much of the progress we made toward a Studio program was made in the absence of substantial dialogue between individuals in the various institutional places it has impacted. In a sense we crept along in corridors, setting up house here and there, but outside of improvements we have perceived in our students' writing and the few individual interactions we have had with some composition teachers as a result of our Studio work, we question whether we have changed the pervasive "deficit" attitudes regarding basic writing on Miami's campuses.

On our own behalf, we might say that at this moment we are still learning how to effectively engage in what Victor Villanueva would call "the rhetorical enterprise of a counter hegemony" (132), this article being part of that learning process and that enterprise. One of the most visible sites in our narrative needs to be our Office of Learning Assistance, which oversees the campus's writing center and basic writing classes, including the new Fundamentals of Writing course. The material offices for these services are located in Johnston Hall, along with our campus's administrative offices, campus bookstore and commons, and English classrooms. With other full-time faculty, we have offices on the second floor of Johnston Hall, the top floor. The writing center and Office of Learning Assistance share a suite on the basement level. At the time we began to consider possibilities for a Studio program, much of what went on in the basement of Johnston

Hall in terms of writing assistance was literally invisible to us upstairs and to most members of the Department of English, located on the university's main campus. Indeed, much of it still is invisible.

At our main campus twenty-five miles away, this invisibility was intensified. In fall 1995, the start of his second year at Miami, John mentioned this invisibility to other members of the English Department's Committee on College Composition, situated in Oxford, Ohio. At the year's first meeting, as he listened to the Director of College Composition read a list of reports from subcommittees regarding goals for the year, he noticed that no subcommittee monitored basic writing courses. When several members of the committee pleaded ignorant to the existence of such courses, a faculty member from our school's other regional campus at Hamilton, Ohio, explained that English 001 and 002 were offered regularly on the regional campuses and staffed through Learning Assistance. This teacher, a tenured English department colleague assigned to the other regional campus, had worked for several years with basic writing there. When at the next meeting John proposed and the committee endorsed the motion that a subcommittee on basic writing at regional campuses be created, she thanked John out loud.

Over the next year, the subcommittee met but three times, and since then the basic writing programs at the two regional campuses have moved in different directions—at the other regional campus, toward widening skills-based instruction to area high schools in the name of early intervention, and on our campus toward the Studio approach. In effect, those of us working in basic writing chose to devote time to actualizing our own agendas rather than meeting as a subcommittee to discuss or debate those agendas. When the subcommittee did meet as a whole through 1995 and 1996, the meetings were well attended and diverse in terms of jobs and institutional sites represented: tenure line English faculty from both regional campuses; our campus's Director of Learning Assistance; the director of our Writing Center and her counterpart from the other regional campus; and several adjunct faculty members (hired through Learning Assistance) who were teaching the basic writing courses at that time. In terms of establishing a place for basic writing on our department's map, the subcommittee served its purpose. It now appears on a list of committee assignments for which faculty may volunteer (although even after the College Composition Committee approved the subcommittee, it was omitted from this list of service choices the next two years). Nevertheless, the subcommittee

included only those people who had already been working in basic writing and the two of us, who were just beginning to; our meeting places—at the two regional campuses—were still far removed from the goings on in our department at the main campus in Oxford (who supplied us with no representative).

Although we had made a place for basic writing in our department, the committee that had been assigned the task of developing that place engaged in little more than a series of scripts and counterscripts: pitting current-traditional pedagogies against process and (post)process pedagogies; the Office of Learning Assistance against the Department of English ; adjuncts (hired through the Office of Learning Assistance to teach basic writing) against full-time faculty (who traditionally had steered clear of basic writing). In short, the meetings of the Subcommittee on Basic Writing at the Regional Campuses were often contentious and unproductive, and what goals we did agree upon were daunting, often involving the development of new courses and expanding the power and scope of writing centers university-wide. Mostly, there were tense disputes over changes in the manner of teaching basic writing. As we write this, we lament our failure to generate third-space discussions in these meetings, meetings that in retrospect appear to us as but manifestations of rigid polarizations, not democratic and dialogic third-space conversations.

These polarities are not inevitable. Perhaps we just needed more time in this committee to engage our differences, to develop and discern third spaces and work within them toward understanding and improving conditions for students labeled basic writers, which after all was the shared goal of everyone on the subcommittee. What is evident to us now, looking back on ourselves at those meetings, is that we were the outsiders. We were the ones who needed to be informed about who was teaching what, about how many students were enrolled in basic writing, and about how many sections were available. We didn't know this particular landscape as well as we had thought. On top of all this, many of the other members of the committee seemed to know one another—if not personally, at least by shared experiences in Learning Assistance programs—and got along famously. We learned at the third and last subcommittee meeting that the English faculty member from the other regional campus and our own Writing Center Director were working together on a proposal for a new, 3-credit basic writing course, which would eventually become the Fundamentals of Writing course. In short, while the Subcommittee on Basic Writing at the Regional Campuses had helped basic writing form a blip on the university

English Department's map, it also showed us that basic writing had existed in several places in our institution all along. We had stumbled into a patch of our university terrain as if it were empty space, only to find it very much peopled—and with people who, we came to believe, saw us at best as initiates (given our lack of exposure to the basic writing courses on our campus) and at worst as intruders.

Regretfully, we did little to help the group challenge their characterizations of us nor did we generate any kind of dialogue that might help us learn if these were indeed accurate characterizations. Rather ironically (and in retrospect, embarrassingly), as we worked to make the place of basic writing visible to our colleagues on the main campus at Oxford, we discursively dis-placed those who were already working in that place at the regional campuses. We spoke to our Oxford colleagues in hallways after meetings, and in one meeting of the College Composition Committee, took advantage of the absence of other members of the Subcommittee on Basic Writing to speak off the record about our concerns for the basic writing program. Several of our colleagues at the main campus appeared sympathetic to our concerns; at least, we felt they seemed to side with our critique of the "skills and drill" approach to basic writing. At the same time, others saw interest in basic writing as a foolish career choice. Despite the formation of the Subcommittee on Basic Writing, basic writing remained, geographically and conceptually, distant from our colleagues on the main campus.

During this time, most of our concerns regarded the reductive approach of the basic writing syllabus then in use. All our attempts to influence basic writing curricula had been stymied. We found ourselves displacing the alliance we had sought to form via the subcommittee in order to gain some leverage by aligning ourselves with the English Department on our main campus. Although the basic writing courses had been staffed by Learning Assistance (the lone exception being the one English faculty member on the other regional campus), the courses were indeed English classes. The English Department does have the authority to withdraw recognition from these courses, but we soon came to realize that such action would most likely lead to the same courses being offered under the sponsorship of another department, putting them even further out of our field of influence. As the proposal for the new Fundamentals of Writing had been forwarded to the Director of College Composition, we hoped that she might intervene to guide the syllabus more toward the (post)process assumptions, assignments, and pedagogies driving our mainstream courses.

However, the proposal for the new basic writing course, imbued with the very same approaches and assumptions that had driven the former basic writing course, raised no objections from the English Department's Committee on College Composition and eventually was approved by the university's Curriculum Committee. Although we had not effected any change, approval of this proposal serendipitously left available the 1-hour course number, English 001, for use as the Writing Studio. So it was within this institutional context that we first sat down with students in Studio to help them discern and negotiate the institutional context in which they would be writing.

Studio as Hybrid Space

> [U]nrepresentable in itself [,] . . . the precondition for the articulation of cultural difference[,] . . . the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation . . . this hybridity, this "Third Space"[.]
>
> —Homi Bhabha

As Bhabha has argued, cultures (and here we are thinking of specific institutional cultures) are not deterministically fixed but can be "appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew" (209); yet we would add a slightly more cautionary emphasis that what emerges as "new" in the spaces of institutions, the interstices as Bhabha would call them, is necessarily made from and thus necessarily reproduces pieces of the older, already emplaced culture. We soon found that the divisions we had encountered throughout our lobbying for the program would follow us into the Studio sessions themselves. Far from being a transparent, uniform, or open space, this "new" Studio space quickly revealed itself as densely populated by overlapping and knotted social, cultural, and institutional contexts and constraints, lines that intersected in the lived lives of students and often entangled them—and us—in their nets. Students had been referred to the Studio through various diagnostic devices (writing placement recommendations, scores from a computer editing skills test, advising recommendations, and self-sponsorship—often for the extra hour of credit). Although students at our school are not obliged to follow these referrals, many did. Some had registered in Studios against what they felt to be their better judgments. While these students often resisted the idea of devoting additional time to their writing (which they were to pay for with additional money), other students who had had unhappy experiences with writing in the past sought out and took comfort in the Studio support.

Job and family obligations, which had complicated the academic careers of students previously, continued to do so, and our attrition rates for Studios (much as with other classes at our open-admissions campus) remained high (19% the first year).

Perhaps the most apparent of the contextual elements that materially and metaphorically marked Studio space were the divisions on our campus regarding writing theory and pedagogy. The Studio program revealed an even more divided landscape than we had at first imagined—not the simple divide between current-traditional approaches to the teaching of basic writing and (post)process approaches to composition. From the vantage point of Studio, we learned that the approaches on our campus to writing instruction were as contradictory as they were varied.

Our Studios situate us in such a way that we view the variety of assignments, classroom exercises, and grading practices our students encounter not only across the curriculum but also within composition classrooms. We listen to students' stories about their classes, read their syllabi, and review with them their graded papers. Our Studio sessions reveal that some teachers challenge students to write about significant social issues and allow students to define their own purposes and develop their own forms to serve rhetorical ends of their own choosing. Many other teachers stress adherence to modes of discourse and narrowly prescribe topics for students. Some teachers stress revision and ask students to develop portfolios; others grade papers only once, the first time they see them. Some teachers offer students feedback on audiocassette tapes and in one-to-one conferences; others attend to grammar and stylistic matters by writing cryptic notes in the margins of student papers. One teacher used an elaborate color-coded system that neither the students nor Studio instructor could fathom, even after reading the explanatory key. Some teachers seem rather consistent in their process, (post)process, expressivist, or current-traditional approaches to college writing, while others include a variety of approaches and assignments that often confound students and Studio instructors alike.

One of the most challenging tasks in any Studio is to help students negotiate the various demands of their curricula without negating either students' concerns and desires of expression or the aims of their classroom teachers. We need to help students discern as best we can the underlying agenda of assignments, without compromising the authority of their teachers, while also engaging students in discussing the rhetorical needs and writing practices we believe will improve their writing. At the same time, in conducting the Studio we need to be conscientious about our own positioning, so that participants

develop and sustain third-space discussions. This means being careful not to represent the various voices emanating from classroom practices so as to arrange them into script and counterscript, them and us.

Studio Practices

> [W]e found ourselves struggling to articulate the value and meaning of what happens with student writers in Studio sessions and what we have learned by pushing past the boundaries of our own institutionally-inscribed assumptions.
>
> —Rhonda Grego and Nancy Thompson ("Repositioning")

As spatial praxis, Studio creates a space for students and instructor to scrutinize the very different pedagogies, assumptions, concerns, and content of writing instruction (represented through syllabi and assignments) that circulate throughout an institution but also remain discretely tucked away within individual writing classrooms. Just as importantly, Studio provides a space to address, question, and talk back to the people behind these official texts. Throughout the semester, as Studio instructors, we remain in contact with students' classroom teachers. We meet them in halls and use e-mail to inform them of their students' progress. We question the classroom teachers to enhance our own understanding of what they might be looking for in particular assignments and to exchange information about students' understanding or confusion about course assignments. Such interaction improves our instruction in Studio and contributes to a larger ongoing campus dialogue about the teaching of writing, which we hope will lead to reflection that critically sharpens the practice and theory of writing instruction of all teachers, ourselves included. We invite classroom teachers to attend a Studio session. Students can then directly ask questions of classroom teachers, and those teachers can observe and participate in the interactive inquiry of Studio, a practice we hope the teachers will take back into their own classrooms.

We also write memos describing Studio activities to classroom teachers, keeping them informed about work in which their students engage. These memos serve a variety of other purposes as well. For one, we do not send them out without first asking students to review them. Through this process, students get an additional chance to reflect on what they have accomplished in Studio. We also ask students to add to the memo, or write their own memos to their teachers about their work in Studio, giving Studio instructors an opportunity to reflect on what students consider to be, or not to be, significant. Indeed,

engaging the difference of viewpoints among students and instructor about Studio work can generate important third-space discussions.

These memos to teachers allow us to intervene in our campus's writing culture. They afford an opportunity to author a third-space discourse in the interstices of the various scripts and counterscripts of official documents. Among other things, we use these memos to represent our own approaches to writing alongside those of other teachers, giving them a chance to consider (just as we do in Studio sessions) how different approaches to writing may complement or collide with one another in productive or nonproductive ways.

For example, we use the memos to describe to other teachers what seems to work for individual students in Studios, offering them a chance to consider elements of their curricula that they might enhance or change or even disregard. By documenting what goes on in our interactions with students, and in a non-prescriptive manner, Studio memos provide teachers with a means through which they might critically reflect on their teaching methods and on ours:

> • The process of talking through really seems to help Justin [all student names are pseudonyms]; the more he talked and the more the group asked him about what he talked about, the more he found to write about.
>
> • During this session, Sharon also found out that reading her draft aloud helped her to locate many awkward sentences.
>
> • The Studio class felt Wendy could reorganize her draft, putting similar points together, and suggested she use the word "thing," which you tagged as repetitious, as a cue to cut to the chase, to be specific regarding her arguments.
>
> • Our Studio group examined the returned draft of Todd's paper on his traffic ticket. We felt he could handle your suggestions to add more detail and dialogue, since he was fluent in these matters in other areas of his paper. He was also confident he could address the matters of grammar and style himself, stating that since he had been submitting a draft—not a completed version—of his paper, he had not composed it with much attention to those areas. I suggested that he leave time during his writing process to attend to

matters of style and correctness, as these were among the matters you stressed in this preliminary grading.

• Bill also presented the outline he has in mind concerning his research project, and I talked about how research sometimes begins with an outline going into the project, how the research sometimes comes first, and how both the research and the project must remain flexible to new insights along the way.

• The Studio group discussed the "68" Danny received on a subject-verb agreement quiz. We talked about how vernaculars differed: I stressed to him that his usual way of talking is not wrong, but that rules of Standard Edited English were being stressed on the quiz. We talked about how he would not be able to trust his ear in many cases, since he is used to hearing verbs used in other ways. I suggested he study the passages that had been marked wrong toward the goal of locating patterns in his subject-verb usage and ultimately of recognizing these patterns in other contexts, a task which I told him is hard to do, but which will improve as he reads and writes more in college.

The above passages point to the range of conversations that the Studios generate. Given the small class size of Studios, we can delve more deeply into individual students' writing practices than can classroom teachers, many of whom are teaching two, three, or even four composition classes of twenty or more students. The fact that we are neither grading students nor designing their assignments also allows us more freedom to discuss, critically and rhetorically, the details of writing practice that intersect with larger issues of writing and language, issues such as the rhetorical choices involved in grammar and punctuation, or debates about dialects and Standard Edited English.

As a result of the space the Studios allow for our in-depth interaction with student writers, we also get to know students and their work in such a way that we can perhaps offer classroom teachers alternative means of engaging their students and students' texts:

• Much of our discussion also focused on what Heather confessed to be her feelings about feedback, as she says she typically feels "bashed" no matter how tactful the commentary. We discussed

as well Heather's reluctance to reveal private matters in her narrative for a public audience and how various omissions affected her paper.

• Since Ian had already received your feedback on the draft, we talked about the chances he might be taking if he should decide to move the draft in directions your comments did not address. He said he did want to do a little more to the draft in response to both our group and your comments before he submitted the paper.

These passages indicate issues that intersect in our Studio sessions, such as the politics of writing to teacher expectations and the ways personal insecurities and suspicions might impact academic discourse. They also point to ways the Studio can help students validate their concerns as well as their accomplishments. We find that the memos provide us with a means to act as liaisons for students, as well. We explain some of their motives for and perceptions about writing to teachers, and at the same time we highlight for teachers various student achievements:

• The class was generally impressed with Geoff's descriptive paper; we liked his comparisons ("vampire shadows") and word choice. Also, we liked his manner of organization as he describes his progress within his restricted line of sight.

• Students were impressed with Laurel's detail concerning the water tank in the waiting room, feeling that the scene expressed well the nervousness of the two girls.

• The group discussed at length Hank's use of "she" to describe the field, generally feeling it helped add a dimension of personality to the paper.

As a "split-space of enunciation" (to return to Bhabha's description of third space), the Studio does open up possibilities for new kinds of interactions that may lead to negotiating or at least discussing conflicting approaches to the teaching of writing. Paradoxically, however, at the same time the Studio is also driven by constraints that limit the kinds of dialogue that can occur. Consider the following memo Cindy as Studio instructor wrote to a classroom teacher:

> I am writing to tell you how Jean is doing in Studio and invite you to make any suggestions about areas we might focus on. During the previous two weeks, we discussed researching topics related to the book you are reading. Jean narrowed her topic to "rape" and then to "acquaintance rape." I helped her get started on using the computer to search library materials (books and article citations), and she reported the next week that she had found a number of references she could use. We also went over a reasonable work plan and timeline for her completing her research paper. I suggested she have a draft by Nov. 12 to bring to Studio workshop so as to give her plenty of time to find more information and revise the paper by its due date. Jean is generally very quiet in Studio. I don't get a clear idea of how she is doing in English 111, and she hasn't brought any papers into our workshop. Let me know the areas we might work on or any other concerns you have.

This memo was written to a senior colleague who allows no revisions, assigns mostly in-class writing, and only a small number of out-of-class papers, primarily one research paper. The memo tries to open up dialogue about the writing process, such as drafting, workshopping, and revising, and about the content of the research project, but does not open discussion about the rhetorical situation of the writer or of the assignment, or conflicting social views about date rape, all issues that this teacher's pedagogy did not seem to welcome. The classroom teacher responded with a long complaint about the student's punctuation problems and grammar errors (she mentioned faulty parallelism, modifier errors, fragments, comma splices, fused sentences, and agreement errors) and characterized the student as one who "has refused to address" these problems when the first paper was returned. It's not clear, of course, how students could "address" these errors when they cannot revise their papers. There was no comment about the subject chosen for research, about its relations to the course reading or goals, or about Jean's thesis, beliefs, or argument.

This particular memo exchange illustrates the very real limits of curricular transformation that a Studio program faces, as well as the ways that Studio itself becomes complicit with values and approaches to writing external to it. Dialogue did not occur with that teacher, and change did not take place "out there" in the classroom. In fact, that classroom's "values" seeped into the Studio. As the Studio group worked with Jean to help her

craft a research paper without significant rhetorical context, Cindy had little success in getting students to inquire into the social and rhetorical complexities of writing a paper about date rape. Who would be an audience for such a paper? What does the writer want to say to that particular audience and why? Does the writer have a personal story connected to this issue? What do other people, in different positions, think about date rape and why might what they think be related to their positions? Tense about meeting the expectations of teachers who want one-shot, non-rhetorically based research papers (with perfect grammar and punctuation), students want to shut down competing interpretations and inquiry as off the mark and too risky. Students' discussions move centripetally back to reinscribing a current-traditional pedagogy of mastery of a set of subskills as the sum total of writing.

The Spaces and Places of Lived Lives

> [O]ther defining qualities of Thirdspace: a knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences, emotions, events, and political choices that is existentially shaped by the generative and problematic interplay between centers and peripheries, the abstract and concrete, the impassioned spaces of the conceptual and the lived, marked out materially and metaphorically in spatial praxis, the transformation of (spatial) knowledge into (spatial) action in a field of unevenly developed (spatial) power.
>
> —Edward W. Soja

> Staying around is half the battle.
>
> —Tom Fox

Studio space is frankly not utopian at all. Leading a Studio is hard work, requiring flexibility and improvisation, tolerance, and some complicity with "norms" and values one may wish to contest. We do not wish to endorse acceptance or passivity; we try to work counter-hegemonically against the emplaced practices and values we disagree with, but often what we are most aware of is how difficult it is to change the status quo. Two examples stand out. Not only are composition teachers sometimes not open to new kinds of interactions, as in the case of Jean's teacher; many adjunct faculty who have no office space or teach at off-campus community sites are simply unavailable for student conferences and unreachable through e-mail, memos, or phone calls. We are not blaming adjuncts for this com-

munication gap. It reveals the deeper institutional structure, its exploitation of part-time workers, and the low status of writing courses that are seen as easily and cheaply staffed by part-time workers, and this institutional reality impacts on our most vulnerable, "at-risk" students in highly specific ways. We use the Studio to discuss and prepare students to become more effective in conferences with their teachers, yet many students and even the Studio instructors often cannot talk with writing teachers, cannot ask questions, and debate or negotiate curricular issues. In Studio we see the real effects of this structural problem on students who don't ever communicate with their teacher and who have a sometimes shockingly limited grasp of what is going on in class. Unfortunately, as Studio instructors we see too often that, whatever the pedagogy and assumptions driving a writing class, they remain unknowable and unimaginable to students.

As Soja states "the lifeworld of experiences, emotions, events, and political choices" are both real and imagined. In the gap created by little or no communication with their teachers, students' imagined "scripts" become a powerful unofficial curriculum that they bring with them to the classroom and into Studio sessions themselves. We hear these phrases again and again in Studio: "I just want to write what my teacher wants," "I have nothing to say," "I have no writing work to do," "Just tell me how to do this paper." We work to supplant these scripts with others, like "Let's do some exploratory writing to uncover something you want to say," "There's always writing work to do," "There's no single 'correct' way to write a paper," "Let's talk about the politics of just writing what the teacher wants," "Let's talk about your history of schooling." This last suggestion usually seems completely off-topic to students, and yet to unravel and examine the powerful forces of entrenched student and teacher practices firmly in place often does mean asking students to critically reflect on their past experiences of school and to imagine new ways of thinking about the classroom that will supplant the old scripts.

After leading Studios for several years now, we have undergone some changes, as well. We are both much more attentive to the rhetorical situations of our writing assignments as we have seen first-hand how student shortcomings may often be the result of unexplained or unexamined contexts set up by our assignments. Our responding to student writing has likewise been transformed. Studio discussions again and again reveal that students cannot understand teacher comments on papers, however well-intentioned the teacher was when writing them. (We have been just as guilty as others in this regard.) As Studio instructors, we've become much more

aware of the waste of energy and time taken in marking papers, when those markings seem opaque and indecipherable to students and even to us as practiced teachers! Several instructors on our campus use audiotape-recorded commentary. Playing these tapes back in Studio sessions was a transforming experience: Students got to hear the nuanced way that an attentive reader responds to a paper. Tape-recorded comments lend themselves to deeper discussions of content, arrangement, and rhetorical choices; allow the teacher to pose broader questions that remain text-based; and make discussion of contexts much easier. After one semester teaching Studio classes, Cindy saw these advantages and started using tape-recorded responses, changing a twenty-year practice of written commentary. And while John still writes comments on student papers, he now follows each marking session with a one-to-one conference to explain further and to negotiate with students the significance of his comments in relation to each assignment.

We continue to map the relations between our Studios and their intersections with other contexts in which our students write, bringing the third-space potentials of Studio practice into dialogue with the realities of the institutional, social, and cultural places teachers and students inhabit. In the second year of our program, we moved Studio sessions to our campus's Writing Center, which shares the basement suite with the Office of Learning Assistance. Thus, a place and an administrative division that was once on the periphery of our understanding is now closer to the center of our practice. As we lead Studio sessions in this place, we hope we are now more visitors than intruders, able to share and learn ideas about writing, instructional practices, and dreams for improving the culture of writing on our campus.

Authors' Acknowledgement

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Notes

1. We are indebted to Pegeen Reichert Powell for her reworking of the concept of "skill" and would like to acknowledge her important contribution to redefining this term in her dissertation, "(re)Writing Skills and Changing Standards in Composition Pedagogy, Educational Policy, and Public Debate."

2. Miami University has three campuses in Ohio: the main campus in Oxford, Ohio, is a selective admissions, residential campus, specializing in liberal arts undergraduate education and selected graduate programs. The English department is the largest on campus and offers Master's and Doctoral degrees in creative writing, literature and composition and rhetoric. Miami's two regional campuses, located in Middletown, Ohio, and Hamilton, Ohio, are primarily two-year colleges with open admissions. Faculty in Arts and Sciences on all three campuses are members of their home department in Oxford.

3. The evolution of the placement procedures at our regional campus is a complicated story in itself. See Lewiecki-Wilson, Sommers, and Tassoni, "Rhetoric and the Writer's Profile: Problematizing Directed Self Placement" for a full account.

4. We put "post" in parentheses to indicate our position of continuing to teach process along with postprocess social theory and critical dialogue. Welch argues that compositionists should "remain at the intersection between 'process' and 'post-process' conceptions of composing (163-64), a position compatible with a third-space approach. For further discussion of postprocess, see Kent, and Dobrin.

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Crossing Academic Cultures: A Rubric for Students and Teachers

Mark T. Williams and Gladys Garcia

ABSTRACT: Researchers use images of outsiders and insiders to distinguish basic writers from students more proficient with the demands of academic discourse and academic culture. For example, David Bartholomae examines how outsiders rely on unelaborated commonplaces to define their interpretations while insiders elaborate and work against their commonplaces. We underscore how the rhetorical topics are the basis of the commonplaces, how students can define, compare, relate, and cite their assumptions more successfully. We also describe a rubric to assess how students may move from outsiders to insiders in part by cultivating what Kenneth Burke calls a "humble irony." This perspective may help students develop more critical viewpoints and may prompt teachers to better engage the dissonance and difficulties students bring to our classrooms.

As writing teachers at California State University, Long Beach, where nearly 50% of composition students are the first in their families to attend a university and just 35% define themselves as "White," we frequently see many of them struggle with academic discourse. In the communities surrounding our school, residents speak 33 different languages, an environment one journalist calls an "alphabet soup" (Simmons). And while faculty from the departments of Asian-American Studies, Black Studies, Chicano and Latino Studies, and English offer multicultural curricula to students from these neighborhoods and beyond, we assess students through the conventions of critical academic culture. They must analyze their own and others' ideas, question'"commonplace assumptions" while exploring new perspectives, and evaluate "all knowledge claims" (*Composition*). These goals are particularly difficult for the 50% of first-year students who place in remedial writing courses.[1] For a variety of reasons, these undergraduates may not comprehend

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the claims we hope they will critique, may recoil from reconsidering assumptions because meaning seems fixed, and may resist what they see as an oppressive world-view pushed by professors. Consequently, as researchers have noted in other settings, our campus manifests what Mary Louise Pratt would probably call "contact zones," places where cultural groups "meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (34).

Mina Shaughnessy first identifies some repeating syntactic and semantic errors among basic writers new to academic culture, those "true outsiders" who have not yet "reconciled the worlds of home and school" (2-3). Patricia Bizzell reminds us to reconsider the off-campus circumstances that may influence basic writers, or "outlanders." We should reassess how their "outlandishness" can be explained in part as a conflict between their home dialects and Standard Written English as well as between their world views and ours (*Academic* 164-66). Bizzell argues that we should recall how academic discourse seems mysterious to students new to scholarly conversations, and she contends that writing teachers should expose and demystify how knowledge is created and conveyed (108-12). David Bartholomae also acknowledges that although academic writing can remain "mysterious" even to those who compose it, students need to imagine themselves as "within" such a discourse ("Inventing" 590, 594). Students need to move from "outside" to "inside" academic language by discovering an authoritative stance, by taking risks with their syntax, and by resisting ordinary interpretations of the world to approximate more authoritative prose. They need to "imagine for themselves the privilege of being 'insiders'" (597-99).

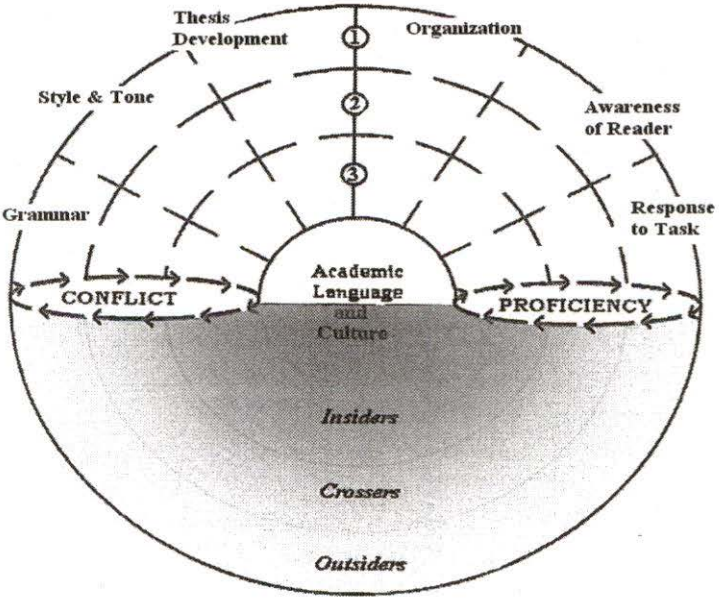
Some scholars criticize Bartholomae for overrating academic conventions, and the *insider/outsider* distinction may evoke static conceptions of language and learning that many hope to erase (Alford; Blake; Boyd; Lyon). Antonio Gramsci in fact disrupts hegemonic concepts of *a center* by lauding the transformative, centrifugal possibilities "organic" intellectuals can enact in social spheres (1-23). Paulo Freire critiques those who promote "banking" or passive pedagogies that reinforce ideas among the less literate that they remain "outside" of social structures. Everyone is already "inside" a given society, and we can potentially find agency to transform our marginal places through an active, critical consciousness that unveils and intervenes in the world (55-57).

Still, however, the *insider* and *outsider* distinctions help researchers locate student writing and teacher pedagogy (Brammer; Farris; Kutz; Rossen-Knill and Lynch). Bartholomae also adds rhetorical dimension to these spatial metaphors by updating Aristotle's "commonplaces" to suggest the

concepts and statements we use to interpret the world. The commonplaces, or rhetorical *topoi*, are *places* in language where we define, compare, relate, and cite our potentially transformative views of the world. Bartholomae contends that students must locate themselves in academic discourse in large part by extending such commonplaces as "no pride," "lack of incentive," and "laziness" into more rigorous explanations of experience ("Inventing" 592). Basic writers need to "extend themselves" into the interpretive frameworks that comprise the varied fields of academic communities—as expert writers do when amplifying and elaborating ideas and assumptions through analysis and critique (600, 610). Aristotle of course identified commonplaces for the homogeneous Greek forum, and Giambattista Vico later defined the topics as a "primary operation of our mind" (*Science* 498-97). Vico contended that students could counter the increasingly powerful empirical sciences by simultaneously accommodating and critiquing the values and viewpoints that construe cultural environments (*Methods* 19, 34).

We combine the commonplaces with *outsider/insider* distinctions to locate student writing in the discursive sphere below. We use the rubric to characterize student writers who may be crossing into the more critical terrain of academic culture and to invite fellow teachers to reconsider the values and viewpoints that underwrite our position within the academy.

A Process-Guided Rubric



This rubric is motivated by Kenneth Burke's claim that the rhetorical topics provide a means to shift between images and ideas (*Rhetoric* 86). We use this image to process the frequently ambiguous ideas that students put to paper. When Burke introduces the pentad of act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose as resources to discern motives among people who use and are used by words, he offers an image of a solid earthly surface, where divisive ideas congeal, then give way to a molten core, an "alchemic center," where language and identity can recombine in "consubstantial" relationships (*Grammar* xix). We can potentially identify with others, but the ironic, consubstantial grounds of rhetoric always admit division as well (*Rhetoric* 22). These boundaries of unity and separation emerge each time we assess student writing: some passages place students within our communities, some passages keep them out. Moreover, the molten nature of Burke's core underscores our commonplace view that academic discourse and culture are constructed through argument, through the give and take that rhetoric allows. Ironically, too, the topics do not comprise a discrete category in the rubric; they are what Vico calls the primary operation of our minds at work during assessment, the taken-for-granted categories students use to write and we use to read their writing.

So, critiques of hegemonic centers notwithstanding, we see *insider* prose closest to the rubric's molten core, where students construct consubstantial commonplaces by defining their own and others' assumptions through comparisons, relationships, and sources. *Insiders* also demonstrate awareness of readers' expectations and partly reconcile ambiguity and conflict through the irony that Burke evokes. Student prose in the next category, *crossers*, is where writers begin to elaborate on their clichés by defining their own and others' assumptions through comparisons, relationships, and sources. They generally show some awareness of readers' expectations and recognize—but do not reconcile—conflict, contradiction, and ambiguity. The exterior sphere of the rubric suggests *outsiders*. Student writers in this category usually rely on stereotypical responses and clichés and miss defining their own and others' assumptions through the topics. They also tend to misunderstand or reject critical questions, show little awareness of readers' expectations, and avoid contradiction and ambiguity.

We are not here implying static categories of student writing or hard links between learning styles and language forms. To be sure, the two smaller circles marked "conflict" and "proficiency" on both sides of the rubric's center convey the recursive or looping nature of writing—how students will encounter varying levels of tension and success in virtually each piece

of prose. Many students in fact produce passages in each essay that demonstrate some elements of *outsiders*, *crossers*, and *insiders*. Their developing ability to traverse these boundaries underscores the transformative powers that language allows.

For example, one student crosses the conflicting terrain between home and college when she chooses to write about her father's violent drunkenness. Initially unwilling or unable to define him as an alcoholic, the student arrives at this definition after a first draft, but she ends with an unresolved contradiction characteristic of *outsiders*: she now sees herself as "a mature, independent and very intolerant person of abuse" (see Appendix A for the complete student essay). In contrast, another student analyzes published writers who "walk on thin ice" when arguing about school prayer. In a later essay he then both recognizes and partly reconciles contradiction: as an atheist, he feels excluded from the center of society. The first student approximates *insider* writing by developing a more detached, *outsider* perspective on "home"; the second student acknowledges how *insiders* can remain *outside* cultural comfort zones by maintaining contrary views.

These passages and others underscore the fact that as faculty who enforce academic conventions while also trying to nurture diverse student viewpoints, we need to discover and maintain an ethical stance to assess their writing. Burke is helpful here, because he identifies a "humble irony," a supple standpoint that emerges when we use the pentad to consider how we are not simply "outside" others as observers, when we realize how we contain others "*within*" us (*Grammar* xix, 514; his emphasis). Hopefully, as humble *insiders*, we aim for *places* in language and experience to reconsider *outsiders'* perspectives.

One strand of Burke's "consubstantial" stance may explain such work. *Insiders* can build a place for themselves in language that admits contradiction, can be at once with and against others. Gloria Anzaldúa deploys this *topos* when recalling how she learned the contradictory "territories" of her ethnic community and the world of the academy (Lunsford 8).Victor Villanueva also enacts this stance to explain his simultaneously *outsider* and *insider* status as a professor (*Bootstraps* xiii-xiv). Bartholomae too acknowledges how *insider* discourse is "not the world but a way of talking about the world" ("Inventing" 593). We consequently look for—and infrequently find—student *insiders* who decode texts and encode print in part by reconciling ideas seemingly *outside* their own immediate experience. We also look for—and frequently find—students who may be *crossing* from a relatively unelaborated stance to consider others' views more intensely.

In what follows, we first reintroduce definitions of "culture" and review practices of writing assessment that address cultural issues. We then examine sample student writing that corresponds with the categories of our circular rubric. We end by contending that Burke's humble irony is a stance that might enable students and teachers to understand each other more fully. This view was expressed millennia ago when Cicero called for the topics to invent ideas before judging them (Book 2.159-66), to discover more about our worlds before critiquing them.

Writing Assessment and Culture Influences

The word "culture" of course conveys an immeasurably large field of human experience as well as the particular life patterns of persons in homes and neighborhoods. "Culture" also carries immense ideological weight and essentialist implications, and we are wary of suggesting causal links between diverse student backgrounds and the writing they produce.[2] Tracking through "high" and "ordinary" conceptions of culture that Matthew Arnold and Raymond Williams introduce, we turn to Clifford Geertz, who defines culture as "webs of significance" that all people spin from their experience (4-5). We particularly value those writers who are willing to unravel some ideological networks that comprise the commonplaces of the cultural landscapes surrounding us.

Scholars have called for more research on how culture may influence writing assessment at least since conferees to the 1975 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) acknowledged that an increasingly multicultural society demands recognition of varied written dialects (Committee). Twenty-one years later, the CCCC's position statement on writing assessment (CCCC Committee on Assessment) prompted many individuals and programs to develop unconventional rubrics and portfolios to better account for the cultural contexts that may affect student writing (see Kamusikiri; Holdstein; Hamp-Lyons). Increasingly, the relatively objective or scientific stance that assessment participants and projects had used to reach reader reliability has been replaced by more context-sensitive readings of student work (Broad; Huot; Yancey "Looking Back"). Scholars also question how traditional assessment rubrics tend to fix or reduce complex writing processes to a set of seemingly stable criteria (Mabry; Yancey "Postmodernism"). Ulla Connor argues for more sensitivity to cultural influences on assignments, rubrics, and readers' interpretations in part by citing the traditionally situated nature of rhetoric. She asserts that writing

is an activity embedded in culture, that cultural factors influence how writers perceive their readers, and that patterns and processes of language and writing are culturally specific.

So, even though cultural issues manifest in many discussions about writing and assessment (Bean et al.; Bruna et al.) and individual teachers may enact strategies and assessments that are highly sensitive to the specific classroom cultures, rubrics for writing assessment generally do not foreground cultural influences. We know of no study that explicitly explores how cultural differences may be assessed—aside from the errors ascribed to students whose first language is not English (Cho; Crusan). The relative lack of culture as an explicit component of assessment rubrics is understandable because of the speculative links researchers might infer when questioning how cultural circumstances can sustain and constrain student writing. For example, Margaret Marshall identifies how the influences of class and culture can basically remain invisible to teachers and how our inferences about the possible effects of cultural forces can be wrong. Some Anglo students can struggle with writing as much as students from any other racial or ethnic group, and we should be wary of ascribing causal links when none may exist. White males, for instance, do not have a "unitary experience" that we can discern in their writing (235).

The difficulty of reading student writing is complicated by the critical demands that composition programs make of students new to universities—students whose home-based value systems may not generally accept cultural critique. In fact, Bartholomae's suggestion for students to situate themselves in "a discourse that is not 'naturally' or immediately theirs" ("Inventing" 602) may defy some ideas of how identity, culture, and power are intertwined through language. Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky certainly provide students with multicultural readings, and they admit the difficulty for students to read both with and "against the grain" (11-12). Tensions nevertheless remain. Raul Ybarra ("Cultural") cautions us to consider the dissonances that may exist between the cultural conditions of Latino students and the epistemologies at work in composition courses (38-39). Ricardo Garcia warns us that Mexican-American children are generally taught to respect elders and those who hold positions of authority, so they may expect a composition course to be a place for clearly representing ideas, not a place to also question ideas through writing. In addition, Ilona Leki reminds us how other ethnic groups display similar "reverence" for respected individuals in the community (64).

Some individuals resist the dominant discourse once they are proficient in it. When arguing against California's law to eliminate bilingual education programs in public schools, for example, Adela De La Torrre asserts that "the dominant culture could have meaning in my eyes only with the remnants of my family language" (1). Claiming her right to nourish and sustain an identity through the language of her choice, De La Torre argues that "maintaining our language is a final act of resistance" (2). She contends that the language of childhood and home must have a place in formal learning. Other scholars explore the tensions they experience when alternating among the languages of several cultures to construct identities as writers. For example, when Ngugi wa Thiongo'o discusses the role of language in shaping his autobiographical identity, he asserts that language is "both a means of communication and a carrier of culture" (Ngugi 13), and he details his struggle against the damage that colonizing discourses can create. Other scholars examine how disciplinary bias complicates teaching and assessment (Faigley; Yagelski; White).

Keeping these complex cultural issues in mind, we next examine student writing that corresponds with *outsiders*, *crossers*, and *insiders*. We also look for writing that prompts us to reconsider the relatively safe terrain we occupy—how as *insiders* we may take for granted the cultural dissonance and difficulty students may encounter when entering our classrooms. We can perhaps learn more about them as they learn more about academic discourse by rigorously defining ideas, by relating experiences more fully, and by locating points of view through a conversation with sources beyond ourselves.

Outsiders Caught in Unelaborated Commonplaces

We begin examining student prose with a qualification. You will notice that the upper-half of the rubric denotes six discrete categories for assessment—Grammar, Style & Tone, Thesis Development, Organization, Awareness of Reader, and Response to Task. We admit that six categories are a bit overwhelming to consider when reading student writing, but we do want to capture the complexities of writing processes in our relatively simple rubric design. As the broken lines in the upper-half of the rubric are meant to convey, the six evaluative categories are molten, or intertwined: students define their theses by developing and organizing their main points as well as by acknowledging readers' potential responses. Nevertheless, a more solid or discrete sense of the evaluative categories might help students see the places where they need to improve.

Outsider prose is of course identified by relatively frequent grammatical and/or syntactical errors that obscure meaning. For example, the student who wrote the "Power" essay (Appendix A) should be praised for exploring a dysfunctional domestic situation. She nonetheless ends her work with unresolved syntactic contradictions that mark much of her writing as *outside* acceptable prose. *Outsiders* also generally do not realize the need to define their commonplaces because these phrases carry their own explanatory force—as Bartholomae suggests with "lack of pride" and "original sin" ("Inventing" 592). The writers do not generally compare how their beliefs might be constructed differently by others; do not relate their examples to other examples; do not cite voices in opposition to their own; do not locate an identifiable point of view in discourse. Moreover, the students have difficulty identifying with ideas presented outside of what might be called their own zones of cultural comfort. After the September 11 terrorist attacks, for example, a Latina was asked by the media why she watches television news in Spanish rather than in English. She answered by praising the Spanish-speaking journalists: "They know people like me, they come from where I come from, they think the way I think" ("Bringing"). She acknowledges difficulty in identifying how the English-language media present the event and so returns to media which better represent her culturally-informed views.

Of course, we all gravitate to familiar media to process traumatic events. When students are trying to learn the discourse of the academy, however, an over-identification with home culture may translate into resistance and/or rejection of academic tasks. When not explicitly rejecting our prompts, students may discover additional dissonance and difficulty by falling back on stereotypical reasons for their ostensible analysis. For example, a student who immigrated from Vietnam as a young teenager was asked to explain some of the possible causes and effects of poverty in the United States. As part of her response, she acknowledges how "a competitive society" requires everyone to work. In the U.S., though, "poor people are too lazy to work. They have no expectations in life." Here as elsewhere in her essay the student mimics the commonplace that laziness equals poverty. She does not define this phrase through comparisons with her experiences in Vietnam or with published sources, as she was asked to do. Later, she does examine some possible causes of poverty, but these causal relationships are reduced to a simple rationale. Economically impoverished people, she writes, "like to live in the street because they don't have to worry about paying any types of bills every month. . . . they prefer to be poor instead of working their life off just to get out of poverty."

In the final sentence of her essay, the student does mention the possibility that the "unequal opportunity to succeed in life" is a potential cause of poverty. This idea could be a central part of her essay—as many experienced readers would probably contend—but she does not develop or support the concept. She probably encountered a level of poverty in Vietnam much worse than that of the United States. She nonetheless does not relate examples of Vietnamese poverty and its causes to the phenomena she encounters here. It is understandable that she would hesitate to compare such diverse cultures, but it is our responsibility to encourage her to do so. She may not realize that her foreign experience can be defined, compared, and related to her experiences here as she develops proofs to support her claims. She can tap experience-based *topoi* to *cross* into more critically informed writing.

The next samples emerge from an essay written by a Latina student who, when analyzing arguments for and against allowing women combat positions in the military, reverts to stereotypes typical of *outsiders* to the academy. She reviews how two authors—Margaret Thatcher and Nicholas Coppola—offer contrary views of allowing women to serve in military combat units. After briefly introducing the authors' main claims, the student puts forth her ostensible thesis: "In either case there are many ups and downs of women being in combat" (see Appendix B for the complete student essay). This pat phrase begins to suggest the complexities of the issue—complexities that she generally neglects in the ensuing prose. And while clichés such as this can help students maintain a sense of self when trying to approximate academic discourse (Skorczewski 230), we see this phrase provisionally marking her as an—*outsider*. She later laments how Thatcher "does not use any statistics to back up her claims . . . and causes her to appear much more opinionated." Here the student does not seem to recognize that opinions can be validly put forth without statistical information; she does not yet seem to recognize that our discourse community admits appeals other than the sheerly empirical.

She then identifies the ethos that Thatcher embodies as a former British Prime Minister to acknowledge a stereotype in the politician's writing. Thatcher "claims that '[women] are better at welding [*sic*] the handbag than the bayonet.' This claim is very general and not only goes out of the boundaries of her argument, but it has absolutely no proof supporting it." With her characterization of Thatcher writing "out of the boundaries," the student does not acknowledge that Thatcher might be deliberately mocking others' arguments—a point she could analyze through Thatcher's style. The student, in short, does not infer any ironic elements in Thatcher's work—an

awareness fundamental to recognizing and perhaps countering the commonplaces that give shape to intellectual landscapes.

Christine Farris offers helpful explanations of writing we would classify as *outsider*. Detailing how she encourages teaching assistants and members of writing programs to reconsider and revise how they teach writing when she introduces cultural critique to first-year writing courses, Farris acknowledges dissatisfaction with student writing that is not related to error. Many students "cling to unified worldviews" when asked to critique popular culture. Many of these students, who seem to believe that "experience is universally the same for everyone," cannot seem to "get beyond" their initial retorts to social issues, "beyond merely agreeing or disagreeing," repeating commonplaces and "ventriloquizing" already published positions (97-98).

In the examples above, the students seem unwilling or unable to define a stance that could take them *beyond* the commonly expressed phrases about the world. As one graduate student wrote, many first-year composition students do not yet seem to realize how cultural consciousness is "unconsciously imbibed" and how an academic sense can be "consciously cultivated" (Jones 1). We believe students can discover a more critical consciousness by developing relevant comparisons for their discussions about poverty and equal opportunity, by discerning more of the causal relationships that may complicate and/or contradict their original views, and by cultivating sources to elaborate upon their pat phrases.

Crossing into Critical and Elaborated Discourse

The middle sphere of the rubric suggests the prose of *crossers*, writers who seem to recognize the socially constructed nature of belief sets, who begin to question commonplaces, and who organize and support previously undefined and unelaborated clichés. They respond to assignments by exploring some probable relationships among multiple causes and effects, by comparing apt realms of experience, and by citing sources with increasing deftness to locate their analysis in conversation with others. Their writing nonetheless remains marked by a tendency to under-analyze, by not adequately supporting an idea, and by not defining or locating a point of view that suggests some of the cultural dimensions informing their perspectives. They also seem frozen by an increasingly sensitive rhetorical consciousness: aware of readers' expectations, they are unsure how to engage them. In the "Power" essay (Appendix A), the student has the confidence to write about embarrassing family experience, but her syntactic contradictions suggest she

is still processing the event for herself. She has not yet discovered how to effectively translate the powerful event for readers who may emphathize with her trauma but who expect more coherent, developed explanations of it.

Another Latina student exemplifies difficulty with readers' expectations when reflecting on how she wrote a paper for her peers to review first. The assignment required her to describe an event or experience that had changed her life. She recounted working at a store and how, over time, she realized that many North Americans are "self-centered" and overly influenced by "greed and corruption." She later wrote in her journal that she did not want to offend her peers with these characterizations, so she stopped examining these potentially offensive views. Her reluctance is understandable. Nonetheless, she can be encouraged to realize that her critiques can be valued; many readers would certainly accept her critique of the harried, sometimes abrasive quest for more money to buy more stuff—if she developed this commonplace through definitions, comparisons, relationships, and sources.

She also explains how her fellow employees and customers were frequently "extremely inconsiderate" when demonstrating their materialist values, and she recounts how she eventually understood that she "did not want to be a product of that type of society," a materialist, U.S. society. She is here writing against commonly accepted assumptions, but she can do more to relate her own experiences to what she sees happening around her. She could compare the worksite to values perhaps enacted in her home. Moreover, she does not admit the fact that as an English-speaking student at an American university, she is and continues to further become a product of the dominant culture. She defines herself in opposition to U.S. culture without yet realizing a productive place for herself within this society. A skilled teacher might encourage her to imagine a more nurturing workplace by reading about and citing sources that document such environments, might challenge her to define an oppositional—*topos* that need not offend. The student could, for instance, appeal to readers who may have experienced similarly material attitudes. She could imagine how others, seemingly *outside* her world, in fact populate it too.

Another Latina student, the first member in her family to attend college, praises her parents for helping her attend a university while also admitting the unknown terrain found here. "My parents have supported and guided my path throughout my education," she writes, "even though they were not sure what exactly it entailed." Most of her experiences on campus will be novel because she does "not have the fortune to have someone show

me the steps to take." Her writing has clichés, but she defines a point of view that admits the unknown. She also acknowledges ambiguity: her parents "were not sure what exactly [college] entailed," but she was encouraged to attend school nonetheless. She is simultaneously affirming her home environment while also acknowledging how she is entering into a relatively unknown academic culture. Conflicts remain unresolved, but she can be encouraged to define some of the ambiguity that attends to these tensions. We could support her elaboration of values from home that may help her negotiate the conflicts she encounters on campus. "

We examined above an example of *outsider* prose when a student analyzed whether or not women should be allowed in military combat. In some sections of her paper, the student is *crossing* into more successful academic discourse. For instance, when reviewing Thatcher's dismissals of a woman's overall strength and martial abilities, the student counters with the comparison that many women have earned high marks as snipers. Moreover, the student defines as deficient Thatcher's credibility on the matter. The former politician "has never served in the military nor has she experienced some of the trials that women must face in today's military" (Appendix B). Such a stance may result from Thatcher trying to imagine herself in such a situation, the student writes. But "she is not putting herself on the side of women that may have the capabilities to perform well in combat." The student defines Thatcher's apparent antipathy to other women; she acknowledges Thatcher's ethos as a political leader, and she criticizes Thatcher for not supporting her claims. Still, this student could *cross* more effectively into *insider* writing by elaborating more about "the side of women," the experiences that perhaps inform other women's views.

In another example, a Latina student questions the value of affirmative action programs in college. While her writing overall is quite strong, she lapses into some unelaborated definitions, some underdeveloped relationships, and some potentially faulty comparisons. For example, when summing up her rejection of affirmative action, the student writes that merit—not skin color—should solely be considered when students apply for college: "The admissions process is only taking into account generalizations and forgetting to look at a person as an individual and not as a Latino or African American." She continues by contending that "society should aim for a colorblind society and affirmative action is only hurting this goal." This student should perhaps be applauded for criticizing a program that some might contend has helped her. And, while she writes relatively error-free, well organized prose that marks her as successful in a composition classroom, she offers a

relatively reductive definition of affirmative action—how the program is "only hurting" the objective of a "colorblind" society. She relies on commonplace ideas of a "colorblind" culture and the power of the "individual." In addition, she does not yet make any comparisons with the past that might complicate her claims. Nor does she explore any of the causal relationships that might affect the attainment of "merit." Moreover, she does not seem to consider *the other*—the humble awareness that some students grow up in circumstances that may basically preclude academic success.

The writing of *crossers* is perhaps best evoked by assignments that challenge students to discuss satire and irony in contemporary life. For example, one African-American student analyzed media accounts of Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers* to evaluate the success of the film and to consider Stone's possible culpability in copycat crimes. After concisely and effectively summarizing the film and two arguments about it, the student first lapses into relatively awkward sentences and clichés typical of *outsiders* and *crossers*. "One's outlook on society will probably differ from another's," he writes. "Everyone will not conform and believe what others believe." He then moves toward a more *insider* view: "The media has been more than eager to capture scenes of violence and exploit them to the world." He begins to question cultural commonplaces, but he continues to rely on conventional *topoi* such as individual responsibility.

Becoming *Insiders* to Academic Culture

The *insiders'* place on the rubric is populated by students who are able to define cultural contradictions succinctly, compare relevant experiences when exploring these contradictions, and express with effectiveness the sometimes competing belief sets of home and school in part through an ironic consciousness that admits the influence of others. Anzaldúa offers a professional version of such a stance when she defines her experience on the Mexico-United States border to critique the effects of the political boundary. Borders are set "to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*" (3; her emphasis).

Insiders seem to negotiate the material and conceptual boundaries that sustain and constrain *us* and *them*. For example, we identified above how a Latina student exemplified a *crosser* when criticizing her co-workers and customers as overly materialistic and rude. In some passages of her writing, we also see an *insider* stance beginning to emerge. When reflecting on her relationships with fellow employees, she states how she had "grown to a state

beyond material possession and conformity." The student is here perhaps traveling towards the ability to embrace ambiguity and contradiction: she is "moving beyond" materialism. While still undefined and itself a cliché of sorts, the *topos* of "beyond" suggests a willingness to enter into the relatively unknown, a move toward a molten world where values can perhaps be reconsidered and reconstructed. She might craft a more *insider* stance by complicating her oppositional view of others with the notion that she also contains others' views inside of her. How, for example, might materialism manifest in her home, and how might she productively integrate these contradictory influences?

We identified above some elements of a *crosser* when a student explored and exploited some of the contradictions attending to affirmative action. We also see her writing as an *insider* when she questions how affirmative action is carried out. "Somehow the supporters of affirmative action have convinced themselves that a diversity of colors and physical features will somehow benefit the college environment." She then challenges this assumption: "The simple fact that people are from different races does not automatically produce a diverse environment. People may all be different colors, but hold the same ideas and opinions. Where is the diversity then?" Although this critique might be considered predictable—diversity of skin color does not equate with diversity of thought—she seems to convey a humble irony. Social Darwinism notwithstanding, she argues for intellectual diversity, for complex interpersonal perspectives invigorated through an engagement with others.

We mentioned at the beginning of this discussion a student who investigated prayer in school, and we now end with more analysis of his work. This Asian-American student first analyzes two arguments about school prayer to later write an argument against the increasingly commonplace appeal to God in U.S. culture. Challenging the beliefs of many readers, he first analyzes a controversy about the phrase "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. Defining the patriotism resulting from the attacks of September 11, the student writes how some citizens responded to the violence in New York and Washington through bigotry, and he goes on to argue that Americans turned to religious views to justify the war in Iraq. Recalling how one California man successfully challenged the Pledge before the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, the student later states why many people accept its recitation: "With most of this nation believing in one God or another, it is no wonder why the Pledge has not been protested: the majority of the public are comfortable with the Pledge as it is." The student argues, however,

that the U.S. Supreme Court should consider historical facts when reviewing the Circuit Court's decision: "The Founding Fathers hoped the nation could be a place where every man and woman could live in peace." Noting how the government has nonetheless traditionally relied on religious values for expedient ends, the student contends that politicians exploit religion "because it gives the impression that they have a set of values, morals, and beliefs. While I agree with the power of this tactic, I do not believe it gives the power to force us to believe in God."

The student then historicizes the reference to divinity in the Pledge, noting how the phrase was inserted during the Eisenhower administration to reinforce differences between the U.S. and the "Godless" communist nations. He goes on to briefly define his own atheism. We see *insider* passages here because the student clearly defines a contentious issue and he critiques the commonplace by developing relevant historical sources. He notes the irony of America as a "place" initially defined as free from religious constraint, but this place nonetheless remains significantly bound by religious dictates. Most importantly for us, the student seems to cultivate the "humble irony" that Burke defines as fundamental to rhetorical consciousness. He admits how religion fosters both good-will and bigotry among those around him, and he cites the power of the Pledge to *both* unite *and* divide people—what Burke defines as a consubstantial stance.

Insiders can admit and express the irony of being at once with and against others. Burke addresses this *topos* when recalling how rhetoric is for Aristotle a means to "prove opposites"; rhetoric is a method to identify with and oppose others in any given case (*Rhetoric* 25). We see Villanueva offering a variant of this consubstantial view when he realizes that his *insider* status is simultaneously strengthened and weakened by his racial stock, by his markings as *outsider*. He has "succeeded in all the traditional ways. Yet complete assimilation is denied—the Hispanic English professor. One can't get more culturally assimilated and still remain other" (*Bootstraps* xiii-xiv).

Although this complex discursive balance is perhaps *beyond* most basic writers, we end with some suggestions for working towards this molten, rhetorical stance in the BW classroom.

Crossing from *Outside* to *Inside* through Writing

When teachers encounter writing from *outsiders* to academic culture, we might help them cross into more effective composition by considering what Eleanor Kutz calls "interlanguage." Kutz develops this category when

detailing how students produce awkward and convoluted syntax as they encounter "new or stressful discourse demands" (392-93). She argues that we can build on the verbal abilities students bring to the classroom as well as on their earlier success when they progress through increasingly difficult texts and tasks. Moreover, when Bizzell details the "hybrid" writing that emerges in the "blurred" borders between academic and home discourses ("Basic" 7), she recalls an earlier essay in which she contended that we can encourage students to develop their own hybrid discourses. Such language would include "variant forms of English," surprising references to cultural sources, and irony among other elements ("Hybrid" 7).

We can encourage students to see irony and hybridity at work among successful writers from cultural backgrounds similar to their own. We can also encourage students to take more risks—particularly in the drafting stage, when we introduce the rubric to them to suggest how their writing remains *outside* the expectations that readers of academic writing generally have. We can see clichés as productive points for further elaboration, as Farris contends. Students can complicate their clichés, amplify the pat statements with reference to their own and others' experience as well as to ideas encountered in texts. In the'"Power" essay, for example (Appendix A), the student may be *crossing* necessary contradictions as she processes her experience. We can remind future students that they too may encounter ambiguities that may not be immediately resolved, but such intellectual conflicts mark the very terrain that academic writers must traverse.

We suggest that the process-guided rubric may help students cultivate a more fluid understanding of how writers travel through the contradictory and molten language that stretches between home and school, between writers and readers. Ideally, home languages would receive equal consideration in the classroom, allowing students traditionally *outside* of academic success to define their home culture in a meaningful way for readers on campus. Such meaningfulness is created in part by elaborating commonplace statements into critical assessments through detailed causal, temporal, and other relationships, through apt comparisons across experience, and through a deft use of published sources. The optimal result would be writers who can bring their *outsider* identity to an *insider's* stance, a place where they can more effectively acknowledge the culturally plural nature of knowledge. Such positions are inherently multicultural because we must understand how the commonplaces of others help construe the discursive landscape we *cross* in the classroom and in the world. And such positions require teachers to listen to students as carefully as they often try to listen to us.

Notes

1. Placements are made by combining students' SAT/ACT scores with their performance on the English Placement Exam, which they take during their junior or senior year in high school and which is assessed by readers independent from any one California State University campus.

2. We consistently encourage students to explore and express the experiences that might influence their writing, but we do not in this paper question the actual off-campus situations that may influence their academic performance. Ybarra presents a powerful example of how Latino students may experience cultural dissonance when traveling from the home to campus (*Latino*).

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APPENDIX A

Student Essay

The Power of a Fist

The best time possibly for the majority of people is when the holidays start approaching because it is a time that brings the family together to celebrate a joyous time: This was the feeling surrounding my family as well. Thanksgiving was the only time throughout the year when my dad joined the girls to help with the cooking and cleaning. By now my dad had already begun feeding his unhealthy habit. It was not an unusual occurrence when my dad would drink excessively, but when he would drink too much the outcome was always a nightmare. I was beginning to worry, but I hoped that since it was Thanksgiving it would be different. The day progressed and the later the day became, the more our stomachs growled desperately in hopes of being stuffed with the delicious smelling food. My worrying had not been in vain, my father abused my mother that night. What I witnessed that night on Thanksgiving four years ago has created a strong feeling of intolerance for this type of behavior.

The perfection of that day was simply magnificent. Everything was going according to the way it had been planned and nothing seemed to be able to ruin it, except for maybe my dad and his unnecessary drinking The moment we had all been waiting for was slowly approaching, dinner. My aunts and uncles were all arriving with smiles, hugs and hungry stomachs. As soon as they walked in I could see their mouths beginning to water from the smell of my moms famous cooking. The day could not be any better. It was not too hot or too cold. There was a light breeze swiftly running through the trees and making everything look as if it came straight out of a fairy tale. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, my mother began serving our dinner. We all gathered around the dining table, like ants on a piece of candy. We sat down and said grace and devoured our food.

The night continued on, we were all laughing, singing and dancing to a wonderful year and Thanksgiving. My mom and dad looked happy, despite the fact that my dad was intoxicated with alcohol. He could still walk on his own, but he would sway from side to side. His eyes were beginning to lose their focus. My dad was going overboard with his drinking. I tried my hardest to stay up and celebrate the rest of the night with my family but my eyelids

could no longer stay open, and it was impossible for me to stay awake. As I said good night to everyone, and went off to my room, I prayed that my dad would not go through with his usual show when he became drunk. It was extremely embarrassing for my family and me to watch our dad when he was intoxicated. He would start rambling about work, Mexico, and start dancing on his own or cling to people he did not even know.

My prayers were not answered, instead my dad's outburst was the worst I had ever seen. I jumped out of bed with sounds of screams. I ran out of my room and into the kitchen. I could not understand what was going on; my dad was yelling at my mom who was down on the floor crying and holding a hand up to her face. I looked around and theexpressions of disgust on my relatives faces gave everything away. My dad was beating on my mom. I had never seen my dad behaving in such a manner before. He had been drunk before but he was always sure of what he was doing. I also clearly recall him swearing never to beat on my mom. I could not understand how a person could do this to someone they know is weaker and defenseless when put up against them. By now my mom was trying to pick herself up from the floor, but my dad grabbed her by the hands and threw her on top of the kitchen table, where just a few hours ago we had all been eating a fantastic dinner in peace and love.

I wanted to move and help my mom who looked in pain down on the floor. WhenI tried to help her my legs would not budge from the floor. He kept on yelling and swearing at my mom horrific words and he would try to talk but his words were only slurred. Out of nowhere my dad grabbed the kitchen table with my mom on top of it and flipped it over. My mom yelled and along with turkey, rice, beans, drinks, salsa, bread, and everything we had only a while ago had for dinner flew from the kitchen table and onto the floor. I had never seen such a spectacle. There was a feeling in the room of severe disgust and disbelief. I felt as if I did not even know this man who was my father, although I had been living with him all fourteen years of my life.

My uncle finally fell out of shock and grabbed my dad, pushed him down to the floor and helped my mom up from it. When my dad looked up from the floor, the crazed looked-in his eyes suddenly disappeared, and a look of confusion came his face. He then looked at my brother, my mother, all our guests and me. He looked around the kitchen, towards the floor at the chaos he had created and slowly with his head down, lifted himself up from the floor and walked to his room. My mind was not registering what had just occurred. These sort of things where only supposed to be seen on T.V. Too

much had happened for me to process everything at once, and I fainted.

When I came to, almost everyone had left, except for my aunt and uncle. My aunt, my mom's sister, was with both my mom trying to comfort her the best she could. My uncle, her husband, was with my dad, questioning him and at the same time trying to understand what had just happened. My dad was crying and apologizing to everyone, especially my mom. I tried standing up, but my legs could not support me, they felt like jelly, and I thought I was going to fall, my arms were shaking, and I could not look at this man which I had to call father, because of his actions. At this point something inside of me was triggered something I thought would never develop. It was not hate, because after all he was my father. Instead it was a very strong' grudge, because he should had never done what he did.

Spousal abuse is not a recent phenomenon or something that happens occasionally. There are cases upon cases of this nature, where the male beats the female so severely she has to go to the hospital and stay in bed rest for weeks. Many children become traumatized when witnessing one parent abuse the other. These acts are forever imbedded in children's memories, possibly affecting the way a child views opposite sex relationships. There is absolutely no excuse for a man or a woman, despite their anger, to hit their spouse, and there should not be a single person putting up with any sort of abuse. Through witnessing the abuse of my mother, I have become a mature, independent and very intolerant person of abuse of either the male or female in a marriage. This was a very important lesson for me, as it should be for everyone, whether a victim or not of abuse. No one should put up with being abused even if the person says they love you, because if in reality they did, they would never harm you, especially in such a way that would send you to the hospital.

APPENDIX B

Student Essay

Women in Combat

In today's military, women are allowed to take on numerous jobs of great importance. However, women are not allowed to fight in combat. Some people like Margaret Thatcher, Author of "The dangers of Feminism Damaging our Armed Forces", would like to say that it is wrong to allow

women to fight in combat. On the other hand Army Major M. Nicholas Coppola, author of "The Female Infantryman: A Possibility?" would disagree by saying that women should be allowed to fight in combat. I either case, there are many ups and downs of women being in combat.

Margaret Thatcher wrote her article in 2003 for a larger piece named "statecraft". Thatcher appeals to the adult readers by beginning her argument saying that "soldiers generally need to be physically strong" (p.3). This argument would imply that women aren't physically strong enough to do the tasks that males in combat do. Thatcher shows logic to this when she tells about how the military had to change the lethal capability of a grenade because women couldn't throw the heavier, more-lethal grenades as far as they needed to in order to avoid being caught in the explosion. However, Thatcher does not use any statistics to back up her claims and in return it causes her to appear somewhat unresearched and much more opinionated.

Margaret Thatcher has a great deal of credibility piled up in her past. Her most widely known achievement was her role as the British Prime Minister from 1979-1990, the longest run for a British Prime Minister in the twentieth century. This would put her into the position of having to deal with many political issues. She is also the first and only woman to run a major western democracy. Thatcher associates herself with the subject by saying that "women have plenty of roles in which they can serve with distinction: some even run countries" (6). This claim shows that she is one of those women that is content with one of the roles that women can serve with distinction. Thatcher makes another claim by saying that "the fact that most men are stronger than most women means either that women have to be excluded from the most physically demanding tasks, or else the difficulty of the tasks has to be reduced." She creates credibility by showing an example of how the US Navy had to 'reconfigure' their warships to accommodate the facilities the women needed that men do not. She says that the USS Eisenhower had to spend million dollars on their ship alone for renovations. This fact causes her argument to be more persuasive and causes the reader to think of women as being an inconvenience to the military's warships. Thus, causing the reader to further agree with her. Even with all of her political background as a woman in power, she still feels that women should be excluded from combat.

Thatcher makes a claim that in my opinion might evoke anger if those that were supporting women in the military had read it. Her claim is that "[women] are better at welding [*sic*] the handbag than the bayonet" (6) This

claim is very general and not only goes out of the boundaries of her argument, but it has absolutely no proof supporting it. There are many women that have been rated as snipers in marksmanship. Thatcher might have been a woman ruling a country, which would leave her opinion regarded as high and superior. However, Thatcher has never served in the military nor has she experienced some of the trials that women must face in today's military. She might have this opinion because this is how she feels she would perform is she was put into a combat situation. She is not putting herself on the side of women that may have the capabilities to perform well in combat.

Coppola wrote this article for the December-November 2002 edition of the Military Review. Coppola began his argument to the adult public by stating the fact that it is public policy and federal law that women can't be in combat. He does this to give background information to the reader. This makes him seem well informed.

Coppola brings to mind the logical fact that "not allowing women to serve in combat units runs counter to trends in American society that show that women can perform equally with their male counterparts in law enforcement, firefighting, and other civilian occupations"(1) This statement shows a trend that is very persuasive in leading the reader to agree with him. Coppola claims that "until women are given the opportunity to fail as infantrymen, there will continue to be criticism of an exclusionary policy"(4) Coppola backs up his claim by warranting that "females in law enforcement and firefighting have been successful when given the opportunity"(4).

Coppola tells about the women in America that disguised themselves as men and successfully fought in combat in American wars. He tells us that "Japanese women died in hand-to-hand combat during World War II"(2). He includes this fact in order to evoke sympathy from the reader. Coppola claims that "despite documented, tried, and proven examples of successful females into combat and infantry units in foreign countries, current U.S. policy continues to exclude females from similar opportunities"(2) This claim is very persuasive, however it seems to be opinionated and might be easily contradicted because he shows no statistical proof that these women were successful. Coppola only provides dialogue from men that responded positively to seeing these women fighting for their country in World War II.

In Coppola's argument, he isn't just arguing for an argument's sake. He actually suggests a solution called Advanced Individual Training (AIT). This program would train the women that would voluntarily join AIT and help integrate them into infantry units. Voluntary is his way of surpassing the argument of what women should or should not be allowed to do. Having this program be voluntary makes sure that these women are consenting

and aware of what they are signing up for. This idea causes his argument to be much more ethical and effective because it shows that he actually wants a solution. This gives him credibility to his audience along with the fact that he shows proven facts and trends in his argument. For example, he tells us that in the United States Marine Corps and United States Army training programs, "current graduation rates suggest there is no difference in success for either male or female United States Army or United States Marine Corps candidates" (1). Coppola also has a very persuasive argument simply because he is an active member in the United States military. He has inevitably been around women or has been influenced by them. Coppola obviously has generated his opinion that women should be allowed into combat through his experience with the women he sees every day working in the military alongside him.

Coppola's argument is strongly supported by Retired United States Air Force Captain Barbara A. Wilson. In 2002, she wrote "Women in Combat: Why Not?" She informs us about a research project done at the US Army Research institute of Environmental Medicine. This research project tested the woman's ability to become as strong as a man. This project concluded that "when a woman is correctly trained, she can be as tough as any man"(1). She talks about the fact that it would be too much of a hassle to have women facilities put into certain male-dominated military units. However, she retorts the issue by saying that "Military units of mixed sexes have quietly maintained order, accomplished missions, and passed operational readiness inspections with flying colors. They're too busy doing their jobs to worry about who uses which latrine" (3). Her final claim is that "The pure and simple point is that all jobs should be open to women and men - if and only if - the women and men are qualified, capable, competent, and able to perform them. Nothing more, nothing less" (7).

In the end, the question posed is, should women be allowed in the military? To answer this controversial question, Margaret Thatcher and Nicolas Coppola both wrote pieces on them. Coppola argues for women in combat simply because it is not fair to say that women can't fight in the military when they haven't been given the opportunity to do so. Thatcher argues against women in military, saying that it is ethically wrong and would be a burden to our military. Both of these arguments came from very intelligent and well-informed writers that have credible experience with the military's infrastructure. One can only hope that a true answer to this question will finally be decided. Until then, the law will stand that women will not be allowed fight in combat in today's military.

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