ASKING IN THE VOID OF THE ANSWER: THE PEDAGOGY OF INQUIRY AND THE DISCOURSE OF DISCOVERY

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Introduction

The boy and his mother are a modest scandal in the apartment building. She purports to be an artist. The pictures of her three year old boy are a mess.

"See, if you would teach him to wash his brush between using his colors," instructs her neighbor Jan, "then he would have pretty, clean, reds and blues."

The mother nods in agreement; the grey-browns of her son's palette are disagreeable.[1]

"And if you could just tell him how to outline" says Jan, drawing a box with a triangle on top, "then he could fill in with green, and purple."

The mother does not tell her boy, but they talk about pictures, look at pictures, paint pictures, and the mother one day discerns amid muddy colors the image of a recumbent cat. Jan can see the cat, but she prefers what she has wrought: her daughter's blue and red houses.[2]

Jan and the mother are people and they are emblems of ancient, incommensurable ways of teaching. Jan's way is natural and coherent. It requires her to give her daughter knowledge, pose problems for her daughter so her daughter can use that knowledge, and intervene in her daughter's progress by monitoring and correcting her daughter's use of that knowledge. Jan's way of teaching--I have called it Jan's because it has no more need to name itself than a fish to name water--allows a tribe, a civilization, to pass on the treasure of its understanding: you can find fire where the flash of the sky has done a thing. You can paint if you do thus and so. Jan's way is education: the giving and taking back by examination of a data base of facts, meanings, and values.[3]

Although the way of Jan is reasonable and essential in the attempt to master fire, I have been given cause to wonder[4] how the way of Jan got its toehold in my job, teaching essay writing, sometimes characterized and lamented as a discipline without a subject matter; a discipline nonetheless able to beget a subject matter of facts, meanings and values to give and take back in the immemorial way. I imagined a beginning. A speaker of speeches before the advent of Rhetoric speaks a speech that gets him made Tyrant of Agrigentum. One member of the audience, not so moved that he fails to remark the near connection between power and persuasion, recalls that the speaker deviated from

the ordinary idiom, and the audience enjoyed strangeness. In order to praise the speaker took his metaphors from something better in the same class and in order to deprecate from something worse. The speaker opened with a self-disparaging anecdote which seemed to warm his audience to him.

In this analysis Rhetoric is born. Because the primal rhetorician wants to make a buck and other men want to rise high in the state, he opens a school where he can retail his observations: "You must first ingratiate yourself with your audience by telling . . . ."

The history is apocryphal, but this pedagogical model has had more than a little application in schools: discourse (or history, biology, philosophy) is examined and the fruit of that examination, a subject matter, is imparted to students. This model, moreover, seems so necessary to the cohesion of a culture and the benefaction of its treasures that it is by and large unexceptionable. Yet it is not without critics, some vicious and very early on. "But I marvel," writes Isocrates, "when I observe these men setting themselves up as instructors of youth who cannot see that they are applying the analogy of an art with hard and fast rules to a creative process." Plato finds Rhetoric morally repugnant, a way for the glib to snooker the foolish, and because it requires students to rehearse established truths rather than inquire into new ones,

methodologically fruitless. To the question of how Isocrates' "creative process" can be fostered Socrates answers: "All great arts demand discussion and high speculation about nature; for loftiness of mind and effectiveness in all directions seem to come from such pursuits."[5]

In the "Gorgias" students trained under these competing pedagogical models (subject matter vs. conversation) engage in an intellectual mano a mano. Although the student of Socrates wins handily and Socratic inquiry will become a buzz word and sometime fashion, History gives the palm to Gorgias and the pedagogy of subject matter. [6]

The mother is a Socratic teacher.[7] She gives no knowledge to her son unless it is part of their conversation, or he asks for knowledge. She requires her son to pose his own artistic problems. She intervenes in the progress of her son by collaborating with him.[8] What a lark! What a plunge! Socrates and the mother have no way of determining what the outcome of their instruction will be: the pupil may think this or he may think that. She may do this or she may do that. Things fall apart, the center cannot hold. We should not wonder that Jan's way dominated schools for millennia.

Things change. It will come to pass--twenty years, thirty years--that as a consequence of the evolution of the technology of knowledge, teachers who impart knowledge will

be antiquated by cheap and effective implements, while teachers who converse with students will prove useful.[9] That, in any event, is the thesis of this book.[10]

The argument advancing the thesis is partly picaresque, a tale of blunders and happy chances as I moved from the way of Jan to the way of the mother in the course of my twenty year attempt to learn how to teach essay writing. To call this course a quest would be a pretty conceit, but I began my career as a Composition teacher in that mental state which has become known as Cartesian doubt to honor Descartes' method of emptying his mind of dogmas, preconceptions, and assumptions in order to look at things fresh. My mental state would more correctly be called ignorance, for where Descartes' doubt had been deliberate mine was circumstantial. I had been hired as a graduate assistant to teach college students to write better and I had no idea how that was to be done.

A textbook, The Random House Handbook, had been chosen by my superiors for use in Composition courses. Here was a lifesaver that would give me something to do all semester and anchor my inexperience in the authority of The Book. What would happen next is what happens in one form or another in the experience of all Composition teachers: the clash of blood knowledge, that fragile faculty born of experience and intuition, with the ancient, ramified authority of a tradition. Opening the Random House Handbook

I read a sentence and was shaken. Although as a student of English I had complied with a subject matter of prescriptions, exhortations, and advice for decades, now that I was charged with teaching people to write better this subject matter seemed quite mad. "Your commitment to your readers requires" proclaimed the Random House Handbook, "that your language be clear . . . strive to select words that please and delight your reader, rely on short, simple words . . . ." What requirement was this I wondered, and what commitment. Please and delight your reader? What to make of other commitments: Zola's to shock and appall, Gibbon's to provoke, the Book of Job's to awe? Why the reduction of artistic choice and responsibility to an act of compliance with an aggressive moralism?

When I embraced the chore of teaching essay writing and opened that textbook I made a beginning in the way literary critic Edward Said speaks of beginning: " . . . the beginning then is the first step in the intentional production of meaning, a moment when the mind can start to allude to itself and to its products as a formal doctrine." I eventually produced two products, two structures of explanatory ideas which act as spines to render my picaresque tale architectonic. These spines are discourse representations of two theories[11] of teaching--Jan's way, anatomized by an examination of the current-traditional paradigm for teaching composition (CTP), and the mother's

way, anatomized by an examination of the future-radical paradigm for teaching composition (FRP). The formal doctrine I made is the thesis that one way is better.

A thesis, the suggestion of an argument to prove it, and my point is? Years ago my point would have been advocacy. I had come to prefer the mother's way to Jan's. Would it not be well, I thought, if everyone were to prefer what I prefer. But in attempting to understand the inertial forces that keep the Current-Traditional Paradigm in place against the better wisdom of Socrates, Henry David Thoreau, John Dewey, Paulo Friere, the mother, et. al., I came to know why Jan's way is as impregnable as it is hegemonic: it so triumphantly serves the hierarchic ego[12] structure. By ego structure I mean the way we estimate our worth and value ourselves. Most human movement is driven by this making; we feed and shelter our bodies so we can feed and shelter our egos.

The hierarchic ego prods us as teachers to tell students what we know. I know. You do not. That feels very very good. No advocacy was going to break the back of Jan's way.[13] Still I whistled down the wind until I read an article in Newsweek that mooted my advocacy. I went to find my wife. "I have just read," I said portentously, "the death knell of the Current-Traditional Paradigm." The article was titled "Here Comes Hypermedia." Let me present you with a quotation:

The time is the near future, and you're a student assigned to learn about ecology. But instead of plowing through out-of-date-reports and badly drawn graphs, you're about to take a video adventure. You sit in front of two video monitors, a computer and a new hypermedia program from Lucasfilm. On one screen, an animated cartoon introduces Paul Parkranger, who invites you into his office. Meanwhile on the other screen, the ranger confides that the duck population is diminishing and he needs you to help find the reason. The evidence is in his notebooks and cabinets, on the screen in front of you. Using the computer's mouse to move the on-screen image of a tiny hand, you "open" a file cabinet, take out a folder marked "interviews." Suddenly the other screen fills with the image of a real farmer, talking about the ducks he's watched on his land. The cartoon file cabinet turns out to contain a dozen similar interviews with hunters, naturalists and game wardens--along with animated maps an articles about ducks. Using the mouse, you browse through the films, texts, and photographs, letting your curiosity lead the way. In the end, you fashion a theory of what forces are driving the ducks away. This simulates real

life: there is no single right answer. But there is a process to learn and it's called thinking.

Three years later, virtual reality technology[14] began to inch its way into the classroom and hypermedia was old hat. The future moves fast and, ironically, its technology allows and requires us to embrace an ancient, marginalized teaching ethos and methodology. Adventure? Real Life? Curiosity leading the way? No single right answer? A process to learn called thinking? Proponents of the Future-Radical Paradigm have made the same noises for millennia, yet because they suffer the misfortune of not being machines their professions can be dismissed. I ask my writing students to make their experience into ideas and I tell them we are born to the savage pleasure[15] of discovering the way the world works. "He has nice intentions, but he is not really teaching anything sound or important. This idea of discoveries is still hard to understand and is opposite of everything I have learned in my past classes in English." Administrators will not take their rage to measure and butt out of my classroom where what goes on is a faint tracing on the surface of mystery. Pundits will not get a clue. Passion, not memorization, is the driving force of the understanding. But pundits grind the old old ax. "Educational fads[16]," writes George Will, "such as the idea that young people learn best when blown along by the inconstant winds of their own inclinations take a serious

toll on the serious teaching of history and literature, which are the core of the liberal arts curriculum." Hard to know what has George Will in a pother. He has his way. For thousands of years advocates of the Future-Radical Paradigm have lost the battle for the schools. Their persuasions are entirely resistible, yet what they have been pointing at, the power released when collaborators ask in the void of the answer, has created a technology that is irresistible.

Will this technology render the teacher as purveyor of a data base of facts, meanings and values, defunct? Of course. A technology created by the will of men and women is indifferent to the will of men and women and mires them in the slough of unintended consequences. Will administrators let the engines of their own destruction, machines that will wreck the ethos of hierarchic control, into classrooms? Of course. Having committed themselves to the surface of things that can be measured, they will be undone by the surface of machines that glitter. Will students embrace the "video adventure?" Please.

The relationship between pupils and teachers will not be lost, but will undergo a sea-change. Where once teachers told pupils the answer and testified to the factuality of the answer, tomorrow they will collaborate with pupils in the making of answers--theories of ducks--and prove by their presence that those who ask in the void of the answer are not cast into the abyss. Given the gift that courses

electronically in the soul of a new machine we will all, at last, play out the drama that abided in the soul of an antique teacher: "All great arts demand discussion and high speculation about nature,[17]for loftiness of mind and effectiveness in all directions seem to come from such pursuits."

The teaching profession is fated to become orders of magnitude more demanding and orders of magnitude more influential.

Thesis, argument, point. So what? I am a Composition teacher. Composition teachers are at the bottom of a barrel. I would see them rise to the top. "History," declared Mikhail Gorbachev, "punishes those who come late to it."

History rewards those who come early.

Part I

Subject Matters

Chapter 1

Blood Knowledge and Ancient Authority

"Mr. Disraeli cannot possibly be sure of his facts," thundered William Gladstone in parliamentary debate with Benjamin Disraeli.

"I wish," responded Disraeli, "that I could be as sure of anything as my opponent is of everything."

The virtue of ignorance, modesty in Disraeli, intellectual rigor in Descartes. As a beginning teacher of Composition I sought to assume the virtue because I was afflicted with the ignorance, but I lied to myself. I knew something. I had an experience as a college sophomore, forgotten for a time, that affected me profoundly. A friend of mine was not doing well in English and asked me to teach him to write better. "Many people ask," writes John Gardner in <u>On Becoming a Novelist</u>, 'Can writing really be taught?'" An informed question with not the least presence in my mind; without qualm I agreed to teach Marvin to write better. Marvin showed me something he had written and we talked about how we could make it better. We messed with old sentences and made new ones, put the kibosh on others, proposing and disposing, talking and writing. The outcome, which would have surprised me if I had been well informed, was that Marvin was a better writer than he had been before.

When I began to teach Composition I had knowledge: writing could be taught.

Comes the textbook and my reaction to it. We are not dealing with artists here; the Random House Handbook is for spear carriers, my colleagues informed me with a soupcon of condescension. We cannot all be Hamlet. I thought my colleagues might be right, but I suspected they were wrong and that the Hamlet analogy might not be on point. In any event, I could ignore the subject matter I did not care for--perhaps Random House had insight into the comma.

I could not, however, ignore my students. They seemed to maintain ragbags of rules and regulations, some positive (put the thesis sentence in the last place of the first paragraph), some prohibitive (do not use the same word twice in a sentence). In order to answer their questions and compose wars between rules, I answered--it depends. It depends became the response in a litany that lasted until both students and teacher began to catch on to the fact they had dissimilar orientations to the business at hand. Somehow my students had come to see writing as the act of compliance with authorities while I saw it as an art of making strategic choices. I thought they were asking the wrong questions and worrying about the wrong things. They saw the essay as a species of examination, and they expected to be rewarded for demonstrating their ability to employ the rules they were taught. To me the essay is one of the high

water marks of human culture: an instrument by which we make and articulate our investigation into the personal dimension of reality. My students used the essay to preach; they proclaimed customary attitudes, appended a dollop of argument, and by exploiting "should," turned their attitudes into moral imperatives.

Something was amiss. When I talked to my students they were wise and companionable. When they wrote they were stupid and pretentious. One young fellow made an essay of bewildering sentences. I sat him down and asked him what could possibility possess a human being to indite this sentence right here. "I've already used up my five 'To Be' verbs." And this? "You're not supposed to use the same word twice in a sentence." Then, in a tour de force of erudition and swift precision he told me, sentence by sentence, the rules with which he was in compliance. My student was a very bad writer because he was a very good student. I was dumbfounded.

The time was at hand to read something about Composition other than the textbook. In an essay on the ideas of anthropologist Marshall McLuhan, of medium is the message fame, Tom Wolfe remarks: "Teaching composition is one of the most exquisitely squalid hells known to middle class man." Gee. This was my new job. I hoped that Wolfe was driven to hyperbole by the resonance of his adjectives, or by a vision of sometime Composition teacher McLuhan in

his University of Toronto office, his prodigious intellect reduced to villifying sentence fragments in stacks of student papers. Wolfe had nothing more to say about Composition so far as I knew, but Robert Pirsig, Composition teacher and author of Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, did. His hell was a descent into madness, and redemption thence by shock treatments that left his former self, the Composition teacher self, a ghost dimly sensed by the new self born of therapy. Pirsig does not guess at the cause of his insanity but he supplies evidence to suggest he was driven mad by teaching Composition. Driven mad by Composition? I thought the notion almost too ludicrous to articulate. Certainly most people who enter into the framework of Composition in America are not driven mad, but Robert Pirsig is dogged as a pit bull and sharp as a blade. Those qualities were his undoing.

His descent into madness began slowly: "For the first year of teaching Phaedrus [the name he gives his former self] had been fairly content within this framework." Then he began to feel that something was wrong:

> He recognized it as the same wrongness which had been troubling him for years and for which he had no solutions. He just felt that no writer ever learned by this squarish, by the numbers, objective, methodical approach. Yet that was all that rationality offered and there was nothing to

> do about it without being irrational. And if there was one thing he had a clear mandate to do in the Church of Reason [school] it was to be rational, so he had to let it go at that. (176)

Unfortunately for his sanity Pirsig, cannot let it go at that. I read as Pirsig pursued an impossible choice into madness, but here was the raconteuse of Marilyn French's novel, The Women's Room, aware of the contradiction that Robert Pirsig's training in linear rationality rendered invisible to him and accepting it in a cavalier manner: "I teach composition," she says, "but as anyone who has ever taken a comp course knows, you don't have to know anything about writing to teach it. In fact the less you know the better, because then you can go by the rules, whereas if you really know how to write, rules about leading sentences and paragraphs and so forth don't exist."

A serviceable attitude under the circumstances I thought, but these are the circumstances of a character in a fiction. What happens day to day in the crucible of the classroom when an teacher teaches the lies of Composition: the rules that do not exist? What species of cynicism will serve her turn, or what despair constitute her personal hell?

"On top of this lumbering figure was planted a savage, baleful countenance. Behind the inevitable thick-lensed spectacles glared beady porcine eyes whose sole purpose it

seems, was to seek out ne'er do wells and inflict on them stinging lashes of shame and guilt." So goes a student's description of a Composition teacher quoted in the essay "The Teacher as Dragon" by Composition teacher Anna Villegas. "I caught," writes Villegas, "in the reflection of her horn rims, an image of myself" (Conscious Reader 647).

I read some of the dominant scholars in the nascent academic discipline of Composition. Janet Emig, author of the seminal The Composing Processes of Twelth Graders argued that the teaching of Composition in America's High Schools is a "neurotic activity," and the institutionalization of the neurosis, William Irmscher suggests, is complete: "The shoddiness of composition teaching is one of the unfortunate and harsh realities of the schools at all levels" And Francis Christiansen: "In Composition we do not really know how to teach our captive charges to write better--we merely expect them to. And we do not teach them to write better because we do not know how to teach them to write better. And so we merely go through the motions" (1).

Yet here is a stray ray of hope from Richard Young who proposes that the neurosis is not merely institutional, but is generated by an institution; that Composition teachers are not so much creators of a catastrophe as victims of a pedagogical model: "The failure to develop effective means for cultivating the skills of invention is due neither to

lack of awareness of the problem nor incompetence on the part of Composition teachers. It is due, I believe, to efforts to respond to the problem in terms of the current-traditional paradigm" (34). Hope did I say? No, Young's asseveration scares me more than Wolfe's quip. If the neurosis is located in an ancient pedagogical model, a pattern of activity, it is nonetheless persons who must act out this pattern and be influenced by it, even to madness and despair. In fact the location of the neurosis within an institutionalized framework, the Current-Traditional Paradigm, may be especially injurious if it is preferable to own and conjure with our own neurosis than to unwittingly act out an institutionalized neurosis capable of subverting our healthiest impulses and intuitions.

So. The Composition classroom. A looney bin. A minefield. A Slough of Despond. I began to think I had got myself into something interesting. Now there is a fine and requisite bravado as I begin a journey into humiliation and error. I move on; I need to know: what is this sullen and hazardous entity called the Current-Traditional Paradigm by Richard Young?

Although it would beggar the resources of Gallup's poll to make statistical generalizations about what goes on in English classrooms today, all the other instruments agree: millions of textbooks, gravely influential standardized tests. Clinton Burhans Jr. estimates that the "concepts,

methods and goals" reflected in upwards of 80% of general writing course descriptions "are severely current-traditional." "Within the classroom," claim Linda Flower and John Hayes," 'writing' appears to be a set of rules and models for the correct arrangement of preexistent ideas . . . In the midst of the Composition renaissance an odd fact stands out: our basic methods of teaching writing are the same ones English academics were using in the seventeenth century. We still undertake to teach people to write . . . by dissecting and describing a dissected piece of writing" (449).

Surely the employment of subject matter in our schools, a circumstance to which any of us can attest, declares the eldest primal choice of educators and the foundation upon which is raised the edifice of the Current-Traditional Paradigm. Of which paradigm I was a creature: erstwhile and misgiven dispenser of the prescriptions, exhortations, and advice that are the particular subject matter of Composition.

I began to notice people who chafe on the bit of subject matter. In an autobiography of his intellectual growth, The Summing Up, W. Somerset Maugham recounts the circumstance of one of the two English lessons he remembers being given in his lifetime. It seems he asked a temporary secretary to correct the typescript of Cakes and Ale: fix the spelling, note mistakes that might have been occasioned

by his sloppy handwriting, that sort of thing. The secretary took the manuscript home over the weekend and returned it Monday together with four foolscap sheets of critical commentary which showed, as Maugham says, "she had gone through my novel in the same methodical way her masters had gone through her essays."

Maugham was vexed to discover his secretary forbade him a preposition at the end of a sentence, disapproved a colloquial phrase and was dutiful to see that the same word was not used twice on a page. "If I had indulged myself in the luxury of a sentence of ten lines, she wrote: 'Clarify this. Better break it into two or more periods.' When I availed myself of the pleasant pause that is indicated by a semi-colon, she noted: 'A full stop," and if I ventured upon a colon, she remarked stingingly: 'Obsolete.'"[18] The writer hoary with age and honors, the girl impersonating her secretary school professors; Maugham makes rules a drollery.

Here is the magnificent historian William Hickling Prescott who wants to get rid of them altogether: "The best rule is to dispense with all the rules and to consult the natural bent of one's genius." One teacher answers this contempt for rules: Prescott has a genius to consult; my students need the rules; you cannot play tennis without the net. And look, she says, at the disingenuous Prescott who consulting the bent of his genius finds a rule there: "American history should be written in American English

rather than English English." And watch here, as Maugham's avuncular contempt for the prescriptions of the professors mutates to reverence when the rules are his; he finds the prose of Walter Pater, with its "jeweled phrases and sentences stiff with exotic epithets' to be a 'brocade so heavy with gold that it stood up by itself' to conceal 'a tired, wan personality.' Maugham prefers the ease, simplicity, and clarity of Dryden, and commends Dryden's prose style to the would-be writer.

Prescriptions you have always with you, or so I conclude at this juncture. Presumably, the problem for teachers is to choose useful, intelligent prescriptions. To lump the farcical "every sentence must contain between 12 and 24 words" with the fruit of the Composition Enlightenment, accomplished writers do not trouble themselves about spelling in early drafts and students would do well to follow them in that, is surely to do violence to the one and unduly dignify the other. Distinctions must be made. Those rules concerned with product (the purpose of the final paragraph in an essay is to summarize what has gone before) could be distinguished from those concerned with process (the first step in writing is prewriting), or rules could be scaled according to their degree of abstraction from the down-dirt "do not use 'I'" to the elevated "be sincere," or rules that improve texts could be distinguished from those that do not, or rules that are true

of discourse (a degree of redundancy is necessary to maximally communicative discourse) could be distinguished from those that are pedagogical conveniences (underline your thesis sentence), or rules could be arrayed along a spectrum of precision from the nebulous "consider your audience" to the unequivocal "write in complete sentences," or along a spectrum of compulsion from "underline your thesis sentence" to "it might be a good idea to underline your thesis sentence."

This classificatory enterprise by cleaving those rules that help writers improve their process and their product from those rules that do not to the end that teachers and students can be enjoined to embrace the good rules and abjure the bad would appear to be ingenious and useful. In any event, it was clear to me, at this time, that a subject matter of prescriptions, exhortations and advice, of some sort, was what a writing teacher trafficked in.

Marshall McLuhan, Robert Pirsig, Anna Villegas, tens of thousands of teachers, and I, had entered hopefully into the framework of Composition in America because, as Anna Villegas says, "The teaching of writing, good writing, is the teaching of thinking . . . our job is too important for me to give up." Maybe so, but I began to suspect I would have to get smart to survive it. "Yet as time and students passed her by, she was forced to accept the decay of her initial illusions about the rational animal's ability to

communicate . . . ultimately she found it easier to torment than to teach. With tormenting she could at least see an emotional response, while with teaching she despaired of ever finding an intellectual one." What to do? Villegas resolved to try harder. So did I. Yet I hear things.

"How is Victor?" one of my teachers asked about another of my teachers. I said that Victor is still able to read his lecture, but he is getting along in years.

"Victor," said my teacher, "what a fine old gentleman. He won't be having any trouble with death."

Yes, I thought, and his lecture will live after him, the knowledge he imparted to eager ears granting his life meaning and making his death a deprivation. Yet I hear things.

"Are you going to study history tonight?" someone behind me said as I walked the sidewalk to a class.

"Not tonight," came the confident reply. "I retain for about twenty-four hours. I'll study tomorrow."

I resolved to try harder. I would make a good subject matter, give useful knowledge, artful prescriptions, bold exhortations, wise advice. I will try harder. My knowledge will be retained and my life vindicated.

Chapter 2

A Thrall Twists in the Traces

I set about to make a good subject matter. My students write essays badly. I make a list:

1. Their essays were impersonal. It was as if no one had written them and no one was at home in them. As a reader one wonders why one is being told these things, and one discerns in the writer no motive for telling them.
2. Their essays were epistemologically naive. The writers seemed to have little notion of how an idea could be given credibility.
3. Their essays advanced banal ideas, conventional wisdom, received judgment that had plainly been repeated rather than created by essayists out of their experience.
4. Their essays were written at a constant, high level of abstraction.
5. Their essays were marred by errors of inattention and indifference.
6. Their essays demonstrated little sensitivity to the limitations of language. The writers were attempting to charge words with a freight of meaning to which the ear of the experienced reader is deaf.

Following a kind of medical model I identified pathologies and prescribed curatives: a number of exercises

and demonstrations designed to treat piecemeal the pervading malaise of boorishness.

In order, for instance, to treat the problem of over-reliance on the ability of words to convey meaning I asked my students to write a list of twenty characteristics of a person to the end that a reader could come to know that person. Kind, intelligent, extroverted, realistic, sympathetic, sweet . . . . I read the lists at tedious length until I chanced upon, or interpolated if necessary, something like "wears western shirts with pearl buttons." The students laugh, and I charge them with being an easily wrought audience to laugh at this of the pearl buttons. Defending themselves they were forced to say what I had shown: in a wasteland of meaning pearl buttons pack a punch.

In time I created or borrowed an armamentarium of demonstrations. I was pleased with myself. The drama, the gusto, a magus of old manipulating the tribe to feel and see what I wanted it to feel and see. A month or so and I was bored. I was not learning anything. These manipulations were tedious. The Magus a bank teller attending closely to a matter of no intrinsic interest. I supposed that for someone with the impulses of an actor who wishes to amuse and edify an audience this kind of thing would suit, but I wanted people to come to me and be changed in their capacity to grow intellectually. I was inspired by novelist Dan

Simmons' erotic and stupendous account of what happens between a true student and a true teacher: "melding, melting into me, her form still tangible, still touchable, but moving through me as if our atoms were the stars in colliding galaxies, passing through each other without contact but rearranging the gravity there forever" (375). I wanted to be a teacher. And there was the rub. I could not see that my students were writing any better. Francis Christiansen explained the rub: "In Composition we do not really teach our captive charges to write better--we merely expect them to. And we do not teach them to write better because we do not know how to teach them to write better. And so we merely go through the motions." My students might go in fear of abstractions because of one of my demonstrations, but when they wrote the fear confused them. Bored and incompetent I simply did "not know how to teach them to write better."

Having flailed around on my own for a year or so with my education in Literature no help, I was given an opportunity to bring to bear the resources of Science on the problem of teaching Composition. An experiment was afoot. Professor John Renner, one of the United States' foremost exponents of Jean Piaget, wanted to prove that the educational theory of the French child psychologist could be used to teach Composition and John Renner had a munificent grant with which to prove it. This would be Real Science,

Piaget having studied clams before he turned to children, and I would be well paid for finally learning to do my job. Note please that co-opted by a fee I took no exception to Professor Renner's intention to prove what he already knew rather than discover what he did not know. My literary education muted my scruples: Charles Darwin's On the Origin of Species is good Science, hypothesis and blah, blah, but Darwin's journals reveal that he set sail on the H.M.S. Beagle to prove what he knew.

Professor Renner's plan was to implement Piaget's Learning Cycle, a rhythm initiated by disequilibration whose upshot is the understanding of a concept. My colleagues and I would posit the significant concepts that govern success in writing and develop learning cycles to teach each concept. Some teachers would use them for a semester while others, the control group as it were, would flog along on their usual unscientific path. Finally a corps of readers would evaluate the output of all the classes and statisticians would reduce the numbers to meaning. I was confident this meaning would prove Renner's point because the beauty part of using Science, whose proper purview is things, is that you can prove anything you want about people.

In the event, the Learning Cycles were splendid theatre. Take the concept of specificity which figures so large in the marginal notations Composition teachers make on

their student's essays. I walk briskly into a class, up to a placed table, and pour from my Italian leather briefcase a tumult of custom cut walnut blocks. I peel a hundred dollar bill from my wad. "A C note," I say, "for the team that does it." One member of the team had to build a structure from blocks, and the other member had to build a like structure on the basis of oral instruction alone. This is surprisingly difficult to do and no one did it, although with another chance they might have succeeded having come, as they certainly had, to understand the concept of specificity in a "hands on" way. Students were moved by the object lesson, had a fine time, and thought I was a swell chap. I liked it too. Still a magus, but a Scientific Magus relieved of the duty to pay attention.

When my $3,000 dollar fee was banked and the entry for my curriculum vitae secure, I suffered an epiphany. Although the researchers had won the statistical wars, I could not see that my students were writing any better. Eureka! I had passed this way before. These learning cycles were my "demonstrations" in science tech manifestation, more perfectly designed to evoke understanding of a concept in students, but not changing their behavior. As with many epiphanies the blazing dawn of insight was attended by the twilight of humiliation. It was obvious: the act of writing would teach students more about writing than anything I could say or do. The act of writing

was a complex and potent learning cycle. That is, of course, a scientific way of saying what writers know: one learns to write by writing. Not much going on here other than my direct exposure to sleight of hand: pseudo-sciences proving a claim whose verity is available to common sense. Even so, something happened in my relationship to subject matter: I was beginning to find the subject matter of Composition inutile and repellant. My first wee experience of subject matter as a teacher when I opened the Random House Handbook is being writ large over years. I read Composition student Vickie Bottemly:

> Preparation for Language Arts in College has done more harm than good. PLA, as the class was lovingly referred to, taught the college bound senior all the essential skills and rules necessary for freshman English courses. The strict flunk-if-you-use-the- first-person-five-paragraph-essay was the major focal point of the class. Not only did this type of writing cut off all creative thinking, it most effectively produced a mass of duplicate essays with the only change being the substitution of required topic--drug abuse, alcoholism, and women in the draft to name a few of the more original ones--at various times in the semester. To relieve the monotony we developed various simple yet effective systems of

completing these assignments. In most cases a friend and I would alternate making up every other sentence so that inevitably our papers would turn out to be replicas, with only minor changes used, such as the subject-verb switch, or the turned around transition ploy. It was a challenge to see if the teacher would notice the similarities. As expected, she never did.

Cynicism carried to this level of articulation contains the seeds of its own salvation, but the less articulate less cynical student is apt to be confused by a CTP that makes skill in writing a matter of compliance with rules of discourse. From the transcript of an interview with an essayist:

Interviewer: Were you taught any rules of writing by your current teacher?

Leslie: Well, every sentence should have between twelve and twenty-four words in it.

Interviewer: You mean that if I counted the words in the sentences in your essay here they would all fall within this range of from twelve to twenty-five?

Leslie: Mostly.

Interviewer: You do count them?

Leslie: Yes, but sometimes I try to slip in an eleven or even a ten to see if he [her teacher] will catch it.

Interviewer: Does he?

Leslie: Never yet.

Interviewer: When you write, say your very first sentence, are you aware of the need to make it between twelve and twenty-four words?

Leslie: Sure, it would be hard to come along later and do it. You'd have to change too many of your sentences.

Interviewer: But it also sounds difficult to simultaneously try to think of something to say and contrive to say it in from . . . in any certain number of words.

Leslie: Yeah, it is.

I saw that in the face of restrictions students can create strategies as well as evasions and games. "Every time I produced what I thought was a new and exciting story," writes essayist Paul Wilcox, "my teacher would flail me with accusations of split infinitive, misplaced modifier, dangling participial phrase, or worst of them all misspellings. I changed my writing style accordingly. I used no commas or quotations or long sentences or metaphors or big words or anything else that could possibly cause trouble."

I overheard conversations. Lori seems at once troubled and amused by some predicament as she takes a chair next to her friend Barbara's desk. Like Lori, Barbara is a graduate assistant teaching composition at a large state university. She is also Assistant Director of Composition there.

"What's up?"

"You know the process essay," says Lori.

Barbara nods. This is a common formal problem of the CTP that she uses in her classes. She has read a great many of these essays whose purpose is to describe a process: making a cake, roofing a house, milling a log.

"I've got a student who described the process of falling apart."

Barbara smiles at Lori. She cannot see a problem.

"The feelings," Lori insists, "after you've kissed a dead man."

Barbara's face expresses amusement and disgust.

"His father."

"Yeah, well, okay." Barbara is disturbed. She would prefer the process of making a cake, but she recognizes the student's attempt to inject a tired quasi-genre with power and originality. She still cannot see a problem. Lori get to the point,

"It had five sentence fragments in it."

Now Barbara understands. Only that week in a faculty meeting her boss, the Director of Composition, articulated the standards of the university: "One sentence fragment, this piece is gone."

"Well?" says Barbara.

"I gave it a 'C,' replies Lori.

"I can't believe you passed that paper!

"What can we do? He wants to write something he likes-

-says I'm stepping all over his creativity. He keeps talking about the creative essay."

"Can't he be creative inside the form?"

Lori shakes her head.

"Maybe this isn't the place for him."

Barbara nods.

"He has to learn to conform."

I recoiled from the agitation of these students, but not causing discomfort to students was not my conception of the teacher's job. Quite the contrary. I took my cue from Whitley Strieber's short story "Pain." A young woman seats herself in the diner booth of the narrator who is doing research for a novel about prostitutes.

"My standing offer was twenty-five dollars for fifteen minutes of talk.

'I've been doing pain for about two years,' she said without so much as an introduction.

[He mistakes her for a whore.]

'I would like to hear more about what it is you do.'

'Like I said, I do pain.'

Again her eyes found mine.

'I do it the way it was meant to be done and I do it for the right reason.'

[He takes this for an invitation.]

'It isn't my way. I'm afraid I have normal sex with my normal wife and that's all.'

'I told you, I do pain. Pain and sex are not the same thing. They aren't even similar.'

[He surmises that she does what she does for masochists.]

'They don't interest me. You can't <u>want</u> to suffer if you're really going to. If you seek it out it becomes a variant of pleasure. I don't give pleasure, I give pain. And in return you get a gift.'

'I'm listening.'

'The gift is, I lift the burden of self from your shoulders. You can see clearly then. You can see the truth of the world . . . that's why nobody turns me down, once they understand what that truly means.'"

I wanted to be like her, to do useful pain, but I had no truth of the world in my gift and one could plausibly argue that the most useful pain is etiquette pain, the pain of the the youth who kissed a dead man and gets a "C" for sentence fragments, the pain of Paul Wilcox who subverts an impulse to express himself by simplifying his writing to avoid correction of his comma use. Etiquette, with its snobbery and arbitrariness, but does justice to the way of the world. We do have to conform. Wear white socks with your dark suit to an interview at Snively, Cylde, Robust, and Pang if you think otherwise. And more than etiquette is at stake. William Buckley Jr. tells of spending the day "with a college student who had much on his mind to tell me,

which I looked forward to hearing. But after an hour or so I gave up. It wasn't that his thinking was diffuse, or his sentences badly organized. It was simply that I could not understand his words.

'Somi iggi prufes tometugo seem thaffernum.'

'What was that?'

(trying hard) 'So me IGgi prufes tomegtugo seem THA afternoon.'

'Sorry, I didn't quite get it.'

(impatiently) 'SO MY ENGLISH PROFESSOR TOLD ME TO GO SEE HIM THAT AFTERNOON.'

My responses became feigned, and I was reduced to harmonizing the expression of my face with the inflection of his rhetoric."

As a teacher, I did not propose to be a feel good anarchist who would do no pain and fail to uphold necessary standards when communication (somi iggi prufes), and more, was at stake. With a stern quasi-syllogism University of Chicago President Robert Hutchins in his book The Higher Learning in America reminds me that there is too much at stake for me to go all weak in the knees: "Education implies teaching. Teaching implies knowledge. Knowledge is truth. The truth is everywhere the same. Hence education should be everywhere the same." It is always a bad time for a teacher to forgo giving and taking back a data base of facts, meanings, and values; the plaint that young people do

not know what they should sells books: Hirsch's Cultural Literacy, Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind, Cheney's American Memory, Ravitch and Finn's What Do Our Seventeen Year Olds Know? Their plaint: we have no common knowledge by which to communicate which our young; we are not passing on our cultural treasures; these ignorant children are going to damage our nation. As Allan Bloom puts it, young people have the Walkman on, "They cannot hear what the great tradition has to say. And, after its prolonged use, when they take it off, they find they are deaf" (Qtd. in Levine 14). I know what this is about. What teacher has not made an allusion in class, this is like Hamlet's indecision, and felt it fall on deaf ears. The audience has not sufficiently felt the shame of its ignorance and the glory of my erudition.

Even the layman is distressed. "A" from Phoenix writes Dear Abbey, "I dearly love the English language, but it appears that English teachers aren't teaching or their students aren't learning. I am appalled at the number of teenagers who use the verb 'goes' instead of 'says.' Example in point: 'Butch and I were discussing this problem and Butch goes 'But you promised you'd do it.' Then I go 'Well, I changed my mind.' So Butch goes, 'That's not fair.' Abbey, please point out that goes is a verb meaning forward motion in movement, not speech. We are producing a nation of imbecilic sounding youths holding bachelor

degrees. And they can't spell either."

Woe. I thought the "goes" business was a bright coinage suggestive of stage direction, prologue to acting the dialogue, and I have surely failed Karen Cox who in a letter to the editor wails her lament. "I've worked for PhDs, MDs, doctors of education, and attorneys; they disappoint me more than most. When someone with that much education states he wants to 'raise' his children, I shake my head in dismay. Chickens are raised, children are reared."

Pundits and the public envision a failure of English instruction. Scores on verbal tests stagger alarmingly, traditional linguistic distinctions are eroded by banks which offer to "loan" money, by youngsters who say "goes" rather than "says," by teachers who mistake "affect" for "effect" and newsreaders who render fungible "infer" and "imply". In this vision the young are the flying wedge of erosion, and the bulwark against it the English teacher whose failure is to be calculated by its rapidity and sweep and whose success, if success were to be had, would consist in stabilizing patterns of discourse so that language as a broker of meaning remains consistent and universally accessible.

Yes, yes, yes, but I felt something mean spirited and self serving in this entirely conventional recognition of the failure of English teachers. Is this how a slenderly

educated office worker contrives to feel superior to her superiors? Still standards must be upheld even if that means holding back the tide of linguistic and semantic change. One of my students told me of a dictionary which asserts that in modern usage infer and imply can be employed interchangeably. The best part of my mind lauded the change because I saw the difference in meaning could usually be inferred from context, or implied from context if you will. But. Another part of myself, and this the bulky part, was losing something. As the distinction eroded, I was losing distinction. I had taken trouble to know these words; now my knowledge was nothing, and I was less than before. Standards must be upheld to serve my ego needs.

It is no fault of standards that they can be abused as by Lansing Hays, co-trustee of the Sarah Getty Trust and board member of the Getty Oil Company, who "viewed his membership and his role as co-trustee as a license to beat up on whomever he pleased," claims Thomas Petzinger in Oil and Honor: the Texaco Pennzoil Wars. When staff lawyers dared to commit such unforgivable acts as splitting infinitives or dangling participles, Hays could drive them to the edge of tears. During director's meetings, Hays would go out of his way to inflict one humiliation after another on the company's top in-house lawyer, Dave Copley, whose wording of board resolutions often failed to conform to Hays' specifications. 'He was a very nasty man, and I'm

giving him the benefit of the doubt,' recalls Jack Leone, a longtime Getty Oil PR man. '"

How nasty a man is Hays, after all? Standards must be upheld, conformity can hurt, and someone must cause the pain. Ed Lundy, longtime Vice President of Finance for Ford Motor Company, "had elaborate rules for financial presentations," writes David Halberstam in The Reckoning:

> Some of them were his, and some had been handed down by his predecessor, Ted Ynetema, and embellished by him. The word 'employee' for example must always be written with only one 'e' at the end. No infinitives could be split. As long as Ed Lundy was with Ford Motor Company, it was never'under these circumstances,' it was always 'in these circumstance's.' Something would be compared with, not 'compared to.' The phrase 'due to' was not to be used, since 'due,' he liked to say was a word used in connected with library books; similarly the word 'current' as a synonym for 'present' was barred, for a current was a river. Sentences were not to start with the word 'however.' He kept a Webster's dictionary on his desk, the classic Second Edition, for he thought the editor's had corrupted the third. (253)

If Lansing Hays is an upholder of standards with allegedly ugly impulses, surely Ed Lundy is a hero of standards, a

creature of the very best English instruction. Yet, again another yet, as I am pulled this way and that, I can hardly fail to note the connection between standards and pride of place. Try to imagine Lundy imposing his standards on Henry Ford II, or on anyone above him in the hierarchy of the Ford Motor Company. Are standards, I wondered, for overlords to impose and underlings to achieve? When a pedant attempted to impose on his better and "flailed" him for ending a sentence with a preposition, Winston Churchill is supposed to have replied: "This is the sort of errant nonsense up with which I will not put."

Enough of this. I grew increasingly confused, torn, incapable, my relationship to the facts, meanings and values of Composition parlous and unsatisfying, inquiry confounded. Then I came upon a remarkable article in a learned journal that required me to make a choice.

Chapter 3

Free at Last

"I can't believe," says the California blond with the exquisite tan, "the picture she made me see in my head."

"Dude, I saw it too!"

"She just made the right choices. If she told you, jacaranda or whatever, it would keep your imagination down."

"Hey dude!"

Hey, this class is out of control. The teacher remains silent about Ezra Pound's gender. The students are talking about "The apparition of these faces in the crowd;/ Petals on a wet, black bough," a poem hardly longer than its title, "In a Station of the Metro". Upbraided by me with failure to correct her students' data base, the teacher replies wistfully, "I'd never really valued what the Imagists were doing."

"Think about it," says her colleague, "you go with this kind of thing, you'll seem ignorant, you don't know your stuff." Even so, but when I read an article titled "An Erotics of Teaching," I understood the unimaginable choice this teacher made. "There is an erotic element," wrote John Rouse, "in the teaching relation, then, but how it expresses itself will vary with different teaching styles, and here we have two very different styles, one direct and analytic, the other indirect and poetic. With direct

teaching the authority is direct, deriving as it does from the teacher's knowledge or insight, and each learner must enter into a personal relation with that authority by submitting to or opposing the teacher, by accepting or rejecting, perhaps even by loving or hating" (548).

That makes sense, and it may be the more important the answers the teacher is willing to take responsibility for, the further the personal relation can be pushed toward love. I recalled that Saul Newton, psychotherapist head of Sullivan Institute for Research In Psychoanalysis took responsibility for notably important answers. One of his followers, Michael Bray, who earned his Ph.D in psychology in 1976 was appointed a Sullivanian therapist in 1979 and two years later was asked by fellow therapist Alice Dobosh to father a child. "This had been decided by Newton," Bray says, "I thought to myself, I must be doing better than I imagined if I've been chosen to have a kid. What a neat thing!"

"But with the indirect method," argues Rouse, "the erotic element has a very different character, for here the teacher remains concealed, claiming no authority, and by every artful means turns the feeling intellect of learners to issues that lie outside the preceptorial relation. Such a method requires both art and self-control--the self control allows us to hold back our own ideas, insofar as the disciplined ego will allow. The teacher who uses the

indirect method . . . offers no message but rather waits for messages from the learners, having persuaded them to participate together in a new experience. For they are to be changed not by the addition of ideas already prepared but through their own activity."

No subject matter?

"Then the values of eros, including interest, enthusiasm, and the discriminating power of feeling, are directed not to the teacher but to the learner's own relation with issues that matter" (548).

I imagined what is lost by the teacher who eschews subject matter: respect, control, authority, ego aggrandizement, even the "values of eros" which through deliberate acts of silence she directs away from herself and toward "issues that matter." The gains are less immediate and therefore less palpable. Consider Michael Bray. You probably already ran the numbers 1976, 1979, 1981, and the recriminations, the hatred, and the lawsuit limned in the pages of People were when (Reed 46-48)? Maybe 82, 83? The usual teacher of direct authority will trade in lesser answers, and his students will not likely turn on him, but the vital current of distaste for teachers in America assures us students will sour. And what of the loss of love, the values of eros? John Rouse suggests a possibility for the indirect teacher who "maintains the necessary separation between an erotic and a teaching presence." She

may become "in time even more intriguing." That may be: a student becomes conscious that although he did not know it at the time, by artful means and by disciplining her ego, his teacher took part in his self creation, and he says in wonderment, "Who was that masked woman?"

Small potatoes and cold comfort these rewards that live somewhere out of sight sometime in the future. When the students discuss Pound their teacher may have vanished to them, but not to herself. This is her class and her artfulness. She can stop the action, or alter it, exalt or humiliate, reward or punish, reveal or conceal. Mastery of our burning need to demonstrate how knowledgeable and smart we are enlarges rather than diminishes the self. And if the teacher having mastered her ego and persuaded students to participate together in a new activity participates with them (I'd never understood the power of Imagism), the values of eros are not lost, for eros is one of the values of collaboration. So I assert, having been schooled by Mr. Rouse. And for the whine of the pundits and the public? Old whine. Young people have been carrying their culture to hell in a handbasket for millennia; proliferation of facts, meanings, and values makes it very difficult for people who would like to use a particular data base, not surprisingly their own, as a source of prestige and ego gratification. Things fall apart, the center cannot hold: here is my student versed in the history of surfing, and the yokel

cannot see, will not see, the fact that I am versed in the history of the Thirty Years War makes me a smarter fellow and a more valuable social commodity. Something must be done. We need more right knowledge, not this surfer drivel:

> And then this huge clean-up set came rolling in, it must have been, 6, no, 7 feet and everybody started scratching for the horizon. It was insane! So, like, I'm the first one out there and I just cranked it around and went. One stroke takeoff, then freefall, for I don't know, five, six feet, then reconnect and head for the pit. Major sketch. So I jam this just insane, full buried rail bottom turn, and snap right into the pocket. It just bowled right over my head. You could drive a bus through that barrel! Insane! I must have been in there for five, six seconds and then it just totally spits and blasts me out.

I saw now that these champions of knowledge, and all teachers operating comfortably within the CTP are willy-nilly champions of knowledge, are sites of a terrible irony. If, arguendo, people do not know as much as they should, it is because students resist the impositions of these champions of knowledge. The importance of knowledge, after all, is that we make judgments about the provenance and utility of facts, meanings, and values. If judgments are already made, I gave it you (provenance), you memorize it

(utility), the intellectual potency of knowledge is gelded. "The number of those," noted Richard Brinsley Sheridan, "who undergo the fatique of judging for themselves is very small indeed."

Name your poison. You want knowledge to come to your students and your children, enthroned, sovereign, demanding assent and compliance, or you want knowledge to come crawling, supplicant, begging an audience. If you want the former, you will likely part company with me now, and not alone, for you are thick on the ground, are you not?

I read of and decried as would any good reader of Newsweek, the "educational methods and materials" described in an article on the success of a business started by fundamentalist entrepreneur Donald R. Howard. The method is packaged rote learning and the materials are of this sort: "In fifth-level English PACE, students are instructed to copy sentences from the Bible such as 'Rejoice in the Lord' and 'He is risen.' A 12th-level PACE teaches that Jews and Roman Catholics 'deny the power of the living God' and so lack 'the inner power to live a truly Biblical, and therefore truly free life.'" Mr. Howard supplies his materials and methods to 4,500 schools that serve a quarter of a million students. "By the year 2000 predicts fundamentalist celebrity preacher Jerry Falwell there will be as many Christian academies in the United States as there are public schools."

The good reader is not expected to see all this as school business as usual: the giving and taking back by examination of a data base of facts, meanings, and values. We will squabble about the relative noxiousness of data bases, but that is to put ourselves in the position of the lady who agreed to have sexual intercourse with George Bernard Shaw for a million pounds. When he offered five shillings she asked him, pray tell, what he took her for. "Madam, that has been established, we are negotiating your price."

My perspective shifted, I saw subject matter in a new light and was capable of immoderate anger. Helping refurbish a playhouse at my son's school, I heard behind me a small sweet voice: "Ima take my sawdust maker ova there mamma." Sawdust maker. Delighful coinage. "Rose, that's not a sawdust maker, that's sandpaper." I wanted to turn round, take this superior cow by the throat, and slap it silly.

I knew a chap, a psychologist at the University of California who crowed his half million dollar grant to prove when people have a bias they tend to select data from their experience that support their bias. I had known this of old because Francis Bacon taught me: The human understanding," writes Sir Francis in "Idols of the Mind XVI" The New Organum, "when it has once adopted an opinion (either as being the recieved opinion or as being agreeable to itself)

draws all things else to support and agree with it. And though there be a greater number and weight of instances to be found on the other side, yet these it either neglects or despises, or else by some distinction sets aside and rejects; in order that by this great and pernicious predetermination the authority of its former conclusions remain inviolate." Is this what my understanding of subject matter is becoming, a bias? "And therefore it is a good answer that was made by the one who when they showed him hanging in a temple a picture of those who had paid their vows as having escaped shipwreck, and would have him say whether he did not now acknowledge the power of the gods---- 'Aye' asked he again, 'but where are they painted who were drowned after their vows.'" Whether we pay half a million to the greatest university in the world, or a nod to Bacon, we confess our prostration to this idol of the mind, this "pernicious premeditation." Yet we must still conclude, we must see even if, as Kenneth Burke insisted, a way of seeing is a way of not seeing. Sit with me in a class for a moment and see what you will see. The scene, a senior English class taught by a fresh and admired young teacher who helped design the English curriculum for her high school, is amicable, efficient, humorous. The curriculum is conventionally Current-Traditional and "covers these subject in this order: the sentence; the paragraph; the whole paper--description, expository-analysis, classification,

comparison and contrast, cause-effect, problem-solution; literary criticism." The lesson today covers comparison and contrast. The teacher is pointing out to students that with other modes they could sometimes choose amongst formats, with comparison and contrast . . .

Teacher: . . . you don't get a choice because comparison and contrast has an easy format to it, you just fill in the blanks, you will meet this for dead certain in college English class. We are looking at two things in relation to one another, not two things with their divergent and component parts [what the teacher has called classification]. We're doubling the burden, compare and contrast are opposite things. Comparison means to pick two things and show they are similar. Contrast is the opposite of this. You can do both in your paper.

Student: If you do both, should I give 50% to each, or should I vary it? Which is better?

Teacher: The latter. Why?

Student: That's the way it is.

Teacher: You're right, unless you are truly an even minded person. Now in our set-up you will be given two things [Cat Stevens' song "Father and Son" and Carly Simon's "That's the Way I've Always Heard It Should Be"]-- hark back to paragraph techniques, remember analogy, you can't use similar things. Why?

Student: It's more interesting.

Teacher: Exactly. Hey! These two floor tiles are alike, that's real interesting [general laughter]. That's the same process you will have to go through with this. If most people think its similar you show differences, and the reverse-- that's the principle of interest, the formula you plug in, in the introduction paragraph you show how most people think its similar, sex and bowling [general hilarity]."

Student: How do you plug it in?

Teacher: "Although many people think these two songs are different, I . . . ."

Student: Is that our first sentence?

Teacher: Uh huh. The next question is which method of arrangement you're going to use.

Suddenly a voice issues from a speaker on the wall of the classroom. It is the principal of Norman High School. For slightly over three minutes he complains about students wandering in the halls. After he signs off, the teacher explains the two methods of organizing the compare and contrast essay.

Something political seems to be going on here; something to do with hierarchical distributions, control, putting people in their places. Evelyn Wright certainly thinks so. She argues that the inculcation of rules of writing is a political act disguised as pedagogy. She cites the Report of the Committee on Secondary Schools which

recommended the teaching of a certain kind of language so as to make "the schools into a more efficient bureaucratic system by disbursing the standardized language into a regular curriculum, by which measures of the child's quality could be made." Not only does the imposition of a political agenda masquerade as "effective communication," argues Wright, but "one effect of such training, when it is extended over a dozen or more years of schooling, may be the production of simple declarative sentences in which the speaker oversimplifies the complexity of situations and glosses over ambiguities" (331). Shades of Paul Wilcox!

Subject matter seemed able to insinuate itself into the unlikeliest occasions. Thomas Farrell writes in College English about a letter he received from Sarah D'Eloia, who claimed that when women write they usually employ an inductive structure in which the experience and thought that allowed them to arrive at a generalization or conclusion is presented to the reader and followed by the generalization or conclusion and such a structure is the obverse of the usual male deductive structure in which the conclusion is stated first and followed by support. If D'Eloia is right, superficially unpolitical instruction in the thesis-support school essay is a sexist maneuver of the first magnitude: a fundamental (perhaps adventitious) topus of the male mind is privileged over a topus of the female mind.

I had no idea if she was right. One of the greatest

essays ever written, Virginia Woolf's "A Room of Ones Own," was structurally just as D'Eloia advertised: "I am going to develop in your presence," wrote Woolf," as fully and freely as I can the train of thought which led me to think this." D'Eloia provoked me and I meditated and felt myself taking on an edge. A woman named Linda Flower had become famous in Composition partly because of the popularity of one of her ideas, a distinction she made between what she called "reader-based" and "writer-based" prose. She argued that writer-based prose of novices was egocentric, youths as they are, and in consequence crummy. In her textbook Problem-Solving Strategies for Writers she cautions students to avoid the writing in which we "watch the writer's mind at work and follow him through the process of thinking out his conclusions" (169). Shades of Michel De Montaigne, the essay-inventor whose mind so many readers enjoy as it plays upon a matter. Men women writer-based reader-based, what all this meant to me was that I was hardening against subject matter. The more I thought about it the more I confirmed my bias. I saw that mandating a subject matter inevitably leads to the question of whose subject matter: the political issue of control. When Hong Kong changed hands the history taught in her classrooms changed utterly. Which is it? The universe was created by God or a Big Bang?

But what of the net without which one cannot play tennis? I saw that it is always with us. "Art is

limitation," writes G. K. Chesterton. "If you draw a giraffe, you must draw him with a long neck. If in your bold, creative way you hold yourself free to draw a giraffe with a short neck, you are not free to draw a giraffe at all. You can free things from accidental laws, but not from the laws of their own nature" (qtd. in Lomask 51). The essayist who kissed a dead man willingly submitted himself to nature, but wanted to be free of the accidental laws imposed by Lori and Barbara. "Can't he be creative within the form?" Perhaps, but he will certainly be creative outside it, mocking and subverting accidental laws and their advocates. The day after the students were instructed in the compare and contrast essay their teacher is absent. A substitute teacher tells the students to get into small groups and write on the blackboard some things that can be compared and contrasted. She tells them to make five pairs of things per group. The next day their teacher returns and tells them to write ten pairs of things.

Student #1--How about real teachers who tell us to do ten and substitutes who tell us to do five? (laughter)

Student #2--A big tree and an old man. That was my own. (laughter--he has made clear he is reading from a list left by the previous class)

Student #3--athlete-brain!

Student #1--Contrast, right?

Student #4--school-prison.

Student #2--everybody does that one. (laughter)

Chapter 4

The Essay as Examination

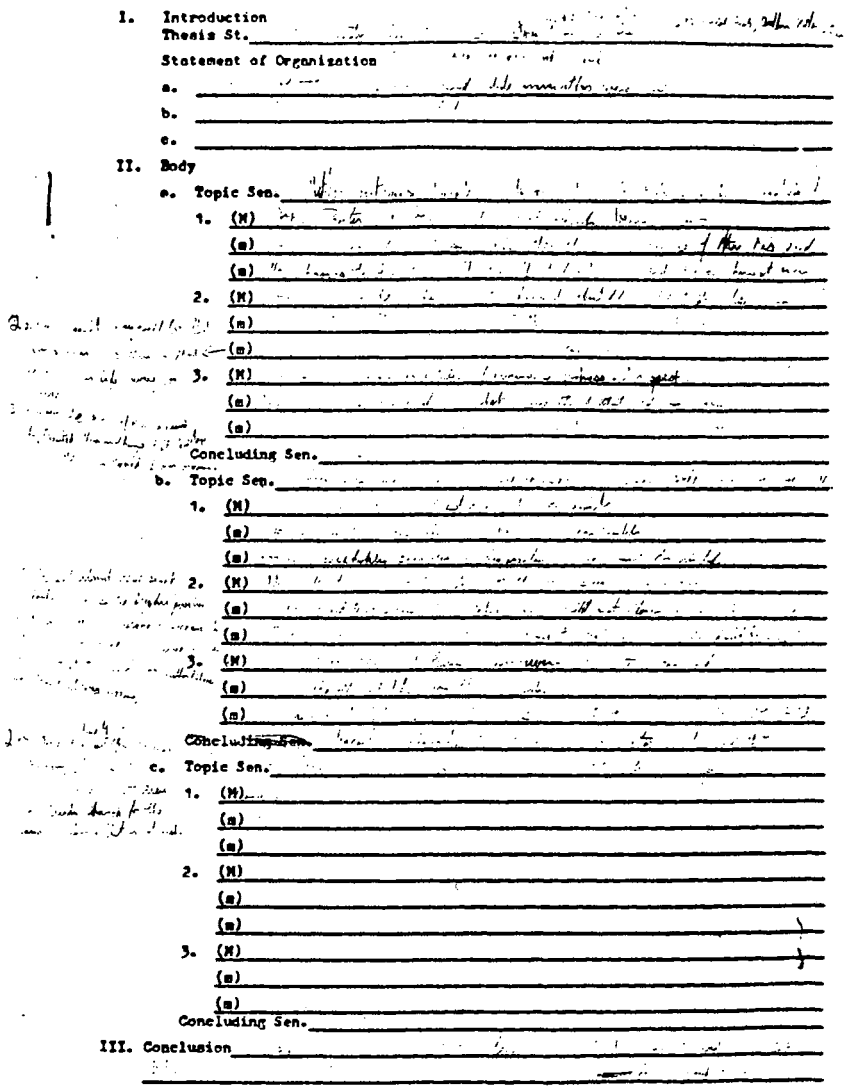
I heard of a teacher taking a course to prepare for the California Basic Educational Skills test who was told by the course instructor that on the essay portion of the test the testee will write a five paragraph thesis essay with a three part thesis sentence.

"Why an essay with a thesis sentence?" asked the teacher. What the teacher does not know, that I have learned in my new posture of Compositionist, is that this variety of the essay is a characteristic formal problem, that is to say a task given by teachers to students, of the Current-Traditional Paradigm. More than likely the instructor is also unaware of that fact, but he does know something.

"Because," he replies, "that's the way it is."

The way it is gives the teacher a subject matter to teach: the formula. The procedure is comforting for all concerned. The teacher knows the thesis-support essay formula and students are relieved of the burden of making certain artistic and intellectual choices.

Here a teacher goes the distance for his students:



I. Introduction
Thesis St.
Statement of Organization
a.
b.
c.
II. Body
a. Topic Sen.
1. (M)
(m)
(m)
2. (M)
(m)
(m)
3. (M)
(m)
(m)
Concluding Sen.
b. Topic Sen.
1. (M)
(m)
(m)
2. (M)
(m)
(m)
3. (M)
(m)
(m)
Concluding Sen.
c. Topic Sen.
1. (M)
(m)
(m)
2. (M)
(m)
(m)
3. (M)
(m)
(m)
Concluding Sen.
III. Conclusion

The thesis essay formula bestrides schools like a colossus, but I was persuaded that formulae, like most every other tool, offer benefits and drawbacks that I needed to understand. "Fielding took this formula," writes David Cecil of what novelist Henry Fielding does with the

conventions of comedy, "and, as it were, loosened it, stretched it, and then used it to impose order on the episodic confusion of the picaresque romance. Thus he achieved pattern, thus he integrated his panorama. It was a useful formula, for it was at once firm and elastic . . . All the same, just because it was a formula, it did not provide a complete solution to the novelist's problem. Order was imposed on the material from without, not evolved from within; with the result that the author's inspiration and his form were often at odds with one another."

A personal inspiration and a generic form are necessarily at odds, and a formula cannot provide a complete solution to the essayist's problem, but the teacher of Composition does not, of course, teach novelists. The teacher of Composition has pedagogical intentions, it will be argued, that make Lord Cecil's strictures irrelevant. By requiring a certain form, a certain topic, a certain mode of thought, and a certain purpose (as in "write a five paragraph thesis essay comparing high school and college in order to prove which is best") the teacher precludes some choices so that the full attention of students can be given to other choices.

The logic is irreproachable, but I have to read and evaluate a great many essays for a great long time so I ponder the big picture. I conceive the big picture under the head of what H. W. Matelene calls "entitlements to

attention" or, why should we listen? "In the late Renaissance," he writes, "science began to look like a possible means of making Europeans listen because a few influential minds thought that perfected science would provide the three entitlements to attention which, from Plato onward, all felt any perfect utterance would have. These could be called the entitlements of truth, clarity, and candor."

To be sure, I do not require the perfect utterance, and truthclaritycandor transcend my small ambition: I want to read my students' essays without going cracker-dog. Why should I listen to the thesis-support essay?

The author has taken a position on some matter, made her stand. Capital punishment is bad. I consult myself to find the place within that cares what stand people take. Sometimes I care about the stand of my wife, my son, my brother, my friend, my aunt; a sometime desire that I prefer to have quickly satisfied, not beaten on with a four page disquisition. The author of an essay, a stranger to me, has no claim on me from the get go if she trades on her stand. Worse, she supposes that I wish to be persuaded of the validity, yea the moral valor, of her stand. In an access of misplaced aggression she makes herself one with the people who sell me their God at my door.

Now, as if suspecting that she is not only not entitled to my attention, she is not getting any, she deploys the

structure of the thesis essay, which requires her to take the same stance thrice, in the introduction, in the body, in the conclusion. Iteration does give her stand emphasis: she is not a bore with an ax to grind, but a big bore with a big ax.

Suddenly her choice of prose style makes strategic sense: the voice of textbooks, the voice in which no one is home, the I without an I. Having won no entitlement to my attention, having in fact alienated me, she wisely wishes to disappear. She can do so honorably by avoiding a narrative dimension to her essay and supposing that she has deployed Science's ploy of objectivity. She hates abortion because she pictures a fetus sliced and diced by surgical steel, but by depersonalizing her stance she can create an idea more likely valid, she supposes, because it has not been dragged through the blood and moil of the human enterprise. Yet even if this credibility ploy were to manipulate those of little brain, the arid prose that moves it cannot provide an entitlement to attention. And there is something rotten here. While the style may be cold and impersonal, the relationship it creates with the reader is too warm, too needy: if I can get you to confirm my stance, my own commitment will be made surer. The ardent persuader brings me her problem and craves succor.

All this is, of course, a revealing fiction. She is doing what her teacher told her to do, and her teacher is

doing what was done to her. Although even a skimpy market analysis would reveal the thesis essay's idea, form, and voice, cannot sell much popcorn, that is beside the point for the CTP in which the essay is not seen as a work of art but as a pedagogical device for teaching and evaluating a part of the subject matter of the Current-Traditional Paradigm for teaching Composition: an exam.

It will be objected that entitlements to attention are, in any case, self-referential, not to say solipsistic, not to say plumb selfish: gor blimey, you giddy squirrel, this is not about you; this is a job of work. All right then I will read what I must, but consider for a moment what the thesis essay does to the mind of the writer. The fill-in-the-blanks format above is expressive of what the thesis essay is, but to understand what it does we might imagine a cleaver that cuts apart phenomena counter-productive to sunder. The criterion for an adequate formal problem in Composition is that it does not perform the following cleavages. "Order was imposed on the material from without, not evolved from within," argues Lord Cecil, "with the result that the author's inspiration and his form were often at odds with one another . . . The fact is, that unity of form and inspiration can never be achieved by formula; only by genuine and radical integration."

The form of the thesis essay intends to integrate the parts of the essay into a whole and so it does, but this is

not radical integration. The parts--abortion is bad because it is against God, it is murder, it is immoral--chosen precisely because they cohere are not in a state of tension. "Writing, to George Eliot," writes Jerome Beaty, "was not an unpremeditated outpouring; neither was it a mechanical following of a detailed blueprint. It was a process of evolution and discovery." When one evolves one does not know what one will become, when one discovers one does not know what one will find. "I find," remarks Donald Murray, "few English teachers are comfortable with the concept of uncalculated discovery." Radical integration is a performance that necessitates uncalculated discovery.

Also not in tension is another aspect of the form of the thesis essay: the halcyon working out of a procedure--tell them what your are going to tell them, tell them, tell them what you told them. Raw artistic power, the force that through the green fuse drives the flower, is a consequence of a tension: the unification of diversity, of radical integration. The more diversity unified the more raw power has a work of art. The failure to integrate parts, to compose tension in a writing, means that the writing does not have power. The failure is an engine of boredom in writer and reader. The effect on a writer attempting to grow in skill is yet more dire.

In a thesis-support essay the problem of integration, artistic wholeness, is being solved by a procedure that can

be carried out consciously; no intuition, inspiration, creative unconscious, call it what we will, is required or desired. Consider the problem of ending an essay. The procedural solution of the thesis-support essay is to end the essay by summarizing what has gone before. That procedure solves a problem that deviled and fascinated Henry James: "Really, universally, relations stop nowhere," declares James," and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall <u>happily</u> appear to do so." The exquisite problem of the artist. The problem of integration, the circle of our personal geometry, requires everything the self has available and most especially the intuition, or what one of my students after realizing that he did not consciously write sentences (first an article "the" next a noun "cat" next a verb "ran") called the "little scribal box in the brain." Denying an artistic problem by solving it the thesis essay dulls the tool of solution by severing the conscious mind from the intuitive mind; minds whose partnership, whose most intimate intercourse, is as surely the raw power of writers as radical integration is the raw power of writings. Damage to a writer's scribal box, for all we know, may cause damage to the growth and refinement of the intuitive faculty. "Intuition is not something that is given," says Benoit Mandelbrot, a seminal mind in the new scientific discipline

of Chaos," I've trained my intuition to accept as obvious shapes which were initially rejected as absurd, and I find everyone else can do the same." Or everyone can suppose that intuition is the faltering resort of weakness and of women.

The thesis essay not only cleaves asunder our truth knowing mental apparatus, but it propels us away from the shape of the truth. Although at this moment in my story I have no notion what the shape of the truth might be, I am certain that it is not the binary shape fostered by the thesis essay, a shape that goes back a long way in Composition. "The invention systems of the classical rhetoricians," explains John Gage, "for all the complexity of their distinctions and vagaries of their variety, all began from the common identification of a 'stasis.' The recognition of a stasis, as the point of disagreement between a writer or speaker and an audience was the point of departure for any method of invention . . . . Writers do not have to look for topics on which to write. They write because a topic, on which they have a stance, confronts them" (4). Stasis lives. Abortion is bad, or good. Now this binary thinking is the shape of an argument, but it is not an engine of discovery and not the shape of the truth, or so I surmise, but I cannot help note that when men take a respite from arguing they require a modus vivendus and right down the middle does the deed. The Golden Mean is the shape

of their surmise.

"I can't get behind that," exclaimed one of my students on being introduced to the noble and ancient ideal limned in John Pomfret's best selling 18th century poem "The Choice." Pomfret's speaker chooses an estate, not too big, not too small, a library, not to fine, not too vulgar, a wine cellar, not too grand, not too niggardly, a woman vigorous, but not too much of her.

"I'm a human, said my student, "I need passion." There is that, but there is something else. My friend David and I were watching children and mothers on our apartment playground. Josh Eleazar was hurt again and again, and each time his mother bathed him in sympathy. The hurts began to border on the imaginary. David said, "I wonder what effusions she'll come up with when the kid really gets hurt. Each time a child is hurt you should express a moderate amount of sympathy." The Golden Mean. Somehow a wrongheaded aspiration, a misapprehension of reality, a timorous ideal, albeit common as dirt; small wonder David's little girl raised under a moderate sun and yclept Mary-She-Bites.

For all its defects the thesis essay is an admirable entity. It intends to teach people to make ideas by using writing as an instrumentality. There are easier ways to teach writing than to insist that the writer present an idea. People become more fluent if you require them to

write stories and letters, genres that are customary and comfortable. Everything could go more easily for everyone, but the CTP bit off a big chunk of grief and earned my esteem by choosing a genre that can be expressly ideational, and by insisting that it be expressly ideational.

My admiration does not extend to the modes of discourse essays, compare and contrast, observation, description, narration, et. al., which, although they are queer crafts to fly the ensign of the essay do, like lesser vessels in a battle group, bolster the thesis essay and allow teachers to teach writing "by dissecting and describing a dissected piece of writing." These modes are compelling, one supposes, because they give teachers something to talk about in class and text book writers something to write about. In a personal letter pitching his book The Prentice Hall Guide for College Writers Stephen Reid uses a rhetoric straight out of some future:

> I've also become more and more disenchanted with approaches to writing that assume that because some students are weak writers, they must always be given assignments that externally impose a shape on their writing. In the Prentice Hall Guide, the writer's purpose and intended audience drive the process, not a strategy (such as comparison-contrast) or a school form (such as the five-paragraph essay). Writers need to have

> choices in order to think and learn; we must allow writers to make choices, even the wrong choices, and then let them discover how readers react to those choices. (1)

After an inaugural flourish of this sort of rhetoric the book gets down to business with a sleight of hand recasting of the classic modes of discourse in modern dress: observing, remembering, investigating, explaining, evaluating, problem solving, arguing, exploring. Hypocrisy? Consider Reid's problem: the splendid course design articulated in his letter--allow writers to make choices and discover how readers react to those choices--will not fill a letter, let alone a book. Writing teachers do not remark that Reid is tarting up same old same old because writing teachers have their own filling problem: filling time. Wherefore thrives the textbook, site of subject matter, and principal implement of the CTP. The formal problems of the CTP serve the data base of the textbook, and quite frequently the textbook provides the formal problems as well as the data base. In any case, the CTP requires that the formal problems and data base be different expressions of the same thing: subject matter. In order to eschew subject matter I was going to have to invent or borrow a formal problem that is not a subject matter, does not act as a cleaver, and moves its maker in the shape of the truth, whatever that is. Happily, I was not alone. The CTP was

under attack, and I intended to follow the charge.

Chapter 5

Revolution and Renaissance

I judged that Composition in the guise of textbooks stuffed like the gullet of a foie gras goose with all manner of malarkey had no idea of how to teach writing, and so did professor Nancy Sommers, a seminal figure of the Composition Revolution and Renaissance, who invited me to be her research assistant. A discipline founded on ignorance. Just like me. I would not merely follow the charge I would lead. But my narrow agenda, down with subject matter, soon pushed me into the vanguard and finally onto the sidelines. Whole schools had developed methodologies eschewing subject matter, as for instance law and business schools where students do not learn a subject matter but are made to study cases and learn to think like a lawyer or businessman by making meaning of those cases, and I thought that Composition too was on the cusp of getting rid of subject matter. Composition sometimes styles itself a discipline without a subject matter, perhaps because of an intuition that it should have no subject matter. Nonetheless, Composition, scut work of grad students and housewives picking up a part-time buck, developed an elaborate subject matter of prescriptions, exhortations and advice sufficient to fill out its myriad textbooks and afford its

practitioners a data base to retail. The situation, ambivalent and conflicted, was ripe for revolution.

In 1970 freshly minted Ph.D's in English who could not get jobs teaching literature due to a crowded job market were downloaded into Composition. They looked around, and Composition, the least prestigious of academic disciplines, impertinent with intellectual sophistication, careerist aspiration, the onus to publish or perish, briskly gave rise to the epiphany of incompetence, and re-created itself with a revolution.

In a summary article, "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing," Maxine Hairston lists what she calls the principal features of the revolution:

> 1. It [the revolutionary paradigm] focuses on the writing process; instructors intervene in student's writing during the process.
> 2. It teaches strategies for invention and discovery; instructors help students to generate content and discover purpose.
> 3. It is rhetorically based; audience, purpose and occasion figure prominently in the assignment of writing tasks.
> 4. Instructors evaluate the written product by how well it fulfills the writer's intention and meets the audience's needs.

5. It writing as a recursive rather than a linear process; pre-writing, writing, and revision are activities that overlap and intertwine.

7. It is holistic, viewing writing as an activity that involves the intuitive and non-rational as well as the rational faculties.

8. It includes a variety of writing modes, expressive as well as expository.

9. It is informed by other disciplines, especially cognitive psychology and linguistics.

10. It views writing as a disciplined creative activity that can be analyzed and described; its practitioners believe that writing can be taught.

11. It is based on linguistic research and research into the composing process.

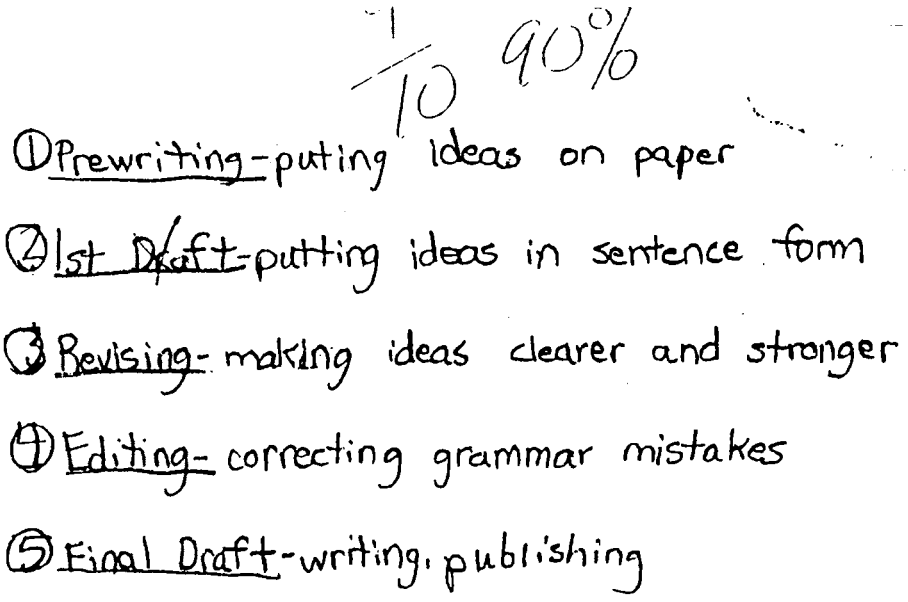
12. It stresses the principle that writing teachers should be people who write.

Professor Hairston created a discerning and replete formulation of the direction of research in Composition. She was, moreover, optimistic that this research would come to shape the practice of teachers in the trenches: "But no revolution," she warns, "brings the millennium nor a guarantee of salvation, and we must remember that the new paradigm is sketchy and leaves many problems about teaching and writing unresolved."

Yet for all the problems, this revolution from product

to process--as it is epitomized--played out as Hairston's list foretold in a body of research on the composing process, the cognition process, the linguistic process, that has given rise to a widely distributed subject matter. Linguisystems in its Complete Supplemental Language Arts Program under the grades 1-6 offers, on a worksheet, its version of the writing process: prewriting, writing, revising, proofreading, publishing. The purpose of the worksheet: "goal: learn the steps of the writing process" (LinguiSystems 5). Strategies: A Rhetoric and Reader for college composition offers "to guide students step by step through the writing process."

Imagine my dissappointment when I saw that The Revolution supplanted the subject matter of product with the subject matter of process. The teacher still knows the answer, a texture of prescriptions, exhorations and advice, and you do not. The Rennaisance looked like this:



The Rennaisance sounded like this: "I do the writing assignments," says a writing student, "but I don't easily conform to the process of brainstorm, outline, rough draft, and the final. That's where I find problems, when I don't follow 'the process.' My high school teachers have done their best to help me conform to "the process.'"

What went wrong with the revolution, from my point of view, is that Composition did not eschew subject matter because The Revolution was modeled after the pendular swing from classicism to romanticism, from objective product to subjective process. "The arena of literature has been transferred," says Edmund Wilson of one of these swings, "from the universe conceived as a machine, from society conceived as an organization, to the individual soul" (4). To the people who invented Composition, the downloaded litterateurs, these arena transfers are upheavals of exceeding significance; when they make a revolution they make it in the image of the revolutions they have studied. Thomas Kuhn, the historian of paradigm shift in science to whom Maxine Hairston refers in her article, was talking about Science, where truths can die (the sun orbits the earth) and cannot be revived by fashion; as for instance, emphasis oscillating between classic and romantic, objective and subjective, society and individual, product and process.

I thought that in order for our discipline to shift to what I began to call the Future-Radical Paradigm Composition

teachers will have to loose the grip of the subject matter which yet abides after The Revolution, and kick it from the House of Composition. If that act of expulsion had to await John Rouse's "mastery of the ego," we might wait a long time. Yet as Paul Kennedy explains in The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: "There exists a dynamic for change driven chiefly by economic and technological developments which then impact upon social structures, political systems, military power, and the position of individual states and empires." We know that. Widening of discussion from the dogmas of Aristotelian scholarship and medieval church theology did not wait upon mastery of the ego, but upon moveable type.

To be hurled by a few years experience, a slew of anecdotes, and a few writers into eschewing subject matter is rash, but there it is. A thrall no more. A thrall no more in a predicament. I had no way to think of myself as a teacher. I cannot give knowledge, I cannot transmit cultural treasures, I cannot retail a data base of facts, meanings and values and take back that data base by examination or performance. What will I do now? What can I ever do?

Jim Gray, a founder of the Bay Area Writing Project that eventuated in the National Writing Project, was asked in an interview, "What are the characteristics of an excellent teacher of writing?" He replied, "One

characteristic of a great writing teacher is not necessarily what he or she does in a classroom--the good ones don't all do the same things. But all the good ones have clear reasons for what they are doing, a theoretical framework that guides them. They aren't scratching around for something to do on Monday" (36).

Invited to become a Fellow of the Writing Project I accepted because I understood its dogma as the same dogma I subscribed to when Stephen Reid spoke it: "Writers need to have choices in order to think and learn; we must allow writers to make choices, even the wrong choices, and then let them discover how readers react to those choices." When Gray said "theoretical framework," I paid attention. He was, after all, my trailblazer for the nonce; yet I did not understand what he meant. I noticed that other teachers saw the partice part of theory and practice as life, what works, and the theory part as a mess of portentous abstractions. "There was a lot of theory," says a graduate student of a composition teaching seminar, but not much about what we are supposed to do in the classroom." The pejorative distinction between theory and practice is pervasive among educators; here is the justly renowned Peter Elbow: "On such occasions I may theoretically be limiting myself by starting with a rigid cage to limit chaos, but practically speaking I would limit myself much more if I tried to deal with more chaos than I could handle." As Goethe's

Mephistopheles tells the young student, theory is grey but the tree of life is green.

Bertrand Russell begs to differ. He points out in his essay "On Useless Knowledge," that everyone likes to quote this line about the greyness of theory as if it were Goethe's opinion "instead of what he supposes the devil would be likely to say to an undergraduate." The more I thought about theory the more I began to understand what Jim Gray meant. The devil has good reason to disparage theory by making it seem to have nothing to do with life. Theory thereby loses not only its cachet, but its power to keep us from scratching around on Monday.

Theory only seems abstract. A teacher having interviewed a candidate for the position of Director of Composition at a university was asked if she were going to vote for the candidate. She replied that she was not. "I asked him a question," she said, "and he answered it incorrectly." What question, I wondered, could be so charged with diagnostic power, and what answer so damning. "I asked him if he would assign a set number of citations for a research paper. He said fifteen."

The interviewer is in possession of a pedagogical theory, or theoretical framework, which in brief is that students learn when they solve problems, and it is the teacher's responsibility to provide them with problems that are germane to what they are learning. If students are

required to traffic in the art of citation, it can only be so that they have the opportunity to solve the problems of when to cite, why to cite, what to cite. The fixed number presents housekeeping problems to be sure, but none that have anything to do with scholarship. The fixed number abrogates the act of choice, and the act of choice should be the point of the exercise. From the interviewer's point of view the candidate was unqualified because his answer revealed that he was either in fundamental disagreement with the interviewer's theory, or he did not know a loaded question when it was put to him. In any event, the candidate had embraced a tradition, but lacked a theory. "I've got more than a thought," announces deputy Barney Fife of the Andy Griffith Show, "I've got a theory." Even the fool aspires to theory, but he cannot make one. That is not surprising. We are trained to assimilate a data base rather than think theoretically. Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo for these three reasons; memorize and repeat on the examination. True or false the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is about love. The planet earth was created by God. Memorize and repeat. The planet earth is a physio-biochemical accident. Memorize and repeat. We are not invited to make our own theory of beginnings, our own theory of what poetry is up to, our own theory of why Napoleon lost at Waterloo. Schooled in dogma, a data base of facts, meaning and values, we teachers cannot be faulted if we do

not know how to make a theory of our practice, although Jim Gray seems to suggest that theorizing is not so much an opportunity, as an imperative.

Another fardel for me to bear: to become a theoretician; more doable anyway than discovering the "shape of the truth." Besides, if theoretics was as potent an epistemological tool as touted, winnowing the competent and incompetent, keeping me from scratching around on Monday, indeed, so serviceable an heuristic probe that the Father of Lies is moved to keep it down, perhaps theoretics could help me discover the shape of the truth. I was not without resources, chiefest among them my students. Because I was not telling students what I knew, I often found myself thinking with them, and thinking of us as a Mind. Solitary, however, I was faced with a decision about what performance to privilege in my classroom, style or substance, form or content.

Part II

Formal Problems

Chapter 6

Performance Privileged by Reward

I sit fascinated and appalled as my wife and her sister Becky argue over a question of fact: did Becky's former boyfriend wear cowboy boots with a zipper on the inside seam, or did he not. The stakes were high. The stylistic choice of the young man would speak of his soul and of Becky's choice of amours. Only the fact was in dispute, for the disputants shared an assumption: style and substance are variant expressions of the same supervening reality so that if one cannot know the soul of an ersatz cowboy direct one can nonetheless take his measure at the surface and know his deeps by inference.

The style is the man himself? Maybe not. Maybe the boyfriend is a truck salesman who wears the boots in order to relate to his customers, and his boots are zippered so he can get them off swollen feet when his working day is done. Although we cannot be blamed for wishing the obscure uncertainty of life like the certain lucidity of artifice, only in the greatest art is the relationship between style and substance unproblemmatic. Here in the gutter where we live our day style and content, to employ the writing teacher's formulation of the distinction, enter divers complex and even nefarious relationships.

"Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country" commanded President John Kennedy in a lauded flourish rehearsing the philosophy of a fascist state. In Language in Thought and Action, semanticist S. I. Hayakawa calls this kind of sleight verbal hypnotism: "First it should be pointed out that fine sounding speeches, long words, and the general air of saying something are effective in result, regardless of what is being said."

The relationship between style and content is a muddle, but the theoretical framework of the Current-Traditional Paradigm has resources with which to purify it: make the muddle into a choice between style and content. The choice goes back a long way and is expressed by this classic emblem: Socrates wants his students to use language as a way of discovering and expressing truth (content) and the Sophists want to make fine speeches (style) to dupe the weak minded. Yet to put the choice between style and content in these terms is to confuse pedagogy with politics. The choice as it presents itself to teachers of writing is not between truth and trickery, but between writerly behaviors to privilege by reward, for it is not possible to reward all desirable behaviors, and not desirable to reward all possible behaviors.

The choice of the CTP is described by Richard Young as a "strong concern with usage," or emphasis on "discrete and sequential surface skills, 'rules' of grammar to be learned

in lectures, practiced in workbook exercises, and applied in assigned topics--usually in one shot final drafts." These "surface" skills are not trivial matters, but go to the heart of language as the Arhat in John Updike's S. proposes after he has his usage corrected by a sannyasin:

> English is strange in its little words. In German there is the same thing, the strange little floating words only the natives can dispose properly. I have often considered that language is stranger than it seems. It conveys meaning, we perceive that, yes, but it also makes a tribal code, a way to keep others out. It is of the intricacy which in paper currency is meant to defeat counterfeiters. (131)

The Composition teacher who focuses on style enrolls students in the intricacy of their language so that they become, like the olden circumcised Jew, recognizable members of a tribe. That would seem to be a good thing, but good things can have a price: a desensitized glans penis. If I were to consider focusing on "enrolling" I needed to make a calculus of gains and losses. I once presented my students with a variety of prose styles to analyze and imitate, and asked them by the way, which of these styles they preferred in point of beauty and penetration. They were nearly unanimous in liking this passage best: "He that carries the mortar furthers the building though he be no expert mason,

he that digs the garden is to be considered, though he cannot tread the knots, the Goldsmith's boy must have his wages for blowing the fire, though he cannot fashion the jewel." Now I like John Lily as well as the next man, but I was confounded by my students' taste for his iteration of the obvious. Eventually I saw that he solves their problem. They write within an ethos wherein what is said, content, is disvalued, and the creative-inventive power of the writer is expended upon manner, style. That ethos seemed too costly. Then I had an experience that caused me to conclude that the ethos of style is far too costly.

Given a job teaching Composition at the University of Tennessee I entered unwittingly into an intensive program for the teaching of style; intensive because the English department owned half the royalties accruing from an intensive instrument. Unwitting because when the department chairman offered me the job he had not mentioned the instrument: The Harbrace System.

THE
HARBRACE
COLLEGE
HANDBOOK
THE HANDBOOK
OF CHOICE FOR
INSTRUCTORS OF
OVER 8 MILLION
STUDENTS--

So says the blurb on a giant postcard I received from Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. The handbook is a compendium of prescriptions ranging from the grammatical--

"use the subjunctive mood in the few types of expressions in which it is still appropriate"--to the formal--"The thesis statement is a single declarative sentence that announces the writer's attitude toward the subject and suggests the essay's overall pattern of organization . . . as a rule it is stated as the final sentence of the introduction."

The Harbrace System requires the teacher to inspect student essays for violations of the prescriptions and mark the site of the violation that corresponds to an explanation in The Harbrace College Handbook, say 32d for a thesis sentence that does not announce the writer's attitude, or is out of place, or does not appear. Alerted to error the student turns to her handbook and reads about her error, corrects her error on her essay, and lists her error in the Harbrace Folder "Summary of Errors," a device that gives this account of itself: "The Summary of Errors, when properly filled out, will show at a glance the student's progress."

Harbrace's pedagogy would appear to be unimpeachable. In an article titled "Taking a Lesson from Japan and subtitled "Will the Kids in Toledo Ever Catch Up with Tokyo," Barbara Kantrowitz yearns after Harbrace: "In their new book The Learning Gap University of Michigan psychologist Harold W. Stevenson, one of the country's leading experts on education and his co-author, James W. Stigler say that 'Asian teachers think of mistakes as an

index of what still needs to be learned.'" Although Stevenson and Stigler lament the fact that too many "Americans believe that academic success is largely the result of nurturing innate abilities," Harbrace is certainly at one with them, and with "Asian teachers," and with celebrated Ford Motor Company executive Lee Iaccoca who in his book Talking Straight laments the lament and talks straight: "Japan, on the other hand, really keeps students focused on their studies, pumping fact after fact into them." Professor E. D. Hirsch advocates, in response to the folly of nurturing innate abilities, a "corrective theory":

> The corrective might be described as a anthropologic theory of education . . . . In an anthroplologic perspective the basic goal of education in a human community is acculturation, the transmission to children of specific information shared by adults of the group or polis . . . . Only by piling up specific, communally shared information can children learn to participate in complex cooperative activities with other members of the community.

One would think television does the necessary transmitting, piling and pumping, but Professor Hirsch will say it is not the right communally shared information; which information, the stuff Hirsch knows, is to be found in his book Cultural Literacy. In Japan, Naohino Amaya, a high

nabob of puissant MITI, is not so enamored of piling and pumping:

> The problem is that we are in danger of producing young people who have the intellectual capacity of computers but who will be inferior to computers in what they can actually do. The computers have caught up. The entrance exam at our universities now is designed to choose students with computerlike capabilities. That means we are geared up to producing people whom we no longer need because the computers will do what they do better than they do it. (Qtd. in Halberstam Next Century 117)

I read Amaya and recalled what my little son had said, indirectly, about the anthropologic theory of education. We were watching his favorite movie The Lion of the Desert again. A mechanized Italian Army was massing to destroy an Algerian village. I wondered why the people, who knew a tank attack was coming and were prepared to defend their village with their lives, had not dug a ditch around Kufru to stop the tanks. "Daddy," sadly said my son who loved these Algerians and their noble leader Omar Muktar, "they're a tribal people, they can't prepare for things."

In Tennessee I find myself in trouble. I had glanced at Harbrace, bemused that an anthology of error neglected to mention the only error that a writer of essays can make:

being uninteresting. I dealt with Harbrace as I had learned to do with the textbooks my superiors required me to employ and students to buy: "This is a book. It may be of use to you. You bought it. You read it."

Called on the carpet for "failing to Harbrace" I could see that my superiors were, as the psychologists say, conflicted. They seemed to think that error correction was no way to teach writing, even chuckling when I showed them a full page magazine advertisement for a Smith Corona typewriter headlined THE FIRST TYPEWRITER THAT TURNS A BORING WRITER INTO A BORN WRITER. I had underlined a few lines of the text: "Introducing the Grammar-Right System . . . . Think of it as your co-author and writing coach all in one, because it works with you step by step to improve your writing style." I did not say, look see here where it makes the assumption you chaps make about the connection between the prestige standard written dialect and other matters: "It puts passion in your prose, life in your letters, dash in your documents." I did not go there because this was a dainty negotiation, at stake bread on my table; and royalties to the English department, water in the desert, had spawned in my bosses deep and abiding loyalty to Harbrace.

I submitted to Harbrace my superiors accepting, somewhat reluctantly it seemed, this grade formulation: 1/2 intellectual sufficiency, 1/2 prestige standard written

dialect sufficiency. I wondered if my students would submit, truly submit. "The grammar checking program, Grammatik, drove me up the wall," writes Whitely Streiber. "I'm a fiction writer, my voice is my main thing. And sometimes repetitions are very important to the right tone, and you might not even consciously know what you are doing but the program is liable to take the voice right out of the fiction writer. It erases personal style. It is good for the business writer and perhaps certain types of non-fiction. But I don't think it has any real place in creative writing--fiction or non-fiction."

Michael Kurland thinks it has a place, although not for the likes of him. "I wouldn't use a grammar checker. Besides grammar is largely a question of style. Unfortunately, your average writer today could use a grammar checker to his benefit; however, I'm a stylist. I'm a fairly important novelist. I establish style; I don't bow to anyone else's ideas." Michael Kurland makes importance a condition of freedom, but where he ranks in the pantheon is neither here nor there. How much of a stylist must one be, after all, to be a Stylist, how important a novelist to establish style, how courageous a writer to resist bowing to the ideas of others? Does it matter that the critic there in the corner thinks kurland writes an ugly prose and novels so derivative that he is as bent from bowing as a Monterey Cypress? I think not. He is a writer, and he will get

better at writing and savor writing only by making choices and exulting in them, or suffering the consequences of them.

On the floor below my office was a room called the vault, saturated with the million errors of ten thousand students: the Harbrace Folders testifying to their progress as writers. To which progress, bent from bowing, I would try to make my scanty deposit. For all the strangeness of this dusty space, it was less strange than what a woman told me in an interview. "For awhile I would work with the students on their stories," explained the Knoxville High School English teacher, "but then I realized that's plagiarism." I asked her how she came to realize that working with her students on their stories was plagiarism. "It says so," she replied, "in the University of Tennessee's handbooks, The Freshman English Program, and Guide to Composition. I found this most unlikely. Plagiarism is a complex matter, but working with students on stories, call it what we will, helping, teaching, collaborating, is not plagiarism. I looked to the sections on plagiarism. "The department of English does not discourage the use of tutors. It does, however, urge you to be very careful when you employ a tutor, because in English assignments there are obviously potential problems of collaboration." What deformative pressures could cause an English department to confuse collaboration, acme of the human enterprise, aim of alliance between God and man, with plagiarism, sentence

theft? "Students should not . . . replace their own ideas and plans with those supplied by someone else or ask someone to proofread their papers for errors in grammar, puctuation, spelling, diction, or sentence structure. These practice,s which constitute excessive collaboration are objectionable because by preventing the instructor from recognizing the students' real ability and progress, they inhibit effective teaching and learning."

Of course. When progress as a writer is measured by compliance with the directives of the Harbrace College Handbook, collaboration will muddy the waters. How can I know the measure to which I have bent you to my will, if someone else is helping you grovel?

Style as deployment of the prestige standard written dialect, or style as l'homme meme, it was the same to me and to my assertion: for the writer, the pressure to say some thing to some one is the driving engine of style. "He who has nothing to assert has no style," asserts George Bernard Shaw, "and can have none." Reluctant to privilege content over style, I remembered the lull in a party at Knole House, great estate of the illustrious and fabulously wealthy Charles Sackville, sixth Earl of Dorset. Sackville, according to author Paul Theroux, made a proposal: why do they not all write a few eloquent lines--impromptus--and let his guest John Dryden, the greatest poet in England, pick the best. After a time Dryden collected the pieces, read

them, and chose the winner:

> I promise to pay John Dryden five hundred pounds on demand.
>
> Dorset

Dorset's "eloquent lines" are a triumph of content over style. It is hardly the case, however, that content always wins the battle for the hearts and minds of an audience,- and to set style and content at odds in point of primacy is foolish. Perhaps Dryden cannot be bought, even for $50,000, and is reacting to Sackville's wit, his style. Or it may be that wit taken to a certain plane of excellence is content and style can be the driving engine of content.

That is to say, in principle it does not matter whether a Composition paradigm privileges style or content because both open the door to expressiveness and communication. But as a matter of cases rather than principle, it matters everything. The choice of the Current-Traditional Paradigm to traffic in subject matter necessitates a further choice: to mandate compliance. Compliance can be more easily mandated if outcomes are objectified, and style is reduced to something other than style.

"In a bad workshop," writes novelist John Gardner, "the teacher coerces students into writing as he himself writes. The tendency is natural, though not excusable. The teacher has worked for years to figure out his style and has persistently rejected alternatives. The result is that unless he is careful he is likely to be resistant to writing

markedly unlike his own, or worse, written in a style opposed to his own, as in the case of the elegant stylist confronting a rough, demotic prose."

Gardner presents the worst of a best case. In the more usual case Composition teachers do not themselves write, and reduce style to a matter of prescribed and proscribed usages: from page 257 of The Harbrace College Handbook, "select from fresh expressions instead of trite, worn out ones." Consider what happens here: strategic choices afforded by the worn out are obviated. If the teacher discovers a worn out expression she strikes it out. She is interested in compliance with rules of discourse, wherefore she turns aside from the truth of style. Whatever else style is, it is at least a manifestation of individuality. If I am interested in your individuality I do not recast your sentences to make them an expression of my individuality.

Just as the current-traditional paradigm has reasons for privileging style, I have reasons for privileging content. Chief among them is a primary fact of writing that usually goes unremarked: we do not write our sentences by thinking "first I will write the article 'the,' then I'll choose the noun 'cat,' then I'll finish this sentence with the verb 'ran.' Instead we indite sentences as they come to us flowing from some creative part of the self over which we do not exercise conscious control. If I know that I must

end an essay with a summary of what I said above, I can dispense with the creative powers of my scribal box and I can afford to neglect the disciplines that nurture it. How is it nurtured? Certainly not by being pushed around with prescriptions about style. Prescriptions are abstract and universal; style is individual and particular. Style is result and means of individuation, and it must be left to create itself in the deep mystery of the self.

I asked my students to make discoveries to provide content for their essays. One young man in my business writing class drew on his experience of working as a busboy in two cafeterias. He proposed a "pecking order" business model, and a "family order" business model and argued that the latter was preferable to the former. Within five years his distinction would be all the rage in business books. I had supplied the term "model" to help him articulate his idea. This may, or may not have been "excessive collaboration," but was plainly the iceberg tip of a pervasive failure for which I was soundly rebuked in an evaluation:

> No attention whatsoever was given to such matters as spelling, syntax, basic grammar. From my viewpoint as a visitor in the class, the discussions created the format of story editors examining the works of professional authors. My question: do all of these students write such

clear English essays that one can focus nearly exclusively upon effect, character development, and relationships--and other elements of concern to a creative writer's workshop?

A failure to my bosses was madness to my students: "I still recall how crazy 'we all' thought your little discovery notion was," wrote my student Russ in a farewell note, yet Russ suspects method in my madness. "Now I find myself making and enjoying them more often, and I am still trying to calculate their true worth."

I too would have to calculate their true worth. "Mr. Pratt writes quite well and he has gotten a job, but his students don't write as well and the day is coming when a series of sentence fragments on their applications for jobs may prove a saddening experience for them."

Immured in the vault is a Harbrace Folder containing the essay that utters a prescient idea made by the young man who thought about work, and taped to the "Summary of Errors," is a note: I DID NOT WRITE BACK HERE BECAUSE NONE OF MY WORK HAS ANY ERRORS ON THEM.

Chapter 7

Temptation Sin Redemption

The polar bear dives into her pool, swims to the other side, pulls herself out, lumbers to the other end of her pool, dives, swims again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again. I heard a child say "Mommy do polar bears like to swim?" I saw the scene new. Was the bear's behavior obsessive, had she been maddened by incarceration? Suffering by the spectacle and marveling at the child's creation of his disturbing heuristic probe I heard the mother say. "Of course he does, he's doing it isn't he." A good mother, conscientious to bring her child to the zoo, to let her child know that the answer is wisdom and the question a troublement, just as her parents and her schools had let her know, and taking her pleasure, for subject matter, the answers, supplies a satisfaction difficult to obtain elsewise: the constant opportunity to correct people coupled with the delusion that one is doing them a service.

Now with a better job at a better university, perturbed by fresh ambition, I coveted such satisfactions, especially the image of competence supplied by subject matter. One day I was blackboard charting the movement of ideation in a student's essay in order to make the point that an

intellectually respectable idea is seldom a thesis, but a movement of ideas under the aegis of a meta-idea in a symphonic rather than hierarchic pattern. My point was so well taken that my students asked me to give them more of these symphonic patterns; they would, they said, choose amongst them to suit their tastes. My students were asking me for something! In the throes of the thrill, I realized that my rejection of subject matter, at least subject matter in the aspect of a formal problem, was wrongheaded. The proponents of subject matter had been right all along: "Carefully thought out rules of writing can give rise to better essays."

What I needed to create, with the help of the students at my disposal, was a reasonably well designed essay structure that would make my students look smart and me look competent. We created a quasi-symphonic formula in seven movements:

1. Indexing the Discovery: A colonated title with a tad of poetry to the left of the colon and a morsel of explanation to the right.
2. Making Connection: a vignette that "sets" the problem, implicates the audience, suggests the problem-solution motif of the symphony, and appeals to the reader's interest in people.
3. Defining the Problem: explains what was implicit in the vignette by indicating what a solution to the problem would

require, why the problem is a problem, and who or what creates the problem.

4. Describing the Conventional Solution: how do people think about the problem and why do they think that way? Why is the conventional solution not a solution to the problem, and why do people not see that it is not a solution?

5. Narrating the Discovery: a progression through vignettes, including wrong turns, referring back to the vignette in Making Connection.

6. Solving the Problem: the way in which this solution meets the requirements stated in Defining the Problem, and the ways in which this solution is in accordance with the principle of no free lunch: how is it to be "paid" for.

7. Passing the Baton: suggests the ways in which the discovery might be tested and exploited in the experience of the reader.

It is all there in the format: subjective human experience coupled with a claim about the nature of objective reality; movement between the concrete and the abstract, the particular and the universal; suspense and drama rather than iteration; a rhetorical stance promising power rather than persuasion; a symphonic movement of twists and turns hung on the skeleton of an impeccable logic; built-in structural and intellectual complexity. Where the thesis essay made intelligent people seem stupid, this formula could make stupid people seem intelligent.

Heady vapors of pedagogical glory rose to my brain. Using this format my students would write better essays than the students of my colleagues using the thesis essay format, or anything else. I had somehow discovered a "good" subject matter in this formal problem, one that would make my students look like better writers and feed my preening ambition. The only tricky part of the deal was the "discovery" upon which the whole apparatus turned. Although making discoveries about how the world works is our habit and destiny, we are seldom asked to account for them, traffick in them, articulate them, give them away. Discoveries are not a currency in our schools. Ideas, however, are, and ideas were crippling my students. Lacy Streeter in a math class notices cheating and is angry, but she does not turn stoolie because nobody likes a stoolie because being a stoolie is a bad thing. Here, in a rush to judgment, meaning and experience are conflated; experience is not separated out as an object of investigation, but is instantly fastened to platitudes and helpless moralizing. Questions, interposed between experience and meaning, might be the thing to keep my students from grasping irritably after conclusion. Sissy Jupe wishes to argue that fraternity types are snobs. What is a snob? Is a snob a good or bad thing? What is a snob good or bad with reference to? What happens in fraternities? What are the mechanisms by which the values of fraternities are

inculcated? What are the social consequences of the inculcation of these values? The personal consequences?

My questions were not asked all at once or in an order, but in response to Miss Jupe's Project. Eventually she ended up with an intellectually respectable idea vivified and demonstrated by the research gone into it. She argued that the ethos of fraternities is upper middle class, anatomized that ethos, described the means by which it is inculcated and compared that ethos to the Judeo-Christian ethic. She made the idea that fraternities are at once a superior vehicle for the attainment of social success and the sure and certain custom of damnation.

It took her awhile to make this idea and her pride was only exceeded by my own. Natural enough since the idea reeked of the species of intellection I had developed for my school papers, more clever than useful, more precious than profound. I recalled the teacher who styled himself a Socrates, but had a secret agenda: the fifteen or so concepts he knew about the 18th century. When a student answered a question in a manner that furthered the concept he responded positively and when an answer did not further the concept he discounted it with grave courtesy. The concept emerged.

Well, qualms, misgivings, reservations, scruples, cannot serve my turn. I have means, the quasi-symphonic format and my idea shaping questions, to make my students

look good in their essays. Certainly, as one who has engendered a "good" subject matter I remain interested in the dubious prescriptions of other teachers. Consider this sentence: "It evokes many good feelings such as loyalty, commitment, care, friendship, companionship, while at the same time it can also bring about negative aspects such as frustration, fear, and possessiveness." Aspects of what, one wonders. That looks like some kind of grammar bolix, but as it happens the writer was following a rule, something about not repeating words, so that "feelings" is replaced by "aspects." The ensuing confusion is the moral equivalent of iatrogenic disease, call it pedagogenic dysfunction, teacher caused blunder. The rule seemed to uncreate, to degrade.

> "The Almighty Deity intoned 'permit us to have radiance in existence,' and lo and behold, illumination was manifested and therefore reality came into being."

That is a sentence bent to rule, several rules.

1) do not repeat words
2) use complex syntax
3) use authoritative diction (big words)
4) use strong verb (get rid of "to be" variants)
5) punctuate properly

Pedagogenic dysfunction. Authoritative diction for I hardly knew what, but I did know that I should not care to wield the rules that could disenable a writer and wreck the

sentence Longinus tenders as exemplar of sublimity. Isocrates marvels at teachers "who cannot see that they are applying the analogy of an art with hard and fast rules to a creative process," but what happens, I wondered, when teachers act out the analogy; what does the wielded rule do? It cannot teach writing, but what can it do? Can the rule act in the world, and if so to what end? When my student answered these questions I was led to discover an astonishing phenomenon: "We have rules, how to sell, pretty much same in all the dealerships. To help sell the unit. People like to buy from people they like, so one rule was, you approach the customer, get your hand on 'em, shake hands, get their name and phone, give 'em your name, your card. Use their name a lot, people like to hear their name. We have this raised glass office, so one day I'm talking to my wife on the phone, and I'm looking out, and I see something, I see something that was always there. Guys go out on the lot up to the customer and I can't hear 'em, but I can see, and the customer is shrinking away, sometimes you could hardly see it, but the customer is shrinking away from this guy putting his hand on him, trying to be friends. So I broke the rule with this customer and as we went deeper into the deal I see there was this one moment where I feel that if I introduce myself it'd bring us closer. It worked. I could damn feel it work. Course there's just that moment there, different moments, different people, sometimes no

moment, you've got to be alert, pay attention. How do you do it Bob they say? Hell, I sell more product than anybody in the store. They don't want to know. Me, I'm in it for the money. That, what'd you call it, that discovery shit, yeah I do it."

Bob looked down. He caught his breath, or perhaps he was sighing. He looked up.

"I work my butt off Michael."

It is all here. It is. When a principle, a fact, say people prefer to give their money to people they like, is turned into a rule, get your hand on 'em, the outcome is the opposite of what the rule intends. Call it contra-action. The upside of the rule is ease, clarity, certainty, the absence of necessity for thought, alertness, sensitivity, and not the least of upside, the comfort of being part of the crowd that subscribes to the rule. I am not the first to notice contra-action, or the down side of the wielded rule. William Abernathy, late of the Harvard Business School, argued that America's industrial production problems are caused by the managers whose job it is to solve them, and that we are, as the title of his hugely influential book states, Managing Our Way to Industrial Decline. Edwards Deming, the industrial efficiency guru rejected by the United States, taken up by Japan, and now taken seriously in the United States, noticed the same phenomenon, and as a journalist remarks, "Companies like Ford and General Motors,

for all their good intentions, have deeply ingrained cultures that are essentially the anti-thesis of what Deming teaches."

I devised a research project with four of my fellows to address an issue about which I had a mute intuition of contra-action. The outcome was that I began to undertstand the contra-active operations of the CTP. We wanted to understand an anomaly: frequently when our students rewrote their essays they degraded rather than improved them. We assumed that the skill of rewriting was important to a writer, not only to improve texts, but to learn to write better. Certainly from time to time we had all taken a step backward by rewriting, but the consistent retrograde motion of so many of our students was as disturbing as it was anomalous. We wanted to know what caused it. Our research methodology was simple as pie: students wrote and rewrote essays, and we asked them why they made changes.

We answered the question posed by the anomaly, and named the answer Piecemeal Cue Response Syndrome. When students read their essays with intent to rewrite they were cued to make textual changes in accordance with the prescriptions, exhortations and advice they had been given by all their teachers. The cues were arbitrary, disconnected from rhetorical considerations, piecemeal. The ability of students to use rewriting as a way of learning was sabotaged by teachers who, "for all their good

intentions," had invoked a demon: contra-action, doing the opposite of what one intends to do.

It occurred to me that if the subject matter of Composition is contra-active, we will know it by its fruit. In Telling Writing Ken Macrorie tells the story of the poison fish. A student stops a professor in the hall and asks him to read some lines she has written in a style of James Joyce about another teacher: "Day each we tumble into the glass he sez to mee, 'eets too badly that you someday fright preach Engfish.'" And the professor knew, writes Macrorie, that "the girl had found a name for the phony, pretentious language of the schools--'Engfish.'"

I had supped full of this Engfish. Its salient trait was emptiness. "Each and every poet is unique in their own style theme, and expression." When I try to let that sentence make meaning in my mind nothing happens. That sentence was, of course, created by an amateur. These two were created by a professional:

> Appetite, or nothingness experienced, initiates a process of symbolization modelled on the act of eating, which itself figures as the conversion of an absence into a presence, or at least as the reduction of the space between the desiring subject and the object of desire. The journey from remoteness to intimacy is none other than the paradigm of orality imposed on all communicative

acts. (12)

Or, as one of my students put the case more succinctly, "Homosexuality has sexual ramifications."

Plainly, language has a mathematical dimension allowing it to say and not mean. I collect instances. From a Department of Transportation press release:

> N.H.T.S.A. declined to characterize the cause of sudden acceleration as driver error . . . Pedal misapplication is more descriptive of what occurs. It could happen to even the most attentive driver who inadvertently selects the wrong pedal and continues to do so unwittingly, N.H.T.S.A. said.

The writer of this press release may have wanted to spare the feelings of a woman interviewed on 60 Minutes who engaging in unwitting and inadvertent pedal misapplication ran down and killed her child. Non-semantic discourse of this sort works by self erasure to achieve definite rhetorical ends. Composer Luis Munoz: "A long time ago I stopped trying to be a rock and roll star, that was never my goal." "Everyone's heart goes out to these stricken children," says Alexander Power, who lives on an estate near the J&R Ranch being considered for purchase as a summer camp for children with cancer, "and our neighborhood is behind this concept in every way--but in an appropriate setting."

Barbara Uehling, Chancellor of the University of California, arrested for driving the wrong way at night with

her lights off, in a statement released by Vice Chancellor of Institutional Development Ed Birch: "I believed that my driving was unaffected by the small amount that I had to drink during the two-and-a half to three hour dinner that evening, and I had a very modest amount of wine."

You may have noticed the odd thing about non-semantic discourse. Making no meaning textually, it nonetheless figures forth an astoundingly expressive subtext introducing us to Munoz the failed rock star, Powers the Santa Barbara greed-hog, Uehling the closet alkie, for whom, as is the way of her kind, the wine she must have guzzled is not "drink." Or it may be that Munoz, Powers, and Euling are not what sub-text suggests. It is certain, however, that the sub-text of the non-semantic prose written by the amateur student and the professional scholar quoted above, is "I have nothing to say, but I must speak." You hear this kind of thing in popular media, a television show on child development, "By the time the child is three it will have reached half its capacity for creativity and learning," or Lloyd Dobbins, host of the television newsmagazine Monitor "Success and failure are words that have no meaning outside of each of us," but the academic, brandishing "authoritative diction (big words)" is a stealth practitioner of non-semantic prose. Robin Dearborn, Senior Learning Skills Counselor, and Jesse N. Valdez, Ph.D., Counseling Psychologist, have invented a "model for understanding

writer's block":

> The writing anxiety model illustrates the general sequence of events which may contribute to and perpetuate a writer's block. Because students interpret a writing situation or task as a threat or as a challenge, they have either a negative or positive response to writing. Typically, blocked writers respond negatively to writing tasks, and experience negative thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and physical reactions. These responses, which take different forms for different students, contribute to feelings of anxiety, failure, and insecurity and eventually feed into their future negative interpretations of writing situations. (4)

In brief, people who respond negatively respond negatively. Although a logician would recognize this as tautology, blue is blue, the modest flourish of "verbal hypnotism" might stump the casual reader. Now I will put on a piece of prose by a professor of education unwittingly crafted to fool everyone:

> The evolving nature of the institutions within which we teach, the pattern of social expectations that define the world in which those institutions live, and the changing restraints and opportunities that shape the interaction between

> academic institutions and the larger world--all make a difference. It is a difference was cannot ignore as we collectively shape curricula and programs and individually construct course and teach them. Neglect of that larger context will blunt our particular efforts to the detriment of the quality of our instruction and of our academic programs. (Humphreys 5)

Or, differences make a difference. I am tempted by the formula.

_____

_____

_____,_____

_____

_____

_____--all make a difference. It is a difference we cannot ignore_____

_____

_____

_____. Neglect of that larger context will blunt_____

_____.

The acts of discovery I asked of my students, requiring

as they did passion and insight and luck and pluck and my slew of questions, were big jobs of work not worth calling into play the contra-active forces unleashed by my methods. If I were going to conjure contra-action in the service of ambition, I might as well make the work quick and easy. The above formula, and others I could devise for my students, would be a way to let them look smart by expoiting the mathematical dimension of language. Observe and perpend. I do not know or care anything about cereals, but using the formula I write what follows in two minutes and fourteen seconds: The intrinsic nature of those cereals indigenous to our culture, the systems of personal and societal intentionalities which condition our responses to those cereals, and the continuously variant climate of possibilities and restrictions which affect the interface between the object cereal and the subject personality--ALL MAKE A DIFFERENCE. IT IS A DIFFERENCE WE CANNOT IGNORE in our efforts to shape as a polis a unified response to the phenomenology, epistemology and teleology of breakfast cereals <u>gua</u> breakfast cereals, and as singular persons to provide ourselves with a program of validificatory motives <u>in re</u> the objectification of our subjective intentionality. NEGLECT OF THAT LARGER CONTEXT WILL BLUNT the progressive motion of our attempt to implicate quality and excellence in the domains of cereal creation, cereal marketing, and cereal

consumption.

It will be objected that this is some kind of scam, and I am entering yet further into the dark contract if I teach it. Do not be naive. Text, sub-text, the important thing is that texts make meaning. No point being peckish about how. Think of Yoko Ono who reveals herself to an impolitic degree by talking straight. "Sam has many friends," said Ono to a witch she had hired for $50,000, "maybe I won't be able to get him to do things for me when I need him. Could you make him somehow a sort of slave of mine during his lifetime so I can rely on him. Can you please do that?" She could use, could she not, some intense training in the production of non-semantic prose? Most students go into business and as David Halberstam explains all who do could use training in non-semantic prose:

> Henry Ford II was perceived as a throw-back to another era, when men were men and ran their companies the way they wanted, did what the damned well pleased in their own hours, and said whatever crossed their minds. Other corporate leaders were careful and used management-speak, a deliberately neutered language devoid of feeling, humanity and viewpoint; a language that left as little record as possible. (Reckoning 202)

As little record as possible. Non-semantic prose! I could avoid the loss of face that comes of denying business

what it wants and students what they want. The student who wrote "Each and every poet is unique in their own style, theme, and expression," went on for pages with the same sort of thing. When I pointed out that she was exploiting a mathematical quality of language that allows it to say something and not mean anything, she explained imperiously that she was an A student in English who had done "this sort of thing" all through her schooling. She looked at me as if I were a very stupid or a very malicious old man. Who needs that? I can give her what she wants in spades. Yet there is a puzzle that I cannot resist: her teachers give her an A for a prose that does not make meaning. How do teachers read student essays?

Here is a matter evidentiary. The 90,000 member National Council of Teachers of English has a committee called the Committee on Public Doublespeak that each year gives awards for egregious instances of a kind of prose named by George Orwell, writer of the essay famous among English teachers, "Politics and the English Language." In 1989 a patient died at a Philadelphia hospital and doctors won an award for describing his death as a "diagnostic misadventure of a high magnitude."

"We're corrupting what language is supposed to do, and that's communicate," said Professor William Lutz, a chairman of the committee. Professor Lutz has been raised up in an ethos that privileges style over content, and the style of

these doctors is a style that Lutz does not like. Lutz would have the doctors say death when they mean death. His indifference to content and paramount interest in his own taste make him deaf to what the doctors are communicating. First they want to place the death within the discipline of diagnostics, rather than within one of the many other disciplines that can lead to the death of a patient. Next they want to characterize the endeavor that led to the death of the patient as a misadventure. They could have called it an error, a blunder, a mistake, but they use the term misadventure to suggest that this was a difficult diagnosis, an adventure rather than a cakewalk and, as adventures will, it came a cropper. Because there are levels of diagnostic misadventure (oh, I thought that splinter was wood rather than steel), they call this one "of a high magnitude" in order to suggest its severe consequence, yea even unto death. Of course these doctors may be lying, having pithed the patient inadvertently or maliciously blown his brains out with a Mossberg, but that is an extrinsic matter; the prose is excellent, at once medically explicit and poetic in its concentration of so much meaning in so little space. Lutz says that if we were to write Ben Franklin's "nothing is certain but death and taxes" in today's doublespeak, we would write "In this world nothing is certain but negative patient care outcome and revenue enhancement." Lutz is indifferent to the fact that times have changed since

Franklin. Today most people in the U.S.A. die while being cared for as patients in hospitals. Taxation has become complex and now we try to distinguish amongst its several kinds. If the government privatizes by selling off Amtrak, that is a revenue enhancement kind of taxation. I predict that because Lutz is a type that reviles adjective to verb coinages, he would disparage "privatizes" in my last sentence. Well, Professor Lutz is probably a swell fellow with a loyal dog. I use him badly here, but to good end as emblem of the consequence privileging style over content has on the ability to read and write. He did not read the Philadelphia doctors aright because of his indifference to content, and when he wrote doublespeak he was not able to express the cynicism of Orwell's Peace is War; he again revealed his indifference to content. The two incompetencies, reading and writing, are part of the same contra-active pedagogical model. When teachers use the writing of students as a way to test compliance with their tastes and their rules (prescriptions, exhortations and advice, the subject matter of Composition) they spoil their instinct for what a writer wants, power, and what a reader wants, power. That species of non-semanticity is begot of the separation between experience and meaning, as noted by Washington journalist, Meg Greenfield: "I would define this ever increasing tribe of talk-subjects as those generating continuous talk that is often detached from experience,

action, meaning, candor and consequence . . . ," and as noted by Compositionist Kurt Spellmeyer: "Although he [an essayist] works hard to enter the discourse community, to comply with its rules and fullfill its expectations, the author has nothing of his own to say. . . A young man who must have felt "left out" more than once in his life, and who may even have contemplated suicide at some point . . . He has read the assigned material and has learned some of the conventions most exemplary of Durkheim's own prose, but whenever there is an opportunity to make a real discovery, to venture beyond the assigned reading into the realm of implication, through assent, disagreement, or the consideration of examples, he retreats again into summary" (113). Of course he does. That is what he has been trained to do and what he is supposed to do. I conclude that by the mechanism of contra-action teachers within the CTP disenable themselves and their students in the skill of making and expressing ideas in prose. The conclusion bolstered my resolve to eschew subject matter and to look critically at those practices and formulae I had developed in order to appear competent to colleagues and students. Torn between sudden ambition and imagined ideality, able to contend for the one as ardently and adroitly as for the other, I hung fire, awaiting, albeit unknowingly, John Rosemond. Rosemund, a family therapist in North Carolina, writes a newspaper column. A parent wrote to him:

> Three months ago, we got a puppy for our 5-year-old-daughter, who loved it dearly. Unfortunately, the puppy had to be returned to the breeder because of a congenital defect, and it will probably be awhile before we can find a replacement. Naturally, our daughter was very upset. Shortly thereafter she began asking a lot of questions about death and dying and has since become almost obsessive . . . the more we answer her questions, however, the more obsessed she seems to become. What can we do to restore her sense of security?

In his column "Parental Guidance" John Rosemond answers them under the headline "Obsession with Death Needs Prod." Rosemund recommends that they sit the girl down and say to her:

> In fact, you've asked all the questions there are, and we've given you all the answers there are. From now on we're going to let you ask two questions a day about death and no more. If you ask a third question we're not going to answer it. A third question means you're getting yourself upset and we're going to send you to your room for 30 minutes to calm down.

Rosemond promises the parents that if they enforce the two questions rule they should see "marked improvement

within a couple of weeks and a total 'cure' within a month or so" (4).

This chilling answer, this confection of arrogance and stupidity, is a version of the answer I would have to make if I were to deal in my formulae and forward my ambition. But what could I do? I could forgo subject matter, but I had to have a formal problem, and if the formal problem were itself a subject matter . . . what could I do?

Reading in the library I witnessed a scene and that concentrated my mind wonderfully. A girl, maybe thirteen years old, came out of the stacks whimpering, took a chair from a table, placed it in a corner of the magazine reading room, and sat sobbing noisily. Two adults hurried to her and asked her if she didn't want to go out to the van or back to the school. She said no, and as they gently remonstrated she bawled and said again and again, like a litany or mantra "I feel bad about myself. I don't want to grow up."

When I described the scene to a friend over lunch he said wearily, "Feeling bad about yourself is a disorder to be cured by drugs or by the cheerleading of the self-esteem movement." He looked at me appraisingly. "What would you, the merest layman," said my friend, a psychiatrist, "say to the girl." I said I'd tell her that I feel bad about myself a lot of the time too, and growing up and getting old isn't so hot either.

"No one has told her that. No one converses with her. In her lonely discovery of what Thomas Hardy [sic] called the blight man was born for, she's become confused and angry, a problem to herself and others, and she's been delivered to the bosom of the mental health industry."

To be helped, I assured my friend.

"To aggrandize themselves professionally, they tell her precisely the opposite of what you would tell her. They tell her not wanting to grow up is a disorder, feeling bad about yourself is a disorder. Come on. We know the up and down movement of our self esteem is a tool of growth. We know that not wanting to
grow up plays as important a role in growing up as wanting to. They tell her she is sick and she believes them because she would rather be a sick little girl than a bad little girl. Who tells her in a thousand thousand ways, of this clay I too am formed, on this hard road I too have embarked? Who tells her Michael, you?"

To aggrandize themselves professionally? Give me some light! I am Thomas Gradgrind, sir, plutocrat of Charles Dicken's Hard Times. A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations, of coarse and ruthless ambitions.

"'Girl number twenty,' said the gentleman, smiling in the calm strength of knowledge.

Sissy blushed and stood up.

'So you would carpet your room--or your husband's room

if you were a grown woman, and had a husband--with representations of flowers would you?' said the gentleman. 'Why would you?'

'If you please sir, I am very fond of flowers,' returned the girl.

'And is that why you would put tables and chairs upon them, and have people walking over them with heavy boots?'

'It wouldn't hurt them, sir. They wouldn't crush and wither, if you please, sir. They would be the pictures of what was very pretty and pleasant, and I would fancy----'

'Aye, aye, aye! But you musn't fancy,' cried the gentleman elated by coming so happily to his point. 'That's it, you are never to fancy.'

'You are not, Cecilia Jupe,' Thomas Gradgrind solemnly repeated, 'to do anything of that kind.'

'Fact, fact, fact!' said the gentleman. And 'Fact, fact, fact!' repeated Thomas Gradgrind" (16).

To be quite sure, I courteously called my girl number twenty Miss Jupe, and my questions were shaping questions rather than rhetorical attack questions. Nevertheless, my Miss Jupe expressed my fancy not her own, for I am sir a shrewd, advanced, insinuating Gradgrind. And apparently doomed to remain one. I could not put away my subject matter, my format, my molding questions, until one day my student made an idea of a different order that gave me a future:

"Will you give us that format you made with your other class last year?"

"No. The writer must arrogate all power of strategic choice to herself."

"The format would be nice."

"No. You're going to have to allow the pressure of what you have to say to shape the means you have to say it with, and the means you have to say it with to shape what you have to say."

A huge groan.

"I told you, I do pain."

Chapter 8

An Idea of a Different Order

When I mentioned, at a seminar, my intention to ask students to make original, intellectually respectable ideas and express them in essays, no less a personage than a full professor of education proclaimed "There are no new ideas." This was perhaps a commonplace only reliable as personal statement: I have never made a new idea. The matter turns, of course, on the meaning of idea and new. The meaning to which I subscribe is articulated by John Dewey: "Each one experiences life from a different angle than anybody else, and consequently has something to give others if he can turn his experiences into ideas and pass them on to others."

In John Dewey's conception the way the world works is so staggeringly complex that it can fed by angles, by as many perspectives, as many ideas, as there are humans to have them. We are isolate, solitary, beings apart. I could say to my students: "No one, alas, gets to be you. No one can have your experience, no one can think about your experience the way you do. You are doomed to originality." Dewey's sentence was not only a serviceable conception of the nature of an idea. I was determined, because it possesses a necessary advantage, to adopt it as my formal problem. The advantage is that it is not a subject matter,

something I know and you do not. It is what humans do. They have experience and make meaning of it to get what they want. They do not often pass the meaning along perhaps, but it is possible that one does not own an idea unless one can give it away, or sell it; in any case I was not reluctant to require "pass them on to others." One could argue that Dewey's formal problem bespeaks the essence of what it is to be human. Comedian Jerry Seinfeld asked if he enjoyed his job replied: "I am my job. Everything else in life pales by comparison to the interpretive experience: seeing something, interpreting it, shaping it, communicating it and being affirmed for it" (51).

Seinfeld's was not an experience made available to essayists in school where the essay is a kind of examination in which they demonstrated they understood and could employ the prescriptions, exhortations and advice they had been given. Therefore, when I modified my formal problem from "write an essay" to "make an original idea and express it in an essay," my students should have been flumoxed, but in the event they made the task manageable: fraternity members are snobs, handguns should be outlawed, the family is important to Western civilization, education is the key to a better life, jocks are stupid. When enjoined to create ideas they explained the obvious, repeated something they had heard, turned an attitude into a moral imperative, elaborated name calling, brandished platitudes as if they were fresh goods,

and practiced the craft of disguising the fact that they had nothing to say. Rather than pass along the ideational fruit of experience, they endeavored to persuade a reader that their received configuration of words was the truth. Perhaps they could do no other. Even Dewey admits that "We are given to associating creative mind with persons regarded as rare and unique, like geniuses." So we are, and lack of creativity is a debility not at all crippling in the course of most schooling, consisting as it does in memorizing and repeating someone else's data base. Yet, when it comes to expository writing, the inability to create ideas is a grievous defect. Grievous for the reader because with the exception of the sometime motive of self- congratulation readers do not care to hear again what they already know, and fatal for the writer because it is difficult to be moved by the desire to express someone else's idea.

In his novel, Vurt, Jeff Noon invents a future in which virtual reality games courtesy of drugs are the rage, and the most revered game/drug, English Voodoo, illegal, unobtainable, dangerous, rolls this blurb in its opening credits: "There will be pleasure. Because knowledge is sexy. There will be pain. Because knowledge is torture." Obviously the knowledge promised by English Voodoo was not a teacher's data base of facts, meanings and values. That knowledge is comfortable, albeit tiresome, but it is not dangerous. Dewey's formal problem is. I surmised that not

incapacity, but fear made people reluctant to engage his problem. I had reason, in fact, to think that anyone could make an original, intellectually respectable idea and pass it on to others. When my son was five years old I liked to ask him a question: "You're new to the planet, what do you make of it?" He invariably repudiated my question, and why not. "The mind is lazy," writes novelist Michael Swanwick. "It's comfortable where it is, and can only be driven into reality with pain and fear" (89). Or remuneration. Every evening at bedtime my son mimed a ball with his hands and said "What exactly is a planet? Finally I told him I would not answer the planet question again until he answered one of my questions. He reluctantly agreed. "What is love?" I was serious. He had intelligence, language, and the experience of love unshaped by much in the way of received formulae. After a time he gave me an answer that I did not understand. I have, however, explored it ever since as I ponder, for instance, the high status in my heart of my brother's wife who is my wife's sister who is the mother of my niece who is the double first cousin of my son who is the daughter of my mother-in-law, and the daughter-in-law of my mother. "Love," my son said, "is a system."

Even knowing what I knew, I continued to shape my students' ideas with a matrix of questions until one of my students struck out on her own to made an idea that was not clever, but could be profitably passed along and thereby

implement John Dewey's formal problem. In the course of a getting-to-know-you interview with a fellow student, she learned that her interviewee had recently been kicked out of her mother's house for the reason that she, the daughter, was dating and thinking of marrying a boy that the mother thought a rotter. The boy lacked ambition and practical sense, he was unkind and unloving. My student later interviewed the mother who confirmed the charges, whereupon my student challenged her with information she had obtained in the interview with her fellow student. Why do you charge an accounting major in college with lacking ambition and practical sense? Her daughter thought the boy was kind and loving to her, what measure of kindness and lovingness was the mother using that the boy should fall so short. None at all, the mother finally admitted. She thought these charges would turn her daughter against him. Why turn her daughter against him? Because, the mother insisted, he is a rotter. Yes, a subtle, wily, and more depraved rotter than she could possibly explain. "I know him, I know his kind!"

Well then, why not tell your daughter about his kind and how you came to know it rather than tell her lies? Would not your own experience be the most compelling agent available in your attempt to turn your daughter against a rotter? "Yes, of course, of course, but I married him." Ah. In a calculus weighing persuasion against humiliation the mother chose to lose power rather than dignity.

The idea my student made struck me with the force of revelation because it answered a question. Not the sly rhetorical kind of question with which I foisted my piquant ideas upon my students, but a real question: why did adults, who one would think wise from failing ahead, often wax hortatory in proportion that they had missed the point of what was going on. I had grudgingly supposed it in the nature of the beast to grow obtuse as it grew old, but the older I grew the less satisfactory an always unsatisfactory answer became. My student taught me. Adults are forced to enter into a hard calculus. I understood the impulse to guard ones repute after assiduously cultivating the status of a demi-god.

A fine, fine idea; somehow an idea of a different order. Often discussing ideas I heard my students use the word "theory," as in "I have a theory about jocks." I would call that a notion, or an attitude, but I could not blame my students for being drawn to the T word: it has a knack for lending respectability to any old statement. A theory, however, is a complex intellectual artifact, "a set," writes Fred Kerlinger in Foundations of Behavioral Research, "of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions, that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena." A theory seemed to be an order of ideation separate from and inclusive of

other orders of ideation, an order attained by the practice of disciplines particular to it. My teacher Paul Ruggiers had written on my student paper: "I personally find theories alone exhilarating; but I find the melding of theory and practical application reassuring. Anyway, it is in practice that theory is validated." Validated? Practical? No wonder I liked theory, at least defined this way. You could do things with it. Was my student's idea about the hard calculus practical? Sure. She put us in a position to make the hard calculus with conscious intentionality, choosing what is lost and what is gained. We could in a general way predict the persuasive power of the parent whose habit is to insist on the preservation of his dignity. As I thought about her idea I could feel it opening up, blooming with questions and caveats.

Her idea had an edge, and powers, and I needed such a thing because for some time I had been knocked around in the classroom trying to create a definition of intellectually respectable idea. When I asked a student to make an intellectually respectable idea and she said "I like hamburgers," how could I gainsay the status of her proposition? To say "not an intellectually respectable idea" felt more like carping than teaching, and the usual distinctions between fact and opinion that some teachers deploy in this circumstance struck me as epistemologically naive. I was drawn to theory because it seemed to be an

entity, this and not that. That I did not understand this entity, or how to teach it would not finally prove to be a problem, but I was faced now with a choice between two paths; a wrong turn would have unmade me. Once, after his speech, I asked James Kinneavy, author of A Theory of Discourse, how it was that he taught composition. His speech, like his book, was a description of his theory of discourse. "We articulate," he replied "these definitions, concepts, and distinctions for the student and then he or she endeavors to apply them in the writing of texts." That was a way to go. I could articulate the nature of theoretics by repackaging, say, Fred Kerlinger the way Kinneavy had repackaged Aristotle, and my students could endeavor to apply my knowledge. Or. I could pursue the dialectic of action and ideation, right there in the classroom, coming to understand theoretics even as my students and I were learning to do theoretics. Unfortunately students are apt to disdain a teacher who does not know the answers. I would have to swallow more years of incompetence. And as for the goal, the doing of theoretics, the unsatisfied, though they will not complain that theoretics is not worth doing, were certain to complain that it could not be done by children. A hard alternative set against a harder alternative: the desperate tedium of telling people what one knows.

Where to begin? Dewey talks about turning experience

into ideation; perhaps experience was both the commencement of theoretics and its data base. Experience was nowhere in the essays of my students. Many of their teachers had forbidden them the first person pronoun and had made a distinction between the essay of thesis and support and the personal essay, the account of experience. The goal of these teachers is to mandate objectivity, but anyone familiar with the epistemological assumptions of students trained under such a regime knows that students are confused and deluded by having come to think that knowledge is divided between the trifling, needy opinions of the "I" and the austere findings of impersonal Science. The rhetoric of science plays to the delusion, but it was not in my interest to authenticate the credibility ploys of other disciplines when the intelligence of my students was at stake. Taking my mission from David Cecil, I wanted to foster objectivity derived not from exclusion of the subjective self, but from mastery of it:

> The puritan will recoil instinctively from Sterne, the pacifist from Kipling, the man of faith from Gibbon, the infidel from Bunyan . . . . He who aspires to be a man of taste should suffer a sense of failure if he does not enjoy them all. To do so, however, may mean subjecting himself to a stern course of self discipline and self-effacement; he may have to learn to subdue his

> tenderly cherished prejudices, his garrulous self important opinions, if he is to attain to that receptive state of mind in which he can freely and spontaneously surrender himself to the book he has chosen to study. Some people never even try to do these things, though they devote their lives to literary criticism. They take their raw instinctive reactions as axiomatic; and instead of striving to widen their sympathies and correct their taste, they spend their energies in constructing a philosophy of aesthetics to justify these first reactions. (75)

This was no stern course I had ever taken, although as an English major I had from time to time exhorted myself along these lines. Was I now to lecture my charges on the disciplines of self-effacement: "subdue your tenderly cherished prejudices." I take Lord Cecil's statement for a truth, but I had never found that promulgating truths in a classroom produced much of anything. Instead I invented a formal problem that would necessitate the practice of disciplines of self effacement: narrational discourse. I drew a camera with a microphone on the blackboard and commanded my students to narrate only the experience this apparatus could record. No rush to judgment, because there could be no judgment. They wrote narratives, shared them around and promptly fell to quibbling. I quibbled with them

about the artistic adequacy of their prose representations of experience and they quibbled with me about everything. This was bad, but more tellingly it was anomalous. I had trained myself not to quibble, and my students were above quibbling. What was happening? At last I understood that the quibbling was a static created by the collision of my power and their truth. Their experience included thoughts, emotions, dreams, fantasies, acts and failures of will, answered and unanswered prayers; all the perturbations of desire to which the self is heir, and which could not be captured by the Draconian camera I had drawn on the blackboard. I had enacted what I had intended to repudiate: the rhetoric of Science. All this to say that I was unquestionably over my head, but the glamour of the theoretical idea nevertheless excited me.

Let us consider this one. On a playground my student saw an older boy haranguing her nephew. The older child finally came over to my student and said in exasperation, "That baby won't share. Make that baby share." This was passing strange. Not only was sharing, which one supposes an act of spiritual grace, understood by the older child as subject to coercion, the coercive nature of sharing was being used by the older child with conscious instrumentality: to get from the nephew what the nephew owned. That might make sense in the old communist U.S.S.R., but surely not in the U.S.A. The incident puzzled my

student, but at last began to make sense. The older child's instruction in sharing, his induction into the ethos of sharing, must have been itself coercive. Whether gently or brutally he had been told to share, exhorted to share, required to share. "Be a nice boy and share with Tommy." Or else. Wherefore "Make that baby share." Hard upon the playground incident my student noticed that for the most part children have nothing to share. They are not owners. Her mother had given her sister's boy a small suitcase. The boy stood on the suitcase and began to jump up and down. The boy's grandmother gently told the boy to stop jumping up and down on the suitcase lest he break it. My student was shocked when her sister said to their mother. "Well, that's probably what he's looking into. Whatever, it's his so he can do what he wants with it." The grandmother was offended and my student provoked. How often she had seen parents protect the stuff of children from the children themselves in order to teach them the value of property. She had heard a man giving two bicycles to the clerk in a thrift store explain that the two small boys, his sons, standing by his side did not appreciate the value of property, look how they had painted on their brand new bikes. This would teach them.

My student asked her sister why she did not follow the convention in this matter of ownership.

"Hey, you get to know the value of ownership by owning

don't you."

But wasn't the boy destructive?

"Do you destroy what you own? He won't hurt your stuff either. He owns stuff and he understands you own stuff. It works for him."

My student felt a rush of excitement and asked, Do you think he . . . shares his toys . . . compared to other kids?"

"Yeah, he's so sweet."

"You make him share."

"How can I, he owns it."

"He is sweet, but is it possible he shares because he owns?"

"Sure, you might not get it back if you don't own it."

"And you couldn't experience the pleasure of giving."

The theoretical idea my student made stated as a proposition is that in order to teach children to value and share property you have to let them own it. Sounds obvious, but if it is why do most parents act out a different proposition: in order to teach children to share and value property you must protect property from children and require them to share it. This theoretical idea may not seem like much, but consider for a moment a disquisition, by the numbers, on its nature.

1) A theoretical idea accomplishes work. The work it does is the same work that T. H. Huxley attributes to a liberal

education in his essay "On a Liberal Education," and it is the same work that one of my students fiercely repudiated, "Hey man, I like to take it [life] as it comes. I don't wanna predict and mipulate the future." Huxley is persuaded that my student's breezy preference, though ever so natural in the Doris Day que sera sera vein, is calamitous:

> The question of compulsory education is settled as far as Nature is concerned. Her bill on that question was framed and passed long ago. But, like all compulsory legislation, that of Nature is harsh and wasteful in its operation. Ignorance is visited as sharply as willful disobedience--incapacity meets with the same punishment as crime. Nature's discipline is not even a word and a blow, and the blow first; but the blow without the word. It is left to you to find out why your ears are boxed . . . . And a liberal education is an artificial education, which has not only prepared a man to escape the great evils of disobedience to natural laws, but has trained him to appreciate and seize upon the rewards, which Nature scatters with as free a hand as her penalties.

The scientific viewpoint of Kerlinger, the lotus eater viewpoint of the student in the back row, the Victorian viewpoint of Huxley, the pedagogical viewpoint of Dewey, the

fatalist viewpoint of Doris Day, the essayist outlook of my students, all pointed at the same project: making a kind of understanding that allows for the prediction and manipulation of the future.

2) A theoretical idea is cruel, a site of pain. For sheer ruthlessness no student of mine topped the following idea. He noticed a father in a grocery store shopping badly, following his toddler daughter around, looking at what she looked at, picking up what he needed almost as an afterthought. Slow going. They spent forty-five minutes smelling scented votive candles. The man was going at the child's pace, my student noted, while all over the store children were going at the pace of their parents. He asked the father if there were anything exceptional about his child.

"Kid says 'goo' at six months, the parents brag he talks, he talks at six. I don't play." My student thanked him and began to move away. "Last week we were looking at a big kind of collage painting in an art gallery wing, woman passed by, "did" an adjoining wing, passed us five minutes later and said she wished her kid had my kid's attention span. We'd been looking at that painting for half an hour."

"You don't get bored?"

"Sure. I want to learn to see like him."

My student surmised that attention must be a skill. She

knew yogis had been exploring the skill for centuries. A skill with a shape--beginning, middle, and end-- and a rhythm in which benefits are accrued and dues are paid; a skill perfected by practice. The usual parent moving the child of formative years at the parental pace, continually yanked the child out of the rhythm of attention, like a golfer interrupted in his backswing, thereby denying the child benefit of practice.

Again obvious, but certainly not the conventional wisdom which holds that a child learns attention the same way she learns most everything else: by parental example. The possibility that the child is exemplar in this arena and that who goes at whose pace has anything to do with attention span is not considered by the conventional formulation of natural law. "Ignorance," says Huxley, "is visited as sharply as willful disobedience--incapacity meets with the same punishment as crime." One would be reluctant to tell the parents of a child with the disease of Attention Deficit Disorder about the causal machinery of attention. It is too late and they are too responsible. They will prefer, as explanation of their children's inability to pay attention, the disease model of diagnosis (ADD) and cure (over one million children on the "speed" drug ritalin despite that it takes over the mind, attacks the liver, and distorts development). One of my students began to weep when she heard this idea in class. Both her brothers were

on ritalin.

There is no free lunch here. Dues must be paid to come to a theoretical idea, not least the isolation of opposition to the conventional wisdom. And when the key to power is found, yet more dues must be paid. A price is always demanded of she who would wield the power of the theoretical idea: a parent must steel himself to silence as a child destroys his toy or declines to share; a parent must smell votive candles for forty-five minutes. A child with the concentration of a yogi may be testy when interfered with, like some great inventor disturbed in the throes of a eureka by his wife's call to breakfast. We are perhaps reluctant to endure testiness in a child. The child may not attend upon a matter for an average time, but is all in or not in at all. The consequence of attending to what is going on is to know more about what is going on than those who attend less. This child may not get her share of the bliss of ignorance. Always one feels the terrible bite of theoretics, the failure of pluck, the uncertainty of luck, the way nature could have, or did, or will, box some ears. The parent who badly wants a child on the fast track and bores him with memorization of culture-data has lost power. But what if a parent, taught by
my student's idea, is unwilling or unable to move at her baby's pace. What has she lost?

3) A theoretical idea is patently a made thing; an intellectual artifact of parts that have relationships to one another--"interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions," according to Kerlinger. The commonplace way of thought is still binary, the "stasis" of the ancient rhetoricians--: an attitude is struck, a position taken, a thesis promulgated, and by putting on of arguments and proofs is given the weight of a moral imperative. The taker of positions, having propounded a proposition taken from one side of a binary argument, can easily come to feel that what she has said or written is the voice of Truth in language: a monolith of such mass and adamancy that it can scarcely be moved or altered. And when by chance the monolith is moved (abortion is bad, I had one last week), the earth moves and the taker of positions displays the radical skepticism that teachers see in students now. The practitioner of theoretics is under no delusion about the relationship of the truth to her attitudes, or about the ease with which the truth can be known, or the ease with which it can be articulated, or the ease with which it can be exploited, or the ease with which it can be lived with, and therefore suffers no falling off into epistemological disillusionment. The theoretical idea is power raw, but it is truth with a little t, a thing of the moment, an ephemera. In a society where people moved at the pace of their children the idea of attention span would

be invisible and irrelevant. The theoretical idea is power raw, but it is inevitably partial and incomplete, the intellectual equivalent of a growing organism. Made up of parts, it can take on new parts; made up of relationships, it can shift into altered configurations, always growing or dying in reaction to its internal logic and to the experience through which the theoretician moves it. The theoretical idea can predict and manipulate the future, but the future is a wild hare. If the sun goes supernova tomorrow, all bets are off.

4) A theoretical idea feels queer. Reduced to a proposition it is preposterous. An instance. You recall the evaluation of one of my classes at the University of Tennessee:

> No attention whatsoever was given to such matters as spelling, syntax, basic grammar. From my viewpoint as visitor in the class, the discussions created the format of story editors examining the works of professional authors. My question: do all these students write such clear English essays that one can focus nearly exclusively upon effect, character development, and relationships--and other elements of concern to a creative writer's workshop?

My critics' position is entirely conventional and, reduced

to a proposition, enjoys the happy attribute of being entirely sensible: if you want to student to display correct writerly behaviors, correct spelling, correct syntax, correct basic grammar, you must correct these behaviors by calling attention to deficiencies in the performance thereof. Of course. That is what teachers do. That is what parents do: sit up straight Tommy. That is the way we teach and learn. I am either a damned fool, or I am responding in my classroom to a different understanding of the laws of nature, which understanding reduced to a proposition is: the effective way to teach correct writerly behaviors is to ignore them altogether, and attend to "elements of concern to a creative writer's workshop." Preposterous? So it would seem, but it can be rendered sensible if I were to explain my experience of discovering that it is so. Finally the proof is in the pudding. My students write essays, so do yours. You want a piece of me?

5) A theoretical idea lacks moral valence. It says only, "to get this, you do that." Care about a child's attention span or not, care very much but not enough to spend forty-five minutes smelling votive candles, or not. The theorist is too occupied investigating and revealing the causal machinery of the world to tend to a reader's morals. Take it or leave it. Strangely, despite its amorality <u>qua</u> idea, the making of a theoretical idea feels like a moral act <u>per</u>

se. What does it feel like, after all, to discover, if only in small bits and pieces, the bill of Nature, her compulsory legislations, her punishments and disciplines, her rewards.

Once in a technical writing class I was explaining to my students that I wanted them to take the rhetorical stance of consultants to a business and make a single discovery about motel management, pizza sales, automobile importing, whatever they were interested in. One menacingly astute young man raised his hand and said:

"Aren't you making a humongous assumption on this?"

"I suppose," I answered lamely, "what is it?"

"You assume there's something out there to discover, some of that "causal machinery . . . what if there's not?"

I muttered something poor about faith and thought later what I should have said. It requires faith to pursue the disciplines of theoretics, faith in the sense of confidence in the teacher, or faith in the value of academic preferment. Yet, when you have made and lived a theoretical idea faith is no longer necessary, for you have known the causal machinery of the world, felt the compulsory legislation of reality. "I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear," cries Job, "but now mine eye sees Thee!"

"I feel," said one of my students in the hall after making her first theoretical idea in class, "so stupid."

To penetrate by commitment to severe and costly disciplines the veil of mystery somewhere is to realize one

has not penetrated elsewhere. The light of illumination reveals the scale of enigma.

6) The theoretical idea is a dialectic of action and ideation, of subjectivity and objectivity, of the abstract and the concrete, of the specific and the general, of the personal dimension of reality and the impersonal dimension of reality, and therefore obviates one of Composition's fundamental errors: the creation of two oppositional genres, the personal essay and the essay of ideas, or thesis support essay. The oppositional genres may be more an error of adoption than of creation, for the genres are out there. Here is Joseph Epstein explaining the personal essay, a collection of which he edited in the Norton Book of Personal Essays: "In the personal essay, all claims to objectivity are dropped at the outset, all masks are removed, and the essayist proceed with shameless subjectivity . . . . Perhaps it is this intimacy that makes the personal essay an almost irresistible form" (Quality 8). On perusal, Epstein's claim of shameless subjectivity is more posture than performance, but it is a posture that takes meaning in opposition to the posture of the impersonal essay, the essay of objective fact, a performance that necessarily neglects its birth in the wetware of the brain, perhaps even in the vaporware of the mind. Each posture requires dullness and credulity on the part of those it seeks to impress, for the subjective

without the objective is plainly the mark of madness and the objective without the subjective, the mark of stupidity. The practice of the dialectic of theoretics, action and ideation, entails increasing mastery of divers intellectual and artistic problems, and the mastery of these problems requires a kind of self mastery that Compositionist Sheridan Blau calls "Personal Literacy." Personal literacy is a locus of abilities: the ability to suspend closure, to avoid grasping irritably after facile and comforting understandings; the ability to tolerate ambiguity; the ability to take risks, to explore; the ability to focus attention amid the seductions of stimuli; the ability to be wrong and bear the pain of recognition of wrongness; the ability to entertain problems rather than avoid them.

I thought it a good thing that theoretics requires two tools: discourse and character.

7) The creation of a theoretical idea is an act of genius as Aristotle defined genius: the ability to metaphorize. A theoretical idea bears a striking resemblance to the metaphysical poetry Dr. Johnson explains as a violent yoking of heterogeneous matters. At first blush a parent smelling votive candles with a child has nothing to do with the psychiatric disorder ADD, and a child jumping on an old suitcase has nothing to do with sharing. In large measure the skill of theoretics consists in noticing connections

between phenomena that conventional wisdom does not notice, or which by a pattern of assumptions willfully or unwittingly disconnects.

8) The theoretical idea is at home in the essay. A pattern of theoretical ideas, a theory, is too big for an essay, but a theoretical idea is just right. A theoretical idea gives the essay some entitlements to attention. For one thing the author has gone to rather more trouble than one must to take a stand. The author has made an inquiry. The inquiry may not have rooted out the secrets of the universe, but the point of the inquiry, after all, is the same point John Dewey claims for philosophy: "If it has disclosures to offer it is not by way of revelation of some ultimate reality, but as disclosures follow in the way of pushing any investigation of familiar objects beyond the point of previous acquaintance."

The author of the theoretical essay has done some pushing rather than some attitudinizing. Do we care? We might. We cannot, after all, do all the disclosure Nature requires by ourselves; we can appreciate help. Help is an entitlement to attention. Typically, although not necessarily, the discourser whose principal aim is persuasion comes under the influence of deformative pressures, not the least of which is a serene contempt for the persuadee, that shape the tone of discourse in ways that

subvert entitlement to attention. The reductio ad absurdum of the deformation is felt on a car sales lot, the persuader will have his way with us, snooker us with stratagems. The essayist articulating a theoretical idea, however, is our investigator, a servant bearing the gift of power. Her prose style can be her "voice", her personal prose style, for the theoretician creates an impersonal idea, a description of of Nature's Law, and so can afford the luxury and reap the benefit of an entitlement to attention occasioned by the fact the someone is at home in the prose, someone made the idea within the blood and moil of the human enterprise. The thesis essay presents a subjective notion in an impersonal form and style; the theoretical essay presents an objective idea in a dramatic form and personal voice.

While the form of the thesis essay is based on iteration of a position, the form of the theoretical essay is a narrative of discovery leading to explanation of the structure of an idea. The latter, in formal terms, has pretty much the same entitlement to attention as a mystery story, a quest fable, a tale of ratiocination: the story of an intellectual adventure that begins "Once upon a time . . . ."

As my reader may have discerned, I have a penchant for serving my turn. If I am, for instance, to read and evaluate essays, I want to be served by them, to be, as

Horace would put it, taught and delighted by them. It may therefore appear that my devotion to the notion of entitlements to attention is a pitiful bid to lift base desire above reproach. Maybe, but there is more to it. Listen for a moment to college teacher Joseph Epstein:

> Poor Madame Bovary, one understands and sympathizes with her condition. It is very awkward--if not so awkward as that of the freshman student at my university who, in a term paper, spotted the difficulty when he wrote: 'Madame Bovary's problem is that she cannot make love in the concrete.' How could he know that the word 'concrete' is itself an abstraction, a by now quite stale metaphor, and one used in unpracticed hands to hilarious effect? How could he know that for professors one of the few pleasures in grading student papers is that of writing zippy comments in the margin, and that he had set up his professor exquisitely? In his unconscious trope rendering Emma Bovary frigid in the concrete, the possibilities he provided for marginal comment--and comedy--were not practically but altogether boundless. Only the greatest constraint prevents me from trying out twenty or thirty comments here myself. (Plausible 353)

So, paper graders will take their pleasure, but not all

pleasures are equal; we would do well to choose prudently amongst them. The pleasure of mockery is inferior to the pleasure of being taught and delighted, and these pleasures point their devotees in different directions. When one of Epstein's students writes "'The basic difference between Billy Budd and Claggart is one of lifestyle,'" he finds the sentence, the idea . . . "sad, and even a bit crazy" (Plausible 365). One wonders which of his twenty or thirty "zippy comments" he will write in the margin. My desire to be taught and delighted tilts perspective; I thought about this student's assertion for several minutes when thinking about Billy Budd, Foretopman even for a moment was not on my agenda.

It would seem that from the point of view of a reader, the point of view I have been taking above, a theoretical essay is all gravy, but from the point of view of the writer the theoretical essay is onerous. Rather than performing the psychic cleavages of the thesis essay it demands synthesis. There is no dimension of human experience that is not germane to the theoretician. Theoretics is a way of being in relation to the world. It is not the easiest way. I could justify the terror of the theoretician's passage only by supposing we are born to it and turn aside in peril and loss.

9) The heuristics that serve theoretics are as simple and

easy to use as the heuristics that serve the thesis-support essay. This is an important fact, for if theoretics was caviar for the general, no point pursuing it with private soldiers. Say you want to investigate flattery. You ask students for narratives that involve flattery, their story, the story of others, fictions, times when they have been flattered or insulted, been insulted when someone tried to flatter, flattered when someone tried to insult, and so forth. Now give a name to these narratives that speaks of their operation--reverse backhanded flattery, jeopardy flattery. Get up thirty of these categories and explanations thereof, and your students appear to be world class experts on flattery. I say appear, because potent as categorizing is to make one seem smart--I think of the chap who made his name by declaring seven categories of human intelligence (rather than one)--narrating and categorizing are but two of the six discourse modes that make up theoretics:

Narrational Discourse--the attempt to body forth experience in words.

Rhetorical Discourse--the attempt to name and order experience to reveal meaning.

Empirical Discourse--the attempt to recognize causal relationships that hold within named experience.

Philosophical Discourse--the attempt to juxtapose patterns of causal relationships so as to understand and define them

more completely.

Political Discourse--the attempt to determine the value of philosophical discourse by observing its ability to articulate and solve problems.

Metaphysical Discourse--the attempt to determine the value of Political Discourse sub speciae aeternitatus.

It is tempting to teach writing by dissection into component elements, words, sentences, paragraphs, and for a time I tried to teach theoretics in much the same way using this discourse category schematic, a schematic that portended both a historical developmental and a personal developmental pattern: the ability to make a theoretical idea was both a planetary accomplishment and a personal accomplishment. Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. Very very neat. I argued the pattern by, for instance, in the discussion of narrational discourse adverting to Father Walter Ong's work on Primary Orals (what the less enlightened call savages) and my knowledge of people the furthest seamark of whose utmost discourse sail is narrational discourse. Before long, a year or so, the enterprise began to collapse. Moving up the categories (down as I have listed them here) was not useful in my teaching, was truly one of those instances where, as Wordsworth put it, we murder to dissect, and I was, moreover, over my head with the developmental theory I was trying to make. This failure was no bother because I still

owned my version of John Dewey's formal problem: make a theoretical idea; make and express that kind of understanding of the present which allows for the prediction and manipulation of the future.

This stab at the notion of development, progress, was, I saw, a way of justifying the discomfort my formal problem caused my students. If theoretics was destiny, then I was in service of destiny, rather than a silly squirrel with a mission. If I were going to do pain, I had better have a good reason, but there ways other than progress-hope to make a good reason and I used them and I came to this good reason. There is no nice way to say this. Those who cannot make theoretical ideas are condemned to act out the ideas of others, or of impersonal systems, or traditions, that are self contained, self justifying. Joseph Wiezenbaum, speaking of computers and his father's authority, and by indirection of the CTP:

> No human is any longer responsible for "what the machine [the tradition] says." My father used to invoke the ultimate authority by saying to me "it is written." But then I could read what was written, imagine a human author, infer his values, and finally agree or disagree. The systems in the Pentagon and their counterparts elsewhere in our culture, have in a very real sense no human authors. They therefore do not admit of exercises

of imagination that may ultimately lead to human judgment.

I seem to suggest that so far as theoretics is concerned the world is divided between the saved and the damned. I suppose that is my claim, but it is not my fault; it is Nature plays hardball. Many Composition teachers are condemned by inability to make a theory of their practice to act out a tradition unaware that they are disenabling their students and themselves in the art of making and expressing ideas in prose. Theoretical ideation is not icing on the cake of intellection. It is intellection itself. If I insist, it is because theoretics requires so much effort and because the effort, preceding as it does the reward, requires faith to feed it. In a grandiose moment I harangued a class:

"I'm giving you keys to the kingdom of the mind and you won't work!"

"It's too much trouble," said a girl in the back row.

She was right, of course. For her, at that time, knowing what she knows, it was altogether too much trouble. She is not a Composition teacher trapped in the framework of a neurotic and dangerous endeavor, has not felt her self subject to the compulsive legislation of the harsh edge of reality. Yet she will come to it.

"You live badly my friends," sighed Anton Checkov, but could one, if one were intelligent and good, live well

without benefit of training "to appreciate and to seize upon the rewards, which Nature scatters with as free a hand as her penalties? Could it be that a well lived life depends upon the intellectual feat of theoretical ideation?

In his short story "A Father-To-Be" Saul Bellow tells the tale of a good and intelligent man doomed because he cannot make a theoretical idea and cannot therefore imagine changing the shape of a future that his intuition allows him to see. As he moves through the story this man, Rogin, makes discoveries. Of his mother he thinks, "She had always spoiled him and made his brother envy him. But what she expected now! Oh, Lord he had to pay, and it had never even occurred to him formerly that these things might have a price." Rogin is able to enter "a calm, happy, even clairvoyant state of mind," in which his thoughts and perceptions are acute, and he is able, although he is disastrously unaware of what he has done, to make a theoretical idea about the role of money in American life. His mind, growing yet more fertile as he rides the subway, is able to examine his fellow passengers with dispassionate clarity. He falls into a study of the man next to him and types him a dandy, not of the flaunting kind, but a dandy of respectability. The dandy strongly suggests one person to Rogin, and the comparison is so unpleasant he tries to escape it. But his Personal Literacy, his commitment to discovery at any price, is too strong to allow him the

surcease of escape: "Of such a son, he himself Rogin, would be the father."

> "My son, My son!" he said to himself, and the pity of it almost made him burst into tears. The holy and frightful work of the masters of life and death brought this about. We were their instruments. We worked toward ends we thought were our own. But no! The whole thing was so unjust. To suffer, to labor, to toil and force your way through the spikes of like, to crawl through its darkest caverns, to push through the worst, to struggle under the weight of economy--only to become the father of a fourth-rate man of the world like this.

Struggling in the grip of the masters of life and death Rogin vows to renounce his fiance, decline "To be the father of a throwback to her father," avoid the inevitable. I do not know what Bellow intends this story to mean, but it could hardly be more to the point as a fable of the doom attendant on failure to make a theoretical idea. The masters of life and death are going to bring about the son that Rogin despises. That Rogin might by using his considerable intelligence to create ideas about the development of children and thereby take a hand in the creation of the child he wants, does not occur to him. Rogin has everything except awareness of his power to

transcend fate and shape his future. He has an extraordinary intellect, and all the requisite disciplines of the theoretician: he is perceptive and can fuse disparate perceptions into coherent understandings; he is courageous, able to face the dire implications of his discoveries; he is intuitive and articulate, and he can make theoretical ideas. But because he is unaware of what he can do and what it means he remains, in his own words, an instrument.

Rogin's is a tragedy of having almost enough. The usual tragedy of the non-theoretical intellect is a tragedy of imposition. Because theories and theoretical ideas are compelling even the most unfledged can, exerting influence far in excess of its merit, thwart the creative impulse of great numbers of people. A modern instance is a theory of sculpture that both creates and explains those angled girders on the grass. Tom Wolfe reveals how the Statue of Liberty would be critiqued and redecorated by this theory:

> 1) No more pedestals; pedestals are grandiose (bourgeois). Miss Liberty loses half her height.
>
> 2) No more "pictures in the air." These are illusions in three dimensions that betray the true nature of sculpture. So Miss Liberty no longer has a torch, a tablet, a toga, a face or a human body. She is no longer a she. Liberty is an abstract metal sculpture about 30 feet wide at the

base and 151 feet high.

3) A sculpture must "express its gravity." It must make the viewer sense its weight. Attempting to soar is a dishonest attitude for a sculpture. So Liberty loses most of its height.

4) A sculpture must express its object-ness. The viewer must realize first and foremost that this is a heavy physical object--not an abstract form that is supposed to suggest something else. Liberty loses whatever boluses (in the manner of Henry Moore) or squiggles (in the manner of Isamu Noguchi) that may have been left to her. (35)

If sculpture is created in accordance with the principles enunciated by the theory, says Wolfe, the consequence is that the public is introduced to a physical polemic meant to subvert the bland conventions of most public art. Wolfe, who is frying other fish, does not mention that such a sculpture, performing as it does the task "epater le bourgeoisie," is new and interesting and we could praise the artist who makes and executes the theory. How dismal and revealing that this theory which is not all that interesting is nevertheless adopted by sculptors who do not have a theory of their own practice, but have simply been imposed upon. Is this the way if the world? Genius invents a theory and the spear carriers ape it until it is overturned by new genius which is in turn served by acolytes

of imitation. The way is common, but it is not inevitable because theoretics has a property that is to my mind the most surprising of all: theoretics is not difficult; it is probably second nature to us. We used to think that children learned to talk by imitation, like a parrot. Now we think they learn to talk by making ideas about language. Babies, as anyone who observes them knows, are researcher-discoverers of the first order. They have to be, they are cast down here and they do not know what is going on. They labor incessantly to find out what is going on and to master the available instrumentalies. Einstein, asked to explain the font of his genius, said that he never stopped asking the questions he asked as a child. If we do not ask the questions that would make us formidable theoreticians, it is not because it is abnormal or difficult, but because it is not allowed. Our schooling in the data base of the moment fosters precisely those attitudes and intellectual disciplines (a list by inversion of Sheridan Blau's Personal Literacy attributes available on request) that blast our powers and insure that what we have by gift is lost to us. Why, in an hour a competent teacher and a band of bright teenagers could create a more persuasive idea of beginnings than creationism or big bangism, but that is not to be. Student and teacher are not invited to make a theory of beginnings, they are required to subscribe to one. Which one depends on which special interest momentarily wins

control of the information inculcated in schools. Who wins is of no pedagogical consequence. Dogma is dogma. The harm that is inflicted when information is given and taken back by examination is no respecter of the "quality" of the information.

Enough ranting. From the point I ended the by-the-numbers listing of the bonny characteristics of a theoretical idea I have been devising the rationale I need to justify forcing young people to experience the pain of creating theoretical ideas. Something momentous needed to be at stake. It was: one makes a theoretical ideas to get what one wants and avoid what one does not want.

My Composition class would open with explanation of the formal problem "make a theoretical idea and express it in an essay," and close with evaluation of the essays put forward as solution to the formal problem. That left a middle, and a question. How was I to intervene in the progress of my students?

Part III

Interventions

Chapter 9

Correct Me If I am Wrong

"How can I know what to do on my paper until I get my last paper back?" complained a student who was in my view justly aggrieved. I had failed to intervene in her learning process in the manner she expected; I had failed to give her "feedback." The device on our dashboard that blinks red when we turn from the right direction to Fargo, the rolled newspaper when our dog defecates on the Tabriz, the marginal note when we want a student to end an essay with a summary, devices that give information about progress toward a goal. That this "feedback-correction model," if I may call it that, has deleterious consequences, the direct route that precludes a happy chance, a dog that knows you will hit her, an unsatisfying ending, matters not, for in operating as a guidance system feedback-correction does what it intends to do. It works.

The feedback-correction model, requiring as it does response to a subject matter, was not available to me; the Future-Radical Paradigm I had pledged required that I give no information. I was in trouble with my student and I noticed that the more I understood the manifold ways subject matter manifests the more I was in trouble with other people. "You don't," complained one evaluator of my

teaching, "do much sentencing." Sentencing? Not the moment to reveal ignorance of a term of art. I recalled an incident. I took the class of a fired instructor and she gave me a stack of student essays. She had written about 500 sentences above crossed-out sentences in the essays. Her sentence was invariably, at least to my taste, a better sentence. Sentencing. A feedback mechanism whereby a teacher gives information about her taste.

"I'm having trouble with my intern," said one of my colleagues. "He has excruciatingly poor taste. Look here." She showed me an essay and pointed to a line: "The room was lit by a 100 watt bulb." A line had been drawn through the word "lit" and above lit appeared the handwritten word "illuminate." "That's pretentious. I want the sentence back to lit, but do I tell Mr. H he has lousy taste?" I put the case to another colleague. "Tell her to keep her taste to herself," she said.

I have known several teachers of taste who made it clear to their students that Rod McKuen, the chap who made millions writing poetry, is not a good poet, but I knew one teacher who thought Rod McKuen was not a good poet and kept her taste to herself. "I ask students to talk about poets they like. I ask them what gift the poet gave them. I want them to become sophisticated, you know, where objective considerations of excellence exist side by side with personal preferences, so you can say Milton is a great poet

but I don't care for him." If the student becomes sophisticated in that way, she told me, it will not be because she imposed her preference for Coleridge, but because of McKuen's gift: "He got me into poetry."

My evaluator had been kind, I did not do any sentencing; not simply because compelling taste is demented insolence, but because sentencing is yet an apparatus of the feedback-correction model in service to the CTP; a model not available to me, but a model that nonetheless impinged variously on my day.

"You're one of the best actors I've ever seen," said my middle-aged student admiringly. She had seen Lord Olivier on the boards in London. Me? "I'm amazed how convincing you are when you ask us questions and we give you answers." Yes? "You act as if you don't know the answer." I was astonished and confounded, then I understood. The question is used as a feedback- correction device in schools. An immensely cultured woman confronted with questions asked in the void of The Answer, or a world class actor, judged a real question scarcer in schools than an Olivier.

When the question is used to serve the feedback-correction model it trails an implication of this model: the need to mandate compliance. When professor John Renner, he of the Piaget research grant, was observing my teaching to confirm that those of us teaching significant concepts about writing in a Piagetian manner were doing pretty much

the same thing, he confirmed and then said he wanted to give me an important piece of advice. I was on tippy-toes. John Renner was a renowned professor of education and a sound fellow. When you ask a question, he said, don't say the name of the student first thing, because if you do that will allow all of the rest of the students to relax. I thought it perverse to use the question, highest achievement of the human intellect, to make people anxious and catch them out in error.

"And so she continued to believe," write Steven Naiffeh and Gregory White Smith of Sandra Tanner, "until one day overcome with curiosity she began to ask questions. That lead inevitably to trouble. In class after class, teachers scolded her for confusing the other students." Inevitably? Well, we can all understand how a real question would cause static in the line. A teacher gives knowledge. As professor Peter Piero says: 'A teacher must know everything." What Piero must have meant is that because the teacher cannot know everything he must at least control the classroom situation so he seems to know everything. Although the feedback-correction model works, apparently there rough patches in its employment and limits to its utility. One such limit is the shape of the truth elicited by the question used in service of the feedback-control model: Yes-no, this-that, A-not A. Question. What are we, products of nature (genetics) or of nurture? Newsweek

pronounces on page 52 of its February 24, 1992 issue: " 'Something in the environment,' 'something biological'--the truth is, the nature-nurture argument is no longer as polarized as it once was. Scientists are beginning to realize there is a complex interplay between the two, still to be explored." Complex interplay? Only a relentless schooling in binary thinking could have put off the due date on that eureka until 1992.

Scott Shane points out another limit to the utility of the feedback model when he argues that the failure of the U.S.S.R.'s economy was due to a failure to understand what we now call cybernetics: the control and communications feedback that operates in machines and biological systems: "This then was Brobdinagian economy Stalin had built on the bones of the Kulaks and prisoners, an economy subject to state command and control. It was an economy designed not to generate the stream of information necessary for self regulation, but to respond to orders" (90). The intellectual economy of the CTP works the same way. The stream of information is reduced to a trickle so that students can respond to orders.

"Teachers are overworked and underpaid, true," writes George Leonard. "It is an exhausting business, this damning up the flood of human potentialities. What energy it takes to make a torrent into a trickle, to train that trickle along narrow, well-marked channels." Leonard is not

convinced, however, that teachers choose this exhausting business. "Do not blame teachers and administrators if they fail to educate, to change students. For the task of preventing the new generation from changing in any deep or significant way is precisely what most societies require of their educators." Leonard may be correct, but I am leery of the disembodied society as knave. I do know that the feedback-correction model mandates compliance. From the evaluation of a fourth grade teacher who "exhibits definite areas in need of improvement as a director of learning and member of the faculty:"

> Once the students have begun to work, Clara should move about the room checking on progress and keeping students on task. She should always stand so that she is facing and scanning the class to keep them on task. At the beginning of work activity and again midway through the period she should move around the room without permitting herself to be stopped so that she can do an "on task" check beyond a visual check from across the room. All of this is to maximize the time on task for students and minimize the distractors they introduce.

"Good advice here for this Clara," chortled a wag, "face and scan, you can't afford to turn your back on the little buggers, not when you task them so."

The much applauded schools of Japan, where "Asian teachers think of mistakes as an index of what still needs to be learned," are death on "distractors." In his book, The Enigma of Japanese Power, Karel van Wolferen describes a report of the Japanese federation of bar associations, Nichibenren:

> The lawyers' federation has compiled a report concluding that serious violation of the human right of [Japanese] children is widespread. A majority of the schools investigated prescribed to the smallest detail how students must sit, stand and walk, and to what height and at which angle they should raise their hands. The route to be travelled from school to home is often laid down as well. Some schools have rules forbidding classmates to talk with each other in the street. The order in which lunches are to be eaten is sometimes prescribed. School rules apply even at home and on vacations: it is generally forbidden to go out after six at night; it is decreed at which time the pupil must rise, even on Sundays.

When compliance with feedback must be mandated someone must do the mandating within a system of hierarchical relationships. Albert Shanker, a president of the American Federation of Teachers, adverts to an article by Linda McNeil titled "Contradictions of Control, Part 2: Teachers,

Students, and Curriculum," when he discusses the way in which teachers are pressured into "implementing defensive teaching strategies into their lessons to promote the efficiency and control so highly valued by the administration." "Superficially," writes Shanker, "the administrations of the two schools observed by McNeil had different approaches, but they were just different ways of implementing the same priorities--keeping things under control and keeping the production process moving." When I have put on other voices to cast blame upon something or someone I have allowed blame to be broad-cast: on students who would rather be told what to know than to think, on teachers who crave to give their knowledge, on administrators who want production control, on societies that do not want significant change in students: we are all players. I want to continue Shanker's discussion, not to the end of further blame casting, but because he inducts us into a simple idea that is the most important thing I know: the answer to the question "what is power", and the primal fact of the war between the CTP and the FRP. Here again is Albert Shanker:

> One administration seemed indifferent to what went on in the classroom, but 'did not hesitate [Shanker is still quoting McNeil] to make policies that affected the conditions of instruction, but . . . typically did so without consulting teachers

> beforehand . . . . The administration issued directives with which teachers were to comply.' The second administration was more intrusive in classroom activity. 'Classes were frequently interrupted with announcements of new rules governing student behavior and new tasks for teachers in patrolling the school.' According to McNeil . . . 'teachers in both schools saw that they were not valued . . . and administrators in both schools frequently demeaned their authority in front of students by subordinating instructional needs either to administrative efficiencies or to a preoccupation with order and control.

Preoccupation is a curiously negative word for Shanker to use in that last sentence. Order and control are necessary. The teacher is well served if the chalk is in the tray, the floors swept, the space safe. He seems to suggest, however, that these efficiencies cannot satisfy the longing for power that most of us feel, that the will to power still surging within administrators causes them to embrace Napoleonic power, the power to tell people what to do. "The great irony, according to McNeil, is that imposing a kind of assembly line control, the school loses authority. The kids are shrewd enough to see that they're playing some sort of game--with the diploma as the prize. But in the

process they lose respect for the idea of learning and rarely get to see evidence of the real power of knowledge."

Shanker is, of course, a politico using a professor to grind his ax, but he does bring us into the realm where lives the idea about power I touted above and did not state. To state the idea I must make names, a necessity first borne in upon me when I was illustrating for students one kind of idea, the invention idea, and told them about my invention of The Ultimate Toy: oil based clay used to make people about so ---- high who disport themselves on a big board spread with clay and built up with the trappings of some place or another. I told my students that my son had little routines to get his pals interested in the Ultimate Toy. If he were playing Trojan War he would show them Achilles and a Trojan clad in cape, helmet and a little breastplate of toothpaste tube metal. "Ordinarily, the armor can prevent a spear, but this is Achilles, greatest of the Acheans." He took Achilles' spear, a straight pin, from Achilles' arm, moved it through the air until it struck the Trojan in the chest, penetrated his breast plate, and drove through his body to emerge from his back. "Do that with your stinking G. I. Joe!" The pals squealed with glee until the dark side of ultimacy loomed: making a place, a civilization, takes time and effort and research, and mothers do not like oil based clay. After class in the hall one of my students told me that I had failed to understand

something else that mothers would not like about The Ultimate Toy. How could they not like it, it doesn't have to be violent, it's ultimate fun but it's also the ultimate educational artifact: the child creates the world, he is the god. "Yes," said my student, "and parents lose control."

Napoleonic power, the power to tell people what to do, I will call control. Nurturing, bringing forth, as in the latin root of educate, as what the Ultimate Toy does for a child, I will call power. If I tell my student to end her essay with a summary I have gained control and lost power. The CTP leads to control, the FRP to power; people who want control will find the FRP repugnant and people who want power will find the CTP repugnant.

Devotees find occasion to defend themselves and their predilection. Freelance writer Joan France complains: "This society neither respects nor rewards nurturing skills." That seems true enough, although her next sentence seems a trifle desperate: "Is it any wonder then that many of our young people do not seem interested in acquiring them, only taking advantage of them" (16)? What I have called her desperation, the word is too strong, is reasonable in the circumstance: power is disdained and she responds to the disdain. What is peculiar and telling is that the ethos of control which has no need to justify itself, for it is after all prestigious, nonetheless displays an urgency, desperation is not too strong a word,

to valorize itself with a romance of false sentiment. My wife's school principal wanted a committee to fashion a creed that students could say each day after the pledge of allegiance. She arrived late to the first meeting of the committee; a creed had already been written:

I am unique!

There is no one in the world exactly like me therefore I can make responsible choices, share my knowledge and abilities with others, and be a successful, productive citizen of our world.

I am an intelligent person, and my goals are within my reach.

I will respect the rights of others to achieve their goals.

I will listen to my teachers.

My wife pointed out to me that a credo is a statement of belief, but this was a non sequitur garnished with bunk and petering out in obedience pledges. The ethos of hierarchic control, a romance of obedience, non-semanticity, and false sentiment. Observe the romance on a School Climate Checklist where false sentiment, "All staff members acknowledge the good works and deeds of others," envisions a utopia:

SCHOOL CLIMATE CHECKLIST

(Please indicate your rating by circling the appropriate number for each area).

NOTE: TO BE COMPLETED IN OCTOBER, FEBRUARY, AND MAY. (Circle appropriate month).

4 = Always occurs (or very nearly) 3 = Occurs frequently 2 = Occurs half of the time 1 = Occurs infrequently 0 = Never occurs (or very nearly)					
1. Every classroom, office, and Multipurpose room has the Hapgood School rules posted.					
2. The students and parents have signed and read the "School Rules Contract".					
3. School rules are enforced consistently and fairly by all staff (teachers, noon supervisors, principal, etc.).					
4. Student achievement is acknowledged publicly both in the classroom and on a school wide basis.					
5. All staff members acknowledge the good work and deeds of each other.					
6. Students and teachers are punctual and are on task during all of the time allotted for instruction.					
7. The school is neat and clean.					
8. Student morale is positive and enthusiastic.					
9. The school environment is oriented toward personal and academic success.					
10. The school environment is safe and orderly.					
11. Teachers have a positive attitude about themselves, their profession, and their students.					
12. Staff members work cooperatively to develop and carry out school policies.					
13. The Student Study Team meets regularly and is effective in providing alternatives and support for teachers.					
14. Staff has opportunities for involvement in decision making.					

Taste this instance of the utopia in Sandra Stotsky's "A Proposed Categorization of the Academic Writer's Responsibilities."

Sandra Stotsky

A PROPOSED CATEGORIZATION OF THE ACADEMIC WRITER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

A. With respect to the purposes of academic language
   - To define key terms
   - To write clearly

B. With respect to other writers
   - To consider other writers as intelligent as oneself
   - To present another writer's views fairly
   - To attribute ideas only to their authors

C. With respect to the integrity of the subject
   - To gather all seemingly relevant information on a topic
   - To evaluate the relevance and quality of gathered information
   - To address all relevant information
   - To account for all significant components in an analogy
   - To provide adequate evidence for assertions directly or through accessible references
   - To use facts accurately
   - Not to make blanket generalizations
   - To use representative examples of a phenomenon
   - To create texts with no erroneous implications
   - To provide correct examples for reasonable generalizations
   - To create consistent categories for classifying information
   - To create coherent texts

D. With respect to the integrity of the reader
   - To assume an open-minded reader
   - To use affectively balanced terms
   - Not to stereotype possible readers

"What kind of a world," muses Compositionist Richard Batteiger, does this list live in?" Why, a feedback-

control utopia, seamless, dense, and dead as a billiard ball. "A phantasmagoria, a piety, that idea--an abdication of reality," writes novelist Harold Brodkey of this utopia, "an infinite condescension toward anything less than absolute power."

Absolute power and smarmy sentimentality entice, but our circumstances are conspicuously shaped by wastrel masters of life and death (who) (that) would rather be beat than bored. "The mating rites of mantises," writes Annie Dillard, "are well known: a chemical product in the head of the male insect says, in effect, 'No, don't go near her, you fool, she'll eat you alive.' At the same time a chemical in his abdomen says, 'Yes, by all means, now and forever yes.'"

> While the male is making up what passes for his mind, the female tips the balance in her favor by eating his head. He mounts her. Fabre [J. Henri Fabre, a "hardened entomologist"] describes the mating as follows: "The male, absorbed in the performance of his vital functions, holds the female in a tight embrace. But the wretch has no head; he has no neck; he has hardly a body. The other, with her muzzle turned over her shoulder continues very placidly to gnaw what remains of the gentle swain. And, all the time, that masculine stump, holding on firmly, goes on with his business! . . . I have seen it done with my

own eyes and have not yet recovered from my astonishment." (58)

It will be objected that I miss the point of the ideality aspired to by "infinite condescension toward anything less than absolute power." It will be objected that I do not believe Robert Browning when he sings a man's reach should exceed his grasp or what's a heaven for. Oh, but I do and that is precisely the point: the utopia limned, the heaven, is a site of stopped motion, Dante's heaven, the Great Snore.

I am making two theories, one of the CTP and the other of the FRP. I am almost finished: The CTP has a subject matter, its formal problems are a subject matter, and it uses the feedback-control model to intervene in the progress of learners; the FRP has no subject matter, its formal problems are real problems, and . . . . There is a blank here, and I do not have the feedback-control model with which to fill it because real problems of the writerly sort are complex and the model cannot "generate the stream of information necessary for self-regulation." For a time I thought I hoped to exploit the pedagogical Law I discovered in my son and corroborated over Akenaton. My son asked me how a car works. He listened avidly to my lecture and told me how a car works; an explanation more fancy than fact, "In E. T.'s universe the wheel . . . ," but he insisted on lecturing me after I lectured him. Edificatory Reciprocity,

the law of.

I talked with an architect about teaching.

"There are just certain things people should know," he said insistently.

What?

"Well, Akenaton's influence on Egyptian architecture!"

I am more taken by Akenaton's influence on Egyptian religion and I cannot feel it either possible or desireable for me to have Tom's passions. My treasures are not his treasures. When Akenaton comes up Tom's eyes shine. When do my eyes get to shine, when does he bask in my glow? If I get my turn our relationship is reciprocal, we learn together. If, however, the floor is always his, his treasures the ones to be transmitted, I become a consumer, he begins to bore me unutterably and at last the light in his eyes fails in the deadlight of my indifference. And what if power vested in him by the state enables him to compel my attention?

"You seem to have a lot of attitude," I heard a reporter say to a schoolgirl he was interviewing.

"That's all they let me have," she replied.
My idea was to exploit the Law of Edificatory Reciprocity, escape the unpleasantness and inutility of feedback-control, and fill in the blank space in my theoretical paradigm.

One drawback. I want people to come to me in school and be changed in their capacity to grow intellectually. I

do not want to tell people what I know or listen to what they know. The Law of Edificatory Reciprocity does not serve.

Oh yes, says a reader, no doubt the same reader who is doing all the objecting, and you need to get off the high horse that disparages hierarchic feedback-control utopias only to furbish your own abdication of reality with touchy-feely, goodtime free-love, non-judgmental, playheads; you are going to have to winnow, or is there no grading in lotus land. Quite the contrary.

"I don't think we should be making these distinctions," says the boy in the front row. "How good a poem is, that's just a question of who likes it. If I think it's good it's good, if you think its good it's good, beauty is, you know, beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Oh? "Nothing is either good or bad," says Prince Hamlet, "but thinking makes it so." This radical subjectivism, a legitimate philosophical position, would be the philosophical position of lunatics if lunatics articulated philosophical positions: solipsism. I have observed how quickly the eye of the beholder takes a back seat to considerations of artistic excellence if Jimmy Hendrix's guitar playing rather the merit of poem or essay is at issue. Still we can sympathize with the feeling of the front-row boy and the mad Prince. They know that the arena of the greater and lesser is knee deep in human blood: my country is greater, my race is

greater, my tribe is greater, my family is greater, I am greater. The boy knows that even in a bloodless arena, the classroom where he sits, he must suffer the pain of being judged, perhaps ineptly. Yet the fear and pain caused by people ineptly or cruelly at play in the arena of the greater and lesser is a consequence of our ineptitude and cruelty rather than a consequence of our trying to do good rather than evil, know truth rather than falsehood, create beauty rather than ugliness. In that arena the only game in town is played. Judgment in Lotus Land and I will judge.[53] Some essays are better than others.

"Clive Berman," says the protagonist in Kurt Vonnegut's novel Bluebeard, "has just asked me how to tell a good picture from a bad one. I said the best answer I ever heard to that question, although imperfect, came from a painter named Syd Solomon, a man about my age who summers not far from here. I overheard him say it to a pretty girl at a cocktail party maybe fifteen years ago. She was so wide-eyed and on tippy-toe! She sure wanted to learn all about art from him.

'How can you tell a good painting from a bad one?' he said.

This is the son of a Hungarian horse trainer. He has a magnificent handlebar mustache.

'All you have to do, my dear,' he said, 'is look at a million paintings, and then you can never be mistaken.'

It's true! It's true!"

"It" is a peculiar link between objectivity and subjectivity, but I have read a million essays and I "can never be mistaken."

From time to time I have told the story of the teacher who did not correct her students when they called Ezra Pound she to make much the same pedagogical point I made with you. Once a fellow, a gentleman I guess, heard me out, and said: "FRP, CTP, put that crap up your nose, correcting people is rude, I won't tolerate it."

There is that, and you can, moreover, threaten people with the feedback-correction model if you are of a mind.

"Okay," says the Kindergarten teacher ominously, "we can do that." Children working on their art projects are complaining about the burden of creativity, and their teacher, having supped full of artist-angst, threatens them with "that." That is what the children do next door. At the moment they are cutting forms along dotted lines and pasting white forms on black paper and black forms on white paper; a lesson in the concept of negative space, a datum that can be taught with the feedback-correction model. Negative space is fine information, a cultural treasure to be sure, and we must wonder why children can be threatened with it, for memorizing a datum and submitting to feedback-correction is easier than making artistic choices and wearing one's heart upon one's sleeve for daws to peck at.

I titled this chapter "Correct Me If I am Wrong." Forgive me please my little joke. We say correct me if I'm wrong as preface and beg to differ. Correct me if I'm wrong . . . but

Chapter 10

Two Heads Are Better than One and Too Many Cooks Spoil the Broth

"Dressed for success are we," said my office mate snidely as I walked to my desk in my best clothes. Later when I was telling him something about collaboration, an enterprise beginning to engross me, he struck again. "Yes to be sure, collaboration is a sexy word in education now." Oh no. I had bet my career not on my best clothes, but on being the first to successfully demonstrate the importance of collaboration in education. I was occupied attempting to understand collaboration and use it to fill the blank in my theoretical paradigm, and what I had supposed would be one of the premier moments in human history, when schools exploited collaboration, seemed to have passed me right by.

Maybe not. I was rapt in my researches, but surely not that wrapped. My understanding of the Current-Traditional Paradigm was far enough along for me to know that the choice of teachers to intervene in the progress of their students with the feedback-correction model was not happenstance, but a remorseless consequence of a fully ramified paradigm. For collaboration to rise would not only require the fall of the feedback-correction model, but the fall of a millennia old and monolithic tradition, a pattern of actions, a paradigm. And there was something else that made me hope

with a type of depraved hope that shamed a friend of mine doing research in juvenile diabetes. Someone else was getting close to a cure and Morton hoped he would fail. Morton wanted the disease cured, for the children, but he wanted to do it. The something else was this. I had never thought a thought about collaboration, save Vichy France and that kind of thing, until the day one of my wife's sisters said to us at lunch, and I remember the cafe and the taco as clearly as Proust his madeleine, she said "You guys are weird, you're the most opinionated people I know, you've got opinions on everything, sure Michael likes to call them ideas, but what it is, you think you know everything, but you never disagree with one another, you never fight or argue." Fighting in public is crass, but what intrigued me after Becky called attention is that we did not disagree in private. Fifteen years later when I said to my wife we might disagree about what house to buy this time she replied, "Why would we, we've never disagreed before." Sometime during that fifteen years I attached a word to what we did rather than disagree: we made our ideas together; we collaborated. No big deal, two heads are better than one, but collaboration <u>is</u> an accomplishment. My hope was that it was too great an accomplishment to have been performed in a few years behind my back. I needed to do a job of research: "collaboration is a sexy word in education now." Really?

My office mate was correct. I had no difficulty

finding articles extolling collaboration. I would have to find a new hobby horse to ride, a new ax to grind, a new star to hang my hat on. By George, I was late to the party. It is my habit when stung in the service bay to seek out the head of North American operations for General Motors, so I went straight to the top, a book published by Cambridge University Press in 1989 titled Rousing Minds to Life. The authors were none other than Roland G. Tharp and Ronald Gallimore:

> Both were long associated with "KEEP"--the Kamemhameha Elementary Education Project--and have published extensively on issues of multicultural and effective education, as well as theoretical issues of child and cognitive development. Tharp is dean designate of the School of Human Behavior at United States International University, San Diego, and professor of psychology at the University of Hawaii, where he teaches in the preservice teacher education and community psychology program. Gallimore is professor of psychology, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, and a professor at the Graduate School of Education at UCLA, where he teaches educational and developmental psychology and the role of culture and socialization and behavioral change. (20)

Their authority and credibility were enhanced for me by the fact that their book was state of the art, just off the presses, and professor Gallimore worked at a campus of what is by any measure (save age) the greatest university in the world. I was also pleased they had done work in schools. In an address to graduate students a university Dean revealed students' reward for having been stuffed full of information for eighteen years. They will now "transfer the knowledge that you have pent up inside you." That is "if you can find someone to listen to you." The grads Home Free, but what of the transfer targets? Tharp and Gallimore would speak of them.

In keeping with my view that most non-fiction books without a lavish narrative component are articles writ large and prolix I read an article in American Educator written by the professors themselves titled "Rousing Schools to Life." Their means to the rousing is the replacement of the "recitation script" (a teacher assigns a text, textbook or lecture, and follows with "a series of teacher questions that require the students to display their mastery of the material through convergent factual answers") by "instructional conversation." "To most truly teach," they say, "one must converse; to truly converse is to teach." Yes, yes, yes, and Oh no. But what is this? Anyone who has experienced collaboration, or true conversation, or instructional conversation I guess, knows its efficacy, but

say the authors "this basic method of human socialization has not generally diffused into schools." Sure enough, but Tharp and Gallimore give two central reasons, too many students for each teacher and no teacher training in instructional conversation, that led me to believe that they have a different idea of conversation than I do. Training? A matter of a sentence: ask students a question to which you do not know the answer and create answers with them. Too many students? Two heads are better than one, thirty heads are better than two. I want to know what "truly converse" means to Tharp and Gallimore. Surely they will tell me, but their prose does not bode well: "All intellectual growth relies heavily on conversation as a form of assisted performance in the zone of proximal development" (25). Yet they are invoking a Russian psychologist, one L. S. Vygotsky, a foe of Stalin who had a brain to him, so perhaps I am in good hands. And here is instructional conversation and here is the same pedagogical scam I described above in the pseudo-Socratic with fifteen ideas about the eighteenth century. "The large numbers of pupils, the restricted and technical curriculum, the complexity of institutional restraints of schooling require that teaching be highly deliberate, carefully structured and planned. Assisting performance through conversation requires a quite deliberate and self-controlled agenda in the mind of the teacher, who has specific curricular, cognitive, and

conceptual goals . . . while good instructional conversations appear to be 'spontaneous' they are not--even though young students may never realize it" (25).

Now I know that the sexy word is a scam described and commended by Tharp and Gallimore's, and a fashion for "collaboration" as cooperation: kids study together in order to assimilate the data base (although that sounds immeasurably more joyful than memorizing the damnable stuff in the hush of my room and the tumult of my mind). I have used Tharp and Gallimore to enact a parody, experts without clue, and point a truth: collaboration is a stranger to schools. Pace Tharp and Gallimore. You are just trying to do some good in a situation of "institutional constraints." You think subject matter a given and you want to set aside the feedback-correction model that makes intervention rude in favor of instructional conversations, amiable delivery vehicles for a data base of facts, meanings, and values. My perverse hope was fulfilled and my surmise bourn out: the whole of the CTP must be thrown out before collaboration can come in.

Feedback-correction is a fascist romance and collaboration a touchy-feely romance, or so collaboration can be made to seem. "By avoiding the heavy hierarchic structures that dominate French business," writes automotive journalist Robert Cumberford, "the enthusiastic team managed to accomplish in months what would have taken a firm like

Renault seven or eight years" (72). Three cheers for the fleet team that created the MVS Venturi, a creature of enthusiasm that drives its wheels with an engine purchased from Renault. A "heavy hierarchic structure" has uses. Although in the collaborative moment the romance of equality is requisite, we are here in this chapter because I needed to find a way of intervening in my student's work between two hierarchical and coercive mandates: you will solve this problem; your solution will be judged. I will put on two cases, one from first grade and one from the cutthroat automobile business, to show that getting rid of subject matter and the feedback-correction model that implements it is not a Cumberfordian romance, but a ruthless and utilitarian operation.

A deal of energy in schools goes into teaching students to write letters a certain way. In some schools the requisite letters have little hooks on them so that they can eventually hook themselves together into cursive script. Getting those little hooks right is quite the enterprise. It is not the enterprise of choice for one teacher. "Today," he says, "you are going to design letters. People have designed letters for a long time." He shows his students some designs, illuminated letters, and so forth: "The text of this book was set on the linotype in Garamond, a modern rendering of the type first cut in the sixteenth century by Claude Garamond (1510-1561). Garamond was a

pupil of Geoffroy Troy and is believed to have based his letters on the Venetian models; however, he introduced a number of important differences, and it is to him that we owe the letter that we know as old style. He gave to letters a certain elegance and feeling of movement that won their creator an immediate reputation and the patronage of Francis I of France." Here is one child trying to develop the lucid letter. You can hardly see it, what you see is a word, or better yet a tree. There is another who values lucidity but is interested that the letter provide pleasure with the beauty of its design, and here another who wants to develop even better cursive hooks, and another who says lucid be hanged, I am designing the gorgeous letter, and here is a fellow who simply wants to master a common letter style because he is not interested in being creative about this matter and is content to exploit the virtues of the generic. The teacher intervenes in the projects of his students by collaborating with them. One point I would like to make explicit because I have so often been told that my ideas about teaching have put me in an untenable position: claiming that because a teacher of the FRP does not teach a subject matter that teacher needs no knowledge of subjects. Look at the case above. Is that teacher ignorant? Or consider collaboration. Would we not rather collaborate with the knowledgeable than the ignorant, with the proviso that the knowing not overbear the engagement with pedantry.

The knowledge of the teacher, in fact, becomes even more important to the FRP than it was to the CTP, but the teacher no longer has to know everything nor fear the questions of her students.

My second case is the story of Donald Stone told by David Halberstam in The Reckoning. Stone was an American engineer Nissan brought to Japan in 1955 to teach them about engines:

> Though he was small for an American, almost Japanese in size, he looked the part, rather tweedy and professorial, which was appropriate because the engineers expected him to run the equivalent of a small university for them. That way they would know all the American secrets. They were soon disappointed in Stone. They had expected fifteen lectures in fifteen categories--a lecture on the crankshaft, a lecture on the carburetor, a lecture on the ignition system, and so on. But it became clear that Stone, professorial though he might look, had almost no interest in lecturing them. He appeared bored with his lectures, delivering them in a weary monotone, rushing through them . . . . Stone, it turned out, was a brilliant teacher, but not of the sort the Japanese expected. Every day after he had raced through his lecture Stone called the

> Japanese around him informally and asked them what their problems were. At first they were shy about speaking up, but then they became gradually less so. They were, after all, engineers speaking to engineers, and Stone was easy to talk to. There was no superiority in his manner. What are your problems? he would ask. Well, a Japanese engineer would say hesitantly, the crankshaft keeps bending. So off they would go to the Yokahama factory where crankshafts were made, and they would inspect it, and Stone would make them explain what had gone wrong, and then, patiently, would prod them into coming up with ideas for correcting the problem. He was teaching them that engineering advanced by small degrees, always based upon performance. He was also teaching them that they were better at their jobs than they thought, that all they lacked was confidence. (268-269)

I quoted this story at length because Halberstam in telling us Stone's story has touched on a number of features of collaborative intervention. Stone wants to talk with his students rather than at them. He puts himself forward as a fellow worker so he is easy to talk with. He want to solve problems with his students. He wants to give them confidence. He has more knowledge and experience than they

do, but he does not flaunt and overbear. Halberstam has also touched on the realpolitik of teaching. The oligarchy that executed Socrates was wise in protection of its interests. They intuited that the collaborative-conversation model by nurturing change could threaten the stasis that enforced their eminence. If the oligarchs of what was the General Motors-Ford-Chrysler monopoly failed to co-opt teachers like Donald Stone and Edwards Deming (the god of quality control) and thereby stymie the emergence of a competitor that ate their lunch, it was not moral scruple made them forbear. Having committed themselves to what my Tennessee student called the pecking order business culture model they could not imagine the potency of the countervailing model that they now, lunch eaten-point taken, embrace and that right heartily.

As does Composition. Compositionist Lad Tobin calls collaboration the "God Word" of Composition and he is persuaded that "by lumping together under the heading 'collaborative writing' every classroom technique that in any way requires group work, we have confused one another and ourselves." The confusion, I think, is at base about one matter. Most group work involves students editing other students and teachers editing students in conferences (a small group to be sure), and just as education confuses cooperation with collaboration, Composition confuses editing with collaboration, and just as cooperation can make

assimilation of information more efficient and pleasant, editing can make texts better. For all his contempt for Composition, "are you still teaching those silly things [essays]," novelist Jack Bickham honors editing and the editor who taught him the most important thing he knows about writing: end chapters with a cliffhanger. Not only can editing make texts better, one can use editing to teach a subject matter. "Arguably, nothing we do as writing teachers," write C. H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon in 'Teacher Commentary on Student Writing: the State of the Art,' is more valuable than our commenting on individual student texts in order to facilitate improvement . . . Presumably, the more facilitative voices people hear in response to their writing, and the more often they hear them, the more quickly they will achieve that internal control of choices which our teaching strives to nurture."

Professors Brannon and Knoblauch point out that there is "scarcely a shred of empirical evidence" that teacher commentary on student writing is facilitative and they attribute this situation to certain contextual and methodological limitations of the research in this area; still they suspect facilitative commentary is possible under the right circumstances. For sure. Thomas Wolfe could not lay claim to the title novelist were it not for the intervention, the "facilitative commentary," of Maxwell Perkins. Yet Perkins as editor felt himself constrained in

a way that teachers who write on student papers do not feel constrained. In a letter to Wolfe he wrote about a problem in the text, but finally said that if he could get together with Wolfe he could make him see. Make him see? Why could prose not make him see?

I answered those questions with another iota of classroom research. I was working with a student and we thought that given her point and the audience she intended a description was not adequately specific. I found myself asking this question: "If I write 'be more specific' in the margin here, will you remember what it means?" A stupid question on the face of it, but it improves markedly on closer examination. I assumed that "be more specific" means nothing by itself, but could act only as a mnemonic, a rembrancer of the collaborative act in which we made a strategy. Max Perkins, the great editor, wanted to collaborate!

By taping editorial conferences I discovered that good editors are good in the same way and bad editors are bad in any number of ways; a small catalog may suffice to open my point that Composition teachers, at least the denizens of the CTP, are bad editors.

1) There are editors whose interest is in congruence between a subject matter and a performance. In a study of written commentary Searle and Dillon call this "didactic/correction form," and claim that it is very

common, a 59% incidence in their sample. Another "neurotic activity" that Janet Emig argues leads students to ". . . outward conformity, but inward cynicism and hostility." I have seen students shrink in a chair like a struck tent.

2) There are editors whose principal concern is the quality of the writing. They enjoy clarity or admire obscurity, are repelled by ten dollar words or impressed by them. Their partiality makes perspicuous aesthetic proclamations unlikely; they are arhetorical in their orientation and therefore non-facilitative in their performance.

3) There are editors who respond to the truth or falsehood of the displayed propositions and editors whose personality mandates a certain stance, argumentative, conciliatory, measured or brazen, and editors who enjoy to catch the writer in error.

It is no small achievement to edit a writer so that both her text and her ability to write are enhanced. The achievement requires that the editor locate problematical aspects of the text, put these aspects into rhetorical context by asking the writer questions, contrive to have the writer "see" the problematical feature in the same light she does, and converses about means of fixing the problematical feature. All that at bare minimum. Notice that the characteristic discourse operation of the effective editor is identical to the characteristic discourse operation of the effective teacher, asking questions to which she does

not know the answer, and the characteristic discourse operation of the ineffective editor, providing information about a text, is identical to the characteristic discourse operation of the ineffective teacher, providing information about a subject.

Although editing can be collaborative, collaboration consumes time and entails wisdom. One can briskly improve a text. Although the article by Knoblauch and Brannon is old now, the following recital, sounds of editing, is state of an art not changed in the twenty years I have been sharing offices.

"interesting but it didn't help your evaluations. Scrap that" "if you want more feedback, come back." "this is an assertion you could go back and develop"

"you might want to, you definitely would want to use 'listeners,' that's probably better than using the awkward 'he and she'--I won't do any more on that level."

"that might be helpful to mention the kinds of places" "I would also try to look at the music itself, the mood it establishes"

"avoid the non-, that's usually not an effective way to say it" "you need to spend more time explaining why tone is the most important thing in the story"

"I would like to see this developed more"

"normally if you can paraphrase do that, rather than

filling up large stretches of the page with quotations." The language is tentative (I would, that might, you could, you might), but students take the point:

"You might want to look at the sentence structure right here and you need to look at the whole picture"

"Where should I do that?"

"At the end, a brief summary of what the poem is about."

Editing collaboratively takes time most writing teachers do not have. My solution to the problem was to use no time editing, a decision consistent with my decision to privilege content over style and my avowal that the dominant fault of my students' writing was not bad sentences, but vacuity. I would intervene in the progress of my students by collaborating with them in making an idea. Here is an instance of idea making with Earl Dillwith.

The essay in which Earl expressed the idea we made together is titled "Lead Me Into Sin." An alien title for a young man of fierce Christian persuasion, but it is Earl's title, and that it is his title is important for reasons I will state presently. Earl was a weightlifter, a body builder, and had written an essay on the subject of body building. The essay was informative and interesting, but Earl had not made a theoretical idea; his assignment was to make a theoretical idea.

"Let's make one together," I said.

"Okay," said he.

We have time because neither of us is engaged in giving or taking back a data base of facts, meanings and values, or in editing or being edited. I asked Earl why he wanted big muscles. Physical beauty and power. Power? Do you want to beat me up? Not you. Who? Earl asked me if I remembered the Charles Atlas ad in which a buff guy kicks sand in the face of a 90 pound weakling. That weakling was Earl. One time a fellow hit him and knocked off his glasses. Earl said, "do you want to hit me again." You were imitating your religion's prototype I said. Not exactly, I was following my Dad's advice. He said if you get in a fight make sure the other guy <u>never</u> gets up again. Of the two alternatives Earl preferred to turn the other cheek. Later in his life Jesus as model also imposed upon Earl and he committed himself, heart and mind, to the ethic of turning the other cheek. Body? No muscle, no urge said Earl. He explained that maybe he embraced the ethic because he was not capable of defending himself. Do you have urge now? Yeah said Earl, yeah I have the urge to fight now, but only to defend the weak. Am I weak. You're weak. Will you defend me. I will. Here's what I want you to do Earl, I want you to beat Elizabeth Grubgeld, you'll find her on the third floor in this building. Well. Seriously, Earl, she's my editor, brilliant, a superb woman for sure, but she causes me a lot of pain about commas. Well. Earl, Earl,

think how much pain you've been caused by English teachers picking on you just because you happen to be a really amazingly bad speller.

Earl was reluctant to defend me. He refused to defend me. "I've created myself a problem here," he said. He realized that the defending motive could be used to justify the urge and it would be hard to tell when he was being moral and when savage. The problem, in Earl's iconography, was the problem of sin, and he had created the problem and he thought his creation was a good thing, an instrument of spiritual growth. We realized that what was sin for Earl would not be sin for people who had not lived his life and conceived their circumstances in his way. This was bespoke sin. Our idea was that spiritual growth proceeds by the creation of opportunities for sin. That creative act is so intricate and arduous that one might well call for help: Lord lead me into sin.

I found that I could think of my situation as a teacher in these terms. For me giving someone subject matter is sin. As Bronson Alcott of Brooke Farm expressed it-- a good teacher protects his students from his own influence. When I collaborate with Earl, with any student, I am at risk. Obviously Earl and I each brought stuff to the table of collaboration, we seem to have made the idea together, but if the idea we made is more mine than his, if I have imposed on Earl, I have sinned, to lose the iconography, I have

performed an act of professional incompetence. Sin or incompetence my creation is bespoke, nothing to anyone else.

The title of Earls's essay was, as I said, important to me. I look for marks that this is our idea and the title is one. We had bandied titles about and "Lead Me Into Temptation" was our front runner. "Lead Me Into Sin" is better and is source of hope to me that I did not violate Earl. How could he have made that title without owning at once our idea and a profound understanding of the central idea of his religion? His ability to express the idea in his essay was another mark in favor of my competence in this instance, for I have made ideas with students and seen the ideas disappear in a welter of failed articulation. Also the fact that the idea was new to me was a mark of success. I cannot, however, be sure, and that is another feature of bespoke sin. I know if I have done murder, but if I create the occasion of sin in order to grow emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, I am a blade runner asking in the void of the answer. In the introduction to this book I made a claim: "The teaching profession is fated to become orders of magnitude more demanding and orders of magnitude more influential." Collaborating, it will be seen, is more difficult than giving information and more able to effect change in students.

The theoretical paradigms, one for the CTP and one for the FRP, are complete. Because the argument that change in

the technology of knowledge will overturn the Current-Traditional Paradigm is a subtext of the theoretical paradigms and has consequently been for the most part already made, I will finish the argument in an endnote. One thing remains yet to do: "Composition teachers are at the bottom of a barrel. I would prefer they rise to the top." In a final chapter I will reveal the choice facing Composition: it can go the way of the pseudo sciences by using research methods evolved to study things, or it can enter the domain of paradox, espouse the shape of the truth, exploit the medium of our mortal moment. Sententious and occult twaddle? Tell it to the Corps. In an article titled "What We Can Learn from Them," Thomas E. Ricks studies the training whereby the United States Marine Corps "turn teenagers--many of them pampered or frightened or reckless or dangerous--into self-assured, responsible, courageous leaders." Not much New Age blather on Parris Island, but Ricks entered there the domain of paradox where we can lose ourselves and find ourselves at the same time: "They had subordinated their needs to those of the group, yet almost all emerged with a stronger sense of self" (5).

Chapter 11

The Myth of Aztlan: Reflections on a Professional Dilemma

I saw that all of these beings from one end of this limitless place to the other were connected, by hand or finger tip or arm or the touch of a foot. Everyone drew, in his or her separateness, upon the separateness of everyone else!

"They are all themselves!" I cried.

From the transcript of an eccentric undertaking: three people trying to make sentences together:

Melanie: We need a great opening sentence. "There has been scant research . . . ."

[laughter]

Michael: And I'm going to make it a trifle less scanty in my twenty page paper.

Melanie: He's making fun of my paper. (McGuire 4)

Plainly off to a bad start. Collaboration's bete noire, the human proclivity to esteem ourselves at the expense of someone else, has raised its ugly head from the get go; he is making fun of her paper. Making sentences together may be as difficult as it is eccentric, and these people are merely students, insecure, immature, nascent.

Consider two older and wiser heads about the same strange business:

> A seat had been placed under a weeping ash for the collaborators, and in the warmth and fragrance of the garden we spent many pleasant hours, quarreling as to how the play should be written, Lady Gregory intervening when our talk waxed loud. She would cross the sward and pacify us, and tempt us out of argument into the work of construction with some such simple question as-And your second act-how is it to end? (Moore 246)

The speaker is the novelist George Moore, his partner the poet William Butler Yeats, their referee, the playwright Augusta Persse Lady Gregory, and they are off to a good start, so it would seem: the sward, the weeping ash, the fragrance of the garden, of nobility, wealth, accomplishment, and genius. Surely it would not be naive to suppose that the beast of the desperate ego is subdued by the sweet smell of success? "I strode about the sward," says Moore mired in a battle of wits with Yeats, "raising my voice out of its normal pitch until suddenly a sight of Lady Gregory reminded me that to lose my temper would be to lose the play." He restrains his temper, but not his rancor. "It may suit you," he tells Yeats, "to prepare your palette and distribute phrases like garlands of roses on the backs of chairs . . but there's no use getting angry" (247). When

Lady Gregory wants to do something for the play Moore implores her, "But Lady Gregory, wouldn't it be better for you to use your influence with Yeats, to persuade him to concede something." The men seem to have encountered a force field beyond which they cannot go. Lady Gregory's solution is not a laissez passer, but a capitulation: "Let the play be written by one or the other of you, and then let the other go over it. Surely that is the best way--and the only way?" They will assume the roles of writer and editor, but no longer collaborate, if by collaboration we intend what the dictionary does: the mutual making of something, as making sentences together. Mutuality may be the key here, and the placing of high value on mutuality, even the assumption that relationships are an end to which all else is instrumental. Any other ethos acts as a force field that denies entre to what the great Orientalist Henry Clarke Warren calls a "Fairyland" where "the world is turned upside down and inside out." We understand Yeats is barred from Fairyland when Moore tells us of his arrival at Coole Park and Lady Gregory gives Moore news of Yeats:

> He was still composing; we should have to wait breakfast for him; and we waited till Lady Gregory, taking pity on me, rang the bell. But the meal we sat down to was disturbed not a little by thoughts of Yeats who still tarried. The whisper went round the table that he must be

> overtaken by some inspiration, and Lady Gregory, fluttered with care, was about to send the servant to inquire if Mr. Yeats would like to have his breakfast in his room. At that moment the poet appeared, smiling and delightful, saying that just as the clocks were striking ten the metre had begun to beat, and abandoning himself to the emotion of the tune, he had allowed his pen to run until it had completed nearly eight and a half lines, and the conversation turned on the embarrassment his prose caused him, forcing him to reconstruct his scenario.

Yeats, convinced his creativity is more important than a lunch engagement, contrives to have the thoughts of those he misuses bend to him and burnish his brass; a prerogative of genius perhaps. In the movie Immortal Beloved a woman whose child he stole says of Beethoven, "I forgave him because of the Ode to Joy," and as that tune surges in the background we take her point. Genius may be its own excuse for being, but Yeats and Beethoven will not go where our students want to go, a domain above whose gates is graven the rubric RELATIONSHIPS ARE THE END TO WHICH ALL ELSE IS INSTRUMENTAL.

We had better look to our students who, jejune as the are, have determined to investigate collaboration by submitting themselves to what disciplines the mutual making

of something requires. One imagines austere disciplines, yet they started making fun of one another and never cease:

Michael: How about "although its definition remains inchoate?"

Mitzi: Is that one of your words?

Michael: Not mine, it's out there in the world available to all you writers.

Mitzi: Richard Hugo says that everyone has their own words they use.

Michael: I use that one about every three years.

Mitzi: I've never used that word, it's more yours than mine. (McGuire 8)

This Mitzi is one of those creative writers who like plain language, or as Michael says, is an "advocate of a diction idea begot to screen the phenomenon of a destitute vocabulary," and Michael is an academic writer, trained as Mitzi says, "to dress poverty of thought in pompous robes." The different points of view become a leitmotif of the transcript:

Mitzi: I do like the word realm though . . .

Melanie: Thank you.

Michael: Would you prefer demesne . . . I have pulled that word out once in the last year, and that was probably too many times . . .

Mitzi: The realm of . . .

Michael: Demesne looks better than it sounds, you know, how

it looks on the page, it looks realmish.

Mitzi: Realmish. (McGuire 7)

Mitzi, Melanie and Michael will have created after about 40 hours a one page proposal for a conference. One page=40 hours, a bizarre calculus, and they make no argument that the page is a better page of prose than any other page of prose, yet they are satisfied, even smug. We begin to understand why when we consider the definition of collaboration they concocted: collaboration is the mutual making of something whereby the creators' individuality is enhanced even as their immersion in a community intensifies-- "The enterprise that destroys individuality, also grants individuality; the enterprise that satisfies ego requires that we relinquish ego" (Springer 9). Oxymoronic one would think; next they will serve up dry wetness and mountainous plains. But the students insist and are aware of the implications of their insistence; one of their working titles for their conference presentation is "Composition Enters the Domain of Paradox."

Melanie: How about "Our treatment of collaboration in three dimensions . . . "

Michael: "is a conventional Platonic conception of reality . . ."

Mitzi: "Our consideration of collaboration . . ."

Michael: "in three dimensions is a conventional Platonic conception of the . . ."

Mitzi: "the universe, of the world . . ."

Melanie: "which we find useful, or necessary in this . . ." (McGuire 5)

The Platonism and the three dimensions are left on the cutting room floor, yet is this the not the rhythm, the very music of the Domain of Paradox? And look closer at the teasing, how it insists upon their separation and draws them together <u>at the same time.</u> When Melanie says they need a great opening sentence "There has been scant research . . ." she is mocking herself in a complex context; Michael mocks her for producing scholarship in which the "scant research" formula is justification for more research and at the same time shows his awareness that one of her teachers had lined out her word "little" in the formula and written in "scant," and that another of her teachers informed of this had thought scanty was rather salacious. Melanie and Michael seriously disagree about the way of scholarship and they insist on this disagreement, at the same time drawing themselves into a web of connection. Does the domain of paradox require prior intimacy? Not at all. The prose style division noted above is new, but they work it, and mock themselves with it, and their mockery is praise and their praise is mockery. Verily, have they entered the domain of paradox.

Although Americans honor that domain in adage--the more I know the more I know I don't know--and song--give one

heart, get back two, that's the paradox of I love you--the domain of paradox remains for us an undiscovered country. When we send an emissary he returns amazed. Henry Clarke Warren, author of Buddhism in Translation, explains:

> A large part of the pleasure I have experienced in the study of Buddhism has arisen from what I may call the strangeness of the intellectual landscape. All the ideas, the modes of argument, even the postulates assumed and not argued about, have always seemed so strange, so different from anything to which I had been accustomed, that I felt all the time as if walking in Fairyland. (279)

Buddhism is Warren's fairyland; none other than the domain of paradox described here by Walpola Rahula:

> He who has realized truth, Nirvana, is the happiest being in the world. He is free from all "complexes," obsessions, the worries and troubles that torment others. His mental health is perfect. He does not repent the past nor does he brood over the future . . . his service to others is of the purest, for he has no thought of self . . . He gains nothing, accumulates nothing, not even anything spiritual . . . . (43)

He gains nothing, and at the same time, for this is the structural idea of paradox, he gains so much that in the

interest of brevity I elided most of what he gains: joy, perfect health, kindness and so on and on. Nirvana. Nice deal if you can get it. Our three students define collaboration in precisely the same paradoxical terms; and Anne Rice, stretching her lucrative imagination, depicts a Christian heaven--see the epigraph above--in precisely the same terms. Not a feeble image. Ask an inarticulate teenagers what they want to be and they will probably grab a pole of dichotomy to dodge an oxymoron; ask the articulate and they will say what all feel: I want to be more different from other teenagers and more the same as other teenagers. Nirvana, Heaven, collaboration, teenage angst, all event horizons in the domain of paradox where what cannot be, is.

As if intuiting that the domain of paradox is a potent Magik, Composition has embraced collaboration. Alas, there is a snake in Paradise, or as will appear presently a bent cog in the Big Machine that puts composition in a professional dilemma. The dilemma momently, but first the bent cog best illustrated by a fiction. In E. M. Forster's A Passage to India Adela Quested, under enormous psychic pressure, rises to testify against a man she accused of molesting her in the caves of the Marabar. Afraid to tell the truth of a private failure, she decides to tell anyway, and she is afraid. "But as soon as she rose to reply, and heard the sound of her own voice, she feared not even that.

A new and unknown sensation protected her, like magnificent armour." When fear dies Adela can see, or is it because she can see fear dies? The question is mooted by the canon of paradox, which is not either/or, but both/and. "The fatal day recurred in every detail, but now she was of it and not of it at the same time, and this double relation gave it indescribable splendor" She has, for the nonce, become Nirvana; a state of being as distant as eternity and close as the nearest cigarette: of it and not of it. And what a pleasure the double relation is, a pleasure that our students claim for collaboration: to be more separate and more connected, the double relation. Miss Quested will forget her moment; or her husband, an Englishman who can straightaway make oxymoron of paradox will kill it in her. As such an Englishman, Adela's friend Cyril Fielding tells his friend Aziz: "Your emotions never seem in proportion to their objects Aziz." Aziz replies: "Is emotion a sack of potatoes, so much the pound, to be measured out? Am I a machine? I shall be told I can use up my emotions by using them, next." Precisely. Empiricist dogma insists upon it and so does Fielding: "I should have thought you would. It sounds common sense. You can't eat your cake and have it, even in the world of the spirit." Aziz is unpersuaded: "If you are right, there is no point in any friendship; it all comes down to give and take, and we had better leap over this parapet and kill ourselves." Aziz suspects that love

is a way to the double relation and his suspicion is not arcanum but mundane intuition: another popular song: "It's just like a magic penny, hold it tight and you won't have any. Lend it spend it, and you'll have so many, it will roll all over the floor."

Aziz' quest for love fails and Forster tells us why, and suggests the power of the force field that denies us entry to the Domain of Paradox, Nirvana, the double relation, call it what we will:

> . . . the horses didn't want it--they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which the rider must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion . . . they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet,' and the sky said, 'No, not there' (362).

The earth rises up against Aziz, but the obstacle for composition, the bent cog Forster suggests, Nathaniel Hawthorne explicates:

> He had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity. He was no longer a brother man, opening the chambers or the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy, which gave him a right to share in all its secrets; he was now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, and at length, converting man

> and woman to be his puppets, and pulling the wires that moved them to such degrees of crime as were demanded by his study.

Ethan Brand conducting his search for the unpardonable sin commits the unpardonable sin: Science. That is harsh, ungrateful. Where women and men once cowered before Yahweh rumbling in Horeb they now waste cities with the discharge of an atom and say of themselves what the gods say: I am become death, destroyer of worlds and an estimable plumber to boot.

Science is useful, and the sciences studying things with methods designed to study things know their place, but the times blur the distinction between the personal dimension of reality and the impersonal dimension of reality. The myth of Aztlan reminds us that the distinction is an achievement paid for in blood, a distinction to be held in mind, a distinction that unknown or uncelebrated wreaks havoc.

Aztlan, you will recall, was the Tlaxcalan warrior who had the misfortune to fall into the hands of his neighbors, the Azteca. This Aztlan, renowned for martial prowess and eccentricity, by a study of rocks begun in his first year and continuing in the stone chamber where he was imprisoned had made a discovery that his compatriots thought absurd. He surmised that there were in world "things" that could not be dealt with as persons. He imagined a dimension of

reality with no motives, no feelings . . . impersonal. A stream did not babble in the breath of a sprite, nor the wind blow in the cheeks of a Titan, nor the sun shine because a god stoked its fire. The surmise grew upon him until it had the weight of probability and probability made truth by actions he performed upon "things" based on his assumption of their impersonality. He took dominion over them as he had never taken dominion over his wife, or even a fallen foe. As he waited for priests to tear his heart from his chest to persuade the sun, he repeated again and again-- "wrong . . . these 'things' . . . the sun . . . you don't need me."

History swings like a pendulum does. Most swings are short lived, a month, a year, several decades, but the swing from the personal vision of reality to the impersonal vision is millennial, not yet having reached the end of its initial arc into the impersonal dimension. "Yes, yes yes," cries Henderson the Rain King of Saul Bellow's novel of the same name, "the world of facts is real, all right, and not to be altered. The physical is all there, and it belongs to science. But then there is the nouemenal department, and there we create and create and create." The nouemenal department is not lost on Americans, a majority of whom believe in the devil, but our three students who would speak of the nouemenal department to a particular discourse community, Composition, must make their way in an academy

caught in the final degrees of the great arc, spawning a new thing under the sun: the pseudo-sciences. Poaching the prestige of Science by mimicking an epistemology and methodology designed to comprehend and exploit Aztlan's "things," the pseudo-sciences attempt, for a fee, to comprehend and exploit the subjects of Ethan Brand's experiments, persons.

The heroine of the pseudo-sciences, Kareene Bloomgarten, diagnosed a victim of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder no longer uses her previous drugs of choice, cocaine, marijuana, valium, alcohol. Each day she takes under doctor's orders the stimulant drug ritalin and the tranquilizing drug Zoloft. Kareene wants what we all want, the peace that passes understanding, of it (stimulant) and not of it (relaxant) at the same time. She does not read the 7,000 volumes of the Chinese Buddhist cannon and practice the 3,000 moral precepts and 80,000 minor disciplinary rules, nor does she take instruction from the crow. "We might all," as Ruby of Cold Mountain. says, "take instruction from crow:"

> When three crows harried a hawk across the sky, Ruby expressed her great respect for the normally reviled crow, finding much worthy of emulation in their outlook on life. She noted with disapproval that many a bird would rather die than eat any but food it relishes. Crows will relish what presents

> itself. She admired their keeness of wit, lack of pridefulness, love of practical jokes, slyness in a fight. All of these she saw as making up the genius of the crow, which was a kind of willed mastery over what she assumed was a natural inclination toward bile and melancholy, as evidenced by its drear plumage. (137)

Kareene Bloomgarten, taking instruction from an upper-downer drug combo platter known and coveted on the streets as a speedball, takes no less pleasure in her new story than in her new mind, and both her pleasures testify to the suasions of a master narrative that deposes perturbations of desire in dramas of good and evil with an innocent allegory of disease and cure. "I had 38 years of thinking I was a bad person," she says, "now I'm rewriting the tapes of who I thought I was and who I really am."

Composition in the birth throes of trying to create itself as a profession is as taken as an addict with her alibi with the prestige of Science. To the extent that Composition succeeds in realizing that status marker it will put itself in the place that pseudo sciences put themselves: it will be able in its scholarship to say nothing to the point and when that scholarship is put to work in classrooms its insights will be contra-active in their effects.

David W. Smit submits collaboration, an act that certainly smacks of the nouemenal, to the aegis of

utilitarian pseudo science--the dominant epistemological model of composition theory--in an article titled "Some Difficulties with Collaborative Learning." The article appears in a book, Composition Theory for the Postmodern Classroom, that styles itself "a collection of the most outstanding articles published in the Journal of Advanced Composition over the last decade. Together these essays represent the breath and strength of composition scholarship that has fruitfully engaged with critical theory in its many manifestations." This quotation is a blurb on the book. I put it on as testimony that the article I am about to draw conclusions from is representative of the Zeitgeist, or perhaps, as the blurb will have it, exemplary and advanced. In this article Professor Smit sets a stage:

> Usually collaborative theorists offer three arguments in favor of collaborative learning: (1) traditional classroom methods have failed to teach students what they most require--a critical stance toward authority and the ability to cooperate to solve problems of social concern--and therefore we need to reconstruct both society and education to promote these values, (2) collaborative learning mirrors the social nature of language and writing, and (3) empirical studies demonstrate the positive effects of collaborative methods. (70)

Smit then questions the validity of the three arguments

and concludes: "Properly executed, collaborative practices may constitute an effective pedagogy; but to be certain, we need a great deal more evidence" (79).

More studies are needed, argues Professor Smit, else we cannot understand whether collaboration works and we cannot tell the confused teachers in the trenches what to know and what to do. The irony, of course, is that more studies will always be needed because they can never prove anything one way or the other: they cannot speak to the issue. More studies do speak, however, to distinguish teachers employed by universities from teachers employed K-12 in point of money and distinction and who tells who what to do. Their professional circumstance, no- status selves together with no-status understandings, leaves our three composition students who entered the domain of paradox in something like the position of Atzlan reversed--but see people aren't like the sun, they are persons, and in the personal dimension paradox reigns. "Expressing our motives and needs introduced new words into the enterprise," writes Mitzi McGuire," words such as risk, faith, trust, gratitude, spirituality, even God made repeated appearances. We were able to allow the unscientific into our discourse precisely because we had needs that wanted to be satisfied, because we hadn't set out on a scientific expedition to prove that collaboration works." It seems not to have occurred to the students to prove what they already know by experience. "In

fact, we never questioned if collaboration works; we wanted only to understand better how it works" (4).

The dilemma of composition as it attempts to become a profession is that it must choose between Smit and the students. So far it has chosen Smit and suffered a consequence dire: the phenomenon of contra-action. The three students claim that they and Composition by embracing collaboration unwittingly entered the domain of paradox; that maneuvering there is made possible by submission to disciplines of selflessness and agreeable by rewards of self aggrandizement. Their argument will not carry the day. The relationship between teachers and students will change because the relationship between students and information will change. A software billionaire says how:

> Electronic documents will be interactive. Request a kind of information, and the document responds. Indicate that you've changed your mind, and the document responds again. Once you get used to this sort of system, you find that being able to look at information in different ways makes that information more valuable. The flexibility invites exploration, and the exploration is rewarded with discovery. (64)

Mr. Gates says that information will be more useful. So will teachers. We can no more collaborate alone than we can listen to the sound of one hand clapping. For the three

Composition students Collaboration is a desideratum, for the futurist an historical inevitability, for Composition a dilemma. For all of us collaboration is the ruling discipline of the primal, eldest quest: enlightenment, the double relation, the domain of paradox, heaven, Nirvana, love, self-creation, the plenty that denies the desolation of entropy. One cannot, in fact, imagine Sisyphus happy and one cannot imagine Fielding correct: "You can't have your cake and eat it, even in the world of the spirit."

I have presented a theory of the Current-Traditional Paradigm and a theory of the Future-Radical Paradigm as both make their way within a millennial pendular swing between the world comprehended as thing and world comprehended as person. The arcs of the pendulum will become smaller, and we will grow increasingly attentive, as with nature and nurture, to a complex interplay. Or. The sun will go supernova, the sky rain nuclear bombs, a happy few rise in rapture, you turn into a mimsy tove. The future is a wild hare. Probably on Monday people will have to say and do something in Composition classrooms and they will do what tradition tells them. Or they will do what researchers tell them. Or they will create a theory of their practice as Composition teachers. If I depicted, by the way, a theory of the practice of Composition, it was not to preclude others, but to induct my reader into the dialectic of action and ideation from which a theory of the practice of

Composition can be made and to provide a place of departure for the long experiment in which Composition teachers of divers interests, gifts, and circumstances, make and act out their theories of Composition.

Wilhelm Reich, in his book Character Analysis, one of the best books to describe a theory and depict theorizing, writes: "If I now sketch some of my own gross failures . . . ." This is not coyness on his part. A theoretician's failures are real, people are hurt by them, patients in Reich's case, students in ours. But as Compositionist Mina Shaugnessy remarks, our students should not always have to pay the price of our ignorance. I don't mean to suggest that you will be foolish enough to make my errors and can go to school on me to avoid them. You will make yours. The quest of each teacher to make a theory of practice is terrible, fraught with a too lucid recognition of harms done to students because of the incompletion of understanding. It is a quest whose immediate upshot is unease and whose goal, expertise, seems to recede even as it is realized. The making of a theory of practice does not achieve The Answer, but as many answers as there are teachers to make answers; wherefore the maker will not insist on the truth of his answer. He may, however, write it down and cry quod erat demonstrandum!

Endnotes

1. The mother may be alone in the apartment building, but her way of teaching is not without formidable exponents. John Dewey for one. "For Dewey," writes John Trimbur, "learning should be experiential and should occur through the interaction of the learners and the wider social environment, not through the teacher's imposition of subject matter from above and outside the experience of the learners" Here we see, in Dewey's repudiation of subject matter, why, like Socrates, his way is scorned, although his name is legend. Intuitively we all know there is something rotten with subject matter.

2. Loose cannons like the mother in the apartment can show up anywhere. Lionel Poilane, arguably the greatest baker of sourdough boules in France, explains his method:

> In bakery school students learn to push a button that delivers 60 liters of water at 40 degrees Celsius. I tried that, but then I realized that the push-button just stops them from thinking about what they're doing . . . Sixty liters of water isn't necessarily right you see? In baking, everything is a question of variables--the temperature that day, the humidity, the quality of

the flower and the like. There are no absolute rules. (56)

3. When the scandal of the mother's heterodoxy rears its head in schools it is opposed by the weight of tradition, and by "corrective theories" of the sort advocated by E. D. Hirsch in Cultural Literacy:

> The corrective might be described as an anthropologic theory of education . . . In an anthropologic perspective the basic goal of education in a human community is acculturation, the transmission to children of the specific information shared by the adults of the group or polis . . . Only by piling up specific, communally shared information can children learn to participate in complex cooperative activities with other members of the community.

Fortunately, television does our piling, leaving teachers to pursue another purpose.

4. "Jason, my six-year-old," writes Steve Peck, also given cause to wonder, "greeted me one evening by saying, 'I wrote a book today. It's called Ants. I was excited to see this growing interest in nature. With obvious pride he handed me the book, made of folded computer paper, hand drawings and tape. I flipped casually through his creation, patted him on the head and asked him if he liked ants. When he

answered in the affirmative, I said 'We'll have to buy you a book on ants'" (15). His answer has left me thinking ever since. 'I have a book on ants--this one!' One wonders what Mr. Peck has been thinking about.

5. This way of knowing is a by-product of an assumption about the nature of knowledge itself. "Others spread a knowledge they have and can dispense, as from a storage tank," writes Gary Wills. "Socrates 'knows' only as he interrogates, as he keeps questioning, going deeper and deeper." When students are asked to make ideas many respond out of the former assumption, and therefore suppose that they have nothing in the storage tank to dispense.

6. Mr. Jakes, a character in a story by Dan Simmons says:

> When I was training to be a teacher . . . one of the trick questions questions the professors used to ask--"Do you want to be the sage on the stage or the guide on the side?" The idea was that there were two kinds of teachers: the "sage" who walked around like a pitcher full of knowledge pouring some into the receptacle that was the student, or the "guide" who led the student to knowledge via furthering the young person's own curiosity and exploration. (357)

Who do you want to be? Gorgias, or the student of Socrates. I repeat: History gives the palm to Gorgias.

They did not kill Socrates for no reason, and they did not dismiss Henry David Thoreau from his teaching post after a few months for no reason. The professors were giving Dan Simmon's character a choice that he does not have.

7. I am using Socrates emblematically as surely as I am using the mother and Jan. I assume he was a fellow who asked in the void of the answer, that is to say he asked questions to which he did not know the answer and conversed collaboratively. The dialogues as often give the impression that he was a put-down artist, perhaps because the first and greatest "user" of Socrates was Plato. Jasper Neel in his book Plato, Derrida, and Writing makes the ingenious idea that after his analysis we will be able "to see Plato behind the tapestry, with a pen in his hand, in silence, attempting the greatest theft of all time, the theft of writing. Rather than using writing, he tries to use it up, leaving nothing for those who follow" (6).

I also use Isocrates emblematically to support the Socratic emblem, but he may have been closer to Gorgias than to Socrates in his philosophy. "He developed, writes James Kinneavy in the his book A Theory of Discourse, "the set speech and the imitation of models, and this has continued down to our day" (7).

8. Although the mother probably does things the way she does because she wishes to nurture her son's artistic ability and

has an intuitive understanding of what it takes to nurture him, empiricists are on the case. John Briggs, in his study of creativity, Fire in the Crucible, writes:

> In an ingenious set of experiments, Brandeis University psychology professor Teresa Amabile has shown that creativity itself may depend on the intrinsic nature of absorption, that is, it depends on being its own reward. Amabile tested subjects ranging from elementary children to undergraduate women, rewarding some of them for creative tasks. Their creative productions were then rated by a panel of judges composed of professional creators. Amabile and her colleagues report that no matter what the reward was or when it was given, if the subjects thought they were working for external remuneration, they became less creative. (210)

9. The distinction between imparting knowledge and conversing is old news and new news. Ira Shore, a chap James Berlin says "has emerged as the most reliable discussant of the uses of the work of Paulo Freire in the United States," calls conversation dialog. He writes ". . . I will contrast dialogue to teacher-talk, the one way discourse of traditional classrooms that, I argue, alienates students, depresses their achievement, and supports

inequality in school and society" (85). Plato/Socrates said the same thing. Not only is the distinction old hat, people who trouble themselves to make it usually to advocate dialog and disdain teacher talk. Yet teacher talk abides, and one must wonder why.

10. The fashion amongst the argumentative, here lately, is to admit the ideological basis of the truth claim being advanced, an abstract analog of the architectural fashion for expressing infrastructure by exposing ceiling beams and air conditioning ducts. Presumably the architect thereby pushes worker housing to its logical conclusion, and the ideologue avoids divers kinds of potential embarrassment, as for instance the kind Nicolas Lemann inflicts on Phillip Zweig in his review of Zweig's biography of Citibank's Walter Wriston. "Mr. Zweig elevates the automatic prejudices of someone in Mr. Wriston's position to the status of philosophy" (12). Here, out of my own mouth, is my automatic prejudice recognized as such: I do not like to have a data base of facts, meanings, and values imposed upon me; in consequence, I would never do that to a student.

11. Modern translations of the Bible do frequently follow the directive of Random House so that "did'st thou give the horse his power, did'st thou clothe his neck with thunder" becomes "are you responsible for making the horse's neck heavily muscled." That change serves the sense of audience

(the metaphorically challenged?) of the translators, and that's their business. But when I am asked as a teacher to inflict this or any other sense of audience on my students, that's my business, and I prefer not.

12. In his book Foundations of Social Research Fred Kerlinger defines a theory as "a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, a propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variable, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena." Predicting. Theoretics is the futurist tool par excellence. If most futurism is jejune, it is perhaps because even to get in the ballpark one must make a complex ideational artifact.

13. The Current-Traditional Paradigm is, however, increasingly subject to corrosive forces. LynNell Hancock explains the assault on subject matter, cornerstone of the CTP, as it is presently taking place in the discipline of History:

> Tradition has it that history teachers have been anointed with the crucial task of infusing our country's facts--and myths--into its youngest, most malleable citizens. American history of the old school. . . has been converted into a remarkable new style: history told from the points of view of non-whites, women, and ordinary

> folk. "No one owns history anymore," says Columbia University historian Aslan Brinkley, "there is no consensus, just a discordant babble of historians." (28)

The problem of ownership of the data base (God or a Bang created the universe?) is always, when it rears its head, an embarrassing revelation that Jan's way is Pavlovian operant conditioning used to impose propaganda.

14. When education is the act of giving and taking back a data base of facts meanings and values, it is always threatened by proliferation of data bases, of points of view. It has stood its ground. Virtual reality technology changes things because, as journalist Howard Fineman says, "Soon enough, philosophers of cyberspace point out, you'll not be able to 'research' another point of view; you'll be able to inhabit it" (52). When students inhabit points of view, and points of view are legion and accessible, teachers who impart knowledge will finally be seen and felt as what they have been since the book was born: anachronisms.

15. The information pamphlet of the Goleta Open Alternative class offers quotations from thinkers who locate themselves within the Future-Radical paradigm:

"There should be no element of slavery in learning . . . let your children's lessons take the form of play."

Plato

"If a child is fully engaged in an activity, learning is taking place."

Roland Barthes

"The fatal pedagogical error . . . to throw answers like stones at the heads of those who have not yet asked the questions."

Paul Tillich

"The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery."

Mark Van Doren

"A child who is learning naturally, following his curiosity where it leads him, adding to his mental model of reality whatever he needs and can find a place for . . . is growing . . . in knowledge, in the love of learning and in the ability to learn."

John Holt

16. Psychologist Joseph Nowinski argues that where ego is concerned men and women differ dramatically. He says that the male ego has a "positional orientation" as in I'm big, you're small, and the female a "relational orientation" as in the Scottish adage "There are you, and here am I." If he

is right, the increasing sway of women in the public arena might have meant death to the CTP. In any event, technology will kill it faster.

17. Following inclination, anathema to George Will, is the essence of the technological gift that will transform education from the subject matter model to the quest-inquiry model:

> The father of the Web is Tim Berners-Lee, a computer scientist who was working at the European Laboratory for Particle Physics in Geneva, Switzerland, when he first developed it in 1989. Lee was looking for a way to present scientific information using 'hypertext.' With hypertext, certain pictures or words on the screen are highlighted; users click on them with a mouse and moved to a linked image or page of information. With many choices on the initial screen, EACH READER WOULD GO THROUGH THE INFORMATION IN A DIFFERENT WAY [my emphasis]. (Kantrowitz 60)

18. Rules, as Peggy Noonan points out, are stranger birds than they seem at first blush:

> The problem for me as a writer was that the mice [chief of staff Donald Regan's assistants] had control of my work . . . I knew I was in trouble when I got a note from Dennis one day, early on.

> I had written for the president [Ronald Reagan] the phrase 'The Constitution as you know . . . He had circled the last three words. If they already know, he challenged, why do you have to tell them. I began a memo explaining that 'as you know' is a polite thing to say when you're reminding people of something they may have forgotten, or repeating what is known for effect, or telling people something they might not know, but you don't want to be assuming they are uniformed or . . . and then I thought, when someone wants to argue about 'as you know,' there's more going on than 'as you know.' I didn't send the memo. (205)

The girl had been slam dunked by her professors, now she takes her opportunity to slam dunk the magisterial W. Somerset Maugham.

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