

In Search of Play: A Performance Kit

by

William Douglas Taylor

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Department of LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Thesis Abstract

My thesis is about educating through play.

I have been playing, experimenting, thinking, and living my thesis for eight teaching years. At times insight has come with certainty and passion; more often, insight has not come, or it has been diluted or made problematic.

I have read educational philosophy, and history, and psychology; I have experimented with evaluative models; I have tried product and process approaches. No matter how fancy the language that I use, no matter how simple and direct the models I create, no matter how intricate and accountable my evaluative strategies are, teaching and learning work best when the heart is at the centre of the enterprise. Becoming educated is learning how to love: to wonder, to question, to quest. Educating is about loving, about finding ways to bring people confidence, and hope, and openness.

Play bridges the opposition between order/chaos. It helps me locate the generative, constructive forces in our schools.

As a reader of this thesis, I invite you to become a play director. The stories told here do not live on the pages. They do not even really live in the spaces between text and active reader. The only way for these stories to live is if they're played to life through performance.

I invite you to read these stories about writing, and community, and culture in the classroom as a producer would read a playscript. To that end, this thesis is presented in the form of a performance kit which contains theory on acting and directing, specific production strategies, the scripts themselves, and background information on the generation of these scripts.

I believe that this extended metaphor—teacher as director, students as players, community as audience—can serve as a useful aid to bring play back to the multi-vocal theoretical literature of our discipline and to the stories enacted daily in our classrooms.

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Preface

I must say that it was with some trepidation that I released my three scripts to the creators of the educational performance kit series. I was worried that my words would be taken out of context, or that they would be twisted to serve some purpose other than the one I had intended.

I need not have worried. The creators of this performance kit went out of their way to understand and to create anew what I had written. They spent hours looking over my notes and journals. They spoke to my friends, to my students, and to me. They played with my material until it took on new life.

The result is a package that presents my work in a fair and appealing way. In some cases, these authors bring insight that I must confess not to have had at the time of living these stories.

I hope that you enjoy reading these scripts, and that this performance kit meets your expectations.

William D. Taylor.

Acknowledgements

The creation of this performance kit would not have been possible without the co-operation of the author of the stories contained herein, William Taylor. We thank Mr. Taylor for allowing us to use his stories, and for giving us access to his journals and other papers.

At times we were not certain how things would turn out, but we are glad we persevered and the result, we hope you will agree, was worth the effort.

This is the first in what we hope will be a series of kits designed to bring educational theory to life through performance.

Enjoy.

The PKC.

Section One: Preparing for Performance

To the Reader/Producer

Working as a teacher in school involves writing and reading texts of many kinds through a regular teaching year, texts which include, among others, curricular, social, political, and personal elements. A written representation which captures the spirit of this involvement can prove difficult to compose due to the necessary translation of events from immediacy of action to words on a page.

The scripts in this package attempt to bridge this gap. They offer points of departure for those wishing to explore educational texts. The written word is offered as a precursor to action.

The *act* of being educated requires *action*. This thesis can be read, but it should be acted, played, and performed. The reader should approach these texts as a theatre producer would. A reading approached in this way can begin to grant the many voices contained herein the nuance and depth that they deserve. The theorist can become producer, become teacher, become player and director, all the while realizing that the directorial burden is a heavy one:

Directing a play...means nourishing, sustaining, and revitalizing the actors, encouraging and satisfying them and finding their proper theatrical diet; it means bringing forth and raising [a] family...It means finding the spiritual mood that was the poet's at the play's conception...It means realizing the corporal through the spiritual. It is a way of dealing with a work, with the places and properties necessary to the setting, with the performers, with the poet who has conceived it, and, finally, with the audience for which it is destined. (Jouvet, 1937, p. 227)

Assuming our educational scripts are vital, we have no choice but to perform them with energy, focus, and imagination. This kit offers three scripts written by William Taylor: *A Multivocal Exploration: Textualizing a Writing 10 Curriculum*, *Creative Collaboration: An Exploration of a Curriculum in Play(building)*, and *Voices in Conflict: The Cultural Sub-text of a Journalism Class*. These scripts have been performed. It is the hope of the author that other performances can take place, filled with their own subtlety, shades of meaning, discovery, joy, and love.

As reader/producer of these scripts, your job is to decide where they will be performed, for what audience, with which director, and with which actors. Once these choices have been made, the rewarding job of rehearsing, of creating the sub-text for each play, can begin.

In the end, as long as the characters found in the scripts are fully defined and caringly brought to life, the performances will be vital.

As the Shakespearean actor Professor Emeritus Norman Welsh (UCLA) once said, twenty-five

percent of meaning is communicated verbally, seventy-five percent is communicated non-verbally. The text (re)presents only a fraction of what will and can be communicated through other means.

“Stanislavski says that subtext is what the audience comes to the theatre to see—if all they wanted was the text, they could have stayed home and read the script” (Barton, 1993, p.18).

To The Actor

Either you have decided to take part in the performance of these plays, or you have been selected to do so. In either case, you will succeed if you approach your work in the following ways:

- 1) remember that these are *plays*, so enjoy the playing,
- 2) keep your mind open to wonder (open to be in awe and ready to question),
- 3) approach the text as an exploration of the subject matter *and* of yourself,
- 4) be prepared to listen with your ears, mind, and heart, and
- 5) commit to these scripts, your ensemble, your director, and your audience.

Remember that “acting is living truthfully under the imaginary circumstances of a play” (Bruder 1986, p.8). The player’s mind should be flexible, creative, quick, and open so that the imaginary, given circumstances can be accommodated. Given circumstances refer to the historical, social, political, temporal, and stylistic milieu within which the text is to be performed. Factors like age of character, setting (both time and place), and social conventions are given circumstances. Recognising and honouring these circumstances while playing the text with honesty and immediacy will lead to living truthfully in the context of play.

While playing involves bringing unfettered, honest impulse to action, it also requires careful preparation and intense focus. “If the actor is to understand the character fully he must have faith, courage, and humility” (D’Angelo, 1939, p.7). The actor must trust those with whom s/he works so that the group work, the work of an ensemble, can live on its own.

To be a constructive member of an ensemble, an actor’s individual motives for speaking and doing must be very clear. No line is spoken and no action is taken without a reason, and the more deeply felt the motivation, the better. If an actor does not feel strongly about a line or movement, then

the motivational stakes must be raised until each line and every line carries strong meaning, until each line and every line leads to action. Even the seemingly simple act of standing still must be the most important action in the world to the actor at the time. If the motivational stakes are raised by each actor, the ensemble's energy will increase to meet them.

Stakes can be raised by asking Konstantin Stanislavski's magic question "what if?" (1936). Imagination should be applied and risks taken because the answers the actors give to the 'what if' questions provide the subtext of the play. Subtext brings depth and life to the play.

For example, let's consider the following text:

A: I am glad you are here.

B: Me too. I love this park.

A: Yes.

B: I love just breathing in. I love being able to sit, uncaring, in the breeze.

A: Uh huh.

B: The smells, the sounds, even the feel of this bench inspire me.

A: Mmm Hmmm.

Now add given circumstances. The park is close to an office building and the dialogue takes place during lunch time on a sunny day in June. A and B work in the same office. A is B's superior. How are we to play these lines?

What if A wants to be alone and B needs some company?

What if A is uncomfortable around B and B needs to impress A?

But things can be much more interesting...

What if A is secretly attracted to B, but cannot pursue B because of their working relationship and B is openly and strongly attracted to A?

What if A is so strongly attracted to B that sleep is impossible and work is impaired, and B comes on to A to get the promotion that s/he does not deserve and which will be decided on later that day?

The best "what if" questions are compelling, risky, and fun. Each player must stir him/herself to action so that the ensemble can move through the play.

The dialogue becomes a type of multi-player ping-pong match. One player, through action and speech, causes another player to respond, and so on. The subtext informs the text and vice-versa.

Energy can be built between players if they interact through honest, open listening and unrestricted response. Imagine how exciting life would be if everything we did was a matter of life and death. Playing offers this opportunity.

Pay close attention to those lines of text which seem difficult to reconcile with the rest of the text. Those lines which just do not seem to fit any kinds of 'what if' scenarios are the lines which are key to the meaning of the text. These lines must be played until they work. Once their place in the text becomes clear, the text will gain in richness and vitality.

The importance of listening cannot be stressed enough. Remember, as characters in a play, you will not have heard any of the dialogue before. Approach each line as though for the first time. No two performances will ever be alike if the players really listen to one another.

To The Director—the “Midwife of the inarticulate” (Jouvet, 1937, p.226)

The 'what if' questions the players pose will undoubtedly help to create the meaning communicated in the performance of the text. Players should be encouraged to explore 'what if' questions and to take risks until the energy in their interaction is palpable. Meaning will arise through the interplay of each player's questions and answers. Whether through leading a group process, or through making decisions alone, the director's job is to help the players raise the stakes, to experiment, and to take risks based on a careful consideration of the text.

The director must also make some sort of attempt to decide what type of performance will emerge. Factors such as time, space, resource availability, and actor availability need to be considered. Once they are, a myriad of choices must be made.

“The text of a play is surprisingly short on the instructions required to bring a performance into existence. Playwrights do not include—and cannot, because of a shortage of notation—all those details of prosody, inflexion, stress, tempo and rhythm. A script tells us nothing about the gestures, the stance, the facial expressions, the dress, the weight, or the grouping or the movement. So although the text is a necessary condition for the performance it is by no means a sufficient one. It is short of all these accessories which are, in a sense, the *essence* of performance. The literal act of reading the words of a script does not constitute a performance. (Miller 1986, 34)”
(Whitmore, 1995, p.15)

Many questions must be asked if the essence of a text is to be discovered:

1. Who owns the rights to the text? Can it be modified?
2. What type of space is available? What will be the physical proximity of actor and audience? What kind of set will be used? What type of costuming will be used?
3. What kinds of lighting and sound will be added to supplement and help define the meaning created during the performance?

The director's "job is accomplished through intuition, understanding, foresight, through a special alchemy composed of words, sounds, gestures, colours, lines, movements, rhythms and silences, and including an imponderable which will radiate the proper feeling of laughter or emotion when the work appears before the public" (Jouvet, 1937, p.226).

The final question becomes whether the direction the play takes is to be decided on by one person, or whether it is to be navigated by an ensemble who will explore this shared textual terrain. Where is the play to be performed? Who is to benefit from its performance? Who is the audience?

Notes on Audience—Beyond the Fourth Wall

"The theatre may be the only place in society where people can go to hear the truth."
(Bruder, 1986, p.7)

The audience comes to the theatre ready to be transformed and challenged. The audience is willing to give the players energy and support and must be thought of like an extra player during performance. A play can really gain energy through the interaction of the players and their audience.

The link between playscript, director, performance, and audience is immensely complicated; it constitutes the heart and mystery of the theater [sic] experience. Each playscript can be interpreted in an infinite number of ways. Using the playscript as a touchstone, the director creates a hypothetical production in her mind that is made concrete by the work of the theater artists through the *mise-en-scene*, which Pavis (1982) elegantly defines as 'the establishment of a dialectical opposition between T/P [Text (playscript)/Performance] which takes the form of a stage enunciation (of a global discourse belonging to *mise en scene*) according to a metatext 'written' by the director and his team and more or less integrated, that is established in the enunciation, in the concrete work of the stage production and the spectator's reception' (Whitmore, 1995, pp 15-16).

Close attention must be paid to the audience. Who are they and why are they there?

Specific Performance Suggestions for the Taylor Scripts

Will these scripts be performed together or alone? Either option is viable. If they are performed together, need they be connected in some way?

Anything is possible in theatre. A performance does not need to conform to the Aristotelian conception of linear plot. Is the audience to become emotionally sympathetic to the players, or, in Brechtian fashion, is the audience to be encouraged to intellectually examine the text and to make judgements on the whole? How you play these scripts will depend, to a large extent, on who the intended audience is and on the reasons for bringing work to performance.

A note on the scripts. They are not written in the traditional fashion of **character: dialogue**. Rather, they are written as a dialogical stream with characters popping in and out. The central character (and, predictably, the author), William Taylor, takes up most of the space, but even his words are amalgams of others' or comments on what others have spoken. At the end of this package you will find a reference list which refers the reader to scripts in which the characters presented here are given greater scope.

I — Style

There are several clues that can be looked to when deciding on the style of the play: theatrical conventions of the time in which the play was written—spaces, equipment, the physical manner of the actors; language rhythms and forms; dramatic conventions such as the use of verse, the employment of neoclassical or epic structure, and the mask approach to character; social, political, moral and other perspectives of the age in which the playwright was working, and his response to them. (Harrop, 1982, p.4)

Taylor is a contemporary author who is writing in what has been called a reader-response, child-centred, or postmodern style. His texts are meant to be played out within the milieu of the public school system in British Columbia. He believes that students will care about their education when they can take ownership of it; therefore, he is in favour of a process-oriented workshop approach to English Education which looks to the group creation of meaning and to the roles of paradox, chaos and wonder in classroom settings. For an indication of Taylor's persisting problems with paradox, peruse his article "We never learn anything in his classroom, Mr. Taylor" (1993).

These three texts, therefore, should be played with primacy being given to the creation of meaning by the group, in a particular location, at a particular time. As long as given circumstances are clearly defined and recognised as integral to the meaning created through performance, then these playscripts will work in many environments.

II — What If Examples

Text taken from *A Multivocal Exploration: Textualizing a Writing 10 Curriculum* (ANNOTATED)

I write and live in a world of words, in wonder and awe. I expected that this wonder would form a large part of our time together.

This quote comes from the midpoint of this script, and it is one of Taylor's. He is teaching the Writing 10 class at West Whalley Junior Secondary to four students scattered through his teaching schedule. The group has met and has expressed some fear and frustration. What if Taylor is projecting his hopes onto the group with these lines? What if he is unsure about what he is doing and wonder and awe are blanket words used to cover any eventuality? What if he sincerely lives his life in wonder and awe and this is an invitation to his four writing students to take the time they need to begin their own spiritual quests. What if he sees himself as some sort of saviour?

Clearly, the types of 'what if' questions asked here can substantially influence the performance of the text. It is important to make bold choices, but these choices should be supported and enriched by the rest of the text.

Text taken from *Collective Collaboration: An Exploration of Curriculum in Play(building)*

[We must] build our pedagogies not only around our feeling for what we know but also around our knowledge of why and how we have come to feel the way we do about what we teach. Then, perhaps, teaching the text may lead us to devise new forms of knowing that will not compel our students to recite the history and future of our desire. (Grumet in Pinar, 1995, p.379)

Taylor prefaces his playbuilding script with this quote. This script is being played out at Ladysmith Secondary School to which he has moved from West Whalley Junior High School. He is in transition between English teacher and drama teacher. It is his first year in a new school. He is 28 years

old. He is married. He is middle class. He is speaking to other teachers through a voice appropriated from another text.

What if he is struggling to come to terms with the forms of oppression immanent in his self-proclaimed liberating workshop approach to English Education? What if he wants to confess his desire, to be forgiven for it, and to overcome it? What if this is a desperate plea to himself—to save his students from the “history and future” of his desire? Not only does he want to confess, he wants others to see the same desire in themselves. His objective, then, is to face his own motivation, and to invite his colleagues to identify their own histories and desires, in order to insure that students are free from reciting these things, free to desire anew.

Text taken from *Voices in Conflict: The Cultural Sub-Text of a Journalism Class*

Something some people forget is that the paper is run by teenagers. Not that this is bad, but they are not experienced. Mistakes are made more frequently which means forgiving more frequently.

This quote is part of the fifth entry on Sheet Two. It is written by a student in Taylor’s Journalism 12 class at Ladysmith Secondary School as part of an inkshedding strategy Taylor used to bring light to some negative feelings affecting the class dynamic midway through the course.

What if the student knows that this is not true, that teenagers can do work as good as any adult, but s/he is tired and wants an excuse to not expose his/her writing to criticism? What if s/he feels superior to his/her classmates and that his/her experience reveals that teenagers should not be trusted with positions of responsibility?

This document offers many opportunities to ask intriguing “what if” questions. Asking good “what if” questions can help us to separate the individual voices which, when brought together, tend to lose their identity to certain patterns of response.

A General Note on ‘What if’

From these three examples, it should be clear that the answers provided to good, actable ‘what if’ questions will provide the essence of your performance. Remember that the point of asking “what if” is not to just define a contextual framework from within which to approach an issue; the point is to

define a contextual framework which pushes interpersonal interaction to an extreme, to heighten the drama, to increase the conflict, the immediacy, and the poignancy lying latent in a text.

Imagine what would happen if we approached all of the texts in school by asking bold, searching “what if” questions. Every minute could offer the delight of discovery, the possibility of chaos, and the promise of multiple playings.

Section Two: The Scripts

**A Multivocal Exploration: Textualizing a Writing 10 Curriculum
(Annotated)**

**Creative Collaboration: An Exploration of Curriculum in
Play(building)**

**Voices in Conflict: The Cultural Sub-text of a
Journalism Class**

A Multivocal Exploration: Textualizing a Writing 10 Curriculum (ANNOTATED)

Refreshing meetings.

i'm listening to the Police and others as i respond/comment.

"Encore une fois..."

Thanks Hh for letting me read this.

Almost a new year. I wonder, Mr. Taylor, if what we've written in here will still be helpful to you. I hope so. I have something to say (not really a criticism, more an observation), QE does not have a writing community. If there is one it's hiding (very well). I don't like it. I wish, Mr. Taylor, that you still taught at Whalley because then I could come & visit you. I went back a few days ago. It wasn't my school anymore. I didn't belong. Did you know they changed your classroom into a MATH class? Poetically unjust. That's all. Ra.

Note to the reader:

The coloured intertextual writing represents responses to the initial text by the students whose story it tells. Each of the four students involved in the Writing 10 project was offered a chance to respond to the version of *A Multivocal Exploration: Textualizing a Writing 10 Curriculum* offered here in black.

The student responses are colour coded; each colour represents one student's comments.

Green=Hh
Cyan=DJ
Magenta=Jo
Purple=Ra

The comments are placed in the same relative locations that appeared on the draft sent out to and retrieved from the students.

Note to grayscale readers:

Font differences play the same role as colours in the original document.

Arial=Hh
University Roman Bd=Dj
Bradley Hand ITC=Jo
Lucida Sans=Ra

Curriculum Pretext

Our schools lack spaces for students to lie fallow, for students to be challenged with the prospect of unplanned growing, for students to push up and out, for students to be unashamedly confused and challenged and valued. We need to make spaces for students, spaces for students to be-in-the-world together, and that's how the Writing 10 course began.

Curriculum Context

I offered the Writing 10 course over one semester at West Whalley Junior High School in 1996.

Having the Writing 10 during an English 8 made me feel quite satisfied and involved...i enjoyed it and the experiences i had with the 8's course by attending during one of my English blocks. I sought out students who had chosen Writing 10 added to my performance in Writing 10. Sometimes it gave me some- in the course selection process. They were going to be slotted into their second choice, and in a small thing to write, think, share about. They also were an already present school, this was often one they simply did not want. The Writing 10 course would be an important part audience. i didn't have to go find them because they were already of their school lives; they were looking forward to it and I offered them a choice. Running the class in there.

existing English blocks meant they would receive little of my time during class, and that I would be i wasn't worried about having little time with you because involved with them after school, discussing their writing, talking about life, and working on the literary we could always find some...later (time, that is) i agree magazine; we very much welcomed this involvement even though it meant we could spend less time i never felt that the lit mag took away my time to spend for other things...

Curriculum Subtext

Here, we would be challenging the traditional transmission model of education which informed the curriculum in use at the school. We were aiming for an experience of transformation, living in the world of words, and wording our world in a spatially dislocated, though communal, discursive practice. As Giroux and McLaren wrote in *Radical Pedagogy as Cultural Politics: Beyond the Discourse of Critique and Anti-Utopianism*, we undertook the exploration of voice to create "a pedagogical site for asserting and interrogating spoken/unspoken interests" (1991, p.165).

collaborating with colleagues/peers, working with the students' council, and coaching/playing badminton. School is a busy, messy place and the system would not make room for us, so we had to make room for it. ^{i agree} ^{definitely}

Four students accepted this offer: Hh, Ra, DJ, and Jo. Hh and Ra attended the same class, while DJ and Jo were on their own. Each of the four girls was a strong student. Evaluation, therefore, would be straightforward for me. I decided, without telling the students, that each would receive an A for the Why didn't you tell us? The "A" thing bewilders me.. ^{1*} Me too. While I was taking the course I course as long as they took advantage of the time offered to work on whatever projects inspired wonder or question or reverence. We also held a common goal, the publication of our school's literary magazine. This would be the second edition, and the four girls would form the core editorial board, although it turned out to be more of a collecting and publishing team.

As a common link, I placed a blank journal on our desk and invited the Writing 10 students to use it to keep in touch. No curriculum was specified; rather, I asked each student to write up her own course outline. It was assumed by all that this outline would have something to do with writing. How was it for you to let us make up our own outlines? Did you trust us? Did you want us to learn to deal with a responsibility?

Thank You. I have to say I think you achieved the environment you strived for and it made those four months (and all the times since) a little bit warmer.

Curriculum Subtext For me, caring would be central to our project. We needed to care for one another, and for our work together. This is essential to the formation of genuine community. T. Tetsuo Aoki describes the environment for which I was striving in *Layered Voices of Teaching: The Uncannily Correct and the Elusively True*: "a teacher's presence with children...if authentic, is being. I find that teaching so understood is attuned to the place where care dwells, a place of ingathering and belonging, where the indwelling of teachers and students is made possible by the presence of care that each has for the other" (1992, p.21) ^{interesting}

Curriculum Text (the *authorized* version)

At first the students' journal entries mentioned feelings of isolation and confusion:

"Hi! I'm kind of confused because I don't know exactly what I should be doing. I've been feeling very isolated here in Block H all by myself, but it's challenging and that's good. So I'm looking forward to reading about what the rest of you guys are up to!

Jo [drawing of star]"

Hh quickly took the lead and wrote a course outline at which I could only marvel:

So some of you are confused, huh? Some of you are unsure and don't know your direction? Here are 10 important questions you should ask yourself:

1. Why am I in this course?
2. What do I want to do/accomplish in this course?
3. What do I expect to get out of this writing class?
4. What is the purpose of this course?
5. How can I challenge myself?
6. How can I grow as a person?
7. How can Mr. T help/assist me in this course?
8. How do I want to be evaluated?
9. What is the meaning of LIFE?
10. Who am I?

i don't think that all these questions were answered but i think that asking them was more important...

i don't think that i took my own advice

Ask questions. Questions are good. If you haven't already, make a specific list of what you want to do in this course (this list may be changed during the semester, it's just to give you an idea of your initial direction.) I feel that this writing course will be what you make it.

*2 You have all this FREEDOM! Use it! Be comfortable with yourself. Be yourself.

Be confident! Challenge yourself and work on weaknesses you may have in writing/reading. SHARE. Take risks. SCARY?

STOP AT RED LIGHTS. this is conformity: would i run the red lights now?

Be spontaneous, different. You are the choice maker.

GO WILD!

It's all up to you! (I hope that HELPED.) Yes! But i must maintain a respect for order.

Hh Hh

If you feel like talking about it I'd be glad to. Find me, I'm around somewhere.

Sometimes it's difficult for me to understand why i do or say certain things. Thanks Mr. T for helping me out!

Curriculum Subtext

Hh was true to her words here. Her meaning, who she was, how she communicated, was by being "around somewhere." Hh would not be fixed, located, or labelled as a subject. She changed her signifier from hh to Hh to CHh to pictographic forms as she felt the need. Her way of relating to us and of seeing herself spoke to a post-modern way of knowing as Rebecca A. Martusewicz writes in *Mapping the Terrain of the Post-Modern Subject: Post-Structuralism and the Educated Woman*: "the subject can never be fully present to itself or to anyone else, since as an effect of language it is constantly shifting, flickering in absence and presence like the constant movement along the signifying chain" (1992, p.140).

At this point the curriculum seems clearly rooted in personal transformation and discovery. And I was quite comfortable with this. It seemed that the curriculum was revealing itself in magical ways, ways which excited me as much as the students, ways which would bind us together.

I do need to comment here that I had worked with Hh in two previous classes. She had been in i've never had you for an English Teacher. i Peer Tutored a Socials 9 class in gr 9 as well an English class with me which I ran similarly to Atwell's writing/reading workshops. The intent of this as the gr 8 class in grade 10. You've only taught Hamlet when i was in Ms. J's class. class was to give each student time and opportunity to write and read in a social situation. Hh also served as a peer tutor for one of my English eight classes, which was organized similarly to her English nine class. In this role, she and I spoke often about the aims of the course and the opportunities offered by the course. I did not realize at the time the type of interpretation she was constructing.

Hh's manifesto obviously made an impression as the following entry attests:

Hey Fellow Writers,

I'd like to know how everyone else feels about this course. Am I the only one who thinks it's a little intimidating that there's no set course outline, for example? I mean, we have had people telling us what to do for 15 years, and now we have all this sudden FREEDOM, and we don't really know what to do with it. But, at the same time, it's exciting and intriguing, and we're at an age now where we have to learn to recognize the things we need and want out of life, and figure out ways to get it! I think this will be good practice. **True but more practice is needed at an earlier time in our lives.**

I was content to give these writing students time to arrive at individual goals which would be meaningful

for them; however, I was worried that the lack of direction would lead students to discomfort and

inaction, so I added the following to Hh and Jo's entries:

**sometimes we
need to feel
these ways**

Dear Writing Students,

Thank you for expressing some of your concerns and beliefs about the course.

Here are mine:

Am I meeting your writing needs?

Have I given you enough?

Will this course work?

How will we share our writing? * I don't really think we did.

How can we feel like a group?

I believe that we all need to make our lives, to create our environment, to unmake and renew who we are. I believe that writing can help us do this.

By the way, I really look forward to seeing each of you throughout the day. It is nice to be around writers. * I miss it.

W. Taylor

It is clear here that my aims for the course were to make it a place where students could examine their

* The course was always very emotional for me and continues to evoke

lives personally and socially, and through writing transform those lives. I wanted to create a writing emotional responses. A bit of regret. I wish I had recognized what was

culture which we would share, one characterized by individual freedom and group support. We would available and helped make it happen. I was afraid to accept what was offered

make meaning for ourselves through dialogue with our group, and through dialogue with our school of and now I would do things differently. But at the time what I did turned

writers. I write and live in a world of words, in wonder and awe. I expected that this wonder would out to be what I needed.

form a large part of our time together.

My discomfort, with the course was shared by the students, but as always Hh gave us some

perspective:

Howdy fellow humans,

I also consider honesty to be one of the most important things that an individual can share so I'm going to be honest. Coming into this course I held some FEARS! I guess that my biggest fear was going into a new class that offered so much FREEDOM and me not being able to deal with it or use this FREEDOM productively

So, what is FREEDOM?

(It's one of my favourite "F" words) Besides that--according to RED [in red ink], my loving Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary freedom is "the quality or state of being free as a) the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action b) liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another: INDEPENDENCE ... etc."

Do i agree? Yes. This sounds familiar. What do phrases like "Grow up!" and "Act your own age!" really mean? Play is for all.

Curriculum Subtext

Hh continues to educate us in the ways of the post-modern as she introduces us to the power of play, to the power of the ludic. As David W. Jardine writes in *Reflections on Education, Hermeneutics, and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics as a Restoring of Life to Its Original Difficulty*, we must recognize and celebrate play if we are to retain our passion: "once the difficult play (lude) of life is denied or objectified into some dispassionate fundamentum...inquiry becomes deluded, unable to face its own liveliness, its own life, its own desire" (1992, p. 119). Hh was teaching all of us that play can displace slavish adherence to structure, and that our fear is really fear of play.

It is true, we have become slaves to structure. It's time to take out a pair of independence scissors and cut this thing called structure into snowflakes or triangles or paper dolls, into anything! If you do not feel like cutting, mould it.

What are your FEARS regarding this course? Presently I'm still in the process of cutting. I may do this the whole semester. I don't like writing, in a way I FEAR it but I do it. That's important to me. **This is not true, i do like writing.**

So far this course is working for me because I feel that I've got both my hands on the steering wheel. I will HONK now and then.

Hh

Hh not only shares her fears with the group, she identifies their source. She talks of structure, and of playing with that structure, of cutting it up, of making paper dolls out of it. Fear of breaking from accustomed ways of being-in-the-world is also manifest in Jo's next entry:

Hey, Guys!

I'll be honest, too. I've had more than a few insecurities coming into this course. The big one for me is a fear of rejection. I don't know where it came from, but it's a very large and debilitating part of me. I'm afraid of people laughing at me or criticizing me, that I don't take any chances. But I also know, in my logical mind, that if I do take those risks and overcome my fear, I could reach a whole new level of awareness. I'm still trying to get my fingers on the scissors, I think. I can see them, almost feel them, but just when I think I've got them, something happens and they move just out of my grip. Having all this freedom facing me is a frightening thing. I'm afraid that if I allow myself to accept it and use it, something might happen to take it all away. I guess my thinking is, "You can't lose what you never had." But I also know I want it.

Jo

Jo is afraid of moving beyond herself, of moving beyond the defences she has constructed to keep still *am. with my music, too* This is becoming an obstacle so I'm working on it, steadily. herself safe. She realizes the power of transformation, of becoming more aware of herself and her place in the world. The tension Jo outlines here will provide a rich source for her writing through the semester.

At the time, I saw the tension, the worry, and I felt compelled to address it somehow:

Dear Writing Students,

Hmmm. I ask only that you don't... Well... NO I don't want to restrict any of you.

If you would like me to help you build a bridge, I will.

If you would like me just to watch as you struggle to wade through/across a river on foot, I will.

If you don't want to cross, that's okay too.

If you want me to help you find the rivers I know about, I will.
If you don't like water, we should talk.

Which one
did I choose?

W. Taylor

Here I revealed my still-lingering conception of the teacher as guide, as somehow outside of what happens in class. Ra swiftly reminded me that for transformation to occur, we must all participate. We must all identify and challenge our own cages:

Bonjour...hello...buenos dias,

There's some international greetings for you. WOW! I've missed a lot. One theme that ran through all of the writing in here was freedom. NEW-FOUND freedom. I have to admit being free scares the hell out of me. I think that it's because when we aren't free, we're caged and when we're caged we're safe. Nothing can get in and hurt us, we're fed, we're given water, we're taken care of. Now we've sort of been flung into the real world. And with all of the disadvantages of being free (having to take care of ourselves) there are advantages too. We are treated as ADULTS and not caged animals to pity and care for. Another thing that scares me is that with freedom comes responsibility. Responsibility has always scared me and I think that's because if I'm not responsible with the responsibility given me I won't only hurt myself but I could hurt someone/something else too. Does that make sense? I hope so.

Hh, I have a question for you. How do you go about finding the answer to number 10? I have been struggling so much lately with knowing who I am. So if you have any suggestions they would be greatly appreciated.

Mr. Taylor, I love water, I love being in water but I'm also scared of its awesome power. So you know where I'm coming from, I think I would like you to be in the water, struggling to wade across it with me, instead of just watching.

Ra

Ra was right. To be involved in transformation means being involved, not watching. If we want true transformation, we can't be the bonsai artists pruning and watering and tying the roots; we must give students the freedom to become what they are capable of becoming, not what we allow them to be.

Rachel reminds us all that we teachers are not uninvolved, impartial observers. We are present, and

if only all teachers thought this way. Thank you for being you, Mr. Taylor. That's really what it all comes down to. You are inspiring and wonderful.

our presence has implications.

Textual (in)Conclusions: "Putting children away by means of technical or instrumental language is really a kind of spiritual abandonment." (Max van Manen quoted in *Max van Manen and Pedagogical Human Science Research* by Robert K. Brown, 1992, p.60)

I have not arrived at any conclusions regarding the curriculum we constructed during our four months together as a Writing 10 group. What I do know is that we lived honestly, passionately, caringly, and critically together. We created a community of writers, and we explore(d) our world. Hh completed a book of poetry along with continual journalling. Jo filled two journals and continues to fill them. DJ rescued her writing from a burning house and gave it to me for safe keeping. Ra left messages for us to read here and there, causing surprise and concern. Together we did publish the Literary Magazine, an

The course allowed us to Be. *exactly!*
84 page sampling of the literary culture of West Whalley Jr. Secondary, in both official languages.

There was really no closure to our curriculum, to our course, to our gathering, to our exploring, to our listening, to our writing, and to our caring. Jo felt the need to close out our shared journal writing in this way:

Au revoir, (gRin)

Well we didn't fill the book like we wanted to. And I'm not even sure any of you will read this. But I wanted to say good bye and say that I'm just as scared now as I was about this course. It all boils down to CHANGE. I now feel like I've left this book properly. If that had been our last entry, it would seem we had forgotten our personal unity. It would seem we were no longer people joined by a common fear and passion, but rather names behind the literary magazine. But now this book seems to have a sense of completion, finality, death. I guess I had to kill it. Now I see it as an empty tunnel. Or an ending of a legend. The last kiss before the stake is driven through the heart of the vampire. You've all taught me something, in your own little (BIG) ways. Even if we don't see each other ever again, you'll always be with me in mind and heart.

it
would
be nice
to have
this. or
develop
it
again.

Jo [underlined with heart]

* Mr. Taylor, you've brought it back to life. Thank you. Thank you.

[Here Jo has drawn a sun setting on four people standing around a larger person in the centre front. She has also drawn a ghost, two doors padlocked together with Writing 10 written on them, and a headstone with the following written on it: RIP Writing 10 1996-1996 Spirit Never Dies.] ? I don't know. I guess the moment just moved me!!

The course was an important space for us all. We became a close group, and I am still in touch with these students. Their words continue to bring me closer to wonder. But how does this read as curriculum? What did we accomplish? What outcomes were met? What did we learn? How was the course in line with the stated mission of our education system? How did we contribute to British Columbia's sustainable and prosperous economy?

We realized that we were actually allowed to be. Personal growth and experience. How does B.C.'s economy fit in? I think that things were done for Health Reasons. Creating is always an experience...

Question #10. Who am I? The answer to this question may lie in the conversation between Alice and a caterpillar.

Mr. Taylor,

Hello again. How has your experience been lately? Wow. This has brought up a lot of feelings for me. I think it is beautiful. A few things which I'd like to respond to:

*1 I'm glad you didn't tell us. If you had, I probably would have worked harder, but it would only have been for marks. Truthfully I am a bit disappointed with how I handled the freedom/responsibility. But at least I found that out for myself. The disappointment I have felt about that has been good incentive to make sure I don't make the same mistake. It has been much more effective than a bad grade would have been, so it turned out to be positive after all. Although I did get the 'A', I know I still could have done more work. On the other hand, I accomplished a lot emotionally, which has proved so much more important.

*2 I'm still having problems with this! I don't know if this would have been easier if we were all in the same class, but really I think it was (is) just me. However, I think we could have had meetings to talk in person. I think that it was a lack of face-to-face interaction which led me to feel inferior and insecure about the course. I have quite a bit of trouble sharing my writing. I think what it is is a lingering fear of what people think of me. I'm afraid of showing enthusiasm or pride and being criticized or discouraged.

*3 I never realized this but it is so true! So true! When I was young I was so secure with myself. I wasn't self conscious or afraid to enjoy myself. Now I tend to put myself on display and I won't do what I want unless it will please and impress someone else. I never realized where that came from but now it makes so much sense. It's been so long since I said I was going to play and felt comfortable saying it. And why should I feel uncomfortable? This is exciting!

Well, it's been a great trip down "memory land." I've realized that there are a lot of things that I was working on that got forgotten since grade 10. Like accepting freedom and sharing my life. And there are things that I could do now that would help. Like remembering how to play. Thank you for reminding me. Instead of being depressed by this nostalgia, I am going to turn it into something positive by resuming my projects. I'll keep you posted if you'd like. I look forward to hearing from you when you get the time. This essay is beautiful, by the way. (It warrants saying that twice.)

Jo.

Hey Mr. Taylor!

Well, how does life go?

I don't have much to say about your essay except that I think it's AWESOME and that it made me nostalgic & sentimental. Yup.

I also want you to know, you inspired me!

My last year at Whalley was a year of self discovery. I learned to understand me (whoever that happens to be). But it was you with your "weird" (different, unique, original?) way of thought that started that trip for me...

Honestly, I've lost a bit of that since leaving Junior High. And that bothers me. So, what to do? Hmmm...

Well, since it is almost the 18 of September now, I shall transpire to place my conscious mind on a new plane of awareness (I'm going to sleep). I amuse myself!

Ra.

Wow, Mr. Taylor, you sure do have a neat way with words. I liked reading this report 'cause it let me know what you thought of the class. Thanks for giving me the opportunity of taking Writing 10. I'm sorry, I didn't contribute much to it, but I know [sic] wish I had. I learned a lot about myself from taking that course. I learned that I'm not a writer, writing just isn't for me. Thanks again for everything. Mr. Taylor your [sic] the best teacher I ever had and may ever have. Thanks for Caring!!

P.S. If you have gotten tired of keeping all my writing stuff, you are welcome to discard it, in any manner you like. Or you can send it to me, and I'll do something or rather with it.

Thanks, Thanks, Thanks,
DJ.

Collective Collaboration: An Exploration of Curriculum in Play(building)

[We must] build our pedagogies not only around our feeling for what we know but also around our knowledge of why and how we have come to feel the way we do about what we teach. Then, perhaps, teaching the text may lead us to devise new forms of knowing that will not compel our students to recite the history and future of our desire. (Pinar, 1995, p. 379)

Con Text of the Collective Collaboration

Students should study their own experience in schools in order that they might be molded to the shapes of the masks they wear there. (Pinar, 1995, p. 589)

I arrived at Ladysmith Secondary on September 24, 1997. The Drama teacher had just quit, and I was to fill in until a replacement could be found. Eventually, I became that replacement. The Drama program consisted of a portable which contained an assortment of old costumes and even older books. There had been five Drama teachers in the six years prior to my arrival. The program was in need of stability. A fresh start seemed in order as we would be moving into a brand new multi-purpose space by the end of the year. I resisted attempting a scripted work with which to initiate the new stage; instead, I felt that the first performance in our new space should be one written by the students, to give the students an opportunity to establish an identity for themselves, for the program, and for the fledgling multi-purpose area which could offer a powerful space for the creation of meaning both in the school and the community.

Approximately thirty students committed to the project, ranging in age from thirteen to eighteen years. None of us had been involved in such a project before; our faith in one another would have to guide and sustain the project. We gave ourselves two months in which to write and polish a short play of approximately forty minutes in length. We had much we wanted to say: about youth, about our community, and about transformation. At the time there was a debate raging between the youth of Ladysmith and group of residents concerning the location of a proposed youth centre. The residents claimed, in a variety of letters to the editor of the local paper, that such a centre would promote noise, loitering, and vandalism in their area. The youth responded with promises to keep the area clean and to respect the neighbourhood. It was clear to all that some sort of centre was needed by the youth of the town, and it was also clear that certain residents in the area were waging war with stereotypes, stereotypes depicting young people as irresponsible, hedonistic, and valueless. We wanted to show these residents and the larger community of Ladysmith the quality and abundance of energy, joy, talent, and love that young people can offer. We wanted to show that young people, when supported and engaged, are capable of transforming their community in positive ways.

The Inter-Text of Process: Collecting and Collaborating

Over two months our group met three times a week, for two hours a session. Our stage would not be ready until the week of the scheduled performances, so we met in the portable, in the gym, and in any other place that would contain us. A group of eight students were selected to lead the group and to script the play, though this selection broke down as the students took over and established their own participatory structure.

We used a variety of strategies to uncover themes/situations that we wanted to address in the play including wall graffiti, inkshedding, group discussion (small and large), and improvisation. Once issues/themes/scenarios had been suggested, we would work with these in informal improvisation. Gradually the group agreed on a number of these improvised scenes from which the play would find its form. The scenes were arranged in some sequence through further discussion and identification of our aims. Transitions were added as we went, and the play was polished and scripted near the end of the process. Set construction was carried out by a separate group, and the artistic vision of the set designers influenced the form of the play.

A typical rehearsal consisted of a check-in time when each group member was given an opportunity to speak about how s/he felt. A general direction for the session was given by an adult leader (the teacher, or by one of two volunteers from the community who were involved in the collaboration). A warm-up was then conducted by the students, followed by work on some scene or group of scenes. As the play grew closer to performance, the sessions became more focused and the group focused on the play's rhythm and flow. It was at this time that the original scenes/issues/scenarios were transformed into the play's final text. This was a rich time of collaboration and inspiration.

By the time our performance dates were reached, student fears and skepticism of the process had been replaced by energy and ownership. Many students later admitted that they had feared we would have nothing to present at the end of the two months, and that this fear had existed many weeks into the process. They had worried that the play would degenerate into an "issue" play, or that it would lack coherence, that it would be nonsensical. They knew that whatever came from

the process would be their message presented in their forum. They worried that meaning simply would not be made from this type of seemingly non-structured collaboration. However, as the performance dates drew near, student fears were transformed into desire, desire to show and to tell their experience. The ensemble came together with powerful focus as they realized that their work together had created meaning and that sharing space with an audience continued the dialogue they had begun.

Writing/Reading Textual Play: The Following... Dialectic

Script of The Following...

The Following was written by a group of twenty five high school students (grades 8 through 12) from Ladysmith Secondary. It was written through a collaborative process over two months from April to June 1997. Three adults helped to direct and workshop the play: Trudy Penner, Debbie Schmidt, and William Taylor. The transcript that follows was taken from a recording made on June 15, 1997 at Ladysmith Secondary.

Cast: 25 Players

The stage is bare but for a triangular frame set in the middle on which is painted a building in perspective. Two banners are hung on each side of this structure also depicting buildings in perspective.

The players take the stage taking the rhythm set by player one (Katie). They move about individually: pounding, clapping, and stomping. The rhythm is punctuated by a variety of still pictures formed at Katie's three clap signals. The mass then splits into two rival groups who move through each other in a sort of rhythmic battle. This battle is ended when Katie begins a machine into which all players join.

At Katie's signal the players form five rows, sitting on the stage, looking straight ahead, bereft of expression and movement. One of the players becomes the teacher. The triangular set is opened to reveal the interior of a classroom.

Teacher: Good morning class. It's time to take attendance. Charlene. Samantha. Janie. Joanne. Brian. Lona. Lisa. Rosy. Christine. Rocky. Micky. Mary. Kitty. Ben. Suzanne. Now that we're all present, I'm gonna ask you all a question. When you look up here, do you see

Writing/Reading Textual Play: The Following...

"Because the gestures are wordless, the phenomenology of the relationship is laid bare. In so doing students begin to see, as Grumet phrased it, 'the dialectics of both theater and education: one and many, activity and passivity, leading and following, freedom and contingency, abstraction and particularization, self and others, giving and taking, assimilation and accommodation'" (Pinar, Slatterly, Reynolds & Taubman, 1995, p.591).

It is telling that the students decided to name the play *The Following...*; it is a problematic title. As Madelein Grumet points out, it gains its meaning in a dialectic with its opposite: leading. The students understood that leading and following cannot exist independently. Who leads and who follows? What is the relationship between leader and follower.

The play opens with the kinds of wordless gestures to which Pinar refers. The cast is split into two lines arranged in opposition. The players proceed to play with movement and rhythm, leading and following, one and many, giving and taking, assimilation and accommodation. This felt right, and led to the second scene of the play, in the classroom.

Here the students wanted to play with structure, the structure of the classroom. In this scene, the type of curricular experience portrayed leads to expected behaviors from students. At first the players tried fidgeting and acting out when faced with the traditional transmission classroom, but we found that the scene gained power when the powerlessness, the passivity of the students was accentuated. The players sat very still.

Our teacher becomes narrator and asks the audience to examine the structure of the traditional classroom and how it informs the way we see people. Indeed, his question, while rhetori-

all these people as individuals, or do you see them as a group, a nameless, faceless mask of people? I'm gonna let you decide. Now class, if you recall, I assigned you pages uh 127-130 numbers 1-87 a through e. It was to be done this morning. If in fact it was not done you'll have a two hour detention in which to finish it. Very good. Now I would like you to open your books, Geography For Fun, to page 500 and read to page 700. In here you'll find enriching material on Zimbabwe. Enjoy.

Five or six players leave their places and congregate around Christine, obviously a popular girl. They chatter.

Brian: Oh wow. Look how great Christine looks today. But she'd never go for a guy like me. She's way too popular.

Truth Voice: You don't know that for sure. You should try to go ask her out.

Brian gets up and runs into the wall.

TV: Oops. I forgot to tell you about that.

Brian: Yeah, I think so. What is that?

TV: Well it's the wall that separates her clique from yours. She can't even see you. Look.

Brian: Hey, you're right. Christine! Christine, can you hear me? Christine. You're right. She doesn't even know I exist.

TV: I don't know about that. Let's break down this wall and see.

Brian breaks through the wall. He and Christine see each other and begin to embrace and dance as the players sing "Hey, I think I love you, what am I so afraid of, a pain that I'm not sure of, a love there is no cure for..."

TV: (*grabbing Brian*) Only in your imagination.

cal, leads to further questions about the nature of schooling.

More happens in a classroom than the simple transmission of knowledge, even when the classroom is structured for transmission to occur. This scene reveals one sub-text which is constantly at work in our classrooms, the text of social relationship.

Why did the student writers call this character Truth Voice?

Interesting (coincidental?) abbreviation.

The students clearly understand that identity is negotiated in a social setting. It seems that the

Brian: But we would've been the perfect couple.

TV: I know. *(They sit.)*

Brian: *(as Christine passes, dropping her pencil)* You dropped this.

Christine: Oh, thanks Ryan.

Brian: My name's, Brian.

The stage darkens as the players set up for the identity dance. The lead dancer stands at the front of the stage. Five dancers are in a semicircle behind her. Each dancer has a tableaux behind her, formed by groups of remaining players, which depict the way she sees herself/is seen by the main dancer (strong, joyful, angry, sad etc.). All of the dancers wear their "character masks". The dance, to a Radiohead song "Talk Show Host" (1996), allows the lead dancer to move to each of the five characters and exchange masks with them. The six dancers gather at the centre of the stage and remove their character masks, revealing neutral masks, and their loss of identity through this process of trying on the identities of others.

The players move into two lines at the sides of the stage.

Two girls walk on.

Girl one: So I heard you were having a party this weekend, Samantha. Are your parents going away?

Girl two: Yeah, my parents made me promise I wouldn't have a party.

Both: Yeah right!

Girl three: *(catching up)* Samantha, dude, I hear you're having a party this weekend. You must have forgotten to invite me so can I just

"truth" of possible relationships hides behind social codes and restrictions. Imagination can free us from these codes, but reality is quick to reassert itself.

"Once the 'life mask' or persona is stripped away, the actor can act with full consciousness to reclaim it, knowing now what ends it serves and what it conceals" (Pinar, 1995, p.589).

Through making casts of their faces, and through making molds from these casts, the players in this dance became familiar with masks, and from their features as transferrable to mask. This dance, which was created and choreographed by a student, speaks of the search for identity, and of the understanding that looking for identity means looking for connections with others, looking at what connections one's mask assumes as part of its makeup.

see you guys there?

Both: laugh and walk off

Party music. All of the players enter the scene and dance. The chalkboard is exchanged for a window showing trees outside. The players eventually move to their places in the party as the music fades. One girl moves forward with four girls behind and to her sides.

Coca-Cola Girls: *(singing)* The sun will always shine, the birds will always sing. Whenever there is thirst, there's always the real thing. Coca-Cola Classic is always the one. Whenever there is fun, there's always Coca-Cola. Yeah. Doo doo doo doo doo....Always Coca-Cola, yeah... *(As they sing, the girls are moving around Samantha, who is clutching a can of Coke, supporting her etc).*

Samantha: *(drinking)* I promised I would never drink Coke again. But I can't handle this. I can't have a party this stressed out. I had a hard day. I just need a little break. Just a break.

Coke Girls: *(as Samantha talks, they whisper back)* a little break...drink coca cola...just a break...
(as Ben enters they sing) The sun will always shine...

Ben: *(entering)* Samantha. Hey Samantha.

Samantha: Look Ben...

Ben: Having fun Samantha?

Samantha: Look Ben, I don't need this right now.

Ben: You don' know what you need. This stuff's got you.

Sam: I know what I need and I don't need you. I don't need you telling me anything any more.

The party can be seen as the removal of institutional codes, but the players show us that parties have their own set of codes, which can be just as imprisoning.

This scene began as an attempt to explore the pain of cocaine addiction. For the sake of performance it was allegorized, but by substituting Coca-Cola for cocaine, the students were able to look beyond the issue of drugs to the nature of addiction in our media-saturated society. The use of Coca-Cola helped us all to see the influence of media and of consumerism in our lives.

Critical media literacy must offer a practice of dialogue with students so that brand and product loyalty, types of consumption, and identification with the media can be questioned and understood. Students must question the text and what 'they' do with the text (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1995).

Through movement, song, and dialogue, the students have created space to critically examine the effect of media/consumerism in their lives, and to examine the dangers to which ignorance could lead. This scene in the play was one of the most powerful because it worked so well as a parody. It was obvious that Coca-Cola stood for another substance, but it was just as clear that Coca-Cola itself was frightening enough in this context. The physicalization of Coke's siren song rang true for many of us.

Ben: C'mon. Get smart, Samantha. I've seen what that stuff does to people. I've seen people in the gutter looking for just one last sip of Coke. My Grandma got sugar diabetes from that stuff for Christ's sake. Smarten up. Just let me help you.

Sam: You've never helped me before. Why would you help me now?

Coke Girls: The sun will always shine, the birds will always sing...

Ben: Shut up! Get away from her. Shut up! These things Samantha, they've got you. These people around you, they don't care. I'm the only one who cares about you. Come with me. Let me help you.

Samantha: *(looking tempted, but the Coke girls pull her back)* No! Just get away. Just get off my back.

Ben: Just know this Samantha. That stuff there, that stuff will be on your back the rest of your life.

Sam: No. Please.

Coke girls: The sun will always shine...

All of the players get up and join the Coke girls as they sing and press around Samantha. Samantha finally can stand it no longer, and hidden from view, she yells and pushes the group away. The players fall, roll, etc. into place for the next phase of the part.

Party girls: *(grouped at front, stage right)* Chattering. Have you heard the new spice girls song... *(They sing, and one of the girls, disgusted, gets up and walks away)*

Micky: Are you having the time of your life?

Christine: Does it look like it?

Ben finally gets fed up with the all-pervasive media message which accompanies and rationalizes addiction to Coca-Cola and to its promises of "real" life. He tries to silence and cast away the Coca-Cola girls, but he cannot. He can resist them, but he cannot touch them. The relationship between Ben and Samantha must account for Coca-Cola and all that it signifies.

"Educational theory must engage with the popular as the background that informs students' engagement with any pedagogical encounter...Such a pedagogy must allow students to speak from their own experience at the same time that it encourages them to identify and unravel the codes of popular culture that

Micky: Socializing is the poison of modern life.

Christine: Pardon me?

Micky: Socializing, it is the poison of modern life.

Christine: What are you on?

Micky: My dear, I am on planet earth.

Christine: Micky, come here, I wanna ask you something. Why are you such a freak?

Micky: Oh my. I am the mundane one here. I think you, you are the freak.

Christine: Excuse me, do you know who you're talking to? I am popular. I am in control.

Micky: Oh really. Are you in control.

Christine: Yes I am.

Micky: Do you even know who you really are?

Christine: Of course I do. I'm Christine.

Micky: Oh really.

Christine: I'm me.

Christine walks over to where the party girls are frozen. As she does, the players sing "Wild Thing" and she dances with them. Repulsed, she pushes them down and they wind down their song as they fall.

Christine: I'm not me. I'm who they want me to be.

Micky: Do any of us really know who we are?

Hannah gets up and walks among the frozen groups singing the following original song.

may work to construct subject relations that serve to silence and disempower them" (Scholle & Denski, 1995, p.19).

The students include the reference to the Spice Girls to show the audience that they understand all too well that adults in their community suspect them of uncritical appreciation of popular culture. The idea that media can impose meaning on young people assumes that the receivers of the message have no part in constructing it. Dave Buckingham reminds us that we should reconsider our understanding of how meaning is made in the context of media education.

"Teaching about the media should be based on the view that children are active producers of meaning, and that this production of meaning is fundamentally a social activity" (Buckingham 1991, p.13).

Critical pedagogues go even farther than this. For them, becoming media-literate in a critical way assumes that students take an active role in the construction of meaning.

"The postmodern condition demands a new angle of approach, a new grammar of subjectivity and political agency to produce critical encounters and pedagogical engagement. Indeed, critical media literacy may be the shortest path to an understanding of the humanization of inhumanity and the destructiveness of post-industrial western civilization" (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1995, p.3).

This moment in the play is one of the most poignant. Hannah wrote this verse out of need.

Hannah: Who are you, reflection of a certain light. Glow from your insides. Who are you? Free your soul from the pain and sorrow. Free your soul and you will be whole.

The players join her for the second round.

One after another the players stand and deliver the following monologues. Stage movement is accomplished at this point.

Janey: When I was a kid, and even now, there's always been a lot of pressure on me to do good. My sister's a pilot My brother's a doctor. I guess I'll have to do the same.

Christine: When I was a kid, all I wanted more than anything was a little brother or sister...

Kitty: When I was a kid, I wanted to be a princess. I used to dress up in my mom's clothes. Sometimes, she even let me put on her beauty queen crown.

Don: When I was a kid, my brothers and I would go to the beach. They buried me up to the neck in sand. They let crabs and stuff crawl through my hair. That was great.

Andrea: When I was little, I used to like to climb trees. Now, every time I try, the branches break.

Jill: When I was a kid... Oh oh. Problem. I don't quite remember back that far.

Lona: When I was a kid, my mom and dad used to take me to the circus. We had ice cream. We'd go on the tilt-a-whirl. It was lots of fun. Now they fight a lot and I don't go out with them any more. I go to a party. I hang out, have fun...

Katie's monologue. Throughout this monologue, Katie moves through the different groups in tableaux on the stage.

Her life has been one of struggle, and her message is inspiring to her peers and is a central element to our collective creation:

"The potential is that educational theatre of this kind can lead participants to look into the mirrors created by the roles they produce and discern those reflections of self which often go unnoticed...Such work allows the participants to voice their lived experience, and perhaps politicize that experience through performance" (Pinar, 1995, p.601).

Katie: I'm sitting at this party. I'm not dancing and I'm not drinking. I'm just watching. I'm watching those party girls. You know the ones I mean. The ones who drink three glasses of Kool-Aid and all through the night whenever they see each other they give each other a big hug and say (*party girls come alive "I love you man...chatter...silence"*) Three Kool-Aids later they're even saying it to me. My nose is starting to itch as the smoke from outside wafts into the room. The guys sitting outside are the ones who drink eight Kool-Aids and then in the middle of the night while sitting outside on the lawn of some suburban townhouse, they realize the meaning of life. (*Guy: Hey buddy. Do you know that song. We're gonna rock and roll all night. Guy2: That Gene Simmons guy, with the tongue...*) And for that 45 minutes they feel emotions so real and so deep that the next day they wake up ashamed and never mention it again. Until two months later when it's their 45 minutes again. Over on the couch in the corner I'm watching a boy who graduated last year as he gives candy to a grade eight. (*Grade eight: Oh Johnny...*) The music is loud but I can still hear the high-pitched pubescent voices of the party girls who are singing songs now (*Party Girls: You Jerk. You Jerk. You are such a Jerk.*) Except that after they've drunken some Kool-Aid they sing each lyric seriously as though they just realized that it means something. But why does it only mean something when there's an empty Kool-Aid package in your hands. It always meant something. A few stoners are outside eating Lik-a-Maid. Half an hour from now they'll be sitting on the couch next to me realizing that wallpaper is entertaining. A few more people are outside drinking Coca-Cola. A half an hour from now they will remember that they like cartoons and head for the TV. Four hours from now they will still be in front of the T.V. A girl has just announced to the crowd that tomorrow she will give up Kool-Aid. (*Girl: I'll never drink Kool-Aid again! Players: Me too...*) A chorus of me too's follows, followed by more empty promises. Tonight I'm Kool-Aid free. This doesn't mean

Katie's monologue clearly indicates her understanding that peer relations and her peer group's relationship with consumerism and the larger society is one fraught with oppression.

that I've never drunken Kool-Aid and that I won't again. It just means that this can all get very boring. So far things at this party have been good, relatively speaking. But they're not always this way. It seems like I'm always there to help that person who's keeled over in the bushes puking. Hoping that this will pass, hoping it's just a phase. Or to comfort that girl who's realized that Johnny only gives her candy on Saturday night. Or to help wash off that person who's decided that they don't wanna be around any more. They can just draw away at themselves with a jiffy marker they huffed earlier, drawing away at themselves like they can just colour over the parts they don't want any more, and think that they'll be happier with technicolour arms. The real decision comes when they decide to either add to those drawings or take a shower. Differences are genuine. Saturday nights are not. Perhaps by now you've got your brow furrowed and you think you've read the real meaning into this. Or maybe you're sitting there thinking, trying to figure out if you're a party girl, or a Lik-a-Maid queen or a drunk guy. Find the real meaning of this yet? Me neither.

Katie grab's Hannah's hands (the colouring one) and lifts her to her feet. The players walk under the archway and as they pass through grab hands. They form a semicircle with their backs to the audience. They sit to give the next dance a space on the stage.

A man and woman are in tableaux stage left, man bending over the woman in a posture suggesting some violence. The dance then follows. The lead dancer shows her desire for a man, but she follows the script of her parents' relationship, one of abuse. The song danced to was called "History Repeats Itself" from the Natural Born Killers sound track. The tension in the dance comes from the lead realizing that the relationship is one which includes violence. She almost invites it while trying to leave it behind. In the end, the two dancers assume an identical

Here Katie explores the idea that identity is malleable, that one can redraw and rewrite one's position. But she recognizes also that one person cannot alone rewrite her place; colouring in society is a group activity. Katie acknowledges this by ending her monologue and moving to Johannah to pick her up and to make a physical arch under which the rest of the players can travel to find a different community on the other side.

The difficult issue of abuse—physical, emotional—is portrayed here through dance. This depiction is fairly straight forward and raw, and it is the most naive of the treatments in the play. I think this is so because this subject is very difficult to approach critically in a group situation. It is a difficult subject in any situation, especially in the context of education and the power arrangements found in education.

tableaux to the one her parents have held throughout the dance.

The players turn around to face the audience still in a semicircle. Lit class begins.

Teacher: Good afternoon class, welcome to English Lit. How are we all doing today? Now, lately we've been discussing LOVE, how we feel about love and everything involved with love and what people do when they're in love and...today we're going to have a discussion about it. Who would like to start?

Lone: I think that love is an emotion that controls you. That's why people who are in love are never really in control?

Janey: Is that a good thing or a baaad thing? Because nobody likes to be out of control.

Rocky: If you find the right person, it can be worth your while to lose control.

Christine: But why must love always involve another person? Wasn't it Buddha who said that love for one's self is the ultimate spiritual nirvana?

Samantha: I think that people who believe in love are just naive. They probably have never even been in love. It's like Keats said in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*: "Heard melodies are sweet but those unheard are sweeter."

Ben: But I think Def Leppard captured the true essence of love when they said "love bites."

Katie: Does hate increase as love decreases? Or is it the other way around?

Joane: Well, yes, of course. That's why the people who are truly in love break up and unhappy yuppies stay together forever.

Kitty: A lover's scorn is a death sentence written.

In this sequence the students play with the intellectualizing of an emotion which informs our humanity. School values such an emotion primarily in the context of this type of cognitive understanding.

Janey: Love is everything...

Micky: ...and nothing. It is everything in the way that it matters more than everything, but it is nothing in the way that it has no boundaries, no limitations and ultimately, no description.

Teacher: Oh class, that was an excellent discussion. I just loved it. Now you may all write a one thousand page word essay on love.

Kitty: Hey, what's with Janey, she looks like she saw a ghost.

Christine: I know. She's been spaced out all day.

Kitty: Hey Janey, what's the matter? CAT got your tongue?

While the players are speaking about Janey, she is lying back. When they finally call her by name, she sits up in a daze. After Kitty's last line, the players all get up and make dream-is-starting noises and movements.

The players form two lines mirrored each side of centre front stage. The lines are at an angle to one another, facing front. The first row is kneeling, the second standing. They have formed an audience of their own. The classroom blackboard is changed to a sign proclaiming Doprah.

Don: Well, hey, wouldn't you know it. It's my favorite talk show ever: Doprah. They take a person who's completely miserable, put them in the public eye, where millions, possibly billions spectate, and tear them apart. It's really part of the healing process...

The following Doprah show is conducted in exaggerated daytime talk show format.

Player: Now here's your host, Doprah! *(Loud audience cheering as Doprah visits them.)*

The students show their awareness of the difficulty of discussing love. They conclude that love cannot be defined and bound by language. This provides a transition to the final drama scene in which expression through movement plays a primary role.

While language has its limitations, it is also extremely powerful. The next scene, a parody of a talk show, displays the power that language has and the way our society uses this power in often inappropriate ways, in this case to entertain.

Doprah: Okay, today we have on our show a girl who just got a kitten at the age of 16. (*Audience astonishment*) That's right folks. Let's have a warm welcome for our guest Janey! Hi Janey! Welcome to the show! It's so great to have you. So, when did you get this kitten?

Janey: Just today. (*Audience disapproval*)

Doprah: Now don't you worry. You're not here to be embarrassed or anything.

Audience 1: You should be scared, you irresponsible little child.

Aud 2: Um, where did you get this kitten from?

Janey: Well, my boyfriend, Rocky, sort of gave it to me, like a present. But I didn't want it.

Rocky: You're lying! I didn't give that to you. You probably bought it at a store. (*Audience disapproval and heckling*)

Aud 3: How do you intend to pay for the kitten?

Janey: I'm sure Rocky will pay for half of its stuff...

Rocky: Like hell I will. I don't even like cats. I... (*Audience drowns him out..*)

Doprah: Hey, like, this is public television. If you swear again, you're outta here! (*Audience approval*)

Aud 4: Hi! Um, how are you gonna go to school with a kitten? They take a lotta time to take care of you know.

Janey: I'll just finish school later, right, like maybe go to VAST. (*Audience disapproval*) Fine! I'll go on welfare! (*More audience disapproval*)

The substitution of kitten for human child is quite evident here. One of our lead players does have a child, and this scene was written in conjunction with her input. The issue of teen pregnancy is an important one to the group.

“Thus, a first step in a critical media literacy program involves the practice of ideology critique in a confrontation with the text. In the context of postmodernism, this means educating students to become media literate in a world of changing representations. This entails reworking the traditional practice of ideology critique, which tends to locate meaning in the text as an isolated object of interpretation. Instead, the practice of critique must involve a number of considerations: 1) the critical reading of how cultural texts are regulated by various discursive codes; 2) how such texts express and represent different ideological interests; 3) how they might be taken up differently by various subjects in different contexts” (Scholle & Denski, 1995, p.21).

By reconstructing the forum of talk show as spectacle, the students have begun their own program to acquire critical media literacy. Don steps out of the simulated television audience to draw the theatre audience's attention to question the discursive codes inherent in the talk show format and in choosing to passively participate in such a format.

This sequence reveals the students' knowledge of how the public's reaction to complex political issues can be reactionary and oppressive.

Aud 5: Excuse me. If you don't like your kitten, why don't you give it to the SPCA or something?

Janey: I can't just give it away. It's a living thing. I can't give it away...

Aud 6: You know what Janey, like, if you have a kitten, no guy will ever find you attractive again. Look at me, I have eight cats!

Mother: Janey, it's your mother here. I just want you to know, whatever you do with that...that kitten, I don't care. As far as I'm concerned I have no daughter. (*Audience astonishment and disapproval*)

Aud 7: Hi Doproah, I love your outfit.

Doproah: Thanks, it's Ralph Lauren.

Aud 7: Janey, you're so strong. You should feel so proud of yourself for being here. And as for you, Mother, excuse me but that's your daughter! No matter what she's your daughter. You should be standing beside her. You should be so proud of her right now. (*Audience approval*)

Doproah: We're running out of time here. So, um, I have one last question. Are you gonna keep it?

Audience Right Side: Keep it, keep it!

Audience Left Side: Give it away, give it away!

This repeats and the sides move in to surround Janey. The chanting and pressing in continues until Katie breaks into a machine. The rest of the players join her. One player has broken out of the group and now returns as the Drama teacher.

Teacher: Beautiful machine, class! I just felt its motion. (*players break out of the machine*)

I really like this sequence. We are pulled out of what should be the point of highest tension in the show and reminded that consumerism is driving the whole process.

This final exchange illustrates the damaging nature of defining problems and looking for solutions through oppositional strategies. Discourse breaks down and the students show this by again forming a machine, the defining symbol of industrial society.

The transition from nightmare talk show format to drama class illustrates the need that young people have to gain control over their media environment, and to play out their own dreams and aspirations in a safe place.

and sit in a semicircle) I'd like to welcome you all back to Drama class. *(Clapping)* I'm sure everyone has had a stressful day today. *(Agreement)*

Christine: This is Suzanne. She's a new student...

Teacher: Everyone say hi to Suzanne.

All: Hi Suzanne.

Teacher: Suzanne, I want you to know that this is Drama class where everyone accepts you for who you are and you're free to speak your own mind. *(Clapping)* All right class. Now let's just jump right to it. Everyone just follow me.

Teacher leads class in multiple Hopi "Ho" Warrior jumps. Then, when the players are well dispersed, she begins slow motion Poison Samurai Swords. When all have met their slow motion deaths, she continues.

Teacher: Is everyone dead? Now class, it's time to warm up our vocal chords. Ready? Suh, suh, suh, suh, suh, suh, suh, suh, suh. Puh, puh, puh, puh, puh, puh, puh, puh, puh. *(This continues with the letters ACEJUMP)* Now what does that spell, class?

All: Space Jump!

Teacher: Who'd like to start?

Five players have been chosen to take part in this improvised game. One occupies the player space and begins an activity. When they feel ready, the other four join him/her one at a time, starting new scenes each time. When all five have joined, the Principal makes his entrance.

Principal: Huh. Right! Right! Right-O. Someone came in and stole my Barbie collection. *(Class jeers)* And my Ken collection *(more playful jeering)*. All right, *(clears throat)*, all the guilty parties stand up *(all sit down)* and

This ideal of acceptance and caring and the reality which supplants it are in constant tension in our classrooms. The players' version of an ideal classroom situation is intriguing.

The end of the play finds its meaning in the absurd, and I think that this choice was made because the students understood that solutions to complex problems cannot be transmitted, cannot be put forward without dialogue. There are no easy answers and sometimes we need to recognize the absurdity of situations before we can work to improve them.

To indicate that the problems with school exist because the students missed the seventies is a claim that problems exist and that we should

stick one foot out (*all sit cross-legged*). Well, (*clears throat*) if that's the way you're going to be... I think the main problem with every one of you and this whole school which I've been subjected to as being Principal for, is that you all missed the seventies.

The principal takes off his jacket to reveal seventies attire. He puts his tie around his head as a head band. He points to the tech crew and starts dancing to "I Will Survive." Before the singing starts, Janey pushes him aside and leads the group in a dance number. The play ends with the group posing for the audience and saying "We will survive."

End

resist easy solutions.

The students' final message is that they will survive in a world filled with tension. They will survive and create meaning together, as a group which offers support and spaces for dialogue. The play's message is demonstrated most strongly through the medium itself. The play works because the students work together, because the ensemble makes meaning through interchange, through play and through questioning. The energy of the play comes from the energy of the group made manifest in collaborative, meaningful play.

The Possibilities of The Following...

At the center of critical pedagogy is the reconstruction of media theory and practice into media praxis...Praxis includes an element of critique of existing historical conditions and an element of possibility for reworking those conditions. In addition, the concept of praxis attempts to link or loop together theory and practice—in its strongest sense of ‘practice as action’...In the loop, theory and practice are in a transductive relationship, circulating back upon each other without cancelling each other out (Scholle & Denski, 1995, p. 11).

I believe that the writing/reading of *The Following* illustrates Scholle and Denski’s conception of critical pedagogy as media praxis. Students created performance through examining codes in the media, in the society, and in their immediate lives. They played with these codes and with the subject relations in which they found themselves operating. Through improvisation, subject relations were re-worked and codes challenged. The process was generated through a critical acknowledgment of the community’s history, through an exploration of the group’s location in that history, and through the desire of the group to transform that history and their position in it. What we ended up doing fits McLaren and Hammer’s definition of critical media literacy:

Critical media literacy becomes the interpretation of the social present for the purpose of transforming the cultural life of particular groups, for questioning tacit assumptions and unarticulated presuppositions of our current cultural and social formations and the subjectivities and capacities for agent-hood that they foster (McLaren & Hammer, 1995, p. 201).

The Following... provided an opportunity to continue dialogue between groups in Ladysmith, and to interpret the “social present” of the community. Through the use of theatre and other channels of communication, further discussion can occur, further transformation is possible. The students, through choosing to write this play, indicate their willingness and ability to recognize and rewrite their role in the continuing creation of meaning in the community.

**Voices in Conflict: The Cultural Sub-text of a Journalism
Class**

The Setting

In the spring of 1998 the administration of Ladysmith Secondary School decided to offer Journalism 12, which I was to teach in the fall. I had extensive experience running writing workshops in secondary level English classes. Though I had no experience teaching journalism, I felt confident that, the group of students who chose Journalism 12 could help me create a writing environment which would support the creation of a newspaper of some sort at our school.

I decided to give the journalism students great leeway as to how the class would operate given our goal of producing some sort of text for consumption by our school community. The first two weeks of the course were devoted to deciding on a mission, setting routines, and defining expectations. I acted as a guide during this process, keeping in mind the Writing 12 ministry-set curriculum outcomes.

I felt that the best way to tackle the creation of a school journalism program would be to keep it, as much as possible, in the students' hands. Student ownership of the newspaper, and the routines which would sustain it, was central to my thinking as the class began.

Everything from the goals of the publication, to its format, to its method of creation and distribution was decided upon by the class as a whole. Our first task was to name the paper, define its purpose, and decide on a format for publication. Based on these decisions, I then offered lessons on the use of computer programs, network protocol, printing processes, and duplication routines—not to mention exploring how to write the type of articles the class contemplated creating.

A great deal of enthusiasm was generated in the first two weeks of the course. Predictably, as the amount of work we would have to undertake became apparent, the enthusiasm turned to dissatisfaction in some and disillusion in others. But, for a core group, the project presented a challenge, and offered freedom seldom encountered in other courses.

The product was, by any outside standards, a success. The school community welcomed the paper. The staff of the school applauded our work. Letters of praise were written by parents and community members. Even the superintendent and a school trustee wrote to us praising the project we had undertaken. The layout we had decided upon, and the routines we set, turned out to be surprisingly close to those used in the office of our local town newspaper. When we undertook a combined publication with the town paper, very little had to be done to our work to ensure its compatibility with the

publication processes used by professionals. Through careful, considered attention to audience and to publication, we had hit upon many of the standards found in professional journalism (including article format, layout, captioning, type size, and font selection). While none of these standards had been taught in the traditional sense, they had, nonetheless, through a process of discovery, been learned and applied.

As the final month of the class approached, just after Christmas break, I offered the class an opportunity to discuss their feelings about our ambitious project in the form of inkshedding. Each student was given a large sheet of paper on which s/he would write his/her feelings about the course. The students chose groups of six or seven, and passed their sheets around the group. Each student then read the initial comment and responded to it, passing the paper to the next student. A dialogue was created in writing on each page. What follows are the verbatim texts of these dialogues.

Virtually every problematic aspect of running a workshop is illustrated in these dialogues. There are voices of pessimism and of hope. Some voices support the workshop method; some oppose it. The types of voices contained in these inkshedding sheets have been present in each process-oriented classroom in which I have participated. What they have to say bears careful consideration by those considering using a workshop model in a high school classroom.

Mission Statement

To provide our school community with news which

- (a) is truthfully and respectfully gathered and presented,
- (b) encourages communication and meaning-making INSTEAD OF relying on social status as an arbiter of truth,
- (c) encourages individual and community growth.

Inkshedding Journalism 11/12 January 5, 1997

Sheet One

I like this class, but it can be extremely frustrating at times. I think there are three levels of work going on in this class. People who work their butt off and really want to be here, people who do what is required of them and a little extra sometimes and people who don't really do much. Could this be because they are lost? Maybe we need motivation for them.

Your comment is good. There are also people who used to work their butt off but never got appreciated for what they did and then became one of the required people who just do what they should. Anyone else agree? People need to learn to have fun instead of being so serious. It's not like this is a job we are getting paid for; it's for fun.

That is so true and I just finished saying that. People should learn to have fun and not worry so much about deadlines and perfection. I think that the people who work their butt off start the favouritism when the people that only do what is required need more attention to get their butt in gear.

There needs to be more of people helping others that aren't in their section when they're done. A lot of times people will shut themselves down when the minimum is half completed. I don't know what else to say. It is hard to get everyone working at 110% because this is a class. Look at other classes of yours; see how many people goof off. This is the same for Journalism.

If there were no deadlines there would be no paper. I feel we need them. I agree that the people who do what is required of them should get some recognition too but why should people who work their butts off not receive the extra praise? I think that we do need to motivate the people who do what is required so they get the gratification they seek.

It is expected the different people will work differently. People should get due credit for their work and if they don't do anything, they should be removed.

Sheet Two

I find this course is going good but ever notice the favouritism? Certain people get all the credit. I like being in the course but sometimes it's really retarded; seriously, people get too worked up over little things and they start freaking out. I like the way our class was when it first started in September. People were really friendly and everyone liked coming to class.

I can agree with the favouritism bit because it is very true. Class did used to be fun when first started and now it seems like everyone is so hooked up on perfection that it isn't fun anymore. This is a high school newspaper not the town newspaper. Even they make mistakes and move on.

Too many people are worried about pleasing everyone. And it stresses everyone. When you start doing that, the articles get boring. Do you ever notice that in a magazine the letters that are the most interesting are the ones that attack the article on some kind of level? Controversy is good. Without it life would be boring.

We definitely need to start making the articles pop. I don't know how exactly to do that but I agree we shouldn't worry too much about offending everyone. Some of my best stuff came from when I totally offended someone and they offended me back. The comment I underlined can go both ways though too. We are a high school paper; therefore, we do not have total freedom to do whatever we want to but I don't think we should let that [allow us to] write bad stories that are boring. It's still our paper!!

Something some people forget is that the paper is run by teenagers. Not that this is bad, but they are not experienced. Mistakes are made more frequently which means forgiving more frequently. Some take things too seriously and others not seriously enough. This paper is run by hard working people. And not all adults look to find the good works in amongst the rare mishaps.

I agree that we shouldn't paint a perfect happy place and be nice to everyone and avoid sticky issues if we need to talk about them. I am also a little annoyed at all the perfectionism or however you spell it. I've seen newspapers and magazines published by adults that are garbage compared to ours! I think we need to grow up and realize that things are going to offend people and the world is far from perfect.

Sheet Three

This course is going well and the papers that have been produced are very good. There's been problems which were dealt with semi-well and I would like to see the paper continue after the semester ends. Whether it be people doing it on their own time or the next Journalism class.

I want to see the paper continue too. J_____ you should be specific about what problems that way they can be avoided in the future. I'm proud of what we've done so far. But I would also like to see what the next group who tackle the paper would do!

To have a permanent paper at this school would be an asset. It would be an avenue for students to express ideas and feelings. A paper that sticks to our mission statement would be valuable.

I would also like the paper to continue, but I don't know how it would go. If it was after school, only people who wanted to be there would be there, but it's a lot of work. Also if it was after school, I think there would be a lot of different opinions and story ideas coming in.

I would like the paper to continue but like S_____ said only people that wanted to be there would do it. First, look how long it takes us to produce a paper. We have about five hours a week; actually it's probably six and sometimes we can't come up with a paper by the deadline. A few people after school, working for a two week deadline? Give me a break!

There would have to be major work done to improve the system.

Sheet Four

Organization, positions, and jobs weren't clearly defined. We went with what was needed and felt good at that particular moment. It was good and bad. We also worked as a team (most of the time).

I hated this. I need a lot of structure around me and at the same time I need complete freedom for me. I only like structure to define where we stand and what we should do but I have to have control over the 'how' part.

Structure in this class would make it an informative class. It is at present, but some need more direction than they are getting at present. I personally have been completely lost more than once.

I agree that we did what we thought was good at the moment and that is/was both good and bad. It was good because we figured out a solution to a problem, but bad because a lot of issues kept coming back to us.

I agree that jobs weren't clearly defined cause people were doing things they shouldn't. General editors taking the whole job away from section editors. It was brutal. People need to know what their job is and know what to do so they don't butt into everyone else's job.

I totally agree. If you're given a position and certain jobs to do then do them. If you're done then ask someone if they need help. Don't do it for them. That's also where the 'doing nothing during class' comes in.

Sheet Five

I like the freedom we have to write about important things that are going on around us but a lot of people (including me) don't ever use that freedom and venture out to find out something that does not directly affect us. To be a paper that says it serves the whole community, we have to look at the stuff out there too!

We have to be willing to put extra time in outside of the classroom in order to have a real paper. This school isn't the centre of the town, so we need news from other areas besides just the school. This would make it rounded out in its viewpoint.

I agree that we have a lot of freedom in this class. "Freedom is Slavery" George Orwell, 1984. All this freedom can be overwhelming. We are used to being told what to do and put in a situation like this draws a blank for me a lot of the time. I'm glad we have this freedom, but it's hard not to be spoon fed sometimes.

We do have tons of freedom and I think we just need to learn how to be out on our own. Like the person above said, "it's hard not to be spoon fed sometimes." That's so true, I agree. We need to learn how to be on our own and use the freedom we have.

O.K. So the freedom thing is good, but what do you think the people that don't do anything during class

take advantage of?

Sheet Six

I find this class is very disorganized in its structure. Some of the jobs are made very difficult because of the way the class is run. If a set structure was in place the paper would never be late. In order to do this, the people who do nothing should be kicked out of the class. Once this is done, only people who work hard will be left.

I agree that the structure is kind of vague and there are some people that don't do much, but I think if they had a little guidance and prodding they would be great writers. I think we should brainstorm about stories that we can write. If a story interests someone they will write a great story. I also agree that if we had a more 'cement' structure and policy on deadlines etc. we would get the paper done earlier.

I agree about the structure as well but I don't think people should be kicked out just because they aren't doing anything; they should be given failing marks. I think this will give certain people more motivation to do work. People need to be taught and I know most of us are in grade 12 but we still need to be taught about things.

Being kicked out won't teach them anything except the fact that all they'll be doing is the same thing but in the halls. They could stay in class and get guidance and some help to show them that if they don't get moving then they won't grad.

Guidance!? Is this Mr. Taylor speaking? I agree that they need motivation and teaching to become great writers, but now with this class, I think that we should sit back and let it (motivation) come from within. What more can we do?

I feel the same as J _____. It's really not our job to motivate people. They choose to be in this class and yes it's changed since the very beginning. So have the things that have been going on around us. We have to have had more than one idea in our little heads that inspired us at the beginning. I don't think they should be kicked out either but it's hard when you depend on people to get things done and they don't come through for you.

Sheet Seven

Journalism at the beginning was really exciting and fun but it seemed that as we progressed we grew away from the newness, I guess. It wasn't new and exciting anymore; it became a regular 'class'. To some people it stayed the same but to others they didn't want to work; they just wanted to goof around. I enjoy this class but it seems it's lost its 'spark and its life'.

The 'spark' that we had was the newness and excitement of trying or being a part of something new. Excitement should never be a thing of the past, though, and through our ideas and visions we create or should be able to create new excitements and realisms for ourselves. Believing in ourselves is a key step in achieving our goals for this class.

I think now we need to think of a way to bring the 'spark' back. What new things could we try? Or do we need to recreate the whole class? I think for some there never was a spark. It was 'just another

class' from the beginning. Others thought there was something. It was a new class, something different, and although it's still a new class, we've done the same thing too many times!

Right. I think it is time for a little change. The class is getting a little routine. I think the key issue is, don't make a big change. Too much change causes chaos.

If this class has become a routine it is because we have allowed it to become one. Although the paper is good, it is far from perfect. Since it is not perfect, it should be continually getting better. We should be learning from our past mistakes and working together to see that we don't make them again.

Things become 'routine' and lost their 'spark' when people do. It is not the fault of the class itself, but our own attitudes. The class can only be what we are willing to make it.

At the beginning, I couldn't wait to get going on the paper. I got to do the horoscopes. I thought that was the best part. Then that section got banned. Our team was working as a team. Our section was doing great until just because no one wanted [to report on] sports they banned our section. Some people have a goal to follow. Don't become one of their many obstacles.

We should remember all of life is a test. That's why we get no real instruction. You just do what you can.

Sheet Eight

Positive feelings amalgamated with those whose feelings are only temporarily trapped until they themselves fall under the titled class of 'positive'. We are team workers or have been team workers even if we are not fully aware of what we have contributed entirely.

I agree to an extent. A lot of people are team workers in the class but there still are those who do not contribute! I believe a lot of people could do a lot more to benefit the paper and their classmates! It is a tough class, with a lot of stress, but that doesn't give you an excuse not to do your part!

I think it seems like what the problem with the paper is the amount of people who just aren't giving enough effort. The paper is a team project and if people don't pull together we are not doing our job.

The problem is time. This class requires a lot of extra curricular work that needs to be done outside of class time. Some people feel that since coming in after school is not a course requirement that means that they don't have to bother.

If putting out a paper is a course requirement (by agreement of the class) and that goal requires time put in after class, then it is a class requirement. However, there are also those who are simply unable to contribute this after school time (people with prior commitments, those who catch buses, etc, etc).

I agree. But people get stressed and become bitchy. This class shouldn't be a stress project, or people should learn how to harness the anger caused by stress and not take it out on others, their so-called 'team'.

I understand people become stressed when they have a test in two classes and still have three hours of

homework.

If people become bitchy, tell them to take a deep breath. Come on now. We have all been stressed so let's help each other. I agree with N___. She's right!!

Sheet Nine

Have we really done the best we can? I think some people in the class definitely have, but because the class depends so much on the end product and the only way to have a good end product is to work together, the few people who slack off make the entire class look bad!

I totally agree with that. I think if they want to slack off and make the class look bad, they shouldn't be in this class. And yes this paper could use some improvement. I think all the departments could brush up on editing.

I don't think that all the blame should be placed on the editors. The reporters should also be responsible for the quality of their work. I have a feeling that many people are handing their first drafts over for publication. Perhaps earlier in the course we should have placed more emphasis on quality rather than driving right into publication.

Final editing should be pretty much complete by the time that an article gets to the editors. Reporters should really look at the quality of the pieces they hand in to the editors and make sure that they are good and well edited. Many articles have, however, made it to the layout full of errors that no one caught but were so obvious. Editing is the responsibility of the reporters and the editors.

I agree. The reporters should do their own editing, but still the 'editors' should edit too. That is why they are called 'editors'. I am upset with the way people get really bossy. They think they are right and everyone else is wrong. Take a pill. We are just students so no one is perfect.

I have to agree. Editors should edit this but people should look over their own stuff too. We must take responsibility for our own actions. Those who do little know what they are doing. Responsibility is for everyone.

Responsibility is a privilege, not a right. We have to stop taking it for granted.

Blah. Blah. Blah. Editors and reporters are both great assets to the paper and we should really give them both a pat on the back for all their hard work.

Sheet Ten

I feel that the paper is a good paper. This class is a good class. We actually know how to make a school paper.

Most students have responded well to the class and have learned to deal with student authority. I am proud to know that students can be this responsible. Many people have worked very hard to get to this stage and as a result we have put out quality work.

Most of the class works well together; however, there are those who refuse to co-operate or contribute and that is the only real downfall of the paper. Most students seem to understand the need to be responsible and get things done—that is truly nice to see.

I have a problem with student authority. Some students, when they get in charge, go on power trips and make my day lousy. They are rude and don't listen to what you have to say. It's either their way or go to hell. I find that very unreasonable which is the most polite thing I can say.

You know what? The day you have to run the flipping class and keep a bunch of people who don't want to work on task then you can talk about power trips!

I myself had no real problem with peoples' power trips. They seem to respect my view and opinion. There are those who may wish they were somewhere else. I agree that even with everyone's opinions we still have put out a good paper.

We have a GREAT paper and the only reason people go on power trips is when people are stubborn and whine about not being confident enough to say what they feel.

Power trips—the world would be boring without them. You're right, they do make you want to rush out and prescribe prozac for yourself for a year but they also add a dash of excitement to life. I think this problem will give us all something to talk about in the years to come—and hopefully we can all, on a friendly basis, look back and talk about everything over a couple of strong cups of coffee!!

Sheet Eleven

I feel that this course is doing fairly well. There could be more structure, but currently it seems to be working. With the exception of missed paper deadlines and people on power trips and those who do almost nothing, I feel that this class has been successful and put out a good newspaper.

I agree the class has put out a good paper. Even though some do not always do what they should do. However, we must remember that there are three other classes and not just this one.

I agree with this person. It is true. Some people work hard, and others don't work at all. I feel Mr. Taylor is a little hard on us. We aren't professionals, but still he is a great teacher. Maybe expecting too much is a good thing.

What do you mean? There is only one journalism class and it is part of our criteria so deal with it. Stop picking on Mr. Taylor. If he loosened up he wouldn't be a teacher. He is definitely not too hard on us. So, he expects good quality; that's not a bad thing. We have something great here. Let's use it to our ability.

You look at Taylor and on the whole you are seeing a good guy—then you decide to pick at him. You know what it is? He's put himself out by giving an inch. You know what they say: give them an inch and they'll walk all over you. Well you've got steel-toed boots on and you're not only walking—you're stomping. Nobody wants to hear about someone's bad qualities and nobody will feel sorry for those who feel the need to pick at others.

Definitely, some people are on power trips but you know what? Without those certain people NOTHING WOULD GET DONE! And as for Taylor, he's a good teacher who puts his own name on the line for this class, for you. SO STOP COMPLAINING!

There is no sense in complaining about the teaching styles about Mr. T. It's you whoever has the problem.

I don't know what you guys are talking about. Mr. T has the most loosened up teaching style of any teacher I have ever encountered. He does not govern tyrannically, like some; he instead allows us to have a say in how the class operates.

Sheet Twelve

I found it fun working with the layout; however, I wish that I could go back to it. I however do not have time to go and get stories for the paper. I have tried to make the most out of the class even though I did not want the course.

If you didn't want to be in the course you should've tried to get out of it. Maybe you did. I don't know. You don't seem too enthusiastic towards it though. I'm glad you liked layout. If you don't have time to go out and get stories you should go during class time. Even though this wasn't your class choice, I'm glad you put some effort into it.

If you are part of a team that has the job to get a paper published—you yourself make the time to find the stories. If you are a dedicated team member and are enthusiastic and familiar with yourself and you surroundings, stories should not be hard to come by.

I agree. If you didn't want to do the job you never should have stayed because it just weighs down the rest of the class, especially in a class like this when if one single person fails in their job the entire class fails! If you didn't want to be here then you should have found another place to be or take a spare block because you're not being fair to the rest of us who wanted this class from the beginning!

This is almost actually how I would put it. A team project takes an all together team and if one person fails to do his/her job the project fails.

We cannot put the 'failure' of the paper on one person. This paper has not even been a failure. We have been surprisingly successful for a bunch of students who knew very little coming into the project.

'Failure' is not based on one person. Also, it is not always easy to get out of courses. It is unfair to place blame for 'failure' of the paper; the paper has not been a failure.

Sheet Thirteen

I feel that the open structure of this class has allowed me to explore the aspects of this course that I found most appealing; however, I seem to be having trouble staying on topic with the lessened authority. This should not say anything negative about the class, just my ability to focus.

I also enjoyed the open structuring of the course, but feel that for some, more structure might have been

a good idea as some people tend to accomplish nothing without a more traditional structure.

I feel that some people don't understand the idea of structure. They need a leader. They have no direction. For others, they are leaders, and work well, accomplishing many things in a limited amount of time.

Yes, some of us have problems working by themselves and for them they may need more structure but others may not do any work at all even with structure. Their minds may be on their English class and not journalism. Everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses.

Good point!! I think everybody is different and the work-at-your-own-pace program helps people go at their own speed, as long as they meet deadlines. He's given us a special thing: INDEPENDENCE AND TRUST!! Let's thank him for it, not denigrate it.

Work-at-your-own-pace has really opened a window into each of our personalities and lives. By W.A. Y.O.P. we see who is really lazy and who is ready to contribute to a world of expression.

This class has shown different sides of all people and they are all different. But this class is a place to express yourself NOT WHINE about teachers, etc.

It is not the teacher who has the problem. It is our problem.

Sheet Fourteen

Journalism 11/12 is fun but sometimes stressful. Sometimes things are a little unorganized within the class. Some articles in the paper are pointless and have no meaning but others are well written and interesting. I think we should write more about interesting topics instead of topics that are there just to fill space on the paper.

Yes! Yes! How do we encourage people to write interesting articles? Why do folks write 'filler' in the first place? Who decides what is interesting?

Everyone has different tastes, different beliefs and so on; therefore, we should have a range of topics for every group of people—even if some may be offended. It happens to people in everyday life so why can't we read about it?

What we have to think about is what the students want to read! We only write what we are told to write! What do people want to read?

Yes, topics that are put in the paper just to fill space usually suck. But I'm just too damn nice to say anything about them.

I just agree. And we should ask what the students of the whole school want not just what Journalism 11/12 wants.

Sheet Fifteen

Every time I come into this classroom I feel like I'm in a battle with everyone. It seems like everything

my group does or says is immediately bashed. Is journalism not a freedom of speech? I like this class but sometimes I hate the people.

You go girl!!

I agree. Sometimes I just feel like leaving cause the class is annoying, not really the class but some people's attitudes are a little hard to take.

I agree too. People do get a little carried away with the paper. It shouldn't be stressful. It should be fun!

Yes. It is difficult to work as part of a group. Energy is required to sustain relationships with people one ordinarily would not 'hang out' with. How can we balance this need to work with others with the need for personal space and freedom?

We may never be able to fix this problem; some people will always be the same. It would be nice if everyone could just let everyone do what they wanted and felt.

Sheet Sixteen

This class frustrates my brain. Sometimes I hate it! It has been a learning experience even though I go mental very easy. I don't like the people who believe they are superior to the rest of us and boss me around, probably because I'm against all authority.

You just said a lot that is true. Like I said on mine, everything my group does is bashed. The class is not all that bad but I know how you feel.

I must agree with them. I always feel stressed out in this class!

Me too! I find it easy to go nuts and want to puke but the idea behind the class is really good.

It is stressful like I said. People should learn that they do not have control over anybody or anything.

Yes. Control is an issue. How do we get organized while making sure we are not controlled? Sometimes we need to be told what to do? Is this true? Can a group function as a team of free spirits? Where should the locus of control be?

Sheet Eighteen

I had hoped that the Journalism 11/12 class would provide a forum for folks to express opinions/ideas/beliefs of importance to them. Is this happening? Where is the passion, the poetry, the idealism of youth? Where is the rebellion, the curiosity, the joy? How can the class's format honour being part of a thinking, striving community? How?

I think that if we are supposed to be able to express our thoughts, beliefs, and ideas in this class then I wouldn't get so frustrated and blow up!

This is what I've been saying all along, but you never listen to me! Every time we write something

rebellious, we have to change it.

Yeah!

I agree too. You tell us to be creative, rebellious, and all that but once we do it's considered not politically correct. I don't know. Maybe we should have spent more time learning how to write effectively.

I think we should have spent more time writing effectively. It would have made us more knowledgeable on how to go about the article.

Sheet Nineteen

I want to ride a boat. On a more serious topic, I believe that I would like to move into the layout section. I'm doing this not only to learn more about PageMaker, but to fully experience this course. So far, I have learned far more in this course than my English 12 course. Maybe that's because of my teacher. I don't know; It just seems that this course has direction, eh?

I do not find direction in this course, but inspiration. Yes. It is a different sort of course than English, so I don't really think it can be compared. I don't know how much English/Journalism stuff I've learned (so far). But, I have definitely learned valuable stuff.

I feel this course doesn't have direction other than producing a paper. I feel that so far I haven't learned anything except for how to use PageMaker and stuff on the topics I wrote about.

Sheet Twenty

I enjoy this class a lot because of its freedom and a sense of independence. The deadlines are sometimes unrealistic, but it's fun to try and meet them. This course is challenging enough for me that I actually care about doing the work instead of slacking off (which I do in my other classes).

Cool man...Daddio! I wish I was inspired by this class like you were. I think that you have a good work ethic. I don't feel the same way...I used to, but I am frustrated now. School isn't really so important to me now...I'm going to write something for the paper.

It is rad that this course challenges you and you find it enjoyable. That's what I had hoped for but...School is important to me now because I have to graduate, but I'm beginning to hate it and therefore I am not as positive towards this class any more.

I am happy you enjoy it. For me it is really tedious and I find just another useless course I don't need to graduate. All I want are the fundamentals and then to get the hell out. I did enjoy it at one time but it seems to drag on.

You are the first person I know in this class who enjoys it. Is there something wrong with you? I know there isn't. I'm just asking how and why you could be enjoying this class. I'm losing my interest in it big time.

I must also say I am enjoying this class. It is one of the best I have ever been in. It shows more maturity

to be able to enjoy the work done in this class than to despise it.

Easy big fella! Class work is only fun, enjoyable, or productive if you make it that way. Yeah this class is fun, but Mr. T needs a triple heavy dosage of Prozac.

Sheet Twenty-one

I wish that this course was different than it is. When I first signed up for it, I believed that it was a journalism class that would teach me the stuff about journalism I needed to know on the computer, and how to write with a journalistic style. Although I enjoy this class, I don't think I've learned much so far...that's just what I think!

I hear ya! I guess I thought it was gonna be better. Well, not better. This class is not good or bad. It just is. I have no passion about school. Let's drop out!

I agree. There was no teaching of how to write articles or good ones anyway. It is kind of hard or was hard to just jump right into it. I haven't learned much but it is an interesting course.

I also feel the same way. This class you're supposed to learn as well as put out work. But to do a good job on your work, you need to learn about it. We haven't done that.

I believe we have learned from doing so I must say I fully disagree with the above statements. People must learn from their mistakes so the whole thing is we have learned a lot more than we think.

Wow man, that's deep. (Below the stomach even.) It's true that people learn from their mistakes, or at least smart people do. I myself have slaved my ass off in this class, and that experience has helped me to learn things in here.

I have not slaved my ass off but I have slaved to get a good mark. I enjoy this class because it's not a text book class...Text books are pathetic because they train you how to think.

The first above statements are not very thoughtful. I think you're acting lazy. Teachers just can't go around all the time asking what you need help with. You have to approach them, not just wait to be helped.

Sheet Twenty-two

There is no format and so I feel an anarchic energy. I just want to graduate and get the 'hell out of Dodge.' I like computer...I like e-mail...I love _____. I took this course because it was creative...but lately nothing scholastic inspires me. I haven't started my 1000 word research article...I am drowning in homework...I just want to graduate...

I believed this course to be creative too...until I began it. There is no format, but there is structure in how we must write. But really, at this point in my high school life I (also) just want to graduate! So, sadly enough I don't really care about this much.

I feel the same way. I think all grads do. It is hard to concentrate and can get really frustrating. I need to

get the article done and it just continues to linger on as does the hour of class, the day of the week, and this year of school.

I too feel this way. As the course moves on, it's losing all its energy. People are slacking off and there's too many expectations that are high, so people just quit. It needs to be fun, not boring as the dead.

I too must agree. This course is losing its energy. This might be because all of the pressure has been put on a small group and the small group is getting tired of having to do all of the work.

Hey, easy big fella! I agree that school is boring, but that's only if you let it be. Fight boredom. Strive to graduate! Don't just drift through this. If anyone knows about education being a big load of bullsh*t, it's me. But just fight, dammit!

I agree education is a load of it. I think that school is useless. So far, I have been here for 12.5 years and the only question I have left is 'what the hell am I doing here?'

Quit being such a moron. I'm sick of you saying everything is useless. Maybe it's because you act like such a nerd about everything. Open your eyes and quit acting like you're smarter than everyone.

Sheet Twenty-three

I thought the research article [assigned to all, open topic] was really annoying and it's kind of hard with the paper because it's only a team in the small groups because no one knows what anyone else is doing even though it is a class effort and not everyone can be focused all the time. When you get focused, it's annoying to others and vice versa.

The article, as mentioned above, was very annoying as s/he stated.

The essay may have been annoying but I feel it got people thinking and working who just did not ever do it before but there are also bad things such as people worked on them instead of the paper. I have a serious problem with this class. NO FOOD ALLOWED!

Yes we should be able to eat and drink in this class. Also the essay was a complete waste of my tyme [sic], effort, and intelligence.

That was stupid. It wasn't a waste of time. It got us out finding out things and answering questions instead of sitting on our asses and making up things. As for the food, it would be nice to eat and drink in here, but just accept it and quit whining.

Food+computers=danger.

I liked doing my research article, but now I'm kind of confused about it. It wasn't really a waste of time, but I have a hard time understanding what is expected of me, us!

Sheet Twenty-four

I fear Mr. Taylor doesn't think we can do this paper because he always says 'if we put a paper out.'

I don't think that he doesn't believe in us. I think he knows we can do it but is not sure if we want to.

I believe that Mr. Taylor has faith in us...but...I guess that we let him down a lot. I guess that he is frustrated just like me. But then again I screw around a lot in this class.

Who cares what Mr. Taylor thinks? You know that you can contribute well to the paper. I have now come to the conclusion that the paper is not the class. So, whether or not we get a paper out, it doesn't matter! It's what we learn that's important. Is that cheesy or what?

I agree. Who cares. We don't have to put out a paper. It's not part of the course curriculum. It has just been worked in to the course. If we put out a paper it should be for us not him. Forget him.

Exactly. I know what you guys are getting at. As mentioned up above, the paper is not a part of the curriculum. It's just worked its way to where it is. There's no need to get all frustrated about it cause we don't have to do a paper if we choose not to. It's our decision.

I must reply to the top because you are right. He is a pessimist and he is always bugging ____ and ____ is a pessimist. I guess that means that Taylor is a hypocrite.

Bravo...Clap! Clap! Clap! Let's use this paper to pass around personal vendettas! Yay!

Sheet Twenty-five

I feel that this course is all right. It could be better, but I'm unable to change anything. I've learned a bit in this class, not as much as I thought I'd learn. We just work instead of learning and working. I had higher expectations. I have to say I'm disappointed.

I feel disappointment all around me but it seems to me that we have learned a lot. I mean at first we had no idea about how much work it took to make a paper but now I feel we have become a team and learned from each other's experiences so in some way it is good what we have done.

Once again, I agree. A person shouldn't let other people f*** up their learning experience. Close yourselves off from all that narrow-minded gibberish. Use this education to its full extent.

I think we are a team that can do this paper. We have had to 'guess and check' our way through it but for those of us who got decent grades in English it wasn't that hard.

I'm not disappointed. I've learned all sorts of things. Learning doesn't always mean sitting and having someone tell you what to learn. Sometimes you have to go out and do things wrong before you learn and ask someone. If I didn't ask someone about a picture, I never would have learned how to scan.

I don't think that we really know how much it takes to make a school paper. Reading our articles, you'll see that very few of them took research. Why don't we just have one big fucking Variety Section?

I agree! Positively I am sort of disappointed. But, we are now a team!

Sheet Twenty-six

I feel most people joined this class to learn about journalism and to become better writers but it seems that people are in this class for an easy grade and a small amount of people have to do all of the work.

That is completely true. Most seniors out there are just credit hunters. It is sad that these 'hunters' do nothing in the class to further their learning experience. It's even worse that sometimes these individuals will impede on other people's learning experience.

Yes there are credit hunters whose greatest dream is to have three spare blocks but I think that 70% of the class does work for the paper.

That 70% might be right but in that number who is really working as hard as they can? Probably not that much. I think some people should at least try in this class so that they might enjoy more instead of just sitting in front of a screen playing solitaire or free cell.

Look...in six months I'm going to be out in the real world...and I'm gonna have to work to eat and live and survive...I'll probably be working for the rest of my life...Give us all a break...High school is supposed to be the most relaxed time of your life... Why is everyone in this class so pissy?

We are putting out a school newspaper—that is it! There are people who slack in every class. I'm sure that people may work harder than you know. Plus, this is high school and we are in grade 12 (lots of us anyway). For most of us (in grade 12) this is one of our easier non-provincial classes. Just do your own work, try to encourage others, and mind your own business—there may be reasons.

I started this course wanting to learn but now I just want the credits and everyone has a bad day and I admit that on occasion I slack but I do work hard so who are you to judge?

I too took this course just to get credit, but also to learn. I honestly slack off and do basically nothing in class. That's just cause it's not fun anymore.

Some Questions

Generally, these inkshedding sheets raise more questions than answers.

What type of background--social, economic, academic--helped students adapt to the course? How did some students take ownership of the newspaper while others did not? Does gender affect how students work in a process-oriented class? What conceptions of learning and teaching do students bring to the class?

It seems clear to me that students did learn many things through the course, tangible and intangible. From computer skills to layout expertise to interviewing strategies, students did leave the course with new ways of approaching writing. Do they recognize this?

As seems the case in every workshop class I have taught, why is the value of the class, as judged by students, based on the kind of structure brought to it by the teacher? Why do some students appreciate the freedom to define their own routines, and to identify their own learning paths while others feel that they are not learning unless a teacher defines what is to be learned in easily measurable steps? Should either of these approaches to learning be discouraged? Need they be in opposition?

How do we locate spaces which allow multiple types of learning to occur?

How do we listen to each voice, so that times of stress, and unease can be identified and used in positive ways? If there are no incidents of frustration in class, how many students are being challenged?

Is there a way to balance each student's need for structure and freedom? Should these needs be balanced? Who decides?

Section Three: Source and Reference Material

To the Reader/Producer

The following material was found amongst Taylor's papers. He kept a journal through the years during which he wrote the scripts contained in this package. We have excerpted relevant passages from his journal. These excerpts make up what we take to be some of his source material.

The material which follows the journal entries was found filed in among some early versions of the scripts. Taylor seems to have based some of his characters and events on research done while on the campus of the University of British Columbia.

Finally, the frames found at the bottom of this package appeared as sub-text to some of the other miscellaneous research notes which Taylor kept in yet another journal.

We hope that this material will help with sub-textual choices you make for your performance.

Eight Years of Excerpts from a Teacher's Journal...

Oct. 11, 1991

[Within the first few days of teaching at my first job in a high school, this interaction occurred.]

Me: "I'm an English teacher at this school."

Student: (sarcastically) "Well, that's something to be proud of, isn't it?"

March 27, 1992

It strikes me that there are many powerful, good, intelligent voices at school. But these often remain subdued, likely because they are in a state of growth; all of their energy is being used to gain power. The voices that are heard are the ones not trying to grow, the chaotic voices who have no immediate need of nurture. These are the voices that strike against me. The other voices are powerless if I am doing my job properly. If I am learning too, if my energy is being drained, then my power is weakened as well. Do teachers who no longer learn have better discipline in their classrooms?

Sept. 9, 1992

[The start of a new teaching year in a junior high school English class.]

Will the workshop be productive?

For some it will.

Will writing's magic take these people from West Whalley to a place of understanding, clarification and joy? I hope so.

Aug. 10, 1994

"Vocabularies are crossing circles and loops. We are defined by the lines we choose to cross or to be confined by" (Byatt, A.S., 1990, p.431).

A.S. Byatt's book/novel is not a linear narrative. Its appeal lies in subtlety, shading...the

the
PRAXEOLOGICAL
TRAGEDY

BY LIMLIWA YORTAL

adapted from
the inanimate
tragedy
by Edward Gorey

lamination of meaning. This type of storytelling runs counter to the types we generally value in the school system. We expect linear, reasoned, logical argument. We expect Aristotelian, plot-driven stories. We must make room for other modes of expression, or we deny the remembered experiences of many of our students.

In general, we keep our power when we protect the power of others.

Thomas Moore (1994)

Jan. 17, 1995

"I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him, and if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent. I do not help my opponents without at the same time helping myself and my co-workers." Mahatma Gandhi (Moore, 1994)

I must keep reminding myself, amid the hustle and bustle of a school day, that each and every student must be heard and valued in our educational discourse.

"Fingers and toes 40 things we share; 41 if you include the fact that we don't care."

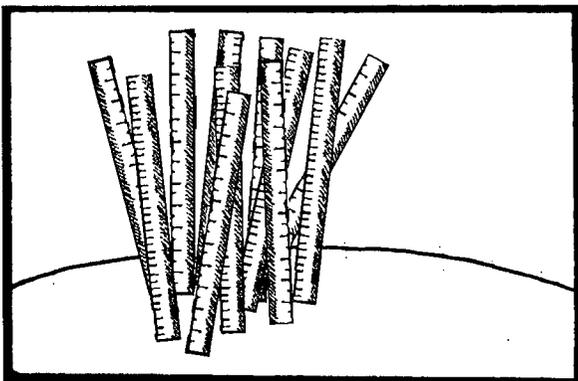
The Tragically Hip (1989)

Nov. 4, 1995

"A teacher is one who gives not instruction but provocation, so that a learner, startled into making an assertion, begins an individual movement towards some as yet uncertain goal. Where an instructor would be concerned with the material to be covered by the class together, a teacher is concerned with the experience of individual learners, by whatever artful means, by cunning even, from the safe anonymity of the group in which they sit, for anonymity is an expression of the impersonal and the irresponsible. Provoked, the learner comes out of hiding long enough to express a feeling or thought which until then may have been hardly admitted or even recognized, reporting the world as beheld from one's own perspective so that a mode of being is revealed and opened to thought."

(Rouse, 1988)

I definitely consider myself a teacher. Uncertainty and provocation have a place in my pedagogy.



Riot and Rebellion,
said the Rulers,
Resignation and Regurgitation

Aug. 8, 1996

Context: Junior high school

Her brown eyes slide up to meet mine, her head angled down and away. "I am going to burn it," she said.

"Why?"

"I have nowhere safe to keep it."

"What about school?"

Her eyes flick away. She's no fool.

"It's almost over."

"I could keep it."

"No."

"What's wrong?"

The eyes stare down, lids descend, chin falls. "Nothing." And the eyes are back, brown and pure and pained. "I have to go now," she trips the words. "Bye."

And she leaves the room. All I manage is to throw good-bye at her back, and a wish for her. "Have a good night."

The words fall to her feet and she is gone.

Context: rented suite in housing co-operative

What happened to your journal?

It got wet.

What do you mean wet?

I dropped it in the bath tub.

What do you mean you dropped it in the tub. How could that happen?

I drowned it.

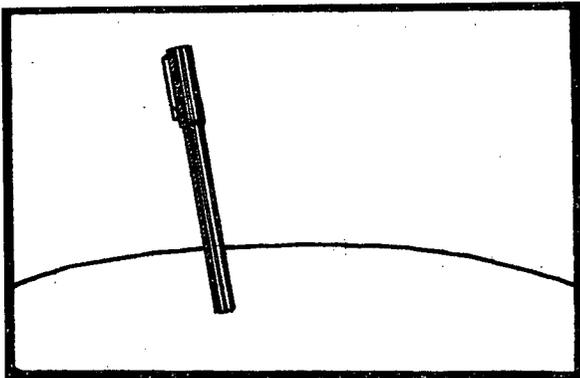
What?

I drowned it.

You drowned it in the bath tub?

I thought that maybe I could kill it, but I was wrong. I've got it out back drying now.

The young woman has nowhere else to tell her life but school, and nowhere safe to keep



Almost at once the
Tech Point Pen
returned to the
featureless expanse

the life she has written there. She is writing hundreds of pages, wording an existence here in her new country.

*

She wrote more than the teacher would have thought possible in four months. She must've written in every spare moment. In class she read novels--during Social Studies and during English. She explained to him later that she was not allowed to read novels at home, so she had to use class time in this way. She did write at home though, and now that writing made it unsafe for her, so she gave her writing to him, and he locked it in a cupboard in the classroom, promising it would be seen by no one without her permission.

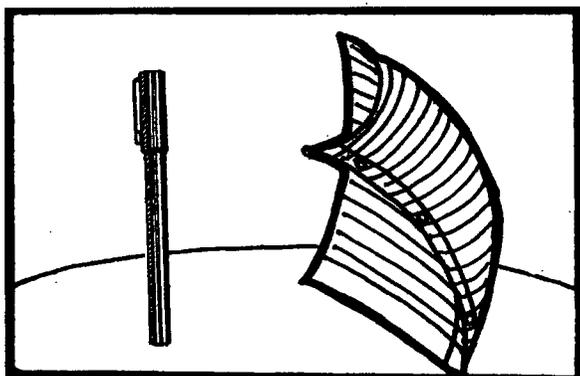
The summer passed for the student. She returned to school and was in a different English class. She still spoke to the teacher but she did so infrequently. She chose to take a writing course he was offering in the second semester. She told him that she did not feel safe to write in the other English class, that the teacher did not honour what she knew had to be said. He told her to write as she wanted to write. She accepted his invitation.

She did not hand anything in for a long while. She avoided his classroom by sitting in the hall with her friends, or by sitting in the art room exploring her world in colour. He grew more and more concerned, frightened by the enormity of school expectation looming over his shoulder. He shared his concern with her. She apologised and asked to be given assignments. He refused and their uncertain relationship continued.

Her house burned down midway through the semester. She lost everything: her clothes, her pieces of India. But she did not lose her writing journals, which she had been hiding in his room every day. He was happy when he found out. Eventually, she used the time she had spent to find a place to write from. She wrote about betrayal, about not knowing, and she wrote her unhappiness, her unease, her frustration with life.

*

At the end of the year, having decided to move, he busies himself with cleaning out his classroom, and he comes across a very large blue binder filled with writing. It is charred. It is hers. She had saved it from the fire and left it with him. He puts it with her other binders, with her journals, in a box to take with him.



It encountered the
1" lined paper, but
neither recognized
the other

At the awards ceremony, she approaches him and hugs him and thanks him. He is very surprised. He has not seen her touch anyone before. Moved to tears, he promises her that he will keep her writing safe. He gives her his new address and phone number and tells her he will bring her the writing when she needs it. She looks at him, and nods, and turns away.

In a note she had given him, she wrote that she would likely be unable to communicate with him, but that her words might find him in the letters of another student. She wrote "I'm different, better and happy because of you." He wonders what he has done. He hasn't counselled her much. He has listened and he has encouraged and he has given her a safe place, and he guesses that this is enough, that this is all that needed doing.

October 20, 1996

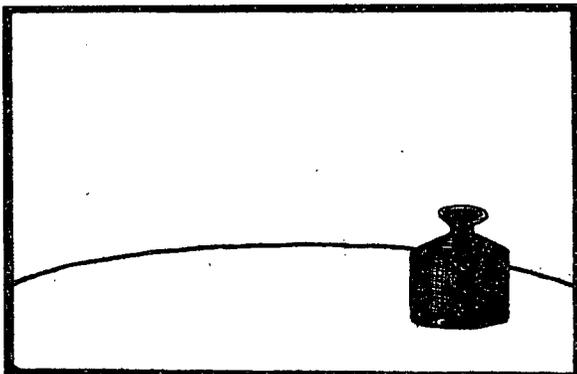
[Now living on Vancouver Island, I am teaching Drama for the first time.]

Physicality deserves an importance which I have not given it. How we live in the world physically goes a long way to determining how we live in the world imaginatively and thinkingly. Teaching drama has forced me to get in touch with my own physicality and the relationships between physical beings in a group. There is much I must learn here, but exploring the physical nature of being has proven exhilarating so far. I was surprised at my discomfort initially, and with my growing enthusiasm. The idea that relaxation is central to creativity is an interesting one...

Improvisation. Game. Play. Ritual.

That's what drama can be, a way in to the world, to connectedness. Let all else fall away and we then can see naked humanity. As in Lear, naked. But not shivering, not cowering. Not pushed to the breaking point. This nakedness, in an environment of nurture, will be glowing and strong, and supple. This nakedness will inspire joy, will be joy... This can be drama. This can be a drama workshop. More fully than in a language class, a drama class can embody the essence of who and what we are and can be. Play. Game. Relaxation. No energy wasted, potential everywhere evident and new channels of application for that potential.

Curricula. Learning Outcomes. Grades. Expectations. This is all part of the larger play, the



The black inkpot
concealed its
apprehension

larger drama, isn't it? These things should not be dreaded. They should be studied, and examined, and played with. Improvised with. Mined for the riches they can offer. Sub-text should be found. Must be found. Critical Theory can be applied. PostModernism Mat(t)ers.

Teaching drama has opened up new ways of seeing for me. Now when I watch a movie, Sabrina for instance with Audrey Hepburn, I see more. I see the grace with which Hepburn carries herself. I see the poise, the attention to posture that makes the grace so. I see the acting skill behind the words. I see the dynamics of the scene, the relationships physical AND scriptural. Well, I'm beginning to see these things anyway.

I must work on seeing, and feeling, smelling, and tasting, and listening. All of the sensory equipment we have interprets the physical world. I must work on my sensing, and somehow pass on this ethic to my students. How?

Point of focus. Concentration. Character. Imagination. Tension. Conflict.

Poise. Projection. Movement. Voice. GRACE.

I think I have a better idea now, not of how to act, but of how to be in the world as an actor. Now I must practice.

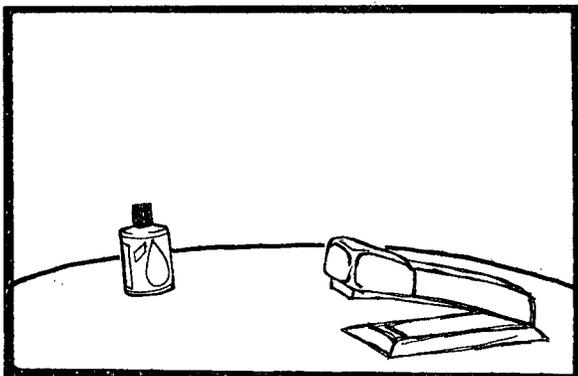
October 21, 1996

Care must be taken with honesty, with taking courage in honesty, with living honestly.

November 4, 1996

Our lives, our family lives, can be told mythically. By becoming familiar with the mythic figures of our creation, we can melt away the shadows, and face the rough edges of our lives. Myths allow us to examine our lives with a certain detachment, with a focus on the whole life and not the details. Thinking mythically, we can see the archetypes at work in our lives, and we can better understand the relationship of ego to soul in our history and in our present.

Only through death can life emerge. We must, in effect, renew our past by creating it in myth. Once created, new life can emerge for us in literal ways. First, we must destroy our



The No. 54 stapler and
the white out circled one
another warily

literal worlds, transform them to myth, and then be freed to create, to write, new worlds. Each writer has to let go of the socialised, the literal, the expected parts of themselves to be able to create, to enter new ground and to give us something for which their lives will be remembered.

How will I become comfortable with the mythic characters in my life: Mother, Brother, Grandmother, Grandfather, Father... How can I create these mythic characters so that I do not lose their archetypal significance in my life. How can I draw these characters in a way which is not preset by my attitude toward them? How do I write my myth so that it invites thought, not directs it? How do I allow myself to be drawn on by these figures to think in new ways about my life as it has been and will be?

I must lean to value dream and myth, to value the power dream and myth have of inspiring imagination, of not fitting easy or clever interpretations, of being fecund and elusive and generative...

Always it is the need to reform to rethink to restance.

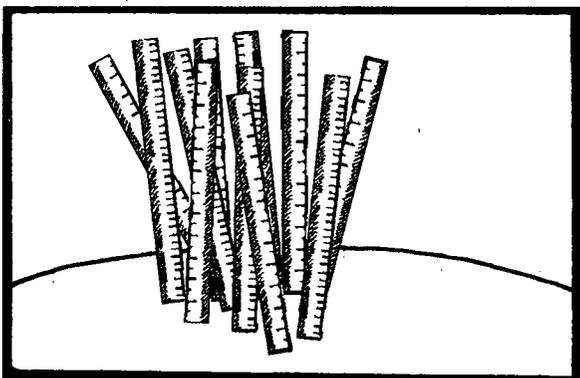
November 6, 1996

The idea that living writing is the creation of dying self is taking hold for me. Only through dying, through losing our world views, can we create anew, can our writing live and speak to others, can our writing be a worthwhile read, can our writing shock and disturb our readers, can our writing be something other than what our readers could have written for themselves.

December 2, 1996

Our writing must descend...So says Helene Cixous (1993).

Maybe this is why Hh's [the same student from the Writing 10 class] writing was so powerful, so disturbing. She wrote from dreams, from fragments, from subconscious cues, and she wrote fearlessly. I remember one poem in particular, and one line from that poem which spoke of violation, potentially sexual violation, in a graphic, disturbing way. I asked Hh where that line came from, and she told me that it was something she thought she had heard her sister say. It turns out that her sister hadn't said what she heard, but Hh wrote it



*"Retaliation and Revenge",
said the Rulers,
"Repression and Repudiation"*

anyway, and she combined it with other lines, from her journal, from her life, into a poem with unsettling unity and direction.

Hh was not/is not afraid of Self, of digging and displaying what she unearths. She does not seek publication or audience; she writes for the descent, for the uncovering. And her only desire is that others descend also, that others learn how to unearth pieces of themselves, to examine, to ponder. Hh helps others dig. She gives them tools, but mostly she just digs herself and invites others to follow. Though whether they do or not is of no great matter.

Even the name of the journal she shares with her sister is telling: Chasm. Chasm is referred to as She. She has a relationship with the writing and with the writers. She serves as a bridge between sisters, a common way down.

It is interesting that Hh ascribes lines and ideas to Chasm, her journal, to the shared gap between sisters.

The following words are taken from the preface to the portfolio (titled Melloncollie) which Hh turned in at the end of Writing 10:

Chasm gave birth to Melloncollie thus creating a whole different book full of honesty.

Though Parental Guidance is not needed to read the stories she holds within beware of her Truths.

Allow the signs given to you to run and trap the moonbeams and escaping starlight.

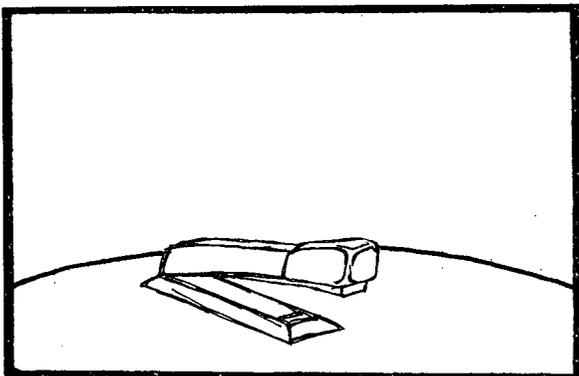
Don't let anything become lost because they never ever will be found again.

Don't let the "black" hole get any more White. You will not regret any of the Truths.

You will not feel Guilt though your thoughts will no longer be yours.

Here is an excerpt from Hh's poem "Grade 10--April 9/96":

And I slipped and fell
 up, up, up til up became down
 Then the down became round
 and then square.



The
 No. 54 stapler
 digressed

Til it had no unidentifiable shape.
 It no longer had a shape but
 a presence of longing;
 of being. Til being became
 living.

And here is what I take to be Cixous' point: we must get down to the point at which "being" becomes living. Here Hh is saying a great deal about descent and the lessons of descent.

Here is another excerpt from Hh's poem titled "UNTITLED:OBLIVION"

Jump down to oblivion
 Facing the know of knowledge
 while losing face.

Hh's imagery is different from Cixous'. While Cixous writes of descent and digging, Hh speaks of jumping. Cixous climbs and Hh stands on the edge of a precipice. Cixous is an adult; Hh is beginning the journey.

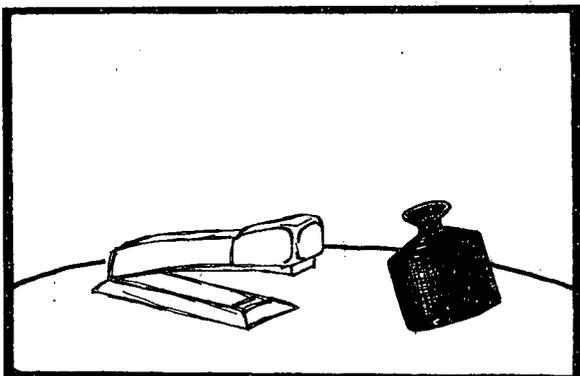
January 9, 1997

Is the writing workshop a system? A dialogue with Usher and Edwards (1994).

It can't be. Text surrounds, defines, and is defined by us. This is no system we can explain or should want to explain. It just *is*. Pretending that we have some magic process or system that we can teach students is ludicrous. No. The workshop is no system.

What we really should be asking is how it comes to be. We can do this by telling birth stories. And celebrating them. Problematize. Yes, I suppose we should problematize writing workshop when it begins to be systematic, when it begins to be organized, when it begins to be regular, when it begins to calcify, and lose life, and fail to cause those who are frozen to start up in fear.

We know writing workshop is alive, is working, when people question it or turn to it. When there is no interest, or when there is interest in workshop as system, then it is dead.



The black inkpot
 came to it with a
 prettily prepackaged
 preposal

It is not serving students, who are no systems at all. Even by alluding to student as system, we change student, and we change system. Meaning is muddied, and in flux. If I am reverent of life, of being, then the workshop becomes something of a time to better supplicate oneself to being, to existing in connection, to having a place in the world, in words.

“We as educators need always to question any discursive practice, no matter how benevolent, for the configurations of emancipation/oppression within it.” (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 27)

“It is the very notion of method as the guarantor of truth which is problematic.” (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 35)

Yes, we must always keep our minds and intuition open. If we must proceed by “argument or reasoning” (OED -- discursive), a thing counterintuitive, then there may be something oppressive there, or emancipatory.

Student-centred learning—students take control of their own learning. Is the emphasis really moved to “cost-efficiency...and more efficient regulation through engaging students directly in a supposedly democratic process of participation--a process...empty of ‘empowering’ content and centred on adaptation.” (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 45)

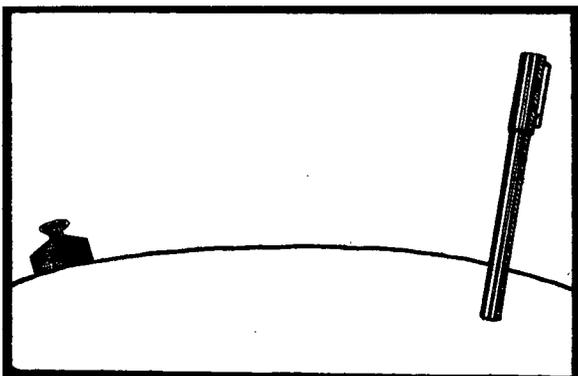
This quote is problematic, isn't it? I wonder what they consider to be student-centred learning. What have they seen? What empty situation?

And what of self-assessment in a workshop setting? Aren't students being asked to place themselves under their own surveillance? Aren't students still being shaped, still being regulated? (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 51)

“Psychology--all of it-- is a branch of the police, psychodynamic and humanistic psychologies are the secret police.” (Richer in Usher & Edwards, 1994, p.53)

Maybe this is why the Writing 10 class worked so well. We didn't really have a system, a process, and organization. We just got together, in a variety of ways, and talked, and wrote. And so much became. So much storying.

Student R jumping into the water. Student J not quite sure. Looking for a safety net, a rope



The extra fine
Techpoint witnessed
the meeting

for guidance. Me. A buoy. Navigation. Flashing lights to turn to in the dark. A channel marker. Range beacons.

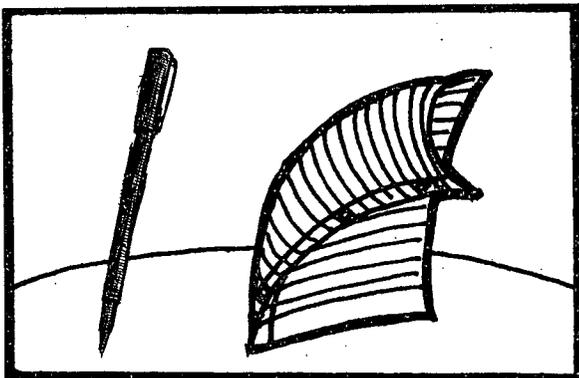
range beacons in the night
 i turn towards them
 and seek the land
 but
 by dead reckoning
 i know where i am
 i think
 i
 know

Students Ra and Jo are fuzzy. If you tried to touch them, you could reach and get lost reaching. You could probe, but to no end. Hh and DJ have edges to them, solidity and uncharted spaces. But they can reach out and touch you, stab through you, pound you. Not Ra. Not Jo. Self-esteem has much to do with it. Finding the core. Digging to bedrock. Hh, DJ--they have rock. Jo and Ra are still digging, looking, in the soft stuff. Trying. Going down. Journal after journal. Play after play. Poem after poem. Smiling, frowning. A plain indrawn look on their faces, except when they laugh. When pulled. A laugh comes, and a sharpness emerges.

Feb. 7, 1997

“Teachers need to be trained to analyse what is repressed in order to foreground the affects, release the emotions and broaden the sense of fulfilment. The pupils then would be allowed to extend their analysis to their environment. To create the space they live in rather than just fit in with the set of rules. Literally. To paint. To build. To co-operate. To participate. The limit then would be the analysis of the transference. (Stanton 1983:88)” (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 81).

There is so much to be created and so many ways to create. The drama classroom is teaching me that there are a variety of forms of representation. Writing with pen and paper is one way.



On its way it met
 the 1" rule, lined
 paper and felt a
 tinge of remorse

Feb. 28 '97

Quotes to think on from *Postmodernism in Education...*

“Educational discourses of knowledge and morals marginalize the body” (Usher & Edwards, 1995, p.92).

“Power-knowledge formations...aim to produce ‘docile’ bodies and ‘obedient souls’” (Usher & Edwards, 1995, p.92).

Drama class is physical in many ways. From relaxation exercises to warm-up games to mimetic activities, we use our bodies. One of the students’ favourite activities is whole body relaxation, and other favourites include bum tag, explosion tag, and space jump. In the last game, students jump into an improvised situation and provide a new physical place in which to begin a new improvisation. Creativity can be increased through use of the whole body.

“Persons are not natural givens in the world, nor is knowledge a process of discovering their reality. Persons are constructed through knowledgeable discourses conditional upon and related to the exercise of power” (Usher & Edwards, 1995, p. 95).

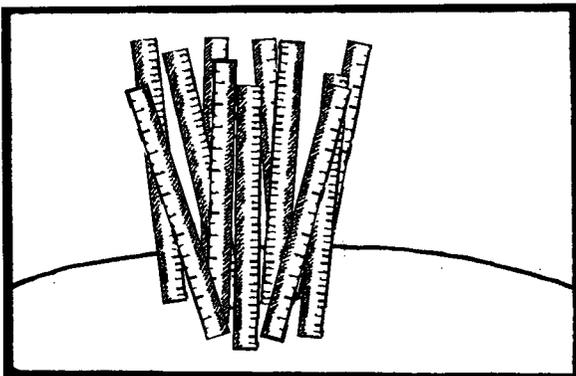
“As Couzens Hoy (1988:27) points out, for Foucault ‘subjective experience is socially and historically constituted by factors that individuals learn to internalize without being consciously forced to do so’” (Usher & Edwards, 1995, p.95).

March 9, 1997

What are the power-knowledge formations of the Writing Workshop? Which are emancipatory, which oppressive?

From *Postmodernism in Education...*

“Discourses ‘empower’ by creating active subjects with certain capacities. But these very capacities also ‘disempower’ by objectifying subjects, making them subject to power” (Usher & Edwards, 1995, p. 97-98).



“Reclamation and Restitution”
said the Rulers,
“Reverberation and Rhapsody”

This is true in the workshop. Our discourse empowers by giving students voices, and disempowers by subjecting these voices to evaluation...

"In this process, knowledge is an aspect of regulatory power which operates 'externally'. At the same time, regulation can take the form of self-regulation, where knowledge is self-knowledge. At one level, this produces 'empowered' subjects: individuals who are empowered by learning and knowing more about themselves. However, subjects 'disempower' themselves in the very process of 'self-empowerment', because this very power of learning about oneself is also the condition for self-regulation; one learns the 'limits' of one's own possibilities—'limits' which are a function of discourses rather than 'natural' factors. The self is 'discovered' in order to be more readily mastered and regulated. The 'success' of modern disciplinary institutions is therefore gauged by their 'production or regimented, isolated and self-policing subjects' (Dews 1987:150)." (Usher & Edwards, 1995, p.98)

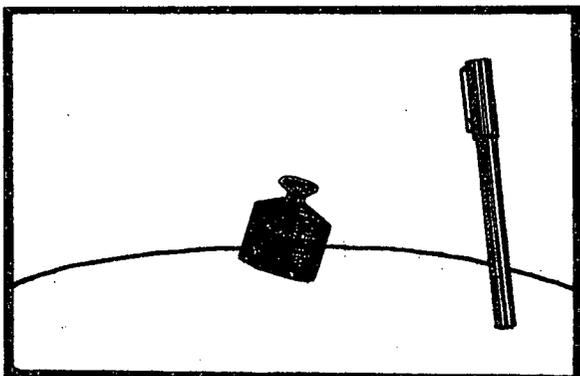
This is a frightening proposition. But, again, I admit it has bearing in the classroom. How often have I encouraged students to learn about themselves through writing? And how often have students' explorations of self been limited by this very writing?

March 29, 1997

Oppression/Emancipation. Rules/Freedom. Structure/Chaos. A world of extreme is a world doomed. My friends and I watched a movie today called *The Last Supper*. A group of self-proclaimed liberals began killing those they saw as "rightists." But their extreme actions led to pathos. And the movie makes a point the post-modernists are making: living in the world is problematic.

I listened to an episode of "Ideas" on CBC radio about Northrop Frye's great code. Frye believed that we live in language. Language comes first. First there was the word. Human beings follow. This concept of language is not foreign to Lacan and Foucault I think. If the Bible, then, is seen as language as myth/metaphor, then the bible becomes who we are. Doesn't it? I wonder. Is all language metaphor? Is there any determinacy? Are we, at the root, metaphoric beings? Then why do we live in systems of denotation? Among rules and judges? Jesus said judge not lest thee be judged. One can only judge when one's philosophy allows it, when one is speaking literally. Is this true? Can one make figurative judgements?

Frye claims that the Bible was written before historicity was known, before the tools for



Polyphonically, the black inkpot serenaded the extra fine techpoint with other prettily prepackaged proposals

doing history were invented. The bible couldn't be a document detailing history then, could it? At least not in the way we understand. He's right. The bible doesn't work the way we understand modern texts to work. Frye also claimed that the bible framed his world. It was the language he knew. He lived within it, its pictures, its myths. He was the bible, or the bible was him.

Now that I am open to tangled threads, I find them. Just like the doctor on PBS said. He said that it is possible to train your mind to help you to see differently. Finding clover. He knew people who could find four leaf clover in a field at will. He trained himself to do likewise. It all stems from belief. If you believe that you will find a four leaf clover, you will.

Structure and Freedom. If youth aren't given boundaries, they cannot rebel. They need to rebel. So what am I doing in the school? Disempowering?

If I am to be a servant, I also must be prepared to be served. I cannot have it one way. I must humble myself to be served.

How does one keep one's faith in one's own ignorance?

July 11 1997

T. Tetsuo Aoki in *Layered Voices of Teaching: The Uncannily Correct and the Elusively True*.

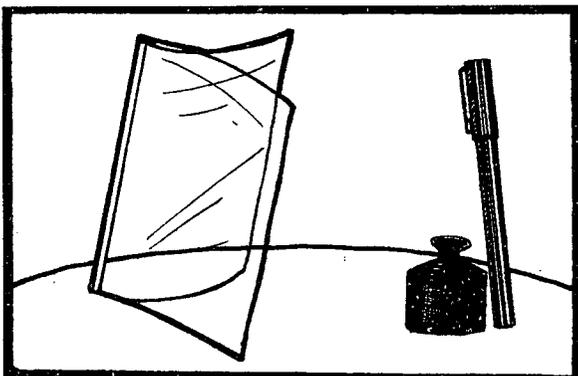
"he is the teaching; she is the teaching...allow the unsaid to shine through the said. Savour now the elusively true, the mystery of what teaching essentially is" (1992, p 27).

July 16 1997

Why re search? Why re flexive? Why are we so concerned with doing things again?

July 24 1998

"As with life, I think this story will be enjoyed most if the reader does not decide beforehand what it is about."



The clear plastic report
cover informed them of
the regression

Tuva or Bust!: Richard Feynman's Last Journey, Ralph Leighton (1991).

How often have we decided beforehand what students will do or behave? I am engaged in a constant struggle to keep from deciding beforehand what the stories I will live in school will turn out to be.

August 2, 1998

"The connection between the subjective and objective, the absolute necessity of constant exchanges between these two attitudes, conditions the entire progression of the work. It is through the experience of this connection, this exchange, that the interpreter, having started from his instinctive way of working, gives himself the chance to go beyond himself. Through this he can raise his imagination to the level of the most demanding texts instead of remaining miserably dependent on his own subjective identity, however profound it may be" *Training for the Theatre*, Michel Saint-Denis (1982, p.82).

It seems that when reading a text, actors need to be aware of what exists outside of themselves, and what exists inside. The goal is to use the subjective and to rise above it.

August 24, 1998

"An ounce of behaviour is worth a pound of words." Sanford Meisner, *On Acting* (1987).

I am learning more and more about what action is, about the meaning that can be created around words.

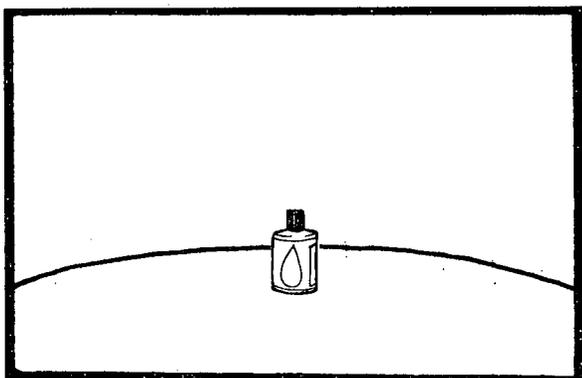
August 30, 1998

OUR BABY GIRL WAS BORN! 3:50 am Nanaimo General.

Feb. 14, 1999

Playfulness, irony, and de-centredness inform my teaching, why not my thesis?

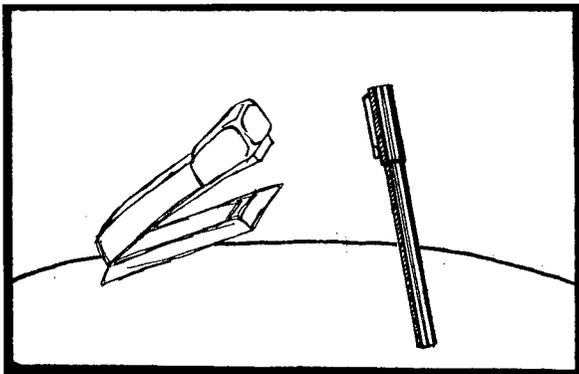
Feb. 16, 1999



The white out regretted its actions

“And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: it is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.” Antoine de Saint-Exupery, *The Little Prince* (1943).

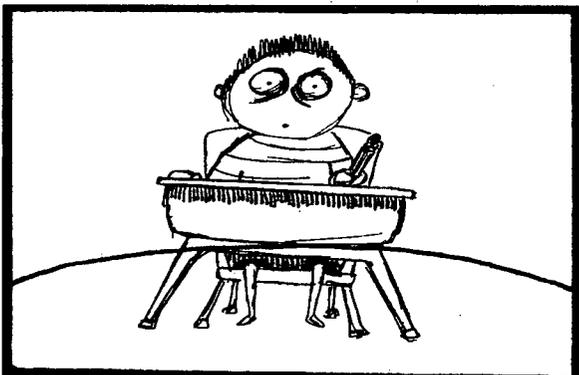
[Here end the journal out-takes. We believe that Taylor recorded numerous observations in different media in his work as a drama teacher. Unfortunately, we did not have access to most of this media, and that which we did have access to could not be translated to print. Look for an upcoming video tape addition to this performance package in the near future. Eds.]



The extra fine techpoint and
the No. 54 stapler confronted
one another

An Influential Document: A Culture of Literacy

[The following document is included here because it so obviously influenced some of Taylor's early work. Of unknown authorship, it seems to have introduced Taylor to educational thinkers which later become characters in his scripts. While Taylor seems to have moved away from some of the concepts detailed within, we believe that exposure to these writers so early in his career has marked, and continues to mark, his thinking. Eds.]

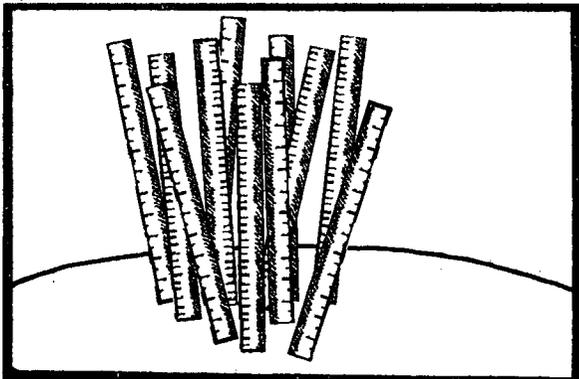


INTERMISSION

A Culture of Literacy

Secondary school teachers of English face growing pressure to reconceptualize their notions of effective pedagogy. Traditional teaching practices which place Literature at the centre of the curriculum are being challenged as literacy takes on a multiplicity of meanings in our information-driven society. A new view of literacy has emerged which “represents a profound shift from a text-driven definition of literacy to a view of literacy as active transformation of text” (Hiebert, 1991, p.1). In this New Literacy (Willinsky, 1990) -- modelled in writing/reading workshop classrooms -- the roles of teachers and students change as the making of meaning becomes “a cultural process rather than the solitary invention of the individual” (Willinsky, p.206). In this paradigm, notions of textual authority shift as meaning is negotiated between text and reader in the historical and political context of the classroom and of the society in which the classroom is located. The acquisition of literacy is profoundly influenced by the specific “culture of literacy” which emerges in the classroom. The problem is that if the effects of a writing/reading workshop are to be understood at the secondary level, students’ perceptions of the culture of literacy which emerges in their classrooms must be considered.

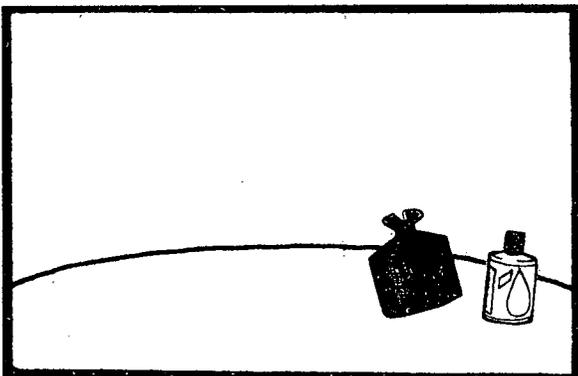
While whole language strategies have gained acceptance in many elementary school classrooms, and professional literature increasingly describes the benefits of writing/reading workshop methodology at the secondary level, practice has been slow to change in secondary English classrooms. One book that speaks convincingly to secondary teachers is Nancy



*“Renunciation and Rue”,
said the Rulers,
“Rumour and Rocambolesque”*

Atwell's *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents*. Atwell offers *In the Middle* as "the best invitation [she] can extend to other secondary English teachers to come out from behind their own big desks" (1987, p.4). Atwell intends her workshop to be a challenge to the "status quo [which] regards collaboration as cheating and learning as a solitary, competitive enterprise" (1987, p.37). She points to John Goodlad's 1984 study *A Place Called School* as justifying the creation of "a workshop, a way of teaching and learning uniquely suited to junior high students of every ability. Workshops accommodate adolescents' needs, invite their independence, challenge them to grow -- and transform the junior high school status quo" (Atwell, 1987, p.40). Atwell's conception of a workshop is one which is "student-centred in the sense that individuals' rigorous pursuit of their own ideas is the course content" (1987, p.41).

In the Middle provides details on how writing and reading processes occur in a workshop setting. Atwell lays out her routines in detail, and she supports these routines with stories from her classroom. She describes all aspects of the workshop model, including the lay-out of the classroom and the methods used for evaluation. For example, she explains that grades are determined in evaluation conferences between student and teacher, and are based on criteria which are initially set out by the teacher, and which are subsequently set by the student in the form of goals. As with other methods described in the book, the method of grading is presented as unproblematic -- as a simple process of helping the students to see what they have accomplished. Indeed, the running of a self-contained writing/reading workshop is presented as being free from systemic problems.



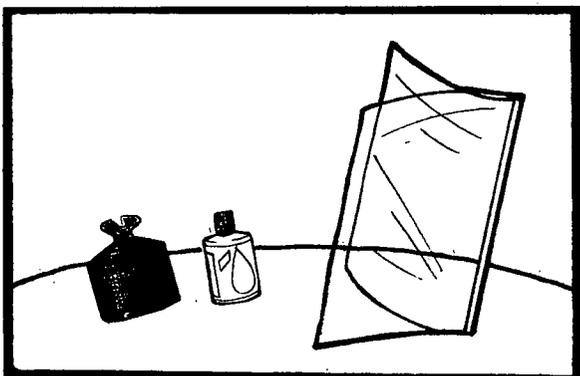
At once the black inkpot,
now ruined, and the white
out fled

In the Middle celebrates and advocates the use of a writing/reading workshop paradigm, and it has been fairly effective with its advocacy judging by the influence that it is exerting on secondary school practice. But the implementation of a workshop paradigm is not unproblematic. Timothy Lensmire identifies some problem areas in a workshop approach in *When Children Write: Critical Re-Visions of the Writing Workshop*. Lensmire spent one year in a grade three classroom volunteering to teach the writing component. He summarizes his experience with the workshop in his "Introduction":

The children flexed their muscles, wrote, were heard. All of this happened, and I could have told this gratifying story of a workshop life without lying -- but I would have been lying. Lying because children are not only the Romantic, innocent little beings that appear in the stories of workshop advocates. Lying, because neither workshop approaches, nor the role they envision for teachers, are so innocent (1994, p.1).

Lensmire identifies the "underside" of the "workshop community" in his examination of "how a peer culture with gender divisions and informal hierarchies of status and power shaped the production and sharing of texts" (1994, p.2). He notes that little research has been done which focuses on the student experience in a workshop situation. For this reason student experience in the workshop drives his "exploration and criticism of writing workshop goals and practices (1994, p.2).

Lensmire dedicates one chapter of his book to "Teacher-Researcher Practice." It is clear that he is concerned with how teaching the writing workshop component in the elementary classroom will affect his research. He is also concerned with the influence of his

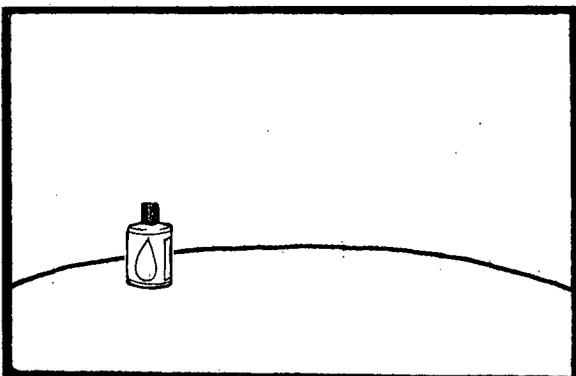


The clear plastic report cover alerted them as to what had transpired

own emotional responses, and “the need to narrow [his] research focus and data collection without privileging some children over others in [his] day-to-day work as a teacher (1994, p.52). The bulk of his book provides a richly contextualized description of what occurred during the workshop. He concludes with an analysis of this description, and an appeal to workshop advocates to drop “a Romantic rhetoric that tends to abstract authors and texts from their social contexts” (1994, p.140). Lensmire further argues that workshops must undergo re-vision. Particularly, response to student writing should “pay more attention to the immediate peer culture” (1994, p.145), and “an adequate conception of response would include...a vision of the type of classroom community in which we want our children to write and learn” (1994, p.145).

While Lensmire’s study focuses on a grade three class, his findings are relevant to the secondary level. Advocates of the workshop paradigm must move from “Romantic rhetoric” to a sometimes problematic discussion of the effects of using such a paradigm. The effects of creating a community of learners must be examined. What does theory tell us? Lensmire sums up his assumptions: “Writing is a craft, granted. But writing is also an ideological activity, in that it involves meaning, world views, moral and political positions that select and bend facts toward particular ends” (1994, p.152). Lensmire advocates a re-visioning of the writing workshop which focuses on “helping students develop their voices in ways artistic and political, even though it is difficult, risky work” (1994, p.158).

Lensmire’s conclusions, drawn from a specific case, are given a more general treatment in John Willinsky’s *The New Literacy: Redefining Reading and Writing in the*



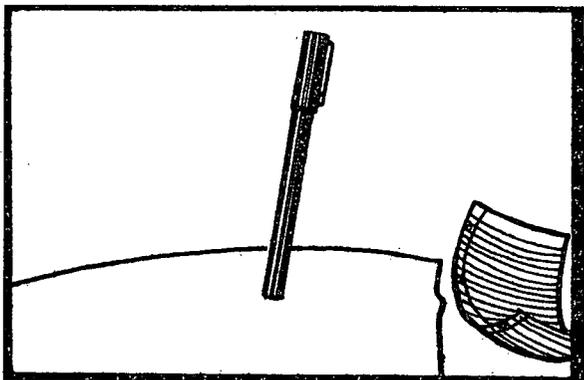
The white out found itself
situated, alone

Schools. Here, Willinsky coins the term New Literacy:

The New Literacy consists of those strategies in the teaching of reading and writing which attempt to shift the control of literacy from the teacher to the student; literacy is promoted in such programs as a social process with language that can from the very beginning extend the students' range of meaning and connection (1990, p.8).

Willinsky contrasts this form of literacy with the kind which would measure people against some sort of standard. His sense of the type of literacy we need to explore -- the New Literacy -- is one which is active, which is social. He argues that "meaning lies in the shared act...Many students do learn that disembodied meaning is the very language of schooling...It works in its own way to reduce the personal risk of not doing well" (1990, p.210). For Willinsky, the challenge lies in critically examining the underpinnings of New Literacy, of being certain that New Literacy practitioners "reveal the road still to be shored up in places" (1990, p.229). Willinsky identifies three paths which lie ahead for New Literacy: "greater integration within reading, writing, and literature programs" (1990, p.233); elaboration of its research program; and staying current with the thought of post-structuralists and literary theorists.

It is valuable to examine some of the poststructuralist thought and literary theory which New Literacy assumes. Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction* discusses both New Literacy theories and theories upon which traditional practice is based. The theories underlying traditional practice (which is identified as being in opposition to New Literacy practices) fall under a number of labels, one being classical structuralism. Accord-



The extra fine techpoint,
mistaking the 1" rule,
lined paper for the black
inkpot, pushed it into the
fitful void

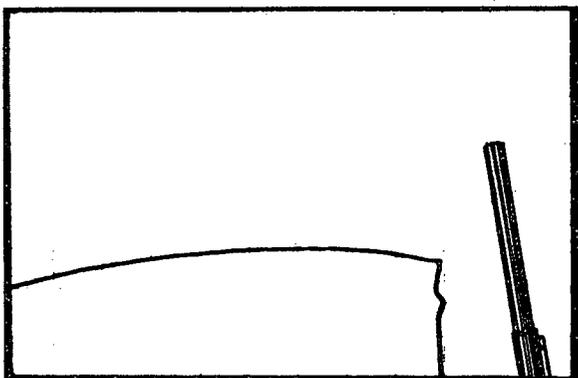
ing to Eagleton,

binary opposites within which classical structuralism tends to work represent a way of seeing typical of ideologies. Ideologies like to draw rigid boundaries between what is acceptable and what is not, between self and non-self...reason and madness, central and marginal" (1983, p.133).

Traditional secondary English practice can be seen in this way. Multiple choice tests, for example, leave no doubt that a rigid boundary has been drawn between what is acceptable and what is not. Meaning in this conception is based in ideology that students are expected to share with the teacher. In this conception, a literary canon can be fixed to serve as a tool to enculture and civilize students.

If multiple meaning is to be created, as New Literacy would hold, and if this meaning is to involve text, then it is necessary to be able to break down these binary opposites. It is necessary to challenge the first principles on which these opposites are based (Eagleton, 1983). Deconstruction, then, is "...the critical operation by which such oppositions can be partly undermined, or by which they can be shown partly to undermine each other in the process of textual meaning" (Eagleton, 1983, p.133). Poststructuralists wanted to show that texts do not have inherent meaning; therefore they devised "the tactic of deconstructive criticism...[which] is to show how texts come to embarrass their own ruling systems of logic" (Eagleton, 1983, p.133).

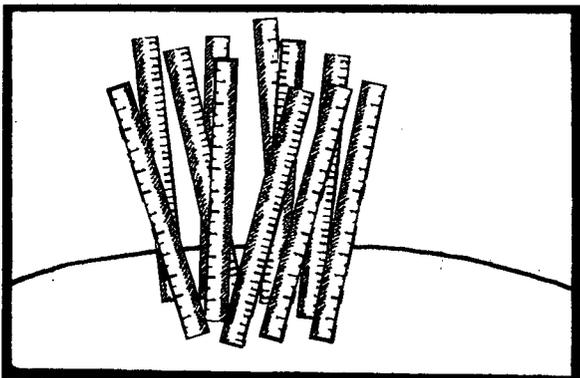
Deconstruction, then, is a way of freeing a text from one meaning. Eagleton points to Roland Barthes as a figure central to the evolution of deconstruction. According to Eagleton, Barthes showed that when responding to a text "the tyranny of structural mean-



When it saw what it had done,
it went mad and flung itself
over the edge

ing could be momentarily ruptured and dislocated by a free play of language; and the writing/reading subject could be released from the straight jacket of a single identity into an ecstatically diffused self" (1983, p.143). It is crucial to New Literacy that multiple meaning is possible, that structuralism and ideology can be overcome. Indeed, writing/reading workshops tend to celebrate language as play, and students as players in meaning. Eagleton does not stop at characterizing post-structuralist thought as seeking freedom. He betrays some of his own theoretical bias when he proclaims that "post-structuralism was a product of that blend of euphoria and disillusionment, liberation and dissipation, carnival and catastrophe, which was 1968" (1983, p.142). Here Eagleton situates theory in history, in the political climate of Europe. In direct opposition to New Criticism -- which treats literature as being free of history and context -- critical theory holds that history is central to the meaning of literature.

Judith Goleman applies critical theory to composition in her book *Working Theory: Critical Composition Studies for Students and Teachers*. Critical theory is based on the Marxist claim that knowing is historically and contextually based, and that knowledge doesn't exist as a Hegelian essence but is manifest in its effects. There is no way to point to a system as existing isolated from effect. The system is manifest in its effects, which are historically and contextually apparent. Indeed, the knower is also historically and contextually formed. "All knowledge, even the knowledge of how we produce knowledge, must be understood historically as the particular effects of social structure" (Goleman, 1995, p.14). This theory calls into question the authority of text in the classroom, and stresses the



"Reprehension and Repulsion",
said the Rulers,
"Rupture and Regret"

political implications of authority: “what students learn about and do with their relationships to textual authority is indissoluble from what they learn about and do with their relationship to a teacher’s authority” (Goleman, 1995, p.47). Quoting Bakhtin, Goleman further asserts that

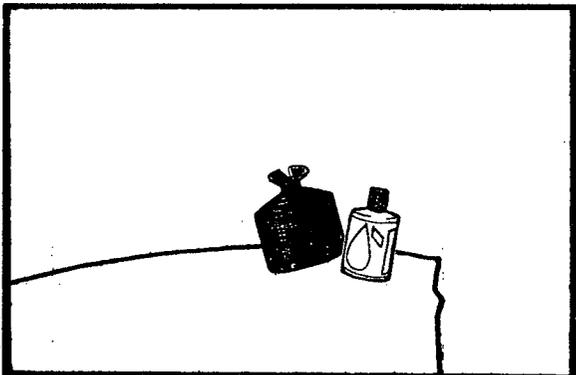
the work of the teacher is to create the conditions by which a student’s own discourse may be ‘gradually and slowly wrought out of others’ words that have been acknowledged and assimilated...the boundaries between the two [being] at first scarcely perceptible’ (1995, p.47).

In the Bakhtinian model of language, a person carries on the simultaneous double activity of language relations with others and language relations between outer world and one’s own psyche. The goal is for the psyche to develop into an independent ideological consciousness (Goleman 1995).

Central to the understanding of critical theory lies the notion of analyzing ideology.

Ideology is

a particular practice of representation. In capitalist society -- the object of Marx’s study -- the practice of representation is dominated by the class that dominates the forces of production and struggles to maintain that position. And so, while ideology, as the practice of representation, may be an organic part of every social structure, it does not function the same way in every structure. In a structure determined by its contradictory relations of power and privilege, ideology can be ‘seen’ as the representation of these contradictions as normal, as human nature itself...ideology is a material force that naturalizes the unequal relations of production -- the ongoing, complex, multiply determined interrelations among classes, races, genders, ages, disciplines, and more. By virtue of its naturalizing effects, ideology limits individuals to a certain ‘mental horizon’ (Goleman, 1995, p.17).



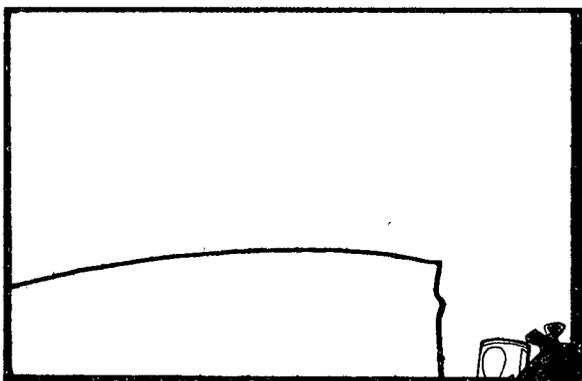
Promptly, the black inkpot
surprised the white out

Goleman's aim is for students and teachers to be able to deconstruct the ideology surrounding them, to denaturalize it so that contradictions inherent in their society can be analyzed and acted upon. It is the goal of critical theory that, through its incessant practice students can enter a state of ideological becoming (Goleman 1995). In this state, students are constantly deconstructing ideology, constantly locating themselves historically and contextually, and constantly creating meaning.

This theoretical perspective holds implications for practice. For one, "assignment sequencing...should privilege openness and play over formality and developmental process" (Goleman, 1995, p.48). How can students be expected to take part in "relativized consciousness and knowing participation in their ideological becoming" (Goleman, 1995, p.49) if teachers use "the current model of the academic writing process" (Goleman, 1995, p.49)? A process of ideological becoming is not linear or developmental because one's participation in internal and external dialogue interrelates and causes recontextualization and interanimation (Goleman, 1995).

The function of a dialogically structured course sequence is to create the conditions for recontextualization and further interaction with suppressed discourses. Based neither on recursion nor revision per se (both of which posit timetables for growth and awareness), dialogic sequencing eschews the ideology of progress. The terms 'for making progress' will always be another's: centralizing and authoritative (Goleman, 1995, p.51).

The question becomes: what kind of sequencing can create these conditions? Does a workshop paradigm allow for this kind of sequencing? The point Goleman is making is that



*in the struggle they went over the
edge together*

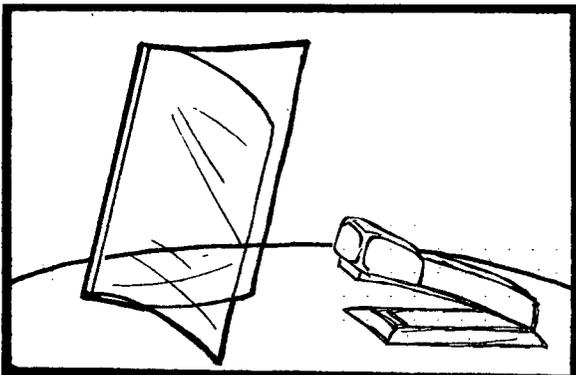
conditions should be created within which students can take part in internal and external dialogue so that they can critically and incessantly examine the world in which they live, and the words they use to describe and create that world.

Pam Gilbert takes the implications of poststructuralist theory for writing practice one step further in *Writing, Schooling, and Deconstruction: From Voice to Text in the Classroom*. She identifies “three theoretical bases” (1989, p.174) on which practice must rest:

a base which posits a concept of writing that is not tied to a voice, a presence, or an ultimate meaning; a base which acknowledges the constructed nature of discursive power networks and the way in which such networks organize and systematize social and cultural practice; and a base which accepts that reading is a set of learned and arbitrary cultural practices privileging certain meanings (1989, p.174).

Gilbert deconstructs the notion of authorship and finds that, in the end, all we are left with is text. She argues that advocates of writing process continue to value authorship in a poststructuralist paradigm in which authorship cannot be seen to exist in the same way as in the traditional sense in the English classroom. She advocates “a move from the ‘mystique of Awesome Authorship’ (53) to the ideological deconstruction and reconstruction of text” (1989, p.174)

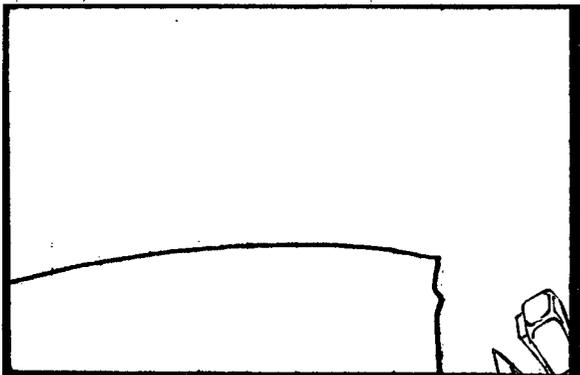
In *Critical Theory and the English Teacher: Transforming the Subject*, Nick Peim identifies one more aspect of classroom practice which must necessarily change in the poststructuralist, New Literacy model. “The grading system depends on ideas about lan-



The clear plastic report cover
witnessed the event to the
No. 54 stapler

guage, ideas informing its assessment, and the central idea that language -- in its individual usage -- *can* be assessed according to criteria that are objective and universal” (Peim, 1990, p.188). In a poststructuralist paradigm, the nature of assessment must change as well from a model based on objectivity and universality to one of subjectivity, contextuality, and specificity.

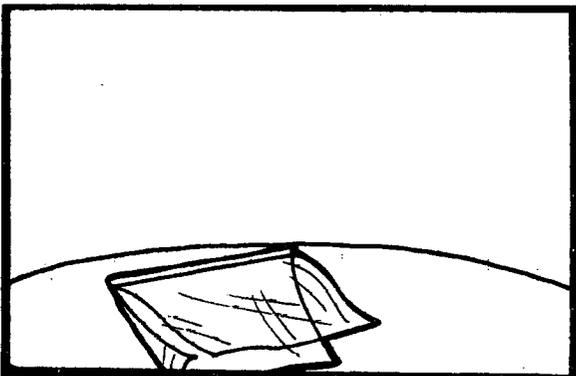
Theory and research relating to the teaching of English using New Literacy strategies makes clear that if meaning is to be constructed, the social context of that construction must be understood. Atwell’s attack on the “status quo,” Lensmire’s exploration of the “micropolitics of social relations and language in the classroom” (1994, p.18), Goleman’s advocacy of critical theory, and Gilbert’s deconstruction of authorship all point to the English classroom as being a place where a very specific culture is created in relation to literacy. How this culture is understood by participants will reveal much about how a writing/reading workshop model works, situated as it is amid social constructivist and poststructuralist thought.



The No. 54 stapler threw itself over the edge in the same spot

Thoughts on Teacher as Director

[The following three pages reveal some of Taylor's thinking concerning some points of congruence between teaching and directing. Eds.]



The clear plastic report cover looked
around and cast itself down,
lifeless

July 1, 1999

“The actor makes a total gift of himself.” P. 16, Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 1968.

I remember being deeply affected when Carl Leggo told our English Education writing class that sharing writing was giving a gift, that if someone read to us, they were giving us something special, something from the heart. And now, as a drama teacher, I understand Grotowski's statement in the similar fashion.

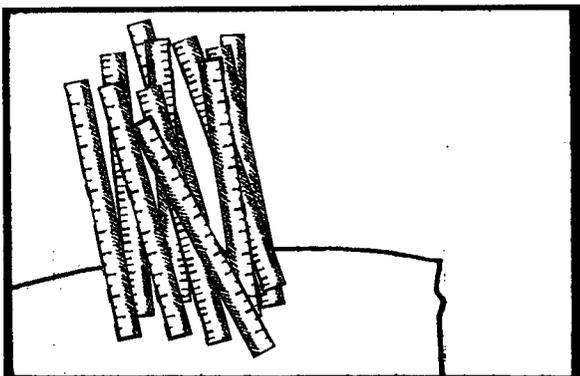
“The education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses. Ours then is a *via negativa* – not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks” (Grotowski, 1968, pp. 16-17).

Schooling seems to be designed to add blocks. Much of my time in the drama classroom is spent removing impediments to play. Norman Welsh once told me that when he taught theatre at UCLA, it sometimes took two years for students to re-learn how to play. He told me that teaching students to play, helping students to remember play, was the most difficult and time consuming part of actor training.

“The forms of common ‘natural’ behavior obscure the truth; we compose a role as a system of signs which demonstrate what is behind the mask of common vision: the dialectics of human behavior. At a moment of psychic shock, a moment of terror, of mortal danger or tremendous joy, a man does not behave ‘naturally.’ A man in an elevated spiritual state uses rhythmically articulated signs, beings to dance, to sing. A **sign**, not a common gesture, is the elementary integer of expression for us” (Grotowski, 1968, p. 17).

When we were planning to stage a musical, one of our student directors asked me why some of the dialogue was written as song and some not. Characters sing when the level of their emotions will not allow them to simply speak.

“...The essence of the theatre is found neither in the narration of an event, nor in the discussion of a hypothesis with an audience, nor in the representation of life as it appears



“Recollection and Recapitulation”,
said the Rulers,
“Rationalization and Resurrec-
tion”

from outside, nor even in a vision—but that the theatre is an act carried out **here and now** in the actors' organisms...theatrical reality is instantaneous, not an illustration of life but something linked to life **only by analogy...**" (Grotowski, 1968, p.118).

We must live in the moment if our living is to be interesting to those around us.

"Meyerhold based his work on discipline, exterior formation; Stanislavski on the spontaneity of daily life. These are, in fact, the two complementary aspects of the creative process" (Grotowski, 1968, p.209).

Opposites. Contradiction. Complement.

"If you want to create a true masterpiece you must always avoid beautiful lies" (Grotowski, 1968, p.236).

We might say that we are glad when our friends do better than we do. In truth, we are not completely glad. We are sometimes a wee bit jealous. And this must not be overlooked.

"...the problem of creative passivity..." (Grotowski, 1968, p.251).

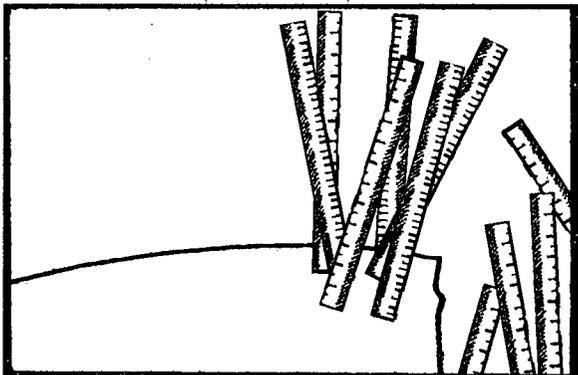
Sometimes, creativity requires passivity, stillness, silence...

"An actor can only be guided and inspired by someone who is whole-hearted in his creative activity" (Grotowski, 1968, p.258).

In a like manner, I believe that students cannot be inspired by teachers unless those teachers approach their jobs with passion, honesty, and zealously.

"...One says 'language' for action, movement, thought, reflection, consciousness, unconsciousness, experience, affectivity, etc. Now we tend to say 'writing' for all that and more: to designate not only the physical gestures of literal pictographic or ideographic inscription, but also the totality of what makes it possible; and also, beyond the signifying face, the signified face itself" Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1967, p.9).

Our worlds are written and re-written.



With new found pragmatism, they too flung themselves into the fitful void

"History and knowledge, *istoria* and *episteme* have always been determined (and not only etymologically or philosophically) as detours *for the purpose* of the reappropriation of presence" (Derrida, 1967, p.10).

"...the meaning of the being in general [is] *presence*...of the thing to the sight as eidos, presence as substance/essence/existence, temporal presence as point of the now or of the moment, the self-presence of the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of the self, intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomenon of the ego, and so forth" (Derrida, 1967, p.12).

Teaching must involve being present, and encouraging the presence of those around you. It is living in the moment. It is living in the moment, playing, and interacting. It is a total act.

THE
END

story by
WILLIAM TAYLOR

illustrations by
GEOFFREY CRAM

Section Four: Reflecting on Performance

Excerpts from a Speech given by William Taylor at the PK Book Launch

It took me eight years to see the stories presented in this Performance Kit come to publication. It has been a wonderfully exciting and rewarding eight years. Now, with this kit about to become available to the public, I would like to make some comments about its production...

As I re-read and reflect on my work as presented in the Performance Kit, I realize that I ask educators to live on edges, near chaos and danger, always open to joy and wonder. While I try to find and position myself in these locations, I do not always succeed. In fact, I fight constantly to follow my own advice. Sometimes I find myself striving for spaces of stasis and comfort. Sometimes I need these types of spaces...It takes a whole lot of energy and perseverance to find and live in generative spaces...I believe that we must find a balance...Sometimes we need to rest, to regenerate what is already with us...

Tomorrow, in the classroom, I may find myself trying to assert control, to limit surprise, to choose paths of safety. I need to remember that the environment I help to create should, if it is honestly and caringly maintained, invite problems, and frustration, and danger. These things are natural counterpoints to solutions, and calm, and safety...

I am very grateful to the Performance Kit Creators for bringing my work to a place where any number of new performances are possible... Each time I am gifted with a new performance of this work, each time I speak with those who are planning to perform, I find myself filled with new thoughts, renewed, brought to new spaces of comfort and question...

It is my sincere wish that readers/directors/producers who come in contact with this kit will find it as rewarding a space as I have. I look forward to future kits and to the promise of future performance possibilities...

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