IMAGINATION AND PRAXIS: CRITICALITY AND CREATIVITY IN EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

How Higher Education Feels

Commentaries on Poems That Illuminate Emotions in Learning and Teaching

Kathleen M. Quinlan

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SCOPE

Current educational reform rhetoric around the globe repeatedly invokes the language of 21st century learning and innovative thinking while contrarily re-enforcing, through government policy, high stakes testing and international competition, standardization of education that is exceedingly reminiscent of 19th century Taylorism and scientific management. Yet, as the steam engines of educational "progress" continue down an increasingly narrow, linear, and unified track, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the students in our classrooms are inheriting real world problems of economic instability, ecological damage, social inequality, and human suffering. If young people are to address these social problems, they will need to activate complex, interconnected, empathetic and multiple ways of thinking about the ways in which peoples of the world are interconnected as a global community in the living ecosystem of the world. Seeing the world as simultaneously local, global, political, economic, ecological, cultural and interconnected is far removed from the Enlightenment's objectivist and mechanistic legacy that presently saturates the status quo of contemporary schooling. If we are to derail this positivist educational train and teach our students to see and be in the world differently, the educational community needs a serious dose of imagination. The goal of this book series is to assist students, practitioners, leaders, and researchers in looking beyond what they take for granted, questioning the normal, and amplifying our multiplicities of knowing, seeing, being and feeling to, ultimately, envision and create possibilities for positive social and educational change. The books featured in this series will explore ways of seeing, knowing, being, and learning that are frequently excluded in this global climate of standardized practices in the field of education. In particular, they will illuminate the ways in which imagination permeates every aspect of life and helps develop personal and political awareness. Featured works will be written in forms that range from academic to artistic, including original research in traditional scholarly format that addresses unconventional topics (e.g., play, gaming, ecopedagogy, aesthetics), as well as works that approach traditional and unconventional topics in unconventional formats (e.g., graphic novels, fiction, narrative forms, and multi-genre texts). Inspired by the work of Maxine Greene, this series will showcase works that "break through the limits of the conventional" and provoke readers to continue arousing themselves and their students to "begin again" (Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*, 1995, p. 109).

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To the many teachers in higher education whose dedication and caring are making a difference in students' lives

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The commentators were charged with the unusual task of commenting on poems, which was a new experience for some of the scientists and social scientists. Their belief in the project and willingness to try something new encouraged and energized me. Their contributions transform this volume from anthology to academic book.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> *In this class we read slowly, taking time to shape each word with our lips and tongues … There's a sacramental quality…all we need is a bit of bread – a crumb dipped in the wine of metaphor – and it becomes a whole loaf, a risen body. All we need is one poem – and it fills a whole class.*
>
> – Carol Tyx

> *My world was opening out… That day was my first glimpse of how one cultivates a soul.*
>
> – Linda Goodman Robiner

These excerpts highlight the passion associated with discovery; the delight in ideas that animates higher education. What scholar hasn't felt the thrill of picking up a thread of an idea and chasing it to its logical conclusion? What teacher hasn't exalted in a shared 'aha' moment, when a lightbulb goes on for a student or a class?

But teachers also know that higher education can evoke strong negative responses – anxiety, replete with beating hearts and sweaty palms; frustration, fear, guilt, shame. Students and teachers alike have experienced waking up breathless from a nightmare of arriving late to an exam or coming to class with the wrong materials. Yet these deeply felt experiences of teaching, learning, development and discovery in higher education – so familiar to teachers and students – are hardly discussed in the context of improving higher education.

The aim of this book is to help fill that gap, by supporting a person-centered discourse in higher education that enables us – as university teachers – to voice aspects of the experience of academia that have been hitherto silent. Education is, fundamentally, a human experience – one that involves feelings as well as thoughts.

However, the emotional experiences of teaching and learning in higher education have been neglected. There is little attention to the emotional challenges faced by teachers, with texts on teaching instead emphasizing conceptual change, expanding knowledge or theoretical grounding of practice. Likewise, books on teaching in higher education often focus on developing students' thinking skills, mainly analytical and critical thinking. While cognition is certainly a key facet of learning in higher education, it does not capture the whole experience or all of the important goals we might have for university education. There is less attention to other ways in which students may be growing and developing as people during the formative years of higher education. Yet, challenges to attitudes and identities and the forging of new relationships and commitments in a culture beyond family and home communities

are all significant aspects of students' experiences of higher education and are strongly emotional. In these ways, students are – first and foremost – humans who are in transition. To ensure that higher education succeeds as a learning environment that nurtures the growth of students – broadly conceived – teachers must consider the role that emotion plays in learning and teaching processes.

In academia, there is often a distrust of emotion; it is seen as a hindrance to the objectivity, distance and rational thinking that are the traditional hallmarks of universities (Leathwood & Hey, 2009). It is precisely this distrust, though, that leads to the 'cognitive bias' in education described in the previous paragraph (Liston & Garrison, 2004). It is not necessary to see emotion and cognition as opposed to one another, though. A variety of fields, including philosophy (e.g. Boler, 1999), cognitive science (e.g. Maiese, 2010), cultural studies (e.g. Ahmed, 2004), sociology (e.g. Zembylas, 2007), politics (e.g. Clarke, Hoggett, & Thompson, 2006), neuroscience (e.g. Damasio, 1994) and education (e.g. Goleman, 1996; Beard, Clegg, & Smith, 2007; Hargreaves, 1998) are now embracing a more integrated view of cognition and emotion.

Although different disciplines and theorists conceptualize emotion differently (see chapter 2 for a discussion of different conceptual stances), there is general agreement that we cannot separate mind from body or feeling from thinking. Emotions cannot be neatly packed away while people are engaging in 'rational' thinking or public life. Feelings come into decision-making, problem-solving, learning and teaching. They are a part of our social institutions, from media and politics to religion and education.

Through this book, I intend to spark conversations among teachers about the emotional dimensions of learning and teaching in higher education. I hope this book challenges you to consider how you experience teaching and how your students experience their education with you. Through conversation with colleagues, I hope you will explore the emotional landscape of courses and programs you create and question the emotional messages your policies and practices send to students. I aim to contribute to our understanding of emotional experiences in higher education by offering a language, some key concepts and illustrative, emotive examples (as poems) of how emotion is entangled with thinking in higher education.

In chapters 3 through 11, case studies – written as poems – illuminate the integrated nature of education, with evocative representations of a wide range of emotions associated with learning, teaching and growing in higher education. The chapters are organized roughly to follow the lifecycle of students, starting with the transition to higher education, the associated challenges of belonging and identity and the implications of students' struggles for teachers. Chapters 7 through 9 highlight the process of teaching and learning in particular subjects and the emotions these subjects prompt. Examinations characterize the end of courses and programs, thus the success and failure chapter comes toward the end of the book. Chapter 11 includes a number of poems that look back on the higher education experience from a distance.

Each of the main chapters that follow, then, consists of: a very short introduction, some 10 to 15 poems that serve as case examples, and a commentary by a higher education scholar with theoretical and/or empirical expertise relevant to the chapter's theme. The expert commentaries highlight emergent themes across the case examples and make connections to theory and practice in higher education.

This opening chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I briefly discuss the methods used in assembling this book, explaining why I chose to use poems as case studies and outlining the selection process. In the second section, I suggest how the book might be read and used. In the next chapter, I explore different conceptual stances on emotion and its role in higher education. These conceptual stances should enrich discussions about the poems and serve as reflection points.

AN ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGY TO ILLUMINATE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES

Most educational research is rooted in the social sciences. In conceiving this book, though, I sought to stretch the boundaries of educational research beyond the social sciences. Through various forms of qualitative inquiry, social scientists are challenging and reframing philosophical criteria of truth, re-making the social and political role of research, and exploring its potential for opening up new possible, previously unimagined worlds. This book was inspired by notions of 'post-qualitative research' (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013), poetic inquiry (Prendergast, 2009; Prendergast, Leggo, & Sameshima, 2009; McCulliss, 2013) and Ron Pelias' (2004) book, *A Methodology of the Heart*.

Lather and St. Pierre (2013) argue that 'post-qualitative' research is about 'imagining and accomplishing an inquiry that might produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently' (p. 635). As an emergent process, it cannot be pinned down to particular methodologies that can be taught and systematized, but rather 'in this methodology-to-come, we begin to do it differently wherever we are in our projects' (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 635).

Pelias (2004) teaches by example how we might use other forms including dialogues, short stories, flash non-fiction (tiny pieces of prose), and poetry to better capture the heart of human experience. Such representations of knowledge take us into the arts, offering us insights and vignettes that touch us, stimulate new insights, stay in our memories and become a part of a culture's collective unconscious.

Thus, in this project, I 'begin to do it differently' (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 635) by focusing first on a topic that has been previously under-researched and under-valued and, second, by reframing the relationship between researcher and researched. In researching higher education, we have the luxury of a highly literate group of colleagues who can serve as contributors to enriching our appreciation for the felt and lived holistic experience of higher education. I have tapped this experience by soliciting contemporary poems about teaching or learning in higher education from poetry communities around the English speaking world. Therefore,

the inputs to this book come from a large number of people who are writing reflectively, in their own ways, about their own experiences. They are not seeking to tell us everything about emotions in education or even about all of their experience. They are not drawing conclusions, but rather, opening up possibilities and inviting us, as readers, to join them.

I selected poems and organized them into chapters by themes. Commentators with expertise in the field of higher education then read and reflected on what the poets of their assigned chapters had written and intimated. Their charge was to connect emergent themes in the poetry to social scientific concepts, problems and, perhaps most importantly, opportunities and possibilities. In this way, the project might be considered post-qualitative insofar as 'the ethical charge of our work as inquirers is surely to question our attachments that keep us from thinking and living differently' (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 635).

Why Poems?

I wanted to offer the field a set of evocative, concise, beautifully-written case studies of experience. The norms of academic writing, while changing, still privilege detachment and analysis over emotive expression. Working inside these largely unspoken rules of academic social science discourse, it is difficult to convincingly embody felt experience. Even with developments like the use of 'I' and 'we,' academics still avoid emotionally charged language and strive for dispassionate representations of findings.

Literature – with its strong narrative structures, word-craft, emotive expression and use of metaphor, irony and humor – is an established way of representing certain human truths – particularly truths of the heart. Of the various literary forms, poetry's economy of language distils experience to its essence. This book introduces poems into the higher education discourse, giving voice to aspects of the experiences of higher education that have been under-studied using traditional methods and writing conventions.

As Ruth Padel explains:

> One of poetry's jobs is to transform real life imaginatively so we understand our lives new-paintedly, more fully. To make familiar things look strange so you see them new. It does this through the ear, musically, and through the mind – both intellect and feeling – in relation to the world outside. (2002, p. 18)

Good poetry captures the imagination, connects author and reader and creates a lived, emotional experience in the reader. Padel invokes the famous English poet, Philip Larkin, to elucidate the emotional dimensions of poetry:

> A poem can express deep, significant feeling and thought more concentratedly and lastingly than anything else. Poems move you – that's what they are for. Larkin also said poetry begins with emotion in the poet, ends with the same

> emotion in the reader, and the poem is the instrument that puts it there.' (Padel, 2002, p. 18)

In short, poetry is a form uniquely suited to giving us insight into how learning, teaching, development and transformation feel in higher education. It is a form that lets us enter into the world of humans living holistic experiences and prompts us to rethink our own experiences.

The Process

I have solicited poems from a wide range of networks, using international classified ads for poets and writers and sending messages through listservs to local poetry communities and creative writing teachers. Through this wide and varied circulation, I hoped to capture a wide variation of experiences and high quality submissions. I received several hundred poems from more than 200 authors from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and South Africa between December 2013 and April 2014.

I selected poems based on the criteria below:

- *Typical poetic criteria* such as ability to engage the reader (does the reader feel, hear, touch, taste, see what the poet is conveying?), aesthetic and rhythmic qualities (e.g. does it sound good to the ear?) and imaginative use of language (e.g. vivid imagery, avoidance of clichés).
- *Credibility*. Is it believable? Does it seem to capture an important truth? Preferably, poems will be based on lived experience – the poet's or that of someone they know, thus autobiographically or biographically inspired.
- *Contribution to the theme*. Does it illuminate the felt experience of higher education? Does it say something new? Do we learn something about higher education from it? While some poems might focus on classroom experiences of teaching or learning or interactions between teachers and students, other poems may highlight interactions with or responses to texts, ideas and disciplinary norms; changing perceptions of truth, knowledge and beauty that often happen as a consequence of higher learning; what it is like to live in a new environment; changes in relationships with home communities and values; and challenges to identity and intimacy.
- *Accessibility and clarity* (without descending to didactics). Can a reader understand what is going on? Accessibility is not always a criterion applied to contemporary poetry. For the purposes of this project, though, it is vital that readers who are not expert in reading and interpreting poetry can make meaning of the contributions.

AIMS AND USES

The primary aim of this book is to prompt reflection, dialogue and increased attention to the whole person in higher education, particularly the emotions associated with

learning, teaching and growing in higher education. To this end, it draws on poetry from a wide range of contributors to illustrate and illuminate the meaning of holistic education. As compact case studies, I hope the poems will be used as teaching cases and discussion starters among teachers and, perhaps, students in higher education. As Boler (1999; 2004) argues, most literature is silent on emotions. I hope these poems will break that silence and encourage others to begin to talk about this overlooked aspect of learning and teaching.

You may want to read the book from cover-to-cover, enabling you to appreciate first a range of ways of looking at the role of emotion in higher education (chapter 2), and then how emotional experiences unfold over the student's lifecycle. You might, however, prefer to dip in and out of particular chapters that interest you. Each chapter is self-contained, allowing you to explore a particular aspect of teaching and learning in higher education through a variety of cases that highlight different angles and perspectives on the chapter's theme. The commentary offers a research-informed perspective on the chapter's themes, although you may wish to tell your own story of the experiences represented in the chapter. As you read a chapter, consider:

- How do you respond emotionally to the poems in this chapter?
- Are there some that particularly strike you? Why?
- Are they familiar? Have you experienced similar situations or issues? How did you resolve them? How else might you have resolved them?
- What themes emerge across poems?
- Are there tensions or contradictions between the poems?
- What do those themes or tensions tell us about the emotional challenges of teaching or learning?
- Do the poems problematize or call attention to some aspect of practice that is a common challenge in your field?
- Is there wisdom within the poems themselves that suggest solutions or good practice in education?

You may also want to test these poems against your understanding of the educational literature (and the various stances outlined in chapter 2):

- What theories of student development, learning or teaching in higher education or of emotion are illustrated by these poems? How?
- Are there any poems (case examples) that contradict, extend or add to existing theory or empirical literature? How? Why might that be?

Beyond private readings, I hope the poems will be used as case examples for discussion among colleagues. In this way, they may be used for faculty or educational development workshops, departmental retreats, or left on the table in a faculty lounge or common room. Some may serve as inspiring stories to include in talks at campus teaching and learning events. Appendix 1 offers some discussion prompts and suggestions for structuring case discussions, which may be helpful for discussion leaders.

If you are facilitating a discussion group, you may want to assemble your own selections from the collection – pulling examples from different chapters and juxtaposing them to stimulate discussion. For instance, you might seek out poems that focus on liberal education, ethics, medical education, inductions, rituals, living arrangements, teacher burnout, campus architecture or some other dimension of student or teacher experience. Because poems are open to multiple interpretations (and multiple readings), they are influenced by the context you place them in. Grouping poems in different ways from across the book will highlight different issues.

THE READER'S ROLE

Poetry is a collaboration between writer and reader. I offer the poems directly to you as the reader. Although I provide an introduction to each chapter and have categorized the cases in ways that fit with my reading of the poems and the higher education literature, you may read them differently and take away different interpretations. You'll hear from expert commentators, but I hope you'll draw your own conclusions and find your own applications and uses for the contents. You may find it helpful to read the poems aloud – you will hear and feel things you may miss reading silently. Reading aloud allows you to feel the rhythm of the language, hear the internal rhymes, tune in to the author's tone (e.g. irony, humor, frustration), and involve your body in the experience conveyed in the poem. Don't be afraid to re-read a poem; poems are often designed to unfold in layers of meaning over multiple readings. If you find yourself reading a poem two or three times, it is often a sign of success, not failure, on the part of both the reader and the poet. And finally, I hope you will share these with colleagues and begin a conversation about emotions in learning and teaching in higher education.

While I have sought accessibility and attempted to group poems thematically, the very form defies such simple linear classifications. The ambiguity of poetry and its potential for multiple meanings is one of its strengths. Revel in it. Run with it. Enjoy it.

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CHAPTER 2

SEVEN STANCES ON EMOTION IN EDUCATION

This chapter is intended to give you tools with which to label your assumptions and those of the speakers of the poems. It also makes various assumptions explicit, enabling us to frame (and re-frame) the situations presented in the case studies, opening up different possibilities for practice and policy. In this way, it offers a deeper, theoretical grounding for those who want a more scholarly foundation to their reading and discussions.

There has been a rapid increase in research attention to emotional experiences in higher education in the past 10 years. However, much of this research is under-theorized. Many research studies describe emotions, but they don't necessarily seek to explain how these emotions arise, the relationship between the emotions and other aspects of the learning environment or the impact or effects of those emotions on learning. Existing theories (and their related literatures) are scattered across various disciplines. There are quite different foci of these theories and quite different assumptions about the role and importance of emotion in the teaching and learning experience.

In this chapter, I summarize seven different conceptual stances toward the role of emotion in learning and teaching in higher education. Arising from a wide-ranging review of the literature, these seven illustrative stances each offer different assumptions and educational implications. I summarize each with a sentence that roughly encapsulates the core belief about the role of emotion in education that unifies a group of theories (what I am calling a 'stance'). The summary sentence is followed by an explanation, references to key literature, guidance about where more information can be found in this book and how this stance might be used by teachers. Each section concludes with reflection questions to help you apply theory to your own practice.

SEVEN STANCES

Stance 1: Emotions Are the Result of Appraisals Related to Our Goals

This stance makes two key assumptions. First, human action is seen as goal-directed. Linnenbrink (2006) explains that goals underpin our thinking, action and emotions and, therefore, are central to linking cognition, motivation and emotion in educational psychology. Second, humans are constantly interpreting and making judgments related to those goals, and those appraisals affect how we feel. Thus, emotions arise from judgments about how successful we are in achieving our goals,

how important those goals are, how much we feel in control and how able we feel to handle problems that might arise (e.g. Pekrun, Frenzel, Goetz, & Perry, 2007).

There are a number of different ways we might appraise our progress toward our goals. We may believe that we can control the outcome or feel that we are not in control of the outcome of a situation. These assessments affect how we feel as we approach a situation, while we are in it, and also how we feel in looking back on an event. If we achieve an important goal, and we think it is because we worked hard (i.e. we were in control), we will feel pride. If we are successful, but think it was beyond our control, we may feel relief or gratitude. If we failed and think it is someone else's fault, we will be angry. Anxiety is triggered when people feel that they are not able to control whether important goals are achieved. Anxiety is a common feeling in higher education (for both students and teachers). Although a little anxiety can be motivating, excessive anxiety is detrimental to academic performance (Pekrun et al., 2007).

These theories emphasize achievement goals (such as getting good grades), though other researchers (Strayhorn, 2012; Weiner, 2007) have highlighted social goals such as a sense of belonging.

Reinhard Pekrun explicates the control-value theory of emotions in chapter 10 and how it applies to the poems in that chapter. Terrell Strayhorn discusses the importance of a sense of belonging to university students in chapter 3.

Reflection Questions

a. What goals are our students striving toward? How important are those goals to them? Do their goals match with our objectives for students?
b. How are we helping students toward reaching their goals?
c. How are we helping students to feel *in control of* their own learning and achievement of their goals? (And where are we inducing unhelpful anxiety)?
d. What are the pitfalls or limits of this stance?

Stance 2: Adults Should Be Able to Regulate and Manage Their Own Emotions

In this stance, adults are seen as able to actively regulate their own emotions (Gross, 2001; Gross & John, 2003; Gross, Richards, & John, 2006). Like the first stance, this one also focuses on how cognitive interpretations of a situation mediate between the stimulus and the feeling evoked. However, this model highlights several steps in the process where a person might actively intervene to change how they feel. Thus the emphasis is on how a person might exercise greater control over their emotions (which may include changing their appraisal of the importance of a goal, or any of a variety of other changes in perspective on the situation).

Emotional regulation can be seen as one part of a broader line of research on self-regulated learning (e.g. Op 'T Eynde, De Corte, & Verschaffel, 2007; Bakracevic, Vukman, & Licardo, 2010). Self-regulated learning emphasizes the processes that

learners use in planning their learning strategies, monitoring their learning and reflecting on it afterwards. Emotional management is one aspect of this process of regulating learning.

According to Gross' (Gross, 2001; Gross & John, 2003; Gross, Richards, & John, 2006) model of adult emotional regulation, adults regulate their emotions at five points in the emotion generation process. Four of these points are prior to the emotional response itself, while the last (suppression) occurs as a way of modulating the physiological, emotional response once it is underway. The first four points include: (a) *selecting* the situation (avoiding negative situations or deliberately choosing happier situations); (b) *modifying* the situation once you are in it; (c) *focusing* attention on particular aspects; and (d) *reappraisal*, in which you take a different perspective on a situation or event and attach different meanings to it that have a different emotional consequence.

Thus adults consciously (and unconsciously) think and act to manipulate situations, the focus of their attention and the meaning they attach to events. Adults also modulate their emotion responses once they happen. Existing research focuses on contrasting reappraisal and suppression processes, demonstrating that, generally, reappraisal is a healthier process that is associated with better social and emotional results (Gross & John, 2003).

Interestingly, teacher's reappraisal (rather than suppression) has been shown to be associated with learning-oriented teaching methods in higher education (Kordts-Freudinger, 2014). Student-centered teaching requires that teachers be able to regulate their own emotions well. Thus, Gross' model may help us, as teachers, reflect on how we manage our own teaching-related emotions. We can analyze a specific situation to see what processes teachers are using to cope with various emotions, whether those are fear or boredom or excitement. We can then look at emotionally fraught situations we face and consciously choose to select or avoid them, modify them, focus our attention differently or re-appraise their meaning.

Reflection Questions

a. Reflecting on your own emotional responses to teaching situations, which of these regulatory processes do you actively use? Can you think of specific examples where you've used one approach or another? How else might you have regulated the situation? (e.g. could you have set up the situation differently, modified the situation once you were in it, focused your attention differently, or re-appraised the meaning of a comment or action)?
b. To what extent are your students aware of and practicing these processes to manage their own behaviors related to the classroom? Is this helpful or harmful? (e.g. are they suppressing when they could benefit from re-appraising? Avoiding a situation when they shouldn't?).
c. What are the pitfalls (social, moral or educational) of expecting adults to regulate their own emotions (regardless of the situation)?

Stance 3: Emotional Intelligence Is a Set of Personal Success Skills That Can (and Should) Be Developed

This stance contains two key assumptions. First, as with the first two stances, it assumes that emotions are individual and personal. Second, it assumes that emotional regulation is possible and desirable. This stance, though, assumes that emotional intelligence is an ability, possessed (and, possibly, developed) like other kinds of intelligences. In this case, emotional intelligence refers to 'a person's ability to identify and process emotions' (Allen, MacCann, Matthews, & Roberts, 2014, p. 163).

Like Stance 2, this theory also contains the idea that it is desirable (and important) to be able to manage one's emotions. Rather than focusing on the process of regulation, though, the emphasis is more on the ability itself. Goleman (1996) first popularized the idea of emotional intelligence as (a) a set of desirable personal skills related to knowing oneself, managing oneself, motivating oneself and; (b) as social skills related to understanding others and their feelings and managing responses to others' emotions.

While there have been a number of different theories of emotional intelligence (Allen, MacCann, Matthews, & Roberts, 2014), Mayer and Salovy's (1997) model sets out four major branches of emotional intelligence: (a) *emotion perception* involves being able to perceive others' emotions through, for example, facial expression, tone of voice and body language; (b) *emotion facilitation* involves using emotional information to help support one's performance; (c) *understanding emotions* involves awareness of emotional terminology and how emotions work, change, blend together and interact with situations; (d) *managing emotions* deals with regulating one's own emotions and effectively managing the emotions of others. The elements are step-wise in that they depend upon the previous branches. We cannot manage emotions without understanding them. We cannot use a piece of emotional information without perceiving it in the first place (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008).

Goleman (1996) argued that emotional intelligence can be more important to success in life than traditional concepts of intelligence, and that it can be taught. A meta-analysis shows that school children who participate in social emotional learning programs demonstrated significantly better social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior and academic performance than students in control groups (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

In this view, emotional intelligence is seen as a desirable outcome of higher education, something that can (and should?) be developed through educational interventions. In caring professions such as medicine, nursing, social work and teacher education, educators want students to be empathic in working with patients, clients and children in emotionally charged situations, without experiencing burnout. Various pedagogies are suggested for helping students manage and learn from their emotional experiences, including telling stories (Ahern, Doyle, Marquis,

Lesk, & Skrobik, 2012), mindfulness (Napoli & Bonifas, 2011), and reflective practice (Service, 2012).

In music, educators want students to tap their emotional responses as a key to making a musical performance more expressive (Wiggins, 2013). Although this is a quite different context than the caring professions, emotion still plays a functional role in the success of students as future professionals. Thus, in these various examples, emotional awareness and management are seen as instrumental; they are success skills that students need to develop.

Reflection Questions

a. What emotional abilities do you assume your students already have? Is this a fair assumption? What happens when they don't demonstrate these abilities?
b. Are emotional abilities (emotional intelligence) something that universities should be developing in students?
c. What emotional abilities do you want your students to develop?
d. How does your teaching and curriculum support the development of emotional intelligence? Which branch of emotional intelligence are you enabling students to practice (perception, facilitation, understanding, managing)?
e. What are the pitfalls or limits of locating emotional intelligence as individual, personal success skills?

Stance 4: Some Emotions Are Remnants of Past, Unresolved Conflicts

This stance assumes that some emotions are triggered by memories or associations with past events, rather than offering a real response to a current situation. This stance emphasizes the relational dimension of emotions – how an emotion is triggered within a particular kind of relationship. This stance also emphasizes the personal histories that lead to particular interpretations and, thus, emotional responses within key relationships.

Slater and her colleagues (Slater, Veach, & Li, 2013) draw on theories that have been used in helping relationships, arguing along with Robertson (1996; 1999; 2000) that when teaching is conceived of as 'facilitating learning' it can also be seen as an educational helping relationship. The helping relationship is assumed to be comprised of three elements: a working alliance, the real relationship and the unreal or transference relationship (Gelso & Carter, 1985). The transference relationship involves participants projecting feelings, behaviors and perceptions onto each other that are carry-overs from previous relationships with significant others. In this way, the behaviors and emotions may not match the actual, current situation. When the person being helped projects such emotions, it is called transference. When the helper projects such emotions, it is called countertransference. Thus, students may experience transference and teachers may experience counter-transference.

In their study of expert teachers' experiences of counter-transference, Slater et al. (2013) defined counter-transference as 'a universal phenomenon that occurs

in all human relationships. Counter-transference is a type of emotional reaction we experience in our interactions with others. It has been defined as 'those reactions to others that stem from our own areas of personal conflict' (p. 7). Yeh and Hayes (2011) argued that if people understand these emotional dynamics, they can reflect on these reactions to promote empathy and understanding.

Thus, this theory focuses on the two-way relationship between a student and a teacher. It also brings in the personal histories of the individuals in this relationship insofar as students and teachers may react to situations on the basis of personal conflicts that they bring from past experiences and project into current situations. This theory, then, reminds us that individuals have a past that colors interpretations of the present. It also suggests that we are not controlled by that past, but, through self-reflection and conversation with others, we can manage and learn from episodes in which transference or counter-transference are triggered (Yeh & Hayes, 2011).

This stance prompts us, as teachers, to question whether our own emotions are a response to the current situation, or whether we are having our 'buttons pushed' – whether the emotions we are experiencing are remnants of some unresolved situation with significant others, rather than a real response to the current situation. Similarly, we can remain alert to when students may also be projecting unresolved feelings from parental relationships into their relationship with us as a teacher. These situations may be more likely to arise in one-to-one interactions, such as consultations outside of class regarding pastoral care matters or in individual advising or supervision of projects. Celia Hunt explores these issues in chapter 5.

Reflection Questions

a. What experiences of transference you have had as a learner?
b. What experiences of countertransference you have had as a teacher? What impact did this have on the student(s)?
c. What experiences of a student's transference to you as a teacher have you had? How did this affect you? The relationship?
d. How have you handled these past, unresolved conflicts?
e. How else might you handle these past, unresolved conflicts in your current teaching relationships?
f. What pitfalls are there in analyzing situations through this lens?

Stance 5: Students' (and Teachers') Emotions Can (and Should) Be Interrogated and Critiqued as Socio-Cultural Phenomenon

The previous four stances are distinctly psychological insofar as they situate emotions and responsibility for managing them in the individual person, isolated from his or her social and cultural context. A sociological perspective, though, views emotions as socio-cultural phenomena that are historically constructed and reproduced by schools, universities and other social institutions. When teachers (or students) must behave in particular ways to be socially acceptable (such as avoiding

expressions of anger, even when they might naturally feel angry (Liljestrom, Roulston, & Demarrais, 2007), they are said to be performing emotional labor. Teaching involves emotional labor (and being a student also often involves emotional labor) (Hargreaves, 1998).

Various sociologists have discussed the ways that organizations attempt to control and, therefore, benefit from the emotional labor of their members. Each organization has a set of implicit emotional rules. For example, teachers may be reluctant to disclose their own personal stories and histories. In other settings, such disclosure may be considered appropriate and useful. Whether it is acceptable for teachers to disclose personal details of their life history is one example of an emotional rule. Whether it is acceptable to cry in a class or during office hours or whether to resist unrealistic demands (from a supervisor or institutional policy) all constitute part of the emotional rules of the particular organization within which we work. These emotional rules have been described as 'affective structures' (Clegg, 2013) or 'affective practices,' a term that acknowledges individual agency within emotional rules (Wetherell, 2013). Affective practices may vary by country, institution and department, but are worth examining and critiquing. In this way, we see that emotional regulation is happening within a larger context that shapes how we appraise or interpret situations, express emotion – and, even, how we feel.

These sociological and cultural ideas have been particularly valuable in examining social tensions and cultural conflicts. Ahmed (2004), for instance, has highlighted the cultural politics of emotions, illustrating how sub-populations can perpetuate in-groups and out-groups through hatred, fear and distrust, creating powerful barriers to equality and peaceful relations (Ahmed, 2004). Zembylas (2002; 2007; 2012) has built on these ideas, urging relational rather than personal analyses of emotions.

Adopting 'pedagogies of discomfort' (Boler, 2004) in which students become aware of, question and re-story their own feelings may be key to addressing racism, sexism and the associated cultural politics of emotion (Ahmed, 2004). In this stance, emotions and associated emotional rules are seen as social constructs that are manipulated by those in power and demand critical analysis and awareness-raising about the feelings and the processes that generate them.

The implications of this stance, then, are that we can view students' emotions (and our own) as an educational object – i.e. something that can be interrogated and critiqued to better understand a variety of different situations. Michalinos Zembylas explores these issues in chapter 6. That chapter situates our teaching in broader socio-cultural contexts and considers the emotional implications of those broader contexts for teaching and learning.

Reflection Questions

a. What are the emotional rules (affective structures) in your own teaching context? Do they vary from one class to another?
b. How do you respond to those emotional rules – do you obey willingly, obey grudgingly or actively resist?

c. What emotional rules for students do you set up and enforce (consciously or unconsciously) in your own teaching?
d. How do these emotional rules serve you and your students? How do they unhelpfully constrain you?
e. How might you interrogate (and question) emotions, their role and their sources (i.e. the emotional rules) in your field? i.e. how might these become part of a curriculum?
f. What are the pitfalls or limitations of analyzing emotional episodes from this perspective?

Stance 6: Emotional Disorientation Can Catalyze Changes in Perspectives or Identity. It Is a Natural and Necessary Part of the Learning Process

The basic assumption of this stance is that education is a process of changing one's perspectives, sense of self or identity. While education can be seen in other ways – as acquiring information; storing information that can be reproduced; acquiring facts, skills and methods that can be retained and used as necessary; or making sense or abstracting meaning from complex information or situations (Säljö, 1979), this stance is rooted in the assumption that education is a process of changing as a person. Some theories of adult development acknowledge the emotional challenges associated with transforming one's world views, an experience that often accompanies the criticality cultivated in higher education, particularly in emancipatory or radical education.

Taylor and Jarecke (2009) extend Mezirow's (1981) original transformative learning theory (which has been critiqued for being too rational) to show how emotional disorientation serves as a catalyst for transformative learning. Disorienting experiences destabilize students enough for them to re-analyze a situation, a necessary step in changing their frames of reference. This theory is invoked in numerous examples of students' emotional experiences in higher education (e.g. case studies in Mezirow & Taylor, 2009; Wright & Hodge, 2012), elaborated by other writers (e.g. Dirkx, 2008) and updated to take a more holistic view of changes in identity (Illerus, 2014) and self (Tennant, 2012).

Theories of student development in higher education (e.g. Perry, 1968; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Baxter Magolda, 1992) also acknowledge the emotions that can accompany developmental changes. Studies conducted by these authors have found that students in American universities go through predictable stages of understanding about the nature of knowledge itself. Those immediately out of school, for instance, may see knowledge as 'black and white' or absolute, with right and wrong answers held and known by authorities. Over time, they come to see knowledge as uncertain (i.e. contested and contestable) and that authorities disagree, a stage often referred to as relativism. This step seeds independent knowing, in which students see that their opinion counts. In the independent knowing phase, students focus on developing their own perspectives. With further study, they understand that all perspectives are not equal; some knowledge claims are better than others in a

particular context. At this stage, it isn't just independence in thinking that is valued, but the quality of the evidence and arguments. Knowledge must be integrated and applied in context (Baxter Magolda, 1992).

While Perry (1968), Belenky and her colleagues (1986) and Marcia Baxter Magolda (1992) focus on epistemological development – i.e. changes in how students view knowledge, Parks' (2000) work focuses on spiritual development. She emphasizes how young adults (both traditional-aged students in higher education and young graduates) must, in the process of questioning and reinterpreting their worlds, reconstruct a sense of meaning. She emphasizes the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the struggle to remake meaning and faith (used in the broadest terms), having passed through an appreciation of relativism.

Parks (2000), writing of students experiencing a sense of 'shipwreck' when a worldview has been shattered, highlights the deep sense of threat, loss and hopelessness that can occur. University presents many opportunities for students to challenge received values (those from schools, churches, families) with alternative values. Thus, emotional turmoil is seen as a consequence of shattered world-views. As in Taylor and Jarecke's (2009) model, this emotional disorientation may lead to establishing new perspectives and commitments.

In chapter 4 (Remaking Self-in-World) we see examples of students experiencing these kinds of transformation. Marcia Baxter Magolda provides commentary, drawing on literature on student development in higher education and highlighting the emotional dimensions of these transformations. In chapter 7, David Keplinger also explores education as a process of meaning-making in a world that often defies sense.

Reflection Questions

a. Do you recognize these stages in your students' development? Are there particular activities or topics that tend to trigger changes in their view of the nature of knowledge, themselves, the world or your field? What emotions are prompted?
b. Do you use particular instructional strategies as emotional catalysts for students to re-think fundamental assumptions? (e.g. study abroad, service learning, placements, research experiences)?
c. How do you support students through these emotionally disruptive, transformative moments?
d. How do you help students regain stability (whether this is a sense of purpose, commitment or hope)?
e. What are the pitfalls or limits of applying this lens to your instruction?

Stance 7: Emotionalizing Education Is an Unwelcome Spread of Therapeutic Culture

Some authors criticize what they characterize as therapeutic approaches to education (Ecclestone, 2004; Furedi, 2004). Furedi (2004) perceives a rise in a 'therapeutic'

ethos in Anglo-American society, causing normal difficult life events (e.g. grieving, separation from loved ones, anxiety) to be reframed in terms of emotional deficit. Therapeutic culture is presented as pervading many aspects of American and British culture, including education, justice, politics and work. In this view, education has become overly concerned with reducing stress, teaching people to cope with life, and thereby promoting a diminished self – one portrayed as weak, feeble and in need of constant counselling. These authors are particularly critical of psychological theories, such as stances 2, 3 and 4.

Reflection Questions

a. Why are many fields now acknowledging the affective? How is this affecting your own field?
b. How is education different from therapy (even when acknowledging the emotional dimensions of learning and teaching)?
c. How can we teach in emotionally sound ways without turning it into therapy?

CONCLUSION

This brief overview of seven key conceptual stances has suggested that emotion in higher education is conceived of in quite different ways, with significant and diverse implications for educational policy and practice. Psychological studies focus on emotions as individual phenomena arising from a person's interpretations of situations. Emotions also can be seen and analysed as a set of individually possessed success skills that schools and universities might develop in their students by teaching self-awareness and regulatory strategies. Alternatively, emotional discomfort can be valuable insofar as it triggers or is the result of challenging world-views. In this way, it lies at the heart of adult development and transformation.

We have also seen how emotions are social and cultural phenomenon that are often historically constructed and reproduced by schools and other social institutions. Hatred, fear and distrust are prime examples of how in-groups and out-groups are created and perpetuated, creating powerful barriers to equality, peace, and constructive educational dialogue. Students might usefully open up their own feelings to questioning and alternative storying by being aware of the cultural politics of emotion and their own implication in existing cultural/emotional hegemonies (such as racism and sexism). Emotions, then, can become the object of curricular attention and, through that critical attention, sites of social resistance.

I present these different stances in order to help you reflect on your own assumptions about how emotions operate for you, your students and in your classrooms. As you look at the case studies in this book, you can see whether they illustrate one or more of these stances. What happens when we apply a different stance to the same scenario? Does it open up different interpretations and different courses of action? In the discussion questions provided in Appendix 1, I invite

readers to apply these different stances to the poems and to case examples from their own teaching experience.

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CHAPTER 3

TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION – IN SEARCH OF BELONGING

The transition to higher education is a significant milestone in the life-cycle of students. It evokes a range of emotions from excitement to fear as they make a new intellectual and social home for themselves. Traditional-aged students who leave home often find themselves mingling with and learning from students with quite different backgrounds. How students adjust and the extent to which they are able to establish a feeling of belonging in new communities can set the stage for much of their university experience (Strayhorn, 2012). This chapter is particularly important in light of massification and increased internationalization of higher education, as more students find themselves navigating unfamiliar cultures in higher education.

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CHAPTER 3

KATIE THORNTON

Hiraeth

My Mum couldn't get the day off.

Dad drove me.
Boot of the car rammed with books
boots, shoes,
clothes, enough
for Milan's Fashion Week,
an army supply of tea,
two pillows
and a blanket that would always smell of home even when it no longer did.

On the drive up we listened to old 30's swing
and talked
and laughed
and sang that we were so happy in the Congo I refuse to go.

We arrived at my destination.
A shiny tower; silver
with purple at the top.
I was given a fob-key to one of the identical white rooms.

It took four trips up and down
Up and down
Up and down
Up in the boxy, metallic elevator.

It took a bit longer to ponder on how to turn a white, identical room into home when nails and blue-tak were prohibited.

My Dad went to the car one final time and returned with Audrey
Hepburn, in a sleek black dress, huge hat, Cat around her shoulders and a cigarette held between her pearly whites.

I recognised an optimism and hopefulness behind his gift.
In keeping with the rules we couldn't hang it on the wall. Instead
he put it on the basic, uniform wooden desk, leaning against the new, unmarred cork-board.

And we hugged.

It is a most peculiar sadness, leaving for the first time. It is
an ending of something you have
always known.
You knew this time approached but never acknowledged
how big the shift would be.
For some there is fear, anxiety, sadness.

But it seems to me that on the whole it is not right to mourn.
Because in the morning
– after that first night alone –
doors open.
Windows too.
Unfamiliar territory shapes itself into a curious new home. Different
from the one you left. Real
nonetheless.

Eventually this world you didn't know
how to enter becomes your life. The only things
you lacked were the tools to unlock it
And now
day by day
you equip yourself.

You learn how to live it.
You love to live it.

Commentary. As the daughter of a semi-nomadic family, I am used to goodbyes. I attended seven schools – from home-schooling, to a rough comprehensive school, to a top ladies college – all before university was even a factor. But I remember no change as vividly as leaving home for the first time. I feel it's the most loaded transition. It is tied up in loss and fear and only partially developed independence. But all this is outweighed by new opportunities. The beauty comes from the juxtaposition; sadness balanced with joy at the possibilities, potential and promise, as a fledgling teeters, hoping to fly. The title, Hiraeth, is a Welsh word with no direct translation to English. It suggests homesickness mixed with a sense of grief, longing or nostalgia for the past.

CHAPTER 3

CAROLYN LOCKE

Chestnuts

I have carried them with me for weeks,
torn from the spiked green casing
that held them joined like Siamese twins,
backs pressing their weight against each other,
bodies swelling in summer rain.

On the day I left you,
I took them from the lawn beneath the tree.
I suppose I thought they might
save me on days like this,
when I can't stop looking for you here,
hoping that, like the rays of stars already dead
a thousand years, your light will flicker
on the walls of this room.

I rub my thumb across their backs,
feel how one has made itself a hollow space,
concave and ready to hold the other
in its growing, and I see faint imprints
shimmering on its surface.

Like this, I say, my body lies,
an empty mold that held you
still radiating light.

Previously published in *Always This Falling* (Maine Authors Publishing, 2010)

Commentary. 'Chestnuts' was written several weeks after my son left home for college. I had picked up two chestnuts from under a tree on the Sarah Lawrence College campus (USA) and kept them in my pocket, fingering them often in the days that followed as I worked through my feelings of loss and separation and wondered about his future, as well as my own.

CAROLYN LOCKE

Leaving Again
for Alison

The car door shuts
behind you
and you walk
walk through darkness
toward the light.

Shoulders straight,
arch of your back firm,
pony tail bobbing,
you bounce
up the steps.

On the landing
you turn quickly,
tilt your head,
and offer
a quick flutter
of the hand,

a mysterious signal
that seems to say
the darkness between us
doesn't exist.

Previously published in *Always This Falling* (Maine Authors Publishing, 2010)

Commentary. 'Leaving Again' was written after returning my daughter to Bates College in Maine (USA) following a visit home. I was haunted by an image: the way she walked from the car to the dormitory with such confidence, then turned so very briefly to acknowledge her father and me before shutting the door behind her. I used poetry to explore my mixed feelings about it.

CHAPTER 3

JENNI CURRY

I take a breath

I take a breath. I'm here for real.
What will they think of me?
Will they accept me?
There's so much to do.
Not just the assignments.
How will I finish them on time?

I take a breath. I cry out loud.
I want to belong in this world.
Thousand words left.
Do I go to the bar?
Will my parents be proud?
What if I fail?

I take a breath. I join a club.
Is the social really that bad?
It feels like high school.
I want to fit in.
They smile across the room.
Will we be friends?

I take a breath. I hand it in.
Could this be my last?
I've learned so much.
Not just in class.
Years at uni.
Where did they go?

I take a breath. I don a gown.
My Dad looks so proud.
I can't stand still.
I hear my name.
Certificate in my hand.
Here I go…

Commentary. This poem is set within the modern Australian University scene. It came from my own sense of being an outsider during my undergraduate experience. As social acceptance was a key theme consuming my thoughts at University, I was

not as adventurous as I might have been. Rather than trying everything on offer, I stuck to the small group that was safe. The desire for social acceptance is something that all young people feel at one point or another. Some feel it more strongly than others and need to constantly stop to ‘take a breath’.

CHAPTER 3

JEFFREY LANNAN

The [Student] Card

Only five inches of thin plastic,
maybe four inches wide,
with a picture of a happy man.

There're so many numbers
only young eyes can read;
yet the card is mine, and I am ecstatic.

As I sat in dark pubs on Saturday nights
a continent away
while the men on stage sang about a land of shamrocks,

I would dream of owning this small card.

My friends bought cars
or stereos to make noise and be heard.
I spent every penny on books
so I could be silent and fulfilled.
Books piled around the tiny apartment
like the columns in the Parthenon.

Reading on the crowded subway:
47 stops to get to work,
blessed isolation, even during rush hour.

Smokey parties and late night laughter,
I could always find a window
to look out and dream.

A lifetime of searching: from the hard streets of the city
to the marble floors of the monastery,
I heard God's voice calling me; I just didn't know what He wanted.

All those years of travel and nights of asking the stars.
All so that I could bring myself to this place,
sit and stuff my hunger full.

And all it took was this little plastic card.
That, and a 30 year-long apprenticeship
to finally own it.

JO NIEDERHOFF

Home Isn't Always

The place you used to belong,
where blood ties you to concrete and asphalt
where you had no choice in school
where you grew from baby to adult
where like clay you were molded
where you know what to expect and what is expected
where you have always lain your head to rest.

The place you are given to share,
where you must learn diplomacy to survive
where rules are no longer laid down from above
where you listen to a stranger's breathing in the night
where fear and exhaustion cling to corners like malevolent dust bunnies
where books and clothes pile on the floor
where you lay your head in hope of rest.

Commentary. This poem takes place at my college in modern day United States, but it could be applied to almost any college where students feel as though they can't quite find a home where they are. The first stanza refers to students who feel like they've left their old home behind and no longer fit there when they go back to visit. The second was inspired by a friend who no longer feels comfortable in her dormitory room and what I imagine that must be like.

CHAPTER 3

JENNIFER A. McGOWAN

The Making of Him

The world has always been a marble.
– i.m. J.J.P. and F.N.

There had never been a lot of money.
When 1929 crash-landed, my grandfather did a spell
on the assembly lines, where he daren't
sneeze or scratch his nose for the parts he'd miss.
Seven cents an hour taught him
that education was what really mattered,
and despite his peers leaving school in sixth grade,
becoming men who earned smokes and drink,
becoming men of parts, he persevered,
became sportsman, scholar—won scholarships,
his own kind of income. He left his friends,
left the ever-present marble game on Rock Avenue,
'Keepsies' played by boys-into-men.
Went to New York, to university.
Excelled. Escaped the squalid basement
he shared with six others by tutoring Eugene,
a rich friend and bad student. Lived in.
His first glimpse of affluence—the food on the table.
Eugene was picky, slid his plate over;
my grandfather devoured impartially. When Eugene's grades
began to rise, his parents bought my grandfather
his first new clothes: clean, starched, pressed.
Look at Joe, said his Rock Avenue friends
when he went home to visit his mother.
Them fancy threads. Gone too far up for us.
Grandfather knew value when he saw it.
He got down and shot marbles.

Previously published in *The Weight of Coming Home* (Indigo Dreams Press, 2015)

CAMILLE DUNGY

Assignment #3: Write About Your Favorite Book

I only know Dolly's mother loved her and Dolly knew this
because of the many-colored coat her mother made—
built of flowers snipped from flour sacks, bright rags
Dolly grew to love—I know this much
because every year, as trees put on red and gold tops,
one girl would decide her favorite book was Dolly Parton's,
and during peer evaluation, pulling her diamond cross
against its thin thin chain, this girl would finish reading her draft
and sigh a sigh that signaled to the class the time to talk had come
so, jodhpurs still muddy, a girl who came straight from the stables,
and a girl who cried when I criticized her papers' generalities
('childhood is a time of protected innocence,' 'children get to play
outside all summer,' 'all girls have a favorite doll'),
and, this seemed to happen each October, a girl whose mother had gazed
from the same window M, W, F at 11, too,
having taken freshman comp in that same room,
and the one who hated to be stereotyped and started the club
that got girls talking about new ways to demonstrate love,
and the one who, during orientation, must have bought her favorite t-shirt
in all the colors, the college logo sealed over her heart and, writ large,
the unofficial motto, 'not a girls' school with no men,
but a women's college with no boys,'
and the girl who got engaged at her high school graduation party,
the girl who rarely spoke, who covered her mouth when she smiled,
and the girl from the Southside Virginia no-stop-light town,
and even the girl who was never shy about saying she didn't know
what the other girls were talking about,
she'd grown up someplace completely different,
said, it's about having pride in who you are and where
you come from and the professor wants to know if she stuck to her thesis
and she stuck to her thesis and I wish I could
sew I'd make myself a coat like that and I just love this book
and does she need to bring up that Bible story
and the Bible story is a bit confusing and I don't think she cited her sources
she left out quotation marks I think she means Dolly
loves the coat but when she writes I loved the coat
it sounds like her and I like that I think that's okay
and I love this book and I think this is a great paper
yeah I really like this paper

and I really love how she gets us to care about her
and I feel like she has everything she needs
and I feel like we know everything we need to know.

MEREDITH HOLMES

College Poetry Reading Novice

We gathered in Twombly Hall, a perfect place for poetry
I thought, melting into the dim Anglophile décor
but finding the orange plastic chairs a disappointing,
discordant note and wishing my A-line skirt were less prosaic.

First, a stocky, assured girl marched to the front
and declaimed from a clutch of yellow legal sheets
with an intensity I did not know was tolerated anywhere
about the dangers of speaking aloud her 'stained-glass
thoughts.' Everyone clapped and sighed as for fireworks.

The next poet had a lanky, farm boy frame
slipping-down glasses, and unbuttoned cuffs.
When he spoke of 'the cleanness of trees'
I lost my heart, but found it puzzling
that his lines, anodyne to me, caused him pain
even his 'sylph with corn silk hair' failed to ease.
Words that split him in two just being thought of
would have made me the happiest of girls
glad to endure hard labor for such a poem.

Commentary. For one year, I attended Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU) in Madison, New Jersey. I chose this school, in part, because my uncle, who was a poet and an English professor at Tufts, said FDU had an excellent English department. Although I had read a lot of poetry and listened to many Caedmon recordings, I had never heard a real, live poet read his or her work. Nor had I ever considered what student poetry might sound or feel like. I had no idea that most universities harbor a community of writers, so I was just as surprised by the audience.

CHAPTER 3

LINDA GOODMAN ROBINER

Leslie whose Hair was so Black it was Silver

The truth is I was probably a little in love with her. We met the day we registered, our freshman year at Michigan. She sat next to me in Waterman Gym, filling out a form. Told me her name was *Lezlie*, savoring the z. She was unlike other girls – it wasn't just her inquisitive cerulean eyes. At Heights High School, girls said things like *Ilene was sitting with John at the football game* or *Are you ready for the geometry final?* Leslie had an aura, a refinement I didn't know, had been to Europe, spoke French, talked about philosophy. Our conversations were about ideas, how we felt inside, what we understood about the world and our lives. She confessed she had let a boy touch her breasts. We agreed we'd go all the way with a boy before we were married if we knew we were going to die.

My world was opening out. Her brilliance, her depth, her self-assurance affected me. One afternoon, walking to Mosher Jordan Dorm to visit her, I felt as though every tree had concealed its colors from me till that abundant orange and gold appeared. I stopped on the sidewalk and wrote a poem, a blessing. I think that day was my first glimpse of how one cultivates a soul.

Leslie came home with me that first Thanksgiving. I had dated two boys named Mitch Zucker in college. One phoned to ask me out. I hoped it was the tall, handsome one with fiery eyes, but there was no way to ask. The wrong Mitch arrived at my door. I fixed Leslie up with a senior at Rutgers I had a crush on, Jay Gilden. She told me Jay kissed her goodnight.

Winter break, I visited her in Brooklyn. The parlor of her parents' apartment looked as I'd imagined a stage set for an opera, though I'd never seen one. Dimly lit. Chairs upholstered in rich dark velvet. Persian rugs and pictures like those I'd seen at the art museum. Oil paintings had lights underneath and brushstrokes. Leslie's high twin beds were dressed in lacy white bedspreads, hand-stitched pillows propped on each one. She found me a date and we danced to Guy Lombardo at the Waldorf-Astoria, stood amid the crowd at Times Square to watch the real ball drop. Before he left for work my last morning, her father left me a note on the kitchen table: *Thank you for gracing our home with your lovely presence.* No one I knew used that kind of language. Leslie sent me airmails that summer from the Brussels World's Fair on tissue-thin paper, slanting each blue-inked word, sent me a stuffed doll named Bécassine.

Thirty years later, in New York, the city evoked Leslie for me, and I searched for a Brooklyn phone book. Someone named Dietz, still listed at 145 Hicks Street. Her father provided Leslie's address in Santa Monica, said she'd be glad to hear from

me. I wrote. Weeks passed. A month. A letter came but it was distant. Her next envelope enclosed a photo – her husband, herself, and a daughter so like the girl in Waterman gym. What she hadn't written the first time: she had cancer. It had metastasized. I wrote again. And one more time.

Commentary. My university experience in the United States was extremely expansive for me. An important part of my transformation during the years of higher education included encountering individuals unlike students I had known in high school, where popularity and cheerleading seemed the major goals. Leslie wanted to explore life on a deeper plane than anyone I'd known until then, and I had been longing for such depth of conversation, for such soul and substance. I met Leslie in 1954 at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The end of the prose poem was in 1984 in New York City.

DEBORAH COX

My First Boyfriend, The Archaeologist

He found the lower reptilian half
of a fossil – its cross-section limbs curled like
a tale with flipper toes intact.

Then he told me how flesh and bone can turn
to stone: negative particles attract
calcium deposits and gather together.

minerals into the shape of a body –
the shards of bone now strips of stone;
the creature's bowels now bright crystals;

'till this fat rounded rump with creases is just
a rock, smooth and folded hard
in the palm of my hand.

GAIL GRIFFIN

In the Office in the Afternoon, Following
a Class in Women's Literature

She is pregnant – do you see that,
boy chemist sitting beside my desk?
You have never felt as small as in that chair,
lost and dumb in poetry. Yes, in line two
something kicks her in the ribs. But no,
it is not her lover this time.
It is the thing inside her, upside down,
and that is why in line one she exclaims
about connection. I wonder – when you catch
a ride home to the suburbs on weekends,
do you ever think about the woman
who opens her arms to you and your laundry,
your tales of the dorm, the girlfriend,
the bastard of a chem prof? The woman
who nods, smiles, murmurs, thinking to herself,
'He is so serious, absorbed in his things,
manlike; does he sleep with her?' – do you know
she carried you around for three long seasons,
leaping in her heart when you first moved?
Do you know that once – thumb in mouth,
curled into yourself almost as you are now
in that chair, likewise waiting to be delivered –
you dealt her such a shot to the ribs
that she gasped with the sudden woman's knowledge
of all she would learn of love and pain,
how one curls like a fist inside the other?

Previously published in *Calyx*

Commentary. A very silent young man in my women's literature class came in to discuss a paper on a poem he had misread. The misreading both amused and moved me: he mistook the kicking of a fetus for abuse by a boyfriend – doubtless because we discussed violence against women so often in class. I thought of how lost he was and came to the central educational question: how do we move outside our selfhood to enter into foreign experience? I considered the male relationship to femaleness, and eventually followed the poor student back into the womb.

CHAPTER 3

DEBORAH MASON

Japanese Learner in Oxford

I am here one month.
I have been here for one month.
Always it rains here in fall?
No. It always rains here in autumn.
Not fall. And not quite every day.
Not fall? Not rains?
No. And yes. It is raining now.
Oxford has a heavy rainfall.
Ah so?

Now it is winter.
There is no snow on the mountains.
There are no mountains.
There are many language schools.
'Drizzle' is a new word for me.
It was drizzling yesterday.

Spring is here!
I have made a friend.
He is Asian like me.
He is from Taiwan.
There are cherry blossoms in Banbury Road.
And yes!
The sun is shining.

Previously published in *The Japanese Learner* and *Oxford Magazine*

Commentary. I wrote this poem when I was teaching Japanese students on a diploma course at the Department for Continuing Education at Oxford University. I tried to convey their sense of culture shock and their gradual adaptation to Oxford life as the academic year progressed. It started off with the word 'drizzle', which intrigued one student who asked me what it meant. The first stanza is not an episode taken from my class – it was created to show how confusion could be caused in communication between an English teacher and a Japanese student.

CAROLYN LOCKE

Hopscotch

Nobody told you it wasn't proper
to enter the Sheraton Athens in cut-off jeans,
but if they had, you'd've said, 'Screw them!'
and done it anyway. At least
that's what you'd like to think
when your mind travels the road
to who you were then. True

or false? Who's to say
whether the sweet-tart juice
of the orange stolen from the tree
made your mouth tingle
or merely dribbled over your fingers
and dried to a sticky web
between them, whether Athens

was a city of scalding light,
scarlet poppies, honeyed baklava—
or just the sharp aftertaste
of ouzo coating the tongue,
the cry of skeletal cats
walking the narrow streets?

When you wrote home, were those postcards
meant to dazzle your mother into believing
the world you'd found held no nights
when you curled in a foreign bed
clutching the latest *Time Magazine,* hungry
for a language you understood?

Or were they sent to yourself:

Traveler
in another country
another time
any country
any time

but your
own ?

Either way, they've been returned
in a box you're afraid to open.

Previously published in *Always This Falling* (Maine Authors Publishing, 2010)

Commentary. 'Hopscotch' is a reflection on my travels as a young adult beginning with my junior year abroad at Manchester College, Oxford University, during which I spent time in Germany, France, Norway, and Spain, and then a year after graduation, when I traveled through Greece, Italy, and Spain. Written many years later after looking at some pictures from that time and reading letters and postcards my mother had saved, it explores the conflicting feelings of adventure and loneliness I experienced then and raises questions about how honest I had been in thinking about that time in my life.

MEREDITH HOLMES

Time, Matter, and Motivation in Hayden Hall

My advisor means well.
He asks me about my future:
What do you intend to do with your life?
Are you planning to teach?
'Intend.' 'Your life.' I turn these words
over in my mind, but understand nothing.
They are smooth, mute artifacts,
which I hand back without comment.

Weighed down by immediate sensations,
I live on an enormous planet,
where gravity is 100 times stronger
than on earth, and one day lasts for weeks.
If you worked on your thesis a little bit
every day, my advisor explains patiently,
you could finish by the deadline.
I grasp the power of the incremental
but not as it applies to me.

My advisor's wool jacket hangs
on its hook like the Pleistocene.
Above us, the dust of dispersed
galaxies drifts across the afternoon.
On the desk lies the written record
of my checkered academic career.
I am made of atoms from which
the property of urgency is absent.
My only motion is backward
from stillness through paralysis
to a solid state, indistinguishable
(without extremely sensitive
equipment) from nothingness.

Previously published in *Familiar at First, Then Strange* (Pond Road Press, 2015)

Commentary. Most of my undergraduate years I felt like a dinosaur caught in a tar pit. A major portion of this feeling can be attributed to my lack of direction and focus, but some of it to historical context. The year before I arrived on campus, Case

Western Reserve University had federated with the Case Institute of Technology. Case was the richer, more powerful institution, and after the two colleges joined, humanities took a back seat. I loved my classes, and I had many wonderful professors, but I could see no way of making a living with my degree. I was convinced that what I cared most about – literature – the world had no use for.

BAO HUYNH

The Ghost of Cardinal Newman

They let me through the ivory doors
to walk along these hallowed halls
to wear the cap that scholars wore
and carve for myself a better future.
But at the door I met a ghost
who whispered softly in my ear:
'What will all this be for?'

At first I found the journey rough,
when all seemed new, and all seemed strange
but I knew that soon I'd learn enough
and know enough to get me through.
But there beside me walked a ghost
who whispered softly in my ear:
'What will all this be for?'

Erelong I learnt to work and play
among the classes, essays, tests,
and all the years just slipped away.
Time passed, and I passed likewise.
But all those years I heard a ghost
who whispered softly in my ear:
'What will all this be for?'

So as black hats take joyous flight
above this young and learned head,
all the world shines ever so bright,
a glowing future stretches out.
Yet still I hear a solemn ghost
who whispers sadly in my ear:
'Just what was all this for?'

Commentary. In an Honours thesis in Australia, I explored why students bother going to university. The results were startling. A lot of students never really knew why they were there, or what they wanted. It was just the next thing to do after high school. I've tried to capture this disjunct between the mechanics of just getting through, and the nettling issues of purpose. The form was inspired by W. B. Yeats' *What Then?*

CHAPTER 3

TERRELL STRAYHORN

Expert Commentary

In this book, many poets have authored creative works that speak directly to the emotive aspect of college life. Through the various poems included in this chapter in particular, we come to know, understand, and hopefully feel how students experience university, their aspirations for serving society, and the depth of their appetite for a sense of belonging. Each of the poems in this chapter relate to students' search for belonging, especially during the transition to higher education. Before offering comments about this collection of poems, I begin with a few things about sense of belonging generally.

Sense of Belonging: The Concept

In 2012, I wrote a book titled *College Students' Sense of Belonging: A Key to Educational Success for All Students*, which brought together findings from research studies over a 5-year time period. Initially I saw myself writing a book on sexual and/or racial minority students in higher education similar to topics that I addressed in a 2010 edited volume titled *The Evolving Challenges of Black College Students* (with Melvin Cleveland Terrell). After writing a few chapters, however, I noticed an undeniable refrain that found its way into each chapter regardless of the essay's main focus, targeted sample, or methodological approach: all students have a special need to be loved, accepted, and to belong. Worried that that book would sound redundant without design, I decided to 'flip' the book and start where each chapter seemed to end: belonging. With this decision, in consultation with my editor at Routledge, came a title change (*College Students' Sense of Belonging*) and though the intended book focused on minority students, the revised title broadened the applicability of belonging as a 'key to educational success for all students.'

What I offer in the belonging book is an argument for focusing on sense of belonging in higher education, a review of the existing literature on belonging and community in educational contexts (much of it K-12 literature), and then a weaving together of the argument and literature to posit a theory of sense of belonging. My proposed theory of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) has seven (7) core elements:

1. *Sense of belonging in a basic human need, universal to all*. All people yearn to belong and find acceptance from others. Belongingness is a universal need and applies to all people. Contrary to popular belief, all people have 'special needs'—a need to belong, feel love and acceptance. Satisfying the need for belonging is a necessary precondition for higher-order needs such as the desire for knowledge, understanding, creativity, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1962).
2. *Sense of belonging is a fundamental motive sufficient to drive human behavior*. As a basic human need, belonging is a fundamental motive that influences how humans act and behave. By fundamental, I mean that belonging is a basic principle

of central importance when it comes to human functioning. As a social scientist whose work often approaches questions from a social psychological perspective, I believe we often underestimate the significance of belonging in explaining social phenomena. Why do people behave the way they do? Why do people respond to certain stimuli the way they do? And why do some affiliate while others resist or reject? Simply put, these questions explore belonging, a basic principle of central importance to human existence. An appetite to belong 'stimulates goal-directed activity designed to satisfy it' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 500).

3. *Sense of belonging takes on heightened importance (a) in certain contexts, (b) at certain times, and (c) among certain populations*. This core element of belonging cannot be understated. Belonging is a basic principle of central importance but it also takes on heightened importance or 'salience' in certain contexts or settings, certain times, and among certain populations. For instance, belonging is important in terms of group functioning—that is, how people behave in groups individually and collectively—but it takes on even greater significance when an individual is a newcomer to an otherwise already established group. Lots of people hope they will find love, acceptance, and friendship in life, and this aim is especially important when one seeks to gain membership to a new club, organization, or group. Consider, for example, a recent high school graduate who enters college excited about the possibilities it affords but also fearful of not making friends, being rejected, lonely, or failing to succeed. Belonging assumes greater importance during certain times (e.g., moments of instability and transition) and times of life, too. One of the central developmental tasks of adolescence is figuring out 'who am I' and that understanding is inextricably linked to other important questions like 'who are you,' 'who are we [together],' and 'why are we here,' in terms of connectedness.
4. *Sense of belonging is related to, and seemingly a consequence of, mattering*. Quite simply, people who feel a sense of belonging feel as if they matter, both to themselves (i.e., purpose, self-acceptance) and others (i.e., social acceptance). Mattering is defined as feeling, rightly or wrongly, that one is significant and is valued by others (Schlossberg, 1985). Early scholars identified five (5) dimensions of mattering: (a) attention, (b) importance, (c) dependence, (d) appreciation, and (e) ego extension (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). For instance, people who feel as if they belong must feel noticed in ways that command interest (i.e., attention) or feel needed, respected, and cared about. Have you ever wondered why an associate asks, 'do you miss me' or 'are you happy for me' or even 'do you <u>want</u> (emphasis added) me to do it?' The answer is: it's important for people to feel as if they matter because mattering leads to a sense of belonging.
5. *Social identities intersect and affect sense of belonging*. Although belonging is a universal need sufficient to drive human behavior that takes on heightened importance at certain times and in certain spaces and places, belonging needs may also vary by person or group. Social identities such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and religion intersect (and interact) in ways that simultaneously

influence aspects of belonging for individuals. For instance, my best friend and I are both African American men living in the United States. He's from the inner-city of a large metropolitan area and vividly recalls moving from apartment to apartment growing up. Raised by a single mom, it's important to note that his father was present in his life, though from a distance. I, on the other hand, grew up in the suburbs of Virginia to my mother and father who have been married for nearly 50 years by the time of this writing. I'm the 'baby boy' of three kids and religion has been a very-present and stabilizing force in my life since early childhood. Interestingly, we're both members of the same fraternity and, no doubt, our fraternal bonds satisfy our need to belong to some extent. But I'm often moved to near-tears when I hear my friend talk about or to his dad whose presence, well-being, and acceptance mean a great deal to my friend. The nature of his relationship with his father over the course of his life certainly helps explain the significance that he attaches to the attention he receives from his dad. As another example, I devote a considerable amount of my out-of-work, discretionary time to church-related activities; a full understanding of my various identities and roles (e.g., professor, father, preacher) and the role religion plays in my family helps to explain why and how church fulfills my belonging needs. Who you are influences what matters, and what matters shapes how and where you belong. Identity matters.

6. *Sense of belonging produces positive outcomes*. Sense of belonging, to this point, has been largely posited as an outcome. People do things and consequently they belong (or not). In certain settings, belonging assumes greater importance (than other needs such as food or safety) and people do things or subject themselves to certain experiences (e.g., hazing), in hopes of achieving belonging. Yet, belonging is not only an end; it can be a means to other positive ends as well. Other positive outcomes flow from finding belonging such as community service, academic performance, well-being, happiness, and overall healthiness (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Strayhorn, 2012).
7. *Sense of belonging must be satisfied on a continual basis and seems to change as circumstances, conditions, and contexts change*. This 7th point reminds us that belonging is dynamic (not static) and must be satisfied on a continual basis as circumstances, conditions, contexts, and individuals change. All of these can disrupt, interrupt, or alter one's sense of belonging. A few years ago, I faced a situation—what I refer to as a 'circumstance' in the theoretical model—where I worked in a department that valued research and scholarship; those engaged in research and scholarly activities received attention, signals of appreciation, and considerable support to conduct their work. Then, the college reorganized and my program joined a new department that valued teaching and service to schools largely. As a professor of higher education whose primary audiences are in higher education, I started to feel irrelevant, unappreciated, and undervalued. It was important to understand this vis-a-vis belonging, since belonging is linked to optimal human functioning (Strayhorn, 2012). Feeling belonging today does

not guarantee such feelings tomorrow, so it's important to periodically assess the extent to which one belongs. Remember, belonging is 'largely malleable and susceptible to influence in both positive and negative directions' (Goodenow, 1993, p. 81). Feeling valued, loved, and respected increases belonging while feeling undervalued, insignificant, and irrelevant diminishes belonging.

Sense of Belonging: The Commentary

The seven core elements outlined above represent what I have said about sense of belonging in the past. I think it's a useful framework for understanding a complex concept. Each element can act as a useful tool for analyzing the 16 poems included in this chapter. After close, careful reading (and re-reading) of each poem, I offer four major comments about them that relate to belonging and how higher education feels.

First, higher education is a culture. Culture is defined as shared attitudes or patterns of behaviors characteristic of a particular social group or collective that distinguishes it from another. Culture refers to aspects of a particular group as well—its beliefs, values, arts, music, cuisine, and customs. Culture can be transmitted through language, arts, rituals and other routinized acts of socialization such as rites of passage, orientation, ceremonies. Indeed, higher education is a culture, characterized by its own codified language, values, and traditions. For instance, higher education's codified language includes terms like 'credit hour'. 'Credit hour' does not mean a timeframe in which banks freely offer loans to those most deserving, but rather the weight a course carries in terms of degree completion. Higher education language includes 'residence hall' as a rejection of the term 'dorm,' which typically refers to a room for patients in a hospital not students living on campus. As another example, higher education values 'the student' over 'the consumer' as a metaphor for its primary market, while business and industry subscribes to the 'customer is always right' ideology (at least in theory).

Higher education culture is not necessarily a familiar culture to everyone who enters it. Depending on the background of the individual and the degree of cultural dissonance that occurs when they enter this new cultural site (higher education) as previously held beliefs and values come in conflict with the values of the new space, students might experience 'culture shock' (i.e., feelings of inadequacy or unreadiness to adjust to new or different encounters), as intimated in Carolyn Locke's 'Leaving Again for Alison'. Deborah Mason's 'Japanese Learner in Oxford' beautifully illustrates international students' confusion with words (language) like 'autumn' versus 'fall' and 'drizzle'.

It's hard to adjust to a place where 'the norm' is all but normal to you. In a study titled, 'Singing in a Foreign Land,' I documented the gospel choir experiences of African American students attending predominantly White institutions in the United States (Strayhorn, 2011). Many of them talked about experiencing culture shock when transitioning to college, such as surprise about the sheer number of White

students compared to others or frustrated silence with racist incidents. They used the gospel choir as a way of recalibrating, reconnecting, or feeling a sense of belonging in an otherwise foreign, unfamiliar setting. Higher education is a culture that may be an unfamiliar, foreign culture for some students, even if they are native to the country or state in which the university is located.

Whether higher education is a familiar or foreign culture, individuals must move through it deftly in order to succeed; this is my third point. Moving through or traversing higher education requires strategies for traveling through the culture carefully, gently, and without misstep. Traversing higher education requires students to acquire the language needed to communicate with others in the space, learn the history that influences the present conditions of a campus, and even the rules that govern appropriate and ethical behavior in the setting. History, rules, and values are often transmitted through cultural traditions like intake, orientation, and graduation; students also learn through experiences (with peers such as roommates), emotions (such as homesickness, anger), and deeper feelings as Meredith Holmes shows in her writing about 'Twombly Hall' and Jo Niederhoff captures in 'Home Isn't Always.' Traversing higher education also does not require separation with previous and other communities, contrary to what was once argued as integration. No, as Katie Thornton's 'Hiraeth' reminds us, traversing higher education as a foreign culture usually compels students to hold on to familiar memories of 'what was'—say, two chestnuts taken from under a lawn tree at Sarah Lawrence College (see Carolyn Locke) or 'two pillows/ and a blanket that would always smell of home even when it no longer did' (Thornton).

Finally, students are not alone in this endeavor. To apprehend this culture, students may be aided by a member of the group who acts as a cultural navigator to help them learn the implicit and explicit aspects of it. Cultural navigators might be parents, mentors, experienced peers, coaches, or educators who know something about the (new) culture. They know the codes of conduct, dominant values, language, requirements, rules, and traditions. They know the patterns of behavior, the paths, and loopholes (or ways of escape) and act as an invaluable resource to students. Their knowledge is borne of experience, mostly first-hand, which gives them the acumen and understanding to help others. Cultural navigators in higher education do more than merely tell students where to go; they show them through demonstration, simulation, even stimulation (a feeling) when possible. Cultural navigators in higher education help guide students until they arrive at their academic destination of 'don[ning] a [graduation] gown' (see Jenni Curry) or until the 'fear, anxiety, [and] sadness' that Katie Thornton talks about gives way to love, peace, and belonging. Thornton, like so many others in this chapter, remind us of a critical point that I sometimes forget to *feel* when writing about belonging: belonging is possible and, with time, it will be satisfied for the hungry. 'Eventually this world you didn't know/how to enter becomes your life. The only things/you lacked were the tools to unlock it./ And now,/ day by day,/ you equip yourself./ You learn how to live it./ You love to live it.' That's right. In time and with the right tools (i.e., strategies) the

foreign becomes familiar, the strange becomes second-nature, the oddities becomes ordinary, and what's rare becomes routine.

Sense of belonging is a basic human need of critical importance to human functioning. It is possible and achievable. It largely depends on feelings and emotions, a sense of connectedness. That's why it's often called '**sense** of belonging' (emphasis added). Thank you to the poets for reminding us of this important point and how higher education (really) feels.

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CHAPTER 4

REMAKING SELF-IN-WORLD

Education, learning and change entail opening new doors, but they also mean leaving behind naïve notions, challenging misconceptions, confronting injustices and re-shaping one's own identity. The chapter is informed by developmental theorists such as Perry (1968), Sharon Daloz Parks (2000) and Marcia Baxter Magolda (1992, 2001). Through higher education, students come to view knowledge differently, accept uncertainties and, ultimately, become equipped to make their own decisions in the face of complexity. This developmental journey can be emotional for students, accompanied at first by feelings of pain or loss, confusion or excitement and, perhaps, resolving themselves in triumph and pride.

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PAULETTE MAE

the whole fruit

is truth
firm…

or can it be
soft, peach-like
spread with downy fur, altered
once bitten, tasted,
stewed into something
else… if truth
is forever changing
am I too, its softness, burst

from the pit
of what I think
I am…

JENNIFER L. FREED

Philosophy 183a: Existence
in memory of Professor Maurice Natanson

We climbed up the narrow stairs
to the shaded room with the ancient
desks, and tried to follow
as you paced and spoke, and paced and paused, and
slashed emphatic lines across the board.

You wore a long white beard, like a Chassid, or
a wizard. You urged us
toward uncertainty. You asked, 'What does it *mean*
to be busy, or bored? What does it mean to *be*
at all?'
You asked, 'If I am walking, is there an *I*, or is there only
consciousness of walking? And if
only consciousness, then what
shall we say of the absent
minded?'

We pushed through Heidegger and Sartre. We read
in darkness. We furrowed our brows, and still
crawled on, alert to any sign of light. You lead us
toward an open sky, then left us
at the threshold.
You said, 'Some things you have to do
yourself.
Others can point to the clearing
where the path begins, but they cannot walk
for you.'

Previously published in *Boston Literary Magazine*

Commentary. This poem, with its hints of Plato's cave, speaks to the themes of questioning the taken-for-granted, of learning that sometimes education begins with un-learning, that doubt brings openness to deeper knowledge. It also speaks to the experience of college students, some for the first time away from their parents' home and their familiar neighborhood, having to give up unquestioned reliance on family and community attitudes – of having, that is, to think through old and new ideas for themselves.

SUSAN IOANNOU

First Writing Workshop
For Rose

A rose by any other name,
you uncurl poems toward the light,
but when sheers snip a twig—it stings!

Green stems bend back.
You want to shoot
thorns into the gardener's palm.

Instead, like rain, you drop and hide
dismayed sap bleeds,
as if you are the only one.

Rose, by many other names,
I've watched you burst
to spread your petals red and wide.

Like mauve, pink, white, already flared,
you want to share
the garden's tint and scent,

match daisies' ease, sophisticated iris,
the subtle violets whose practised growing
turns shadows into light.

'What is a metaphor?'
Where rain grows sun,
and past and future root within one moment.

Rose, keep reaching higher.
What briar beauty
awaits your breaking through.

I know. We all dig the same
who garden our passions,
among weeds, in words.

Previously published in *Tower*

Commentary. When I led poetry workshops for the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies, Rose was a student new to poetry who had difficulty hearing constructive criticism by the more advanced writing students in the group. Like many starting out, she had yet to develop the ability to view her creations at arm's length, as separate from herself, and not feel that comments intended to help improve her work were a personal attack. The poem uses her name as the basis for an extended metaphor about literary artistry.

CHAPTER 4

SHINELLE L. ESPAILLAT

Comp and Circumstance

how to rescue one wallowing in homophonic abyss?
how to smuggle Saussure into rap analysis?
how to reach the one who quietly outed himself
while discussing Wilde and quietly cried
when the honorably discharged hero took two steps back?

how to read, one more time,
every paper Silent Girl submitted,

knowing it is time to pick up a pen
and press its point through the thin skin
of dreams this girl barely dares to hold,
that the subsequent hiss and sigh
will blow into your own lungs and expand
until the dark hour
when, children tucked,
you sit before a fresh stack of clean white work,
and the girl's impending sorrow slides down your face
ruining good pinot noir.

Commentary. This poem grew out of my experiences teaching college writing at various four-year universities and community colleges in the US. As an advocate of student-empowered learning, I find that the need to evolve and adapt pedagogical strategies can conflict with agendas held by administration, parents – with whom I am always surprised to interact – and often the students themselves. I constantly learn to re-balance the real needs within the classroom and within the administrative system, in addition to my own needs as an educator and a person.

DEBORAH COX

Lecture 2: Self

It's when a word clogs up a thought
or checks a feeling tide
that I most long for times before
my senses died and all
my neural nodes fell into lingual codes;
just one more minute
of such life would leave it rich
to die; fulfilled by silence,
an opal eye lapping up the colours
of the seams in the wood dye, I…

CHAPTER 4

KARL ELDER

Standing in the Way of Wind

I remember Lucien mentioning
(like he assumed I already knew)
there is no music as great as wind, how
when sensing it
his hand is cutting the volume,
how with even Wagner or Beethoven
it is no contest.

Here in Kansas
I yearn for that certainty
and sing, hum – yes – even whistle
while winter branches silhouetted outside
jerk antenna-like.

What is this stuff
that it conjures the intricacy of an insect?
What am I becoming
that it no longer goes without saying
wind is the void's own voice,
that earth and water
granted the grace
something men call God gave wind,
the body might sing forever.

Previously published in *Translation Review*

Commentary. A tribute to my mentor, Lucien Stryk.

MONICA PRENDERGAST

something broken (a pantoum)

there is something broken in me
i never go down to the sea
to the rocks and the driftwood ascatter
’gainst the curve of a mountain-backed bay

i never go down to the sea
too busy too busy too busy you see
the curve of a mountain-backed bay
lost to the hum drum thrum of humanity

too busy too busy too busy to be
with the silence, the seagulls, the sky
far from the hum drum thrum of humanity
there is something broken in me

the silence, the seagulls, the sky
i never go down to see
there is something broken in me
this lunacy: work making free

CHAPTER 4

GAIL GRIFFIN

Matryoshka

At the end of their first college term my students are in mourning for themselves. One says it hurts to know she'll never be that girl again. Another says it scares her to know the girl she thought she left behind came with her, dragging the whole city of Saginaw behind her. What's worse, I wonder, loss or repetition, that everything changes or that nothing does?

I tell them, for what it's worth, that I think of us as matryoshka dolls: our old selves nest inside us, older selves inside them, an almost limitless regression. Some days I can barely feel them in this fully tenured menopausal body; some days they're live and crowded as puppies, needy and ridiculous as ever. And if life twisted me apart at the middle, there they'd be: thirty-eight, limber, striding up to forty, thinking maybe there's room yet for a kid, wondering if she will always be alone; inside her, twenty-eight, wild with sudden possibilities, doing her bad Italian lover in her office between classes; inside her, eighteen – eighteen, like them – desperate to know everything, to be known in every possible way and thought good; inside her, eight, a little sister, a girl with a father who helps her onto a new blue 36-inch bike. And inside her – a darkness, a space, a silence. Screw them all back together, rejoin those heads and hips. Tuck them all away inside each other, keep them safe.

I don't tell my students all this. At eighteen you think the core of you is diamond-hard and clear, obscured only by what you don't yet know. Watching them sometimes, I seem to see us all in retrospect, a future memory, dim and shredded. I wonder what we will remember of each other. Some of them, one or two, if they recall me at all, might remember the matryoshkas.

Previously published in *Passages North*: *the literary journal of Northern Michigan University*

Commentary. When you teach first-year college students regularly, you become very familiar with the issues of identity – of change and loss – that define their encounter with higher education. I have always been fascinated by matryoshka dolls, and at the time I wrote this, I was exploring notions of the female, if not the feminine, in education and pedagogy. I remember telling this particular first-year seminar about my theory of cumulative identity, and I remember that they listened and watched me very intently, as if it made sense to them and might even be reassuring. I hope so.

CATH DRAKE

It Didn't Happen Until University

I said I'd done everything else: just not that.
My room-mate, Sylvia, was astonished.
She lit a candle and said: *tonight it'll burn down.*

I could already smell his musty wood polish skin,
hear his late night arguments on existentialism,
his heavy feet shuffle while I'd try to sleep.

I turned up late and unannounced. He smiled
like he knew everything. I never said I wanted love,
just to know what the thing was, to be one of those

who could be fresh picked. He stroked the curve
of my lace vest, saying: very nice, very nice.
He said he was falling in love with me, but I knew

he fell in love often. I was in love with longing
and thought only of flesh, leaving the rest behind.
It was a strange thing to be doing with two bodies,

especially in the awkward moments, the urgency
paused, legs stuck together, everything exposed,
the birthmark on my thigh lit red. Wrapped in a sheet,

hair dishevelled, I was surprised when I saw
my dewy face in the still white of the sink.
That was the best part: I remembered I was blessed

with the enamel skin of Gods, perfect brown limbs.
Afterwards, we sat back to back as if we'd not yet
learnt to speak face to face. Sex is sex, he said,

as though I had simply joined the human race.
We argued. The tea was tepid. When I got home
Sylvia said: *I told you, I told you,* while I cried.

Previously published in *Sleeping with Rivers* (Seren Books, 2014)

CHAPTER 4

GAIL GRIFFIN

Mary Alice

Thinking all week about justice, I was ambushed by this pure sadness, simple loneliness. I was driving from a long day off into the first spring evening that promised summer, letting my mind go violet and soft, and there you were, Mary Alice, striding along toward nothing in particular, tall and rawboned, plain brown hair pulled back in a rubber band, jaw like an axeblade, eyes knit up with pain. Someone doesn't love you back, or in the same way, or something. You don't want to tell me more, and why should you, why should I need more, who doesn't know this story? And as we sit in silence, white blossoms raining down on the car, I realize there's absolutely nothing to be said to you. Yes. Sometimes we are not loved back. It's the primal injustice. To love unloved is violation, outrage. Our hearts deserve their desire. And yet there is no fighting it, no noble resistance, no Take Back the Heart march. I can give you nothing but space in my passenger seat, a hand on your shoulder, some breathing room in the last moments of a day. You don't want your teacher's esteem tonight, you want the love you were born for. I would give you justice if I could, Mary Alice: I would give you one who hears you, as I do in class, and thinks, *My God, what a beautiful, swift mind!* I would give you one who watches you run across the campus, long and immaculately steady, and thinks*, She runs like a deer, what a heart!* One who glances into your angular, naked face and says, *Those eyes! She is incapable of lying!* I would give you a world where women like you stand under trees on evenings in late May, white blossoms snowing down, knowing it's all for them.

Previously published in *Passages North: the literary journal of Northern Michigan University*

Commentary. Mary Alice (not her real name) was a remarkable student of mine, my dream student for the four years I knew her and had the privilege to teach her. I wrote this almost immediately after the events it describes: I saw her on campus, looking miserable on one beautiful spring evening, and sat with her in my car for a while. I was fairly sure her unloving beloved was another woman, and fairly sure which one.

BAO HUYNH

Wings

I came here
a fledgling,
blind and helpless.

On these heights
I met an eagle
whose keen eyes saw in me
something I couldn't see,
who spread wide wings
and took me up.

As my eyes
opened,
I watched
his majestic flight.
And he watched
my first wing-beats,
there to catch me
when I fell.

And I felt
those gentle talons
pushing me from the nest
towards the precipice
to fly again
and fall again
until the wind
would lift me up.

Commentary. This is written for one of the most important people in my life, academically and otherwise. He was the first person I met upon coming to university, he watched over me throughout my student years, and he supervised me through my Honours year (in Australia). Meeting him was worth more, meant more, than the last fourteen years of formal education combined. I think that meeting people like this in and of itself makes going to university a worthwhile enterprise. I would not be who I am, had I not met this colossus.

JEFF GUESS

Class Photo
undergraduate tutorial group PCC1-22315

See how the spaces between the pixels
now begin to widen
while the room loses focus
and the faces fall apart

dissolving into the busy
push and shove of the corridor
and the scattered campus
of grades and coffee

holding you for a season
neither as a lover, parent nor friend
in a tight embrace of words
but only on the tips of my fingers

with the lightest of touch
the careful balance
of how long to hold on
and the moment to let go

of you
and this now empty room
and all our Tuesdays
poems and that long Indian summer.

Previously published in *The Mozzie*

LINDA GOODMAN ROBINER

Words

I sit in Dr. Barrows' tatty, book-lined office.
He's wearing one of his shaggy sweaters,
frayed at the left wrist and elbow.
I study his penciled notes
on my composition, which I've typed carefully
on Corrasable Bond paper.
I watch him adjust his eyeglasses,
glance timidly at me before he clarifies
his comments with a slight lisp.
Making our way through the thick green
Quarto of English Literature in class,
he has unlocked the magic of language,
sent me fishing for metaphors, tasting them.

In Ann Arbor three decades later,
I slip a letter under his door.
In four years, you were my favorite.
Your love of prose and poetry changed my life.
I imagine Professor Barrows turning
the key in his door at Haven Hall, stooping
to pick up the scrap of paper on the floor.
He helps his glasses back
onto the bridge of his nose, clears his throat.
Then, rummaging around his desk for a book,
he blinks several times before he rereads
Rilke's 'Sonnets to Orpheus:'
Want the change. Be inspired by the flame
where everything shines as it disappears.

Commentary. I began my four year college stint in 1954, at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. This was a time in the United States when women studied education, 'to have something to fall back on,' because we were expected to marry and drop out of the working world. Professor Barrows' influence in the advanced English class in which I was placed my freshman year has pervaded my life. I consider him a mentor, a guiding light. I'm convinced I care about language and became a serious reader, an author, a writing teacher, and an editor, because of Dr. Barrows.

CHAPTER 4

PHILOMENE KOCHER

Thinking Woman

now what I ask myself
is a woman to do?

a woman can have
opinions of her own
passionate as lava
lukewarm as dish-water

however, are they opinions
if they're not expressed out loud
if they don't erupt
but instead are pondered
along with the grocery list
as a woman stands at the sink
washing dishes
washing dishes
washing dishes

PHILOMENE KOCHER

Listening

where did it go?
my voice
during those undergrad years

was it lost in the library?
hidden behind the references
needed to prop up my argument

or lost in the lab?
trying and trying
to get out the door
(or the window)
away from the experiments
and their exact calibrations
their predicted reactions
their expected results

where has it wandered?
this past quarter century

I sit with my ear tuned
for its phone call
its footstep
its whisper

CHAPTER 4

GWENDA ATKINSON

(Excerpts from) between the semesters: (and before my 40th birthday)

one by one I do
all those things I put off
while studying and working at the same
time (online. asynchronous. edge.)
today, the dentist;
last night,
the closet (winter's here);
before, those photos from Muido holiday weekend and
later, from the parties (book launch; B.'s),
(night of the day I submitted the final project) (of that term) –
also, I did the cleaning.
finally.

then – spring semester: tripping over all what I set aside:
analysis in the. piles. of the undone.

Onward, Spring – produce. produce. produce.
projects. papers.
citations.
all – words.
my revolution.

Commentary. This excerpt is from a poem that was inspired by the experience of being an online graduate student while working full time as a university TESOL teacher in Seoul, Korea (where I taught for nine years). I wrote the poem in the period of relief that always hit after all grading and final projects were finished and submitted.

KATY EWING

Philosophilia

In childhood your name suggested age,
superiority, beards, robes, wrinkles.
Ancient Greeks nodding sagely,
combat with words.

By secondary school, thinking was joy,
recognition of truth like finding ripe wild fruit
in unexpected places.
When another girl in 'O' grade R.E.
was rewarded for an insight with a sincere
'You could be a philosopher',
I panged as if a future had closed off for me;
as if that meant I couldn't.

When finally I met you as an adult
it was like a blind date with an infamous stranger.
You were so well known, so unknown.
You were all the things I'd ever thought about and more,
concepts so familiar I'd never formulated them.
Names of men through time
whose ideas as I glimpsed them made so much sense,
how could they be so difficult?
Why did you seem too big for my mind?

To build structure into my wild ideas
is like trying to dam the Amazon
one brick at a time.
But you don't give up, keep sneaking in
and laying down another teasing possibility.

Sometimes I think I know you, get you, you get me,
a spark ignites…
but when I try to say the words, explain myself,
you're gone, or changed – just not the same,
and I'm left wondering what happened.
The more we share, the less I want to stop.

Commentary. This poem was inspired by the almost paradoxical love/hate relationship I found myself in when I was finally able to fulfil an early ambition and study philosophy – which didn't happen until I was 35 years old.

CHAPTER 4

VIVIENNE BLAKE

Transformation

From reluctant schoolgirl
to graduate
a leap of nearly sixty years.
From study addict
to published poet
a tiny step.
Thank you, Open University.

Commentary. During four creative writing courses I morphed from would-be novelist to passionate poet, writing in English and French. Poor health and limited mobility are no impediment. I even wrote poetry in the recovery room of the operating theatre where they'd just given me a pacemaker.

MARCIA B. BAXTER MAGOLDA

Expert Commentary

Reading these poems brought to mind William G. Perry's (1978) essay 'Sharing in the Cost of Growth,' originally delivered at a 1976 conference on students' personality development. His point was to emphasize the loss that accompanies developmental growth, a dynamic he felt had been insufficiently addressed at the conference. Despite his powerful essay, the role of pain and loss – the realm of emotion – is often overshadowed by the cognitive realm that dominates academic theorizing. This volume in general and these poems in particular foreground the emotional dimensions of the developmental journey.

The Cost of Growth

A rich theoretical literature describes the holistic development of self, voice and mind during adulthood (e.g., Braxton, 2009; Hoare, 2006; Smith & DeFrates-Densch, 2009). Kegan (1982, 1994) integrated theoretical strands to emphasize the intersection of cognition and emotion in the core activity of meaning making. Longitudinal studies of college and young adult development (Baxter Magolda, 2009; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012; Torres & Hernandez, 2007) confirm the intersections of cognitive, intrapersonal (identity) and interpersonal (relationships) dimensions in the developmental journey. Perry's speech at the 1976 conference distilled the major milestones of this journey; his synopsis is still relevant to contemporary theorizing. Perry noted that early in life we discover authorities, who we trust know what they are doing. Our second discovery is that authorities, in fact, do not know the truth, leaving us free to think as we please. Our third discovery is that not all opinions are equally valid, which requires us to think through multiple perspectives. Our fourth discovery is that we must choose what to believe within this complexity and live with the consequences. This is, in a nutshell, the story of continually discovering the limits of a way of constructing the world with which one has become comfortable, and needing to reconstruct a new way of viewing the world that accounts for these limits.

Perry's key point, however, was the importance of the fear and loss associated with giving up old ways of knowing the world, one's self, and one's relationships. Perry asked:

> When we leave the way we saw the world, in which everything was just so and just as we thought, and we see it all differently, we move into a world where all of what was solid and known is crumbling. And the new is untried. … What do we do about the old simple world? (1978, p. 270)

Here Perry is describing the terror and angst of uncertainty in the space between deconstructing the old and constructing the new. Despite historical and contemporary

theorists' recognition of this loss, in practice it is often overlooked in the zeal to promote the complex meaning making so necessary to navigate the complexities of adult life.

The poems in this chapter capture the fear and terror of encountering the limits of one's ways of seeing the world – of making meaning – and the angst and sometimes terror that accompanies the reconstruction of a new way of making meaning. Freed's description of the 'threshold,' or Huynh's more dangerous 'precipice,' conveys teetering at the edge of one's world. Students 'mourning for their lost selves' (Griffin) or in pain over lost innocence (Drake) or relationships (Griffin) reveals the angst of letting go of the old with nothing new yet to replace it. Yearning for the new – hearing one's voice and having others hear it (Kocher) – but not yet seeing how this might materialize reflects another form of angst. Participants in my longitudinal study of young adult development experienced these same emotions. They reported three experiences that helped them re-make themselves in the world: pain, perspective, and partners (Baxter Magolda, 2009). Having made Perry's second and third discoveries during college or in their twenties, they struggled in their thirties (and some into their forties) to work out the fourth – listening hard to hear their own voices. The latter required learning to internally define their beliefs, identities and relationships, or to self-author their lives (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Kegan, 1994). Mark, a study participant, explained:

> You learn it from just being at a point of great pain and trying to solve the pain. I think that is where most people learn their greatest lessons – through some kind of pain. The lesson is made much more real and brought home, and it's one you don't forget. I think you can learn through quieter pain, and that would be an example of attaining a goal you thought would be an end-all and be-all. And then when you get there, it doesn't bring you the kind of satisfaction you thought it would. Or the satisfaction it does bring you is ultimately pretty empty. (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 216)

Regardless of the source of the pain, participants found that its resolution required letting go of how they had constructed the world and themselves in it to reconstruct it in a new way. As many of the poems illustrate (e.g., Mae, Freed, Elder, Huynh), this often meant reconstructing one's view of truth, self, and place in the world. And although student development theorists describe development as cumulative in a way that resonates with Griffin's 'matryoshka dolls,' they suggest that one never views the earlier self in quite the same way, necessitating some grieving of its loss.

Good Company and Its Emotional Toll

The poems collected here extend beyond painful emotions to those of the joy of reconstruction and appreciation for those who lit the way. They reveal how learners gain perspective on their pain and how crucial good company, or learning partners, are in that process. Educators remembered decades later as a 'guiding light' whose

influence 'pervaded one's life' (Robiner), or a 'colossus' (Huynh) surely were those who not only led learners to the threshold but stayed with them to catch them if they fell (Huynh) trying to reach a new ledge. These partners sensed 'how long to hold on/and the moment to let go' (Guess), the intricate balance among Kegan's (1982) notions of confirmation, contradiction, and continuity. Extending Kegan's notions through my longitudinal participants' experiences, I described learning partnerships that promote self-authorship as a combination of support that affirmed learners' voices, feelings, and experiences and challenge that invited learners' personal authority into interdependent relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2009). I read Robiner's poem that conveyed how learners cherished educators' constructive criticism as depicting these kinds of partnerships. Perry noted the importance of educators legitimizing the pain and acknowledging the loss in learning. Perhaps educators who were able to articulate that to their students eased the pain sufficiently to enable learners to stand outside of the criticism.

Educators, whether faculty or student affairs professionals, receive minimal guidance or support for attending to the emotional dynamics of learning. I wondered as I read Freed's poem about the learner feeling alone at the threshold whether the educator in question was sensitive to the challenge s/he had offered (or whether the feeling of being alone was so overwhelming that available support went unnoticed). Yet many of the poems – Iannou, Espaillat, Griffin's Matryoshka and Mary Alice – make clear that educators feel the emotions deeply. Educators felt the pain of learners' fragility as thinkers, their struggles with identity, the heartache of relationships, and shed tears, felt helpless to assist, or tried to offer support by sharing their own stories. The poems not only highlight educators' empathy with learners' pain, but the emotional cost of the limits of what they can offer to ease the pain. The tension between offering the criticism and knowing it will sting as it pierces the 'thin skin' (Espaillat) reflects the constant balancing of confirmation and contradiction. Growth necessitates contradiction, yet causing too much pain stifles growth. The last few poems (Kocher, Atkinson, Ewing, Blake) convey that the journey extends well into adult life as the struggle to hear one's voice, find and enact one's passion continues. Thus educators are still developing too, working out Perry's fourth discovery.

New Partnerships

In addition to revealing the felt experience of higher education, these poems collectively reveal how treacherous the developmental journey can be. They reveal how fragile young adults are in the early portions of this journey as well as how difficult it is for educators to balance challenge and support at just the right times to avoid pushing learners (and themselves) over the precipice. The poems further reveal the energy required to continually remake oneself in the world.

Considering the felt experience of higher education and the developmental journey that gives rise to these emotions suggests that teaching and learning extend beyond informational learning, or acquiring new knowledge and skills, to transformative

learning. Mezirow (2000) describes transformative learning as 'how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others' (p. 8). Thus transformative learning requires letting go of ways of viewing the world that no longer work and reconstructing more complex ways of viewing the world that are 'more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action' (Mezirow, pp. 7–8). This is the kind of learning reflected in the poems that begets the challenges of teaching reflected in the poems.

Transformative learning requires reconceptualising teaching and learning as a mutual relationship among educators and learners. As Wildman (2007) recounts, the learning literature details the shift from learning as cognition to learning as social participation. Similarly, the teaching literature conveys a shift from teacher-centered to learning-centered pedagogy. Yet these shifts are sometimes viewed as new techniques (e.g., collaborative learning, flipped classrooms) rather than fundamental changes in teaching and learning. We have not paid sufficient attention to what Wildman calls the 'learning problem' for educators – reconstructing frames of reference about teaching and learning to embrace the holistic developmental journey of both learners and educators that underlies learning and teaching as social participation. The Learning Partnerships Model (Baxter Magolda, 2009) reconstructs the nature of the teaching/learning relationship in ways that invite learners to grow toward self-authorship. Use of this model in practice (see Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Taylor, Haynes, & Baxter Magolda, 2010 for detailed examples) reveals the kind of transformation educators must undergo to be good learning partners to support learners' developmental journeys.

As was the case when Perry reminded his conference colleagues about the cost of growth, my reminding readers about transformational teaching and learning does not offer new information. It simply reminds us that, like the felt experience of higher education, we continue to pay insufficient attention to the complexity of teaching and learning. Paying more attention would require focusing research on how learner development undergirds informational and transformational learning; policy that supports evaluating teaching through learner development rather than satisfaction; and time, space and support for teaching as a relational practice. As Wildman (2007) noted:

> Unless we an envision more effective change processes for faculty and administrators – that is, support their own learning and development – the best prediction we can make about students becoming cognitively more mature and secure in their identities and relationships is that they will have to continue working it out largely on their own. (p. 16)

Collectively the poems illustrate the distinction between those who experienced good company to deal with the costs of growth and those who are still working it out largely on their own.

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CHAPTER 5

TAKING CARE OF STUDENTS AND OURSELVES

This chapter focuses mainly on dealing with pastoral care issues. Although university teachers may be, as Anna Neumann (2009) found, primarily focused on their subjects, many also care passionately about their students' development, health and welfare. Whether through reading student work, listening to them in small classes, or seeing them individually during office hours, teachers often face students who are coping with a range of personal challenges including abortion, coming out, family deaths or depression. Dealing with students on a personal level presents ethical as well as emotional challenges, evoking guilt, shame, love and hope.

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CHAPTER 5

KARL ELDER

The Art of Teaching

Hands behind your back,
bend forward at the waist and
pick up the apple.

The Art of Teaching II

Hands bound and apple
held tightly in your mouth, now you
are all ears. Listen.

Commentary. These companion pieces above are part of a chapbook, *Some Three Dozen Miniatures from Karl Elder's Rubber Band Bound Batches of Random Locutions*, that was published in an issue of *Lakeland*, Lakeland College's house magazine.

SUZANNE ROBERTS

Try Teaching at the Community College

A student says in an essay he wants to bury bullets in his parents,
that he wants to *kill, kill, kill* – that is a direct quotation – some hotel maid
to see the blood splatter on white walls. I am not joking. But,
neither is he. He says he feels much better. Now. Don't worry,
it's in the past. Why didn't he use the past perfect? No answer,
but he assures me that he understands the difference – past and *deep* past:
Felt, have felt, had felt. Here on the page: *feels, feels, feels.*

The best student from literature class visits your office,
tells you she's pregnant. Again. *But here's the thing*, she says.
It belongs to my ex and I've started dating someone else
who I think is The One. I don't want to fuck it up. Of course,
she says the word *fuck*. Why wouldn't she?
You hand her a Kleenex. She wants you to tell her
what to do and you want to too. You want to tell her
about the one and only you yourself have discarded.
And the artist who bit your pretty red heart in two.
But remember your job. It's not to give advice. Later,
when she's no longer pregnant – the almost now once was –
she says she's mad at you for teaching Sylvia Plath,
that can't bear to read it. You couldn't have understood,
understand. Some lessons are stillborn.

Another student writes all over his body – or so I am told,
I have seen only the arms – words in thick black marker,
'What Is Broken? … Man' and 'Excuse Me, I am Talking.'
The scrawl is blocky third-grade, his own hand.
He suffered a brain injury serving in Iraq. That is my guess.
I've become a master at the guess. You will too.
If you saw how good looking he was – is – it would split
the cage of your chest in two. If you saw the way the other students
make fun of him as he walks the hallways, indelible notes on his body,
in his body, you would know the world is – was – has already been
more than half over. Can you digest your own beating heart?

CHAPTER 5

CAROLE GLASSER LANGILLE

To the Young Poet

You became a street kid
breaking into your own heart
as if it were a locked house, the owner asleep
or on vacation. Shining your flashlight,
not to steal but to find out
if it were safe to enter, nights too cold
to wander streets.

You scaled walls barbed with wire,
somehow managing to balance on top
before you crossed over.
Tagging tunnels moments before
the train roared in.
Risk was a bridge you crossed because
it got you places.

'He was like a dragon breaking down walls,'
it is said of certain Chinese poets.
No dragon, you hid your fire
and entered rooms quietly,
crowded or empty, looking for what was
concealed behind doors.
Young poet rappelling, without any harness,

the daring descent. You knew more
than I knew and I was your teacher.

Commentary. This poem was written about one of my students I had several years ago in a creative writing class. He was very talented as well as modest and his suggestions greatly improved the dynamics of the class. After talking with him in one of our meetings I felt that he'd suffered trauma, because he would tell me things he did that were very dangerous. Why did he take such risks? Every semester I learn from my students. Many of them are tremendously talented. Every once in a while I have a remarkable student and I know, if the gods are just, he will receive recognition. Of course, the gods aren't always just. This poem was written to honour a remarkable student.

VIVIAN SHIPLEY

Christine, at Night, I Tired; Early Morning, I …

Late February, words you spoke outside the seminar
created no clear picture like workshop poems threaded
by your mother's suicide. To compare their techniques,
I assigned you Plath and Sexton. Not satisfied, you asked
why Virginia Woolf weighted her pockets with stones,
and I could answer only that it was impossible to say
which one caused her to sink. You quit coming to Southern.
I didn't call a counselor; dead all these months, I did not
know. Gathering your work for a chapbook, I boasted

I would address your death in a preface with a word of life.
Your poems I had boxed were thrown out by painters moving
my office desk. Another vow I didn't honor, my promise
to keep your name alive was hollow, a cored apple. January
sky, coral as the high collared dress you wore, or flashes
of hair, china black, startle me like the voice of a person
I didn't know was in the room. Nobody experiences anything
through words: think Hiroshima; Kyushu's port, Nagasaki.
Atomic bomb and nuclear shadow are the same to a mother

reading about warring white blood cells as she nurses her son.
A mind adjusts to that as pupils do to the dark inside a closet
where you hung among jackets, above shoes. Did you kick
a vacuum aside like woman flinging bras in Filene's Basement,
or were you trying to pray, a mantis with legs slowly lifting?
The scene shifts. Perhaps your wrists had not healed hiding
razor scars, perhaps I had called you aside after class. Night
mushrooms. What do I know about it or your mind, Christine,
thick with layers you could not strip off like burned skin.

Previously published in *Gleanings: Old Poems, New Poems* (Louisiana Literature Press, 2013) and *Perennial*. (Negative Capability Press, 2015)

Commentary. I have taught at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, CT since 1969. Christine is the only student I have ever had who killed herself while she was enrolled in my class. I wrote this poem to come to terms with how I failed to help her by trying to find out why she quit coming to class. I also did not keep my promise to myself to publish her work. This poem records my guilt and also gives voice to Christine's personal struggle.

SUZANNE ROBERTS

Night Class

The class I dread, somebody
always wanting something—
little birds waiting for food,
wide open beaks, mouths agape—
feeding as sacrifice.

One of the older students always
coming at me with worn spidery skin,
the brassy blond ponytail, a Band-Aid
stretched across her nose. Always
coughing, saying *Sorry,* coughing again.

Always asking me to proofread
her résumé, poems, the children's story
she'd written with her shaky hand.
As if you had time, my officemate says.
I agree, but scratch off a few comments.

Tonight, I let class out early.
On my way to my car, I hear
the phlegmy cough rattling
from the bus stop shelter.
I quicken my pace through the dark lot.

At home, I pour a glass of merlot,
sit down to read the homework—
Thank you letters, using specifics,
to show appreciation to the person
who has been the greatest help of all.

Between notes to Mom, the favorite uncle,
a generous boss, I find a letter written
on pink stationary, embossed with gold roses.
The letter is addressed to me, the shaky hand
claims there is nobody else.

SUZANNE ROBERTS

Connection
After Marge Piercy's 'Barbie Doll'

I asked my students
to analyze a poem
by creating art—
a painting, a sculpture,
a shadow box. I said,
make a connection.
One student chose
a poem about
a young girl
who learns to hate
herself, cuts off
her nose and her legs,
offers them up.
My student pasted
a picture of herself
on the page—
pink sweater,
matching hat,
heart necklace,
manicured fingernails,
a beautiful girl—she wrote
across her picture:
You have a great big nose and fat legs.
This poem reminds me of me

CHAPTER 5

TERRY MARTIN

Office Hours

Fall Quarter

Julie, who will be student teaching next quarter, comes by to talk to me. The form from the Placement Office asks her to list her permanent address, and she's unsure what to do. Her parents are homeless, have been living on the street somewhere in Seattle, she doesn't know where. She worries about them, wonders if she'll ever be able to find them, and, if she does, what then? 'But for now, what should I write on the form?' she asks.

Winter Quarter

Marie calls to tell me she probably won't be able to make it to methods class today. She sounds shaken. When I ask her if she's all right, she says, 'No, I'm really not'—tells me that in the middle of the night a man smashed her second story window, broke into her apartment, and raped her. She has been sitting alone in her living room ever since, staring at the wall, shivering. She hasn't told anyone until now, when she realized she really should let me know that she might be missing class this afternoon.

Spring Quarter

Matt is waiting outside my office when I arrive. He reaches for the stack of books and briefcase I am carrying and holds them while I unlock the door. 'How was your spring break?' I ask. 'Not good,' he says, closing it behind us. Face pale, he describes his week. He was diagnosed with AIDS on Monday, and on Wednesday, drove to his small rural hometown to break the news to his parents—not only that he has is sick, but that he is gay. He describes his mother's pain, his father's rage, his own fear. When he finishes telling his story, I stand, hug him, hold him. Then close the door behind him, and gather myself for my next class.

Previously published in *Earth's Daughters*

JOY REID

Accused

Two girls stand before me.

One seems genuine.

Her fluttering hands are butterflies of breathy assurance.

Could it be she?

She has always performed delightfully
strode forward eager with beaming face and compliant palms –
offered
unsought services, compliments.
Her neon eyes and eggshell skin argues…

The other stands mute – an asphyxiated Kewpie
relying on projection and a practised unctuous aura to
soothe.
Her insincere sincerity and scapegoat eyes
disturb.
Unconsciously she leans toward me, her obscene closeness argues…

Could it be her?

If I could separate
yolk
from white
my decision would be golden – but truth is scrambled.

Two girls stand accused.

Perhaps… one
tells the truth.

But the other,
the other
is lying.

Previously published in *Wattpad*

TERRY MARTIN

The Third Wrestler Cries

Never the football players.
Never the basketball players.
No baseball or track or soccer guys.
Only the wrestlers.

Jaime is the third.
Freshman coiled tight as a spring,
biceps bulging under t-shirt sleeves,
here during my office hour wanting
to talk about the Sherman Alexie poem
he has chosen for his class presentation.

All earnestness, gaze direct, he practices
reading it aloud, knee bouncing
up and down like a jackhammer.
When he reaches a line that moves him,
lips tremble and he halts, unable to continue.
Brown eyes look up at me, liquid pools
teeming, startled fish about to spill over.
'see, I *get* this guy' he tells me, voice cracking.

Jaime, I'm not as hungry as you,
spitting and sweating and starving away
those last three pounds, trying
to make weight by Thursday.
Not as tired as you,
dark circles ringing your eyes.
But believe me: *I get you, too.*
See, I know about intensity—
its blessing and its curse.
Know the pressure of one-on-one,
how it feels to be alone out there,
on the mat, in the spotlight,
facing that next opponent.

And isn't the point to love—
even if too much, or the wrong way?
To lose yourself in what you do
in hopes of finding yourself?

Listening, nodding, I shove
the Kleenex box across the desk,
offer the tissue.

Previously published in *This Assignment is So Gay: LGBTIQ Poets on the Art of Teaching* (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2013)

Commentary. So much of what's interesting, and exhausting, about working in higher education happens outside the classroom. This poem is one of a series exploring the teaching that happens one-on-one, during office hours, which may be some of the most important work we do.

CHAPTER 5

SCOTT WIGGERMAN

Advocate

They come to me like penitents,
past the pink triangle on my door:

plodding gaits, jittery eyes,
voices seldom rise above whispers.

They confess: *I think I might be gay.*
They want absolution, not realizing

the canyon between secrets and sins.
I'm often the first adult they've

spoken these words to, the only teacher
they've known who's out.

I listen. I don't have to coax.
The pressure of dammed-up silence

unleashes floods of words,
the long breath after time underwater.

I give them my blessing: *It's okay*.
And add: *Don't ever apologize.*

Previously published in *This Assignment is So Gay: LGBTIQ Poets on the Art of Teaching* (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2013)

KATHLEEN M. QUINLAN

Academic Priorities

No. Today is for research. I only see students during office hours.

She's perfectly justified.

Just because her door is open to the common room,
doesn't mean students are welcome to come in
to discuss an essay or ask a question.

If I'd passed through the door
instead of standing timidly on the threshold
she'd have to let in the other two dozen students
from her 'Abnormal Psych' course,
although none of them was around to notice.

She needs to set her boundaries, manage her time.
After all, she's a professor and
an actual, real-life, practicing psychologist.
(There aren't any of those where I come from.)

Students are just students. Just because I've dreamed
of a Ph.D. after my degree since I was 16
shouldn't make any difference. I'm not special.
I'm just another kid interrupting her real work.

How could she know that I'd been eyeing her door
for an hour, rehearsing my approach? That I'd used up
all my courage knocking the first time
and wouldn't be able to do it again tomorrow?

Commentary. As a rural student of modest means in a highly selective, private four-year liberal arts college that drew privileged students from around the United States, I often felt out of place and intimidated. On several occasions I sought out assistance from academics during office hours, with disappointing results. This example was, perhaps, the most devastating, as it was in my major area of study. After two years, I transferred to the flagship campus of the state university. There I was delighted to find faculty who seemed to genuinely enjoy teaching and who were happy to talk with me outside of class.

RICHARD M. BERLIN

Surgery Rotation

The last weak rays of sun
shine on the drab green chart room walls.
The evening staff has finished report,
and the wing quiets as night comes on,
our team reviewing the final tasks
on our 36 hour shift –
a dressing for a gangrenous toe,
X-rays to read, IVs to start.
The surgeon opens an aluminum chart
with two hundred colored pages
clipped by a spring, pink for progress
notes, blue for vital signs, lab values
stapled in like tattered rags
on a scarecrow. He points the cold
metal at me like an accusation,
and lets it fall just before I get my grip.
I can still see it tumble
like a cannon ball Galileo dropped
from the Leaning Tower,
and I can still hear it explode
on the linoleum floor,
pages scattered like straw in a thunderstorm.
But what I remember best is how hard
the floor felt against my knees,
the dust balls in the corner,
the way no one moved
to help me pick up the pages,
the shined black leather of the surgeon's shoes.

Previously published in *Secret Wounds* (BkMk Press, 2011)

CAROLYN MARTIN

8 O'Clock Monday Morning

Another Monday and late-comers cruise
to berth in rigid rows. I smile
a knowing smile as they shake off sleep
and grouse about warm beds and how the frost
annoyed their trek and how I'll dare to fill
their minds while empty stomachs growl.

By now, they know I love this class
and challenge them with poetry
that rolls their eyes until it settles in.

I open with a prayer and then announce,
The houses are haunted/ By white night-gowns./
None are green,/ Or purple with green rings,/
Or green with yellow rings,/ Or … .

But before the next line's out,
two chain saws power up across the road
and undercut the poem. We've not been warned
today's the day that rotting limbs will fall.
We're not prepared for wooden rings
to scatter dust across the campus lawns.

I rouse my voice and can't resist
a trek of my own. *Remember*
Dante's hell? The deepest rings
are carved in ice. Forget the myths
of fire. Icy pain defies its thaw.

My students frown – confused by this detour –
but I rev up. *I've known that pain before.*
The freezing out when someone shuns my love.
The freezing in when tears are petrified.
I've known the frost of snubs, a chilling
in the bone. (They're startled wide awake
by feelings slipping through these words.) *I've known*
this all before, will know it all again.

Who wrote those lines? their waving hands
demand. I admit they're mine and try

to circle back to rings of green and blue
but they insist on knowing what I know.
(A dozen Mondays with one breach
and they think something's owed.)

What can I say when decades separate
our lives? How help them understand
a woman in a short black veil
whose silver ring proclaims her vows

desires love as much as they?
How to explain passions denied harden
into icy pain? How to protect
yet satisfy? What can I say?

The noise outside begins to dissipate,
urging me to skim my notes for words
to hide behind, but I find nothing fits.
Perhaps my lines from another poem?
Beware the heart that longs for capturing.
Contentment is the death of bliss.

Previously published in *Finding Compass* (Queen of Wands Press, 2011)

Commentary. As a Roman Catholic Sister of Mercy, I taught a variety of English classes at Georgian Court University, Lakewood, NJ. This poem was inspired by two events. The first was those noisy chain saws that disrupted my class and sent me off on allusions from Wallace Stevens to Dante to the creation of my own poem-within-a-poem. The second inspiration came from the mistake of sharing personal information with students that was far beyond their understanding. I learned to keep my private life very private after that.

SUSAN IOANNOU

Poetry Class

Wrestle with your angel, I tell them,
and there sits a blond, mustachioed Gabriel
blowing my doom,
talking about affaires de coeur
and quoting from Italian.

Every time he glances my way
I feel my old body silken
like the cat lifted before my bath
to slide his thick, black and white fur
across my nakedness.
The cat purred, closed his eyes
imagining no doubt some giant bird
folding him into her downy breast,
and forgot his usual
clawed bolt to the floor.

As I slide Gabriel through my glance,
in his eyes am I sculpted marble,
my animation *cinéma vérité*?
Does he silently unstopper my perfume
and calculate how my blush deepens
as I open one more frozen window?
He quotes me into a corner.
Does my breathing scan like his sonnets,
or am I a pink shell where he listens
to Aeolian sheets snap and billow?

Or have daydreams fleshed into life,
fluorescent light a moon,
chalkboard an invitation.
Dare I step across outer space?
Will Gabriel catch me
if I fall?

Previously published in *Literary Network, Literary Pages*

Commentary. When I led poetry workshops for the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies, working with adult students presented an unexpected challenge. In one class sat an accomplished, handsome, and sophisticated flirt, whose intense gaze and teasing manner were both flattering and disconcerting. While the 'frozen window' stayed firmly closed, his attentions did provoke this poem.

CHAPTER 5

JOANN GARDNER

Modern Poetry

The boy poets enter the room in their alpaca hats,
smiling. They sit down by the window, where
the sun slants in and inhale the stale air. Today,
we are studying Whitman, and one has not
brought his book. I ask him what he will do
without his book, and he quips, 'think deeply
about Whitman?' As if everything he needs
to know resides in his own body, as perhaps
it does. We talk about Whitman's vision,
his transcendental thought launched by touch,
and I discover there are other poets in the room,
boys and girls alike, all in love with themselves
and bristling with personality. One is bald,
her head shaved like a buzzard's. One is small
and dark, the daughter of a hidalgo. One sits
upright in her chair, offering rather than
seeking approval. And there is Evan, fawn-like,
with a blue star on his cheek, and Peter,
whose nervousness belies perfection, and me,
fresh from a season of loss and uncertain what
I'm here for. We talk. The room begins to stir—
each voice sane, considered, genuine. Gradually,
I come alive, respond to their instruction.
They do not wonder why we are here, or sneer,
'What does it matter, anyway?' They tease me
back into the room, back from my brooding sorrow
to the head of the class, saying, 'You are
the teacher. Teach us.' And I do.

Commentary. 'Modern Poetry' and 'The Graduate Poets' (chapter 8) are companion pieces that show a contrast between the actions and attitudes of my undergraduate students and my graduate students. The undergraduate students in this Modern Poetry class were open to learning in ways that 'The Graduate Poets' in chapter 8 were not.

SUSAN CAROL HAUSER

Destination

The day is too fine for lessons: the autumn sun
has overcome this morning's frost, and melts, too,
my yearning toward duty. I gather
my flock and we spill into the out-of-doors,
flutter down to the lake that we can see
from our classroom window.

A hundred feet from brick and mortar,
we choose our places along the shore,
some students gathering in clutches, others
setting themselves aside, as I do,

and all of us taking out paper to write on,
the price of this hour's mutiny.

Just write, I tell them. A letter. A poem. An assignment.
Notes. Your name over and over, if it pleases you,

and it pleases me to see them leaning into their work,
resisting the breeze that is too brisk for our purpose,
and letting the sun and the sound of the waves overcome
the clamor of thought.

Only the geese cause us to stir, to look up.
Restless teenagers dragging Main, they honk
their way into the next week of their lives, the way
these students will leave one day, flapping awkwardly
out of and toward their destinies,

as I will leave one day, squawking like an old hen
deprived of her nest, uncertain of my certain destination.

Previously published (as 'College Writing 2001') in *Outside After Dark: New & Selected Poems* (Loonfeather Press, 2002)

Commentary. The poem was written during a class session and conflates the experiences of the teacher and the students, recognizing that all are on a journey to somewhere.

CHAPTER 5

JOYCE KESSEL

Classroom Quixote

Between semesters
there is reflection,
deepening as I toy
with throwing in the towel
or retirement.
Tired of the sameness perhaps
that isn't ever quite the same.
The years of change
that never really change.
How different it is
from this side of the desks,
sometimes more magical,
usually more mercurial.
Time sliding away
with the students
who move on
without a backwards glance.
And yet the small rewards
make me open a new roster,
hold onto tried & true objectives,
ready to tilt at new windmills.

Commentary. As I get closer to considering retirement, I naturally get more reflective and wonder if I have had – and still have – an impact and influence on my students.

JANET McCANN

After the Unitarian Service

He flies the university president
and the board of trustees around Texas,
and I ask him what he flies

and he tells me, so well I can see the plane
and smell it, faint gasoline
and old leather of seats,

board members getting off in Amarillo, Lubbock,
El Paso, the pilot waiting there in the cockpit
with a good book,

and then I am leaving and he says
I want to tell you something
he says, Liberal Arts majors

make the best pilots, always,
but they keep sending us engineers
and they are terrible pilots, make mistakes

and crash planes, and I am wondering
what makes them good pilots, if it's
a feel they get for the air, after all that

Shakespeare, a kind of intuition
of clouds and currents, storms coming, mountains,
or if it's that they're trained to take

the unknown into consideration always,
not just the formula, the squidgy possibilities,
or if some gene or trait that makes good pilots

also sends them into Liberal Arts,
but all I really know is that I like
to think of them, my students, taking off,

waving their mortarboards,
knowing just how to guide their crafts aloft.

CHAPTER 5

CELIA HUNT

Expert Commentary

In responding to these poems I take as my starting point the lovely idea contained in 'After the Unitarian Service' that liberal arts students make better pilots than engineers, perhaps because 'they're trained to take/the unknown into consideration always,/ not just the formula, the squidgy possibilities'. This idea, with its image of learning as developing the confidence to fly one's own craft – developing a sense of agency, in other words – lifted me out of the darker and more difficult themes of the other poems in this section and encapsulated for me both the value and the challenge of teaching the arts in higher education, particularly the literary arts: in helping our students to take the unknown into consideration, alongside studying the more readily graspable histories and theories of our subjects – the 'formula' – we risk opening them up to the more challenging 'squidgy possibilities' of feelings and emotions that are always there beneath the surface of the learning experience but not always acknowledged. This raises the question: how do we take care of our students whilst they are engaging in this risky process; and the related questions: how do we as teachers manage the tricky learning environment that results, and how do we take care of ourselves whilst we do so?

Most of my professional life as a university teacher was spent teaching creative writing as a developmental and therapeutic tool and engaging in research into its effects (e.g. Hunt, 2013). As part of those courses students were expected to reflect deeply on themselves through specially devised creative writing exercises, learning journals, peer group work and reflective essays. It was an approach that often led to students experiencing fundamental change in their sense of self and belongs in the category of 'significant learning' (Rogers, 1951)[1] or 'transformative learning' (Taylor & Cranton, 2012).[2] Inevitably, in that context, it was crucial that we created a learning environment where students felt 'safe-enough' (Winnicott, 1971) to engage in this work, and learning to do that was very challenging for the tutor team (Hunt, 2013, Part III). I talk more about this below.

But whether or not we *intentionally* set out to open students up to deeper self-exploration in our courses, requiring them to engage in creative writing or the study of literature may do that anyway. It is in the nature of the arts to open us up to emotional experience (Robinson, 2005). This is clearly visible in several poems in this section. 'Try Teaching at the Community College' explores how studying Sylvia Plath's poetry puts a student who has recently terminated her pregnancy in touch with a deep emotional conflict. As a result she is: 'mad at you [the teacher]… You couldn't have understood,/ understand'. When we select texts for our classes that deal with emotional pain, depression, suicide, we are risking evoking students' own traumas. We see this again in 'Connection', where an ostensibly straightforward task of asking students 'to analyze a poem/by creating

art – /a painting, a sculpture, a shadow box' results in one student creating a mix of image and text representing self-harm, which, the poem implies, emerges out of her own self-loathing.

The teacher in 'Connection' is clearly shocked by what she learns about this student; as is the teacher in 'To the Young Poet', who both marvels at, and is terrified by, the difficult and dangerous things revealed about her otherwise quiet, cautious student through his poetry. His 'rappelling/without harness' in his 'daring descent' into extreme experience, the poem tells us, makes uneasy watching. What if he falls? Who will be to blame? And what if the worst *does* happen, and a student who has been studying literature with us commits suicide, as explored in 'Christine, at Night, I Tired; Early Morning, I…'? Do we have the right to place our students in these risky situations?

Paradoxically, if it is the case, as Seamus Heaney suggests in his discussion of Sylvia Plath's poetry, that finding a voice as a poet requires 'getting beyond ego' and plumbing one's own depths, then apprentice writers need to be able to explore the darker and potentially more dangerous regions of the psyche (Heaney, 1988). The student in 'To the Young Poet' seems able both to access his own difficult material and objectify it sufficiently to create art (Hunt, 2001); that is, he is able, on the one hand, to engage deeply with what may be painful or challenging memories or feelings, but also, on the other hand, to distance himself sufficiently from them to transform them into art. Being able to distance himself from his material creatively implies that he is able to 'hold' it in the 'potential space' of the creative process; to allow a sense of internal space to open up in the psyche so that the imagination can move freely (Winnicott, 1971). In other words he is able to think reflexively, which I understand as being able to loosen cognitive control and open up spontaneously to the contingency of learning, whilst at the same time managing the flow of feelings and emotions that accompanies it (Hunt, 2013).[3]

Whilst this young poet seems already to have learned how to do this, many others in our classes will not yet have done so, and will need to be well supported in this new learning. As many of the poems here articulate, the teacher's role is not to be a counsellor or therapist (Yorks & Kasl, 2006); yet there are other things that can be done to provide that support. In our creative writing and personal development courses we learned how important it was to begin with a group discussion of the risks of writing creatively and the duty of self-care that all participants have. Students were encouraged to create a group contract, a list of things they would like everyone to bear in mind as they worked together: things like the importance of listening to each other, of robust but respectful and sensitive feedback, of not passing on to others outside the class what they might learn about each other. One can also allow time at the start of a course for students to get to know each other through ice-breaker exercises (Bolton, Field, & Thompson, 2006), and dividing them into small work-sharing or discussion groups that remain constant throughout the course will deepen that engagement (Hunt, 2013, pp. 119–131).

A similar approach could be valuable in literature and other classes too; after all, it is not just the things students discover through their reading and writing that challenge their ability to engage with their feelings and emotions. As the poem 'Office Hours' shows, there are also the painful life experiences students bring with them into their studies: homelessness, rape, the challenge of 'coming out'. What I learned from my own teaching experience is that, by creating a learning environment where emotions are an acknowledged part of the learning process, it is possible to render that process safer than if feelings and emotions are deliberately excluded, as some commentators would prefer (e.g. Ecclestone & Hayes, 2008). And creating an environment in which students learn to hear and support each other may even go some way to alleviating the pressure of their often difficult lives beyond the seminar room. Of course, it is also important to gauge when a student needs extra support and should be directed to counselling or other student services (Crosling & Webb, 2002).

All of this implies that we as teachers constantly need to be aware of students' vulnerability as they open themselves up to emotional learning. Such awareness involves us in cultivating the same kind of reflexivity as I discussed above, although here it is for a different purpose. We can learn to access the feelings and emotions that emerge as we teach and engage with our students, and also to distance ourselves creatively from them so that they are 'held' in that space for the imagination (Winnicott, 1971) and continuously available to us, rather than kept out of sight. I think of this metaphorically as cultivating a listening/watching/feeling stance, in which we learn to hover at the edge of our 'felt sense' of ourselves (Gendlin, 2003),[4] able to move fluidly back and forth between immersion in that felt sense and standing outside it (Hunt & Sampson, 2006, pp. 1–8). It is a form of self-management as opposed to self-control. This is what the narrator of the poem 'Destination' does, when on a lovely summer day '…too fine for lessons', she abandons her teaching plan and takes the students and herself out into the sunshine to write by the lake. In that spontaneous act she relinquishes her self-concept of teacher and becomes just another student, opening herself up to the insight that we are all – students and teachers alike – 'flapping awkwardly/out of and toward [our] destinies'. Similarly, the narrator of 'Modern Poetry' is flexible enough to let go of her 'brooding sorrow' and loss of meaning by responding to the felt sense of aliveness and spontaneity generated in the seminar room by her students. It is a two-way process, this teaching: helping students to open up and allowing ourselves to be opened up by them (Rogers, 1989).

But opening ourselves up to our students can be a risky business too. The poem 'Advocate' suggests that we can help students by revealing intimate information about ourselves, such as our sexual orientation, which may enable them to feel safe-enough to 'come out'. Yes, certainly, but this has to be done carefully and with an awareness of just how far we ourselves can safely go; sharing our own

personal material too deeply, as '8 O'Clock Monday Morning' reveals, can make *us* feel vulnerable and exposed. As the narrator of this poem says: 'How help them understand/a woman in a short black veil/whose silver ring proclaims her vows/desires love as much as they?' An important part of learning to teach is learning to be open and present to the students, whilst also being aware of boundaries/limits. Again, it is a matter of closeness and distance, getting the balance right, which only comes when we are open to experience.

And that experience can be extremely challenging. The teacher-narrator of 'Classroom Quixote' wrestles with the sensuality generated in her 'old body' by an attractive, flirtatious student, daring her to 'step across outer space', make the imaginary real. In 'Night Class' a teacher is reading her students' thank-you letters set as homework. Whilst the majority are addressed to significant others in the students' lives, one letter '… is addressed to me, the shaky hand/claims there is nobody else'. The presence of transference in the learning space – the tendencies we all have to idealise or demonise the other, to project onto him or her old images of good or bad parents, siblings or teachers – can be extremely discomforting. Understanding the ubiquitous presence of transference in all human relations and how it works (see Britzman, 2009; also Hunt, 2013, pp. 151–163), and even better being able to discuss it in professional development groups, can be enormously beneficial.

Peer mentoring, where we regularly pair up with a colleague to share issues that arise in our teaching, can be useful here too, as can dialoguing with oneself by keeping a teaching journal (Moon, 2004). Using creative writing as a means of engaging with challenging or traumatic events can provide creative distance on them (Chandler, 1990; de Salvo, 1999), as the author of 'Christine, at Night…' finds. Trying to deal with the guilt that remains after her student commits suicide, she objectifies it by writing it out. The vividness of her image of the student's hanging is shocking. She imagines her 'inside a closet/where you hung among jackets, above shoes.' And then she goes further, imagining not just the body after the act, but the act itself: 'Did you kick a vacuum aside like woman flinging bras in Filene's Basement,/ or were you trying to pray, a mantis with legs slowly lifting?' This level of detail brings the act to life, helps to unpack something that is very difficult to think about. In the unpacking the recreation of this terrible act can be looked at and experienced more directly, and whilst at first it is shocking and upsetting, perhaps in the longer term giving the act shape and reality helps it to become more tolerable for the writer (Bolton, 1999).

As the poem 'The Art of Teaching' suggests, learning to be a teacher sometimes requires us to contort ourselves into uncomfortable and difficult emotional positions. Learning techniques to enable us to become a calm, listening presence, both for our students and for ourselves,[5] is, as many of these poems make clear, at the heart of learning to take care of self and others.

NOTES

[1] For Carl Rogers significant learning takes place when the organisation of the self undergoes change (see Illeris, 2004, p. 94).

[2] There are many different understandings of 'transformative learning' and some criticism of the broad or loose use of this term (Newman, 2011). I understand it as similar to Rogers' significant learning.

[3] See also Daniel Siegel's view that reflexivity is a deeper and 'more automatic meta-awareness within the larger framework of reflection' (Siegel, 2007, pp. 126–133).

[4] See Perl (2004) for a practical approach to reflective writing drawing on Gendlin's notion of 'felt sense'.

[5] See Hunt and West (2006) on cultivating 'reverie' (Bion, 1962) in teaching and research; also Hyland (2011) on the role of mindfulness in teaching.

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CHAPTER 6

TEACHING IN THE REAL WORLD

Teaching, learning and the emotions associated with them do not occur in a vacuum. This chapter explores the ways in which global or local events, politics and histories follow us into the classroom, and the emotional and ethical situations we face as a consequence. Sometimes teachers seize opportunities presented by the accidents of history happening around them to pursue 'teachable moments.' Sometimes, the demands of the syllabus mean we keep on with business as usual, even in the face of extraordinary events. While chapter 5 also deals with crises that students experience in their lives, much of the previous chapter deals with individual student encounters, often outside the classroom. In this chapter, we see how personal tragedy, wars and the politics of difference can manifest themselves in the classroom.

CHAPTER 6

SUZANNE ROBERTS

When to Pause
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, 1998

Monday morning,
one student missing.
Where's Donia today?
Students look around
to one another.

She was in that accident
this weekend. Didn't
you hear? Four-wheeling
Cuesta Grade. Mudding

Under a full moon, trusting
traction. The dirt road
swept out – *El Niño* erosion.

The rocky edge caught a tire,
sent the jeep head over end,
again and again
like it was nothing.

She will live, says the class.
Yes, but the driver died
instantly, adds another, he
was my roommate.

I continue with the rules
for the comma,
and the dead boy's
roommate takes notes.

LINDA COSGRIFF

Student Life

My tutor passed away;
that's sad.

I wonder:
did he mark my last essay?

Commentary. When I was studying with the Open University, one group's tutor died suddenly. Students registered their sadness in the chat rooms. There was a tangible pause (the reason for the line break between the two stanzas) and then an overwhelming cry of grief and frustration from most of the affected students that the essays which had been so diligently worked upon might not be marked in time for year-end results. Adult learners tend to be ferocious in their devotion to study, sometimes at the cost of human decency.

MARY VERMILLION

Teaching English in War Time

A farm boy who claims to hate
reading deep leaves for the Gulf.
Every morning I offer more *King Lear*
to those who remain. We think we know
storms and fools and mistakes
that cannot be fixed.

Then towers fall.
An Army girl leaps and pirouettes
through Chaucer, but withdraws from the Bard
and misses Milton's Satan, Shelley's lark,
years of beauty while she prepares for war.
My gradebook swells with zeros.

A year passes. She returns from Baghdad,
garrisoned in silence. Her classmates
pillage *Gulliver's Travels* and blithely
critique evils of war they have not seen.

I return from summer to Shakespeare,
new faces and old questions: Is Branagh's
Henry Five anti-war? We cannot decide.
A lieutenant, a slender tardy girl
who loves the Guard and wins easy A's,
plays Lady Macbeth: Unsex me here.
Here, you spirits. Here.

After Iraq
she watches the same movie every night.
Every night she summons the same flat screen,
seeking a place where she can always know
exactly what will happen next, a land
with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

Previously published in *In Situ: A Collection of Literary and Visual Arts from the Iowa City Area*

Commentary. In 2007, I helped organize a series of events designed to encourage dialogue about the Iraq War. A former student, a member of the Iowa National Guard, spoke to our campus about her deployment in Iraq. She inspired the poem's final two stanzas, but the poem as a whole was inspired by my many students who are veterans of U.S. wars.

JEROME GAGNON

The Unsaid
for A.B., in memoriam

This happened a long time ago,
as if to someone else,
someone I was close to.
We were talking around the round table
with the white laminate top and the swivel chairs,
dinner, I think,
when you began to tell us about the unspeakable.

How you and your crewmates had arrived
in Nagasaki, days after the bombing,
to assess the damage.
How survivors, some of them with flesh
falling from their faces and limbs,
asked politely for help.

'*Onegai*.' '*Please*.'

There wasn't much that could be done, you told us,
but some help was given then,
you helped.

I said nothing.

The silence was quickly filled up
with other talk and,
forgive me,
I remember thinking how inapt it was
to speak of such things at the dinner table.
Not yet understanding that this history of yours
is one we share.
That there are these particular tears,
still falling,
for the wounded and the dead,
for the spilled, uneaten rice.

DANIEL SCOTT TYSDAL

I Wear a Hijab (Lol), or Professor Puts a Cupcake in the Fridge
submitted in fulfilment of an assignment given by the students of ENGB04

This is not what marks you in my memory,
though you write to me: 'Remember? I wear
a hijab (lol).' This is a spell you cast
to charm memory, to summon some features
for me to reference in your quest for work.
What marks you is not the piercings. It's not

the epic beard, for you. For you, it's not
your bedazzled iPhone. It is not your
hijab: neither the rocket-popsicle-
blue hung loose around your crown, nor the black
of deep earth, edging your face the way soil
edges an orchid's surface-bursting stem.

These details are adornments, seasonal
wreaths able to ornament the front door
of a home, but inept at expressing
the life of the lives that once resided,
and do reside, and will reside within.
What marks you is this: the pause as you caught

yourself grasping mid-sentence what it meant
that a wave could motion, 'No, no, I drown.'
For you, it's the far-out comics you shared.
It's the poem you began, 'We begin with
a book. The very first chain in this cave.'
It's what you said about the pronoun 'you'

after class: it hails all of us, and one,
and none. What marks you is that time you spoke,
mid-lecture, interrupting to instruct,
'then write it,' when I said in an aside,
''Professor puts a cupcake in the fridge'
would make an awesome title for a poem.'

And you, the first you, what I remember
is the story you wrote about your trip
to the country where your parents were born,

the last line bearing a rooftop in rain,
and you in that rain once, for real, and me
feeling it in your words, the full, wet fall.

Previously published in *Arc Poetry Magazine*

Commentary. Written in April of 2012, this poem had two points of inspiration. First, I was lecturing to the 150 students in my ENGB04: Critical Thinking about Poetry course at the University of Toronto Scarborough, when a student interrupted to give me a Valentine's Day cupcake. This led to the class assigning me the task of writing a poem titled, 'Professor Puts a Cupcake in the Fridge.' Second, I received an email from a former student looking for a letter of reference. To refresh my memory, she wrote, 'I wear a hijab (lol).' I experienced a huge contrast between what the student thought I remembered and what I remembered about her and other students. With these two points of inspiration combined, the poem pretty much wrote itself.

BUNKONG TUON

Lesson of the Day

We are discussing a book
on the Cambodia Genocide
where a mother makes
the difficult decision: save
her life or the life of one
of her children. A student
raises his hand and asks,
'What are we really? If we take
away the comforts of civilization,
aren't we just animals?'
I scan the room. Silence.

I often feel the suffering
my students endure consists
of pulling an all-nighter to write
papers or study for exams,
receiving a 'B-' in English classes,
boyfriends or girlfriends breaking
up with them over spring break,
and visiting countries without
Mom's macaroni and cheese.

I tell them stories of Grandma
saving her ration of rice gruel for me,
my uncle risking his life to leave
the camp for night fishing to keep us alive,
this same uncle returning to a Khmer
Rouge stronghold for his nephew,
the only evidence left of his sister
and brother-in-law. I say, 'Listen,
I wouldn't be standing in front of you
if it weren't for the love of my uncles,
aunts, and grandmother. Have faith
in the love of ordinary people.'

Commentary. I explore difficult topics (such as war, hunger, genocide, and racism) in my classes. In this poem, I talk about my experience teaching an autobiography by a Cambodian Genocide survivor. Struck by a kind of intellectual privilege and cynicism that pervades our culture, I remind students of the goodness in humanity, the heroic love of ordinary people.

CHAPTER 6

BUNKONG TUON

Coming to Terms

After sleepless nights of re-reading student papers,
you've come to terms with assigning the final grades,
knowing full well that what you have is a glimpse,
a surface reading of a moment in someone's life,
someone you met three hours per week, a little over
two months; you also know that the students whose grades
you've agonized over are home with their families,
or traveling to some tiny island in the South Pacific
or that ancient land where Moses led his people
across the Red Sea, places that you only read about,
and what they want is the final product, that letter grade,
not the process. That morning, you stumble onto campus,
eyes squinting, but for the first time in a long time, you hear
the birds chirping, a spring song of love and kindness,
and you're feeling deep-deep joy, the old blood returning
when suddenly, a question from a corner of the office,
'Can I help you?' and before you have time, an answer
from the questioner, 'If you are unhappy with your grade,
please send your complaint directly to your professor.'
The old joy leaving, you are tired and dried,
as you explain in your now heavily-accented English
that you're simply here to submit grades.
You are thirty five, black hair, face round
like the moon; you are still mistaken for a student.
You wonder what students think when you,
unmistakably Asian, perpetually foreign,
economically uncertain, set foot in their English
classes. You know how you are feeling.

Previously published in *Gruel* (NYQ Press, 2014)

Commentary. This poem explores the struggle of grading that professors go through at the end of each term/semester. Also, as Cambodian-American who was admitted to the U.S. as a refugee, I felt that my life experience was very different from those of my students at a private liberal arts college. I didn't even know, before applying for the job, that colleges and universities could be private.

HOWARD C. STEVENSON

The Politeness of Whiteness

I had a colleague once who got mad at me
because I told him he was White.
He got so mad that he wanted to fight me.
But that wouldn't do so he walked away to spite me.
So I followed him to enlighten him, ever so lightly.
But he couldn't quite say what had frightened him and turned him so red.
So he invited me to restate what I had said.
Instead, I led with, 'No need to get contrite, dude.
It's not a plight to be White, like the day done turned to night.
But I don't do rewrites.'
(He didn't think that comment was polite).
So I thought to myself, 'I don't really do polite when White ain't actin' right.
'Cause subtle and kind words to an academic are like gas to ignite
the right to set my night on fire with his might.

So I said, 'Look-a-here, shall I turn on the light
so you can see for yourself?
And put those boxing gloves back on the shelf
before you get hurt or have to call somebody for help.'

I dreamt my whole life for this kind of rift.
For when a colleague would lift up his hand
to me in thought, word, or deed.
To put me in my place, just so I could erase
the years of politeness and slap the taste out
of his proverbial eloquence.
Enough of the words and the dance.
Time for that fast talker to pray that I don't forget
what time it is or remember where my secret anger is kept.

So he said, 'I wasn't trying to fight.
Just didn't want to carry the burden of being White.
All that baggage of years of supremacy, laid on me.
Took all the trust, sir, I could muster just to stay in your eyesight.
Can't we all just get along?'

There he goes, trying to deny the wrong.

So I thought to myself, 'Professors see prose as the doorways to the soul.
None of us whole anyway, just posing, spending most days conjuring something critical to say.'
So I said, 'instead of avoiding the darkness to crawl into the light,
walk upright in the darkness, don't be afraid of the night.
Stop the fight between your denial and your repression,
'cause you got the wrong impression about me, dude.
I didn't bring up anything you didn't already know.
You just didn't wanna know or show how much smoke you had to blow
everyday without a care of deed, word or thought,
pretending you're not White
and now your distraught cause you got caught?'

As for trust, sir, I see it as bluster,
until you Mister see how the downsize has cut us all down to size.
And how most of us ain't ever going to eye the prize.
And as for the song about getting along?
You didn't quote the words of Martin but Rodney,
who got it all wrong.
It's the former King's words I'd rather sing strong,
'It won't be long now. How long, not long?'
'The moral arc of the universe is long, but it b-b-b-b-bb-bends toward justice'
and that doesn't mean just us or just you.
Brother, if you stay strong, we all can belong,
we all can make it through the night.
But you GOTS to stop denying the wrong and stop crying about being White.

Previously published in *The Teachers Voice* http://www.the-teachers-voice.org/howard_stevenson.html

Commentary. As an African American professor in psychology in an Ivy League University, I've experienced the scrutiny of colleagues regarding my emotional expression as I've experienced their feelings of threat regarding my anger. Couched in what is sometimes a false sense of courtesy, sometimes a value of supreme cultural importance, niceness and politeness is often expressed as a racial avoidance coping strategy. This poem is my expression of inner feelings and thoughts regarding an incident that occurred with a White colleague several years ago who walked away from me when I raised my voice to express disagreement with him. Often, people of color don't say what they feel with White colleagues to keep the schooling environment safe – but safe for whom?

PENELOPE DANE

Low Level

On the day the queer student
panel came to speak, I worried
about the reaction. It was the Deep
South. It was English class, but

most of section 56 focused, except
the Christian frat boy in the front row
who radiated fear as he scratched
letters into a crossword puzzle.

When he finished, he erased
so hard his desk squeaked.
I imagined his pencil emitted ionizing rays
which refracted off us all.

The other students
and the four panelists
kept on, twisting their fingers.
They answered questions

about god, dating, their families.
He began the crossword puzzle again,
his pencil fired out
letter after letter.

I regret I waited

until after class to confront
him about the crossword puzzle.
I was too afraid of detonating in front of them:
then all the students would figure me out.

Years ago, I studied gamma radiation
and I learned that low exposures
over time can damage more

than one mean dose
because our bodies don't
even notice the small cell mutations
from low levels and

the cells never think to try
to fix themselves because
they don't know anything
is wrong.

Previously published in *This Assignment is So Gay: LGBTIQ Poets on the Art of Teaching*

Commentary. In seven years of teaching in the English department at Louisiana State University, I did not invite a queer student panel to speak in my class because I was afraid that I would make myself too vulnerable. If my students were rude to the panel, I worried my own emotional response would out me. Given the political climate in South Louisiana, I was not ready to be out as a teacher. I wrote this poem to think through what happened when I finally did invite a queer student panel to my class. In *Low Level,* I express my regret over waiting until after class to confront the crossword puzzle boy. As a teacher, I could have asked this student to pay attention, but in the moment, my own fear of exposure interfered. The incident got me thinking about reactions, exposures, and the ways small things add up.

MICHALINOS ZEMBYLAS

Expert Commentary

A longstanding challenge in education – including, of course, higher education – is how to handle difficult topics in classes – war, genocide, racism, trauma, and death. The poems in this chapter show how multiple emotions – shock, sorrow, regret, disgust, sadness – *accompany* teachers and students in their efforts to make sense of traumatic events in the world. These poems involve what Deborah Britzman (Britzman, 1998, 2000, 2013; Britzman & Pitt, 2004; Pitt & Britzman, 2003) has called *difficult knowledge*. Difficult knowledge has emerged as a key concept in recent years to denote the affective and epistemological challenges in teaching and learning about/from social and historical traumas. The term 'difficult knowledge' does not only explore what renders knowledge 'difficult' but most importantly how educators may handle *pedagogically* traumatic representations in the classroom (Zembylas, 2014).

Megan Boler's (1999) theorization on emotions and education highlights that students' feelings of 'discomfort' in dealing with difficult topics may not only be unavoidable but also necessary when educators teach about such topics in the classroom. In recent years, there has been increasing empirical evidence of how and why discomforting feelings might block, defuse, and distract the transformation of students (e.g. Berlak, 2004; Razack, 2007; Zembylas, 2012). In my own work, I have argued that there needs to be an explicit *pedagogic* attention to students' emotional responses to difficult issues, if teachers are going to 'respond' to discomforting feelings in critical and productive ways. The poems in this chapter remind us once again of the *power* of these discomforting feelings and call attention to the challenges of formulating pedagogical responses to difficult knowledge. But what does it really constitute a 'pedagogical response' to discomforting feelings concerning the experiences of war (Mary Vermillion), the unspeakable trauma of Nagasaki (Jerome Gagnon), or the un-describable consequences of the Cambodian Genocide (Bunkong Tuon), to name just a few examples?

In this commentary, I do not have the space to analyse the possible emotional responses evoked in/by each and every poem, but I will suggest that by engaging critically with the emotions associated with these poems – particularly in relation to what we can *pragmatically* expect, as teachers, from our students – we might be able to formulate *empathetic* pedagogies that *strategically* position ourselves 'as conduits for students' affective responses' (Lindquist, 2004, p. 189). My commentary, then, proceeds in the following two steps: first, I delve more deeply into what makes emotional responses 'difficult', when we engage with traumatic representations of events; to show this, I will make reference to some poems in this chapter. Second, I will discuss how a teacher in higher education can gradually formulate pedagogical responses that are *both* critical *and* empathetic.

First of all, what makes emotional responses 'difficult', when we engage with traumatic representations of events? Britzman makes a useful distinction between two dynamics of learning – learning *about* and learning *from* – when it comes to 'difficult knowledge':

> Whereas learning *about* an event or experience focuses on the acquisition of qualities, attributes, and facts, so that it presupposes a distance (or, one might say, a detachment) between learner and what is to be learned, learning *from* an event or experience is of a different order, that of insight. Both of these learning moves are made fragile in difficult knowledge. (1998, p. 117, added emphasis)

The notion of 'difficult knowledge', then, signifies *both* representations of social and historical traumas in the classroom *and* the learner's encounters with them in pedagogy (see also Pitt & Britzman, 2003). What is essentially 'difficult' about knowledge that stems from trauma is the experience of 'encountering the self through the otherness of knowledge' (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 755), or as Simon (2011) explains, 'those moments when knowledge appears disturbingly foreign or inconceivable to the self, bringing oneself up against the limits of what one is willing and capable of understanding' (p. 433).

For example, in Gagnon's poem, there is explicit reference to the 'unspeakable' and 'unsaid' representations and memories of helping the survivors of Nagasaki: 'I remember thinking how inapt it was/to speak of such things at the dinner table… That there are these particular tears,/still falling,/for the wounded and the dead'. In Tuon's poem, there is a scene that is often experienced by educators, when a difficult topic is encountered in the classroom: 'I scan the room. Silence.' In Stevenson's commentary after his poem, there is also another common challenge experienced by educators and students when discussing issues of racism and whiteness in the classroom: how to keep the learning environment 'safe'; yet, the question is often, 'safe for whom'? (see also, Matias & Zembylas, 2014). Here I want to discuss two important elements in the notion of difficult knowledge that help educators delve deeper into understanding the implications of students' emotional responses to traumatic representations (see Zembylas, 2014).

First, it is important for educators and their students to realise that it is impossible to find ways that do justice to the signification of war, genocide, racism, trauma, and death. However, the challenges of handling trauma and loss raise important questions for a critical and empathetic exploration in the classroom such as: How and why are some individuals or groups constructed as grievable and others as less so? How can educators and students use the emotions evoked in such events as points of departure to create stronger affective attachments with others who suffer? For example, Vermillion's poem calls attention to the challenges of handling the traumatic experiences of war veterans, but it also offers important insights that could construct a deeper empathetic understanding with these individuals. Importantly, the

criticality of responding to the war in Iraq and its consequences are not sacrificed for an empty sentimentality (Zembylas, 2008) or passive empathy (Boler, 1999).

Second, there is the issue of how to make trauma 'pedagogical', when teachers and students are confronted with the impossibility of un-doing the harm and suffering that has taken place. Britzman points out that difficult knowledge 'requires educators to think carefully about their own theories of learning and how the stuff of such difficult knowledge becomes pedagogical' (1998, p. 117). Britzman's concerns focus on how pedagogical encounters with trauma can offer hope and reparation, rather than getting stuck in despair and the work of memorializing loss (2000, pp. 33–35). How can the curriculum be organized, she asks, in a way that does not provide closure but rather the possibilities to repair traumatic experiences? Her response is that difficult knowledge inevitably creates this ambivalence between hope and despair and thus curriculum and pedagogy should be able to accommodate ambivalent feelings. This ambivalence gives rise to important questions that enrich the pedagogical engagement with trauma: How can the legitimacy of this ambivalence be recognized and affirmed as a point of departure for more critical and empathetic pedagogical work? How can educators and students move a step forward and subvert the symbolic, discursive or material boundaries of trauma regulated in social and political spaces? For example, Gagnon's poem brings to the surface the feelings of despair for Nagasaki and its aftermath, but it also highlights the hope of empathising that 'this history of yours/is one we share'. These ambivalent feelings that are present in other poems too (e.g. Stevenson; Dane) can constitute important points of departure for subverting taken for granted boundaries among individuals and communities.

I want now to move to the next step of my argument and discuss more explicitly how an educator can gradually construct a pedagogical response that is both critical and empathetic. The inevitably emotional nature of discussions of difficult topics in higher education suggests how difficult knowledge itself is not interpreted uniformly. This position highlights that a critical and empathetic pedagogical approach requires the use of those pedagogical resources that enable the formation of new affective alliances among members of 'different' communities. In light of the space limitations, I want to highlight two such pedagogical resources: pedagogies of strategic empathy and pedagogies of discomfort.

One of the pedagogical resources that I have found useful in my own teaching in higher education is *strategic empathy* (Zembylas, 2012). Strategic empathy is essentially the use of empathetic emotions in both critical and strategic ways (Lindquist, 2004); that is, it refers to the willingness of the educator to make herself strategically skeptic (working sometimes against her own emotions) in order to empathize with the difficult knowledge students experience, even when this difficult knowledge is disturbing to other students or to the educator. For example, strategic empathy would entail empathizing with the White professor in Stevenson's poem or the crossword puzzle boy in Dane's poem; this empathy

does not mean sharing the same feelings with these individuals, but rather using their feelings as pedagogical resources to open up affective spaces which might eventually disrupt the emotional roots of difficult knowledge – no matter where it is coming from. Undoubtedly, this is a long and difficult task, but the educator has to become strategic about it. For example, confronting the knowledge of the crossword puzzle boy (as suggested by Dane's poem) might not be the best strategy under all circumstances.

Pedagogies of strategic empathy, then, suggest developing a mode of teaching and learning from difficult knowledge – a mode that produces a new ethical relationality and emotional culture in the classroom. Students and educators who struggle with traumatic representations of events bring different emotional histories with them to the classroom; in tracing these histories of refusal, shame, anger, resentment, denial, shock and so on, it becomes clear that to move beyond emotional injury, the educator needs to avoid moralistic or inflexible approaches. Therefore, developing pedagogies that utilize strategic empathy would mean being committed to develop affective connections without dismissing the critical interrogation of past emotional histories, knowledges, and experiences.

Another pedagogical resource is *pedagogy of discomfort* (Boler, 1999; Boler & Zembylas, 2003; Zembylas & Boler, 2002), a teaching practice that can encourage students to move outside their 'comfort zones' and question their 'cherished beliefs and assumptions' (Boler, 1999, p. 176). This approach is grounded in the assumption that discomforting feelings are important in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices and they create openings for individual and social transformation. For example, Dane's and Stevenson's poems describe vividly the immense challenges of teaching/learning for anti-discrimination and social justice, emphasizing the role of educators in creating classroom spaces where students can engage respectfully and critically with their peers while acknowledging the unequal power relations.

Ellsworth (1989) has already taught us that the assumption about 'safe' speaking in which all shared ideas can be engaged respectfully and critically is illusory due to the embodied and historical differences of students and educators. Safety cannot be constructed, then, as the absence of discomfort; similarly, experiencing discomfort should not be confused with the absence of safety (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007). Whether or not educators are able to create safety and/or discomforting conditions, it is important to open up a much needed learning space in the classroom to engage students in critical inquiry regarding their values and beliefs. Safe space, then, is not about the absence of discomfort, but rather it is a way of thinking, feeling and acting that fosters students' critical rigor (Davis & Steyn, 2012).

Needless to say, the call for a 'pedagogy of discomfort' in higher education should not be assumed to be always already transformative, and beyond question. So many things can go wrong – misunderstandings of the purpose; the immense challenges of creating a 'safe' space for this endeavor (safe for whom, as Stevenson's commentary suggests). It needs to be recognized, then, that while this pedagogical approach may

potentially move us to engage with difficult topics, it is no simple recipe for dealing with such issues. Not all students will respond in the same way or benefit from discomforting pedagogies; some may indeed change, others may resist, and still others may experience distress (Kumashiro, 2002).

To conclude, what I am suggesting in this commentary is the importance of recognizing that critical and empathetic pedagogies enhance our vocabulary and practices to engage with the emotional complexities that difficult knowledge raises for educators and learners – complexities that acknowledge the challenges of living *with* trauma in the midst of powerful social, affective, historical, and political legacies. The attempt to engage with difficult knowledge in higher education may often be invoking the very challenges that are hoped to be resolved through our pedagogies. However, an important contribution of developing critical and empathetic pedagogies is precisely this persistent commitment not to settle this issue once and for all. Much more work is needed to invent pedagogies that address difficult topics – critically and productively – in our classes.

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CHAPTER 7

FOR LOVE OF PEOPLE, CULTURE AND SOCIETY

This is the first of three chapters about love of one's subject area. The centrepiece of higher education is the study of particular subjects. It is through particular concepts, ideas and disciplinary ways of thinking that students and teachers re-make their understandings of themselves and the world. Thus, this chapter and the two that follow it divide the myriad of different subjects in higher education into three broad categories. While much literature on learning and teaching in higher education is generic, these three chapters situate the experience of higher education deeply in the subjects studied. In this way, I draw on Lee Shulman's notions of pedagogy of substance (2009) and signature pedagogies (2005). These three chapters are also informed by Anna Neumann's (2009) research on professors who experience 'passionate thought' in pursuing their chosen subjects of study. Poems in these chapters explore the nuances of that emotional engagement and the kinds of situations in which those passions are ignited or doused.

This chapter explores the emotions and aspirations of those studying subjects intended to serve people and society. In a recent study of social sciences education (McLean, Abbas, & Ashwin, 2013), students at a wide range of institutions were motivated by a desire to make a difference in the world. This chapter encompasses those in various forms of professional education who may be approaching their studies with this core motivation, although their subject may not, itself, be classified as a social science. Managing classroom discussions in these subject areas can be challenging as prejudices are voiced and confronted – or not. Many of these poems deal with breaking silences associated with injustice. These themes follow on well from chapter 5. Other poems show what students encounter and experience when they step out of classrooms to work with vulnerable people in the community.

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CHAPTER 7

BRIDGET DIXON

No offense

but I can't stand white people.
She fires the phrase
across the small classroom
body cocked behind the desk
prepared for anger, or pain,
whatever comes.

She searches for something sharp:
for teeth to clench, for the sturdy
setting of jaw, the splendor of anger
as it molds a face,
sets it taut against bone.

But she'll take the slide of skin
into suffering or fear,
the slacking of a smile
eyes that tumble toward the tile.

Behind the podium I struggle,
work to give her nothing she can
call victory but my belly.
That betrayer, hardens
seconds too late to diminish the blow.

I cling frantically to façade, reply
none taken.

Previously published at *The Teacher's Voice*: www.the-teachers-voice.org/bridget_dixon.html

HOWARD C. STEVENSON

Elephant Attention

It's not about the blame.
Not trying to make you feel guilty.
It's not just about you. It's the filthy way
we both ignore the elephant in the room.
I deplore the card games, the slurred names, and
fanning the politically correct flames.
It's not even about the shames that we can't mention,
'cause the silencer on the racial tension is the doom,
that we presume.

I'm not trying to build fences or get too intense
But my sense is that it's senseless that we can't even make reference
to *that* boil waitin' to bloom'
or to *that* cloud of 'racist' that looms large
over the elephant standing like a dusty heirloom in the corner of the dusty room.
Were we crazy thinking that we could polish away the rusty with a broom,
or sweep up this mess,
when it was the wind or tsunami or monsoon that blew in this unrest of the racial?

No. It was our musty elephant that exhumed up and dragged in the fume.
No broom can clean this spew up, that we all threw up.
We need a bigger tomb to bury the sorrow and the worry that years of fears have
brewed up,
pretending that the skin color didn't father me or bother you;
didn't other me or mother you.
We both know that the dark will make you holler
and bring out that other you.
We both know that you're afraid that the darker brother
is gonna' smother you 'til you're blue.
No need to sweat it, I get it.
Everybody in the lighter hue *and* the darker hue has
got the same fear of the darker smother brother too.

So don't hate the player or the shame that the racial blame keeps wreaking.
Hate the racial game.
'Cause it's way too insane if you keep sneaking and freaking about
every time the elephant wants a shout out.
Just say hello and ask if he wants to stay or go
and then we'll all know whether it's okay to mention the racial tension

or find the right intervention for our negative emotions.
Because ignoring the snoring in the corner gets boring and
elephants won't leave without attention.

Commentary. I often receive predictable questions when I speak on my research that targets racial stress, conflict, and coping in schooling relationships. Those questions tend to center around a basic query about how the 'asker' can remain blameless when talking, thinking, or stumbling into a racial encounter. I try to deflect that these are matters of competence, not character, and that blame only distracts one's attention to the lack of competence and the over-reliance on character. This poem is meant to reframe racial politics as a matter of engagement rather than avoidance, about action and honesty about one's fears rather than personality and fear of being ridiculed.

SCOTT WIGGERMAN

Day of Silence
for the Gay-Straight Alliances

You think you know them, these students
who can't remember to bring a pencil to class
but somehow manage to find pink duct tape.

You told them their silence would be enough,
but they insisted on covering their mouths
with bright rectangles of sticky shocking pink.

The words of taped mouths can't be suppressed.
With eyes on fire, these gay and straight students
blaze down the halls, their message incinerating:
What are you going to do to end the silence?

Previously published in *This Assignment is So Gay: LGBTIQ Poets on the Art of Teaching* (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2013)

GENE GROVES

Documentary

This is the Anti-Discriminatory Practice session [ADP].
Prejudice. Discrimination. Oppression,
long words that mask short lives.
We are learning to pick our way
through class, gender, disability and race,
student social workers, all present today
for the film on the Holocaust
a black-and-white documentary
'The World At War – GENOCIDE.'
Our benign Jewish lecturer presses a button.

Digging and more digging. Pits fill up.
Canisters of cyanide are tipped economically
through a small hole in a roof.
We hear of babies thrust in, over the heads of mothers.
The camera lingers on recycling heaps,
hanks of hair, lustrous or matted
tumble, tangle. Gypsy and Jew together.
Piles of spectacles glint at the lens.

No chairs scrape. No files drop here.
Only sniffs, sobs, in the silent hall,
a blurred scramble for tissues.
I think of my Jewish great-grandmother,
Rebecca, who had thirteen children
to her Irish-eyed charmer.
The SS had lists of Irish and English Jews.
My dark cousins proclaim our common
ancestry, Rebecca's bequest.
The blonde, horse-loving Romany student
at the back of the hall, how does she feel?

Bodies are bulldozed on the screen
and my friend is inconsolable, grief
too deep to comprehend.
Her cries shatter the stillness.
My arm around her shoulders
holds tight. We lean close for comfort.
Abused as a wife, stalwart defender

of refuges for battered women,
she knows this powerlessness. Remembers.
'I want to hug them and I can't!' she says.
The film ends.
I do not stay for the discussion.

Previously published (as 'Video') in *Flambard New Poets 2* (Flambard, Press, 1995)

Commentary. In the mid-nineties I studied at Northumbria University, Newcastle on Tyne, UK for my two year social work qualification. We had to aspire to be as non-judgemental about people as possible, examining our own prejudices and society's. We needed to understand why people can feel powerless. Social work involves both care and control and it is a delicate balance. Ninety students watched the Holocaust documentary. It was an emotional experience and I felt compelled to write about it. We all need to be alert to oppression, whatever form it takes.

CHAPTER 7

M. LEE ALEXANDER

The Great Beach Ball Rescue

Remember that summer at Lake Geneva
when the lifeguards went wild chasing a beach
ball? It was our last hurrah before the fall term; we
had just spread out our patchwork towels when
suddenly the giant red and yellow plastic orb

ignoring all the warning signs bounced out
beyond the buoys, and the shore patrol sprang to
action. We laughed ourselves to tears at the sight of
people doing jobs more ridiculous than ours, flailing
as the spinning sphere eluded their grasps:

kicking, shouting, just missing its bobbling
slippery surface as it flounced farther from their
helpless hands, saying 'we trust these people with
our lives who can't even bring in a beach ball?'
Finally victory, and everyone cheered.

But later on the long drive home as dusk
was falling, brushing off our sandy sunsoaked skin
we fell silent, each of us secretly sobered by the thought
that as we returned to face New Student Days
and desks piled high with syllabi and sighs

that we who were trained to save
lives (remember how we were to save lives?)
yes we who were dying to save lives (I mean we
got the certificate and everything!) would
rescue beach balls all semester long.

Previously published in *Folly Bridge* (Finishing Line Press, 2011) and in *Poems Niederngasse*

Commentary. This poem recounts a true incident. When I taught at a small college in southern Wisconsin, we took our faculty retreat at a nearby lake every year. That year we did laugh a bit at the lifeguards hopelessly chasing a giant beach ball, until realizing our own jobs, meant to be so important, even life-changing, were often bogged down by similar meaningless and inconsequential tasks.

RICHARD M. BERLIN

Power

Ask me about power
and I'll tell you about cigar smoke,
the way it darkens like a thunderhead

or curls thin as an assassin's wire.
I'll tell you how smoke
sticks to your flesh

for the length of a career,
and I'll tell you about the day
the Chairman of Psychiatry

gathered us in a conference room,
pulled a Havana from his pocket,
chewed the end, and blew

each long drag in the patient's face.
And when the patient finally cried,
the Chairman turned

to his audience of students and residents,
took the cigar from his mouth,
and examined it like a surgical instrument,

slime at one end, the tip burning red.
He smiled at the cigar, chomped down,
took another suck.

Previously published in *Secret Wounds* (BkMk, 2011)

CHAPTER 7

DAVID BURRIDGE

(Excerpts from) Mature Student

Out of the lecture hall into broad daylight –
mental clock-cards ping in disbelief:
homeward and not even sick.

Economic curves iron-jangle in my brain.
I see the lecturer's formulated face
ripple with seethe
as I question that equilibrium
can ever be achieved.

He opens his holy book,
quotes equation-proofs,
mutters: such heresies can tumble grades.
I protest: *economics is about behaviour –*
people don't always do as they should.

Lectern-gripping, knuckle-white,
he announces next time it's a *welfare-curve*
and he would demonstrate
constrained bliss.

Commentary. This excerpt is part of a longer poem about being a mature business student. The course involved a parade of different social scientists interpreting the world through their own disciplinary lenses. Experienced in the rough approximations that are work and life, I could see the failings of their theories. This economics lecturer, though, taught me the perils of objecting.

JUDITH BARRINGTON

Martha 1630

Branks: A device consisting of a metal frame for the head and a bit to restrain the tongue, formerly used to punish scolds.

1

It was nothing but the truth, what I said:
He *was* lazy. He smelled like a pig.
He hit me for no cause but that I spoke.

Anyway, ‘twas for his own good—
I said what I said, hoping he’d go to work
or wash himself at the pump before he ate.

So what if I said it more than once?
He didn’t hear the first time, nor the third
as far as I could tell. He never looked up.

So then I spoke louder, like you do
to one who is deaf or a little simple.
Yes, I cursed him—just once I cursed his name.

‘Raise your voice, do you?’ he said
so I turned my back and busied myself
at the stove, stirring the porridge oats.

I made it just the way he likes
but he was gone when I served it up
with a knob of butter I’d begged at the farm.

Before I could eat even a spoonful myself,
they came in, three of them, smiling, casual-like.
One of them held the thing. I knew what it was.

2

A boy once told me my cheek were pink like a fruit
but now ‘tis raw where the bridle grips
and pus is crusted under the metal rods.

Was pride another sin? My hair once blonde
hasn't been washed: I've let it go to grease.
The headpiece rests on that join atop my skull

where bone meets bone. It must've been soft
when my newborn skull rested in mother's palm.
She warned me, my mam, told me to watch my tongue

and now my tongue's held down by the bit—
she was right, I always did speak my mind too much.
The sores on my lips make me think on that boy…

So many years since I learned to kiss.
So many years since I wanted to kiss.
Now when I make his porridge I hawk and spit.

Previously published in *Southword Journal* and *The Conversation* (Salmon Poetry, 2015)

Commentary. This poem harks back to my years teaching Women's Studies at Portland State University, and, before that, as a student in that department, when I wrote a long paper on the witch hunts in the U.S.A.

I was motivated by a desire to somehow make the targeted women real human beings. Students were often unable to grasp the reality of this period and how it impacted women who were either tortured, or forced to become as invisible and silent as possible. I felt that the best way to find the feeling in these episodes was to write in the voice of 'Martha' who is fictitious, but represents many others.

BONNIE S. KAPLAN

Talking Ban

They have a male-female talking ban at the rehab.

Residents are not to engage in any discussion
with the opposite sex.

This conversation ban hinders intimate
relationships from forming within the community.

What about Terry who is transsexual?
I think everyone should be able
to talk to Terry.
The talking ban extends to my classroom,
I don't enforce it.
If Antonio wants to help Marquita
better understand the Barbarian takeover
of the Roman Empire,
then more power to that.

Previously published in *This Assignment is So Gay: LGBTIQ Poets on the Art of Teaching* (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2013)

Commentary. When I wrote this poem, I was working at a transitional housing and drug rehabilitation facility for adults on parole. My work from this time often looks at the unexpected circumstances and relationships that come up between myself as an educator and the diverse community of adults that inhabit the world of corrections—a system that both supports them and keeps them in bounds.

CHAPTER 7

JOANN GARDNER

Haven Poe

Shiftless on a ledge, smoking, she seems between
thoughts, between lives. 'How does one get so lost
so soon?' I wonder, as I walk up the stairs to the youth
shelter, poetry book in hand. I'm trying not to notice
the girl on the ledge, emoting both defiance and need,
but she speaks to me, mumbling, and I turn to see
what for. 'If anyone asks,' she says, 'I'm going to make
a phone call.' She jumps down and walks, dreamily,
away. 'Sure,' I say. 'Whatever.' Although I'm certain
phone calls are not allowed here, especially those that
happen down the road and out of sight, but I am no
authority, stretching that sticky connection between
self and the world. Inside, I learn she's looking for
someone to ask her, just once, to express a desire
that she not disappear into the outside downtown
early spring of Tampa, trees leaning, blue bay sparkling,
feet treading the brick-lined neighborhoods, looking
for someone, even a stranger, to say, 'Won't you come in?'
'Would you like to talk or something?' And I've missed
my cue, lost in my own urge to flee this place, this hurt
that I cannot fix, the loneliness, the empty hearts.

Previously published in *The Comstock Review*

Commentary. 'Haven Poe' is a youth shelter in Tampa, Florida, where I did a series of workshops. The scene depicted here is an event that preceded my first day at Haven Poe and involves my own inner conflict with regard to the hopeful-hopelessness of this work.

JOY REID

Advice from a Lifer

I feel sorry for you, son,
I really do.
Thrust into the firing line virtually defenceless.
What you need is advice based on extensive
experience,
not rhetoric and propaganda.
What you need is to be put right
by a Lifer, like me.

When first you make contact, lad,
keep your head low and your wits about you.
Remember, you're outnumbered –
thirty to one.
They'll start with a lone sniper
gauging your strength, the wily little…
So strike quickly, fearlessly, without favour.
Never relax defences
Might as well paint a target on your forehead,
Hand them a gun,
invite a fragging.

Another fiendish tactic
is to woo you as a 'friend'.
For pity's sake, don't fall for that obvious manoeuvre.
They may approach with winning smiles
and outstretched hands
ask you about your weekend, hobbies, football team
but don't you be deceived, son,
no, not for a minute.
They're low types
always on the sniff for opportunities.
Don't you give them any ammunition.

It saddens me to speculate upon the drubbing
A raw recruit such as yourself will cop.
It's inevitable.
I've seen it happen time and time again.
Still, don't despair.
Sure, you'll walk away bloodied at the end of the day

but as long as the little blighters are more bloodied than you,
I guess you can say you've
achieved something.

Take it from me –
a genuine Lifer, there's only one way to last the distance
and it's not
by currying favour with the kiddies.
Hit 'em hard, hit 'em low
Keep 'em disorientated, distracted
and always watch your back.

Previously published (as 'Antidote') on Wattpad

Commentary. This poem tries to capture the antipathy that can exist between young, energised teachers who, having just entered the teaching field, see nothing but the opportunity to change lives; and the older teachers who have slowly had their enthusiasm ground down and their energy whittled away by internal politics, an excessive workload and very little appreciation.

JOHN MANESIS

Instruction

I sat in back, a volunteer
who watched the teacher try
to elicit the word, 'tree,'
from the disparate group,

among them Somalians, Sudanese,
Bosnians and Viet Namese.
She shaped a circle in the air,
fluttering fingers meant
to represent a crown of leaves.

Not yet obtaining a response,
she chalked on image on the board,
a globe shaped like a cauliflower
perched atop a slender trunk.
Again, she queried them,

'What is this a picture of?'
A young man from Srebrenica,
tapping his feet beside me,
answered in a voice so subdued
I was the only one who heard the word,
'Bomb.'

Previously published in *Colere* and *In the Third Season*

Commentary. This poem was based on an incident which occurred when I was a volunteer in an ESL class in Fargo. It demonstrates how the essence of poetry can present itself at unexpected moments.

CHAPTER 7

ELIZABETH BRADFIELD

Distance Education

In Unalakleet and Gambell, my students,
teachers' aides who need this class
to keep their jobs, learn this week that they must care

about the semicolon. More
than their properly punctuated sentences,
I want to read what stories
they tell themselves to make it matter.

I don't know when the murre eggs
are ready for harvest or when
walrus meat tastes best.

Hard to care about the split
infinitive when ice storms,
when past dues, when shore erosion.

I assign homework they don't do
because they had to take kids
away from fathers or because

cloudberries ripened in the bog.
I look at my spreadsheet of work done
and points assigned. The icon for its program
is green as new shoots of pushki. I fail them.

Previously published in *This Assignment is So Gay: LGBTIQ Poets on the Art of Teaching* (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2013) and collected in *Once Removed* (Persea Books, 2015)

JENNIFER L. FREED

Lessons

If you were that woman, sitting
every Friday in the public library, one week working
through the *who* and *how* and *why*
of simple questions whispering from your tutor's lips,
the next week learning *price* and *pay* and *sale* and *save*
and *How much does it cost?* –
if you were that woman,
then you, too,
would ask for repetition of *bag* and *back* and *bank,*
of *leave* and *leaf* and *left* and *live*,
and you would struggle to produce the English sounds
that held the meanings you still held
inside your head: the dappled murmuring of leaves
outside your childhood home, the trees
full of sweet yellow fruit you could not name in this new life,
the lives you left so you could live,
and as you moved your lips in all the unfamiliar ways
to make the sounds your tutor made, she would nod
and you would smile, but you would never
write, for you'd not yet know how
to form or read those fast, firm letters you watched pouring from her hand,
and so you'd have no way to store what you had learned
except in memory and hope,
alongside memories of why you'd never needed written words
in your native world, where your mother had taught you all the skills
of planting and harvesting and weaving and singing that you would ever need
for living in a lush, good place,
and alongside memories
of gunfire echoing beyond the trees,
of rebels begging for or stealing food,
of soldiers from some distant city standing in your
village, barking about loyalty
and able-bodied men,
and then the memories
of jungle paths for five long nights,
of sharing food and whispered hope with others who had dared
to flee,
and the memories of the daughter and the son, both
born and grown high as your eye in the refugee camp on the border.

The English words would nestle in amidst
all this,
get lost, be found again, and you would have to try
to pull them out but leave the rest behind, try
to let the new sounds tell you
not only the hard-edged names and places
of this brick and concrete life,
but also how to live in it:
how to take
a city bus, how to
pay for
light,
and you would sit again, again, again
in a mauve chair at a round table in the library,
amidst the shelves and worlds
of words,
struggling with your *who* and *how* and *why*,
and you would not allow yourself
to figure how much it had cost
or how much you still had to pay.
You would just smile and thank your tutor,
and come back
next Friday.

Previously published in *The Worcester Review*

Commentary. Refugees and other immigrants face the enormous project of language-learning before they can even hope to enter university. Of course, the issues are not just learning language, but all the culture language holds, while simultaneously dealing with culture shock. The task is all the harder for those who come without a background that exposes them to the typical classroom expectations (e.g. taking notes, studying at home).

NANCY VIVA DAVIS HALIFAX

She waited

She waited on the eastern sea-to-sea-
to-sea tracing men trundling past
carts barren of bottles or copper or fish
hands roughed by minus seventeen with wind
jackets un-ironed coarse cotton.

She waved to skies, clouds
in their gauzy pink rising shine tasted
like candy streams. Her hands wore scars
illuminated in sun's golden set:
one from gutting fish, another
a broken glass hidden in sudsy dish water,

a corrupt grease trap.
She missed her kids. Hoped the sweaters she
knit still fit, were not worn
through. She was saving up a story to tell them why
she had to leave, why

they were taken, but she couldn't get beyond
once upon a time without biting
her nails to the quick, thinking
she should be able to clean up this mess of a
life where the shape of the future is ferried
from harbours passed.

Previously published in *hook* (MGill-Queen's University Press, Hugh MacLennan Poetry Series, 2015)

Commentary. This excerpt from *hook* was written alongside my experiences of witnessing homelessness, poverty, disability and chronic illness on the streets and within women's emergency shelters of Canada.

CHAPTER 7

JUNE SYLVESTER SARACENO

Chrysanthemums and the Communist Manifesto
for Deirdre

What I have to offer you
is a mixed bag of goods:
a yellow chrysanthemum
sunny bright bloom with its whiff of death,
a book whose illicit pages held
a rusty key I needed once

yellowed pages brittle with age
flowers dried between words
maps and moments combined
to create the place that was
the place becoming, the place at a distance
where points converge.

My life converges with yours
and I hand you what I have:
a flower that beams with sun may stink.
The world may stink and no easy way to fix it
but words ripen in the mind.
Some moments make the heart bloom
their fruit and flower
may be just enough
to live by.

Previously published in *The Pedestal* and awarded an honorable mention in the Wadsworth Teachers of Poetry Competition

Commentary. This poem was written for a student, Deirdre, who struggled with how to respond to the injustices in the world that seemed overwhelming to her. Literature was a way for us to talk about this and it offered her various perspectives.

MONICA MCLEAN WITH SARAH LFFANU AND SUSAN BRUCE

Expert Commentary

Reading this poetry demanded change. My professional reading is texts about the pedagogy, curriculum, policy, and politics of higher education. I read quickly, admiring clarity, lack of ambiguity, and logical arguments. To respond to these poems I went to long-ago mostly-forgotten mind places where English teachers and youthful friends guided me. My friends, the author Sarah LeFanu and academic Susan Bruce, sat with me and my poems for hours modelling what it takes; their voices can be heard in this commentary. Edward Hirsch's '*How to read a poem and fall in love with poetry*' (1999) shone a dazzling light on what to do. I re-read the poems aloud over several weeks, inhabiting them, paying them the 'dreamy attentiveness' proposed by Hirsch (p. 2). At each reading I tried to be more alert to how the poetic use of language can catch equivocal, indeterminate, alternative truths about teaching and learning. John Berryman claims that poems are not for 'understanding' but rather to 'terrify and comfort' (quoted in Hirsch, p. 5). Accordingly, my commentary intends to capture how poems evoke emotional responses.

As the chapter title suggests this clutch of poems is about 'love of humanity' and how classrooms can engender it. On the whole (I will deal with exceptions later) they by-pass engagement with subject or discipline to deal with people and the politics of learning and teaching. The majority of these poems are from the tutor's perspective, and enter into the experiences of students or ponder the dynamic between tutor and student in terms of gender, race, class, vulnerability, deprivation and oppression.

Poems catch particular moments; as such, they are the antithesis of generalised, abstract accounts. 'No offense' is an illustration. Time stands still as the reader is privy to the poet-tutor's turmoil in the moment between the student's '/No offense/ but I can't stand white people./' and the tutor's response '/none taken/'. That moment illustrates the power of images and similes to convey feeling. The student has a metaphoric gun, the student as seen by the tutor from '/Behind the podium…/' […]. '/…fires the phrase/' with '…/body cocked/'. The tutor watches the student watching for an angry response or, alternatively, an embarrassed or guilty one. It is a battle for reacting either way is a 'victory' for the student, so the tutor '/cling[s] frantically to façade/' to give the conventional (meaningless)/'none taken'/. Such a poem breathes real-life struggle into the 'ambivalence and tension [surrounding race], which students and teachers must negotiate.' (Zembylas, 2007, 454).

Staying with the issue of race, 'Elephant attention' is one of the few poems here that is explicitly pedagogical, offering a way out of 'No offense's unresolved situation. The commentary explains that the aim of the poem is to counsel readers that racism is a matter of 'competence' not 'character'. No one should blame themselves and, generously (disingenuously), proposes complicity: '/Everybody in the lighter hue and the darker hue has/got the same fear of the darker smother brother too./'. The poem reframes racial politics as a matter of engagement rather than

avoidance by way of the 'elephant in the room' metaphor. The reader is engaged by the rollicking, rap-like movement. The pounding rhythms, the internal and intense rhyming make you *see* that huge grey elephant in the room. So even though the subject matter is serious about the nature of racism ('filth', 'vomit', 'boils', 'fear', 'sorrow') and our pretence '/that the skin color didn't father me or bother you;/ didn't other me or mother you./' – we *feel* how right is the exhortation not to 'get too intense', but rather address the elephant: '/Just say hello and ask if he wants to stay or go/'. My literary comment carries with it an educational point. Silence, blindness and unspoken assumptions about race are barriers to developing a truly inclusive pedagogy in higher education classrooms. Educational literature (for example, Howell and Tuitt's [2003]) gives the reasons for addressing 'the elephant in the room', but fails to encourage action in the way this poem so successfully does by being fun to read.

Despite the acute discomfort of 'No offense', there lurks in that poem a sense that the relationship between student and tutors can be energising and life-affirming when deep-felt issues are at stake. In 'Day of Silence/for the Gay-Straight Alliance' students with mouths taped shut 'with shocking pink' challenge the teacher (and therefore the reader). The poet-tutor learns from and admires students he thought pretty incompetent ('/who can't remember to bring a pencil to class/') who now express a fiery passion for justice: '/With eyes on fire, these gay and straight students/ blaze down the halls, their message incinerating:/'. In fact, there are many powerful images in these poems which direct us to the fruitful, creative relationship between student and tutors when students challenge tutors to re-think. The site of 'Talking Ban' is a rehabilitation centre for ex-drug users where students are forbidden from talking 'with the opposite sex'. The pedagogical issue of considering students as human equals is brought home by humour and surprise. The poet-tutor is moved to mutiny while observing her students: /'If Antonio wants to help Marquitta/better understand the Barbarian takeover/of the Roman Empire,/then more power to that./' The juxtaposition of transsexuals discussing ancient history ridicule the 'talking ban' more sharply and succinctly than prose could manage.

For me as a teacher interested in issues of social justice, the most moving of these poems are those in which poet-tutors inhabit personae. These poems could be of direct use to teachers reflecting on what they want to convey to their students about the lives of others in order to provoke an interest in the conditions of their lives. 'Martha 1630' about the scold's bridle enters into the experience of the woman from her point of view, with visceral, palpable detail: '/but now 'tis raw where the bridle grips/and pus is crusted under the metal rods./'. And the three poems about teaching English language to people who need to learn it (two are about refugees) show how to enter the lives of others. In 'Instruction' the compressed images of 'tree' (for the tutor) and 'bomb' (for the student) suggest hidden relations of power between teacher and student because the narrator, this time, is not participating, but observing the class. 'Distance Education' can be viewed as shorthand which conjures up the whole debate about cultural imperialism. In it the poet-tutor, who is

teaching a distance-learning course, imagines the lives of her students and positions the concrete facts of their hard, rural lives adjacent to the abstract task of learning English grammar: 'Hard to care about the split/infinitive when ice storms,/when past dues, when shore erosion.' This poem, too, carries, in my view, deliberate ambiguity or double meaning in the final 'I fail them.' Most affecting of these three poems, is 'Lessons' in which the student dramatis persona is an older immigrant woman, illiterate in her own language. The poem batters the reader with knowledge about this woman. The reader is directly addressed with the repeated challenge '/If you were that woman…/'. The reader must enter into the woman's detailed memories: a rural childhood in a 'lush good place'; the 'gunfire' of civil war; 'lives left so you could live'. Alliteration of the English words the woman must learn convey the tragedy of what she has experienced and is experiencing: '/if you were that woman,/then you, too/would ask for repetition of *bag* and *back* and *bank*,/of *leave* and *leaf* and *left* and *live*,'/. Martha Nussbaum (1997) uses the expression 'narrative imagination' to capture the role that social sciences and humanities can play in cultivating the capacities of sensitivity, judgement, imagination and empathy that she believes are essential to citizenship. These disciplines offer students ways into the human condition and human possibilities.

Most of the poems in this chapter shed light on the difficulties of being a good teacher. One, 'Advice from a Lifer', manufactures the voice of an older tutor addressing a younger one to illuminate how conditions of service can erode empathy. It depicts destructive cynicism by likening teaching to a battle: 'firing line', 'sniper', target', 'gun', fragging', 'ammunition', 'raw recruit', 'bloodied'. But it is funny too. The older tutor advises against befriending the enemy-students: '/Hit 'em hard, hit 'em low/Keep 'em disorientated, distracted/and always watch your back./' Note that the commentary for this poem is sympathetic, describing such tutors as having 'their energy whittled away by internal politics, an excessive workload and very little appreciation'. There is resonance with Cary Nelson's (2004, 28) account of the 'adjunct teacher' who 'believed caring, working hard, doing a good job mattered' (p. 28) but instead, 'find themselves on a wheel that turns but goes nowhere'. The issue is instantly recognisable in the growing number of part-time, short-term, exploitative contracts. Arguably, though, cynicism can be seen more widely in the context of a marketised higher education in which teachers observe that the construction of students as customers shapes an instrumental attitude to learning (Williams, 2012). That said, as years go by all teachers need to work to maintain energy and enthusiasm.

Two poems from the student's perspective deal with the dark side of the student-tutor dynamic. 'Power' conveys anger at power-hierarchy, patriarchy, privilege in the image of the Chairman of Psychiatry. The reader is revolted by his sucking on his cigar as he faces a patient. Cigar smoke – 'thin as an assassin's wire' – a metaphor for power and what it does to the weak and vulnerable. The poet-student in '(Excerpts from) Mature Student' views the economics lecturer as darkly oppressive, clinging to a 'holy book' and denying the life-experience of the students. Yet, despite the defensiveness of the lecturer who 'ripple[s] with seethe' at the student's interjection,

I am antipathetic to the student's derision of economics and refusal to imbibe the discipline. Present in these two poems as case studies is the pedagogical conundrum of the teacher's authority or control in the teaching space. It is noteworthy that the two disciplines (medicine and economics) being transmitted by teachers who are depicted as oppressive are not of the humanities and social sciences, which claim democratising pedagogical traditions (Bruce et al., 2007). At the same time, the type of 'active', 'visible' pedagogies that assist students require a good deal of control on the part of the teacher (Bernstein, 2000).

Yet for all these suggestions of a potent nexus between disciplinary identity, theoretical debate, social positioning, and pedagogic practice, the study of English as a subject constructed through practices of teaching and learning remains undeveloped.

It is to the place of discipline in these poems that I now turn. Those which deal directly with disciplines or subjects are few. The 'Great Beach Ball Rescue' likens being a medical student to being lifeguards chasing an elusive beach ball; as we have seen, economics is given short shrift in '(Excerpts from) Mature Student'; history is mentioned as context in 'Talking Ban'; the poet-tutor carries a poetry book in 'Haven Poe'. Mostly, though, the poems are about something other than the discipline: relationships, power or learning in a field of public service practice with vulnerable clients/patients. To my mind, the exceptions are 'Martha 1630', 'Instruction' and 'Chrysanthemums and the Communist Manifesto for Deirdre'. 'Martha 1630' was written in the context of Women's Studies and the poet-tutor's difficulty in helping students to 'grasp the reality of this period'. So here she captures reality in Martha's first-person account. It is a complex poem fuelled by accurate information about the bridle or branks 'scolds' were condemned to wear, and informed by feminist theories about patriarchy in a discreet way. It is a poem which is intended to be used directly for teaching. 'Instruction' also refers to discipline subtly – in this case to linguistics. The poet observes a tutor straining to elicit the word 'tree' from a class of refugees from war zones learning English, but to the man from Srebrencia the image on the board was a 'bomb'. The allusion is to the linguist Saussure who used the word 'tree' to illustrate the arbitrariness of language – the signified is not the signifier – there is no connection between a word and reality. Finally, the poet-tutor in 'Chrysanthemums and the Communist Manifesto for Deirdre' offers Deidre literature as a way of negotiating an unjust world.

Overall, it might be concluded from this set of poems that to deal with what are often called 'sensitive' issues in the classroom, empathetic relationships are more important than inculcation into discipline. I will here discuss, in relation to the poem 'Documentary', how this might be a reductive conclusion. In 'Documentary' student social workers watch a film about the Holocaust death camps and the poet-student recounts the experience from matter-of-fact scene setting ('/This is the Anti-Discriminatory Practice session./') to images and voice-over accounts of mass murder which are familiar to most, indeed, iconic: '/Piles of spectacles glint at the lens./'. The behaviour of the students is in implied contrast with usual: '/No chairs

scrape. No files drop here./Only sniffs, sobs, in the silent hall,/. At this point, as I read I become troubled about the responses to the horrors unfolding on screen. The student-poet recalls Jewish ancestry; wonders how a Romany student feels; and then the friend sitting next to the poet collapses in 'grief' because as an abused wife she 'knows this powerlessness', shockingly she wants 'to hug them and I can't'. The poem is for me exemplary of failure to understand the subject, to engage with analyses using the tools of discipline. Empathy and identification are not enough; lack of knowledge and understanding means the Holocaust is misunderstood. Perhaps, in life, this was rectified by the 'benign' Jewish lecturer who used the film as a way into deeper caring, but the narrator does 'not stay for the discussion'.

Poetry produces a particular essence of feeling which has a tang of the universal. It looks into hidden crooks and crannies. In these poems we are shown vulnerable teachers and vulnerable students; we see the flawed nature of the educational enterprise; in Joann Gardner's words 'the hopeful-hopelessness'. These poems are a stirring antidote to the dubious certainties of 'effective learning' and 'appropriate teaching' and 'best practice'.

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with Sarah LeFanu and Susan Bruce

CHAPTER 8

FOR LOVE OF HUMANITIES AND ARTS

In this second of three chapters on love of subject, we explore how students and teachers experience learning in the arts and humanities. The poems raise questions about how to balance analysis, criticism and creativity in the teaching of literature, how teachers sustain themselves through the piles and piles of student work they must read and comment on, and the limitations of the canon and canonical ways of reading and writing.

CHAPTER 8

JONATHAN BLAKE

Ars Poetica

Hibiscus blossoms and the flower
Of the moon. Church bells echo
Into a village stillness far below.

Tonight my students ask,
'But what is poetry?'

How do I tell them
About the quiet in the heart,
Wind stirring the trees,
My wife and I together
On the porch, no words
Between us, happy
For what grows fragrant
In the dark.

Previously published in *Vermont Literary Review*

MYRA SCHNEIDER

Killing Chaucer

The professor's gown hung
in jags trailing loose threads,
its black crumple cobwebbed
with years. The professor's hair was wool
of sheep gone wild
but her mind, neither wild nor woolly,
was as much to the point as her eyes,
two glinting needles embedded
above dry-pouch cheeks
in a landscape rich with bony peaks.

The professor's voice rapped
Wordsworth on the knuckles for barely
scraping a degree at University.
As for Chaucer – she clamped his complete works
to her wooden table and dissected
set texts with scalpel precision,
nailing meanings, digging out
Middle-English variants, cataloguing
borrowings from Boccaccio and the Bible
till no original line was visible.

The professor beamed at her students,
satisfied with the morass of pencilled notes
her penetration and massive scholarship
had produced, but Chaucer who wrote of love
with infinite compassion, Chaucer
who painted the field of human nature
in all its subtle variety,
Chaucer who stooped to smile
at pink-tipped daisies on his walks,
was de-petalled, sliced from his green stalk.

Previously published in *Insisting on Yellow* (Enitharmon Press, 2000)

CHAPTER 8

JANET McCANN

No

When the visiting scholar tells my class
this is what the poem means,
I want to say no, it does not mean that.

There is nothing unreasonable about
his conclusions, but that is what's wrong:
they conclude. I feel doors slamming

down the hallway of his voice, and soon
he will leave us alone in the clean
swept corridor, watching the solemn paired

plaques in their frames, and I say
no, no, the poem spills out
of this hall, over the landscape,

scatters over the lawns and cars,
resonates in the hedges, and when I leave
after the crisp precise voice

answers the last question, after the punch
and cardboard cookies (students; friends), all
that will be left will be poem.

Commentary. I'm kind of an open, 70's sort of prof; the visiting professor I brought into my class definitely was not.

RONALD J. PELIAS

Lessons

Not wanting to bore,
I begin:

Diction dictates how words should behave,
delivered precise, washed
crystal clean.

Connotation considers words
bruised and in blossom
despite the denotative nails
we drive into their hearts.

Simile is an insistent connection,
like a hinge swinging a gate.
Metaphor entangles,
body wrapped with body.
Analogy announces likeness never ends.

Synecdoche slips by leaving a part,
a hand for a man,
metonymy hides behind the skirt of another
a head for a heart.

Weighty symbol stand above,
surveying the scene.

Personification puts the person in the thing,
pushing us to perceive
from all positions. So,
when the sun pauses to ponder
and the swing anticipates the child,
we find ourselves.

Hyperbole, inflated by it own breath,
jumps off the page
doing five backward summersaults
before boasting
it could have done more.

CHAPTER 8

Understatement wants to be caught
in its own deception.
It wiggles along
winking.

And then, a hand and a puzzled look:
Would you go back and define
those terms more clearly?

So I start again:
Diction is word choice.
Denotation is the dictionary definition.

Previously published in *Clare Literary Review*

Commentary. My area of specialization is performance studies, a field closely aligned with theatre, English, and communication. As part of my regular teaching schedule, I offered a class called Performance of Poetry. Standard for that class is to teach some basic literary terms, e.g., simile, metaphor, personification. The poem reflects the teaching strategy I decided to pursue in class and the reality I faced when my idea came to the students. It was one of those moments when I thought I was at my teaching best, only to be undercut by a student's request.

DAVID HOLPER

Weekend Plans

In a talk I recently heard, the speaker said
that at 50, a man has less than
1500 weekends left in his life.
Having chewed on this fact for the last week,
I now realize that my 1499th weekend is coming.

And so I'm making big plans:
On this 1499th remaining Saturday
I plan to grade a stack of student papers
But knowing that there are only so many of these
Saturdays to sit through
I am planning on writing the most
remarkable comments and grades
I have ever composed.

Instead of pointing out where the prose clunks,
I will say that the sentence over which I stumble
reminds me of a '62 Fiat convertible
I once owned, a car that ran well enough
when I bought it,
until I rear-ended a truck one day
and the front end crumbled,
pushing the radiator back just enough
that the fan chewed a hole through
the back end,
the blades not only making an unearthly racket,
but also bleeding the radiator dry
and leaving a green stain on the pavement.

And instead of pointing out that a comma is not a coma
that noone and alot are two words
that a manor is a large country house,
(in a manner of speaking)
and that collage
is not an institution of higher learning,
I will point out to them that Shakespeare, too,
invented new spellings and words
so that rather than see their grades as a kind
of condemnation,

they might rather embrace these marks as a sort of celebration
of their wild and anarchic spirit,
which has emancipated itself from all bounds,
from all pedestrian, prosaic concerns
on this glorious, remaining 1499th Saturday.

Previously published in *Ruminate*

KRIS BIGALK

Dear Student

I didn't read your paper –
not all of it.
The first two sentences
(well, run-ons, not sentences)
sat like obese bouncers on barstools,
slouching next to a metal door
half off its hinges; by the time
I pushed past them,
squinting into the smoky dark,
I realized that any respectable thesis
worth his salt would not be hanging
around this dive-bar of an essay.
Hell, I couldn't even find a cocktail waitress.

I skimmed over the crowd of paragraphs, looking
for the possible well-dressed, out-of-place phrase,
but only surly, bearded sentences, too drunk
to stand on their own, stared back.

So yes, I left.
I didn't stay long enough
to get into a fight with that gang
of pronouns missing their antecedents,
to watch the misplaced modifiers groan
against each other, singing
80's metal hair band ballads,
embarrassing themselves.
It's enough, I think, that I had the courage
to walk into an essay like this,
and to have survived unscathed,
backing my way out into
the bright parking lot of my office,
feeling lucky, but still smelling
like stale beer and cigarettes.

Previously published in *The Bare Root Review*

Commentary. I've taught Freshman Composition in the United States for more than twenty years. After a particularly long day of grading, I remarked to a colleague

that the last essay I read reminded me of a dive bar. She challenged me to turn that comment into a poem, so I wrote this tongue-in-cheek poem as an extended 'comment' a frustrated professor makes on a paper. Of course, I would never make such a comment on a student's paper, but the sentiment reflects the wearying effects of lack of editing, proofreading, and polishing in student work, and the importance of retaining a sense of humor while grading.

CATHLEEN CALBERT

No Animals Have Died for This Poem

Skimming yet another student
piece, I tense at the piglet—
as bad as a puppy, really,
that tail and squeal, as cute
as a baby bull, and I am told
they're damn smart, sensitive to feelings
as well as truffles and able
to learn the most difficult of tricks.
Sure enough, this little pig
doesn't make it out alive,
serving as another example
of Man's Inability to Love,
but I don't care about an antihero
or his anti-quest or some chick's
Master's thesis, just this pig,
which, I am happy to tell you,
was tired out with weeping
and fell into a faint, that's all.
See, he struggles to gain
his little cloven hooves,
and does! At the truck stop,
he leaps to freedom, jumping
over oil spots and telling his saga
of kidnap and sorrow to another
man, newly on the scene,
a vegetarian farmer, hung up
on the Raw Food movement,
who takes the piglet home
to romp with dozens of other
lost-and-found animals, the ones
I hereby pluck out of poems
and stories that break my heart
when I don't want my heart
broken in that way.

The thrown kitten, drowned dog,
overfed goose, and underfed duck

are fine now. They're living
with Jack, the animal-lover/
vegan agriculturalist,
free of the cruelty of authors.

Commentary. This poem came from a discomfort I have about dead animals in students' creative writing. Apparently, I express this discomfort fairly often; once, when I asked students in an introductory creative writing class what they had learned, one young man replied, 'Don't have animals die in your stories.'

KATY EWING

To the Essay

I nourished this knowledge,
took it in, cherished it,
held it safe, felt it grow.
Knew you would be wonderful.

And when the time came
you were born and ran with joy.
We explored the wild world
within each other.

But then I had to rein you in,
subdue you, scold you,
whip you into academic shape.
You spoke a language free, alive, unbound,
but not fit for the world.

And now our eyes can't meet.

Previously published in *Dumfries and Galloway Life*

Commentary. This poem was written near the end of my first year as a mature student of the excellent and progressive Liberal Arts MA at the University of Glasgow's Dumfries Campus. After initially revelling in the new knowledge and ways of thinking, I had begun to struggle with the quite different tasks of understanding and being inspired by a topic and writing an academic essay answering a specific question about it in very specific language – especially when compared to the relatively free world of creative writing.

CHAPTER 8

MIKE BEZDICEK

Expression

We teachers
can be Hypocrites. Liberal
Arts, anyway. Teach
to question and protest
the rules of man,

empower the value of individual
burgeoning thought, show how
to give it eyes and a body,
help coax it
toward it's own breath,

demand our students hold fast
against the absorption
of the Utilitarian greater good, herds
that have indeed
excluded you!

Fight and think, damn it!
Set your mind free to be!

But do so with a Thesis Statement.
Include four ideas of support.

Re-check your margins
and font. Make sure it's typed.
Double-spaced. *For this*
you say, *is time-proven.*

Ah, Utilitarian ways –
so easily embraced
when it serves
my red pen.

Commentary. This was just a fun poem I wrote it after a wonderful lecture to 15 year-olds of letting loose and expressing themselves. I followed it up the next day with how to organize/edit those thoughts. I remember laughing to myself when I realized it was somewhat oxymoronic and hypocritical, especially when I had to explain 'we need to do it this way,' which served me more than the students' creative growth. This is a common bind for teachers, especially if department or state standards/expectations seep into lesson plans.

DANIEL BOSCH

Where every individual talent is nurtured! MFA program ad

After I Studied Poetry with Him

I never wrote a poem again.
I lost my voice. I couldn't get it back.
I still read a good poem, now and then,
But my flow stopped flowing.

I used to keep a notepad by my bed,
But I lost my voice, and I can't get it back.
I thought it would return, but I was wrong.
My flow stopped flowing.

You know that desire, that, that, that feeling?
My fire is quenched, but I can still talk
About poems, good ones, now. Back then
I used to write a poem a day.

I used to feel productive. Now I feel
Poems all the time, but in a different way.
Talk about quenched.
Do you think he knows what happened?

I used to keep a notepad by my bed.
Now I have room for books. I try to read.
I thought it would return, but was I wrong.
I won't write a poem today.

You know that I desire, that I feel. Well,
Now I have room for books. I try to read
Poems all the time, but in a different way.
Do you think he knows what happened?

Previously published on *Poetrynet* and *Berfrois.com*

Commentary. The fictional speaker's plaintive, naïve, unimaginative voice haunted me, so I let him say what it was like for him to stop writing – and who was to blame. *Of course* the teacher '…knows what happened,' and the outcome is *positive* – we are not all poets.

CHAPTER 8

GARY JONES

MFA

1.

We listened as he read his poem,
finding it evocative, oblique, and primal,
perhaps a voice for his time,
his words hanging on the air
like an artifact, possibly very, very old,
or, maybe, very, very new.
Our mouths opened and closed mutely in our admiration,
like the lips of goldfish,
and then some old man broke the spell,
calling out, *What the fuck is it about, anyway?*
That old man was me.

2.

She was my college roommate's latest girlfriend,
an art history major who was a curator at the Milwaukee Art Museum.
She was blonde and feisty, looking like one of those yellow life preservers
that instantly inflates at the sharp tug of a cord.
Over beer I talked modern art with her.
Most of it is shovel, she said.
I didn't know the term shovel, but I had only taken one art class in college,
drawing the human figure, and I didn't have an artistic vocabulary.
Shovel? I asked.
Shit, she said, *a lot of it is just shit*.
She wasn't a curator after all, I later learned;
she worked in the gift shop,
but hoped some day to enter graduate school for her MFA.

3.

A musician friend invited me to attend a modern music recital at UWM.
The program was an exploration of expanding the boundaries of music.
For the first number, wind musicians each caught a bug
which they brought to the concert, placed on the glass of an overhead projector,
and then improvised, taking cues from the movement of their insect partners.
The second piece involved six radios, two musicians assigned to each 'instrument,'
one operating the volume, the other the station selector dial.

(How many music majors does it take to run a radio?
one might ask; the concert was the punch line.)

4.

Because I was a veteran, albeit of the Vietnam era,
for a time it seemed I would be entitled to free college tuition.
Maybe I could earn an MFA in creative writing, I thought,
and checked out the UW-Madison website.
Only six candidates are accepted into the program each year,
poetry one calendar year, prose the next.
Some old man disturbed the academic reverie
calling out, *What the fuck is this, anyway?*
That old man was me.

Commentary. Writing and teaching writing are two of the most important components of my life. Whenever a visiting writer (usually a product of an MFA program) visits our university, I attend the reading. My degrees are in literature, but I fantasize enrolment in an MFA program, even though my poem is unabashedly cynical! (My apologies if this verse offends you!)

CHAPTER 8

JOYCE KESSEL

Teaching Poetry

I watch the ways they work
staring frowning
minds lost in music and eyes lost in thought
some pens moving furiously
the words dripping off fingertips
til the pause the rest
What do they search for?
Rhythm? Rhyme? Tone?

he drums she taps her foot
she rocks he hums
he is enraptured she writes steadily
she walks away he halts
they all sigh

it moves around the room like a yawn
til the rest the pause
What do they search for?
Images? Words? Lines?

The poets at work heads bent creating

Commentary. I watched my students as they worked in the circle of my creative writing classroom and there was literally both a group buzz and their individual thinking styles going on. I tried to capture it.

JOANN GARDNER

The Graduate Poets

Arrive late to class, reeking of tobacco.
Clouds of smoke surround them as they slink into their chairs.

Is this posturing, I wonder, or addiction; wanting to test
the limits of instruction? Yesterday, we discussed

'The Wild Child of Averyon' and Adrienne Rich's sense
that her own throat had been cut – A gargling incoherence

that would pass for a scream, protesting violence – done
by whom? – Society? One does not inherit the right

to speak. So, in my other class, we are discussing
the historical sense and how one must obtain it before

one's twenty-fifth year. And the teacher – me – finds herself
straining against Mr. Eliot because his work contains

belittling comments about Jews, so I talk about the historical sense
as an advertising ploy—a stunt meant to lick the competition

into silence, a world in which history becomes *his* story,
not hers. And I feel my mentors' disapproval, see them wince

at my words. 'Irresponsible,' they trumpet, even though
they are dead and out of time. I am accountable. I know.

The education they gave me was not so I would turn on them,
expose their flaws. But there it is, rebellion. And, when a student

comments with some heat that Ezra Pound's poetry seems
misogynistic to her, I say, 'Right on; I thought so too.'

We occupy different worlds, those venerable old white men
and I. People of all descriptions now write poetry.

There are still enclaves of power that may consist of nothing
more than a clutch of students hovering around the door,

smoking in the company of the new poet, who is also smoking,
and looking beleaguered – the manufacturing beleaguered-ness

for public consumption – the while I sit in a tight circle of chairs,
most of them empty, and talk about the primal scream,
the sound a voice would make, if its throat had not been cut.

Commentary. 'Modern Poetry' (in chapter 5) and 'The Graduate Poets' are companion pieces that show a contrast between the actions and attitudes of my undergraduate students and my graduate students. This class was composed largely of graduate poets who were to study Post-Modern and Contemporary Poetry from a literary/critical perspective. They were less open to the possibilities than the undergraduates in the Modern Poetry class in chapter 5.

JOYCE KESSEL

The Canon

Here in the 21st century
as I tell my students about the dark old days
when I was in college
with two massive volumes
of Norton's anthologies
thousands of pages
of poets, essayists, fiction writers
and so few women
or people of color
I could count them all on one hand

They look at me perplexed
waiting for the punch line
not that many of them
tend to rattle off female names
in their quick listing of authors
(save the blessed J.K. Rowlings
and probably Stephanie Meyers –
sigh – or maybe Sister Souljah, if I am lucky)

Even in the Lit in Translation courses,
the writers were male –
and except for save Latin Americans
Carlos, Pablo, Gabriel, Julio –
mostly white Europeans and American,
solid classic names with well-known titles
and redundant bios.

That is why I now
always people my choices
with women and writers
of all shapes, colors
and preferences,
always believing
that genre & gender

can share
not just the same muses
but the same pages

Commentary. I am very conscious of how literature anthologies have evolved to become more inclusive and diverse. I am so grateful for that because as a young female student I could appreciate the masters – those dead white male writers for the most part – but I craved to read and hear other voices. That desire has clearly carried into my teaching.

GERARD WOZEK

An Open Letter to my Students

What I want you to know is that these lives
matter.

When we read *Leaves of Grass* and one of you
shrugs, who cares that Walt Whitman loved men?
Or questions, so what if Tennessee Williams
wrote a gay subtext for the character of Tom
in *The Glass Menagerie*? Or declares that there
is no significance whatsoever in the homosexual
affectations with Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray,
or downplays the erotic encounter between
Shug and Celie in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*,
or laughs off the bond between Sebastian
and Charles in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited.*

Take note. These acts of love hold significance.

Throughout history, before and after labels,
there was always an impulse toward making fire:
woman to woman, man to man, one being to another
being. Mark it down. We ignited, flamed up
for one another. We risked everything. Sometimes
we fought or tried to deny the passion seeking confirmation.
Despite the blight of cultural trends that erase or ignore
or dismiss our heritage, we persist.
Writing into the night. Offering the whole story.

So this quarter in the classroom we will examine
and explicate and attempt to come to terms with
the visionary transgendering in Virginia Woolf's
character Orlando, the spark between David and Joey
in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, the love poems
in Adrienne Rich's *Dream of a Common Language.*

If we can enter the life of but one of these characters
with compassionate surrendering. If we can come to
see one protagonist's desire to love freely in a world
dead set against their truth flowering open. Then we
can allow that flame that exists in the text to leap

off the page and set up a bonfire in our own heart.
And what a sweet, unforgettable burn it can be.

Previously published in *This Assignment is So Gay: LGBTIQ Poets on the Art of Teaching* (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2013)

NINA PICK

School of Embodied Poetics

When I first started teaching, I thought
my students could see my heart on my sleeve.
I thought they could read the footnotes of
a body splayed open as a book.
I felt embarrassed to have such a
visible heart; there was something shameful about
the whole goopy mess, its ungovernable pulsations,
its lightening blush. It seemed none of my students
had a heart like mine; their hearts were bundled
in their baggy sweatshirts like a packed lunch.
I stood up there on the first day and
dug my hands into my pockets, thinking I
could hide my heart and its waywardness.
I slumped my shoulders, faced
the blackboard, shouted from
behind the projection screen.
But wherever I stood, my heart sparked
like a disco ball, doing
its unmistakable kaleidoscope dance.
I went to my supervisor: I'm so
embarrassed, I said. I think my students
are judging me harshly. They've probably
never seen such a heart before.
She shuffled papers, looked at
the results of my classroom observation.
She said, Well, the best you can do
is be a role model. Maybe they've never had the chance
to learn about the heart. Try teaching it
the same way you teach grammar.
So I went back to class, and returned to
the living pulse of the text:
I glimpsed the luminous globe behind
the poem's dark ribs, felt its warmth streaming
through form, through syntax, through meter's
angled orchard. I saw the poem as a latticework
interwoven with sun. Each sentence was
parsed by the light.

On the desks we drummed
the heartbeat of the iambs. My heart led an
orchestra of small flowers.

Previously published in *This Assignment is So Gay: LGBTIQ Poets on the Art of Teaching* (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2013)

CAROL TYX

Camping Out with Emily Dickinson

Your life was a conflagration –
one hot moment
after another –
so many flames
you could hardly keep up
as your quick breath
followed behind,
your words the bellows
keeping the white heat alive.

Your poems aren't easy,
my students and I commiserate,
at first approach
the words cold,
the fire gone out.
But if we stay
with your remains –
blow and blow –
a flame shoots up,
one word catches
another, and soon
we're warming
our stupored souls
at your tenacious fire,
your burning bush
illuminating
this world and
the world without end.

Previously published in *The Fifty Poems* (Raven Rocks Press, 2003)

Commentary. 'Camping Out with Emily Dickinson' was written while I was a Visiting Professor at Wabash College, where I taught a course on Emily Dickinson and Annie Dillard. Dickinson poems are like intricate puzzles; students have to learn how to persevere in order to put the pieces together. The moment when students start to build momentum in their interpretation I can feel the energy in the room rise. The central image of my poem is a riff on Dickinson's own poetic fire as she asks, 'Dare you see a Soul at the White Heat?' (poem 365, Johnson numbering).

CHAPTER 8

CAROL TYX

The Pleasures of Teaching Emily Dickinson

In my younger days I never imagined how I would come to love teaching Emily Dickinson – how she would turn my landlocked classroom days into wild nights at sea.
In this class we read slowly, taking time to shape each word with our lips and tongues – letting the sounds circulate before we try to digest them. At first reading, a Dickinson poem may feel like a crumb to be brushed aside – eight or twelve lines – a lightweight poem – angel food cake – sugared air; but as we chew, the toughness emerges – the density, the design. Words take on weight – one image connects to another – and soon we're no longer sliding on surfaces. What seemed like a walk around the block has become a voyage into 'deep eternity;' the crumb in our hand – mistaken at first for a pasteboard jewel – turned into a pearl.

There's a sacramental quality to receiving an Emily Dickinson poem: all we need is a bit of bread—a crumb dipped in the wine of metaphor – and it becomes a whole loaf, a risen body. All we need is one poem – and it fills a whole class.

I come up for air. 'What time is it?'
'Class ended fifteen minutes ago.'

We pull ourselves back to the surface, sweep our books off the table, head for lunch – having eaten the antithesis of fast food, the kind of nourishment you can't get at a drive-in window where you push a button, give your order, drive around the corner and have your food handed to you through a sliding window. You have to get out of the car – dive in rather than drive through – come in from the street – and feast at the table.

Previously published in *The Fifty Poems* (Raven Rocks Press, 2003)

Commentary. This prose poem was written while I was a Visiting Professor at Wabash College, where I taught a course on Emily Dickinson and Annie Dillard. I'm trying to describe the process of deep learning that took place in that course: how we allowed ourselves the time to work slowly, thoughtfully, collaboratively. In my teaching experience, this kind of careful attention is rare. Many of the images in the poem are taken from Dickinson poems.

CAROL TYX

Paddling a Poem

Holy moley, it's a Class III poem
full of submerged rocks
eddies and whirlpools –

can we make it through?
Get low, get tough
get those paddles flying

quick turns and drops
use the current
to our advantage, work

as a team, even when we
get hung up or capsize
learn to float, feet first

trust our life jackets
to bring even the non-swimmers
through the rough patches.

Commentary. When I teach general education literature classes at Mt. Mercy University, I try to help students get more comfortable with poetry by letting them work in groups. We begin with straightforward poems and work our way toward more complexity. For the final exam, small groups get a 'new' poem to work through while I listen in, saying very little. The goal is for everyone in the group to contribute what they can to the interpretation. Rivers are assigned 'classes' according to the International Scale of River Difficulty. A Class III, labelled 'Difficult,' requires expertise in maneuvering.

BRIGHID SCHROER

Stage B1: Threshold (Hungarian)

I did not think it happened this way,
to enter a language
like a kingdom spread out.

Meaning is reached by a different route.
There is no direct translation.
Hianyzol nekem – you lack to me. I miss you.

The space between one thought and the next
is empty of the usual crowding words
layering their possibilities.

I catch at scattered phrases and scraps
looking for the bits to slot together
on my way to sense.

There's nothing before I find the foothold
of the next piece, declined or conjugated,
harmonising in all its several parts.

I'm empty, too, not knowing,
until the rightness seizes me and
the verb's attuned to bounded or unbounded.

Then, for the space of a breath, I'm
light and clear as air, at large
in an unwalled mind.

BRIGHID SCHROER

Hungarian 2

It has become more difficult.
It seems impenetrable,
a thick wood.

I stay on the edge
collecting words in my bucket,
and phrases all jumbled.
I sit down to sort them,
but find there are holes
where a lot's fallen through.

Verbs and their endings fly overhead,
brown birds scattering,
calling, repeating,
then swerve out of sight
in the darkness of trees.

This forest is vast.
I loiter, unable to enter or leave,
till a song takes me in –
an open gate for everyone to pass,
a wide window for seeing the world,
a song for the passing of things.

CHAPTER 8

DAVID KEPLINGER

Expert Commentary

Recently I attended an American conference on creative writing that brought together the diverse faculty and students of MFA Programs, the acquisition editors at university presses, as well as literary magazine editors and independent publishers. The count of attendees was numbered at 14,000. For four days at their stalls the booksellers chatted with students of creative writing. For four days poets, fiction writers, and literary journalists offered good advice in featured readings and panel discussions. By the end of the conference a look of exhaustion had risen in most, each lugging not only the heavy load of newly purchased books, but also the weight of a nagging question: what shall we do with this First World problem, this problem of there being *too many* writers? What happens in the society in which the writer no longer lives as the exile, the sequestered, the Other, but participates in a community of thousands like herself?

Such questions about writing's worth, as well as others about the role of the writer-teacher, come up remarkably often in 'For the Love of Humanities and Arts.' In 'Killing Chaucer,' the old professorial model is indicted as a process by which the flower of the work is 'sliced from its green stalk.' The role of the writer-teacher is relatively new. For hundreds – if not thousands – of years literature, philosophy, and religion were taught (to use a different metaphor) as a bellows whose body (the academy) facilitates the in-breath of genius (the lecturer) that ignites the lit kindling of students' minds. Until the mid-nineteenth century in America, reading was a lot like that, too. In a novel the narrator was a voice of authority, a voice to be trusted and taken on faith at face value. Along comes a writer, say, like Edgar Allan Poe, and one begins to see the evidence of a new phase in reading – it is a phase in which the reader assumes great responsibility to discern, to question the narrator of a story or the speaker of a poem.

The speaker in Myra Scheider's 'Killing Chaucer' is a product of history. It is a history of the nineteenth century, it is a long history, it is a story of disappointment in the products of logic and engineering that led to polluted skies and exploited multitudes. And it is a history of the twentieth century, with its mad wars and weapons, concluding with the question asked by all writers in their own way: if logic has failed us, and if we have evolved here by chance, can anything 'mean' universally? Can there be an order to any of this? The speaker has lost her faith in authority. She addresses a reader who agrees; she knows she is in good company. The professor, 'satisfied with the morass of pencilled notes,' is already living on borrowed time. The notes are 'pencilled' and impermanent. So many poems in this section reflect the problem of a post-Hiroshima, post-Holocaust society: nothing can 'mean' except relatively. But in this anthology, each poet has written their commentary on the work. Implicitly we are drawn to the story behind the story. These days, there's still much authority in the *authoring*.

It's as simple as this: learning to write means handing over one's faith to a master of one kind or another. 'Eternal apprenticeship is the life of the true poet,' Theodore Roethke writes, speaking of this sacred connection between the younger poet and the master of the craft (Roethke, 2001, p. 128). The twentieth century institutionalized apprenticeship in its writing programs. (The Iowa Writers Workshop, the first of such programs, was founded officially in 1936.) In America our readers of poetry are poets; our writers teach poets to close read.

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The problem of authority deepens with the invention of photography, moving pictures, news-cams, CNN. Only last week the *New York Times* featured on its front page the images of Walter Scott, a black man, being shot in the back by a police officer in South Carolina (Schmidt & Apuzzo, 2015). A filmic reel of pictures covered the center pages of *Life Magazine* when John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. We need not rely on second-hand information in an age of twitter feeds, Facebook, and instagram. We have become direct witnesses to a world on fire. We watch others jumping from its windows. To write poetry is like calling out to them. In the poem of witness the victim and the witness are as one. To write such a poem is to participate in an act of self-preservation.

The American poet Charles Simic urges writers to sketch a real history of the time in which they've lived. Simic writes that 'in place of the historian's broad sweep, the poet gives a kind of reverse history of what in the great scheme of things are regarded as 'unimportant' events, the image of a dead cat, say, lying in the rubble of a bombed city, rather than the rationale for that air campaign' (Simic, 2006, p. 36). Such poetry – I think of recent collections by Fazullah, Weigl, Komunyakaa, Finney, Forché, Mort, and others – has found a home in America and these writers are gaining attention and honors for their contributions. Seamus Heaney, writing in an essay of his conflation of history and current events in his magnificent early collection *North,* claims, 'the problem of poetry went from being simply a matter of achieving the appropriate verbal icon to being a search for images and symbols adequate to our predicament' (Heaney, 2002, p. 25).

Nevertheless, the voice of Gary Jones in his poem, 'MFA,' cannot be denied. There are large numbers of 'witness poets' who have not found a community among the MFA students in the United States. Jones, whose speaker is a veteran of Vietnam, is vexed by the small numbers of students admitted to each program, and the insinuation is that his subject matter is already passé. 'What the fuck is it about, anyway,' he asks of a celebrated poem whose words hang 'in the air/like an artifact,' and we can only conclude that the poem is about nothing, or nothing that applies to our real lives.

In the classroom, there arise moments of solidarity between teachers and students, moments in which we cling to our common desire to find meaning, as Mallarme said, 'in between the words' (Zachmann, 2009, p. 59). Perhaps we live in a meaningless world. But the artist's role is to create a conversation between her own perception

and the readers, and for a brief moment to make them one. The poem's meaning exists in this gap between the poet and the reader. When that gap is filled with sudden understanding, the poem takes on weight. All at once students and teacher engage in the close reading: 'I sit in a tight circle of chairs,' writes Joann Gardner in 'The Graduate Poets, 'most of them empty, and talk about the primal scream, the sound a voice would make, if its throat had not been cut.'

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Gardner's poem is especially interesting because it presents the readers with a dichotomy. She writes that 'more than a clutch of students hovering around the door,/smoking in the company of the new poet, who is also smoking,/and looking beleaguered – manufacturing beleagueredness/for public consumption.' The poet's role is so attractive to students that the poem seems no longer the issue. Often in the mentorship process students and teachers alike can forget the very thing – the poem – for which they first came to the page. And they can forget that there is much to be gleaned in going back to those first poems that inspired as a way of finding themselves again, long before the harrowing pursuit of magazine publications, fellowships, book deals, teaching positions, and awards.

There is much to be said for the old model, the model of the reader who teaches others to read within a canon of accepted masterpieces. That model is transformed – so gone, too, is the disenfranchisement of populations who are now among the central contributors to our current critical conversations. The old way has been replaced, to some extent, with creative writing programs, where the poet-teacher leads the reader-poet. Nevertheless, I teach as one of two poets in a department of some 25 brilliant, vibrant, inspiring scholar-teachers. The old way still works. The numbers would suggest that academe is quite overflowing with new blood. Recently I spoke to a class of 30 undergraduate seniors who have devoted a full semester to one translation of Dante's *The Divine Comedy.* 'Great books' are not dead; but we've recognized we need more inclusion, more books, more points of view. And great teachers have not gone the way of the dodo either. The teacher-scholar is as much a mentor to a young poet as her poet-teacher. We learn to read by writing. We learn to write by reading.

In Daniel Bosch's 'After I Studied with Him,' a writer completes his academic journey as a *reader* – that rare thing – a *reader* of poetry who does not want to write the stuff. In his commentary he shares that 'the outcome is *positive*—we are not all poets.' That insight, too, can be part of the learning process in an undergraduate or graduate creative writing program. I think of my students who did not publish their work (as I did not until many years after I had received my MFA) and I believe with conviction that they received a great gift in graduate school: between their classes with our writers and our critics, they learned to read poetry closely, to see behind the poem, as Nina Pick writes so beautifully, 'each sentence was/parsed by the light.' They learned to discern for themselves what a poem is, and, by extension, who they aimed to be in the world.

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CHAPTER 9

FOR LOVE OF SCIENCE

This chapter explores sciences and mathematics learning and teaching. It also addresses applied sciences such as medicine insofar as the focus is on the science rather than on some other aspect of professional practice. The role of mathematics in science is a central theme, as are fascinations with core scientific concepts that explain the wonders of the world in which we live. The juxtaposition of poems in this chapter challenge readers to consider how we sustain student curiosity about science concepts despite the day-to-day grind of problem sets.

CHAPTER 9

MARTIN ZARROP

Mathematica Erotica

Still drooling, at my age,
over differential equations,
medication has little effect.
Others shake their heads
as if I have a serious defect.
They blink at the mention of pi,
won't look me in the eye
when I show dissension
about children or nature.
Is that a crime? I mean,
I like a good view, grass,
nameless flowers, but
for a real turn-on
that lasts for hours
give me an integral sign

any time

EVELINE PYE

Love of Algebra

She says, ‘You know how you get it
and then you forget it’, and I smile,
nod – but really, I don’t –
can’t even imagine. How does
the dancer forget dancing,
the singer forget singing? How could
I ever not know how to solve
simultaneous equations?
It would be like forgetting
how to breathe or laugh or love.
You’d have to dissect my brain
scour out layer after layer of tissue
with steel wool, and even then
if you left me one tiny cell,
the knowledge would grow back,
and if you were to succeed,
to wipe out every trace,
    I’d be a lost soul.
I’d never give up. I’d chew on my pencil
night and day to recapture that feeling,
that moment when I grasped the life line.

Previously published in *Causeway Magazine*

Commentary. This poem was written after teaching at the university summer school for students with lower entry qualifications in mathematics. It expresses my concern that students are leaving secondary school with exposure to mathematical concepts but not enough practice in algebra to fix basic skills. I am also trying to convey the fact that a facility with these skills can be not only life changing, but also a route to tremendous personal and vocational satisfaction.

CHAPTER 9

EVELINE PYE

Solving Problems

How do you know the right thing to try? he says,
jabbing paper with his finger. Good question,
I say, playing for time as I have no answer he wants
to hear. Solving these equations is part intuition,
but first, you learn to manipulate *x*'s and *y*'s until
decisions are made in your fingers, not your head –
like typing an access code at the ATM, changing gear
in the car or signing a cheque- until it all becomes
muscle memory – the same way Reubens painted
hands, again and again or Keats scribbled rhyme
after rhyme – and then you go with the flow
and, if you are lucky, there is a sweet, sweet moment
as the plum falls into your eager hands, and if not,
you try, and try – on and on until your head bursts.

Previously published in *Significance Magazine*

Commentary. I noticed that General Science undergraduates were experiencing difficulties in solving problems with algebraic fractions. Although they were able to manipulate fractions and carry out basic algebraic operations, putting the two skills together seemed to result in a cognitive overload. My working hypothesis was that their previous learning was not sufficient to engender automaticity, resulting in overload in working memory when they attempted to solve these problems.

DAPHNE GLOAG

A universe from nothing?
The energy of even perfect nothingness giving rise to ephemeral particles

We tried to imagine how something could come
from nothing…this world, this everything,
the blue and the green of it, its carnivals of light,
the sky of stars that came from gas and dust.

We tried to imagine absence
of the universe, a theatre
without play or actors or stage,
tried to imagine *nothing*.

We understood about empty spaces,
about grieving over absences.
But how could we grieve over *nothing*?
It doesn't make sense, you said,

while swifts were gliding, screaming
high above us, our words
popping into, out of, into existence.
Sky now empty, now full of wings,

our words with the energy of a sea foaming inside us.

Previously published in *Beginnings* (Cinnamon Press, 2013)

Commentary. This and the following poem are two of a sequence of poems about a relationship using a cosmological setting. My knowledge of science comes from several decades of reading and of lectures (notably in Oxford at Rewley House and at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich), which continue, even now that I don't strictly need more knowledge. Thus the poems in this sequence are a testament to the power of adult continuing education, and the joy of learning purely for the sake of curiosity. In the sequence, cosmology is used as a metaphor to illustrate aspects of the relationship, and also to light up its contexts. The protagonists experience not so much confusion as the intuitive difficulty of imagining some of the ideas. The sequence was not intended to be about scientific theory or understanding, but it can be used to illustrate aspects of learning.

CHAPTER 9

DAPHNE GLOAG

Recipe for Light
Why stars shine

We were reading how the old mosaic makers
placed pieces of glass and stone angled
to catch the light;

we admired a mosaic sky,
its gold light
and its star.

How, you said suddenly,
did the stars do it? We tried imagining
those dark clouds of gas and dust

condensing, making stars,
bursting into brightness:
from the centre of stars huge energy,

a consensus of light.

Previously published in *Beginnings* (Cinnamon Press, 2013)

KIM LASKY

(Excerpt from) Eclipse

96% of the universe is a mystery
you say, clear over the hum of the café,
stroking the curve of your cup, barely rippling
the rim of black coffee.

It's dark matter, dark energy, invisible.
Then how do you know it exists?
The theory of relativity, gravity,
satellites, space probes, x-rays of clusters.

I think of a supernova,
collapsing into dust, scattering matter,
while we believe in its starlight
because we see it years late.

We see only 4% of what is.
The lines on your forehead move, darken
and I lose sight of your blue eyes,
which are part of the 4% –

as is the chair where you sit, your chest,
the crease of white shirt in your folded arm
as you demonstrate space: this much –
an invisible cube of sugar held between finger and thumb.

Previously published in *Eclipse* (Templar Poetry, 2013)

Commentary. *Eclipse* was inspired by conversations with astrophysicists whilst writing poetry about dark matter as part of my DPhil at Sussex University. Discussing the invisible matter scientists believe forms around 96% of our universe (and the fact that they don't actually know what this is) inspired me to think about the different ways we try to make sense of life – through poetry, myth, religion, as well as through scientific enquiry. The sequence is about the relationship between those different approaches – a conversation across the imagined divide. Fittingly, I went on to work with the department as it established an astronomy course for humanities students, reinforcing the sense of that collaborative, lived, experience at the heart of learning.

CHAPTER 9

DAVID OLSEN

Obituary for Curiosity

In the beginning was the Wonder.

The Big Bang.
Galaxies and nebulae.
Red shift.
Rings of Saturn.
Sputnik.
Our world.

Physical sciences explained
bodies at rest or in motion,
planets and atoms like billiard balls,
polymers like chains
curled up or stretched out,
iron filings aligned,
chaos and entropy.

Amid these miracles came
problem sets in physics,
problem sets in chemistry,
problem sets in math
(odd-numbered problems on page 68,
even-numbered problems on page 82),
the same problems addressed
in more difficult coordinate systems,
and labs as cookbook exercises.

Tonight
    and tonight
            and tonight
crept in their petty pace,
with no space for
Socrates or Sophocles,
Shakespeare or Schubert,
Dante or Degas,
Austen or Auden,
Mozart or Molière.

What remained were
drudgery,

boredom,
exhaustion.

At problem 12 on page 322,
Curiosity died.

CHAPTER 9

RICHARD M. BERLIN

Stanley Robbins' Bookshelf
for Stanley Robbins, M.D., 1915–2003

The words of a dead man
Are modified in the guts of the living.
–W.H. Auden

If I were still a medical student
I'd tell Auden that Robbins' textbook taught me
our guts are folds of villi lined with
columnar epithelium. I'd be seated
on a royal blue sofa with a broken spring,
light bleeding in just past sunset,
the room filled with smells of mahogany
and dust, Robbins' *Textbook of Pathology*
like a concrete block on my lap, his descriptions
of lesions packed into paragraphs like poems.
Back then I never pictured Stanley Robbins
as a writer, struggling to place the best
words in the best order, and I didn't know
his bookshelves were lined with Ginsberg,
Whitman, histology, and Plath.
As a student, all I felt was pressure
to learn the terms for ten thousand diseases
in five short months, their names a sacred text
that held the poetry of Medicine
I would recite someday to my patients,
like a love poem I knew by heart.

Previously published in *Secret Wounds* (BkMk Press, 2011)

SIMON ALTMANN

(Excerpts from) The Theorem

Surrounded by shadows
a denser form moved,
a figure, a person,
a woman. His beloved.

He advanced towards
the core of darkness,
extended his arms,
searched, grasped
nothing.

His love, where was she?
His brain went
into calculating mode,
assembling equations,
simplifying, re-arranging.

Clarity in darkness:
a marvel took place
and no doubt was left
in his hypnagogic brain;
he had the answer.
But: where was his beloved?

He woke,
forehead damp,
arms trembling,
the tips of his fingers
recalling the softness
of the touch that wasn't.

But there had been
something else,
something more.
Then he remembered.
He had found
and now forgotten
the proof of his theorem.

CHAPTER 9

He was inexplicably
sure that today
the answer would come.
Walking
to his office
the proof struck him:
potent search-light
breaking through the dark.

Unwarranted total certainty
flooded his mind:
no longer did he worry
about details.
He now knew he was right,
knew what to do.
Hardly necessary
to write it down.

But he sat at his desk
and at the day's end
there it was,
the new theorem.

in his hand,
beautiful clear and precise
as a Mondrian,
his blood rushing through his limbs
as when his beloved
snuggled naked in his arms.

Commentary. For a full version of this poem, see the author's *Not for Poets: Poems.* (eBook by Design, 2013) available from Amazon.com.

SIMON ALTMANN

Heisenberg Cried

Winter came and Master went
in search of snowy slopes.
Boy alone at last,
respite from incessant talk.

Boy dreams, boy understands.
Photon on electron:
wave no wave.
No photon: particle no particle.

Boy understands:
His dream explains facts.

Master returns and they talk and talk.
Master says, your picture is wrong,
you do not have a particle or a wave
before you hit it with a photon.
You know nothing then.

They talk and talk, eight days.
Master says, do not believe in your eyes.
Boy, who does not understand why, cries.

In the end, compromise,
the world is told,
and a new world,
a new century arise.

Previously published in *Not for Poets: Poems* (eBook by Design, 2013)

Commentary. Werner Heisenberg, at 26 was one of the 'quantum boys', wrote to Pauli near the end of February 1927 that he had cried in Niels Bohr's institute at Copenhagen, when discussing his newly discovered Uncertainty Principle. This principle deals with the dual nature of the electron, partly as a particle and partly as a wave. Niels Bohr grasped that this was the first important departure for two millennia from the ideas of Democritus, in the sense that splitting a macroscopic particle gradually must reach a point where the object obtained (e. g. an electron) is no longer a particle. This was not understood by Heisenberg at the time, and it is possible that he never understood totally what Bohr had in mind.

CHAPTER 9

MARTIN ZARROP

My Student Presents His Work

Bullet points steady the nerves
as the projector glowers.
He sees nine inquisitors
in a half-filled room,
conference proceedings
cocooned in corduroy laps.
They open the first volume
at page six hundred and five
to stare at the thirteen-word title,
something about *stochastic systems.*

He moves forward
to explain everything,
a geometrical construct
of rotating limbs,
young face glistening
in the projector's light.
His fifteen minutes melt
into stumbling words,
an urgent shuffle of acetate sheets,
the black sprawl of equations.

A red light flashes; he ignores it.
The world must hear his message.
He can't ad lib to save his life.
After twenty minutes
the chairman intervenes.
The conclusion is abrupt.
Time for one question, perhaps,
then faint applause,
that look of relief.

SIMON ALTMANN

I was there
In memoriam Rosalind Franklin

I saw the work as it was done
but saw it through a haze.
When a battle is fought
no one knows what goes on,
(as Tolstoy claimed).
It is only afterwards
that generals collect medals
and memories become History.

She was in the front line,
bent over calculating strips,
not much concerned with battle.
Some good days rejoicing
over a perfect X-ray plate.

Two young men then appeared
dreaming, thinking,
talking, laughing.
How were we to know that they,
innocent of experience
of hard work on crystals,
would finally crack,
sagaciously assembling
a balls-and-pegs model,
the most important
molecular structure ever found.

Seldom had that been done.
No wonder she preferred
the hard, safe, rocky path.
But she needed time, and time
was not given her:
Others hurried to victory.

Without her work no model
could have been made:
this was unkindly ignored
but soon she was dead

and could make no claim.
History is for the victors –
memory, though, still honours
those not there at medal time.

Previously published in *Not for Poets: Poems* (eBook by Design, 2013)

Commentary. I was in the Theoretical Physics Department of King's College London when Rosalind was doing her famous work in the Physics Department. I was introduced to her by our mutual friend Vittorio Luzzati and became good friends.

JOHN BOWDEN AND PAMELA GREEN

Expert Commentary

The twelve poems presented in this chapter cover a broad mix of themes. Nevertheless, each poem has a mostly singular message related to one or more fragments of a 'big picture', but with each fragment isolated and magnified. Several big pictures that fit all the fragments are possible and we have chosen one that is characterised by variation in the application of a particular construct – mindset (Green & Bowden, 2012).

In this commentary, we focus on the mindsets of both the teacher-educator and the student. The process of learning involves change in ways of seeing aspects of the world. While learners certainly should be open to new information, they also need to go beyond merely fitting new information into their current ways of seeing. They need to link what they know to new ways of seeing. They first need to realize that there are multiple ways of seeing most situations, of which their current way is only one possibility. The opportunity then exists for them to grow and develop their own ways of seeing to take on the new but still explain the old. We have associated these elements of being open to new ideas and taking multiple perspectives with the notion of mindset, when we developed the construct 'completion mindset' in relation to doctoral candidates and their theses:

> A completion mindset is a position taken in which timely and successful completion is viewed as the major goal upon which all planning and operational decisions are made. (Green & Bowden, 2012, p. 71)

Within such a mindset, completion is seen as achievable and as a necessary step into the next stage of life beyond the doctorate. Having that mindset greatly influences the ways that candidates and their supervisors plan activities month-to month, even day-to-day, and the ways they undertake them.

Similarly with undergraduate study, a capability mindset, for instance, would be one in which all learning is seen not just as acquiring knowledge but also as developing the learner's capability to act in an unknown future in a range of professional, social and personal contexts (Bowden, 2004; Bowden & Marton, 1998; Baillie et al., 2013). A different and more limiting mindset could be one in which learning is aimed at accumulating points through examinations, with the goal of achieving the required number of points to qualify for a degree; where, for example, learning to manipulate mathematical equations in examinations supplants the development of understanding of the underlying scientific concepts (Bowden et al., 1992). These two mindsets have considerably different influences on the ways students learn, the extent to which capability develops and how learners' ways of seeing the world mature.

Let us return to the fragments that we think the poems represent and draw them into the bigger picture. We saw the fragments as being variously about passion for

mathematics; curiosity mixed with confusion as learning progresses; frustration and regret about science teaching and learning; success but with (often unseen) limitations; and passive acceptance versus reform.

Anything we learn can be a goal within itself, or a means to a different end. In these twelve poems, only the learning of mathematics for its own sake is eulogised. In most of the poems, the relationships between mathematics and science, and between science and the world we live and work in, are represented largely as cautionary tales. We would make a relational distinction between love of science or mathematics and respect for them. The love of mathematics depicted in several poems is presented through various emotions; for example, the joy experienced when the solution appears. We would argue for other emotional elements that are equally important and involve active commitment to learning, to career goals and development of a related enabling capability, to maximising satisfaction while learning, and to using opportunities effectively whenever they arise. With a mindset formed in this way, students will be better placed to value the subjects they are learning about, not simply 'loving' them for their own sake, but rather because learning about them and through them contributes to the goals for which students are striving. Educators have both an opportunity and a responsibility to develop a mindset of support for appropriate learning environments.

We use the notion of mindset to ask the questions of the poems: What mindsets characterise these fragments? How do the perspectives associated with those mindsets emerge? What kinds of changes in the learning environment could facilitate different perspectives and outcomes?

Passion for Mathematics

The passion and intense joy of learning mathematics (in Zarrop's 'Mathematica Erotica'), as well as the way that engaging with mathematics takes over your life and becomes second nature (in Pye's 'Love of Algebra'), place mathematics at the centre. If every university student approached the learning of every subject in the way Zarrop and Pye represent their relation to mathematics, then there would perhaps be little need for educators. The wonder of science and the curiosity invoked by mathematical learning may well be deep within educators like Zarrop's teacher who is 'still drooling, at my age/over differential equations/'.

However in any first year service class, such as mathematics for science, engineering or medical students, the proportion of students who will still be studying the particular service subject by third year will be quite low, perhaps zero, and most students will not be committed to that teacher's specific discipline. How can they avoid falling into the spiral to boredom evident in Pye's 'Solving Problems' and Olsen's 'Obituary for Curiosity'? In order to prevent that spiral downwards, the mindset of that vast majority of students needs to be one of searching for ways in which the learning of mathematics will help them understand the subject matter or professional activities that they are committed to, even passionate about. It will

usually not be mathematics itself. The mindset of such mathematics educators needs to be one in which their passion is transformed into a commitment to a capability-driven curriculum (Bowden, 2004) in which learner capability development is at the centre. The learning task confronting a student in a service mathematics class is to understand how mathematics can be used to represent situations in their professional area and to lead to problem solution. Pye's teacher's focus on 'you learn to manipulate *x*'s and *y*'s until/ decisions are made in your fingers, not your head/' is not a capability focus. It is a focus on mathematics *per se*, in isolation. Students would be advantaged if the focus instead were on the professional phenomena and a qualitative reflection on how inherent problems might be solved. Then the link between the x's and y's, and the professional concerns students are interested in, can be established. In this way, the mathematical manipulations can be understood, not as abstract processes, but as intentional opportunities for progress towards professional solutions. The capability that students need to develop when studying service mathematics is the capacity to see, specify and manage links between the two worlds, of mathematics and the profession. The mathematics educator should design, create and maintain a learning environment where that capability is possible for students to achieve.

Zarrop's educator in 'Mathematica Erotica' is puzzled by other people's lack of passion and clearly also has a mindset focused on mathematics *per se*. As we have commented on Pye's educator, service mathematics students are unlikely to exhibit such passion for mathematics itself. It is necessary to understand the plans and aspirations of students, and the role that mathematics plays in achieving those outcomes. The learning experiences should be designed to address those plans and aspirations so that the relevance of mathematics becomes explicit, thereby enhancing motivation.

Curiosity Mixed with Confusion as Learning Progresses

The curiosity to explore the origin of the universe (in Gloag's 'A Universe from Nothing' and 'Recipe for Light') places science at the centre. Yet the human heart cries out for more tangible links between direct observation and intuition, on the one hand, and the rather cold, closed world of scientific theory on the other:

> We tried to imagine how something could come/from nothing…this world, this everything/the blue and the green of it, its carnivals of light/the sky of stars that came from gas and dust/.

The chasm is bridged (in 'Recipe for Light') by resort to personification of nature: 'How, you said suddenly/did the stars do it?'

Then in Lasky's 'Eclipse', there is the realisation at a macro level that theory does not address every aspect of scientific phenomena: '96% of the universe is a mystery/.'

This is reconciled through the observation that, on the micro level, we know much less than we think about those closest to us*:* 'We see only 4% of what is/The lines on your forehead move, darken/and I lose sight of your blue eyes,/ which are part of the 4%.'

In many respects Gloag's and Lasky's poems represent quite positive mindsets. The initial curiosity-driven quest for understanding, while seemingly naïve, is uplifting. If only all learners were curious in that way. The protagonists in these poems show that they have learned much about the universe, but they also express some confusion. The complex theories do not fully resonate with their direct observation. These learners do not seem to be explicitly aware of the validity of multiple perspectives. They seem to expect scientific theory to have the answers or, perhaps, *the* answer; they don't expect to be confused. We would characterize that as their mindset.

Yet scientific theory is both transient and pragmatic. Bohr's theory, Sommerfeld's elliptic adaptation, and the game-changing quantum theory, were all used by scientists to explain atomic structure. Each theory in turn explained the observations in their time but, as new data emerged, the earlier theory was found wanting and a new theory replaced it. This is the transient nature of scientific theory that students would benefit from understanding quite early. Students would also do well to embrace the pragmatic nature of scientific theory. For instance, as Einstein and Infield remarked (2007), scientists had long ago become comfortable in dealing with the wave-particle duality theory of light by being pragmatic – sometimes using the one theory (wave or particle) and sometimes the other, while at times they could use either.

If the protagonists in Gloag's and Lasky's poems understood these characteristics of scientific theory, they might not have been so confused or disillusioned. Teachers can help. Dealing briefly with earlier theories and why they have been supplanted, before addressing current theory, can assist students to appreciate the transience of scientific theory. Showing what the theory cannot explain and how, in some circumstances, several theories must be used where appropriate, enables students to understand the inherent pragmatism of scientific theory and its limitations. Gloag's and Lasky's protagonists, if they were learning in a classroom, would benefit from such experiences, their mindsets might change and they could develop a more sophisticated understanding of science.

Frustration and Regret about Science Teaching and Learning

Although not inevitable, when mathematics, physics and chemistry are learned within many university science programmes, the experience can be less passionate, less joyful than would be desirable. Such experiences are considered so soul-destroying that Olsen (in 'Obituary for Curiosity') sees no room for creativity in a world of that kind: 'with no space for/Socrates or Sophocles,/ Shakespeare or Schubert/Dante or Degas/Austen or Auden/Mozart or Molière/.'

Olsen can see the wonder in what science is about but is disenchanted by a learning environment that focuses atomistically on automated, routine, repetitive problem-solving, in one subject after another. All opportunity for creativity is removed, in Olsen's view. In a similar way, a shallow, limiting approach to the learning of science as a means for practising a profession such as medicine, can engender later regret. Berlin (in 'Stanley Robbins' Bookshelf') seems to be ruing the experience he had when learning pathology. It was a short period of cramming, memorising and regurgitating the knowledge during assessment. He wishes he knew then what he knows now and approached that same learning in a more respectful and satisfying way, understanding the nuances and the beauty of the field of study.

This theme expressed poetically in 'Obituary for Creativity' and in Stanley Robbins' 'Bookshelf' is precisely the distinction made between content-driven curriculum design and capability-driven curriculum design by Bowden (2004). A capability-driven curriculum would begin with the medical phenomena and then ask what pathology and other knowledge are relevant to addressing the particular health situation. Then, students' mindsets in learning pathology become more purposeful and engaged. The learning takes on a different cast when the pathology knowledge is integrated with knowledge from other areas such as anatomy, history-taking, diagnosis and others. This enriches the learning in all such subjects but will not happen without the appropriate teaching mindset that enables the creation of such a constructive learning situation.

Research Success but with (Often Unseen) Limitations

Scientific research can be seen as an end in itself or as part of a network of people and ideas that help us deal more effectively with the world in which we live. Heisenberg and Franklin are depicted as researchers whose focus was inside their own research. In one case (Altmann's 'Heisenberg Cried') Heisenberg's more experienced colleague assists in raising the work to a higher, more comprehensive and integrated level. In another (Altmann's 'I Was There'), Crick and Watson (unnamed in the poem) bounce off Franklin's ideas and create the theory that nets them a Nobel Prize. Where do we find the fire of creativity? Is it residing in the person who blindly (to that stage) gathers the wood, or the one who supplies the spark at just the right time? Altmann does not pose that question but it is there for the begging in his poem. Again this is a question of mindset. A doctoral student's mindset at the beginning tends to be internally focused about the research question under study. A more developed mindset needs to emerge whereby the place of that research in a wider context is necessary for career progress. Crick and Watson had exactly the same set of information as Franklin, but they saw how to use it to take theory forward. Franklin did not yet see the data so creatively. Although we were not 'there' as Altmann was, we would suggest that a different mindset might have been in play for each of the researchers.

Altmann's 'The Theorem' is focused on a passion for discovery in mathematics but with an emphasis on long periods of drudgery punctuated by the occasional wondrous windfall. Altmann's poem has particular relevance for postgraduate research students and for researchers in general. The activity described is about discovery of something new, a research focus. Indeed, the notion that hard work and periods of apparently fruitless activity are necessary for the occasional windfall of discovery is a reality for most researchers. Researchers do not encounter 'success' every hour of every day. Success is limited to occasional breakthroughs that are the wellspring of intense emotional responses. Altmann depicts the intense feelings of joy and satisfaction during those precious, rare moments that those of us who are researchers would readily recognise. 'The Theorem' certainly has something to say to new researchers whose mindset may include a naïve expectation of pain-free continuous discovery.

Passive Acceptance Versus Reform

Zarrop's second poem 'My Student Presents His Work' also addresses the social aspect of scientific research. How do you bridge your own narrow focus with the wider interests of those around you? Is the depicted conference presentation (small audience, overlong presentation, inability to précis the work to fit the time, listless inattention of audience members, a rapid and unfulfilling closure) a typical one and something a doctoral candidate must adapt to, or should such experiential opportunities be reformed? We would argue for reform that could come in any of a variety of ways. The research student might seek help from supervisors to better prepare for the kind of situation described. Supervisors might offer such help as a normal part of their mentoring role. However, the more significant reform would involve changing the context. Again this has a mindset element. What is the mindset of the conference organisers? What is their purpose in designing their conference? To facilitate interaction and debate about ideas must surely be a key goal that the scenario depicted by Zarrop cannot assist. An alternative could be the proven process of requiring written papers ahead of time, limiting authors' opportunities to engage in 'presentation' and maximising the extent to which conference sessions are devoted to discussion, an approach that implies a different mindset about the conduct of research conferences.

Final Comment

The twelve poems that we have discussed have catalysed reflection on a range of relevant teaching and learning issues related to science and mathematics. What is common to all of the examples commented on in this chapter is the need to address the mindset of the student and the ways that it can be affected by the nature of the learning environment. In turn, the mindset of the teacher-educator is a key element in designing, establishing and maintaining an appropriate learning environment.

A range of mindsets, not all of them progressive, are evident across the twelve poems. Some changes in mindset are required if learning quality is to be enhanced. In institution-based learning, all three – the student mindset, the teacher mindset and the learning environment – have to be considered, and the best outcomes will emerge when all three are synchronised.

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CHAPTER 10

SUCCESS AND FAILURE – ACHIEVEMENT-RELATED EMOTIONS

At its core, higher education is a place where achievement matters. People engage with higher education in order to advance important life goals. As an institution, marking, grading and attainment are often at centre-stage. Such high stakes also sparks high intensity emotions, including fear, shame, guilt, pride, joy, hope and frustration. This chapter is informed by the control-value theory of achievement emotions in education advanced by Reinhard Pekrun (2006) and updated by Pekrun and Perry (2014). In this model, emotional experiences are determined by a combination of how much a person values something, whether the focus is on the activity itself or on the outcome, and the extent to which they feel in control of the outcome. The previous three chapters assume a focus on the process of learning a subject, thus enjoyment of learning (or, its opposites, boredom or frustration) are well-represented there. However, this chapter addresses the emotions that are aroused when a person focuses on the outcome, including pride, hope, gratitude, relief, anxiety, shame and hopelessness.

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CHAPTER 10

RICHARD M. BERLIN

The Hotseat

> I swear by Apollo the physician, and Aesculapius, and Hygeia and Panacea, and all the gods and goddesses…to reckon him who taught me this Art equally dear to me as my parents…
>
> – from the Hippocratic Oath

O700 and thirty housestaff collapse
like shipwreck survivors.
After 24 sleepless hours
of children renounced by Hygeia,
our eyes are drowned in shadow.
A few nod before he enters
ruddy-faced and rested,
white coat starched and spotless:
Dr. Harry, Chief of the Mecca,
diagnostic wizard, the power
who can crush careers with a word.
He slaps a chest film on the light box
and hooks a bleary intern:
Tell me, doctor,
what is the shape of this child's ears?
Fifteen seconds, thirty, a minute of silence,
sweat weeps from the intern's forehead.
Harry scorches him with questions
and solves the riddle like Aesculapius,
even kneads the intern's shoulders
as if soothing a bruise.
We curse him all day, stay awake
all night to earn his love,
and when we descend to Radiology
with our own tame students, we slap
a film on the light box and raise
their first beads of sweat.

Previously published in *How JFK Killed My Father* (Pearl Editions, 2003)

RICHARD M. BERLIN

Good Fathers
for James Daniels, M.D. (1938–2001)

We were three men alone in a ward room
built for fifty, dust film on the floor,
Dr. Daniels and I, scrubbed and sterile,
gloved and gowned, standing behind the patient,
our only light drifting though the dirty
glass windows. I performed the prep –
betadine soaked into a sponge, painting
orange circles on the patient's back,
the room filled with the scent of young wine
poured too soon from the cask.
Week after week we practiced
on anonymous blue-collar vets,
everything ordered and routine until
that day Dr. Daniels pressed the needle deep
and failed to find the spot, four times, five,
finally giving up and passing it to me.
I can still see the angle of the shaft
when I pierced the patient's skin,
the sundial shadow it cast on his back,
gold droplets of spinal fluid dripping
into a sterile tube, the look Dr. Daniels
flashed me, just like my father's that day
he pulled over and handed me the keys.

Previously published in *Secret Wounds* (BkMk Press, 2011)

CHAPTER 10

JON WESICK

or Perish

Solving one integral stands between you and a satisfied life.
You'll be a professor in a cashmere sweater,
have an intelligent, capable woman on your arm,
and drive an antique sports car because genius
is a license to be eccentric. How wonderful
when the best minds pause to hear your thoughts
and wide-eyed students say you make science fascinating!

You open a thick book of integral tables,
search hundreds of pages, and find only the sinking feeling
that your future townhouse with its pre-Columbian artifacts,
season tickets to the theater, and vacations in the South of France
are getting more and more unlikely.

You change variables but each x transformed to u
becomes another low-paid, temporary post-doc.
You move to more desolate cities leaving friends behind
to work on increasingly mind-numbing, desperate projects.
Your lover abandons you. Aching for a human touch
you sleep alone in a noisy, one-bedroom apartment.

Your hand cramps after filling pages with letters, symbols,
and eraser smudges. When you try integrating by parts,
it becomes clear that after years of high-tech serfdom
you'll have only these useless pages. An Internet search
traps you in the quicksand of mathematical irrelevance.
You curse the teachers who encouraged you.
The tension in your shoulders could snap a steel cable.

Your future written in pencil –
a future of frayed sweatshirts, cheap shoes, bill collectors,
a subterranean credit score, and tasteless beer in rundown bars.

SU SMALLEN

The Students Who Come to Me with Writing Anxiety

How shall I love them, these students who need so much
To be right, they can't write? They are like Franz Wright's
Sparrows, *limping on their little bone crutches*
But not his sparrow, the one called Lorca who's figured it out
literature will lose, the sun will win, don't worry

They worry. They don't write. I tell them try writing about
What worries them – oh, they don't have time for that
Their twelve-page paper is due tomorrow, maybe Tuesday
If they can get an extension, can I get them an extension?
I ask them, what does it feel like in your body?

They just look at me. They don't want to feel
For sure not worse and they always suspect it'll be worse.
I give everything I've got 'but, but, but none of that works.'
I know. Most of the time it doesn't work for me either.
Sorrowful news:

The only cure for writing is writing.
Lately I've tried saying, look I know it sounds hooey
But have you tried being kind to yourself? Unconditionally
Kind? I'm trying to slide them over the frozen lake
Of my forties, their twenties. I've lost everyone so far.

Sorrowful news: the only cure for writing is writing.
You might as well be tender with yourself about it.
The truth is, I do not love these students.
I love the ones who write something, anything.
It makes my job so much easier.

Even a January lacking snow summons up some internal whatfor.
On the blank sky it scribbles generic branches, run-on
Cold, freewriting wind, five kinds of hardy birds, a page of

Passive ice, and a half-broken bone of a laugh,
Leaving no doubt the vague mess we're working with is winter.

Previously published in *Wild Hush* (Red Bird Chapbooks, 2014) and *You, This Close* (Red Dragonfly Press, 2016)

Commentary. I direct a writing help center at a small liberal arts college in the US. I work with students who, for a wide range of reasons, struggle to write. Most of them remind me of myself.

TERRY MARTIN

Thirty Years Later, I Defend my Dissertation all Night in a Dream and Wake up Exhausted

Midterm week on campus. Tightrope nerves, temperatures rising.
Tension, thick as fog. Students bump into things,
dazed and startled, red eyes open too wide,
night animals caught in unexpected headlights.

In the hallway, Sara June bursts into tears
when I offer her a piece of dark chocolate.
Don't be too nice to me right now, OK?

Ross comes by my office, sweat pebbling his pink forehead,
concerned about his tone in the midpoint course evaluation.
I hope I didn't sound harsh. I really <u>like</u> this class.

Marie, a teary freshman, stops in to tell me
she has applied for a hardship withdrawal.
Money problems at home, her grandma just died
and well, I had an abortion last week.
My mom was really supportive, because
the same thing happened to her when she was eighteen.
But my dad doesn't know.

Predictable, but unsettling, this time of the quarter stirs shadows.
Wishing we could all apply for hardship withdrawals –
from them, not due to them – I listen, and breathe.

Commentary. So much of what's interesting, and exhausting, about working in higher education happens outside the classroom. Though I've been teaching for over thirty years, the inevitable stress of midterms and finals still sneaks up on me and takes me by surprise. (You'd think I'd 'get it' by now, right?) This poem is my attempt to grapple with the predictable nature of these campus cycles, and the opportunities and challenges they present.

CHAPTER 10

NOEL SLOBODA

The Patron Saint of Plagiarists

Scuttles through dorm halls
during predawn hours

in search of that desperate glimmer
escaping from under a door—

the invitation for her
once more to brand

names of dead presidents
on an inner forearm

or tattoo an algorithm
across a lifeline.

Previously published in *Star*Line*

Commentary. Unfortunately most of us who teach confront academic dishonesty at some point. I have spent a great deal of time wondering what leads good students astray. In this poem, I shifted the blame toward a fictional figure, tempting students anxious about their grades (and their futures). As the poem hints, a little lapse can have enduring consequences.

ROBYN LANCE

exam room blues

in uniform rows eyes read black print
on pink test papers under white lights at night

unseeing, students study brick walls
brains strain for recall to know it all

pencil shavings curl question marks

shoulders shrug, necks stretch
wrists flick, jackboots kick desks

the taut thread of tension slackens
as a voice, devoid of colour, declares

time's up. pens down.

Commentary. As an academic skills adviser for an Australian university contracted to provide academic training at a Police Academy, I occasionally supervised exams. Many students are in a tertiary institution for the first time, are the first family member at university and are only there because of the strength of their desire to be 'coppers' and do their bit to help. Though eager to chase crooks and drive fast cars, the world of lectures, tutorials, essays and exams is daunting. It is an intense period of learning, under constant scrutiny, with strict deadlines and constant pressure to pass.

CHAPTER 10

SANDRA S. McRAE

Answers May Vary

You have three hours to complete the exam. Use as many pages as necessary and write neatly. Double space your work where appropriate. The use of electronic devices is not allowed. Silence all cell phones now. After turning in your exam, please help yourself to a cupcake and have a wonderful winter break.

1. If every year hippos kill more humans than sharks do, why hasn't anyone decided to eat them? Develop a recipe for a four-serving entrée using 2 cups of cubed hippo meat and a variety of Botswana herbs.
2. If the square root of pain is being wrong, what is the cosine of being annoying?
3. What was in that bite of sandwich you spit out at the picnic last summer? Use sensory details and describe the contents in the style of (a) Octavio Paz, (b) Christina Rossetti, and (c) Andre Codrescu. Punctuation optional.
4. Using inference, determine which is a more appropriate form of group expression at a Polish-Afghani wedding in Brooklyn: the hokey pokey, the chicken dance, the YMCA, or the Hora. Show your work.
5. Describe, in linear detail, the contents of your backpack, beginning with the crumbs at the bottom of the main compartment. Do not include candy wrappers.
6. Justify your life.
7. Using echolocation, identify a bountiful supply of miller moths above the river in the park in December. If you cannot complete this assignment successfully, hibernate.
8. On the provided 8½" × 11" piece of blue paper, draw a Venn diagram illustrating all the ways that we humans are different, all the ways that we are the same, and all the justifications we use to kill each other. Use no more than 3 circles and write in blood.

Good luck and watch the clock!

Previously published in *Pure Francis*

Commentary. I work in the Colorado Community College system, where students can earn associate (two-year) degrees in the arts and sciences, as well as certificates in various vocations. I think it's important to make learning fun. It was the week before finals when I put this on the projector screen. My students blanched. They were so relieved when I told them, 'today we're going to talk about parody.'

APRIL SELLEY

Professor's Anxiety Dreams

Here is one:
I am teaching a course that an American Literature professor can't fake.
This time, it is Calculus.
I am supposed to be giving a midterm.
Of course, I left the copies of the exam, which I inexplicably composed,
at home, along with the textbook and syllabus.
But, in this dream, I persevere.
'Even mathematicians need good oral communication skills,' I say.
'So you'll each present an oral report on what you've studied.'

Usually, there is no such triumph.
Before each new semester, I dream myself back in elementary or high school,
or college, where I haven't attended a required course.
It is always the last day.
The final paper is due or there's a final exam. Maybe both.

Or I'm back in graduate school, a week before Commencement,
and I haven't begun my dissertation.

But the most common are the dreams about the first day of a class I'm teaching.
I am not showered or dressed, still in bed.
I'm at my home,
at my parents' house two hundred miles away, or
in another country.
I don't have a car.
It is seventeen minutes past the time when the class
was supposed to have started.
The students have come and gone.

Or I'm on a strange campus.
I don't know which building and classroom are mine.
Then I am attacked by an alligator, or a vicious hybrid dog-snake,
or a possessed car, right out of Stephen King.
It's painful.

Or I do make it to class on time.
I have no syllabi, no handouts, no books, no notes,
no idea which course this is.
Or I do know which course,

but I can't see, or speak, or hear,
or even stay awake (even though this is a dream).

Or I can't read my notes.
I can't read English.
I've forgotten how to write words on the board.

There are walls and columns in the classroom
that keep moving, blocking my view of the students,
and blocking their view of a screen where I'm trying to show a DVD.
It is the wrong DVD, or it skips,
or I can't ultimately use it because the player has broken.

The students are resentful. They will not participate in
the Socratic method. They are silent.
Or they are hissing among themselves about my incompetence
and their disgust and hatred. I have lost all control of the classroom.

I wake up, and instead of being relieved, it occurs to me
that someday I will probably plunge into dementia.
Every waking and dreaming hour will be devoted to
the anxious seeking of books, notes, classrooms, lucidity, academic success—
all lost forever.

And then I'll die.

But only after one last dream.

I'm in front of a classroom. Again.
No books. No notes. And I can hardly speak.

But, this time, I have a perfect memory of everything I have ever read,
ever known. Every syllable of mine buoys my students into unbridled brilliance.
They are vibrating out of their seats with original ideas.
We do not notice the students from the next class,
massing and mumbling outside the door,
or hear the steady pounding of their professor,
who finally enters with an angry, 'Would you please leave?'

I lead my scholars into the bright campus air.
The grounds crew has gone softly away, taking their lawnmowers.
There are no airplanes overhead, no cars parking,
no mosquitos, no bees. The birds are listening.

Like Whitman, the students and I recline on the grass with our souls.
We are Emersonian transparent eyeballs,
attuned to, transfixed by, beautiful ideas.
We do not register time.

Then we are transformed
into stars, into constellations, into literature, into myth,
transposed into a perfect dream –
into every professor's
desired,
deserved,
divine
dream.

Commentary. Between terms is always the time when I am tortured by anxiety dreams. Just when I think that I have experienced every possible permutation of these dreams, I am amazed by my brain's endless creativity, especially when it comes to tormenting me. This poem has given me a chance to make something good out of something I dread.

CHAPTER 10

MARION DEUTSCHE COHEN

Triple Forte

She's teaching different equations again, or supposed to be. Smiling straight ahead, she reaches for her lecture notes. But she's brought the wrong book. Hard-covered, too wide, too thick, and instead of dense equations there are dense scales, arpeggios, chords. It's Beethoven piano sonatas she's brought. Book Two.

There is no piano in the room. If there were, she would not play. If she did, the students would not listen. One by one, they would tiptoe out, or maybe around.

Next class she'll bring the correct notebook. But at the end of the term the evaluations will read 'Not only can't she teach math, she can't play Beethoven.'

Or 'she doesn't want to teach math, all she wants is to show off how well she plays Beethoven.'

Or 'that wasn't a triple integral, there was triple-forte.'

And ultimately 'she lets the class dance all over her

'as she flips through these large pages'

'dark as a blackboard'

'in the key of tiny superfluous exponential e.'

Previously published in *Lights I Have Loved* (Red Dashboard Press, 2014)

Commentary. This poem comes from a dream I had, perhaps not so surprisingly a dream coming from a mathprof who also plays classical piano – moreover, a math prof who is sensitive about student evaluations.

MARION DEUTSCHE COHEN

Teaching Observation

'You spent twenty minutes telling them how wonderful it all is.'

I'm sorry.
It *is* wonderful how we can get around both the vertical line rule and the horizontal line rule
how the curve can flower, spiral, and cross itself again and again
how we can now make any pretty picture we want.
Yes, it is all very wonderful but okay, I promise, I won't ever again waste twenty minutes.
And thank you for letting me in on the big secret, how to get through the syllabus: by not telling them how wonderful it all is.

Previously published in *The American Mathematical Monthly* and in *Lights I Have Loved* (Red Dashboard Press, 2014)

Commentary. Teaching at a new university, I was observed by the department chair. When I spoke with him later that afternoon, his main criticism was 'You spent twenty minutes telling them how wonderful it all is.' He wanted me to be more time-efficient, something I'm usually quite good at but not that particular session. The course was first-semester calculus (at an institution where first-semester calculus included, in actuality, at least three semesters and then some – and where I felt that the students, despite being very bright in general, needed to be coddled math-wise – and told how wonderful it all is).

CHAPTER 10

REINHARD PEKRUN

Expert Commentary

The poems collected in this chapter highlight the stress-related, negative emotions that are typical for many achievement situations in higher education. Most of the poems directly target emotions such as anxiety, anger, despair, and resignation; S. McRae ('Answers May Vary') uses parody to tell a story about anxiety; and M. D. Cohen ('Teaching Observation') illustrates rules not to express positive emotions in classroom instruction. In contrast to scientific accounts of stress and emotions, which seek to analytically decompose emotions and to abstract from individual cases by constructing general principles, these poems provide rich, holistic descriptions of the individual phenomenology of emotional states. They bring to mind one's own memories of stress in taking exams or speaking in public, remind us of the diversity of individual emotional experience in these situations, and help us to understand the feelings of the protagonists even if we would not share them in the situation described. My comments relate to the commonalities among these poems; to the phenomenology of the emotions depicted in the poems; to their origins and effects; to emotions and socio-historical contexts that are not addressed in these poems; and to implications for higher education policy and practice.

Commonalities across Poems – Stress, Anxiety, and Despair

The majority of the poems focus on anxiety and other stress-related emotions. Common topics are students' fear of exams and professors' anxiety during teaching. Fear and anxiety are depicted most often, but a broad range of other negative emotions are addressed as well, such as hopelessness and disappointment when anticipating a failed career (J. Wesick), despair triggering unethical exam behaviors (N. Sloboda), or anger about the demands of a test (R. Lance). Relief is the only positive emotion that is described in several of the poems, such as relief when an exam is finished in the poems by R. Lance and S. McRae. Relief is an emotion that also is related to stress – relief is a tension-reducing emotion that is triggered when an aversive, stressful state ends or when an expected negative event does not occur (Sweeny & Vohs, 2012). University students' relief in achievement settings is closely associated with their negative stress-related emotions, including fear and anxiety (Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfeld, & Perry, 2011).

The poems' focus on anxiety and related emotions is in line with research findings documenting the frequency of negative achievement emotions in higher education. For example, in our exploratory studies with university students, we found that anxiety was the one emotion reported most often. Anxiety was reported not only in relation to taking tests and exams, but also with reference to attending class or studying at home (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002). The convergence of evidence from these different sources – poems and scientific studies – reflects the

high-stakes nature of many settings at university and corroborates that it is important to investigate and alleviate students' anxiety.

Accordingly, since the inception of test anxiety research (Brown, 1938; Mandler & Sarason, 1952), researchers have focused on analyzing students' anxiety. More than 1,000 independent empirical studies on achievement anxiety have been published. These studies have generated cumulative empirical evidence on the development, origins, and effects of this devastating emotion in diverse student populations around the world. Perhaps most importantly, the evidence also shows that anxiety can be treated successfully. Cognitive-behavioral therapy has proven especially successful, because it targets both the cognitive and the affective components of anxiety. Overall, therapy for test anxiety is among the most successful therapies available today, with effect sizes in treatment intervention studies often being $d > 1$ (see Zeidner, 1998, 2014). As such, there may be more reason for educational optimism than suggested in the poem by S. Smallen, which depicts a teacher's failure to treat her students' writing anxiety.

Phenomenology of Emotions: Multiple Component Processes

Emotion researchers agree that emotions are complex phenomena that comprise multiple, interrelated component processes, including affective feelings, physiological activation or deactivation, emotional thoughts, and expressive behavior (Shuman & Scherer, 2014). The twelve poems render rich descriptions of all of these components. Emotional feelings are depicted using terms directly denoting feelings, such as anxiety, worry, and desperation. An example is the description of a professor's anxiety dreams as 'painful' in the poem by A. Selley. In addition, the authors use metaphorical language to capture feelings, which draws the reader into re-experiencing the situation described – an instance of emotional contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994) by means of poetic language. For example, reading S. Smallen's description of writing anxiety as Winter lets readers freeze, thus allowing them to relive the deep despair caused by writing anxiety.

Other component processes of emotion are reflected as well. The poems provide descriptions of emotional thoughts involved in anxiety and despair, such as worries about lack of preparation, being too late, being on the wrong campus, not knowing the class to be taught, or not being able to speak or hear in a professor's dreams of teaching (A. Selley). Symptoms of physiological activation and deactivation are also described using direct as well as metaphoric language, such as the beads of sweat weeping from medical students' forehead (R. M. Berlin), the sinking feeling accompanying a student's anticipation of failure (J. Wesick), or the bodily tension during exams described in several of the poems. Finally, in S. McRae's commentary to her poem, she depicts how students blanched when reading supposed-to-be exam questions, which is an example of expressive behavior that signals sudden shock at receiving frightening information.

Origins and Effects of Emotions

The poems reflect the mechanisms triggering achievement emotions and shaping their effects on behavior and performance. Specifically, several of the poems render detailed descriptions of how failure, lack of control over performance, and perceived powerlessness can induce anxiety, despair, and resignation. In R. M. Berlin's poem 'The Hotseat,' students suffer from the powerlessness they experience when being challenged by their professor, who can 'crush careers with a word.' His poem 'Good Fathers' features the resignation that is triggered by recognizing having lost one's capabilities to skillfully perform medical procedures, and A. Selley's poem 'Professor's Anxiety Dreams' illustrates the devastating feelings of a professor who has 'lost all control of the classroom.' These accounts are consistent with scientific theories about the origins of emotions, such as the control-value theory of achievement emotions (Pekrun, 2006).

The control-value theory posits that achievement emotions are triggered when an individual feels in control over, or out of control of, achievement activities and outcomes that are subjectively important. For example, fear of failure is supposed to be aroused when a student anticipates lacking control over performance on an important exam, thus perceiving failure on the exam to be likely and harmful. If performance is under control and failure can be avoided, or if the student doesn't care about the exam, there is no need to be anxious. As such, the theory implies that two appraisals are essential for achievement emotions to be triggered – appraisals of control over success and failure, and appraisals of the value (importance) of success and failure. Throughout the poems, the authors provide vivid illustrations of appraisals of lack of control. Appraisals of value and importance are depicted as well, although in less direct ways. An example is a student's dreams of the valuable outcomes of a successful career, and the devastating consequences of a failed career, in J. Wesick's poem 'or Perish.'

Moreover, the poems provide accounts of the effects of achievement emotions on motivation and cognitive performance. Anxiety is described as generating strong motivation to achieve, to the extent that students 'stay awake all night to earn his [i.e., the professor's] love' (R. M. Berlin). However, anxiety is also depicted as triggering cognitive blockages and lack of concentration, as when students 'bump into things, dazed and startled' during the midterm week (T. Martin), or when 'brains strain for recall' that they seemingly cannot provide (R. Lance). Again, these accounts are in line with current research on achievement emotions. As described in the control-value theory (Pekrun, 2006), anxiety consumes working memory resources, thus reducing task-related concentration. At the same time, anxiety can trigger strong motivation to avoid failure by investing effort and can facilitate the use of rigid learning strategies such as simple rehearsal. Despite these variable effects on motivation and cognition, however, the overall effects of negative achievement emotions such as anxiety on students' performance, educational careers, and health are negative in most students

(Zeidner, 1998, 2014). Teachers' anxiety is likely to have similarly negative effects (Frenzel, 2014), although firm evidence on teacher anxiety in higher education is still lacking.

What is Left Out by These Poems?

The majority of the poems focus on negative emotions. There is a conspicuous lack of accounts of positive emotions throughout these poems, with few exceptions. As noted, the descriptions of negative emotions are consistent with the findings of research studies on university students' emotions in achievement settings. However, these studies have also shown that students experience not only negative achievement emotions but a broad range of positive emotions as well. Overall, in our exploratory research (Pekrun et al., 2002), positive emotions were reported no less frequently than negative emotions. Academic settings provide not only instances of failure but also of success. There is a wide range of positive emotions triggered by successful achievement activities, such as enjoyment of acquiring competencies during learning, hope for good grades, pride of having mastered an exam, or excitement about the prospects of a successful future career. These emotions are not represented well in the poems in this chapter.

To the extent that these poems are representative of poetic writings about higher education, the question arises how this discrepancy could be explained. One possibility is that authors prefer to focus on negative emotions because this promises more spectacular narratives, including dramatic outcomes such as poverty (J. Wesick) and death (A. Selley). However, there also may be more subtle reasons amenable to a psychological explanation. Specifically, psychological research has shown that 'bad is stronger than good' (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001), implying that negative events have more power over human functioning than positive events. To some extent, this also seems true for memory processes – negative events can trigger more elaborate thinking (Weiner, 1985) and may therefore be remembered better. From an evolutionary perspective, remembering negative events and how to cope with them may be especially adaptive for survival. As such, asymmetrical accounts of negative versus positive emotions may be due to evolutionary-based biases of human memory. These biases may also be operating on the memory of authors writing poems.

Another limitation is that the poems focus on achievement emotions triggered in situations that are considered important by the individual. Anxiety, panic, and despair about failures that are of existential importance to the individual are depicted in these poems. However, there is one negative achievement emotion that behaves differently – boredom. This is an inconspicuous emotion triggered in situations that lack meaning and value. Inconspicuousness may be the reason why boredom is not considered in these poems and has similarly been neglected by educational research (Goetz & Hall, 2014). Boredom may be as frequent in higher education as

anxiety, and the consequences of boredom for students' academic attainment may be even more dire (Pekrun, Goetz, Daniels, Stupnisky, & Perry, 2010; Pekrun, Goetz, Hall, & Perry, 2014; Tze, Daniels, & Klassen, 2016).

Furthermore, the poems describe individually referenced achievement emotions but do not address social achievement emotions. Social emotions such as admiration, compassion, gratitude, contempt, envy, or 'Schadenfreude'[1] in classroom interaction are likely to be important as well (for a broader discussion of different categories of academic emotions, including achievement, epistemic, topic, and social emotions, see Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). Worldwide, higher education institutions provide incentive structures that promote competition between students as well as among faculty. By implication, universities and colleges are likely to be charged with competition-related achievement emotions that depend on one's position in achievement-contingent status hierarchies. These emotions can profoundly impact performance, career trajectories, and identity development.

Finally, the poems focus on the individual phenomenology of achievement emotions and their immediate causes and effects. As such, they do not reflect upon the broader socio-cultural and institutional context which shapes academic settings in ways that promote some achievement emotions and prevent others. A notable exception is the poem by M. D. Cohen, which depicts the frustration experienced by a professor in mathematics who was told by her department chair not to waste time by talking about the excitement stirred by topics in mathematics, thus attesting to institutional rules that undermine emotionally sound classroom instruction.

Implications for Higher Education Policy and Practice

The main message to policy-makers and practitioners in higher education conveyed by these poems, and corroborated by research, is simple: Make concerted efforts to shape institutional structures and classroom instruction such that negative achievement emotions are prevented and positive emotions are promoted (for exceptions to this rule, see Pekrun, 2014). Whereas emotions such as anxiety can facilitate some students' academic motivation and investment of effort, these potential benefits do not outweigh the disastrous consequences for the vast majority of students. Typically, these negative emotions entail reduced performance, high drop-out rates, truncated careers, and impaired health, which in turn incurs high costs for national economies and health systems alike.

There are multiple ways in which higher education institutions could contribute to reducing negative achievement emotions and promoting positive emotions. These include increasing the cognitive and motivational quality of teaching; considering failures as opportunities to learn rather than as indicators of inability; reducing competitive goal structures in favor of mastery-oriented and cooperative structures; and avoiding high-stakes testing wherever possible (Pekrun, 2014; Pekrun & Stephens, 2010; Zeidner, 1998). Shaping institutional structures and classroom instruction in these ways could contribute to breaking the vicious cycles

that transmit negative emotions from one academic generation to the next, as when medical residents suffering from the achievement pressure exerted by their professor start exerting the same pressure on their own students once they are allowed to teach (R. M. Berlin, 'The Hotseat'). In this way, institutional reform could help to promote an emotionally sound climate in universities and colleges, benefit performance, and facilitate healthy individual development in students and faculty alike.

NOTE

[1] Joy about another person's misfortune.

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CHAPTER 11

WHERE WE'VE BEEN, WHERE WE'RE GOING

In the spirit of grounded theory, this chapter captures key themes that were not anticipated from the existing literature. In this chapter, poems relate memories of higher education: key places, people and events that capture what higher education has meant to the authors. Delight in libraries, books and ideas are themes running through the poems. Poems later in the chapter express concern about current trends in higher education. These poets provide us glimpses of historically-situated purposes of and conceptions of higher education that help us re-consider where we've been and where we're going.

CHAPTER 11

M. LEE ALEXANDER

The Last Chained Book

In Merton College Library, I watch
the Oxford undergrad pass slowly
by the last chained book, left over
from an era when a small house could
be cheaper than a printing press,
far too valuable to lend: its spine chained
to the shelf where through the years
a thousand students mined its tethered wisdom
seated at that long and narrow bench,
desk lit by nothing nearer than the sun.

She lingers briefly at its open title page:
Les edifices de Rome, Paris, 1682.
She lays its fragile calfskin cover flat
strokes the aging vellum pages
turns its fine-etched illustrations—
then slips her cellphone from her bag,
takes a picture of the antique tome
and sends it to her friend in Urumqi,
then leaves the volume in captivity
and exits into the city of sleeping spires.

Previously published in *Folly Bridge* (Finishing Line Press, 2011)

Commentary. This poem recounts a true story of a meeting of new and old technologies in higher education. I wanted to celebrate both of them! The location is Merton College, Oxford.

SUE DYMOKE

The long loan is over

The long loan is over
never to be renewed.
Our library's gone
the books have flown
pages flapping free
from well-loved places
taking their unique classifications
their wisdom and their questions
their ethics and their rhetoric
their read and unread stories
their poetry
away to level 2, the yellow zone.

Merry and Mathieson
Simon and Sutton
Rogers and Fogelman
Knight and Galton
all transported now
packed off to new homes
where they will hide in the dark
until a cranked-open stack
leads to new enlightenment.

Our library's gone
its words and people flown
and with them the histories
of all who've ever studied and slept
borrowed and read
whispered and worked here.

Farewell dear friends
until we meet
(at least some of you) again
on level 2, the yellow zone.

Displayed in the David Wilson Library, University of Leicester

Commentary. This poem commemorates the closure of the School of Education Library at the University of Leicester and transfer of stock to a new central library (a 10 minute walk away). It was performed for students and staff in the Library on the emotional last day of opening (5th April 2008) and given to the Library team. They requested that it should be displayed in the new David Wilson Library where it still resides. Names in the poem are of some of significant School of Education teachers and researchers whose publications were on the old library's shelves: Roger Merry, Margaret Mathieson, Brian Simon, Alan Sutton, Laurence Rogers, Ken Fogelman, Roger Knight and Maurice Galton.

JEFF GUESS

In the Library

In the library near closing time
with the latest *TLS*
now all the students have gone
into their books
and the long black windows
of the closing northern lights.

The computer bank hums with that first
tonal breath of a church organ
before a key is touched
I want to believe that
lights are dimmed in a last half hour
for something other than power bills.

The reference section slides into the quiet
closed stacks of a release from enquiry
and the carpet that has agonized
all day with PhDs
is dawdling down the steps
to sleep and other things.

And in the interval before a final silence
there is a time for contemplation
even a reverie of sorts
where empty book trolleys slumber
in the return bays
and newspapers lie in a folded jumble

of neglect.
The last bus at the university stop
idles in the cold fog of where the light
slips off the edge of Union Hall.
A final paragraph on the mystery
of The Mystery of Edwin Drood

before the desk clerk nods
to the loans librarian and there is a taciturn
understanding about locks and leavings.

CHAPTER 11

I cannot depart entirely –
but go on browsing with all my former selves
along the crowded bookshelves of the night.

Previously published in *Westerley*

ELSPETH MCLEAN

Cupboard Love

The Utility cupboard rests heavy on the peeling wall.
It holds behind its tired green doors
sustenance for our student lives:
Mother's Pride, potatoes, cheese and beans.

Its flap, when down, a convenient arms-length from the sink,
a holding station for the washing up.
We pile it high, our kaftans trailing in the grime.
Feet stick to the lino. We make more tea.

We linger over meals, talk parties and philosophy.
The homemade beer goes down, friends travel through,
we get an extra glass, we smoke, we listen to the Dead,
put more dirty dishes on the flap.

One night the flap has had enough.
It pulls the cupboard over with a furious crash.
Our plates and glasses flung across the floor. We laugh,
and find some jars, and help ourselves to more.

Commentary. The kitchen cabinet incident took place in my student days in Newcastle upon Tyne in the early 70's. The crash was spectacular. But what is most memorable was how hilarious we thought it all was, and how easy it was to put it right again. We were lucky; we were able to be free of domestic worries, things were cheap, and we only had ourselves to think of. We must have exasperated those around us, and it might have looked like we were frittering away the time, but mixed in with it all were thoughts and ideas that have sustained me ever since.

CHAPTER 11

CATH DRAKE

Sunken Garden

When I hear talk about the Sunken Garden that would appear
suddenly behind gum trees along the track beside the lecture theatre,

that stage framed by rough limestone, the lemon-honey wattles,
peppermint trees, fresh-cut grass on a cool sleeveless night –

it reminds me how we'd go there after wine and cheese nights, half-cut,
talking Mead, Sartre, Barthes and how easily those years slipped.

One night, when the drink suddenly hit you, you could barely walk,
sinking into the damp ground. How much we cried on the stone seats

and couldn't articulate what for. When I think of that place and you
in that gorgeous jade fifties frock you got for a bargain at an op shop,

your warm brown limbs flailing about, I wish I could have slowed it
to a second-by-second frame, stepped back: told you just how much

you had to offer, to stop wasting time, that I'd always goddamn back you.
Even the blue-cloaked moon, watching coolly, loved you.

The sprinklers came on without warning, making us run to the bus stop
where we called out and waved goodbye across opposite sides of the street.

Was there something I could have offered when you were trying to grip
with both hands that night and things were only just starting to slip?

Previously published in *Brittle Star* and *Sleeping with Rivers* (Seren Books, 2014)

JENNIFER L. FREED

To the Quiet One

Look, the same ivied walls, the same
green quads criss-crossed with blue slate paths.
All these years gone,
and here we stand again. Look,
next to the reception tent, there's Tall John, goes by George now,
funny story why. And over there, with Gina who makes films, there's
Ron, back all the way from the Sudan. He's worked in Africa
for years, refugees and human rights. Eyes gentle, full
of what he's seen. He'll tell you, if you ask,
and he'll tell it sharp and clear, and you'll end the conversation feeling
smarter, and more sad, thinking
he's the one
you should have dated, all those years ago, instead of his roommate,
but you hardly knew
him then, and would have been too shy to try.

And look, remember Awkward Al, how freshman year he came across
the quad holding a single rose, so hopeful,
so hopeless? He's at Harvard now, Professor
of mathematics, standing there so self-assured
beside his lovely wife, and a lovely daughter, too.
And Claire, laughing by the bar with Tim, hear how her speech
still bubbles into bursts of song, how you can't help but float along the current
of her words, so quick, so full of lilting energy.

Come sit. Let's talk. Let's talk and talk till late
into the night, pretend we are still young
enough to bear the lack of sleep. Let's talk and hope
our words will nourish
these old ties, bring back the times when we had time
to know each other well. And in the morning, if we wake too soon,
let's walk the silent campus and remember: Here is where
we ate our meals. Here was a first
kiss. Here a roommate's secret, always
kept.

And here, book of Descartes in his hand, '*Reunion Staff'* across his chest,
a young man who lives this now:
sitting in a folding chair to guard a college gate, watchful

almond eyes, wide cheekbones smooth
as sand-washed stones. So beautiful
and so young, you want to touch him, touch
this boy, and tell him: Hold on to this.
It will not come again – the art student laughing over breakfast
with her physics-major friend about Schrödinger's
cat – This is not
how life will stay, this grand collection of people, all
here in one place, and all
their possible lives, and all
the ways their lives might touch your
life, if you let them.
Hold on to this. Drink it in. Eat it. Breathe it. Speak
to everyone. Don't let your quiet nature hold you
back.
You will one day throw your tasselled hat into the air
and walk a last time through these wrought-iron gates
and only after years will you begin to understand
whose lives you might have shared,
how those lives might have moved
your own.

Commentary. This poem captures the theme of regret – the old saying that you don't know what you have till it's gone. I suppose most traditional students have no idea what a luxury it is to be on a university campus among fellow learners, to be in that atmosphere where any conversation can fly from point to thrilling point. In my case, I was too young to appreciate how much not only my classroom education, but also my adult life, with its routines of work, suburban parenthood, could have been enriched by the brilliant, quirky brains of my peers, by forming bonds that would stretch beyond the years and geography enclosed by the college gates.

ANDREW ALBRITTON

Notes from a Class Taken Years Ago

The graphite's begun to blur
like a memory.
The notes,
    Zheng He, massive ships, trade routes
    through the Indian Ocean, burned records
beyond transporting me
to exotic times and places,
attest to the carpet's smell in the classroom,
the overhead whirring to life in light;
the big guy who sat next to me and smiled,
inspiring me to worry less over exams.
The margin of this page is annotated
with coffee; the result of a spill
in the bookstore café
on one of those cold winter nights.
Some of the history I had forgotten
is interesting:
    Unsure of extent of exploration;
    rumored that he may have gone
    far beyond
    what is commonly believed.

Commentary. When I re-read notes I inscribed while I was a university student, I am reminded of the day-to-day contexts in which the notes were taken and studied; and I am also reminded of the wonderful knowledge and mystery to which I was introduced in those years. The life of the university student is a mixture of the quotidian and the sublime, and I tried to express that amalgam in this poem.

CHAPTER 11

LINDA GOODMAN ROBINER

Commencement

My fiancé says it's absurd to start out now. *What's the rush?*
Commencements never begin on time. Though the day is sunny,
I can smell the rain, know the sound when it slips over gladiolas.
He drives through Ann Arbor, parks the '57 Chevy Bel Air
and we trek a mile up Main Street to the Michigan Stadium.
The band plays 'Land of Hope and Glory'
and two thousand capped and gowned graduates
have already marched across the fifty yard line.
I sprint across the field in black high-heeled pumps,
trying to close the gap between the last student and me.

I found gold in college, delight of discovery –
dissecting frogs, reading Sartre and Jung, Descartes and Arthur Miller.
I felt sap rising in me as guys held me close when we danced
or parked at the Arboretum so long that car windows clouded over.
But now that I'm graduating, I'm a registered grownup.
I have known all along where this degree was meant to take me
and have made the proper plans.
A diamond on my finger (though I said I didn't want one)
and invitations mailed.
The fiancé will save me from exploring hidden paths.
His fantasy: a girl to arrange his tie, toss salads of iceberg lettuce,
mother his babies. Besides I am the thinnest girl he knows,
and he likes the way I look in a sweater.

His family and mine – seven of them – greet one another
for the first time and perch together in Row G of the stadium.
Speeches are spoken, diplomas conferred.
I muse on all the ways these four years have opened me.
After a benediction, the fiancé and I begin the long walk back
to his black convertible, come upon Evie, the only time I'll ever see her –
Evie, his former lover. We chat politely, but I can see he is shaken.
This is the girl who said goodbye, the girlfriend whose snapshot
his mother hid under the tablecloth as she fiddled through pictures.

Two weeks after the graduation recessional, a violin and cello play
'Lohengrin' in a chapel, and I, in a borrowed satin gown,
a hoop in the crinoline, give up my name for someone else's.
I can almost smell moss bleed onto my white linen pumps, sense

I'm selling myself into a castle with a moat, my city of light smothered.
No more dazzle of edges; under the veil, no color to my breathing.
I seize my father's arm, and we start down the sheeted aisle.

Commentary. My poem begins at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and ends in Cleveland, Ohio, in June of 1958. In the fifties in the United States, at least in the Midwest, the universe was laid out clearly. The expectation was that girls who went to college would meet boys whom they would marry. The only degree that mattered was the MRS. We girls knew what we were destined for. Women were to be wives and mothers, adjuncts to men and not have lives of their own, at least not lives that mattered. However, college had been my joy.

CHAPTER 11

JAN FORTUNE

Called you by your name

What we want to discern is summed up in one word: vocation and calling. As I said, one word.
Canon Lynley smiles, breathes deeply and blows, points to a jumble of words, the last one: VOCATION.

In the library, books shed dust like unread words from parchment skins, the Canon nods his white-haired head, asks to its beat, *You're how old, dear?*
From the sinking springs of an ancient chair I say I'm twenty-four.
And can you relate to adults, dear? His smile is cherubic. He nods and nods and finally adds, Surely you'd be better off at home—having babies, dear.

The final test, to assess my spiritual growth, is a single question at dusk: *Do you have a sense of humour, dear?*

Odious to the inhabitants

I wake to a distant tapping sound. Evening: a sodden Saturday in a grey November. I stretch and listen, follow the beat upstairs to where a rupture in the ceiling seeps water onto satinwood. I stare in stupor, rouse and fetch a bucket. The builder says we have a year before the roof beams split.
Rob says, *You'd better have a word with your God.*

Our Mole is born, rooting and black-haired.
A Christmas boy.

At college I'm given a room of my own to work on my thesis in feminist theology. Just me and Mole and all the students' wives who come each morning to my study, also known as 'the designated nappy changing room'.

I dread the smell of faeces in the morning.

Abstain… from fornication

At college my closest friend is male. Nick's staying on an extra year, doesn't have a study, but decides he could share mine.
You know he's married, don't you? Stage-whispers a nappy-changing wife as an anxious pair scurry from my room.
Sometimes I dread to go in there, the other says. *They're always laughing you know*.

It's delicate, says the Principal. *Nothing is being implied of course, but if it gives the wrong impression—the two of you… Anyway I've found someone who'll share his study with Nick, so he won't be needing…*

I can't return to solitary confinement in the nappy changing room. Instead I bribe Nick's room-mate with the promise of fresh coffee daily and move into their room. I'm above suspicion with two married men.

Previously published in *Stale Bread & Miracles* (Cinnamon Press, 2009; reprinted 2015)

Commentary. These poems are part of a longer sequence of prose poems about my experience as one of the first women to be ordained in Britain. This extract is set during my years in seminary, when I was also a new mother.

CHAPTER 11

NOEL SLOBODA

College Open House

Bloated bellies
of parents who want
more for their kids
sway and jiggle,
each like a bag
full of unwanted kittens
dropped in a river,
as raffles and PowerPoints
run nonstop, while smoke
and laser light shows
from the drama club
conceal sacrifices
streaming into classrooms
for presentations
on esoteric topics –
the queering of Elvis
in the afterlife; mating habits
of urban dog packs –
designed to make learning
mere entertainment. All over
the floor lies literature
from academic programs,
like entrails spilled –
a pagan ritual to
know the future.

Previously published in *Plenum: South Carolina State University Journal*

Commentary. Many years ago, while serving on a committee to arrange a campus open house, I was asked by an administrator to identify faculty who could deliver 'sexy' presentations to prospective students. I tried to explain that scholars weren't trained to be 'sexy.' Shortly afterwards I found I'd been replaced on the committee. The experience led me to reflect on ways in which we present higher education to the public—often fostering misconceptions that lead to disappointment.

GARY JONES

Convocation

An adjunct at the university convocation
I sit in the August heat in shorts and sandals
listening to chancellors in medieval gowns

invoke us all to embrace climate change,
to increase our graduation rate by thirteen percent,
to deliver education designed for modern tastes,

more efficiently, less cost to the State,
(salary increases will have to wait,
class sizes and assignments, inflate).

Seats are reserved for Academic Staff
(artists formerly known as adjuncts)
and new stars, Short Term Employees;

standing room only for timid tenured faculty,
unprotected superannuated endangered species,
dinosaurs subject to climate change, rising tides.

We are a leaner and meaner university,
adopting corporate models for success,
privatize, individualize, outsource, hold the course:

Ivy doesn't cling to towers made of glass!
Don't throw stones; quiet your moans;
bow your head for the silent invocation.

Commentary. My freshman composition students inspire me with their innocence, their idealism, and their hopefulness. I enrich my retirement by continuing to teach them, even though I am exploited by the university system as an adjunct. The irony of the convocation for faculty and university employees amused rather than angered me!

CHAPTER 11

JULIE L. MOORE

Requiem for the Liberal Arts

There's no room, no space to rent in this town,
Bono croons, as I wait in my car
for my son, who's finishing his piano lesson

inside his teacher's house. The time slips
past nine, and the moon, hidden
behind winter clouds, holds back its light.

I'm worn thin as long-worked linen
under the hand of another dean
who's unaware of the sublime,

who doesn't celebrate the faculty
of two minds, side by side, discovering
transcendence in an ancient verse.

And through the window,
through its sheer drapes,
I see my son, his back swaying,

his fingers ascending
and descending the keyboard,
concerto no doubt resounding

with the same brave spirit he summons
at home. I love this town,
but I'm tired of negotiating boundaries

for beauty, of being an annoying
voice among the professions, crying,
like Rilke did, *You must change your life*.

What if the beautiful day is over?
I wonder as my son now ends his piece,
gathers together his music sheets,

and heads toward the door.
What if all that remains is the measure
of loss, the last chord struck

amid the surrounding silence?

Commentary. This poem is borne out of the increasing tension that now exists in the U.S.A. between degrees in professional programs and degrees in the liberal arts. As the university education has become increasingly expensive, parents paying the school bills want to see a clear career path for their children when they enter college. Selling such parents on majors like philosophy, history, English, music, or even math, physics, or chemistry is tough now because parents and students alike can't see what the career at the end of that study would be. Thus, pressure to downsize curricula and de-emphasis of the liberal arts has occurred. This poem is a lament, an elegy, over this tremendous loss. Cardinal John Henry Newman would be so sad to see that his 'Idea of a University' has come to this.

CHAPTER 11

JO NIEDERHOFF

When our minds are full, we sate our senses

Sometimes there's sun.
Then we pour out onto the lawns, spreading over grass,
drinking in the heat like we haven't seen the sky in days.
Wind calls us out too, with our kites:
purple and red and green and yellow and
tailed against the blue.
We draw ourselves out of our little dens –
golden sun like wax against the siren of wifi –
and spread ourselves out,
free to take up space.

Commentary. This poem was inspired by the understated fun of going outside when the weather's nice after a long winter.

MARÍ PETÉ

Virtual Conference on Learning Futures

Thirty degrees south in steaming heat
I stumble towards laptop, creased from sleep,
first virtual conference begging:

construct from walk-in closet on the screen
(while dunking rusks in *rooibos* tea)
a sassy chic in a boyish suit—
the me that delegates should rather meet.

Settled in, keyboards clicking, hello chirps sift
like small soft feathers onto my screen:
fellow delegates wrapped in scarves
sipping Ceylon and Darjeeling
report they are all snowed in.

Proceedings begin, keynote speaker greets in video,
speaks of learning through play, to do things in a different way.
Ways of the future? Audience spell-bound,
all bodes well for orderly beginnings.

Then, while the presenter is still speaking
like the
        first
                plump
                        raindrop
        on a thirsty plane
someone posts a comment for everyone to see
…and everyone jumps in—a cloudburst of text
pours across the savannah of my flat screen:
cryptic thoughts, critique, opinions.
I wait for the chair to call for order, instead
she picks up on some points, passes it on,
the speaker fields questions in between.

Squeezed against my comfort zone's seams,
I lurk and learn…

                then leap in,
abandoning manners meant for
face to face ways of being—

download read text furiously field emails
welcome an unexpected guest at the door dash to the corner store
do a few chores soothe a child on my lap,
blog a few lines keep my boss happy feed a
family (and the cats) upload pics to a photostream, tweet in between—
lost in layers of learning,
new ways of being.

Eight days later at close of proceedings
time is announced for conference dinner.
Bandwidth *kaput*, multitasked out,
I sip solo sundowners South, swat mosquitoes
in the breeze of mangoes and sea.

North, delegates settle snug under eiderdown…
while somewhere in the cyber sky
their avatars in Second Life stilettos
dance and play the night away.

Previous published in *Qualitative Inquiry*. Reprinted with permission of the publisher with full citation: Peté, M. (2013). Employing poetry to understand the transformative experience of attending a virtual conference. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *19*, 127–128.

Commentary. The poem illuminates ways of knowing and being academic in the 21st century, risk taking and rehearsing new modes of learning and researching, and the discomfort and liberation of this experience. Focusing on the transformative event of attending a virtual conference for the first time, it reveals a range of themes: embodied and disembodied experiences; interplay and tension between poles such as north – south, local – global, virtual – real, and poetic – technological; the levelling of power dynamics and gender differences; deconstruction of conventions and norms for such etiquette of face-to-face events; experiencing multiple identities, playing many roles simultaneously, satisfying curiosity and desire by having it all, and the compromises involved. Note: Rooibos is Afrikaans for ‘red bush’, a South African herbal tea. Sundowners is a South African term for drinks at sundown.

AMY ANTONGIOVANNI

A Poet-Teacher's Minifesto

Listen to your students.
Listen as though you were walking the streets of a strange city at night.
Watch closely as you listen. They are your teachers.

Imagine each of them as an instrument, unique and essential to the whole.
Play their notes lightly and with caution, as though from their song, you could tease out information from a foreign culture, learning its tastes, manners, myths and fears.

Ask your students challenging questions. When they answer, imagine you are the conductor and they, the composers of an orchestra. Study their melodies slowly and with patience.
Let harmonies evolve organically and rearrange the dissonance.

Believe their answers about themselves and their world
as you would believe an elder of a native tribe.

Trust that in their hearts, they care,
even when they wear backwards hats and flip flops to class.
Even if they talk to their friends, interrupt, or check their phones.
Remember: their hearts are caution-taped in an effort to defend
against not knowing.

Stand at times before them in bewilderment.
If you are brave enough to be vulnerable before them, courageous
enough to say, 'I don't know', I made a mistake', they will become
brave enough to ask the difficult questions and
live with the unknown.

Be gracious. Their lives are harder than yours.

Share with them your passion for learning, your love for the subject. Be the aspen that sprouts new shoots from underground, your roots will become their trunks.

Be generous with your words; praise them often.

When they fail or falter, be kind in your criticism. Like toddlers, they've extended themselves into a new and strange environment, and in order to master this labyrinth, they must bump into walls clumsily, many times before learning to navigate it well.

A second chance never hurt anybody. Third, fourth and fifth chances can tear down a spirit.

Like all artistic endeavors, teaching is a moment to moment exercise
in awareness and presence.
Even though administrators focus on desired outcomes, who can say
when our lessons will make a difference,
or when they will manifest in the students' lives?

The outcome is less important than small moments of brilliance
along the way –
glimpse of a red fox emerging from the trees.

I do not remember the grades I received on each paper I wrote in college,
nor have I hung my diplomas on the wall, but I remember my mentor
bending down to show us a newt along the trail,
fiery red, its nearly glowing salamander spirit.

Take your students outside. Teach them to appreciate this land,
this water, the creatures around them. Let them be quiet and listen
to the wind in the leaves of the great sycamore
that bows over the creek.

Be still and notice the bullfrogs, the blue-bellied lizard doing pushups
on the fallen oak.
Point out the swallows nesting in their mud-nests under the eaves,
the humming birds darting
from blossom to blossom.

Look around you, there are deer grazing in the fields.
This is what matters. This is why we are here.

Commentary. The Vice President of Butte Community College, where I teach, invited me to write a poem addressing the faculty and staff of our college, approximately 500 people, at the opening of Institute day. This event usually consists of administrators reporting on the budget, how to document successes and failures, and other rather dour topics. Rarely is this event about the actual work of teaching. So I decided that while we were all gathered together, most of us teachers, I would try to speak to how and why we feel compelled to teach. The poem offers reasons that I consider worthy of our reflection. The title was inspired by Brenda Hillman's poem: *Ecopoetics Minifesto: Draft for Angie.*

KATHLEEN M. QUINLAN

Expert Commentary

A strong whiff of nostalgia wafts through many of these poems as graduates reflect on their experiences of university. In looking back over several generations, we have a sense of what is most important – and memorable – about university life. In some ways, this final chapter book-ends chapter 3. In that chapter, students were transitioning to higher education, anxiously wondering whether they could make a home there and find a place to grow and belong. In this chapter, we see examples of how and where this belonging is achieved, as students look back at university, often longingly.

Belonging, it would seem from these accounts, is not tied just to psychological and social spaces, but physical spaces. The campus can be a place where students feel, as Jo Niederhoff puts it, 'free to take up space.'

Both Sue Dymoke and Jeff Guess pay tribute to libraries. Dymoke focuses on a library closing permanently, when budget cuts forced the work of beloved scholars in the discipline to be 'packed off to new homes/where they will hide in the dark.' With the library gone, so too are 'its words and people flown/and with them the histories/of all who've ever studied and slept/borrowed and read/whispered and worked here.' Clearly the building housed more than books; it was part of the fabric that bound together a community of scholars over multiple generations. Guess' 'In the Library' echoes these ideas with the sense that the experience of the library in all its rich detail – 'the computer bank hums,' 'the carpet…/is dawdling down the stairs.' Its contemplative silence is something he carries with him. 'I cannot depart entirely – /but go on browsing with all my former selves.'

These retrospective views of higher education highlight how non-formal spaces are places of belonging where good conversation happens, friendships are formed and ideas flow freely. Elspeth McLean recalls a student flat in the early 1970's, celebrating the opportunity to 'linger over meals, talk parties and philosophy.' In her own commentary on her work, she says 'it might have looked like we were frittering away the time, but mixed in with it all were thoughts and ideas that have sustained me ever since.' For Cath Drake, this place was the Sunken Garden on an Australian campus, a place where they went 'after wine and cheese nights, half-cut,/talking Mead, Sartre, Barthes.' Jennifer Freed reminisces at a class reunion, 'Come sit. Let's talk. Let's talk and talk till late/ into the night, pretend we are still young…bring back the times when we had time/to know each other well.' She goes on to hope students she sees will, 'Hold onto this./ It will not come again…this grand collection of people, all/here in one place…all the ways their lives might touch your /life, if you let them.' These three poems highlight that full-time, residential higher education offers a unique experience that 'will not come again' (Freed, 'To the Quiet One').

This kind of dialogue, fueled by big ideas and students' different backgrounds provide fertile ground for transformative learning (Mezirow, 1981, 2009). References in the poems to former selves and possible selves highlight the potentialities represented in young lives, and an awareness of the changes wrought during that unusual time.

But these poems paint a picture of a privileged, full-time, residential experience of higher education. If powerful learning and shaping of identity happens in informal and non-formal learning environments, how can part-time and commuting students share in these experiences? Perhaps teachers can construct assignments that require students to collaborate outside of class time? Maybe the 'flipped classroom' will enable meaningful dialogue to take place within scheduled class-times, rather than pushing it to the margins of residential life.

In three of the poems, we see how technology is now mediating much of students' experiences in higher education. Jo Neiderhoff refers to the 'siren of wifi,' M. Lee Alexander's narrator admires a valuable manuscript chained to a desk in an Oxford library and watches in amusement as a young student 'slips her cell phone from her bag,/ takes a picture of the antique tome/and sends it to a friend in Urumqi/.' We get the clearest sense of how technology is enabling new learning spaces, interactions and experiences in Marí Peté's poem about her first virtual conference: 'Squeezed against my comfort zone's seams,/ I lurk and learn …/then leap in,/ abandoning manners meant for/face to face ways of being.'

When screens prevent residential students from connecting in person, technology is a barrier to non-formal learning. When technology brings students together in virtual space to discuss big ideas, it is facilitating the kinds of experiences that these nostalgic poems highlight. Whether students are online, in a classroom, in a library or in a campus garden, the core pedagogical challenge remains to enable all students to engage deeply with ideas and to do so in good, challenging and diverse company. These elements are vital to transformative learning (Taylor & Jarecke, 2009) and, it would seem, to creating emotionally powerful learning contexts.

When looking back on higher education, we appreciate some of the changes in learners' (and teachers') experiences. Two poems particularly highlight women's experiences in higher education. Linda Goodman Robiner's 'Commencement' is followed two weeks later by her wedding: 'I knew all along where this degree was meant to take me/and have made the proper plans. A diamond on my finger…/ and invitations mailed.' In the 1950's, Robiner explains in her commentary, many women went to university in hopes of finding a suitable husband who would save them 'from exploring hidden paths.'

Jan Fortune's sequence of prose poems charts the experience of being in the first cohort of female ministerial trainees in the UK. She pioneered one of those 'hidden paths' and suffered condescension, suspicion and segregation along the way. 'Surely you'd be better off at home – having babies, dear.' We feel the loneliness, frustration, offense and despair of her situation.

Fortune's and Robiner's poems, in particular, remind us of how historically situated the felt experiences of higher education are. The expectations of students, families and teachers are shaped by the society around them; these expectations include and exclude some students from particular experiences. These expectations also frame and shape what students are able to do or not, as well as how they respond to the circumstances. Robiner, undoubtedly living in sex-segregated dormitories, was not able to casually talk and talk all night long with men. She would have uncomplainingly experienced sexist attitudes that simply wouldn't be tolerated today. A critical reading of these poems reminds us that our emotional responses are conditioned by the culture we are brought up in.

The four final poems in the chapter are situated in the present day, highlighting some of the changes in and pressures on higher education with its 'corporate models of success' where tenured faculty are 'endangered species' (Gary Jones, Convocation). In Requiem for the Liberal Arts, Julie L. Moore asks, 'What if the beautiful day is over?' The question itself embeds the value of the liberal arts as 'beauty;' through the arts, students develop aesthetic appreciation and the ability to communicate – and value – beauty (and its absence) in our lives. Moore is tired, frustrated, feels like the lone voice standing up for the humanities and arts against 'another dean/who's unaware of the sublime,/ who doesn't celebrate the faculty/of two minds, side by side, discovering/transcendence in an ancient verse.'

What's striking about this quote is that the liberal arts are depicted as a form of education that cultivates emotional sensibilities. Through thoughtful discussion of 'ancient verse' (and other works of art), we discover how we feel and can talk with others about those responses. Through disciplinary analyses, we are able to interrogate those feelings, tracing their source and how their creators evoke different feelings in readers/viewers/listeners. These kinds of discussions go to the heart of what I've called emotional literacy (Quinlan, 2015). In a world of political soundbites, product placement, ubiquitous advertising and marketization, citizens need to be able to respond critically. All of those situations aim at emotional manipulation, so a critical response depends upon reflection on the emotional impacts of various messages. It depends upon integrating our emotional reactions with our intellectual reactions.

A discourse that includes the emotional dimensions of learning and teaching is counter-cultural in the current climate of marketization and managerialism. Nonetheless, collectively, these poems remind us of the value of the ephemeral, the unmeasurable, spontaneous, holistic experiences of learning and teaching in higher education. We need to remember, as Amy Antongiovanni says: 'The outcome is less important than small moments of brilliance/along the way – /glimpse of a red fox emerging from the trees.' Her manifesto is consistent with the current movement in contemplative education that values first person knowledge and seeks to integrate meditative practices with traditional academic approaches (Britton et al., 2013; Kahane, 2009). She uses references to spotting elusive and graceful animals to evoke the small miracles that can occur in teaching, if we leave spaces of wilderness

and pay attention. She reminds fellow teachers: 'teaching is a moment to moment exercise/ in awareness and presence…Be still and notice…Look around you. There are deer grazing in the fields./ This is what matters. This is why we're here.'

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CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSION

This book highlights the importance of emotions in student experiences of higher education, from the point of matriculation, through studying particular subjects, to examinations and reminiscences on university.

In addition to illustrating feelings associated with student learning and development, this book makes evident how the work of teachers is also emotionally charged. Teachers are heavily invested in their work – whether that is their subject matter (as in Zarrop's 'Mathematica Erotica' or Tyx's 'The Pleasures of Teaching Emily Dickinson') or in nurturing students (as in Terry Martin's 'Office Hours' or Suzanne Roberts' 'Try Teaching at the Community College').

As you have seen, this book is organized roughly in terms of the chronology of student experience through university, informed by key theoretical frameworks that best describe or explain the emotions observed at various junctures. In this concluding chapter, I suggest a different organizing principle that may help us, as a field and as a community of practitioners, to move forward in our practice and research.

I propose that emotion matters in higher education because education is relational and emotions are central to relationships. Many theories of learning, as well as the now copious literature on student engagement (e.g. Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Zepke & Leach, 2011), recognize that relationships are vital to the learning process in higher education. How we feel *with* and *about* others are central to the quality of our relationships. As teachers, we can consciously seek to enrich the positive emotions associated with key relationships in higher education and strengthen the relationships that are at the heart of student learning.

Elsewhere I have discussed four key relationships in higher education and suggested how teachers might enrich those (Quinlan, 2016). First, university students engage with particular subject matters – the objects of learning with which they are forming deeper relationships. Second, students and teachers interact. Third, students be-friend and learn with other students. Finally, students have a relationship with themselves through the forging of (or honing of) new identities during higher education. In each of these four relationships – with subject, with teachers, with peers and with self – feelings are elicited that influence both whether that relationship expands or shrinks and students' present and future performance. These four relationships are already captured in the literature of higher education (Quinlan, 2016) and reiterated in these poems.

These poems, though, also highlight other key relationships that matter in higher education. For instance, we see relationships with family and communities of origin, such as in Katie Thornton's 'Hiraeth' and Carolyn Locke's 'Chestnuts' and 'Leaving again,' as well as Jennifer A. McGowan's 'The Making of Him' and Bradfield's 'Distance Education.' These relationships – and the emotions associated with them – are of increased importance in a context of both widening participation and internationalization agendas. In some cases, students are coming from cultural contexts with higher stakes on their achievement and with different interpretations of the meaning of a university education. To the extent that governments are sponsoring students, obligations to one's nation introduce another set of expectations and pressures on students. Attachments and commitments to family, community and country affect the emotional landscape not only for these students, but for those interacting with them.

Students also forge a relationship with place while in university (see Gruenewald, 2003 for a discussion of 'place-based' education). The importance of the geographic relationship is not well-addressed in educational literature, yet learning is taking place within certain spaces. Those spaces – libraries (e.g. Guess' 'In the Library'), gardens (Drake's 'Sunken Garden'), apartments (McLean's 'Cupboard Love'), and the local community (Gardner's 'Haven Poe' and Halifax's "She waited") are vital aspects of the learning environment. Attention to the context – physical, social and cultural – is particularly timely as we shift toward online learning spaces. We need to consider how emotional attachments form in a variety of environments.

Learning and teaching are also taking place within historical contexts. As the poems in chapter 6 show, the broader world with its deaths, wars, environmental crises and wonders all continue even as students come in and out of our classrooms. Broader cultural events influence students' thinking (and feelings) and have the potential to shape what and how we teach, as well as what students learn during the formative years of higher education.

Yet much of the existing research on emotion in education is psychological. It focuses heavily on individual, intra-personal processes. These poems and the review of literature in chapter 2, though, suggest that we need to pay more attention to the socio-cultural contexts of emotion. Learning and teaching are, fundamentally, human activities. They involve emotions as well as cognition, and they are social and relational. Focusing on strengthening key relationships, including with the social, cultural and physical environments within which learning takes place, is a vital next step.

Although teachers in higher education are often exhorted to take a student-centered perspective (e.g. Ramsden, 1992), one conclusion of this book is that we might do well to see students as not merely at the center of a relationship between teacher and student, but at the center of learning habitats. We can adopt a more ecological model of education (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Schultz, 2014) that sees the variety of interdependencies within which students and teachers are embedded. Students interact with their own past and possible selves, with peers, with the subjects they

study (becoming members of disciplinary communities), with their universities, with the communities in which those universities exist, with their communities of origin, and with the broader world. Such an emphasis on the nested relationships students inhabit will focus teachers' attention not simply on individual students and how they vary, but, rather on creating spaces and opportunities that include, nurture and enrich the experiences of a variety of students as they transition into new communities of learning and practice.

In sum, I hope this book provides a stimulus to further discussion and discourse among teachers about the role of emotions in higher education. I hope, too, that it may stimulate more inquiry, particularly research which is theoretically grounded and expands our understanding of the social and relational nature of emotions.

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APPENDIX 1

USING THE CASES AS DISCUSSION PROMPTS – A SAMPLE DISCUSSION GUIDE

I have found it helpful to invite colleagues to study chapter 2, which lays out a variety of theoretical stances on emotion in teaching and learning, before a case discussion. For a 60 to 90 minute discussion, I then select some 5 or 6 poems from the volume and ask pairs or small groups of participants to take 15 minutes or so to read one (or, time permitting, two poems), answering the questions set out below. Each group is responsible for their poem, reading their poem aloud to the larger group, reporting on their discussion and facilitating a broader discussion (Allow 10 minutes per poem). As session facilitator, I draw out how these poems connect to participants' own experiences of teaching or learning, guide participants toward the theories and conceptual stances that might be illustrated by the poems, and invite participants to consider alternative perspectives and actions.

Although some people find that they want more details, it is helpful to remember that case studies of teaching are often deliberately ambiguous, prompting us to practice analyzing and interpreting emotionally-laden situations in which we have incomplete information, considering what additional information is needed and through this process, exploring multiple interpretations and possibilities. In this way, a single case might be used to talk through several different situations. Here is a copy of instructions I have developed, tested and refined. Feel free to use it as is, or adapt it, crediting the source.

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR UNIVERSITY TEACHERS: EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Aims

- Appreciate the holistic nature of teaching and learning in higher education; emotion is intertwined with cognition and affects both process and outcomes.
- Practice using different theoretical stances to interpret (and re-interpret) emotionally-laden classroom episodes.
- Consider alternative courses of action and their implications in emotionally-laden teaching situations.
- Clarify your own educational philosophy.

APPENDIX 1

Materials

In your pre-reading, you looked at chapter 2 of this book, *How Higher Education Feels: Commentaries on Poems that Illuminate Emotions in Learning and Teaching*. Kathleen M. Quinlan (Ed) 2016, Sense Publishers. It laid out a variety of theoretical stances on emotion in teaching and learning. Attached are five poems from this book that we will use as case studies. Case studies for teaching are often deliberately ambiguous, prompting us to practice analyzing and interpreting the situation, considering what additional information is needed and exploring multiple angles and possibilities. Poems have been used because they are concise and are well-suited to creating emotional experiences in readers.

Instructions

Each person (or small group) will lead a discussion on one of the poems. Please read through your assigned poem several times and consider the following discussion questions, applying the ideas from the pre-reading to your case. You will read the poem aloud to your peers and then lead a discussion, using these questions and the pre-readings as a framework.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the feelings evoked by this poem?

2. What is this case *about*? What is/are the key issue(s)?

3. What educational questions does it raise for teachers in higher education? For teachers in your discipline specifically?

4. How would you explain or interpret the situation in the poem using one or more of the theoretical stances outlined in the pre-reading? Which theoretical stances are most helpful in interpreting it?

5. What might the teacher do now? Or, what else might the teacher do or have done?

6. Do you have any similar examples from your own experience?

7. With a heightened awareness of the emotional nature of learning and teaching, how might you teach differently as a result?

INDEX BY CONTRIBUTOR

INDEX BY POEM TITLE