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# JNCHC

## JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

Fall/Winter 2001

Vol. 2, No. 2

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*WITH ESSAYS BY...*

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TAMMY OSTRANDER

SARA SANDERS &  
JANET FILES

MARGARET SZUMOWSKI

BETSY WEST

PATRICIA WORRALL

*and a one-act play  
by Portz prize-winner...*

STEPHANIE FOSNIGHT

A PUBLICATION OF THE



NATIONAL COLLEGIATE  
HONORS COUNCIL



*CH: VII*

TODD PIERCE (1999)

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VOLUME 2, NO. 2

## JNCHC

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# JNCHC

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JOURNAL OF THE  
NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

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A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

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## HONORS AND THE CREATIVE ARTS

JOURNAL EDITORS

ADA LONG

DAIL MULLINS

RUSTY RUSHTON

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

**The National Collegiate Honors Council** is an association of faculty, students, and others interested in honors education. *G. Hewett Joiner*, **President**, Georgia Southern University; *Rosalie Otero*, **President-Elect**, University of New Mexico; *Donzell Lee*, **Vice President**, Alcorn State University; *Earl Brown, Jr.*, **Exec Sec/Treas**, Radford University; *Joan Digby*, **Immediate Past President**, Long Island University CW Post. **Executive Committee** *Brian Adler*, Valdosta State University; *Elizabeth Beck*, Iowa State University; *Ronald Brandolini*, Valencia Community College; *K. Celeste Campbell*, Oklahoma State University; *Ryan Commerson*, Gallaudet University; *Morgan Anne Good*, SUNY Potsdam; *Herald Kane*, San Diego City College; *Ann Raia*, College of New Rochelle; *Kathy Rogers*, University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa); *Jon Schlenker*, University of Maine (Augusta); *Blake Standish*, University of New Mexico; *Shirley Thomas*, John Brown University; *Casey Tippens*, Oklahoma State University; *Natalia Valenzuela*, Columbia College; *Stephen Wainscott*, Clemson University; *Norman L. Weiner*, SUNY Oswego; *Jack White*, Mississippi State University; *John Zubizarreta*, Columbia College.

## EDITORIAL POLICY

*Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* is a refereed periodical publishing scholarly articles on honors education. The journal uses a double-blind peer review process. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education. Submissions may be forwarded in hard copy, on disk, or as an e-mail attachment. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to: Ada Long / JNCHC / UAB Honors Program / HOH / 1530 3rd Avenue South/Birmingham, AL 35294-4450 / Phone: (205) 934-3228 / Fax: (205) 975-5493 / E-mail: adalong@uab.edu.

## DEADLINES

March 1 (for spring/summer issue); September 1 (for fall/winter issue).

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# CALL FOR PAPERS

JNCHC is now accepting articles for the Spring/Summer 2002 issue. Articles may be on any topic consistent with our editorial policy (see page 2 of this issue).

## **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS MARCH 1, 2002.**

The subsequent issue of *JNCHC* (deadline September 1, 2002) will be dedicated to the topic of *Technology in Honors*.

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. We will accept material by e-mail attachment, disk, or hard copy. We will not accept material by fax.
2. The documentation style can be whatever is appropriate to the author's primary discipline or approach (MLA, APA, etc.), but please avoid footnotes. Internal citation is preferred; end notes are acceptable.
3. There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.
4. Accepted essays will be edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for obvious infelicities of style or presentation. Variations in matters such as "honors" or "Honors," "1970s" or "1970's," and the inclusion or exclusion of a comma before "and" in a list will usually be left to the author's discretion.
5. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to:

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# Dedication



**JERRALD L. BOSWELL**

With love and sorrow, this issue of the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* is dedicated to Jerrald Boswell, who died of pneumonia on September 12, 2001. Jerrald was Managing Editor of JNCHC from its beginning in the spring of 2000 through the previous issue (Vol. 2, No. 1, spring/summer 2001), which he made sure was at the printer's before he went into the hospital. Without Jerrald, the resurrection of a national scholarly journal in Honors might never have occurred. He devoted extraordinary amounts of his time and energy to designing, laying out, promoting, printing, and distributing this journal as well as the numerous other publications that emanate from the Honors Program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He was a graduate of the program (1986) with extensive subsequent background in the publishing industry, primarily in New York City. Fortunately for us, he returned to Birmingham for the last four years of his life and was an instructor in the Honors Program as well as editor and/or managing editor of all its publications, including *Sanctuary*, a literary journal that he founded and fathered into existence. Jerrald was talented, beautiful, funny, generous, loving, skillful, and utterly irreplaceable. All of his friends on the editorial staff—including his dear friend Mitch Pruitt, who has volunteered to carry on Jerrald's work as Managing Editor of JNCHC—carry him in our hearts as we try to continue his work. It will never be as much fun.



# EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

RUSTY RUSHTON

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

I attended a poetry reading at the University of Virginia not long ago at which the poet slated to read, who was on the Creative Writing faculty of the English Department there, was introduced by a professor and friend of his from the *literature* side of their Department. In his comments, the professor, whose primary scholarly work was in literary criticism but who also wrote poetry, presented the following distinction, based on his own experience, between the writing of criticism and the writing of poetry. He said that he'd been frantically working on an essay about poetic form in the early American modernist period and that the endeavor was driving him crazy, but that he knew he'd be able to finish it. He said he also knew that, once he was finished, he'd be able to write other critical essays about other issues in poetry—he might not choose to do so, of course, but there was no doubt in his mind he would be able to if he wanted. Why was he so confident? He explained that he'd accumulated the kind of literary-critical education over the years that would enable him always to turn his critical attention profitably toward new subject matters.

Not so with the writing of poetry, he then added tersely, for he never knows when or even if the impetus to write a poem will strike. And when it does strike, he continued, and once he's actually completed a poem, he is invariably left with the dispiriting feeling that, for all he knows, he may never write another one. The professor then segued into his admiration for the courage it must take to fashion an entire career out of the writing of poetry—his admiration, in short, for his friend whose task it was to read poems to us that evening.

Honors students like to *know* what they're doing academically. They like to *know* that if they get organized, put in the hours, deny the pleasures, meet with the teachers—in short, if they accumulate the education that's been assigned to them—they will succeed.

But what if the assignment is to write a poem? What if the assignment is to enact a character in a play or to compose a violin sonata? Think how many mediocre poems, sonatas, and character enactments have been produced by hours of earnest hard work. And think, too, how many brilliant iterations of the same have burst forth more or less spontaneously. What risk there is in donning the mantle of an artist! A Friday evening of anxious cogitation and a missed fraternity party, and what gets produced? A clumsy sonnet or two?

And let's say an exceptionally fine sonnet or sonata does emerge: how dependable are the accolades that accompany such success? Are student artifacts perceived (by students themselves, by parents, by Americans in general) to hold anything like the same degree of clout that A's in Chemistry do? Are even honors programs always sufficiently supportive of the deft villanelle, the transcendent aria?

## EDITORS INTRODUCTION

This issue of JNCHC is devoted to the difficult joys of teaching the creative arts in honors classes and to the desire felt by many honors educators that more such teaching be administered. Our submissions have been broken into two principal sections followed by a general query and an award-winning student play. The first section comprises articles on the teaching of particular art forms to honors students. Betsy West, in “An Architect’s Foray Into Honors,” discusses the nature and importance of “visual form[s] of learning,” drawing upon the kinds of creative exercises employed in beginning architecture classes but showing, too, how such exercises might be put to more general use. Margaret Franson, in “*The Play’s the Thing: Theater Arts and Liberal Learning*,” explains how a mandatory theatrical arts component of the freshman interdisciplinary program at Valparaiso University (in short, a musical written and performed by the freshman honors class) not only fosters creativity, but actually exposes students to most if not all of the essential facets of a liberal arts education. Film-making, film-criticism, and the growing need for young people to become media-savvy constitute the tripartite subject matter of “Media Literacy and Liberation: Honors Students as Prophetic Artists and Critics,” an essay by Page Laws that offers a plan for enabling honors students to join what Cornell West sees as the most crucial academic *resistance* to western mercantile culture.

The three remaining articles in this first section focus on the teaching of poetry, though in three very different circumstances. In “Bringing Imagination into the Community Through a Poetry-Writing Honors Course,” Diann McCabe describes a most ambitious endeavor in which a class of honors students at Southwest Texas State University, after spending a few weeks immersed in Kenneth Koch’s books on teaching poetry to children, take on leadership roles in a nearby elementary school, setting up and running an eight-weeks long poetry-writing workshop for grade-schoolers. Sara Sanders and Janet Files, in “Seeing the World Anew: Creative Arts in the Honors Curriculum,” make a case for getting creative writers off campus, listing and analyzing the kinds of exercises in creativity that can yield excellent results when administered under the influence of a professional writer, a lazy river, and a free weekend. And finally, poet and professor Margaret Szumowski takes us through what are for her the six essential classroom-style poetry-writing exercises for honors students in an essay entitled “Honors Students in the Creative Writing Classroom: Sequence and Community.”

The second section of the journal presents four articles that describe how elements of creative-arts pedagogy can be successfully spliced into honors courses of a more traditional sort. In “Could Aristotle Teach the Honors Courses I Envision?” Luis Lopez reflects upon his years of studying and practicing the art of Spanish Colonial tin work in his native state of New Mexico in order to make an impassioned plea for the inclusion of art-making itself in the art-history classroom. Ellen Buckner and Cynthia Leach-Fuller help bridge the gap between the creative-arts and science in their essay “Honors and the Creative Arts in Nursing,” which examines the use of music therapy to regulate anxiety among critical care patients. The inclusion of web-design components of otherwise traditional research projects serves as the catalyst for Patricia Worrall’s reflections in “*Expressive Technology: Multimedia Projects in Honors Courses*.” Leslie Donovan’s “Jesters Freed from their Jack-in-the-Boxes: Or

## RUSTY RUSHTON

Springing Creativity Loose from Traditionally Entrenched Honors Students” presents an evaluative account of some creative-writing exercises (tell the story from the witch’s perspective; write a handful of Dantean stanzas of your own; etc.) designed to put students in contact with not only the themes, but also the *means*, of a given literary text. Completing this second section of the journal is Tammy Ostrander’s essay “The Evolution of Aesthetic Response in Honors Students,” which follows a group of honors students on a term-long mission—through quarrelsome museum tours, sculpture-garden high jinks, and class discussions sprawled over restaurant tables—to respond meaningfully to the question “What is art?”

For a final treat, we have reproduced Portz prize-winning honors student Stephanie Fosnight’s one-act play *When Austen’s Heroines Meet*, a superbly imagined parlor drama in which the likes of Elizabeth Bennett, Emma Woodhouse, Catherine Morland, Anne Elliot, and Marianne Dashwood miraculously find themselves in the same room and are able finally, as it were, to compare notes.

Getting students to enter the domain of art-making is and will continue to be difficult for honors programs. Our students typically need to feel that their paths to academic success are, if unavoidably steep, at least clearly marked, and there are things about art and artistic success that can probably never be fully clear because they are not fully knowable. The following essays present numerous provocative ways in which honors educators can continue fostering the creative arts in their programs. With their help, let us encourage our students to take advantage of their natural artistic gifts and to stand hopefully and respectfully in the face of their unknowing.



# Teaching The Creative Arts





# An Architect's Foray into Honors

BETSY WEST

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHARLOTTE

Teaching the Creative Arts - the Small Picture

“As you know, I am a teacher which means really I am teaching myself and whatever rubs off, the student gets.”

—Louis Kahn (architect)

In universities across the country, faculty struggle with the task of bringing creative arts education into the Honors curriculum. I am, therefore, only one of many who have attempted this, and as an Architecture faculty member I can only truly speak to the introduction of visual material and visual awareness. In the course of teaching an Honors seminar, however, I have come to believe that there are, indeed, strategies which make teaching

creative arts in an Honors curriculum both possible and enjoyable. I also believe it can be done in such a way as to make the information both accessible and profound. Though I will not talk specifically about the seminar I teach, a brief description of its content is necessary to contextualize my broader observations.

Fundamentally the objective of the course is to increase students' awareness of the issues of site and landscape considered from many viewpoints and at a variety of scales. Ethical, political, economic, and cultural dimensions of site are explored in terms of the creation of wastelands, borderlands, and homelands, their larger significance, and their impact on our daily lives. This is an act of discovery that leads to speculation about landscapes of the future.

The course employs a highly visual form of learning, a method common in Architecture but less so in other fields. All lectures present information in a visual format (professional quality slides) in the belief that students' visual awareness and acuity are increased through this approach. Images shown in class highlight the relationships, juxtapositions, ironies, beauties, horrors, and mysteries of site and landscape, and assignments encourage students to record and critique similar issues through visual and graphic means. The primary goal is for the students to become keen observers and critics of their everyday world, a world they encounter most significantly and most frequently at a visual level.



## AN ARCHITECT'S FORAY INTO HONORS

### The Big Picture

“The work of students should not be directed to the solution of problems, but rather to sensing the nature of a thing. But you cannot know a nature without getting it out of your guts. You must sense what is, and then you can look up what other people think it is. What you sense must belong to you....”

—Louis Kahn (architect)

Obviously one of the most significant obstacles in teaching the creative arts (assuming the Honors students taking these classes are non-majors) is the difference in the dissemination, development, and final evaluation of information in the arts when compared to other fields. For instance the delivery of information in most fields is primarily verbal or written and a similar form of verbal or written response is expected. The closer this response is to a predetermined “right” answer, the more favorable a student’s evaluation. Furthermore, the presentation of information and the desired response to this information is primarily intellectual and objective. Evaluation is typically private (as in the assignment of a grade) and is relatively free of subjectivity, making it easy for students not only to know but also to understand the evaluation of their performance in a given class at any point in time.

In the creative arts, however, information is often provided visually (as in art and design), aurally (as in music and dance), or physically (as in dance and theater). The desired student response is sometimes verbal or written but more often is in a similar format, meaning either visual, aural, or physical. Very seldom is there a single “right” answer. This makes both the process and the product of the creative arts relatively indeterminate. As a result it is often difficult to assign grades to numerous discrete portions of coursework that adequately indicate how well a student is performing. Evaluation is often public, taking the form of critical group reviews or exhibitions, public rehearsals and performances, etc. Though student response to a given assignment should certainly be defensible in objective and intellectual terms, it is usually deemed inadequate if it is not also emotive and visceral. Since these qualities are difficult to measure in strictly objective terms, often evaluations are or at least seem to be highly subjective. While this type of evaluation is not necessarily less fair or effective than a more objective quantitative method, it does require greater maturity, participation, and awareness on the part of students in order to understand fully how well they are performing as well as how to improve their performance.



The Nitty Gritty

“You and I are molded by the land, the trees, the sky and all that surrounds us; the streets, the houses.... Our hearts are shaped by the plaster walls that cover us and we reflect plaster wall ideals.... When I make a vase, a cup, or a saucer they will be my expression and they will tell you who I am and what I am.”

—Bernard Maybeck (architect)



Given the obstacles outlined in the preceding paragraphs, why would Honors students choose to expose themselves to the somewhat foreign and potentially unsettling educational method and course content of the creative arts? It is the drive to express themselves that students most often cite as the reason for taking such courses, courses that many enter, nevertheless, with a fair amount of trepidation. Some wish to reengage an artistic interest they pursued earlier in their education but gave up for lack of time as they entered their college major. For others it is a simple curiosity fueled by the awareness that college is an ideal time to expose themselves to as many things as possible. And then there are some who, by their own admission, have no particular interest in the arts but are simply looking for a course with less reading and fewer tests. Whatever the initial motivation, I've found there are some effective ways to engage these students as they enter this sometimes strange, new world.

1. Let students know immediately that the creative arts are as teachable and learnable as chemistry, business, psychology, or any other field. Insistence on this fact will counterbalance the pervading myth that innate talent alone qualifies people to participate in the arts.

In order for this to happen, the educational process itself needs to be as transparent as possible. Explaining to students what skills and knowledge are fundamental to the class and how this information will be taught helps them understand what they need to know and how they will come to know it. It is also useful to tell students the format in which information will be disseminated (i.e. through readings, lectures, demonstrations, etc.). Finally it helps to articulate the reason specific exercises and assignments are given and how each assignment links to those both before and after it.

In addition to addressing the issues above, one should also explain the importance of persistence and practice in the creative arts and the process of developing skill through patience and repetition, whether a project is undertaken individually or collaboratively. It's helpful to stress that students are not expected to have a specific set of knowledge or skills coming in but that they are expected to learn and improve significantly as the course progresses.

2. Integrate teaching methods familiar to students with those that might seem more foreign.

## AN ARCHITECT'S FORAY INTO HONORS

This approach might mean starting with a more verbal method and moving gradually but purposefully toward visual, aural, or physical methods of both disseminating and requiring information. It could also mean introducing new methods from the beginning but balancing them throughout with verbal and written information and requirements. Either way there is some familiar ground on which the students can stand while they explore new content and methods of learning.

For example, in the course I teach I start out with a writing assignment addressing issues inherent in the course content. The following week I introduce more visual components but ones that seem somewhat familiar (journal keeping, collage). Later requirements for the course include a visual presentation, and the final requirement is a purely visual exhibition of the work of the semester, an assignment with no verbal content whatsoever. By that time the students are usually comfortable letting their visual work speak for them, whereas early in the semester they couldn't have imagined doing so.

3. Present the arts in a way that makes them relevant to the focus of the Honors curriculum. In other words, teaching students the creative arts may be the means to an end rather than the end in itself. The goals of the course should align with the goals of the Honors curriculum, which might be anything from increased multicultural awareness to a commitment to community service.

This approach may require alteration or reformatting of the specific skills and lessons of your field of the creative arts to make them specifically relevant to an overarching set of Honors topics. For example, my particular area of focus within architecture encompasses issues of site and landscape. In developing a course for Honors students, most of whom are not architecture majors, I decided to couch this topic in terms of not only the physical, but also the cultural, economic, and social aspects of site and landscape. This approach was consistent with my Honors program's emphasis on cultural studies and social issues designed to make students more educated and active citizens. The resulting seminar gives me the opportunity to teach students to be more visually aware of their world but also makes sense as part of a holistic curriculum. As another part of the attempt to contextualize the information I'm presenting, we take a field trip to a local "wasteland," a neighborhood stricken by poverty and violence, and talk to architects and planners there who have been working with the community to solve their problems in culturally and physically appropriate ways. Seeing this neighborhood firsthand, with its broken glass and vacant houses, is an experience that is both strongly visual and specifically parallel to the type of exposure supported by the Honors curriculum.

4. Encourage students to apply the creative and artistic skills and information they're learning to their own field of study.

One of the greatest potentials of introducing the creative arts (or, indeed, of introducing any new perspective) is the opportunity to use this information as a lens to understand familiar or old information in an unfamiliar or new way. There are aspects of symmetry, balance, rhythm, syncopation, composition, repetition and order not only in the arts but also in almost every other field of study. Similarly, most fields

have aspects of movement and stasis, sound, light, and space. And, indeed, most fields do have at least some subjective aspects, instances in which a creative leap of faith is required to move forward. The challenge is for students to identify the issues within their chosen major that parallel or overlap issues inherent in the creative arts. This overlap makes the arts seem more relevant, understandable, and applicable and, perhaps more significantly, sometimes opens the familiar ground of a student's field of study and reveals it to be more multidimensional than it had previously appeared.

One way I ensure this crossover in my seminar is to require a visual presentation on a topic within the students' majors (or at least within their current body of knowledge—information introduced somewhere other than in my class). I also ask them to engage in exercises addressing issues and methods common to many fields in addition to architecture and design (e.g., mapping), and we discuss the different forms a single issue or activity can take depending on the field in which it is applied.

#### 5. Teach by example.

It's difficult to teach the creative arts successfully simply by telling students what to do and expecting them to do it. While this may seem obvious, it's easy to forget since most faculty are accustomed to teaching within a curriculum that usually ensures that students have some background that will enable them to understand new material fairly readily or help them approach unfamiliar tasks or assignments. Generally speaking, most students' prior experiences both in the classroom and out have ill prepared them for the type of undertakings associated with the creative arts. Since the arts are no more instinctively understood by most students than chemistry or physics, they require active and specific instruction.

Students need to be shown as well as told what to do. Exhibits of both strong and weak examples of work similar to that required for the class and explanation of what makes each more or less successful are extremely helpful. Direct, critical, and frequent evaluation of the students' own work as they begin to produce it is essential. Evidence of the development of the work of previous classes over the course of a semester is also valuable in making it clear that significant improvement is both possible and expected. This motivates students and reduces some of their anxiety about the initial quality of their own work.

In my seminar I bring in examples of collages I have done as well as student collages from past years. I bring in this work in part to level the playing field somewhat for the students who often feel quite vulnerable when asked to express themselves creatively, usually in an unfamiliar medium. Introduction of this work allows us to talk openly about issues of vulnerability, and it increases the students' comfort level to know they are not alone in these feelings but must learn to overcome them.

In addition to these measures, I ensure that all written assignments I distribute have a graphic component. My lectures are also fully visual (I typically show 80-120 slides in a fifty-minute lecture) and are discussed as models for the visual presentations the students are asked to make near the end of the semester. Making the materials and format of the class relevant to the work being asked of the students and constantly confronting them with visual language heightens their awareness of this form of communication and aids them in their own work.

## AN ARCHITECT'S FORAY INTO HONORS

### The Desired Outcome

“And the end of our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.”

T.S. Eliot (poet)

The students in my seminar are not likely to become architects or urban planners. But it's reasonable to imagine they might some day be involved citizens within their communities or passionate clients engaged in architectural projects, and they need to be equipped accordingly. The information and visual design skills they need to fill that role differ significantly from the skills and information architecture majors need. The Honors students need a big picture understanding they'll retain rather than dates and details they'll quickly forget. More than anything else, they need to come away from the experience instilled with confidence in their ability to participate in the arts.



The Honors student who takes a course in the creative arts and decides to become a musician or actor or artist will be as rare as the student who decides to become an architect. But all will be definitively richer for the experience. Certainly they will have a greater understanding of those of us who are not scientists or businessmen, for those of us drawing more on the right than the left side of the brain. The best case scenario, however, goes well beyond that to imagine they might even become better scientists and businessmen because of their exposure to the arts. Perhaps they will look at things and understand them in a slightly different way than before and as a result be more creative and adept problem-solvers. It is through this kind of enlarged understanding or synergy that we can all imbue our work, whatever that may be, with greater resonance and meaning. This, to me, is a powerful incentive to make the arts part of every Honors curriculum.

### Note

All images shown are the work of students in my course.

\*\*\*\*\*

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# “The Play’s the Thing”: Theater Arts and Liberal Learning

MARGARET FRANSON

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The recurrent disposition to view undergraduate learning as most valuable when it prepares students for specific careers by equipping them with the particular “skill sets” of their chosen occupations has led invariably to a number of unfortunate consequences. Foremost among them has been the distressing tendency to comprehend and design even music, theater, and dance activities exclusively as pre-professional training exercises. This over-reverence for technique often weakens the inherent powers of the performing arts to deepen self-knowledge, to develop the virtues most useful in the pursuit of truth, to build community, to enhance appreciation for the ways in which texts of all kinds function to make meaning and evoke feeling, and to introduce young people to the life of the mind. Honors programs can therefore perform a great educational service by restoring the performing arts, especially the theater arts, to their proper place within a collegial setting as instruments of liberal learning. The renowned Freshman Production at Valparaiso University’s honors college, Christ College, both clarifies the meaning and demonstrates the truth of the claim that the performing arts are indeed liberal arts and that they are therefore essential to a liberal education.

Though liberal learning is extremely difficult to define theoretically, especially in an honors setting, it is relatively easy to recognize in practice. It involves the cultivation of certain arts and skills of analysis, criticism, and interpretation. It frees students and teachers from unexamined tyrannies that hold dominion over their souls and minds, even as it frees them for love of the world through responsible and lifelong engagement with fundamental human questions. Liberal learning, therefore, includes both the improvement of the mind and the cultivation of those virtues that are indispensable to the pursuit of the truth of matters. Since liberal learning is a public, not a private, endeavor, most of these virtues are social, governing the manner in which human beings relate to one another.

But how do we cultivate in ourselves and in our students virtues like trust, humility, courage, justice, civility, honesty, and friendship? Aristotle argued persuasively that we become courageous by performing courageous acts in the manner in which a courageous person would perform them. In short, we become virtuous in the same way in which we become virtuosos: practice, practice, practice. So if we wish to shape character, it will not be enough to hold up examples, to exhort,

and to study works about virtue and character. If we are serious about liberal learning in its broadest sense, we must order our common life in such a way that we are all led to those practices of public life whose application will encourage students and faculty members alike to become more civil, honest, and trustworthy. Becoming virtuous is, therefore, from one point of view at least, a “performing art.”

This understanding of the significance of the performing arts for a liberal education has become steadily more compelling to those of us at Valparaiso’s honors college who have taught in the Freshman Program, a required course of study that includes a theater arts component. The Freshman Program is a two-semester sequence of interdisciplinary honors courses titled *Texts and Contexts: Traditions of Human Thought*. Throughout the course, students read selected great works of history, literature, drama, philosophy, and religion and consider closely the ideas that have shaped a range of traditions of the East and West. Ideas are explored in many ways—through critical reading and close analysis of texts; through careful research and focused expository and persuasive writing; through scholarly lectures, faculty-guided small group discussion among classmates, and formal public debate; and through creative dramatic and musical expression.

This last means of exploration—creative dramatic and musical expression—is guided and molded during the fall semester in the weekly Freshman Program Drama Workshop. In just ten weeks of sustained collaboration, the students who make up the honors college freshman class write, stage, and perform an original 90-minute theater piece with music, based on ideas and themes encountered in *Texts and Contexts*. The Christ College Freshman Production is performed five times for the campus community and the families of the students in mid-November each year.

This creative and collaborative activity was designed initially—almost 30 years ago, shortly after the founding of Christ College in 1967—to complement the analytical and expository part of the course. But it soon exceeded those comparatively modest expectations. Indeed, the Freshman Production has enabled us to discover features of liberal education that might otherwise have escaped our notice. We cannot now imagine our program without the production, though we can imagine doing without many of the other components of our course of study that we would have at some earlier time thought much more fundamental to our common purposes.

Some of the things we learned about liberal learning through the Freshman Production were not surprising. We always believed that liberal learning involved communal inquiry, so we had hoped to build and strengthen a sense of community through the production, and we have thus far succeeded. Every year, 80 adolescent strangers learn to discover one another’s gifts, to celebrate the diversity of those gifts, to rely upon one another, and to see that the excellence of the final performance depends upon such diversity. Educationally, this experience is superior to many lectures and several books on the subject of the potentially constructive aspects of a diverse community. And the production reinforces in subtle but forceful ways the opinion guiding our choice to grade the first semester’s honors work on a pass/fail basis—namely, that though conflict is often supportive of healthy communities of learning, competition is inimical to them.



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At its best, liberal learning entails dialectical conflict that leads to some kind of creative synthesis. Creating the Freshman Production involves a great deal of conflict and synthesis, along with a great deal of very hard work and no small amount of disappointment. In the early days of the fall semester, the director of the production, who is a faculty member in Valparaiso University's theater department, convenes a student writing committee of about twenty members. This committee invariably generates two or three splendid possible theme or plot ideas, but may adopt only one of them. Many students must therefore not only give up their preferred choice, but must work industriously for several weeks to advance what was once someone else's rival idea. This same process of intense argument governs the writing of the script itself, the composition of the music, the set design, the choreography—all the things that make up the show. But at some point, after hours of negotiation and a good deal of anger and frustration, all students become deeply invested in the overall quality of the production. They move, however painstakingly, from conflict to common purpose, back to conflict, and eventually to the final performance of the production itself.

The original creators of the Freshman Production had at least hoped for this much, but they had not anticipated the way in which the experience of making a play together would strengthen liberal learning in an even more fundamental way by making students better readers and writers. Surely liberal learning involves the effort to entertain seriously ideas and images that seem initially strange, sometimes altogether obscure, and often threatening. And surely this process in turn involves approaching texts and other materials with an attitude that is at once humble and suspicious. We now notice that our students, once they themselves must invent characters who are consistent, connect endings to beginnings, and carry forward thematic emphases through an entire 90-minute performance, become much more intrigued by questions that invite them to discover the theme, the structure, the argument, and the overall intention governing a text written by Mencius or Jane Austen or Toni Morrison. In brief, their own experience of making something, their own sense of the difficulty in giving both form and substance to an idea or a feeling, makes them at once more respectful and more critical of the works of literature, philosophy, history, and theology they are reading concurrently with their work on the production. This development every fall seems an unexpected miracle.

Nor had the original creators of the Freshman Production anticipated the extent to which it would serve the same function for the honors college community that drama once served in ancient Greece, one of the wellsprings of liberal inquiry. Yet year after year performances of the Freshman Production have shaped, for weeks thereafter, the atmosphere and the conversation among the entire honors college community as well as among a large part of the university community beyond it. These musical dramas differ in theme and tone from year to year. Recent themes have included love and friendship, the deterioration of the family, the prospect of ecocatastrophe, the culture wars, the increasing threat of random violence, the problem of exclusion and community, urban decay, and terrorism. Often over the years shows have had especially inventive or intriguing titles, including *Peanuts*, *Popcorn*, and *the Peloponnesian War*; *Pursuit of Happiness*; *Six Feet Under*, or *A Grave Matter*; *One Hero to Go*; *Something to Believe*; *The Price is Life*; *The Ties that Bind*; and *In Sam We Trust?*

## “THE PLAY’S THE THING”: THEATER ARTS AND LIBERAL LEARNING

The honors college has about 225 sophomores, juniors, and seniors, almost all of whom were once in their own Freshman Production, and almost all of whom attend one of the five performances staged by the first-year class each year. After the premier performance of any Freshman Production, comparisons and contrasts are instantly in the air, some of them invidious, others trivial, many of them sophomoric (literally and figuratively). All of the comparisons suggest fundamental questions about the intricate connections between a community and its art (questions that have engaged viewing publics since the days of ancient Athens), between a production’s several creators and the final work, and between the larger culture and a given, very localized, highly perishable element of it, such as a particular student body. The civil but intense pursuit of these questions is surely a vital part of the experience of a liberal education.

Communal response to the Freshman Production has been so various, continuous, and intense that we have had to institutionalize it to some extent. Nine years ago, we reserved the hour for our weekly college symposium on the Thursday evening after the Freshman Production for a critical response from a panel of sophomores followed by a rejoinder by a panel of freshmen. These panel presentations, which soon open up to the entire assembled collegiate community, are always filled with conflict, enthusiasm, and (occasionally) great insight into the kinds of things that matter most to today’s students. So, for better or for worse, and in sometimes raucous exchanges, the community grows to know itself better, to see what the deepest concerns and impulses that move its members look like and feel like and sound like. Learning to keep your head and your temper in the midst of this kind of public self-examination, to be at once charitable and critical, civil and contentious, is an essential part of liberal education. And it is especially valuable for honors students, whom we expect to mature into leaders in the community and in the academy.

Finally, theater initiates young people into intellectual life, especially to those two frequently opposed dimensions of the life of the mind that the late Richard Hofstadter called piety and playfulness. Part of liberal learning, a larger part of it than we have customarily recognized, involves the training of the affections and the education of the imagination. Students tend to lose themselves in the collective venture of making theater, thereby achieving a balance between the spirit of playfulness and the demand for serious coherence and integrity. These are hard matters to express with precision. As Aristotle would have said, harmony involves a mean relative to the individual, a mean that can only be found through experience and settled through practice in the midst of a supportive community. To feel the right way in the right circumstance for the right reason in the right manner: these are delicate but crucially important moments in the process of becoming fully human and humane. And theater as liberal arts pedagogy provides the curricular opportunity and the public space for this kind of difficult learning.

To tell the whole truth, the importance of theater as pedagogy in the life of Christ College is something that we discovered only with 20-20 hindsight. We have now had almost 30 years of history to contemplate retrospectively. In sum, we have a tradition, whereas initially we had only a grab bag of ideas—some of which quickly

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perished and others of which endured. We soon enough noticed one thing, though—that our students, as they returned to us year after year, seldom remembered Kant’s categorical imperative but always remembered the words and music to the theme song of their Freshman Production. But just as important as what they learned, our students have taught faculty members again and again that the pleasures of friendship and the pursuit of wisdom are bound up deeply with one another. And the production has taught us that disciplined activities that engage the imagination as well as the intellect, the body as well as the spirit, and the affections as well as the reason are critical to liberal education by any name anywhere.

### Note

This article was inspired by a discussion of the Christ College Freshman Production that appeared in *Liberal Education*, Vol. 81, No. 2 (Spring 1995) as *Theater as Liberal Arts Pedagogy*, authored by Mark R. Schwehn, the Dean of Christ College, and John Steven Paul, the Director of the Christ College Freshman Production.

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# Media Literacy and Liberation: Honors Students as Prophetic Artists and Critics

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*Prophetic critics and artists of color should be exemplars of what it means to be intellectual freedom fighters, that is, cultural workers who simultaneously position themselves within (or alongside) the mainstream while clearly aligned with groups who vow to keep alive potent traditions of critique and resistance.*

—Cornel West

“The New Cultural Politics of Difference”

*K*ulturkritiker Cornel West focuses on artists and critics of color in the statement above, and his words are therefore particularly pertinent to students at my home institution, Norfolk State University, the fifth-largest historically black university in the U.S. His refreshing radicalism, however, can serve as a universal call to arm *all* students, and especially honors students, with the weapons of media literacy. Empowering students as makers and critics of film and video art serves the most vital interests of interdisciplinary honors education, and this essay explores some ways of training both types of “cultural workers,” i.e. student filmmakers and critics. My assumption is that, far from being adversaries, good artists and good critics share a common skill set and participate in the larger common cause of what West terms “critique and resistance.”

Two particular programs will be discussed: the three-year-old NCHC-sponsored film and video master class (most recently held at the 2002 national conference in Chicago) and the five-year-old Parsons Prize Contest in Performing Arts Criticism, an essay competition *cum* publication sponsored by the Norfolk State University Honors Program. Though presently limited to NSU students, the Parsons Prize contest can easily serve as a model for any other schools interested in similar endeavors. The exact type of arts experiences offered to students—be it a chance for them to make their own films or to write well-considered reviews of others’ films, plays, operas, lectures, exhibitions, etc.—is less important than the attitude and preparation that they bring to the endeavor.

Before turning to these two specific programs, one national and the other local, let us briefly consider a theoretical basis for the type of art and cultural criticism advocated by West as such activities relate to honors education.

## Paradigmatic Underpinnings

At least three recent movements within and among traditional university departments can provide models and vocabulary to justify the inclusion of a serious performing arts component in an honors program: the Media Literacy movement, the Critical Thinking movement, and especially the Cultural Studies movement.

Though they don't always identify themselves as advocates of Media Literacy by that name, those who write or have written about semiotics offer particularly useful caveats on how dangerous media illiteracy can be. The problem is that, while Americans, and particularly young Americans, are expert at absorbing media messages and responding appropriately to conventions instilled in us almost from birth (any American child, for instance, knows that a wavering fade-out accompanied by harp music signals that the following shot represents a dream or fantasy), we are less adept at thinking critically (acknowledging the presence, articulating the effects) of such conventions. We respond with Pavlovian precision to learned cues that enable us to follow a plotline but are often barely conscious of blatant stereotyping of, say, minorities and women. We are exquisitely sensitive receptors of signs but all too often oblivious of how or why the *signifier* (in Saussure's terminology) has been chosen, aesthetically and/or politically. We are less aware still of the multiple *signifieds* each signifier can bear along with it. The result is, in worst case scenarios, a world of meaning being docilely absorbed without our even knowing it. There's no need for the trickery of subliminal messages flashed just under our threshold of awareness. The ordinary messages we clearly see and hear gallop like stallions right through Troy's gaping gates, disgorging their ideological contents at will in a slumbering city.

As long ago as World War II, the great leftist cultural critics Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, appalled by the wholesale media manipulation of German media during the Third Reich, wrote the following:

All the other films and products of the entertainment industry which they [the consumers] have seen have taught them what to expect; they react automatically. The might of industrial society is lodged in men's minds. (Adorno and Horkheimer 35)

Adorno and Horkheimer make a distinction between the "culture industry" and what they call "works of art," though one suspects that their division does not correspond simply to conventional understandings of "low" and "high" art:

The culture industry perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises...Works of art are ascetic and unashamed; the culture industry is pornographic and prudish. (Adorno and Horkheimer 38)

The unusual oxymoron "pornographic and prudish" points to the hypocrisy inherent in the culture industry's (in short, Hollywood's) efforts at self-censorship, as well as in the efforts of untrained critics (e.g., Jesse Helms) to police real art of any kind.

The great British thinker Stuart Hall also alludes to media literacy (though, again, not by that name) in his essay on televisual images called "Encoding,

Decoding.” Even before the latest wave of “reality-based” TV (the truly pornographic *Survivor*, *Temptation Island*, etc.), Hall wrote that the “illusion” that TV and film are “real” is a complex phenomenon:

Certain codes may, of course, be so widely distributed in a specific language community or culture and be learned at so early an age that they appear not to be constructed—the effect of an articulation between sign and referent—but to be ‘naturally’ given... This has the (ideological) effect of concealing the practices of coding which are present. But we must not be fooled by appearances. (Hall 511)

Although belied as ‘innocent’ by their pseudo-realism, the embedded ideological baggage of each (in the case above, televisual) message is very real indeed. And in a collaborative, multi-level work such as a film, there is also a host of non-representational signs surrounding what we call the ‘real’ (iconic or representational) ones. Richard Dyer lists just a few: “color, texture, movement, rhythm, melody, camerawork.” He adds, “We are much less used to talking about them” (Dyer 373-374).

Dyer believes that “entertainment” (what Adorno and Horkheimer term the “culture industry”) “responds to real needs created by society” and is therefore “utopian” in nature. It is a salve to the “social tension, inadequacy and absence” in society. Where there is “scarcity,” TV and filmmakers create “abundance”; where there is “exhaustion,” we are shown “energy”; where there is “fragmentation,” Hollywood gives us “community” (Dyer 376). Though Dyer is by no means as negative about entertainment as Horkheimer and Adorno are, he does worry about those things its utopianism glosses over:

Entertainment...denies the legitimacy of other needs and inadequacies, and especially of class, patriarchal and sexual struggles.... At our worst sense of it, entertainment provides alternatives to capitalism which will be provided by capitalism. (Dyer 377)

Our only defense is to train good critics who are media literate and semiotics savvy. It does not matter what their academic majors are, nor if they plan to enter the arts. Awareness becomes a basic need of an informed citizenry. Woe to the voter, for example, who has no knowledge of how to deconstruct a campaign ad.

The authors above, as noted, do not use the term “Media Literacy” in their work, though one can usefully bend their ideas to serve that cause. They have all, at any rate, been anthologized in Simon During’s well-known British reader on Cultural Studies, “Media Literacy” in the U.S. is a term more commonly associated with K-12 education than with higher ed.<sup>1</sup> The same cannot be said for the next movement to be considered: Critical Thinking.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Media Literacy Review website at <http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/mlr/home/index.html>. See also the Center for Media Literacy, a source for books and videos on the subject, at <http://www.medialit.org/Catalog/theorypractice.html>.

## MEDIA LITERACY AND LIBERATION

‘Develop their critical thinking skills’ has become part of the mantra for all educators, including honors faculty. The ubiquity of this mandate, however, makes it no less relevant to our topic. When you develop good artists and critics of the arts, you are honing students’ critical thinking in perhaps the most efficient way possible.

In their useful booklet *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools*, Richard Paul and Linda Elder (the latter a presenter at a recent NCHC conference) have defined critical thinking as follows:

Critical thinking is that mode of thinking—about any subject, content, or problem—in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them. (Paul and Elder 1)

Proponents of meta-thinking try to codify good intellectual habits and their resulting virtues as Paul and Elder do here:

THE STANDARDS—Clarity, Precision, Accuracy, Significance, Relevance, Completeness, Logicalness, Fairness, Breadth and Depth—must be applied to THE ELEMENTS—Purposes, Inferences, Questions, Concepts, Points of View, Implications, Information, Assumptions—as we learn to develop INTELLECTUAL TRAITS—Intellectual Humility, Intellectual Perseverance, Intellectual Autonomy, Confidence in Reason, Intellectual Integrity, Intellectual Empathy, Intellectual Courage, Fairmindedness. (18)

These are certainly the standards, elements, and desired intellectual traits we would hope to find in both an artist and a critic of the arts. We would also, of course, hope to find them in an aware and informed citizen of any calling. And there is certainly no better way to tackle what Paul and Elder call the “problem of egocentric thinking”—that is, the total reliance on one’s own unexamined opinions and feelings about art and indeed life—than for an artist to have to collaborate with others on, say, a film, or for a critic to have to convince readers, audiences, actors, studio moguls, etc. of the honesty, validity, and earned authority of his or her criticism. There is no shorter shortcut to teaching the difference between naked opinion and valid interpretation supported by textual examples than to have students write reviews of a university drama production in which the actors are their friends. The linkage between abstract critical thinking and performing arts criticism will be further discussed later.

A final theoretical underpinning for an interdisciplinary arts and art criticism-based honors program can be found in the politically-aware potpourri movement Cultural Studies, now widespread in the U.S. as well as in its home base, Britain. At its best, e.g. in the work of Black critics such as Stuart Hall or Cornel West, Cultural Studies is carefully eclectic and draws from many strains of Marxism, feminism, gender studies, postcolonial studies, film theory, semiotics/structuralism, and poststructuralism. What unites these disparate approaches into one movement—Cultural Studies or, sometimes, Multicultural Studies—is what West calls the “prophetic” or “demystificatory” intent:



I call desmystificatory criticism ‘prophetic criticism’—the approach appropriate for the new cultural politics of difference—because while it begins with social structural analyses, it also makes explicit its moral and political aims. It is partisan, partial, engaged, and crisis-centered, yet it always keeps open a skeptical eye to avoid dogmatic traps, premature closures, formulaic formulations, or rigid conclusions. (West 264)

Granted that West’s polemical vocabulary might seem excessively leftist and/or arcane to nonacademics, his point can still be appreciated by anyone who appreciates the freedom of flexibility—from liberals to libertarians. And West is quite on guard against what he calls the “reductionism” of “one-factor analyses (i.e., crude Marxisms, feminisms, racialisms, etc.) that yield one-dimensional functionalism or a hypersubtle analytical perspective that loses touch with the specificity of an art work’s form and the context of its reception” (West 264-265).

In sum, the beauty of the Cultural Studies model as a paradigm for honors arts education is that it is engaged; it openly acknowledges high versus low culture issues; it is friendly to minority perspectives; and it ‘follows the money,’ i.e., stays tuned in to the power behind every scene. What’s more, the Cultural Studies approach is already well embedded in the honors ethos in the form of each City as Text® project undertaken. The “prophetic” culture critic sees and can articulate the ‘strangeness’ in the everyday—e.g., a trip to a glitzy mall or an ethnic neighborhood—just as readily as he or she can “demystify” a great opera or a trashy made-for-TV film. The prophetic honors student critic can learn to be an acutely aware urban *flâneur* (stroller) from the likes of Michel de Certeau (“Walking in the City”), Roland Barthes, or Walter Benjamin—all pioneers in both Cultural Studies (they are included in Simon During’s reader) and City as Text® writing.

## **The NCHC Film/Video Master Class: Shoulder Your Sony!**

Although it is quite possible that NCHC sessions devoted to critiquing student films predate my awareness, I shall speak only of those from the last three national conventions. Some institutionally-ancient NCHC griot such as Earl Brown can perhaps supplement my short memory.

My first involvement with an NCHC student film/video event was at the 1999 NCHC convention in Orlando, Florida. Organizer and founding mother Joan Digby collected three student films for the students and me to view and discuss. I frantically jotted down notes as I saw the films for the first time, right along with the student/faculty audience, there on site. As the only so-called “professional” film critic on tap (a bit of a résumé stretch since I write more often about theater), I happily pontificated on demand. Fortunately, the students managed a good discussion anyway. Unfortunately, the films we saw were not archived for posterity or for future *JNCHC* articles such as this.

The second (by my count) NCHC student film/video competition took place in Washington, DC in 2000, courtesy of grand organizer Hew Joiner. We received twice as many entries—this time, mercifully, in advance of their screening. Though these

films, too, were returned to their young *auteurs* and are therefore not available to discuss in detail here, one unsurprising trend that I had noted in the Florida session seemed to hold true in D.C. as well, namely that students like to make films about themselves. Just as beginning writers tend to keep journals about their own lives, having been exhorted by someone to write what they know, beginning filmmakers seem most likely to round up their friends and hang a “QUIET: FILMING IN PROGRESS” sign on their own dormitory room doors. The results can be surprisingly interesting and diverse. A couple of the DC conference filmmakers—we might categorize them as Honors Indoctrinators—played it straight, earnestly informing future honors students of their opportunities for special programs or recounting honors trips. At least one lengthy, very ambitious effort was a full-fledged fictional student drama presenting painful themes such as child molestation and a young lesbian coming out of the closet. A couple of others were hilarious, self-deprecating spoofs of the noble “Honors” life. In one of the latter parodies, male honors peer advisors ignored the piteous cries of their advisees, preferring to guzzle beer and ogle porno magazines instead. (It really was very funny.) And still another student effort, by a young deaf director from Gallaudet University, recounted an alleyway student encounter using experimental visuals.

Not every film was based on student life *per se*. One was an analysis of poet Sylvia Plath’s life and work that grew from a course taught by University of Massachusetts professor Richard Larschan. The purpose of this film was clearly twofold: to teach the students involved in making it and to teach those students and others who would eventually see it. There is value in such a double endeavor, though this particular product bore too well the stamp of its faculty co-creator.

The 2001 edition of the NCHC film/video session, this time called a master class rather than a competition at organizer Rosalie Otero’s fine suggestion, featured another doubly didactic (teach-yourself-while-you-teach-others) video on poet Henry David Thoreau. It was a co-production of Dr. Sheila D. Willard of Middlesex Community College in Lowell, MA, and her honors humanities students. It was clear from the film that Willard’s students had not entirely mastered their medium. They relied too heavily on static outdoor shots of Walden Pond to convey the grandeur of Thoreau’s thoughts. But their technical and formal struggles were engagingly educational, both to themselves and to the others on hand who offered criticism.

Another entry, presented by Jennifer Mason of the University of New Mexico, was an earnest analysis of the issue of date rape. Mason’s choice to focus on a sexual encounter initiated by a female student in her male date’s room offered a chance for an intensely ideological critical debate among those attending the master class. Some in the room, most notably a male faculty member, found Mason’s female character dangerously weak in her efforts to forestall the sex act she had herself, perhaps unwittingly, set into motion. As the male date went further than she had intended him to go, she protested, but rather mildly. The sexual act was tastefully shot with the director herself playing the female “victim.” But instead of a rape, some critics in the class saw an act of consensual intercourse merely tinged with regret on the part of the woman. Sometimes sex is not wonderful for both partners. The debate focused on classic issues associated with rape—“No” surely does mean “no,” even if said

weakly in a prone position—but it was especially charged and focused by the viewers' examination of Mason's aesthetic choices in conveying her intentions. Though no minds were definitely changed in the discussion, all minds, male and female, were definitely expanded. Had he been there, Cornel West would have been proud, especially at the recognition and articulation of one post-September 11 subtext: the young actor playing the male date happened to be of Arab descent and was decidedly darker in skin color than his white female "victim," the ideological impact of which (despite the film's having been made before September 11) was lost on no one in that post-9/11 audience. Talking out loud about the young male actor's race and its current connotations "demystified" the uneasy feelings each of us had had while voyeuristically engaged in watching the couple.

Equally revelatory, and aesthetically more successful in its humanistic message, was the amazing student film submitted by Brendan Gill of Loyola Marymount University. Gill, unlike the other young artists, majors in filmmaking and also works off campus in a special effects shop. His professional expertise showed in every facet of his film "Blueberry Hill." Though modest in length—about a dozen minutes—Gill's film is rich enough to warrant its own article-length analysis. Suffice it to say here that it concerns a personalized iMac computer (blueberry blue in color, though this is not stated explicitly) who is about to be removed from his computer network and consigned to the oblivion of obsolescence. This computer talks with a female-voiced server named Ruby who comforts him on his imminent demise. A cocky new, much faster, male-voiced computer is meanwhile being installed on the network, which creates a potential love triangle. There are three distinct worlds skillfully intercut with one another in the film. First we have a Natural World depicted at the start of the film with close-ups on the hands of a humming girl who is picking—you guessed it—blueberries. The song she hums is, of course, "Blueberry Hill," a musical icon of early romantic rock. We are introduced to the second world—an actual computer lab room—by a close-up on some whirring bit of mechanical "life" (perhaps a processor or fan?) within the motherboard-innards of a computer. Most other shots within the Computer Lab World are rendered from the POV (point of view) of a desktop computer's monitor. All humans, for instance, are shot at the mid-trunk level, never above the neck. The third world represents the soul life of the computers, rarely seen or heard by humankind. This is Cyber World, an all-white landscape filled only with the brightly colored computer "actors" themselves: our hero, Blueberry; the new-guy-on-the-block, Indigo; and the female server, Ruby. In this world the computers chat with one another using the stilted, mechanical-sounding voices that we conventionally associate with robots and automatons, based on a hundred years of film history. Blueberry's many cinematic forebears include mechanical men ranging from Fritz Lang's groundbreaking *Metropolis* to the Tin Man of Oz to Stanley Kubrick's Hal of *2001, A Space Odyssey*. Blueberry's voice also reminds us of every cheesy-FX Saturday cyborg on the large or small screen from Buck Rogers to animated *Star Trek*. In post-film discussions, the master class critics readily recognized this family tree. Gill, the young filmmaker, likewise acknowledged that he was standing, both consciously and unconsciously, on the shoulders of...well, droids. The delightful

quality of Gill's film stems from his playfully parodic use of conventions and even clichés in the service of his multi-faceted message. One part of his message is that we humans tend to personify our machines to a ludicrous degree, making and comprehending them in our own image. That much is forgivable; Pinocchio surely would rather be flesh than wood, wouldn't he? More problematic is the corollary message: humans treat all their "servants"—mechanical and human—with questionable humanity. The life-affirming, warmly humanistic voice of a singer long victimized on account of his race—Louis Armstrong—conveys Gill's insight with every word he sings. The film ends with "dead" computers being piled atop dead computers—echoes of Auschwitz—to the strains of Armstrong singing "Blueberry Hill."

Tanner J. McFadden of Davidson Honors College, U. of Montana, had planned to show "a man-walks-into-bar, man-meets-woman story told through a constellation narrative technique using montage-edited footage." Now there is "demystificatory" vocabulary—provided one has had a chance to learn it. Mr. McFadden's proposal was accompanied by a statement of justification that is well worth quoting at length:

Why you should let me show you my film: an argument, sort of.

Film is, among other things, the inanimate object which comes closest to consciousness. Yes, some films entertain us, and nothing more. Even...[this kind of] film has a certain power of drawing the viewer into its world and thumbing its nose at the idea of a reality which simply happens to people. But great films do much more than entertain us, and I hope that everyone who makes films strives, as I do, to make great ones.

My training in film consists of precisely one fifteen-week film production class, supplemented by working as an informal teaching assistant in two film production workshops and the many hours I have spent working on and experimenting with my own film projects. I have made only a couple of films in my short career, but considering that each minute of finished film I have produced represents roughly three hours of invested time, I cannot complain about this output. I am presently teaching a film theory and interpretation class as well; I have great interest in film not only as a producer but as a critical viewer, one who like to see good films and who finds in them inspirations for his own work.

I hope that the NCHC will allow me to show this film, first, because it will be my best work and, second, because the opportunity to show it will drive me to complete it. Perhaps it would be safer to submit a film for the master class which I have finished, but I hope to show my best work to the world rather than something I feel I have moved past; besides, as I understand them, master classes attempt to focus on work still in progress rather than showcase finished pieces. As an applicant to this master class, I hope, on the one hand, to gain insight into and critical perspective on my own work and, on the

other hand, to offer my critique and encouragement to others in hopes that through this process everyone involved can finally make better films, that being, it seems, the point.

While McFadden ended up not finishing his film and therefore having nothing to present, he did participate in the master class as a critic and as an implicit example of how difficult yet necessary it is to “get it in the can.” As Jean-Luc Godard once said, film is “truth, twenty-four times a second” (qtd. in Abbas 147). No film, no truth—at least not as a filmmaker. There is and was value in McFadden’s role as a critic, however, helping challenge, deepen, and articulate veracity for his fellow students. The critics’ story follows.

## **The Parsons Prize in Performing Arts Criticism: Unsheathe Your Prophetic Pens!**

At the NCHC national conference in Atlanta some years back, I offered a session called “Everyone’s a Critic,” which was designed to proselytize for this same cause of empowering students as critics. Then, as now, attendance at certain arts events is a requirement of participation in the Norfolk State University Honors program. We have been mandating six such events per semester. We are dropping the requirements to five for this current semester, but at the same time cracking down on some students’ shaky attendance habits by distributing proof-of-attendance slips at the end of each required event. Five such vouchers must be turned in for a student to receive his or her \$250-per-semester honors stipend, the only monetary reward for students in our program, also new this semester courtesy of a grant from the Norfolk Foundation. Tickets to all arts events, lectures, etc. will continue to be paid for by our program, again thanks to outside foundation grant support from local founding sponsor the Parsons Foundation, plus the Landmark, Batten, and Beazley Foundations—all of Hampton Roads, Virginia.

The proof-of-attendance slips may sound like a draconian measure—after all, we have done without them for a long time, and honors program students should act honorably without external “proof.” The new policy is experimental and will be accompanied by a flexible event-substitution policy. As in the past, the more gung-ho students may choose to go to many optional events we sponsor both on and off campus. We shall see how it goes. The previous inducement—the possibility of winning the Parsons Prize in Performing Arts Criticism for written critiques of honors events—has worked well for some (predictably those in the humanities) but not others. The Parsons Prize contest and publication (which also serves as an announcement of our sister Parsons Prize in Public Speaking Contest and contains a program description, greetings from the university president, activity photos, etc.) will continue to showcase the best of student-produced critical writing, with the first place winner receiving \$300, the second place winner \$150, and the third place winner \$50. One or two honorably-mentioned essayists receive no monetary prize but are also included in the publication. The contest, importantly, is open to *all* NSU students, not just honors program participants, and so serves as a university community outreach/PR vehicle. Students

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may review any arts event, lecture, or exhibition they wish, using the following very general guidelines, which may be easily adaptable to any honors program:

### **\*\*Guidelines for Submission\*\***

The Parsons Prize in Criticism will be awarded to the best review of a performing arts event written by an NSU student during the academic year 2001-2002. Students do not necessarily have to be Parsons Honors Program Participants to enter. Entries must be typed (double-spaced) and shall not exceed 6 pages in length. Students may submit only one review for consideration. There is no minimum length, but a review of less than 3 pages is not likely to be thorough enough to be competitive. Performing arts events might include films, dance concerts, theater, opera, lectures, or music concerts. Book reviews should not be submitted. Entries will be screened by the University Honors Program Committee. Finalists' essays will be judged by one or more community arts representatives. Copies of the guide sheet "How to Plan and Write A Review" are available upon request in the Honors Program Office (LBB 106). For further information, contact Dr. Laws at 823-8208/2303. (Rosenman and Laws, Vol. 5, inside front cover)

A copy of "How to Plan and Write a Review" is also here included, with the thought that it might be adapted to other programs' needs:

### **How to Plan and Write a Review**

As you view a performance, take notes with the following questions in mind. The "bottom-line" question you must answer for your readers is the obvious one: "Is this play/opera/film/ballet, etc. worth seeing?" A related, but slightly different, question you must answer is, "Was it a good decision for this particular arts organization to attempt this particular work?" A good reviewer will always answer these two questions, but most often he or she will do so indirectly or implicitly. If you, the reviewer, answer all or most of the questions below, you will probably find that your overall evaluation of the performance becomes clear.

- In what context does this work belong?
- How does it relate to works by the same artist (author, composer)?
- How does it compare to works on similar themes by other artists?

If your reader needs certain basic facts about the artist's life and work in order to appreciate the work, it is up to you to pass on those facts. Also consider the following questions:

- If the work is an adaptation, is it a successful one?
- How does this production compare to past productions you may know?
- Does the performance have "unity of effect"? Has the director seen to it that the sets, costumes, music, acting, etc. work in harmony to create an impression? Is it clear to you which particular themes or aspects of the work

particularly interested the director of this production? Do you agree with her/his emphasis on those particular themes?

- How do individual performances affect the whole? Which actors (singers, dancer, etc.) were standouts and why? Which actors let you down and why? You must be specific in your remarks and cover every performance of an important character.
- Did this performance fulfill your expectations? Did it disturb you or make you think? How long did its impact last? Did this performance make you see something new about a familiar text? Did it make you understand something about life in a new way?

**OTHER HINTS:** Write down anything you find “striking” or unusual during the performance, even if it’s a brief line of dialogue or a gesture. If the curtain is raised (assuming there’s a curtain at all), use the time before the performance begins to write a description of the set. Note set changes and how they are done. Note lighting changes and the use of music before and/or during the performance. Note the physical qualities of the theater itself, especially if the stage is anything other than a proscenium.

When you write your final draft, avoid first person; this is important for creating and maintaining an authoritative tone.

**EAVESDROP ON CONVERSATIONS AROUND YOU** before, during, and after the performance. It’s very important to get a feeling for how other people are reacting, whether you agree with their reactions or not.<sup>2</sup>

Although the above is by no means an exhaustive or complete guide sheet, students who more or less follow its advice have produced an admirable assortment of critiques quite worthy of publication over the years. The booklet itself (which costs about \$3500 if we print 300-500 copies) has served to showcase students’ critical skills and acumen and of course to showcase the NSU Honors Program, which is always well represented among the winners.

Entries are judged, as noted, in a two-tier system. The University Honors Program Committee (actually a subcommittee thereof composed mostly of English professors) selects 8 to 10 ‘blind’-numbered essays to send to the final judges who are the theater/film critic (35-year veteran Mal Vincent) and the arts beat writer (15-plus-year veteran Teresa Annas) from our local paper, *The Virginian-Pilot*. The participation of these outside journalists is very valuable in increasing the contest’s overall credibility.

The winning essays are generally longer than the average newspaper review. They are, in fact, hybridized pieces both academic and journalistic in nature. Students are encouraged to be more thorough than newspaper space limitations would allow. Students must also properly document any outside sources they might use, although it is rare that they use them.

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<sup>2</sup> This “How to” sheet appears in every volume of the Parsons Prize publication and as an appendix in Laws 131-143.

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The resulting Parsons Prize publication is distributed for free and can be used to provide model essays for future contestants and/or anyone else interested in criticism. An unanticipated bonus has been born of chance. At least two of the winners in each of the five years of publication have chosen to write on the same play, opera, film, etc. They frequently disagree. This gives students a chance to see how responsible people thinking critically and providing good textual examples can come to different, but still valid, conclusions. Seeing two or more award-winning critiques that disagree on the basic value of a work of art goes a long way towards explaining and combating what the Critical Thinkers (see above) call “egocentric thinking.” Skill in marshaling evidence is seen to be much more important than a student’s insistence on his or her own personal feelings.

Students who write about film or TV should be especially encouraged to arm themselves with proper terminology, in that knowing just a bit of the jargon opens up a whole new awareness of *how* filmmakers make choices. No critic is expected to mull over every shot, but knowing how to articulate the conventions on which film depends creates a media-literate mindset. The following guide sheet (again, quite available for the taking) is distributed at Honors Program-sponsored NSU film viewings:

### Film Terminology

Here are some film terms useful for training the eye and guiding the speech of analysis:

**Shot** – the length of film created by a single running of the camera. It may entail hundreds of frames (the ‘motion’ of a motion picture being an optical illusion created by discreet still frames run swiftly past a strong light source and projected two-dimensionally) or many thousands.

**Long shot** – the camera is placed a considerable distance from the object or person being photographed. This may convey a feeling of emotional distance from the object or the grandeur of its surroundings.

**Medium shot** – the camera is placed so that the object fills the screen in an expected (i.e. conventionally neutral) manner.

**Close-up** – the camera is placed so that the object fills more of the screen than expected. There is an emotional charge to any close-up.

**Pan** – the camera sweeps across our field of vision, creating a sense of ordinary and expected movement or extraordinarily charged movement.

**Edit** – the joining of two shots together. Editing creates the structure of a film and can be intended to be either noticed (as with film makers fond of the *montage* technique) or not. Editing that does not force the viewer to make aesthetic judgments is sometimes called ‘invisible.’ *All* editing, however, creates meanings because our minds must connect separate shots to follow a storyline mentally.



**Low angle shot** – camera placement below eye-level. This tends to make us (the viewers) ‘look up to’ the subject being photographed.

**High angle shot** – camera placement above eye-level. This tends to make us ‘look down on’ the subject being photographed, i.e. to see it (or him or her) as if we were superior in understanding or knowledge. This effect is similar to irony in literature.

**POV shot** – point of view shot. The things seen in a film are sometimes supposed to seem as if they are being seen through a certain character’s eyes. Since the camera is the organ of vision, the pure POV shot would be made by placing the camera exactly on top of the character whose view we are supposedly getting. Since this is impractical, and since it is jarring for actors to look directly into the lens of the camera because that makes them seem to talk directly to the audience, various conventions exist to simulate and suggest that we are seeing something from a certain character’s point of view. The most common convention of this sort is the establishing shot (which locates the character whom the camera is impersonating within the room) followed by a shot from the position where this character would be—i.e., from the established position.<sup>3</sup>

Even a rudimentary knowledge of how films are made, beginning with the jargon of camera placement above, can awaken students to the problems of subtext, stereotyping, and the myriad power relationships that underlie works of art, be they “high” or “low,” Shakespeare or Spielberg, *The Song of Bernadette* or *Sex in the City*.

### **Conclusion: Who Creates a Prophetic Artist or Critic? Answer — Organic Intellectuals (A.K.A. Honors Educators)**

Cornel West’s call to educate “prophetic” critics who can then “demystify” the various media and defend themselves against hegemonic corporate culture corresponds nicely with British critic Stuart Hall’s call for “organic intellectuals” whose job it is to pass on the prophetic orb to students. Hall’s vision, borrowed here to describe the ideal honors educator, sets high standards indeed:

It is the job of the organic intellectual to know more than the traditional intellectuals do: really know, not just pretend to know, not just to have the facility of knowledge, but to know deeply and profoundly.... But the second aspect is just as crucial: that the organic intellectual cannot absolve himself or herself from the responsibility of transmitting those ideas, that knowledge, through the intellectual function to those who do not belong professionally in the intellectual class. (Hall 103)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Also appears as an appendix Laws.

<sup>4</sup> Hall says that he borrows the term from Antonio Gramsci

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The great strength of the honors education movement has always been its democratic, even altruistic, bent. Honors teachers, without benefit of overtime pay, often share what they know with students outside a normal classroom context. Many of these students come from class origins and economic circumstances that might have placed Ivy League-quality education and arts enrichment forever out of their reach were it not for honors opportunities. Such students fill our honors programs and honors colleges, and very deservedly so. When honors education works, it truly can turn them into “prophets” for their people, newly armed cultural critics in the war against hegemony. Each one teach one indeed!

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# Bringing Imagination into the Community through a Poetry-Writing Honors Course

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Through my experience I . . . witnessed students' self-esteem and confidence improve, as students were proud and eager to share their work with others. . . I also noticed that students who seemed to have emotional or behavioral problems seemed to shine in poetry writing, which in effect caused them to feel better about themselves and strive to do better in school.

—Rima Kakhah, 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher

Poetry is such an incredible form of expression. When reading the poems [the children wrote], one can feel what fun the writer had in creating the poem.

—Martha Pinales, parent of 4<sup>th</sup> grader

The students that I felt probably wouldn't want to write or didn't really care for writing actually did come up with some wonderful thoughts. . . . I was able to see another perspective on their personalities.

—Melba Smith, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher

I think through the experience, I became convinced that elementary school is the best time to present "real poetry" to children, as any attempt to present it in junior high or high school will always be met with a self-consciousness and reluctance toward poetry that is not present in elementary school children.

—Silvana Naguib, honors student

Writing poetry applies to all levels of intelligence and engages multiple intelligences. It creates space where everyone can learn. Poetry allows all to excel in the writing process, as well as the creative process, without restrictions. Most important, poetry gives freedom to children. A tool to take with them their entire lives.

—Joey Roberts, honors student

For the past few years, I have taught an honors course here at Southwest Texas State University called "Teaching Poetry to Children" that trains ten honors students to teach poetry writing workshops at Crockett Elementary School in San Marcos, Texas twice a week for eight weeks. After a few weeks of immersion in Kenneth Koch's books *Rose, Where Did You Get that Red?* *Teaching Great Poetry to Children* and *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams: Teaching Young Children to Write Poetry* and

equipped with favorite poems from several different cultural traditions (American, British, Spanish, Chinese, and African among them), our ten students enter the public domain of a nearby elementary school ready and eager to bring the creative art of poetry to young people who might otherwise never get such exposure. The stint ends with a Young People's Poetry Reading (organized by our students) for the whole community at the San Marcos Public Library in celebration of *National Poetry Month*. Designed specifically for our students, this course fulfills two important honors program needs: it meets the desire many of our students have to delve into the creative arts of reading and writing poetry, and it provides them with a way (through these same arts) to render a meaningful service to the wider community.

Through such a class, honors students engage in the creative arts, in this case poetry, on a very personal level. In teaching a class full of first, second, third, or fourth graders, using poetry from the literary canon as a springboard to create individual interpretations of artistic intent, the honors students get to feel the power of good teaching, the value of patient waiting through silence as their students grapple with the "poetry idea" behind the poem presented to the class, and the enormous pleasure that comes from witnessing the creation of a poem and the delight from hearing it read.

Honors students in such a community-based creative-arts class come away with very valuable knowledge. They come to understand the process of guiding young people to appreciate poetry, and they learn to devise their own responses to the ideas in poems and to insert like ideas into their own poetry. The honors students begin to see the variety of sensibilities that are included in an elementary classroom—especially as the grade school children react to poetry by designing and producing their own works of art. In addition, honors students absorb the reaction of grade school teachers and class members to an individual grade school student's art. Most importantly, though, our students get to help create a common classroom appreciation for the role the arts can play in shaping an individual imaginative response.

The real key to success in designing a creative-arts course is to have a clear method for teaching poetry to honors students that they can then use in the elementary school classroom. Kenneth Koch's books explore how to teach children to read and write poetry, a double exploration he treats as a single subject brought together by means of what he calls "poetry ideas," which may be found in abundance in the poems he has collected in *Rose, Where Did You Get that Red? Teaching Great Poetry to Children* (Harper and Row, New York, 1970) and in exercises he has designed in *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams: Teaching Young Children to Write Poetry* (Vintage Books, New York, 1990). Honors students study Koch's works before watching as I demonstrate a poetry lesson suitable for a third-grade classroom. They then write their own curriculum based on Koch's ideas and are given an opportunity to observe the classrooms they are assigned before their own teaching begins. Once in the classroom, each honors student presents to the first, second, third, or fourth graders the "poetry idea" from his or her own curricular design. This involves reading a sample poem, such as William Blake's "The Tyger," and then, after discussing what is interesting in the poem, getting the students in the classroom to write, as Blake did, a poem asking a favorite animal questions. Each student's list of questions becomes

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a poem—and at this point, there is no worrying over rhyming or even spelling. Once everyone in the room understands that good poems are based on common experience—such as wondering about mysterious animals—and not on some special inaccessible gift, writing begins in earnest. The results are always surprising to everyone present—the honors student, the classroom student writing the poem, and the classroom teacher. A similar approach could be taken using other art media: one could present classical ideas in paintings, for example, to which students would respond with their own visual arts creations. The same process could work with dance, music, photography, theater, or any other creative art.

Another key to the successful translation of a creative-arts honors course into the community is having the support of partners. Our university honors program provides the ideas, methods, and poets for teaching the workshops at Crockett Elementary School. The university student center has provided transportation for the honors students to travel from the university to the elementary school. The local school district is open to scheduling creative-arts enrichment for children, as is the staff of the local public library. After seeing the track record of our efforts at Crockett, our school district gave financial support to one of our honors thesis students for the publication of a book of children's poetry and artwork. The public library prints the programs and provides space and sound equipment for the Young People's Poetry Readings held in April in celebration of *National Poetry Month*. In addition to local support, a Portz Fund Grant provided some funds for travel to the NCHC in Washington, D.C. to present a session (entitled "An Idea Spilling Over: Poetry in the Schools, Community, and the University") on the experience of teaching a creative-arts honors class. Such a collaboration among the university, the public schools, and the city in support of a creative-arts honors class brings honors arts outside of the university classroom and into the community. The Portz Fund Grant and the *National Poetry Month* celebration connect the local creative arts efforts initiated by our class with national efforts to support and celebrate the arts.

What is the value in having a creative-arts course such as this specifically for honors students? The interdisciplinary focus of this course requires honors students to form their own understanding of the poetry they will present to a classroom of elementary students. This course requires honors students to create a writing assignment that employs elements of the poetry they plan to present in a way that relates to the classroom students' own experiences, and it requires them to believe, enthusiastically, that they can convince even the most reluctant, shy, and weary elementary school children (along with their teachers) that each student in the classroom CAN write a poem.

Honors students in this type of poetry course must be prepared to incorporate into their teaching at least rudimentary knowledge of music, the visual arts, and concepts ordinarily associated with science or mathematics—in short, anything that might relate to the poem they are presenting. Many poems are explorations of nature, for example, and the strongest interpretations of such poems often need to include a physical understanding of the natural world. In addition, honors students must learn at least a little something about the art and technical skill of publishing so that they can help their students create a handsome gift volume of student poems for each



student and teacher. The final classroom project has honors students hosting readings from these volumes of poems in both the classroom and the public library before an audience of elementary school students, teachers, and families, which requires our students to understand the need for drama in a presentation and to do some meaningful coaching toward that end. The last assignment the honors student completes is a journal of experiences teaching poetry and a written paper reflecting on the education he or she has gained.

## Conclusion

This creative arts course works for honors students for several reasons. Many university students have a natural desire to read and write poetry. They see poetry as an important component in their lives or at least wish that it were. Often they see poetry as an entity “out there” and wish to have a way to capture it and bring it “down to earth.” They have a sense that to read, write, and know poetry will benefit their lives. And they yearn to experience the realm of imagination and concrete experience manifested in the world of poetry. Music, theatre, dance, and the visual arts surely capture honors students’ imagination in similar ways.

When this desire to read and write poetry is taken into the community to children in the local schools and libraries, the honors students’ experience becomes much larger than an individual experience of reading and writing poetry alone. In bringing the arts into the community through poetry, an honors course can open the door to the world of imagination where elementary school children acknowledge their own feelings and experiences by writing their own poems. One honors student in my class remarked that children have their own style of poetics; the significance of this remark should not be ignored. In addition, the elementary school teachers see the children in their classrooms in a new light as each of their students works individually to shape a poem that reveals his or her own insights. Bringing poetry into the community makes it clear how important it is for all individuals, whatever their age or level of education, to write about their feelings and experiences. Bringing poetry into the community makes writing poetry something real and vibrant in the lives of children, teachers, and honors students alike.

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# Seeing the World Anew: Creative Arts in the Honors Curriculum

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*“The real voyage of discovery consists not in  
finding new lands but in seeing with new eyes.”*

—Marcel Proust

In the sixteen-year history of the Honors Program at Coastal Carolina University, some three hundred students have completed the program. We have graduated only two fine arts majors, and we currently have a student who is double majoring in art and marine science. Most of our students are science majors. In order to be invited into the honors program, students have to be excellent in verbal and analytical skills, but research on multiple intelligences (Gardner, *Multiple*) has shown us that those are only two of many ways to make sense of the world. Honors students are usually skilled learners in all the traditional senses; they are likely to be the ones who will invent, discover, and lead. True genius in all these areas comes from seeing what everyone has already seen in a new way. Creative arts can help honors students see what is before them from a new perspective.

In the academy, we are seeing a shift from traditional, objective ways of knowing toward a more personal way of knowing with greater emphasis on the teacher as facilitator of the student’s discovery of his/her own knowledge (Barr and Tagg; Palmer). Gardner suggests that feeling is essential in making and appreciating art but is often considered antagonistic to the objective, scientific process (*The Arts* 328). Darwin noted that through time his work as a scientist dulled his ability to respond to aesthetic stimulation:

...formerly pictures gave me considerable and music very great delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry....I have also lost my taste for pictures and music...My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts....if I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week...for perhaps the[se] parts of my

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<sup>1</sup> The Writing Project is a national program with regional centers designed to empower and support teachers in improving the teaching of writing k-12 across the nation.

brain...would thus have been kept active through use. (in Gardner,  
*The Arts* 322-23)

Ganim and Fox (9-10) contend that words actually separate us from our feelings by working as interpreters of feeling rather than experiencers of it. In their work as expressive art therapists, they have discovered that we all have the ability to pay attention to and create visual images that help us move more deeply into understanding and into making meaning of our life.

We (Sara and Janet, the authors of this article) find art a significant dimension of the honors education, one that can help honors students realize the full potential of their intellect and life experience. The first place in which we explored the connection between art, writing, and learning was in a graduate seminar for K-12 teachers that is offered at Coastal Carolina University every summer through the Coastal Area Writing Project.<sup>1</sup> The two of us had team taught the summer institute for several years, and introducing art into the curriculum transformed our process and results. Writing in response to prints of art masterpieces, doing blind contour drawing, and using watercolor and pastels to represent important symbols and metaphors in our lives helped the teachers in the institute put aside the formulas and traditional names they had used for life experiences and go more directly and powerfully into “seeing” their work and lives in new ways. Using writing as a tool for discovering and connecting ideas was still the focus of what we were doing, but visual art took us into writing more efficiently and more deeply than we had gone without it. As a result of this experience in the summer writing institute, colleague Ginger McIntyre Manning joined the two of us to give a workshop at an annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, using visual art as a means of helping teachers muster the courage needed to teach from the heart. We prepared workshop materials for thirty-five participants and hoped that at least eight would show up. One hundred people came to that session. We explained what we were going to do and that we had watercolors for only thirty-five. Everyone stayed anyway. The interest in and hunger for art was obvious. These experiences with teachers encouraged us to explore art as a vehicle for seeing the world from a new perspective in other areas as well.

In the freshman honors seminar Sara taught at Coastal Carolina University, the first essay was an autobiographical narrative. As a prewriting activity for that essay, she used a lifelines strategy developed by Linda Rief (48-51). After the students made a list of ten positive life events and ten negative ones in class, Sara asked them to prepare at home a graph that would show when the event happened on the horizontal axis and how positive or negative each event was on a scale of 1-5 on the vertical axis. Sara suggested that students use symbols rather than words on the graph and bring it to the next class as a beginning point for our writing workshop. She imagined they would sketch a quick graph on a piece of notebook paper. Two days later the students arrived with posters, banners, computer graphics, stickers, sketches in many colors of marker and colored pencil. Their creativity was impressive, but Sara was especially surprised by the amount

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Rillero has written about the value of haiku for helping college biology students observe nature more carefully.

## SEEING THE WORLD ANEW

of time they'd spent on a non-graded, prewriting assignment. She congratulated them on their wonderful charts and apologized for not having been clear about the nature of the assignment and the amount of time she'd expected them to spend doing it. "Oh, we knew it wasn't graded. We did all this because we really liked having a chance to be creative. We don't get many chances to work with color and drawing." They spent hours on an assignment for the sheer joy it brought them...learning at its best.

*"...the task is not so much to see what no one yet has seen, but to think what nobody yet has thought about that which everybody sees."* —

Schopenhauer

Our work with teachers in the Writing Project summer institute and the lifelines insight in the honors freshman seminar encouraged us to consider more ways to include the creative arts as an option in the honors curriculum. During a freshman honors seminar class just before Halloween, we read essays about the masks we wear in our daily lives, the faces we prepare "to meet the faces that [we] meet" (T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" line 27). Sara brought face paint, construction paper, glue, markers, pastels, ribbons, and stickers and asked the students to write about their own masks and then to make one and write about what it represented. They took pictures of each other wearing masks or face paint and mounted some of the artifacts for display in Sara's office. Paul Crowther claims that "artwork and artistic creation...clarify individuality and transpos[e] it into an enduring form" (179). The mask-as-metaphor exercise allowed the students to express their individuality visually and served as a powerful avenue into writing about the things we hide in our lives and the things we choose to present to the world. The process of art allows students to become active participants in creating meaning (Rico 16). Writing about art helps us "brave the mystery dividing the seen from the unseen, image from text," and teaches us "to look and look again more closely" (Hirsch 10).

*"Whether or not you can observe a thing depends upon the theory you use. It is the theory which decides what can be observed."* —Albert Einstein

In another effort to bring creativity into the work of our largely science-oriented honors program students, Janet and Sara developed a haiku workshop called "Awakening to Wonder." Most of the students had been introduced to haiku in elementary school as a kind of syllable puzzle, but our goal was to introduce students to the haiku as a powerful means of paying attention to things in a new way. Haiku, when created in their best Zen sense, are a way to let whatever is before us be our teacher. In our haiku workshop we begin by talking about the origin of haiku and reading together a selection of classic haiku by poets including Basho, Buson, and Issa. Then we go on a walk through nature...in the forest if there is one nearby, on the beach, beside a river or pond, in a garden....and collect images for our own haiku. We find the form of the haiku to be good discipline for forcing careful consideration of insight and word choice. The

simple, powerful statement of an insight helps students be present in the moment and see more clearly the truth and beauty of the nature before them.<sup>2</sup>

*“Vision brings a new appreciation of what there is.  
It makes a person see things differently, rather than  
see different things.”* —Herbert Guenther

After the two of us had been using a variety of creative arts regularly in our teaching, it occurred to us that a stretch of time longer than the traditional class period would greatly enhance the possibilities of combining art and learning. We designed a fall writing retreat for the honors program freshman seminar curriculum to provide this opportunity. Each fall, now, students in the honors freshman seminar spend a whole Saturday at a writing retreat and in exchange have a week without honors seminar classes. (They spend six hours at the retreat, give up three hours of class time, and feel good about the exchange.) All the students in the Honors Program are invited to join the freshman retreat, and faculty are also invited to participate. Each year the retreat is held off campus in a natural setting. Once we were in a rustic cabin near a pond; three times we’ve met on the beach, once using “nature as hieroglyph” as our theme. One year, inspired by honors student Tammy Maher’s high school experience with the Harpeth River Project in Tennessee, we held the retreat at a local river. We began at picnic tables on the bank of the Waccamaw River. Our goals were to get the students to immerse themselves in the deep experience of “the river” and to explore the river through many ways of knowing: science, poetry, art, and personal experience. We also wanted the students literally to *look at* the river from many perspectives: through a microscope, from a boat, and from the bordering banks and rocks. A biology faculty member showed us how to gather specimens from the river and how to examine them under microscopes. A poet on the English faculty talked with us about the river as metaphor and led us in some writing exercises related to our close observations of it—one of which was to create a *five senses* poem focusing on the sounds, smells, sights, tastes, and feelings connected to the river setting.

*“I have learned that what I have not drawn, I have  
never really seen, and that when I start drawing an  
ordinary thing, I realize how extraordinary it is,  
sheer miracle.”* —Franck

Janet brought indelible Uniball sketch pens, pastels, and watercolors and showed us how to use drawing and painting as tools for observing the river and its surroundings more carefully. The act of paying close attention in order to draw what one sees indeed helps us really to see things anew. Scholars of multiple ways of knowing such as Elliot Eisner of Stanford University explain that visual thinking and attention through eye and hand use aspects of the mind often termed “right-brained” that allow us to pay attention to the particular, the not yet named. The “left-brained” language function is very efficient in noting the familiar, naming it, and then, having

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safely “boxed up” the concept, no longer busying itself thinking about this “thing” anymore. In the case of the river, we might see the river, name it dark, dirty-looking water and move on without seeing the tiny blue flowers growing along its banks or the patterns of gray-green lichen woven into the fabric of the river rock. Drawing and sketching or painting with color helped us to see what was there all along but not attended to. The powers of eye- and hand-knowing help us become more fully present to the moment and to all that presents itself in the moment.

A section of Sara’s journal from the retreat is devoted to listing the shades of green in the scene in front of her. She stopped counting at thirteen shades, then began naming them—an awesome task. We took our writing and drawing materials onto a boat at the dock nearby and cruised down the river and back for almost two hours. The biology professor helped us identify the birds we saw along the way and wrote some poetry herself. After lunch we shared writings and drawings, and the poet helped us look for found poems in our writing. Many science-oriented honors students doubt their ability to write poetry, so the “found poetry” process has been particularly empowering for them. Each of us looked through all of the writing we had done during the day and underlined words, phrases, and sentences we especially liked. We copied these bits onto strips of colored paper that we arranged and rearranged on large sheets of newsprint until we had a “poem” that we liked. Then we glued the strips in place. We were allowed to tear off parts of the strip that didn’t fit the sense of the poem, to copy lines as a refrain, and to add anything else the poem needed. The resulting work was far richer in visual image, metaphor and sensory “knowing” than much of the writing we had done previous to our “river immersion.” We attribute much of this richness to the expansion of thought brought about by asking students to know about the river by thinking through their senses as well as representing what they were thinking through varied forms of written and visual expression.

During the retreat we wrote poems, stories, and responses to the river. Poet Nelljean Rice read what we had written and rearranged the words to create lively pictures and whole new meanings. Here is a poem Dr. Rice wrote with one of the honors students (following which, the poem Sara wrote and the one Dr. Rice helped her find):

### **Refraction**

My problem...  
This isn’t a bad thing –  
a wasp like dirt tea –  
it stings dry and watery  
my skin blisters  
like poison swimming under my skin  
like lots of little parts waiting  
for each other  
I’d like to brew this pain

—*Nelljean Rice with honors student Kirsten Burg*



## The Waccamaw River

Dancing light—  
Sky light,  
Cloud white,  
Leaf green and gold  
Dance  
Along the slick,  
Wind-rippled surface.  
Today,  
The river dances quickly,  
Speaks softly,  
Smells of truffles,  
Tastes of summer swims,  
Baptism,  
Fear of all I don't understand—  
A deep mystery.

—*Sara Sanders*

## Word Weaving

A deep mystery  
Drowns the river...  
It writes women's  
Chances...  
The same thing  
Speaks like  
A mote-rippled  
Light questions  
The same thing  
Like truffles  
Today—  
Too expensive  
For baptism  
But it drowns  
All I don't understand.

—*Nelljean Rice with Sara Sanders*

The students agreed at the next class meeting that they'd like to publish an anthology of our river writing. They collected one piece from each student in the group and from each of the faculty members who had joined us for the day, edited the pieces, collected money to have them printed, and arranged for printing at a local copy shop. Here are some samples of student writing from the anthology:



*from* **The River of Life**

Most rivers come together to make one as in marriage. Likewise, most rivers also split apart to form smaller rivers, or children. These rivers have many systems or families of related rivers. If the first ceased to exist, then all of the related rivers would not exist either. There could be one great, great grandfather river such as the Mississippi or the Nile that many other rivers or streams came from....the ocean represents death, or a greater/larger place of being. At the end of the river its waters of life flow into the ocean. They do not cease to exist; they just change forms, as in fresh water to salt water or secular to spiritual....there is more water in the ocean (afterlife) than there is in rivers. Only a select few of these waters get the chance to be reincarnated through evaporation and end up in a river again, starting life all over. Maybe it is only the good water that ends up in the cycle all over again or maybe it is sort of a second chance and the ocean is an unattained nirvana.

—*Ryan Bubucis*

**Water Dance**

It dances through the world,  
Free as anything can be.  
It moves as it pleases,  
With nothing in its way.  
It is a slow waltz through a mountain forest;  
It is a wild rhythm through the canyon;  
It is a symphony of the sea;  
It is a ballet leaping from the sky,  
dancing before a chorus line of lightning.  
It is the dance of the water,  
The most natural dance in the world.  
It is the most uninhibited freedom,  
To dance with the feeling of the day.

—*Brianne Meagher*

*from* **River**

What comes to my mind  
Confluence of the Sava and the Danube, Belgrade  
Confluence of the Sava and the Danube is the  
heart of my town....  
good live music, dancing, fun....  
my grandpa and how we were throwing huge rocks in  
the Danube to listen to the sound of the rocks hitting  
the water....  
peace  
power  
the song of frogs....

—*Jelena Mirkov*

**The River is Us**

We are the learners and the river is the knowledge.  
We flow and the river flows;  
We are the river and the river is us.  
We travel and the river travels;  
We are the river and the river is us.  
To discover, to create, we do the same, but  
We are the learners and the river is the knowledge.

—*Tammy Maher*

This piece was written in response to poet Georgia Heard's advice in her essay "Don't Try to Avoid the Rocks" (38-39).

*from* **Awoken**

Every time I bump into a rock it makes me hurt more....  
Some of these rocks are sharp and better in retrospect.  
The rocks will help you maneuver around the difficult  
places so you can proceed smoothly?  
That is how things always are  
And life and water  
Jagged  
Water is the key to cleansing  
After all, who wants stagnant water or loneliness?  
I will let life run its course and I will be life itself.  
But  
I just keep running into bigger and bigger rocks.  
I have life and imagination in my little whirlpool in that  
river of life.

—*Susie Vogel*

*“Let the beauty you love be what you do.”*

—Rumi

We used our day on the river as a catalyst for helping our campus community think about the link between art and environment. We hosted a River Day in one of our gallery rooms and invited everyone to stop by. Honors students were responsible for planning, promoting, and facilitating the event. They gave special invitations to the freshman composition classes since the experience lent itself well to a writing workshop. We bribed visitors to come with offers of free, river-related snacks including cheese goldfish, Swedish gummi fish, and rock candy. The honors students set up centers all around the large gallery space. The biology professor who had participated in the writing retreat brought over several microscopes for one center. Students collected buckets of river water for making slides and created a tabletop collage of trash and waste they collected from the river. Students decided that the colors in topographical maps made them a kind of art; they set up slide shows of maps of our local rivers. They ran videotapes of the service-learning river project Tammy Maher had been involved with in her high school in Tennessee. They made a brown wrapping paper “river” that ran from one end of the room to the other and provided chalk and markers for visitors to use in contributing to our river of words. On the walls there were quotations about rivers the students had copied onto large sheets of paper and decorated with pastel drawings. There were also large sheets of newsprint for writing river haiku. Tables all around the room were set up with books about rivers and about creative writing. They were supplied with colorful paper and markers and pages of suggestions about ideas for writing about rivers for our visitors. The students created a scrapbook of photos from our river retreat and had it on display along with copies of our river writing anthologies for sale.

*“No problem can ever be solved by the consciousness that created it. We must learn to see the world anew.”*

—Albert Einstein

Art and music call to our soul in a different, more direct way than words do, just as poetry calls to us more directly than critical prose does. Honors students are hungry for creative opportunities, eager to have their spirits lifted, ready to take risks and make sense of seeing the world in new ways. Honors students are masters at traditional ways of learning and at verbal and analytical intelligence. We found that expanding honors students’ repertoire of thinking and knowing through creative arts not only produces joyful exuberance for learning but results in enhanced forms of thinking and representing. Using creative arts in class gives students another perspective on the world and another way to see it, to care about it, and to know it.

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## Suggested Reading

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MARGARET C. SZUMOWSKI

# Honors Students in the Creative Writing Classroom: Sequence and Community

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It is the end of the semester here at Gasoline Alley in Springfield, Massachusetts, and the creative writing students are about to give their readings. It is an artsy setting, the SEE café and gallery. Some of the students who will read today hope to transfer into the engineering program at the University of Massachusetts. They are computer-wise, bright students. Others are candidates for the nursing program. Three women hope to transfer to Mt. Holyoke or Smith. But here they are today, reading their poems at a gallery they have never visited before, with African masks all around them. The favorites today are blues poems, and Leanne concludes hers, “Sweet thing, I thought you were the one, but now I know that I was wrong./ Yeah, I thought you were the one but now I know I was so wrong/ Cuz baby if that were true, these blues would be a sweet love song.” Leanne hopes to be a pharmacy major, but, after some initial fretting about what her grade would be, she enjoys writing poems.

“I can’t have a B in this class; I want to transfer to Mt. Holyoke next semester.” Honors students often say this in the first days of the class. They sometimes have a difficult time adapting to the creative writing classroom. For those who are unused to arts classes, adjusting to different ways of thinking (including metaphorical thinking) and a different way of being graded (i.e., by portfolio) can be a challenge. Honors students want to do not only well, but brilliantly—in every class they take. The purpose of this essay is to propose some ways of helping honors students feel comfortable in a creative writing course. The following strategies will be discussed: giving the students a chance to adjust to the arts classroom; beginning with exercises that help students understand the strategies of poetry; designing an alternative grading system based on portfolios; and easing into the teaching of poetic structure through the study and creation of list-poems, poetic personae, object-poems, haiku, and various traditional European verse-forms.

My first college class of creative writers taught me that honors students need time to adjust to the arts classroom. Over many years of working as poet-in-the-schools and frequently teaching poetry-writing to gifted children and teenagers, I had already learned that some bright grade-schoolers are made anxious by creative writing, that they are comfortable only with essay writing and its logical content. I did not expect college students to feel so vulnerable.

Stress was palpable on this particular first day. I made things worse by saying that I sometimes revised poems twenty times. Students gasped. They had not

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imagined that writing poems would require such attention and diligence. They thought they wanted to be in this classroom, but what was this strange planet anyway? I could hear them hyperventilate. They were so used to their own excellence in nearly every class and so afraid they would get a lower grade than usual that I wondered if they could even hear my instructions. I soon learned that this group of students and nearly every group to follow would feel awkwardness and self-doubt coming into the creative writing classroom. “Everyone else in the class is so talented,” students moaned.

I have learned to help honors students feel at ease in a number of ways. In my experience, introducing students right away to free-writing exercises helps them relax and explore a new kind of learning. Every creative writing teacher has her own set of techniques. I try to warm students up to writing and build their self-confidence before I ask them to create anything we might call a poem. An interest in language is important for poetic growth—a love of words and a fearlessness about playing with them. It is my impression that students need to learn playfulness with language before they start writing their own poems and lapse into jingly rhyme or cliché. I learned from Madeline DeFrees the use of headlines to get the class thinking about multiple meanings and playfulness in their writing: “Tuna Biting Off Washington Coast,” “Drowned Man Seen in Florida Airport,” “Robber Holds Up Albert’s Hosiery,” “Elvis Appears in Holyoke,” “Slow Men Working in Trees,” “Alarmed Exit.” The students surprise themselves at how imaginatively they respond to these titles. I love showing them poet Nancy Willard’s “Buffalo Climbs Out of the Cellar,” a poem inspired by an accidentally amusing newspaper headline, so they can see for themselves the power of her fresh and exciting use of language: “His breath heats this house all winter./ His heart charges all my rooms with light.” I ask them to find their own headlines, ones shot with innuendo or double-meanings. And we do some exercises based on any particularly interesting words we find randomly from magazines or newspapers—“periwinkle,” “rant,” “prestidigitator,” “tryst,” “callow”—that get us to discover what effect using every word from the list has on our free-writing. These early exercises stimulate the students’ imaginations and help to move them into the world of poetry. In an exercise created by Mark Doty, based on Gaston Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space*, I ask students to draw the floor-plan of the first house they remember, then draw a favorite object in each room. Students begin their free-writing with what is for them the most compelling room and object, then continue to free associate and allow memory and imagination to come into their writing—resulting in the kind of word-flow that is so necessary to the poet’s craft. They begin to understand that poetry is not simply about observation and emotion, but also about memories from other times, the potency of familiar places like kitchens, and the stream-of-consciousness of the poet. A natural step from thinking about words and their multiple meanings and free association is to move into metaphor. I’ve learned in my own writing that sometimes nothing but metaphor can help me understand a complex idea, situation, or relationship. I like the way metaphor stuns us into understanding, and I try to find examples of metaphor very early in the class for students to consider. Sometimes I play magician and bring in a bag of odd things with metaphorical possibilities: a bit of elastic, a mirror, a fork, a



geode. What else does it look like? Are your feet goldfish or sharks? Is she more like a spaceship or Haley's comet? I love reading aloud Charles Simic's "Go Inside a Stone," with its revelation of "star charts on the inner walls," as if the stone were a planetarium; I love the way that the stone can be small as a hand or huge as the world. Reading Neruda's "Ode to a Watermelon" or "Ode to My Socks" startles student poets into the exuberance and transforming power of metaphor: "Violent socks, / my feet were/ two fish made of wool, two long sharks/ sea-blue, shot/ through/ by one golden thread./ two immense blackbirds, / two cannons...." How they laugh and enjoy Neruda's quick shifts.

We teachers can establish a safe zone in the classroom, a place friendly to experimentation and revision. Students need to know that finding the "right answers" is not the purpose of creative writing. Answers are often shifting and multiple in the arts. More important in the poet's repertoire of skills is a playful, experimental, and metaphorical way of thinking and a flow of images and words. In addition, the teacher can encourage students to create several drafts of each of their works, to look at unfinished poems over a period of time, and to understand the usefulness of a grading system that does not employ letter grades, at least not for every assignment. In my experience, giving grades for drafts reduces the chances that students will revise their work. I prefer to give them ten points for every draft that shows a reworking of a poem but to leave the actual grade to the portfolio, which I evaluate (in coordination with individual student conferences) once at mid-term then again at semester's end. Grading student drafts makes honors students anxious, whereas accumulating points for a variety of drafts rewards experimentation and revision. I emphasize to the class that each student has his or her own voice and that no two responses to an assignment will be the same. Letting them know that all their work is *in progress* and that they can select their best pieces for a midterm portfolio as well as for the final grade eases their tension. Rather than seeing themselves as competitors, they begin to see themselves as a community of writers supporting one another in the challenge of writing poems.

Now that they have some strategies at hand and are comfortable with at least some of the ingredients of poetry, we can begin to think about the architecture of a poem. Our first real foray into poetic structure is the list-poem. I like the list-poem because it is written for the pure pleasure of listing and because it often helps students move into new territory in their writing. Students list what they hate, what they love, rare moments in their lives, what they know how to do, funny or dramatic moments, their favorite places. Very quickly, they come up with some interesting lines. Below is a list-poem from Joe Brainard's *I Remember*, a book-length list of memories about growing up in 1950's America (*Teachers and Writers*):

## **I remember**

I remember the first time I saw television. Lucille Ball was taking ballet lessons.

I remember Aunt Cleora who lived in Hollywood. Every year for Christmas she sent my brother and me a joint present of one book.

I remember a very poor boy who used to wear his sister's blouses to school.

I remember shower curtains with angel fish on them.

I remember very old people when I was very young. Their houses smelled funny.

I remember daydreams of being a singer all alone on a big stage with no scenery, just one spotlight on me, singing my heart out, and moving my audience to total tears of love and affection.

I remember waking up somewhere once and there was a horse staring me in the face.....

I remember one very hot summer day I put ice cubes in my aquarium and all the fish died.

I remember opening jars that nobody else could open.

I remember not understanding why people on the other side of the world didn't fall off.

I remember putting on suntan oil and having the sun go away.

Students are attracted to particular images in the poem. "I remember one very hot summer day I put ice cubes in my aquarium and all the fish died" shocks the students and reminds them of their own childhood experiences with pets. Another great list poem, stunning in its prolific use of metaphor, is Scott Momaday's "I Am Alive":

## **I am alive**

I am a feather in the bright sky.

I am the blue horse that runs in the plain.

I am the fish that rolls, shining, in the water.

I am the shadow that follows a child.

I am the evening light, the luster of meadows.

I am an eagle playing with the wind.

I am a cluster of bright beads.

I am the farthest star.

I am the cold of the dawn.

I am the roaring of the rain.

I am the glitter on the crust of the snow.

I am the long track of the moon in a lake.

I am a flame of four colors.

I am a deer standing away in the dusk.

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I am a field of sumac and pomme blanche.  
I am an angle of geese in the winter sky.  
I am the hunger of a young wolf.  
I am the whole dream of these things.

You see, I am alive, I am alive.  
I stand in good relation to the earth.  
I stand in good relation to the gods.  
I stand in good relation to all that is beautiful.  
I stand in good relation to the daughter of Tsen-Tainte.  
You see, I am alive, I am alive.

Once students read Momaday's poem, most of their own list poems become infused with imagination and metaphor. They try to imitate his list. The turn the poem takes at "You see I am alive, I am alive" is an exciting moment for students, honors or not, for they realize that the reader is suddenly ready for a change of direction and emphasis. Students also see the effect of repetition. All these effects are new to students who haven't written poems before, even though they may have read poetry and noticed certain strategies. I like the immersion in metaphor that the poem offers, and it is exciting to see beginning writers create their own metaphors, often without any overt prompting from me, just from modeling their poems on Momaday's. I tell them that metaphor is the heart of poetry and moreover that Aristotle said so! All of the above initiates a new kind of learning for most honors students, and many start to look forward to the daily exercise of their imaginations in the creative writing classroom. I contend that they will be better engineers, nurses, and astronomers if they can learn to think metaphorically.

One important question that students themselves often raise is how to organize a poem, particularly where to break lines. Discussion of line breaks is ongoing throughout the semester, but it invariably emerges during the reading of list-poems, in which lines are often of assorted lengths. Where do I end this line? Should I have a period at the end of every line? A comma? Should this look like a paragraph or like Momaday's poem? Here is one early exercise that seems to get the students thinking about line breaks and their dramatic effects on a poem. I show them the following four versions of William Carlos Williams's "This Is Just to Say" (sadly enough, most students do not recognize this poem when they come to creative writing class), ask volunteers to read each of them aloud, then take a vote on which version is felt to be the most satisfying to the reader:

1. I have eaten the plums that were in the icebox and which you  
were probably saving for  
breakfast. Forgive  
me they were delicious so sweet and so  
cold
2. I have eaten the plums that were in the icebox and which you  
were probably saving for breakfast. Forgive me they were delicious  
so sweet and so cold.

3. I  
have eaten  
the  
plums that  
were in  
the icebox  
and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for  
breakfast. Forgive me  
they  
were  
delicious  
so sweet  
and  
so cold.
4. I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox  
and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast  
Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

Though this is a simple exercise, it works dramatically to show beginning writers how essential form is to the way a poem is read and understood.

Often in-class discussion and in-class writing help transform students from frantic doubters of their own abilities into lovers of poetry. Students write surprisingly well in class, and they are at maximum creativity when writing with a time limit. It is fun for the teacher to see these feverish brains at work—though she will want to be writing herself, so enticing is the activity. The in-class exercises I give range in time from 3 to 20 minutes long and often produce some of the best pieces my students write. Whether it is the presence of other scribblers, the excitement and mood of the class, or the assignment itself, something gets them going. Sometimes we base these exercises around selections from *The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart*, an anthology of poems edited by Robert Bly. Each day, one student chooses a poem from this volume to discuss with the class, and often we use that poem as a take off for our own exercise. A poem called “I Am Not I,” by Juan Ramon Jimenez, for

example, is a good prompt for student self-definition poems, challenging readers and writers to imagine alternate selves—a hidden self or *double*, perhaps, or some ideal self the writer would like to cultivate:

### **I am not I**

I am not I.  
I am this one.  
Walking beside me whom I do not see,  
Whom at times I manage to visit,  
And at other times I forget.  
The one who remains silent when I talk,  
The one who forgives, sweet, when I hate,  
The one who takes a walk when I am indoors,  
The one who will remain standing when I die.

Students love this poem and the chance it offers them, as they begin to imitate it, to imagine some previously unidentified part of the self.

“Tell all the truth, but tell it slant.” Nothing could be more useful for the novice creative writer than Emily Dickinson’s advice here, and I make an assignment out of it—before which, however, we spend a lot of time thinking and talking about what it means to “tell it slant.” We talk about different kinds of displacement, different points of view, the creation of personae who are not ourselves, how different a poem about Snow White would be, say, if the mirror were to tell it rather than Queen, how different if the glass slipper were to tell it rather than Cinderella. Or perhaps the writer can displace the energy of his or poem by only *seeming* to write about an object, as Tess Gallagher does in her poem “The Shirt,” which is really not about a shirt so much as about tenderness and devotion and grief for the husband she loved and lost.

If writing in an alternate voice allows writers to don personae that free them from inhibitions and over-immersion in autobiography, addressing a poem to an object or taking on the voice of an object frees the writer to use hyperbole, to experiment with wild metaphors, to seem to be writing about an onion, or about salt, yet really writing about something else entirely, like love or loss. Neruda’s odes to the watermelon and his pair of socks are great examples of poems written to objects. Object-poems excite the class because of the freedom the use of personae allows. Here are some student examples:

## Cigarette

Lips wrap around me  
Sucking my poisons away  
Deep breath in  
Intense breath out  
My white quilted body  
Stained with fuchsia lipstick  
Clenched between trembling fingers  
Stranger's hand  
Flicking,  
Flicking my ashes to the floor  
Rising  
Stained yellow teeth  
Hot rancid breath  
Complete darkness  
I am trapped  
Fingers unbend  
Falling to the ground  
Flames scatter  
Only to be stomped on  
Crushed  
Crooked  
Broken  
Bent  
I'll get her in the end.

—Paige

In a second example, a student's fantastic identification with an object, this time an article of clothing, takes the poem and the reader into a haunting political realm:

## Innocent

I am innocent  
Please forgive me  
I have no choice  
  
I am white  
I am not superior  
  
I am innocent  
Please forgive me  
I have no choice  
  
Those who hide behind me  
Have hate in their hearts  
Evil in their souls  
Darkness in their minds

MARGARET C. SZUMOWSKI

I am innocent  
Please forgive me  
I have no choice

I am simply  
Bleached threads  
Strung together  
To form a cloak and a hood

I am innocent  
Please forgive me  
I have no choice.

I am made impure  
Soiled, forsaken  
Watching an innocent child's

Terrified eyes by torchlight  
While her father hangs  
From nearby tree.

—Jeannette

And a final object-poem with an unexpected bite at the end:

There's safety in light bulbs  
And groups of three or more  
And hands  
Empty  
Of doorknobs and alien flesh  
Clenched to hide hangnails and fingerprints  
And .1% of germs  
Hands are easy  
We sell mittens and gloves  
And scarves for our necks  
And hats for ears that blush and ring  
Hands can hold on to each other  
And rest safely in laps and pockets  
But shoulders get lonely  
Exposed and exploited  
Shawls went out of style, leaving them naked  
In scoop necks and tank tops  
The sins of our shoulders  
Erode the chastity of hands.

—Corinne

The object is full of possibilities for the student. Shirt, chair, light bulb, potato, empty spool, mirror—objects offer students a strategy for saying what they want to say while veiling their autobiographical selves. Honors students, often self-conscious

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about creative writing, appreciate the opportunity to write through an objective correlative. And sometimes they write better in disguise.

Formal verse presents yet another method of leading anxious students into the surprise of real poetry. Students long for structure and don't yet know—despite our experiments with pruning and shaping free verse—how to invent their own. Haiku is a good way to begin the formal part of the semester. Working on haiku helps students understand the power of form to influence meaning and also helps them look carefully at the world around them. Sometimes all the students in the class feel more comfortable when we enter the world of form. I show them haiku from the masters as well as by former students. Below are a group of student haiku:

Ice on bare branches  
Held captive on the inside  
A prison much like my own  
—Mathew

The smoky stench  
bad breath—  
Papa smoking his pipe.  
—Amanda

When the night falls  
and dreams begin, daylight  
rises all over again.  
—Michael

The winter moon  
aglow with pale light  
brings life to the night.  
—Dan

Writing haiku strengthens student writing. Students are better at using images and at compressing their work after this assignment. They are appreciative of structure and the way it supports them as a net supports the trapeze artist. After a week or two of haiku, the class is ready to attempt poetic forms of a more elaborate sort: sonnets, sestinas, villanelles, pantoums, and ghazals. I find that most students welcome these highly structured forms and are pleased at their own successes with them. Here's a poem in rhymed couplets by Sean:

### The Jungle

Men march through the midst of me.  
Their machetes hack down my canopy.  
White men stalk their yellow threat.  
A high body count is what they expect.

A man with stripes signals to his men.  
They lie still, ready to defend.  
Shots ring out, fire flashes flare,  
bombs explode, this is not rare.

Ambush was set, a total surprise.  
They took aim on slanted eyes.  
The enemy so quick, so stealthy, so tough,  
so young, so dead, yet not enough.



Grenades fly, torches lit,  
V.C. run, the innocent submit.  
Troops from the west entered me with their flag,  
most left my domain in a body bag.

My people took prisoners and locked them away,  
Claimed they died and their men ran away.  
I was a lush jungle of South Vietnam,  
now the charred remnant of napalm bomb.

—Sean

My students needed many models of and much practice with formal verse before they felt confident in experimenting on their own. For example, when teaching villanelles, I give them models, but I also give them partially complete, less familiar villanelles, which I ask them to finish. One that I used with interesting results was “The Rapist’s Villanelle,” by Thomas Disch. I gave the students the skeleton-form of a villanelle, along with some particular lines from Disch’s version of it. They filled in the blanks on their own and puzzled over the point of view. The challenge was not only following the form but picking up on the tone as well. After this exercise and a group discussion in which we compared student poems to the complete original, one student wrote the following—a villanelle entirely of her own making:

## **I Know He’s Not You**

I know he’s not you.  
He’s a gentleman.  
He doesn’t leave me black and blue.

He wants more than a screw.  
A wedding in June is our plan.  
I know he’s not you.

He is more than a boyfriend.  
He does what he can.  
He doesn’t leave me black and blue.

I cringe, whenever I hear your name.  
I crumple and he helps me stand.  
I know he’s not you.

I am more than his “girlfriend.”  
He makes me feel like a beautiful woman.  
He doesn’t leave me black and blue.

I smile, whenever I hear his name.  
He is my angel. He is my man.  
I know he’s not you.  
He doesn’t leave me black and blue.

—Jen

I appreciate the energy and passion for writing that appears when these young poets write in form. By the end of the course, they are composing sonnets, ghazals, sestinas, pantoums, and villanelles. They have come a long way from the nervous students that walked into the class on the first day. Working at creative writing has helped them explore and develop their imaginations. With a supportive class setting and tactics learned from in-class exercises focusing on metaphor, personae, formal and experimental verse, and found poems, these students have begun to write with enthusiasm. They have edited the literary magazine, served as members of the editorial board, organized the final class reading, and created books of their own poems.

At the end of the semester, I'll see my honors students pour over their magazine, practice for the class readings, and congratulate each other on their poems. They have practiced giving readings for the class throughout the year, but the final reading for family and friends is a celebration. How far they've come from their early self-doubts! They have surprised themselves with their own good writing. I'm delighted to see how they have become more inventive, more open, more willing to experiment. Best of all, though, they now think of themselves not as isolated honors students striving only for A's, but as poets, part of the community of writers.

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# Splicing The Creative Arts Into Non-Arts Courses

COULD ARISTOTLE TEACH THE HONORS COURSES I ENVISION?

L. LUIS LOPEZ

# Could Aristotle Teach the Honors Courses I Envision? Theory and Practice in the Arts

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In general, art survey and art history courses focus on the influence of culture on art and art on culture, and the changes in art from century to century or from any period to any period. When an art survey or art history section is taught at the honors level, what results is a class with fewer students moving at a faster pace so more material can be covered, the introduction of discussion into what is usually a lecture class, and a more concentrated study of the material presented. This, of course, is the case for many general education courses given honors designation. It seems to me, however, that something important is missing for the honors student who does not take two-dimensional or three-dimensional art courses. What is missing is the hands-on experience that is important in “fleshing-out” a more informed or, to use a term I will explain in arguing my case, a “wiser” honors student. In my opinion, an honors art course ought to incorporate three segments: lecture, a hands-on experience, and discussion after the first two segments. The teachings of Aristotle concerning what a wise man is plus some reflections on my own experience will be the basis for my insistence.

Early in his *Metaphysics* Aristotle claims that wisdom is the “knowledge of certain principles and causes.” Following that statement, he adds, “We suppose . . . that the wise man knows all things, as far as possible, although he has not knowledge of each of them in detail” (500a). By “in detail” Aristotle means the senses: “[S]ense-perception is common to all, and therefore easy and not a mark of Wisdom.” Obviously, then, sense-perception alone does not make a person wise for it is not a necessity for learning “certain principles and causes” well. Yet, he begins his *Metaphysics* with these words: “All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves” (499a). He goes on to argue that a series of sense-perceptions produces memory in men which, in turn, leads to experience. That is, “several memories of the same thing produce finally the capacity for a single experience.” He continues by claiming that art comes to men through experience. He clarifies by stating, “Now art arises when from many notions gained by experience one universal judgement about a class of objects is produced.” So, a man who has both theory and sensual experience realizes that the sensual experience has given rise to theory. Yes, it is possible to learn theory through reading or lecture, but obviously who has the

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better knowledge? Who is “wiser” about “the class of objects” (sculpture, let us say), the pure theorist or the “experienced” theorist?

After arguing that experience leads to art, Aristotle makes a very interesting distinction between men of art and men of experience. By men of experience he seems to mean those who experience with the senses but don't or can't bundle the experiences together to come up with theory—a *manual worker*, in another of his terminologies, as opposed to a *master worker*. He points out that the master worker is the artist in that he knows “the causes of the things that are done . . . “ (500b). He goes on to claim that the master-worker (artist) can teach, whereas the manual worker (the man of mere experience) cannot. I suppose that if the manual worker doesn't know the “why” of things, he cannot teach. But manual workers are human beings, not zombies or robots. Through the honors art class I briefly describe above, I believe the honors student will become more like the master-worker who has been taught theory but who has also experienced the *details* through sensory experience. That experience, it seems to me, leads to a man who knows. Of course, a person cannot have detailed knowledge of all subjects, so I believe that Aristotle might agree that a “wise” person would have knowledge of the “principles and causes” (theory) of many subjects, but of some of those he would have knowledge “in detail.” This, in my mind, describes the ideal honors student.

For a number of years, I studied the art of Spanish Colonial tin work and the art of carving santos, two crafts that are very important and particular to my New Mexican Hispanic culture. Among other things, I learned that tin replaced silver because it was cheaper and readily available. I learned that tin cans were used to make frames for holy pictures that decorate the altars of many Catholic churches. I learned to identify style. As regards the carving of santos, I first learned about the lives of individual saints and about their importance to particular communities. I learned to identify saints by symbols. I had knowledge about the “principles and causes” of tin work and carving. I thought myself wise in those crafts, but until I actually spent three summers in New Mexico cutting, hammering, punching, soldering, and polishing tin frames, I realized I could not *consider* myself wise in that craft. Until I actually spent time envisioning what saint might emerge from a piece of cedar, juniper, or pine, smelled the wood, felt the wood, actually put tool to wood, and cut myself a few times, I realized I could not *feel* wise in that craft. The use of my senses added to my knowledge of the subject. I understood the “principles and causes” with my body (physically and emotionally), not just my head.

When I look at a 1920 tin frame holding a picture of St. Francis of Assisi, and I notice the images of doves and various flowery and geometric designs stamped into the tin work, my knowledge of the expertise called for in the use of the tools and materials available to the artists of the time not only makes me appreciate the artist but links me to the artist in a kinship I could never imagine just by having learned about tin work from a lecture or book. When I look at the flickering image of San Longino, the Roman centurion become saint who is said to have pierced Christ in the side while he was hanging on the cross, standing on a shelf behind a flickering votive candle in a corner of a chapel, and I realize that I saw his image in the piece of cedar before I carved it, I am linked to the likes of Michelangelo. Even though wood is not

marble, I feel I can understand, at least to some extent, what was in his head and what was in his heart, before, during, and after he sculpted the *Pieta*.

My experience teaches me that honors art survey and art appreciation courses should include the practice of art. Obviously, there is not enough time to practice every type of art in a survey course, so one or two might be the maximum. I have discussed this problem with art teachers who have practiced art in their courses. They claim that just one experience gets the point across. However, survey courses are usually taught in traditional classrooms or lecture halls, places where one cannot practice the messier arts—but one can always adapt. If the weather cooperates, there is always the outdoors. At Mesa State College, we are talking about how best to adapt the practice of art to honors survey courses. That remains a difficulty, but a course that will include the lecture, hands-on, and discussion components I mentioned earlier is being developed for Spring 2003. This will be either a 115 Art Appreciation or a 396 Topics course. In either case, the professor will take one type of art and carry it through its various stages of development, for example the movement from wood cuts to etchings. Students will listen to a lecture in a regular classroom, do required readings, then actually practice the art of wood cutting in a studio classroom. This will be followed by a discussion of the entire process. Imagine my enthusiasm over the possibilities. Could music, dance, and drama benefit from this process?

But there is a further reason for experiencing art at the sensory level. That has to do with Aristotle's theory of the "original causes" of things—the famous four causes. Aristotle treats the four causes both in the *Physics* (271 and 275) and in the *Metaphysics* (501b). The four causes illuminate four ways in which a natural being or a crafted being can be understood: the efficient cause (the maker or doer), the material cause (the stuff the object is made of), the formal cause (the shape of the being which is connected to its use), and the final cause (the reason the being is made—its purpose). An honors student can easily understand these four causes on a theoretical level, but it is better to experience them on the sensory level.

Consider a crafted being, say a clay pot. A clay pot can be made by an honors student who starts the process (efficient cause). That student has an idea of what the pot should be and why he wants to make it (final cause). He gathers clay and prepares a mixture for the pot (material cause). Finally, he forms the pot into a shape that will serve the purpose for the pot (formal cause). He fires it, and now the pot stands before him—an object of satisfaction. He has used each of his senses to make the pot, so one can say that he not only understands the "principles and causes" of the pot (that is, the process) but has practiced the process by experiencing it at the sensory level. He understands the pot in his head and feels it in his heart. The outcome is an honors student who, in Aristotle's words, "succeeds . . . better than those who have theory without experience" (499b).

So I leave the reader with two questions. Whom would you rather have as a teacher, someone who only understands the clay pot in his head, someone who only feels the clay pot in his heart, or someone who understand the clay pot in his head and feels it in his heart? Aristotle claims that the man who has only theory can teach, whereas the man who has only experience cannot (499b). His master-worker will be the best teacher for a specific subject because he delights in the senses, derives his

## HONORS AND THE CREATIVE ARTS IN NURSING

principles and causes from the details of life, and is therefore truly wise. I envision honors courses that reflect such wisdom as this. Could Aristotle teach the honors courses I envision? I'll leave this question with the reader.

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# Honors and the Creative Arts in Nursing: Music Therapy to Decrease Anxiety in Critical Care Patients

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In nursing education, we strive for a delicate balance between the science and the art of nursing. While curricular objectives address standards of practice assuring competencies in pathophysiology, pharmacology, clinical fundamentals, medical nursing, surgical nursing, and other domains of health science, we also purport to produce a practitioner with sensitivity and compassion. The honors in nursing option, begun in 2000 at UAB, has allowed us to push the creative side of nursing to a higher level. Honors students have clearly taken this opportunity with enthusiasm. Our first nursing honors graduate, Ms. Cynthia Leach-Fuller, investigated an application of music therapy in nursing while she was a student in our program. The research she completed, a discussion of which follows, exemplifies the creative process in a scientific setting.

Ms. Leach-Fuller joined our inaugural class of honors students in nursing as an experienced registered nurse. She had begun the process of completing requirements for the BSN. From her initial interview, it was obvious that she possessed both great knowledge and creativity. She was seeking to reach the highest levels of accomplishment in the profession to which she was already committed. The honors program represented both the culmination of long-held dreams and a legitimately earned position.

In our initial interview, Ms. Leach-Fuller recounted the observation that would become the basis of her honors project. A teen patient in intensive care following a motor vehicle accident was semi-comatose, responding to stimuli not with words but with gestures and motion. He was clearly anxious, restless, and hard to manage without significant medication. Ms. Leach-Fuller had noticed that, when music was played, the patient seemed to relax, becoming more cooperative and at ease. She asked his mother to bring in tapes he enjoyed at home and found that with this “music therapy” he could be more calm, be more appropriately responsive, and heal more easily.

When Ms. Leach-Fuller joined the honors program, her questions were those of an academic novice who was unfamiliar with the methods of research, but they were also questions of a clinical expert who knew what questions to ask. Coming from a

community hospital, she had never heard of anyone else interested in music therapy. What she found at UAB was a rich literature in music therapy and numerous supportive resources. She located and completed her mentorship with a certified music therapist and initiated her honors project as an application of music therapy. Her intuitive, creative energies were channeled through her honors work into a developed working knowledge, manifold skills, and the application of a novel approach to nursing.

### **Background in Music Therapy**

Music can affect moods, spark memories, and foster associations. Many people believe that these abilities make music uniquely helpful in relieving the effects of mental or physical disability or illness, and this belief has led to the use of music as a therapeutic intervention (Marwick, 2000). Music is now used as a non-invasive treatment modality to help patients relax and cope with the uncomfortable issues of illness. Ever since ancient times, though, music has been acknowledged as having therapeutic value.

The literature regarding music therapy shows that music therapy has been organized as a professional activity since the 1950's. The American Music Therapy Association sponsors educational training for licensure by the Certification Board for Music Therapists. Currently, there are 8000 certified music therapists in the United States and Canada. Music therapists are now utilized in a variety of settings including nursing homes, geriatric and psychiatric units, hospitals, and physical rehabilitation programs. Regardless how convincing anecdotal accounts and individual observations about music therapy may seem, this procedure will begin to enjoy widespread success only if it can be validated by systematic studies providing consistent proof of its effectiveness. The two most important current issues in music therapy have to do with reimbursement and research. Evidence-based research will provide the basis for future development.

Music has been shown to have more than entertainment value. If the appropriate selection is made, it can stop the cycle of ceaseless thinking and produce relaxation (Sammon, 1997). One study suggested that the use of intra-operative music decreased patient-controlled requirements for sedatives and analgesics (Koch, Kain, Ayoub & Rosenbaum, 1998). Music has also been shown to decrease infant pain. Babies listening to music during surgery displayed significantly less pain by the end of the procedure than babies who weren't listening to music during surgery. The group that did not listen to music displayed an increase in heart rate and pain intensity (Kech & Gerkenmeyer, 2000).

### **Methodology of the Honors Project**

The purpose of the study conducted by this first honors graduate was to decrease levels of anxiety and help patients relax with music therapy. The sample consisted of critical care adults whose sensory acuity level was within normal limits. The study variables were pre- and post-therapy blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate, and emotional disposition as evidenced by muscle tension/relaxation, facial expressions,

and anxiety levels. One research question guided this study: will there be a decrease in level of anxiety in critical care patients receiving music therapy?

Patients were invited to participate in the study as part of their scheduled music therapy sessions, which were provided daily by a certified music therapist. This intervention had been in place in the university medical center for several years. The intervention may be initiated by the patient's or a family member's request or upon recommendation by the nurse or physician. For the patient who is a candidate for the therapy, the music therapist offers a selection of music from gospel to rock and that can include taped selections or live vocal or instrumental works. Approval of the study for use of human subjects was granted by the Institutional Review Board of the university. Individuals who agreed to participate were asked their own level of anxiety before and after the music session. Their vital signs including blood pressure, heart rate and respiratory rate were taken every five minutes.

## Results

Five patients met the criteria for participation in the study. Four of the subjects were female, and one was male, and ages ranged from 45 to 73. Music selections included gospel, folk, and classical.

Anxiety was present by self-report in 3 of 5 subjects prior to the session. Based on a 1-5 scale of "not anxious" to "highly anxious," the pre-session mean score was 3.3. At the end of the session, 4 of 5 reported that they were "not anxious" and the mean anxiety score decreased to 2.6. Because the sample size was so small, these findings were not statistically significant.

Heart rate dropped during the session from a mean value of 94.2 pre- to 91.4 mid- to 91.2 post-session. Change in blood pressure was less consistent: systolic pressure dropped mid-session but increased by the end for an overall slight decrease. Diastolic pressure peaked mid session, post-session being overall lower than pre-session. Findings within individuals varied from this pattern, and the music may have stimulated some neurologically mediated circulatory mechanisms. Dispositions were rated on a scale of happy-to-sad and of comfortable-to-restless.

## Discussion

Overall results of this study demonstrated a reduction of anxiety levels and vital signs during and after music therapy. There was one participant whose vital signs increased, although this subject reported a lessened level of anxiety and a happy disposition. In another case, a participant's caregiver reported lowered levels of her own anxiety, which she attributed to her having been present during the patient's session. Therefore, there seem to be benefits for caregivers as well as for their patients.

Results from this study support the opinion that music therapy can reduce levels of anxiety in critically ill patients. As there is yet little published data on the *physiological* effects of music therapy, continued research should be directed toward further investigation into this area. The systematic investigation of nurses into methods of healing previously considered to be intuitive but to lack support from the

scientific community may reveal new procedures that are essential to the holistic care of persons during both illness and health. The use of the creative arts may hold great potential for new developments in the practice of nursing.

### **Honors and the Creative Arts in Leadership Development in Nursing**

Music therapy is growing in popularity with recent articles detailing the benefits of this intervention in areas of pediatric nursing (Berlin, 1998), childbirth (Olson, 1998), and oncology/cancer nursing (Lane, 1992). Through honors educational opportunities, students may develop the creative art of nursing care as they discover, explore, and integrate innovative modalities as an essential component of practice.

Nursing has been described as a *fine art*, whether explicitly or implicitly, by scholars ranging from Florence Nightingale to those of the present day (Donahue, 1985). In his report "Scholarship Revisited," Earnest L. Boyer (1990) defines four processes integral to the scholarship of undergraduate education: discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Through discovery of existing resources in music therapy and their integration and application into the science of nursing practice, our first nursing honors graduate, Ms. Leach-Fuller, effectively demonstrated Boyer's definition of scholarship. Additionally, because nursing is an interpersonal discipline, student development in the *affective* domain (not just in the domain of *understanding*) is or ought to be a goal of professional nursing education. B. S. Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives gives a framework for exploring four levels of affective development (Krathwohl et al., 1964). In the first level (*attending to another person's needs*), Ms. Leach-Fuller recognized the effect of music therapy on her patient's well-being and implemented procedures to utilize this therapy as part of his care. She evidenced the second level of affective development (*valuing*) by treating music therapy as an important practice component and by pushing her ideas about it to even higher levels of understanding and application in the honors course. As an intensive care nurse, Ms. Leach-Fuller plans to use this modality whenever possible to benefit her patients; it is thus part of her *organization of practice*, the third level (in Bloom's terminology) of affective development. Finally, Ms. Leach-Fuller was able, through mentorship, project development, and dissemination, to reach the fourth level of affective development: *characterization by the value*. For her, the art of nursing can and should be practiced concurrently with the science in a manner benefiting both the profession and the patient.

It is well recognized in nursing education that the profession is demanding not only cognitively but also emotionally. Nurses use emotional intelligence, defined as personal competence (self management) and social competence (capacity for relating to others), to provide care to patients and family members (Bellack, 1999). Bellack argues further that nursing curricula, while teaching cognitive and psychomotor competence, fail to allow for development of these personal and social competencies so essential to practice. Inundated by the memorization and learning of baseline concepts essential to nursing care, the undergraduate student can lose the basics of showing active interest and concern for others, recognizing and responding to client

needs, and listening effectively. These skills, she notes, are both desirable and valued in a relationship-intense and service-based profession such as nursing. Bellack goes on to advocate non-traditional and novel learning experiences as a necessary element to building a student's emotional intelligence. Among those novel learning experiences are mentorships and innovative projects such as those made possible through honors education.

E. R. Bruderle (1994) discusses the importance of using the creative arts to develop nurse leaders. She first recognizes that leadership is an inherent quality in those who aspire to the profession. Creativity and openness to new ideas is a characteristic of leaders, and mentoring is one approach to developing such characteristics. Bruderle sees the humanities as fostering the ability to integrate feelings, ideas, and experience with one's personal (and professional) experiences. She argues that leadership is better learned than taught and that leaders must cultivate self-awareness, imagination, creativity, and sensitivity to the uniqueness of individuals.

Did our honors student become a better leader, enhance her creativity, and learn to apply humanistic content to the practice of nursing through the integration of honors and the creative arts? Her chosen innovation was an integrative therapy, a modality that functions as an integrative whole, interacting with multiple processes and systems. However, it is also a modality whose effects have not been measured or evaluated systematically. In her three-month internship with the music therapist, Ms. Leach-Fuller experienced a breadth and range of music therapy applications for a variety of client conditions and ages. Her knowledge of and sensitivity to the beneficial effects of this intervention were strengthened. In choosing to evaluate this methodology, she sought to find ways to describe the benefits of the seemingly immeasurable effects she was observing. Her initial observations were strengthened through systematic study. The project met criteria outlined by the National Institutes of Health for evaluating research in non-traditional therapies in that her primary question was (a) asked by a researcher knowledgeable in the experience and practice of the modality, (b) answerable, explicit, and practical, and (c) important in the alleviation of suffering (Smith, 1998). The application of scientific methodology through the honors project then provided the bridge between the art and the science of nursing. By developing her personal competencies in the modality and recognizing not one but numerous effective applications to human responses in illness, Ms. Leach-Fuller clearly developed her abilities as a leader in the practice of acute care nursing.

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PATRICIA B. WORRALL

# “Expressive Technology”: Multimedia Projects in Honors Courses

PATRICIA B. WORRALL

GAINESVILLE COLLEGE

*“NCHC seeks to enhance opportunities (academic, cultural, and social) responsive to educational needs of highly able and/or exceptionally motivated undergraduate students.”*

—National Collegiate Honors Council Mission Statement

*“. . . we often find ourselves casting about for effective ways to educate students for a world with which we, ourselves, are unfamiliar—and about which we remain uncertain.” (3-4)*

—Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe

“**H**ow might one build a creative arts component . . . into a course not otherwise involved with the creative arts?” was one of the questions Rusty Rushton posed in his Call for Papers for the volume titled “Honors and the Creative Arts.” His question caught my attention. The NCHC’s Mission Statement calls upon us as teachers of Honors courses “to enhance opportunities (academic, cultural, and social) responsive to educational needs of highly able and/or exceptionally motivated undergraduate students.” On the other hand, however, we may feel, as Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe clearly do, that “we often find ourselves casting about for effective ways to educate students for a world with which we, ourselves, are unfamiliar—and about which we remain uncertain” (3-4). A significant element of that world is, of course, technology.

As a faculty member in the English Department at Gainesville College, a two-year, liberal arts college, I teach, among other things, a sophomore Honors World Literature course. I taught it during the fall of 2000 and again in the fall of 2001. Prior to the beginning of Fall Semester 2000, I struggled with what type of project to include in this new course. I wanted a project that would engage and challenge my students, as well as tap into their creativity. I finally decided that, instead of traditional research papers, students would create websites that incorporate hypertext and hypermedia. These two terms have been in general use for a number of years but still bear defining. In his book *Hypertext 2.0*, George P. Landow uses the term

*hypertext* to denote “text composed of blocks of text . . . and the electronic links that join them” and the term *hypermedia* as the extension of “the notion of the text in hypertext by the inclusion of visual information, sound, animation, and other forms of data” (3). Thus, hypermedia (or multimedia) incorporates elements found in the creative arts, such as words, images, and sound.

In this essay, I will discuss the creative art of multimedia work and the pedagogy concerned with it, focusing in particular on the web projects my students created. I must say at the outset that I am neither an educational theorist nor a creative artist. My purposes here are merely to explore issues concerning the relationship between technology, creative arts, and pedagogy. In doing so, I have relied heavily on the insights and expertise of theorists involved in art, pedagogy, technology, and new media. My ultimate goal, however, is to open discussions about how these four areas can come together to benefit students in Honors courses.

## Art and Technology in Education

It is perhaps best to begin with the issue of the relationship between art and technology in education. In her article “Bridge To, Bridge From: The Arts, Technology, and Education,” Carol Gigliotti suggests that the metaphor of education as the bridge between art and technology “locate[s] technology on one side of the span, the arts on the other,” and that each becomes the “antithesis of the other” (89). She points out that the “implied purpose of the bridge . . . is to provide a ground upon which ideas from each of these areas of endeavor may travel to the other” (89). She goes on to argue that “[o]ne may just as well have envisioned art as the bridge between education and technology, or technology as the bridge between art and education” (89). The latter metaphor of technology as the “bridge” joining art and education places technology as the central connection for enriching both the arts and education and in turn enriching students. For Gigliotti, “[t]he partnerships constructed between the arts and interactive computer technologies are extremely important ones to the forming and defining of the future of education” (92). In a similar, but perhaps broader, argument, Charles Traub and Jonathan Lipkin suggest that “The computer has created profound new ways of interacting, thinking, and doing. The digital computer and its accompanying methodologies recreate modes of working which stress relationships between bodies of knowledge and human minds” (25). They go on to point out that “[h]uman expression is nondisciplinary by nature. Disciplines exist only because of boundaries [that] are artificially imposed by the academy” (25).

More specifically, Richard A. Lanham discusses the merging of and common ground between creative arts and technology. Lanham notes that “[b]ecause word, image, and sound are expressed in a common digital code, the arts take on a new and radical convertibility that threatens both their present compartmentalization and its academic departmental embodiment” (xi). He proposes that “[d]igitization gives [the arts] a new common ground, a quasi-mathematical equivalency that recalls the great Platonic dream for the unity of all knowledge” (11). In addition, he suggests, “[B]ecause all the arts face the same technological pressures, they are going to find,



create, new relationships through that technology, through their new digital equivalences” (13). Lanham concludes: “In the digital light of these technologies, the disciplinary boundaries that currently govern academic study of the arts dissolve before our eyes. . . . It is not only the distinction between the creator and the critic that dissolves, but the walls between painting and music and sculpture, architecture, and literature” (13).

To describe computer technology, Lanham also uses the phrases “expressive technology” and “expressive medium,” referring to the capabilities of the personal computer (ix). Among these capabilities is the creation of multimedia. Jason Ohler extends Lanham’s argument by pointing out that “the multimedia environment of the Web . . . requires students to think and communicate as designers and artists” (16). For Ohler, the “age of art has arrived, leaving behind the text-centric world that has guided us for so long” (16). He argues that the “language of art has become the next literacy—or the fourth R,” and that “we need to move quickly to prepare students to be literate in the world that they are inheriting and rapidly shaping” (16). In summary, he notes, “The other three Rs are literacies that facilitate learning and expression in content areas. In a multimedia world, this definition of literacy exactly captures the role of art” (19).

I would now like to consider ways in which multimedia work shares common ground with the creative arts. On a very basic level, as Lanham notes, *pixels* are “‘picture elements,’ the dots that electronically paint the letters onto the computer screen” (3). Thus, as Lanham points out, “[t]extual surface is now a malleable and self-conscious one,” and “[a]ll kinds of production decisions have now become authorial ones” (5). In talking about “taking literacy into the electronic era,” Gunter Kress discusses “the ‘turn to the visual’” (“Visual and Verbal Modes” 56). He points out that when using computer technology “the visual is there, and the possibilities even of producing written text focus on visual aspects—font-types and size, layout, visuals to accompany the linguistic text” (56). In addition, Kress suggests that the “‘look of the page’ is now not a matter only of a specialized group of producers of texts; it is a general concern, and the means for page design are readily there” (56). Kress’s second point is that “contemporary technologies of page or text production make it easy to combine different modes of representation—image can be combined with language, sound can be added to image, movement of image is possible” (56). He goes on to say, “[O]ne person now has to understand the semiotic potentials of each mode—sound, visual, speech—and orchestrate them to accord with his or her *design*” (56).

Landow makes a further connection between creative arts and technology. He equates hypertext/hypermedia/multimedia with the art form of collage. He uses the on-line *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) definition of collage: “an abstract form of art in which photographs, pieces of paper, newspaper cuttings, string, etc., are placed in juxtaposition and glued to the pictorial surface” (“Collage-Writing” 156). He emphasizes that “[h]ypertext, which permits authors to use traditional methods, also permits them to create . . . effects simply by connecting texts with links. Hypertext . . . appears as textual collage—‘textual’ referring to alpha-numeric information—but more sophisticated forms of this medium produce visual collage as well” (160). The

more sophisticated forms would be multimedia, which combine text, image, and sound. Landow’s assertion is that “collage clearly exists in this new writerly medium almost certainly because it so fundamentally combines the visual and the verbal” (166). Landow acknowledges, however, that “[h]ypertext writing . . . does not coincide fully with either montage or collage” (170). He “[draws] upon them chiefly . . . to [help us] . . . understand this new kind of hypertext writing as a mode that both emphasizes and bridges gaps, and that thereby inevitably becomes an art of assemblage. . . . It is a text in which new kinds of connections have become possible” (170).

Along similar lines, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin discuss the concept of remediation and the new media. They use the term *remediation* to “express the way in which one medium is seen by our culture as reforming or improving upon another” (59). Their focus is on the visual technologies (computer graphics and the World Wide Web). They “argue that these new media are doing exactly what their predecessors have done: presenting themselves as refashioned and improved versions of other media. Digital visual media can be understood through the ways in which they honor, rival, and revise linear-perspective painting, photography, film, television, and print” (14-15). Bolter and Grusin propose that “[w]hat is new about new media comes from the particular ways in which they refashion older media and the ways in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media” (14-15). In their discussion, Bolter and Grusin define digital art as “static graphic images made with pixels rather than oils or watercolors. . . . Such images are created with the aid of two- and three-dimensional graphics programs, and they may remediate all sorts of traditional visual art, from oil-based painting to pen-and-ink-illustrations, photographs, and collage and photomontage” (133). They note that digital art “may be an image that was generated entirely in the digital domain, or it may contain elements from other media that have been scanned in and modified” (133). Bolter and Grusin define *medium* as “that which remediates. It is that which appropriates the techniques, forms, and social significance of other media and attempts to rival or refashion them” (97). The discussions of Ohler, Kress, Bolter, and Grusin reinforce Lanham’s description of the computer as an “expressive medium,” one that can be used to incorporate other media as well as aspects of the creative arts: text, sound, and image.

## From Theory to Pedagogy

I would like to turn now from theory to pedagogy. The project that my Honors students were assigned was to create fairly simple web sites consisting of nine web pages per site. Their sites were constructed with conventions of a traditional research paper plus the new conventions of multimedia. The anchor page served the same function as an introduction in a research paper. In their discussion on the anchor page, students had to outline the critical issue that they would explore and provide a context for their argument. In addition, they had to create labeled navigation links to the rest of the site pages. These navigation links functioned as a table of contents. Like the body of a research paper, six of the nine pages were devoted to expanding and exploring aspects of their topic with detailed discussions. Unlike a print paper,

however, the body of the web site contained keyword links to relevant pages and discussions within the site and to appropriate external sites on the World Wide Web. Thus, the discussions became hypertext. In addition, students were required to provide a conclusion page that summarized the main points of their argument. Since the project was a research project, students also had to include at least four secondary sources and provide a “works cited” page. In addition, elements of multimedia were also required for the project. Students had to include at least one image per page, and they had the option of adding music, which several of them chose to include.

Students used Microsoft’s FrontPage, a web-authoring software. Because time was needed to introduce students to the software, we devoted about a third of the semester to working on the project. To construct and create the project, students had to learn a variety of skills such as importing backgrounds and images, creating navigation buttons, making tables, setting up hyperlinks, and adding music. They also had to make creative and aesthetic decisions: selecting colors and textures for the background, deciding on the color, size, and style of the font, finding images that complemented their discussions, arranging blocks of text and images on the pages, and incorporating appropriate music.

Thus through the use of “expressive technology,” each student became what Traub and Lipkin call a “creative interlocutor,” a “designer who facilitates the exchange of ideas and information . . . the curator, editor, and collector, then the maker, weaver, welder, builder, and distributor” (“Creative Interlocutor” 25). Traub and Lipkin argue that, “[r]ather than erect boundaries between areas of thought, the computer . . . has the ability to remove them and allow the return of liberal arts to their traditional meaning, freeing us to think” (33). For Traub and Lipkin, the “new creative individual” is “distinguished by [his or her] ability to negotiate the disparate fields of human knowledge, bringing them together in previously unimagined ways, and relating them for others to use meaningfully” (34). This concept of the “new creative individual” was what I hoped for by assigning multimedia projects.

In both Honors World Literature courses, the majority of students were enthusiastic from the beginning about the projects. Doing a multimedia project rather than a traditional research paper, of course, piqued their interest. There were, however, some students in both courses who expressed reservation—not specifically about the projects, but about the technology they would need to learn in order to create the projects. Knowing that I would have students who had little or no experience with creating or designing web sites, I set aside class time for students to learn FrontPage and time for class discussions about the basic conventions of web page design. I was very fortunate to have assistance from Jo McClendon, the Outreach Services Librarian at Gainesville College, who is pursuing her doctoral degree in instructional technology. Jo provided technical assistance and taught the students how to use the software. She and I were both available to help students during and (individually) outside class. Once the hesitant students realized that I was not going to abandon them to figure out for themselves the technical aspects of the project, they were reassured. Teaching the technology that the students would need did require a considerable amount of class time, but as Gigliotti’s metaphor of technology as a bridge suggests, technology can form the connection between the

creative arts and academic disciplines as it did with these multimedia projects, and that bridge was worth building. Once students learned the technical skills needed for the project, they could then begin to “bridge” the creative arts and academic content.

## The Projects

Before discussing the projects, I want to return to Traub and Lipkin’s “creative interlocutor” as a “designer who facilitates the exchange of ideas and information . . . the curator, editor, and collector, then the maker, weaver, welder, builder, and distributor” (25). As the students worked on their projects, they assumed these various roles while at the same time facilitating ideas and information. In creating their projects, students truly became designers. They collected images and music, which were then incorporated along with their texts onto their pages. As designers, students had to make choices of appropriate images that illustrated and enhanced their discussions. These artistic choices included not only the images, but also the aesthetic placement of the images on the pages. Other design choices had to be made. Students had to decide on background, font size, and banner headings for each of their pages. Among the design conventions we discussed was the need for site unity (consistent backgrounds, font size, navigation tools). As designers, students had to be aware of the visual components of their projects in addition to the content. At the end of the semester, students presented their projects to the class, after which they were made accessible for others, such as family and friends, to view. Thus, students became the distributors of information and ideas to a wider audience than just their classmates.

In both Honors World Literature courses, we focused on fairy tales. For their projects, I gave students the freedom to explore fairy tales in a number of different forms: oral traditions, print stories, and film adaptations. The information and ideas presented encompassed different theoretical approaches that ran the gamut from cultural studies to feminist and psychoanalytic theory to historical contexts. Several students compared fairy tales, such as Cinderella, from several different cultures, including Russian and Chinese versions of the story, and they included in their projects images that illustrated the different roles of the Cinderella figure from these cultures. Others explored Disney’s films of fairy tales, such as *Snow White* and *Beauty and the Beast*, alongside their textual counterparts, again adding images from the films and illustrations from storybooks. In their projects, students discussed the changing representations of the female characters. Others focused on the stories of Little Red Riding Hood, exploring the different representations of the main character and what those representations reveal about the cultures that produced them. What the students discovered and then presented in their projects was insightful, and they certainly provided more diverse information than I could have imparted through classroom lectures. We all gained knowledge and were exposed to new ideas through these projects.

From both classes, I found that the students’ projects were indeed, as Landow suggests, like collages, an “art of assemblage” made up of texts that imparted ideas, images that illustrated those ideas, and music that aesthetically enhanced both the words and images, thus incorporating several of the creative arts in order to make

new kinds of connections. In addition, as Traub and Lipkin suggest, computer technology can free students to think, and through multimedia projects, students can break down the boundaries between academic disciplines. The multimedia projects allowed students to gain skills in computer technology and graphic design, while at the same time exploring and making connections between art, literature, and music. Multimedia web projects enable students to draw from the creative arts by having them work with words, images, and sounds. Thus through multimedia projects, students become “creative interlocutors” who “work across academic artistic boundaries” (Traub and Lipkin, 2000, 34). As Traub and Lipkin have also argued, “True creativity lies in the management of knowledge, not in the production of given objects of art or tomes of discourse” (“Creative Interlocutor” 35). Through these projects, students gathered knowledge and skills from several different disciplines and learned to exploit a technology that merges traditional text-based academic disciplines with the creative arts.

## Conclusion

As a teacher, I wanted to find projects that would engage and challenge my Honors students. These multimedia projects did just that. The knowledge they gained went far beyond what I could have imparted. The students were engaged in their projects and enjoyed seeking the information and resources they needed: critical sources, paintings, book illustrations, and musical accompaniment. They learned skills in web design and computer technology. More importantly, they completed and presented their projects with pride in their accomplishments.

Assigning multimedia projects in a course does, however, require a strong commitment from students and teachers, as well as flexibility and patience from both. As mentioned earlier, class time needs to be set aside for teaching the technology and for discussions about web design and non-linear writing. Technical support is also needed for setting up the sites and for technical trouble shooting when things don't go right. Students who have little or no computer experience need individual help and reassurance. To address the lack of computer experience on the part of some students, I assigned group projects for the fall of 2001 class. In each group, I ensured that at least one member had some experience with creating web pages or had sufficient experience with computers or was generally confident using technology. This approach worked well, and I was pleased with the team approach of group members helping each other to create the projects. The group projects allowed students to negotiate responsibilities and utilize the strengths of individual members, as well as to produce projects that reflected collaborative creativity. From a teaching standpoint, I too had to negotiate my role in the classroom. I became a facilitator and consultant. As the students worked on their projects, I moved among the groups answering questions about strategies of content organization, resources that might be useful, issues of page design, placement of images, and how to make a table and insert a graphic. Thus the project required me to go beyond the traditional role of providing content. I, along with my students, had to learn the technology and the conventions of multimedia. I must say that learning new skills was time consuming and that

shifting my role in the classroom often required rethinking pedagogical strategies, but as teachers we are confronted by a current and future world that we too have to learn to negotiate our way through, both technologically and pedagogically.

Concerning the future, Gunter Kress suggests that the “task is to provide young people with dispositions, knowledges and skills they will need” (“‘English’ at the Crossroads” 66). He also calls upon us “to open up full and productive access to the multiplicity of representational and communicational potentials, which will be essential for competent practice in the electronic age, in the societies and economies of the near future” (86). I believe that including multimedia projects in Honors courses provides students not only with computer skills, but also with the critical thinking skills they will need to prosper in the electronic age. As Traub and Lipkin assert, “[T]he traditions of a learning environment must re-engage the radical realities brought by electrical engineering and the imaging arts. The dialogue ought to be renewed in the discourse of communications creativity” (“If We Are Digital” 366). As teachers in Honors Programs, we need to look to the future and begin a dialogue discussing ways to use computer technology and ways to explore the potential of multimedia in our classrooms.

## Note

Greg Wickliff and Kathleen Blake Yancey, in their article “The perils of creating a class Web site,” have already begun the discussion. They co-taught a junior level, undergraduate honors course titled “Peace, War, Technology.” A component of the course was a web-based “illustrative essay.” They conclude that the “illustrated essay structure provided a halfway place for students to connect their strengths (reading and textual literacy) with new media and new ambitions—the visual argument” (186).

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<sup>1</sup> I do not mean to suggest here that analytical or traditional methods are “uncreative” in the broad sense. Critical or analytical functions at their best are intended to construct original thoughts, but such functions are not generally founded on the specific application of aesthetic and artistic sensibilities, the more narrow use of the term “creativity” that I wish to explore here.



# Jesters Freed from their Jack-in-the-Boxes: Or Springing Creativity Loose from Traditionally Entrenched Honors Students

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Many people in our society manage adequately all their lives without ever flexing a creative muscle. Yet, most of us involved in Honors education expect and want more for our students. We know that those who resist using creativity in their lives and work will be unlikely to push beyond the traditional boundaries of scholastic analysis. Further, we reason that, by operating beyond such boundaries, our students may someday find a cure for cancer, recognize signs marking sentient life on other planets, or move people to leave hatred of differences behind. We realize that such dreams are possible only if we agree that “the purpose of education should be understanding rather than simply knowing; its focus should be on the active process of learning and creating rather than the passive acquisition of facts” (Root-Bernstein 316). Like most Honors educators, I am concerned with how best to involve my students in the rich possibilities available to those who can successfully engage both critical and creative modes of thought. As a former undergraduate poetry major who turned to the highly traditional field of medieval studies in graduate school, I am constantly aware of the

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<sup>2</sup> Arthur J. Cropley, “Creativity and Cognition: Producing Effective Novelty,” *Roeper Review* 21.4 (May/June 1999), p. 253. Another helpful work by Cropley is *More Ways than One: Fostering Creativity* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Among those studies most useful for the purposes of this article are George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophies of the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); and George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> In addition to sources cited elsewhere in this article, the following works provide helpful background and information on the contemporary study of creativity: Denis Dutton and Michael Krausz, eds., *The Concept of Creativity in Science and Art*, American University Publications in Philosophy III (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981); and David G. Tuerck, ed., *Creativity and Liberal Learning: Problems and Possibilities in American Education* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, 1987).

## JESTERS FREED FROM THEIR JACK-IN-THE-BOXES

extent to which creative expression has served me as both a springboard and a sanctuary for fresh or prolonged reflection on my own research and teaching. Such a background taught me the personal and professional value of integrating critical and creative faculties into my own work. However, my current teaching experience in an interdisciplinary Honors program has taught me that many academic environments so strongly encourage students to compartmentalize and prioritize their learning that the educational advantages of artistic creation are frequently ignored or even lost. To avoid such a fate in my own humanities-based courses, I combine standard critical thinking assignments (such as research papers, analytical essays, and reading-response assignments) with creative arts exercises (such as poems, illustrations for difficult textual passages, and historical fiction projects) to give my students experience using both faculties.

While institutions of higher education typically offer degrees and courses in subjects such as fine arts, theatre arts, creative writing, and media arts that automatically appeal to students already interested in creative expression, these programs are generally perceived by those outside such departments as adjunct to the “real subjects” of higher education. Subscribing to such views, the majority of university students avoid these classes and enter disciplines featuring perspectives attractive to critical, but not necessarily creative, thinkers. Taking their cues from discipline-specialized teachers as well as previous educational experiences, these students commonly learn to choose analytical procedure and research to the exclusion of artistic experimentation.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, because Honors programs are philosophically and institutionally committed to seeking the highest level of academic achievement, we ordinarily focus our curriculum on students who display the traits of academic excellence, or the potential for such excellence, preferred by university cultures. Reflecting the aims of most Honors educators, Martha Rosenthal succinctly explains her program’s focus on “student-centered learning, critical thinking, community involvement, learning outside the classroom, an interdisciplinary approach, and a commitment to academic excellence” (15). I, too, want my students to learn those concepts and have no wish to argue that Honors education should seek otherwise. More central to the point I wish to make, however, is Rosenthal’s subsequent remark that her program hopes its

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<sup>5</sup> The scientists among us can explain the theories suggesting that the right side of the human brain produces creative, artistic expression through divergent thinking, while the left side primarily controls logical, analytical operations by means of convergent thinking. Such theories posit that where the left side of our brains is involved with data, the right side provides the creative capacity to synthesize that data into original ideas and perceptions. While the distinctions between right- and left-brain activities are probably more familiar than they are biologically accurate, given the complexities of deciphering how the two parts of the brain actually communicate with each other, I find the language of such theories offers a useful means of distinguishing between creative and strictly analytical faculties. A useful summary of theories regarding the dual nature of the human brain for non-specialists may be found in Betty Edwards, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain: A Course in Enhancing Creativity and Artistic Confidence* (Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher, 1979), pp. 25-44.

students “will continue their intellectual and creative development throughout their lives” (15). To foster the development Rosenthal articulates here, I ask my students to develop artistic expression as a means to expand the analytical functions emphasized in most college courses.

Unfortunately, although a few of the most dynamic and successful students in my program are both strong analytical thinkers and creative artists highly engaged in their media, the majority of students in my classes (and I suspect also in other Honors classes throughout the country) are more comfortable with factual examinations and critical interpretations of data than with the creative expression of their thoughts. Sadly, these same students are frequently those “who are best equipped to be academically and intellectually adventurous [but who] are sometimes the least apt to do so” (Harte 26). John Zubizarretta comments on such students when he asks:

[H]as anyone else had the experience of sitting through graduation and noticing that some of the students who earn academic honors are not necessarily the same students whom we would have identified as the students willing to take intellectual and personal risks, willing to take on unique or additional challenges, willing to think critically and learn liberally? They have earned the grade perhaps by doing what they’ve been told, figuring out the system, staying squeaky clean in work habits, but they lack luster and tolerance for the wildness of learning (as opposed to being efficient with knowledge), lack eccentric imagination. (26)

I recognize these same lackluster students in my own program. Their intolerance for “the wildness of learning” arises from an unfamiliarity with and disrespect for the creative process. These are the students who avoid courses in creative arts subjects. They were never taught that creativity is the product of scientists as well as artists. As the French physician Armand Trousseau describes, “all science touches on art; . . . The worst scientist is he who is not an artist” (qtd. in Root-Bernstein 21). Their “lack of eccentric imagination” results from poor access to the creative imagination that may benefit their long-range professional goals.

Although the degree to which the development of creativity affects an individual’s future achievements is debated in academic circles, researchers generally agree that the ability to function creatively provides a crucial intellectual advantage. Arthur J. Cropley, an influential scholar on the subject of creativity, presents compelling psychological evidence that intellectual giftedness may be linked specifically to creative cognition, which produces what he calls “effective novelty.”<sup>2</sup> Studies by Lakoff and Johnson further support a provocative philosophical framework that describes thought as something embodied explicitly in the biological functions of the brain.<sup>3</sup> For them, reason is grounded in the actuality of physical experience and “is not purely literal, but largely metaphorical and imaginative” (Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophies* 4). In addition, Robert and Michèle Root-Bernstein pinpoint the importance of creative reasoning to future advances when they write that “Learning to think creatively in one discipline therefore opens the door to understanding creative thinking in all disciplines. Educating this universal creative imagination is the key to producing lifelong learners capable of shaping the

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innovations of tomorrow” (vii). Other works produced in the last twenty years from diverse disciplinary perspectives that examine the cognitive roots and social manifestations of creativity assert that its increased use in education has vastly greater consequences for improving the human condition than was previously understood.<sup>4</sup>

Most of us in Honors education yearn to teach the next Albert Einstein or Jonas Salk. But I submit that education which encourages students to employ only their critical faculties will be unlikely to fulfill such hopes. As my UNM colleague Ruth Meredith explains, “Contemporary Western culture has tended to privilege logical thought over imaginative thought because it fails to recognize the close relationship between them. Without imagination, logic becomes trapped in what is already known and cannot make the creative leaps necessary for understanding how we create the realities we inhabit” (Chapter on “Philosophical Reflections,” ii). About the creative thinking that motivated his own revolutionary work in the traditional field of physics, Einstein is quoted as saying that “imagination is more important than knowledge” (Root-Bernstein 23). We as teachers in higher education know that analytical and artistic faculties are neither mutually exclusive nor necessarily separate forms of thinking. Even so, our academic world still values most highly the analytical or left-brain pursuits.<sup>5</sup> Because of this investment in the critical capabilities of our students, we sometimes neglect the creative processes which may be taught best through artistic expression. By such neglect, I would argue that we help to produce the students so many of us bemoan—students who develop only competence, rather than the true excellence that Jack Dudley, in “A Place for Honors,” insists be the goal of Honors programs.

What can we do, then, to develop that creative thinking which augments analytical thinking in our Honors students, especially those most reluctant to explore their own creative potential? If we acknowledge that “creative thinking in every field begins in nonlogical, nonverbal forms” (Root-Bernstein 317), how can we fortify the imaginative qualities that give rise to such forms? Given the narrow limitations of degree programs and the overstuffed nature of most Honors programs, we cannot in good conscience compel each student to take enough creative arts courses to become truly proficient at wielding some artistic skill or another. Instead I propose that, to encourage students to think creatively, we expose them to basic skills in creative writing and/or visual imagery. Further, I suggest that they learn such skills in courses not only on the creative arts, but also on traditional subjects. By assigning activities designed to engage the human brain’s creative faculties not in lieu of but in concert with the brain’s critical ones, Honors teachers can enhance our students’ potential for professional excellence and innovation.

While I am certain that Honors teachers want students to benefit from joining analysis to creative problem-solving, I suspect that we most often encourage such intellectual unions simply by *telling* our students to think “outside the box” or “beyond the box,” rather than asking them to express their knowledge and understanding through artistic forms. Yet, the pedagogical difficulty with telling students to think outside or beyond the box is that such an approach is defined by the limitations of analytical thinking and imposes a similarly confined structure (the box)

as a beginning point. My own first experiments in trying to get my students to think creatively ended up largely as engaging diversions from “the hard stuff” or “the real work” of my course content. I realized only later that my vague dissatisfaction with such forays resulted from the fact that they resembled nothing so much as a Jack-in-the-box toy, from which something colorful and fun pops out in a big surprise of noise and action, but which nevertheless remains completely attached to the physical structure of the box and is relegated, ultimately, to being stuffed back into hiding within the box. I had been *thinking* about how and what it meant to work outside traditional structures, when what I needed was to *imagine* the source of my failure to achieve this end in the metaphor of the child’s toy. Most of my students had no clue how to go about thinking outside the box; instead, they needed to *be* actually outside the academic box. Armed with this insight, I stopped talking to my students about creative thinking in research and started requiring them to create poems, stories, drawings, and collages along with their more traditional assignments.

Despite a cultural misconception that creativity “just happens” or “is inspired,” many artists and some recent scholars argue that creative expression is not innate and can be taught. A 1996 study by Eisenberger and Cameron, for example, strongly suggests that creativity can be developed at least in elementary school children. As all creative artists know, brilliant efforts in any art form come from hard work and extensive training in the successful use of gifts acquired through inspiration. Similarly, seven years of teaching college composition (English 101 type courses) earlier in my career proved to me that the most effective way to teach students to write analytical essays is not to tell them how to do so, but to give them lots of practice developing their thoughts in writing. Still, students unfamiliar with how to work creatively can rarely tap their imaginative faculties until they are trained to do so. To use another analogy, basic math may seem self-apparent to most adults, but we all need practice in it before becoming adept at its use. Few of us would have enough natural inspiration to know how to balance our checkbooks without first having had extensive math drills in grade school. Knowing how to use creative approaches to problems, academic or otherwise, requires similar practice in aesthetic endeavors such as putting words together harmoniously in a line of poetry or foregrounding the main subject in a collage of various images. Yet, how many of us had as much elementary school training in writing poetry or constructing art projects as we had in math or even spelling?

Explaining the necessity of training in artistic processes in order to expand creativity, Betty Edwards claims that “one becomes more creative *not* by trying to be more creative, but rather by further developing that part of the mind, the visual, perceptual mode of the brain, which is so deeply involved in creative thinking” and later that “any increase in perceptual skills will have a positive effect on creative endeavors” (230). In addition to improving my students’ critical thinking processes, my pedagogical aim is to help them activate those impulses of spontaneity, imagination, and artistic discovery that serve as the basic tools of any creative trade and all creative thought. To accomplish this goal, I insist that my students not only construct assignments from analytical perspectives, but also that they perform exercises, such as writing fictional narratives about or drawing stick figures of

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abstract concepts, to practice artistic expression. Mary Jane Petrowski alludes to the significance of such practice in creativity when she writes, “Creative breakthroughs are possible only after prolonged preparation” (310). My own teaching experience, grounded as it is in my personal background, leads me to believe that the practice of some kind of artistry is the best stimulus for getting students to be more creative, whether in the service of the next great American novel, a radical philosophical treatise on humanity’s place in the universe, or a scientific discovery that leads to cost-efficient production of clean fuel free for all the world’s populations. Yes, I dream big; that’s a legacy of my origins as a poet. But only if my students learn the creative skills that empower them to dream so hugely will they be able to enact such visions for themselves.

As a teacher, I struggle constantly with how much or how little to include in my syllabi in order to provide the most effective learning experience for my students. When I first timidly began using creative exercises in classes on classical studies or medieval culture, I was concerned both that my tenuous curricular balance would tumble and that my students already predisposed against working creatively would be resistant to my entire course because of such activities. Also, since I was unwilling to sacrifice analysis and research, I had to explore ways to merge creativity with my existing curriculum. After several attempts with mostly Jack-in-the-box types of exercises, I learned that combining critical skills together with artistic methods enabled me to keep my students both creatively and intellectually engaged without seriously compromising academic content or challenging students beyond their capacities. In my classes, activities calling for the use of creative skills are always linked to a discussion in which students analyze the results in light of the original works or to a formal essay evaluating the academic sources and materials used to accomplish the assignment. Juxtaposing these creative and critical efforts allows me to avoid mere Jack-in-the-box diversions that detract from my pedagogical goals. Instead, I seek opportunities for assignments that yield possibilities for novel intellectual dimensions in which the critical and creative intertwine. Although not all the creative approaches I try with my students are successful, my purpose in assigning such activities is to elicit new avenues for academic exchange in courses structured around traditional content. While the purpose of this article is not to highlight my own teaching strategies, but rather to suggest ways critical thinking may be supported and expanded by creative work in courses on traditional subjects, listing some of my most successful assignments may assist others seeking to develop their own approaches. These assignments include asking that students

- Use research to construct a journal or group of letters written from the point of view of a fictional character from an actual historical time period;
- Compose poems in ancient or medieval forms, such as Dantean tercets, Homeric stanzas, or Sapphic lyrics;
- Copy the handwriting or illuminations from manuscript pages using modern tools;
- Summarize abstract concepts from a text in the narrative form of a comic book or in a collage of images cut from magazines;

- Illustrate in a drawing a particularly difficult passage from Aquinas, Plato, or Aristotle;
- Illuminate or gloss photocopies of text pages from a medieval manuscript;
- Draw Celtic interlace patterns;
- Write inscriptions in Ogham or Norse runes for the monument of a fictional person.

For teachers already committed to student-centered pedagogies, incorporating such creative arts activities requires little extra work, training, or equipment. In fact, most of these activities are accomplished with only one or two simple tools such as pens or pencils, paper, crayons or color markers, and maybe some cellophane tape and scissors. After much experimentation during the last several years, I now generally incorporate six to eight short in-class creative exercises and one longer assignment in a creative form into most of my classes on traditional humanities-based subjects. While this pattern works well with my pedagogical goals for classes that meet twice a week for seventy-five minutes over a sixteen-week semester, other faculty prefer to have students work creatively for ten to fifteen minutes of every class.

While I have learned to balance the creative and critical components of my curriculum, persuading students that creative assignments can benefit their learning process is still not easy. The resistance so many of our students have to artistic expression signals their intense anxiety about their own creativity as well as the perceived lack of academic advantage endemic to creative efforts. Not only are courses in creative subjects usually considered ancillary features of higher education, but the majority of our students also have an acute fear of expressing their ideas in creative forms. Describing a similar discomfort, Katy Rose Resnick's Clarke College students write, "Imagine being told, after twelve years of schooling, to throw away the thought process to which you'd become accustomed and to start thinking in a different manner. (You'd be frightened, believe me!)" (Abben, et al 3). Since only a minority of our students possesses educational experience with artistic, right-brain actions, most students fear failure in their attempts to use creative tools and methods. By rejecting artistic expression of their ideas, these students dismiss the possible benefits afforded by a combination of right- and left-brain thinking. The rejection of such benefits is apparent when, after I have assigned a creative project, students frequently beg me to let them work on a research project instead. They respond to my creativity assignments with statements such as "I don't have a creative bone in my body," "I can't do art," "I don't understand poetry," or "I wouldn't even know where to start." Even after reassurances that anyone can construct whatever creative project I have assigned, these students most often go away looking tense and anxious. Their reactions betray the very real discomfort Honors students experience when asked to produce work outside normal analytical methods.

However, I find that my students' fear of working creatively regularly

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<sup>6</sup> For those interested in general studies of the jester figure, see Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935); and William Willeford, *The Fool and His Scepter* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press,

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diminishes as they become more confident in its practice. The same students who initially pleaded to do research projects instead of creative assignments consistently return no longer tense and anxious, but instead exhilarated and surprised by what they have accomplished. After completing creative projects, even the most reluctant students often make such comments as “I can’t believe this came out so good,” “I never knew I could think this way,” “This was a lot more fun than I thought it would be,” or “I got so involved in this that I spent more time on it than I would on a research paper and I think I learned more, too.” In addition, they often acquire more self-awareness and security in expressing their ideas across my curriculum. Although from a different educational environment, Nancy Mildrum’s explorations in creativity with elementary school children reflect my own findings with college Honors students in her statement that, “When children have experience with expansive attitudes related to creativity, they begin to feel more confident about who they are and what they have to contribute” (37). Once my students learn to work creatively even on a small scale, they begin to be less afraid of using creativity in other ways. When accompanied by solid training in analysis, creative expression in all types of classes allows my students to learn that critical and creative modes of thinking are most effective when they are integrated with each other. For instance, students whom I ask to compose a series of three Dantean tercets with an interlocking rhyme scheme about a political figure of our own time tend to understand more directly and at a deeper level the political implications of Dante’s work than those who study thirteenth-century Florentine politics only from a scholastic perspective. This improved understanding comes about because the artistic act of writing poetry demands that students bring their own subjective experiences to bear on the course content. When students read about thirteenth-century Florentine politics from academic sources, they have been trained to respond objectively to the interpretation of historical facts. But such objectivity cannot even hint at what it might have been like actually to live that same history. However, when asked to write a series of tercets describing the Hell a contemporary figure from our own time might deserve, students participate in their own concerns for an audience’s reaction to their work. By relating their own subjective experience with such assignments to Dante’s much larger effort, students begin to comprehend better the seriousness of the personal and political risks Dante faced when writing his *Divine Comedy*.

While traditional study and discussion of authors such as Homer, Dante, or Darwin allows Honors students to acquire academic knowledge and associated critical discourses, creative exercises linked to such knowledge invite students to own and value the uniqueness of their individual perceptions about academic

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<sup>7</sup> Although this nursery rhyme has many variations, one of its more common texts reads as follows:

For want of a nail, a shoe was lost.  
For want of a shoe, a horse was lost.  
For want of a horse, a rider was lost.  
For want of a rider, a foray was lost.  
For want of a foray, a battle was lost.  
For want of a battle, the war was lost.



material. As a medievalist and the coordinator of our program's 100-level Legacy courses in the foundations and development of western culture, I have a particular investment in encouraging my students to develop personal relationships with early sources and texts. Our Legacy faculty often debate ways to make students better aware of the relevance of seemingly archaic or culturally distanced course material to their lives in the early twenty-first century. Incorporating creative exercises and assignments into such courses as the Legacy series strengthens students' connections to the intellectual and cultural relevance of early materials while causing them to exercise the creative muscles they are so reluctant to use. Although I have only subjective insights from my fifteen years of college-level teaching rather than objective data from long-term experiments and surveys, my sense is that, when I incorporate creativity exercises into my courses on traditional subjects, I generally receive stronger analytical papers from my students, especially later in the term, than I do in courses in which I opt to eliminate creative assignments. This suggests that activating any creative responses in students can lead to advanced insights in more standard types of coursework. Circumstantial as this admittedly biased evidence is, it supports my proposition that if Honors educators want to teach critical thinking effectively, not only as a means in itself but also as a tool for determining solutions to problems beyond the academic sphere, then we need to integrate ways to enhance our students' creative faculties into our teaching. When we relegate artistic exploration only to courses in creative arts subjects, we teachers may be inadvertently denying our students the kind of learning that will enable them to grow into the complex thinkers we so want them to be.

Much as the motley court jester offers expanded possibilities unavailable to its Jack-in-the-box counterpart, I use creativity in my courses to encourage my students' thinking to escape from common box-like limitations in order to move flexibly and with artistic spontaneity in the expanded space and time of their intellects and imaginations. In literature and history, such court fools, costumed in contrasting colors and designs, integrate visual cues with their characteristic creative wit to alter cultural perspectives of the world in which they live.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, I use creativity in my Honors classes to inspire in my students an enriched sense of their own individual possibilities for promoting growth and change in their professions. In addition, for me the image of the court jester is more than a literary conceit for making my point about the importance of bringing together the creative and the critical to form original thinking. For I was fascinated even as an undergraduate with this figure's efforts to generate cultural change by means of multiple-layered visual images and verbal innovations. This interest in fools and jesters initiated my academic shift from poetry to medieval studies as a profession. It also lured me to enroll in a course called "Fools and Clowns," my first college Honors course at the University of New Mexico, where many years later I now teach creativity to students in that same program.

Sometimes I miss my original dream of being a poet. But if I am honest with myself, more often I take secret pride in showing reluctant students in my more traditional classes that they too can put words or images together in a way which layers meaning, knowledge, and experience. Describing the goal of creative expression, Jacques Barzun writes, "Art distills sensation and embodies it with

meaning in memorable form.” My own professional and personal identity has developed, in part, from my explorations in creative expression; I hope, similarly, that my students learn to recognize richer possibilities within themselves by better tapping into their creativity. Honors teaching allows me to use the seemingly disparate elements of my own academic training and background to change how students think about themselves and their world. For me, integrating critical thinking with creative expression in my teaching seems a small step toward a larger goal. Yet, that small step reminds me of the nursery rhyme in which the lack of a nail causes the loss of an important war.<sup>7</sup> As a teacher, I do not want any of my students who have the academic knowledge to understand the causes of cancer, pollution, global warming, alcoholism, or any other modern challenge to be helpless to effect change in such areas because they have no conception that a nail even needs to be made, let alone how to fashion one. By teaching them to access their creative faculties, I want them to be able to make whatever nails they may need in their future lives and professions. Most of all, as my first Honors course freed me from the limitations of my young dream and offered me movement in a multitude of professional directions, I want all my Jack and Jane students to be able not only to spring out of their boxes, but also to bound unconfined through as yet unimagined intellectual geographies.

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TAMMY OSTRANDER

# The Evolution of Aesthetic Response in Honors Students

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In many college courses, the goal of teaching is to convey content so that the students in the course can become literate in a certain discipline. In such courses, the students learn information with which to answer questions appropriate to the field of study. In a course on the arts, however, the goal may not be answering the questions, but asking them. Due to the philosophical nature of the question ‘What is Art?’ for example, faculty members teaching a course on the arts need to realize that students may never fully grasp the concept of what art is. A nonetheless worthy outcome of such a course, though, might be a meaningful evolution of intellectual thought regarding the question. Put another way, a course on the arts perhaps ought not teach *answers* to questions like ‘What is Art’ so much as teach such (ultimately unanswerable) *questions themselves* that prod us to think about art and develop a more sophisticated understanding of the complicated philosophy of aesthetics.

The following essay includes observations about student willingness and ability to query the nature of art. The material provided arose from various events that occurred in an Honors course entitled “The Arts” at The College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, MN, in which the students examined a number of arts, both performing and non-performing, attended a wide range of artistic events, and continually asked the question, “What is art?”

## **They May not Know It, but They do Have Some Ideas about What Art Is**

The second day of The Arts class, the students and two Honors faculty members embarked on the first of several expeditions to find art. This first trip was to the most logical place: an art museum. Luckily, the class was granted a wonderful guide in the actual curator of the museum. He had organized the museum’s current exposition of works dealing with nature. As the curator led us through the museum, the group was unbearably quiet and cautious. The first sign of life came when the curator was enthusiastically engaged in discussing a piece that looked like a square foot of dried grass wrapped in duct tape. A student finally piped up with, “What makes this art? It’s just a bunch of hay in duct tape!” The curator then discussed the artist’s intention and personal connection to the field from which the grass came. The student remained doubtful, but quiet.

Near the end of the tour, the curator led the weary students to a room that contained large pieces of artwork. We passed by a number of boxes of grass, but

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having had one lengthy explanation regarding grass artwork, the students avoided the piece. Instead, their focus was drawn to a large net that covered one entire wall of the museum. Dried red roses were delicately hanging from the net. Another of the braver students again ventured forth to engage the curator in discussion. “When did the artist come here to set this piece up? It must have taken her hours.” “Oh, the artist never came here,” the curator replied. “She sent us instructions and the staff set it up.” The floodwaters broke forth. The students highly resented the fact that a piece of art the artist didn’t touch was included in the exposition.

The museum experience as a whole demonstrated that the students had been generally indiscriminate in accepting a thing as being art. They arrived comfortable with the idea that a piece might be art even if they didn’t like it or didn’t understand it. But the grass/duct tape encounter produced the first signs of aesthetic inquiry in them because the piece itself challenged their innate notions of art. It was neither attractive nor intellectual; it demonstrated no unique skill or insightful vision. At this point in time, the students were truly novices in addressing the question ‘What is Art?’ With no information to serve as a basis for their debates, they were unable to involve themselves in any intellectual discussion of what constituted a piece of art in general and why this specific piece may or may not have been art.

Luckily, the dried rose/net encounter identified one area in which the students were able to be a bit more discriminating about art. They suddenly realized that they did have at least one unconscious notion about art; they clearly believed that there was something special about the touch of the artist, that art involved the idea AND the actual physical process of creation. Interestingly, this first criterion they established to answer the question ‘What is Art?’ didn’t deal with an actual piece of art; it dealt instead with the artist.

One of the frustrations about teaching a class on the arts is that students are generally hesitant to make judgments when there are no clear criteria for making them. There are no obvious correct or incorrect answers to the question ‘What is Art?’ Most honors students are used to knowing the right answer. So, asking a student if a thing is art or not usually results in the affirmative: “If the artist meant it to be art, then it’s art.” If there are no clear guidelines about what makes something “art,” then everything must be art.

Although most students seem to hold steadfastly to the relativist position that anything can be art, at the very heart of it they do have some elementary notions about what constitutes art and what does not. In this instance, what became evident in the dried rose/net interaction is that the students believed that if the artist had not created the work with her own hands, it wasn’t really art.

The general hesitance to consider that a thing might not be art was a constant challenge throughout the course. Students were much more comfortable believing that everything was art; considering the difficulty of defining art, it was, without doubt, the safe and easy answer. In planning to teach a course on the arts or with

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<sup>1</sup> The textbook used in The Arts course, *The Humanities Through the Arts*, F. David Martin and Lee A. Jacobus, eds., included discussion sections dealing with public art and values.

artistic components, teachers should be prepared for this reticence. One counter-strategy is to discuss whether there is “good art” and “bad art.” If this distinction can be made, then the next step of “actual art” and “non-art” might follow.

## **Variations on “I don’t know if it’s art, but I know what I like” OR “You can lead a horse to art, but you can’t make him like it.”**

At the end of The Arts course, each student was asked to deliver a Marginal Art presentation in which a particular activity—graffiti, quilting, window displays, tattoos—was examined to determine if it was indeed “art.” The goal of the assignment was to force students to establish criteria for art by which a piece could be measured. The students had been considering the nature of art for fifteen weeks. They had interviewed a variety of artists; they had reflected upon numerous works of art. They had read essays from Aristotle, Kant, Hume, and others on the nature of aesthetics. The naïve scholars who had ventured into that museum the second day of class now had a whole arsenal of personal experiences with art augmented by a semester of philosophical discussions about the nature of art.

One student selected cooking as his marginal art. Among the many items he prepared were two versions of a chocolate mousse: one was made with heavy cream and cocoa; the other was simply Cool Whip mixed with chocolate syrup. After a wonderful presentation in which the student discussed the need for an audience, the aesthetic influence of the food on the senses, and the special talent of the artist, he allowed the students to sample the food he had brought. Most students preferred the Cool Whip mixture.

At this juncture, the students could understand intellectually that there were differences at least among *levels* of art. Some of the more sophisticated thinkers had developed some criteria for judging art. Depending on those criteria, the cream and cocoa mousse might arguably have been the higher or finer art form. However, just because the students understood that something might be more artful on an intellectual level, that didn’t mean they necessarily liked it better or even appreciated it more.

When we attended that initial museum tour, the curator told us that, on average, a museum patron will look at a piece of art for about seven seconds before moving on. Even once a student comes to understand art on an intellectual level, emotional satisfaction does not automatically follow. Keep in mind that, for any arts class, theory and practice are two very different things. If a student is able to develop an intellectual understanding of art and a set of criteria for judging it, the class has indeed been successful for that person, for that is a remarkable achievement. To hope for the additional emotional appreciation of a work might be too much to ask for in a mere semester.

## **An Intellectual Expedition Takes a Turn**

About a month into the course and after they had gotten to know each other a

## THE EVOLUTION OF AESTHETIC RESPONSE IN HONORS STUDENTS

little better, the students went on another expedition: a sculpture tour. They were each provided with a map of various sculpture locations in town that included a picture of the sculpture, its title, its creator, and a brief description of it. After their artful encounters and at a pre-established time, they had to meet me at a local restaurant. I had reserved a huge table and ordered food.

I could hear them the moment they hit the room. They were excited; they were animated. When they saw me, they were positively bubbling. "This was so much fun," one cried. Once we all got settled, I asked, "So what was your favorite?" I couldn't believe their unanimous choice: they identified a piece that looked like a giant metallic pi. "Why did you like that one," I asked, trying to hide my mystification. "Because Brad and Meghan jumped on it and looked like surfers!"

For the next 30 minutes, they recounted which sculptures were the best for climbing. They definitely knew which fountains they preferred playing in the most.

If the goal is for students to develop an aesthetic sensibility, taking students out of the classroom is extremely helpful. First, the students realize that art exists in many more places than a gallery or theatre. They broaden their thinking about what constitutes artistic creation. For example, by moving into the city to view art, they begin to realize that buildings are another art form. Second, they learn that artistic considerations affect decisions made well beyond the traditional art settings of museums and performance venues. Good city (and campus) planners, for example, consider artistry in making decisions about what is built, how and where something is built, and what materials are used. Third, this new education then allows the students to embrace the notion that choices about art inherently involve individual and civic values. Although a thorough discussion of the interaction between artistic choices and values is well beyond the scope of this article, acknowledging that the question 'What is Art?' is value-laden provides an important component of the discussion.<sup>1</sup> Fourth, students realize that art is public and that we are all consumers of art even if we never go to a museum or performance.

In addition to the value of off-campus activities in helping students query the nature of art, taking students off campus together assists them in creating connections with each other and reminds us all that students learn a great deal when forced to engage in intellectual activities outside of the classroom. Although their initial positive evaluations of the sculpture tour experience were based primarily on *social* standards, encouraging social interactions about intellectual topics helps to create a community of learners. The outing also taught the students a thing or two about what behaviors and even attire are expected of people at various cultural sites and events. Finally (and relatedly), since all Honors faculty members had standing invitations to all events the Arts class attended and many did indeed join us, our students got to see their professors in the act of enjoying themselves culturally!

A student who had taken The Arts course three years ago recently asked me if I was going to teach it again. "I don't know," I replied. "Do you think I should?" Her response was, "It was the only class I've had in three years that took me off campus."



## **If a Singer Performs in the Woods, but Nobody Hears Her... OR Best Bets for Discussion**

After seeing all kinds of art, embarking on all kinds of outings, listening to all sorts of artists, reading all types of philosophical positions on art, and discussing them all *ad tedium*, we found that the class routinely returned to the same central questions about the nature of art. For a last task in the course, the students created the following list of AEIOU's for enriching the question 'What is Art?'

### Artist

- Must we know or understand the artist's intention in creating a work of art? If a person does not *intend* for a work to be art, can it still be art? Conversely, if something *is* intended to be art, is it necessarily art?
- Is the artist responsible solely for the *idea* of the piece, but not the actual *creation* of it? Are the "hands" of the artist unique?

### Audience

- Must a piece have an audience before it can be considered art? If a piece is never seen or performed, can it still be art?

### Engagement

- Must a work arouse us in some emotional or intellectual way?
- Must a work be beautiful?

### Intellectual Component

- Must a piece of art have an intellectual component, or can it merely be decorative?
- Must it have a didactic or moral purpose?

### Originality

- Must a work present a fresh voice or new technique to be considered art?
- If a person without artistic skill or training can make a piece by following a set of instructions (the dried rose/net piece or a quilt, for example), can the piece be art?

### Utility

- If something has primarily a utilitarian purpose (e.g. furniture or food), can it be art?

Ultimately, The Arts course focused more on learning to ask good questions than on answering them. Many students left the course still somewhat unsure about the question of art, but their level of sophistication in discussing what is ultimately an unanswerable question was most certainly greater. They did not all agree on the various answers offered to the questions cited above, but they did end with a better appreciation for the complexities of aesthetic inquiry. I am hoping the course created a foundation for what will become a lifelong intellectual investigation.

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# A Student Play

WHEN AUSTEN'S HEROINES MEET

STEPHANIE RENEE FOSNIGHT

# When Austen's Heroines Meet A Play in One Act

STEPHANIE RENEE FOSNIGHT

THE COLLEGE OF ST. CATHERINE

FIRST PERFORMED MARCH 14, 2001 AT THE COLLEGE OF ST. CATHERINE

## PRINCIPAL CAST

(in order of appearance):

ELIZABETH BENNET: Clara Burgert  
EMMA WOODHOUSE: Stacy Anderson  
CATHERINE MORLAND: Ida Roth  
ANNE ELLIOT: Deanna LaValle  
MARIANNE DASHWOOD: Melinda Grundhauser

## SECONDARY CAST

(to be played by members of principal cast):

ELINOR BRANDON: Stacy Anderson  
MRS. BENNET: Stacy Anderson  
CAROLINE BINGLEY: Melinda Grundhauser  
GEORGIANA DARCY: Ida Roth  
MRS. WESTON: Ida Roth  
BLAKE: Deanna LaValle  
MRS. SPENCER: Stacy Anderson  
MRS. ALLEN: Deanna LaValle  
LADY ELEANOR STAVELY: Clara Burgert  
SUSAN HARRIS: Melinda Grundhauser

**SETTING:** The ladies' parlour of a wayside inn in —shire, England. Sometime in the early 1800s. A sofa, three chairs and two small tables are grouped companionably before the upstage fireplace with mantel. A door stage right leads to the garden and a door to the left leads into the inn.

**NOTE:** During the dream sequences, the major character plays an older version of herself while the other ladies don small accessories and play the other characters in the dream. The furniture is slightly rearranged to suggest a different room.

## WHEN AUSTEN'S HEROINES MEET

ELIZABETH [*enters, calling over her shoulder to the passageway*]: Do not trouble yourself about me, my dear aunt. I prefer to rest before continuing on our journey. Pray, enjoy your walk. [*She settles herself on the chair center right.*]

EMMA [*enters, arms full of parcels, which she deposits on chair next to ELIZABETH. Starts to sit then realizes chair is full with packages. Jumping up.*]: Oh! [*crosses to sofa and sits*]

CATHERINE [*enters with ANNE*]: I cannot wait to return to Bath, my dear Miss Elliot! It is a place of such happy memories to me. [*stands before fire*]

ANNE: I must admit, Miss Morland, that it does improve upon acquaintance. [*sits next to EMMA on sofa*]

[*Silence. MARIANNE bursts in from garden, windblown and disheveled. She looks wildly about her, staggers and faints. The other four women run to her.*]

ANNE [*bending over MARIANNE and taking off her bonnet*]: Have any of you smelling salts?

EMMA [*fishing out a package and handing it to ANNE*]: They have just been purchased. Perhaps the strength will revive her sooner.

[*MARIANNE is revived by the salts and is helped by ANNE and EMMA to the sofa.*]

CATHERINE: Do not worry. You are among friends, and we wish to help you. What can be the sad event that would cause you to arrive so unexpectedly and all alone?

[*MARIANNE begins to weep.*]

ELIZABETH: Will you not tell us what distresses you? We need not stand on the ceremony of introduction now. My name is Miss Elizabeth Bennet, and I have four sisters, so you see I am quite used to receiving confidences.

CATHERINE [*to Anne*]: Can't you do something, Miss Morland? She might faint again.

ANNE [*to the others*]: She might speak more comfortably if she felt she knew us. I am Anne Elliot, and I am journeying from my father's house in Bath.

CATHERINE: Oh, and my name is Catherine. Catherine Morland, and I am returning home from a fortnight's excursion in Bath.

EMMA: I see that leaves me. I am Miss Emma Woodhouse, and our estate is in Highbury. I am quite used to nursing my father, who is an invalid, and I have often noticed a distinct connection between one's spirits and one's health. If you would but share your burden with us, my dear girl, we might help you. I think you should find us very sympathetic souls.

MARIANNE [*shakily*]: I see it is no use to trifle with such determined good angels any longer. My name is Marianne Dashwood, and I am about to be married. [*Falls back on the couch with exhaustion.*]

EMMA: But this is news of the very best kind! I myself am about to be married, which is the occasion for my shopping today, and I fail to understand why it has thrown you into such a melancholy disposition.

MARIANNE: Of course you do not understand. Not one of you can have suffered the pangs of misfortune and disappointed love as have I. I, who was so happy not thirty-six hours ago! If you understood the true nature of my complaint you would no longer question my running away!

CATHERINE: You have run away? How did you come so far alone? I did not notice you in the last coach, at least.

MARIANNE: I have traveled by coach since leaving Devonshire, but I grew fearful of discovery at such a central stopping place as this and walked from the last town. It was a distance of five miles, maybe less.

EMMA: My poor child! To have walked so far on such a day! But really it was quite foolish of you. What will your family think?

MARIANNE: I left a letter for my sister Elinor, explaining that I could never marry Colonel Brandon. But two days ago I thought I might, but then I had a dream of the most ... it was of the most awful purport! You must understand, ladies, that the Colonel is not my first love. No, there was another before him, a young man of passionate and tender ways. I loved him with my whole being, and it seemed to me that he felt the same. But my mother and sisters and I are poor, left at the mercy of an indolent half-brother, and Willoughby deserted me for a Miss Grey with fifty thousand pounds. I would not have believed him so false, ladies and yet... [*she begins to sob quietly*]

ELIZABETH [*becoming interested in the tale despite herself*]: Now, Miss Dashwood, you have stated that this false young man is not the one you are about to marry. What of the second young man? Do not you love him?

MARIANNE: Aye! I do love the colonel completely, though he is not a young man. He is the opposite of the deceitful Willoughby in all particulars of style and manner, and I admit I care for him with a love more steadfast than ever I held for Willoughby. I would say even that I love him with a passion more intense. And yet ... my dream. It was that which convinced me I could not marry Colonel Brandon.

ANNE [*very gently*]: What of this dream, my friend? What was it that frightened you so as to leave behind your friends and family and to stake all your fortunes on a journey so wild and uncertain?

MARIANNE [*colouring*]: Well, you see, I have always been rather proud of myself for the intensity of my feeling. My sister Elinor is constantly telling me I must attain more sense and less sensibility. Yet the romance of nature, of love, and of life has been such a central part of my person for as long as I can remember, and if I were to lose my particular passionate nature, then I could not continue. It was the wretched dream that showed me that I might have a most frightening future before me.

***Lights fade while set is rearranged and characters are altered. First dream sequence begins.***

*The sitting room of Mrs. Marianne Brandon. She appears to be in her mid-thirties, is wearing a cap and is sewing something sensible.*

## WHEN AUSTEN'S HEROINES MEET

ELINOR BRANDON [*enters holding a copy of Shakespeare's sonnets. She is 17.*]:  
'Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took.'

MARIANNE [*not looking up*]: What, my love?

ELINOR [*wanders dreamily about the room as she recites in an exaggeratedly dramatic tone*]: 'Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took.' Hmm...a league. [*pulls dictionary from shelf and looks up "league."*] "A unit of distance equal to three miles." [*refers again to sonnets*] 'Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took, and each doth good turns now unto the other: When that mine eye is famish'd for a look.' Famished. Famishéd. Yes, famishéd. 'When that mine eye is famishéd for a look, or heart in love with sighs himself doth smother, with my love's picture then my eye doth feast, and to the painted banquet bids my heart; and other time mine eye is my heart's guest, And in his thoughts of love doth share a part.'

*MARIANNE has not been paying any attention to her daughter. ELINOR walks up to her and snatches the cushion on the sofa next to her mother.*

ELINOR: Mama! 'When that mine eye is famishéd for a look, or heart in love with sighs himself doth smother.' [*On "smother" ELINOR covers her face with the cushion to smother herself, and falls limply onto the sofa*]. Would not I make a convincing Desdemona, my dear Mama?

MARIANNE: [*looking up at last and annoyed with the interruption*]: Elinor! Have you practiced the pianoforte this afternoon? Did your father find you? He wanted you to read to him. And have you decided what you are going to wear to the ball tonight? You know it is most important that you look your most beautiful. Mr. James will be there, and you know he has twenty-five thousand pounds a year!

ELINOR: Mama! You know that I cannot abide Mr. James. He is so common and sensible. I could not marry a man with whom I was not violently in love, and whose taste did not in every point coincide with my own. [*returning to her book of sonnets*]: And my husband must pronounce with feeling those words which have nearly driven me wild. 'Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took, and each—

MARIANNE [*interrupting*]: Elinor! Where do you find such ideas? Can you not yet distinguish between reality and dreams at the age of 17? When I was a girl I was full of romantic sensibilities, but I soon learned that they were only idle dreams unlikely to please oneself or to even come true. And do you not see what a comfortable, secure life I have led with your sensible father? Had I married my first love, I would be badly off indeed, my child. It is my duty as your mother to teach you to have sense. It is for your own good, my love. [*MARIANNE pauses and surveys her daughter. She wets her thumb with her tongue and carefully scrubs at a spot on ELINOR's chin while ELINOR stands grumpily. She then examines her daughter's bosom, and demonstratively plumps up her own front. Her daughter follows suit, but with a thunderstorm brewing on her face.*] Now do go upstairs and make yourself your most charming for Mr. James. He will be sure to dance with you all evening.



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*MARIANNE returns to her sewing looking no less placid. ELINOR looks at her in shocked astonishment before bursting into tears and quitting the room, throwing the book of sonnets aside as she does so.*

***Light change as set returns to inn. Characters return to normal, lights come up on the five arranged exactly as they were before the sequence.***

*MARIANNE is quietly weeping once again. ANNE is holding her hand and trying to comfort her. ELIZABETH is looking very much as if she would like to laugh. CATHERINE is awed, and EMMA actually chuckles.*

EMMA: Do you mean to say that you actually ran away from an advantageous marriage to a man whom you love, leaving the assistance of all your friends and connections, merely because you had a dream?

MARIANNE: Oh, but surely you understand the implications of my dream, Miss Woodhouse!

EMMA [*kindly, but very practically*]: I am afraid that I cannot attempt to sympathize with such foolishness.

MARIANNE: Did not then the true nature of the dream impress you with its gruesomeness? Can you not now understand why I am loath to marry a sensible man?

ANNE (*kindly*): I think I begin to understand, my dear Miss Dashwood. In the vision of your daughter you saw yourself, and your behavior to her was a frightening caricature of what you might one day become.

MARIANNE: Oh, yes, you do understand, Miss Elliot. I cannot bear to become a creature of such practicality. To be so unsympathetic towards my own daughter, when I myself have been nearly drowned in the throes of passionate reflection and romantic considerations is a calamity indeed!

EMMA [*sarcastically*]: Indeed!

CATHERINE: And this is why you ran away?

ELIZABETH: Surely there is a less dramatic way of approaching your fears, Miss Dashwood. I would be ashamed to cause such worry to my family, and especially to pain my Mr. Darcy in such a fashion.

CATHERINE: Pray, who is Mr. Darcy?

ELIZABETH [*stiffly*]: Although, to my friends, I am known for my vivacity, I am reticent to discuss personal matters before strangers.

ANNE: Well, you see, Miss Bennet, we are not quite strangers in this room now. For the sake of Miss Dashwood, I think it would be agreeable if we offered her the best advice we can draw from our own experience.

ELIZABETH: If I must, then, I will tell you about Mr. Darcy. He is the man to whom I am engaged, and we are to be married in a few short months, on the same day that his friend, Mr. Bingley, and my sister Jane, pledge their vows to each other. I became acquainted with Mr. Darcy through his friend Bingley and-

## WHEN AUSTEN'S HEROINES MEET

CATHERINE [*gushing*]: I suppose you and Mr. Darcy were immediately attracted to one another, and that your sister and yourself enjoyed delightfully simultaneous courtships. How romantic! That must tempt your imagination especially, my dear Miss Marianne.

ELIZABETH [*laughing*]: Indeed, that is not quite the way our betrothal came about. In fact, Mr. Darcy and I hated each other on first sight. He snubbed me because he was bored at the country ball at which we met, disdainful of our rural amusements for the city pleasures to which he had been accustomed. I took his apparent pride to be quite insulting.

MARIANNE: Really? How did you at last become reconciled?

ELIZABETH: I must admit that it was through no virtue of my own. I determined to despise Mr. Darcy thoroughly for his pride, and I constructed for myself a satisfyingly bad character of him. It was rather an embarrassing shock to learn that he was indeed a gentleman of upstanding character and achievement and also of great kindness.

EMMA: And how did you discover his true merits, if you were so decidedly set against him? Your Mr. Darcy is the owner of Pemberley, is he not? I have been often in Derbyshire and I have seen his extensive house and grounds. No doubt your family was in great hurry to help you along to such a wealthy man, especially as you have sisters. How many are there in your family, did you say?

ELIZABETH: There are four sisters, besides myself, and no brothers to inherit the family estate. But I would not say that my family was useful in endearing me to Mr. Darcy. Or, I did not think so at first. In all honesty I must reveal that they were quite an embarrassment at first, excepting my dear sister Jane, in all matters of propriety and gentle upbringing. But in the course of a year I learned to love Mr. Darcy for the amiable gentleman he truly is, and in return he overcame his prejudiced opinions toward my family, even displaying his own attachment to me through his attentions to them.

CATHERINE: And is all now settled happily between your connections and his?

ELIZABETH: I must confess to an unfortunate incident involving my youngest sister which threatened to forever ruin our happiness, but I am now assured of his steadfast love for me, which cannot be affected by the impropriety of my sister or my mother.

MARIANNE: How lucky you are, Miss Bennet, to be so steadfast in your expectation of happiness. Have you no doubts at all?

ELIZABETH: I am determined to be happy, Miss Dashwood. I will be with the man I love, and he loves me. Is that not enough?

EMMA: But what if this youngest sister you speak of were to embarrass the family again? Could his love for you withstand even that? Knowing the social position of Mr. Darcy as I do, I cannot help noticing that you will be occupying a very significant role in society. You would not want anything to impair the reputation of your husband, would you?

ELIZABETH: You speak with such audacity, madam! Your presuming upon my suitability to be the mistress of the estate of Pemberley insults me. I am certain that my sister will not come to visit me. The only possible embarrassment would be a visit from my mother, who is unfortunately a silly woman. And I am not without hope that her behavior might be amended in time.

EMMA: Are you so certain of this?

ELIZABETH [*sounding anything but certain*]: Why, assuredly. If my mother were to embarrass me at Pemberley I would ... I would ... Perhaps I might convince her of my own ideas of propriety. Although, it is the determined belief in the merit of my own opinions which has damaged me before. [*haltingly*] Upon reflection, I must say that I am somewhat unsure as how to refute your fearful suggestions.

MARIANNE: How can you censure me so for my fear if you carry it yourself?

ELIZABETH: Oh, but I am not afraid of becoming overly sensible. I am sure that if I laugh enough all will be well.

EMMA: But what if you are not the one who is laughing, but who becomes instead the object of laughter? It might be worthy to consider it, Miss Bennet.

***Light change, set change for second dream sequence.***

*MRS. ELIZABETH DARCY and her sister-in-law, GEORGIANA DARCY, are sitting with MRS. BENNET and MISS CAROLINE BINGLEY in a Pemberley parlour. It is about one year after ELIZABETH'S marriage. MISS BINGLEY has just sat down.*

ELIZABETH [*cooly*]: Good morning, Miss Bingley.

MRS. BENNET [*quite effusively*]: Ah, Miss Bingley! What a pleasure it is to see you. I do not believe we have met since your brother married my daughter Jane.

MISS BINGLEY: [*barely civil*]: How do you do, Mrs. Bennet? [*turns to Miss Darcy*]: My dear Georgiana! It has been ages since we met in town last, has it not? How do you get on with your music?

GEORGIANA: I practice often, Caroline, though I fear it is not enough.

ELIZABETH: Surely you recall, Miss Bingley, how modestly my dear sister-in-law so values her abilities. Georgiana practices constantly, and it is my firm belief that she has improved vastly since I came to Pemberley one year ago.

MRS. BENNET: A year? Surely not, Lizzie. Can it have been that long since I parted with you and dear Jane? Perhaps I have not noticed the length, if it has indeed been so long, because I have been so felicitous since your marriages. Such an advantageous match you have made, my love. Mr. Darcy is ever so much richer than Mr. Bingley, even!

ELIZABETH: [*looking significantly at Miss Bingley*]: Mama!

MRS. BENNET: Oh, there is no need to quiet me, Lizzie. I am sure both Caroline and Georgiana know exactly how much money their brothers have, and there is no shame in admitting that Mr. Darcy gets ever so many more pounds a year than does Mr. Bingley.

MISS BINGLEY [*cuttingly*]: How does your youngest daughter get on, Mrs. Bennet? Her marriage to Mr. Wickham was rather fortunate, if not quite so advantageous, was it not?

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ELIZABETH: Perhaps we should not—

MRS. BENNET: Oh, do not concern yourself with my feelings, Lizzie. I have no qualms in speaking of my dear Lydia. Wickham may not be as rich as Bingley or Darcy, but he makes up for the lack in good humour. Besides, I am certain that he loves Lydia most violently. Why else would he persuade her to run away with him like he did? I always knew that such youthful enthusiasm was not to be condemned. They were married shortly after, and even Miss Bingley cannot deny that it has turned out well. My darling Lydia is still the most popular girl among the officers in the North, from all accounts, though she be a married woman. If Miss Bingley is scornful of Lydia, I am sure that it is only jealousy. *Lydia*, at least, has a husband. [*looks significantly at the astonished Miss Bingley*]

ELIZABETH [*desperately*]: Mama, did you not say you wished to see the kitchen garden? I am sure it is free now of servants. Georgiana can entertain our guest.

*ELIZABETH propels MRS. BENNET out of the room before MISS BINGLEY regains her powers of speech. They have barely exited when MISS BINGLEY begins to sputter.*

MISS BINGLEY: Such impudence! Such low breeding! I am repulsed and insulted, Georgiana!

GEORGIANA [*anxiously*]: My dear Caroline, calm yourself. You will make yourself ill.

MISS BINGLEY [*continuing*]: To think that the daughter of such a creature is now the mistress of Pemberley! The very thought is repugnant. Your brother has been utterly deceived, and has thrown himself away on a family that is not only beneath our notice but is also worthy of our censure! I cannot believe the abominable pride of that woman. To accuse *me* of being unable to “get a husband” while congratulating herself on the fact that her daughter had to run away with a man and live with him before he could be persuaded to marry her! Georgiana, how can you tolerate such low company?

MISS DARCY: My dear Caroline, you must not concern yourself with me. I think my sister Elizabeth the kindest and loveliest wife imaginable for my brother, and I have been infinitely more happy since they were married and she became my companion at Pemberley.

MISS BINGLEY [*quite sarcastically*]: Of course I cannot expect anything else from a Darcy when speaking of Elizabeth Bennet. I had forgotten how thoroughly she has managed to deceive both of you. But Georgiana, can you honestly defend that mother of hers? Especially after such a display as we have been treated to today?

MISS DARCY: Elizabeth cannot help her mother. And I know that she is embarrassed by Mrs. Bennet's lack of propriety as well. Although, if I had known that her mother was going to be quite so dreadful, I should have contrived to stop with some of my friends in town during her visit.

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*During the above speech ELIZABETH has crept back in for her gloves. She listens to MISS BINGLEY's response unconcernedly, expecting little else from her, but freezes in horror when MISS DARCY begins to speak again.*

MISS BINGLEY [*even more sarcastically*]: What? And desert your dearest sister-in-law in her time of trial?

MISS DARCY: I am sometimes tempted to leave, but the thought of what my brother suffers as well has kept me at home. Oh, Caroline, I must tell you that these past weeks have been such a trial. Elizabeth has borne them well, but she cannot feel the embarrassment that I have when my neighbors and acquaintances have come to call. Sometimes I wonder how my brother can stand the exposure her impropriety has cast upon us all.

MISS BINGLEY: Are you certain, Georgiana, that he will stand it? How can you be sure that even now he is not regretting his foolish marriage? Can you?

*MISS DARCY says nothing but looks at the floor. This is answer enough for MISS BINGLEY, whose smile is reminiscent of a cat that has eaten a canary. The shocked ELIZABETH turns to leave but knocks a book off the table. Startled, the other ladies turn to her, but she runs out of the room in confusion.*

***Set returns to normal, and lights come up on the ladies exactly as they were before the sequence began.***

ELIZABETH [*dazed*]: Can it be worth it? Is it? [*determinedly*] How can I even be considering such a thing? This is foolish! I love Darcy, and he loves me! Of that I am sure. And yet, to become the object of such censure. Perhaps he will change his regard for me, based on my family. The thought is too horrible to entertain, and yet I must entertain it.

MARIANNE: You understand, now, Miss Bennet, the nature of my fear, do you not?

ELIZABETH: Yes, I understand it only too well. I cannot believe that I have succumbed to such irrational thoughts. It is utterly ridiculous. [*Tries to laugh, and begins to cry softly*]. But if it should come true! It might, perhaps.

EMMA: Miss Bennet, do sit down. [*Leads her to a chair and hovers over her*]. You have already exhibited such a strength of character and of love! How can you be so suddenly disconsolate? It makes me feel uneasy myself.

CATHERINE: Why should you be uneasy, Miss Woodhouse? Forgive my familiarity, but you seem to be inordinately certain of your own mind.

EMMA [*chuckles*]: Ah, yes, Miss Morland. You do not offend me with your candid assessment of my character. For you are only too correct. Well do I know my own independence, and I am quite familiar with the consequences of believing myself to know what is best for everybody.

CATHERINE: Whatever can you mean?

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EMMA: There was a time in the not-too-distant past, my dear ladies, when I considered myself an incurable matchmaker. I took pride in my own wit and constantly amused myself by trying to match up the couples I thought most deserving of each other. I also valued my own independence to such an extent that I was unwilling to take advice where it was most needed.

CATHERINE: Why were you so convinced of your own merit?

EMMA: That is not a very complimentary question, but once again you have succeeded in being most insightful, Miss Morland. Unlike Miss Bennet, I was not blessed with four sisters or with the presence of a mother, distressing though she might sometimes be. I, instead, became the mistress of our estate while just entering young ladyhood, on account of the marriage of my only sister. My mother having died many years before, I was also solely responsible for my invalid father, who has long depended on me for everything.

ANNE: That is quite a compliment to your character, Miss Woodhouse. It cannot be as black as you paint it for us.

EMMA: Thank you, Miss Elliot, but you have just excused me again, which is something that everybody I knew was guilty of, even Mrs. Weston, who is my dearest friend as well as my old governess. There was only one person who did not scruple to scold me when I deserved it, the brother of my sister's husband, and also our nearest neighbor, a Mr. Knightley.

CATHERINE: Is this Mr. Knightley well-regarded by your father, also?

EMMA: Yes, in fact. As my sister's brother-in-law, Mr. Knightley has always been most welcome at Hartfield. So much so that he always acted as elder brother role in affairs that concerned myself.

CATHERINE: Dear me! Is he much older than you?

EMMA: Quite. He is sixteen years older than I. Yet when I was 21 and he was 37, we were such good companions that he seemed scarcely 30, despite his frequent admonitions. I did not know how much I depended on his company until after an eventful year in which I nearly ruined the prospect of one happy marriage by attempting to bring about what would have been a disastrous one. He scolded me roundly, especially after I hurt the feelings of an old friend with what I thought was my wit, and it was then that I realized that I could not do without Mr. Knightley.

MARIANNE: You did say that you, also, were on the point of marriage, Miss Woodhouse. Can it be that this Mr. Knightley is the man to whom you are engaged to?

EMMA [*smiling*]: I can now say with certainty that I no longer regard him as an elder brother, but as my Mr. Knightley, whom I shall marry shortly.

CATHERINE: But you said that he was sixteen years older than you! How can you marry such an old man?

ANNE: Miss Morland, consider the company you are speaking in! I myself am nearly thirty, and I do not consider thirty-seven so very old.

EMMA: And neither would you, Miss Morland, if you could see Mr. Knightly. He is but in the prime of life, and he is as fine a specimen as a gentleman, husband and landlord as you will find anywhere.

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MARIANNE: Then what can be troubling you?

EMMA: There is only one thing that endangers our future happiness.

MARIANNE: What can it be? You seem both of you to have everything?

EMMA: Yes, including my headstrong nature. I mentioned before that I was an incurable matchmaker. It was a source of great contention between Mr. Knightley and me.

ELIZABETH: But it has been resolved, has it not?

EMMA: I only wish. Sometimes I think that I am cured of meddling in other people's affairs, but then I get such an urge to help nature along. My fear is that it might crop up anywhere, at anytime, and might someday pose a threat to the regard Mr. Knightley has for me.

***Light change, set rearranged for third dream sequence.***

*Lights up on Donwell Abbey five years hence. MRS. EMMA KNIGHTLEY is standing over a beautifully decorated dinner table. MRS. WESTON has just entered, and is still wearing her cloak.*

MRS. WESTON: I just stopped in for a moment, Emma. I am on my way to visit Miss Bates in the village, and I thought you might wish to send her a message.

EMMA: Thank you, Mrs. Weston. You may tell Miss Bates that Mr. Knightley and I will be pleased to send a carriage to convey her to Mrs. Cole's party tomorrow night.

MRS. WESTON: Such kindness, Emma! You are always so eager to give another pleasure. But what can you do be doing now? Why are you arranging the table? What has become of the housekeeper?

EMMA: Shhh! I sent Blake to the village for an errand, but she might return at any moment. The truth is, I was most ready to have her out of the house this afternoon.

MRS. WESTON [*bewildered*]: But why?

EMMA: My dear Mrs. Weston, you say that I love to give pleasure to others. That is true. And there has always been a person in this household for whom I have longed to do something. Our housekeeper, Blake, has always been so unpleasant.

MRS. WESTON [*suspiciously*]: Emma, what are you talking about?

EMMA: Haven't you guessed? Well then, what is the surest way to bring happiness to an old widow? Why, by arranging a marriage so that she will no longer be an old widow, of course! What other event could secure her happiness so thoroughly, and bring a smile to that careworn and, I might add, shrewish face?

MRS. WESTON [*shocked*]: Emma! I thought you cured yourself of this matchmaking nonsense long ago after the dismal affair of Harriet Smith and Mr. Elton! Remember how that turned out! I might also point out that a second marriage would not make her any less of a widow.

EMMA: You understand my point, at least. Now, don't try to dissuade me, Mrs. Weston. I know that there were some inherent problems in that first match—

MRS. WESTON [*interrupting*]: Such as the utter cold-heartedness of Mr. Elton and

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the blind obedience Harriet gave you.

EMMA [*speaking over her friend*]: but I am sure that luck will be with us this time.

You must admit the affair turned out well. Harriet and her Mr. Martin are perfectly happy, and Mr. Elton got a wife no better than he deserved.

MRS. WESTON [*sarcastically*]: Yes, Mrs. Elton certainly is an addition to the neighborhood social stature. [*conceding, as she inevitably does with Emma*] But, you are right about Harriet and Mr. Martin. Perhaps the affair will turn out right somehow. Who is the unfortunate man to whom you are matchmaking Blake?

EMMA: I knew that you would understand how perfect it all is! I have invited Williams, the butler at the Cole's estate, to tea this afternoon. He is so grim and funereal that I am sure he is secretly longing to be married!

MRS. WESTON: I must admit that I cannot follow your reasoning at all! But I know better than to trifle with your well laid plans, Emma. However, I cannot help feeling that there is something intrinsically wrong with your scheme, other than its utter impropriety. Are you so certain that Blake wishes to find another husband?

EMMA [*happily*]: Perfectly certain, Mrs. Weston. Why do you ask?

MRS. WESTON [*slowly*]: I seem to remember something about her ... something about her husband ...

EMMA: Whatever it was, he's been dead so long I never saw them together, and her son over at the stables is becoming middle aged himself, so I'm sure she won't object to the idea of a new husband.

MRS. WESTON: She has a grown son? Emma, I declare, you know the affairs of your housekeeper better than any woman I ever met! Did you consult him about your scheme?

EMMA: Of course not! I don't want any interference. If there's one thing I cannot abide, it is interference. Now no more scolding. I don't want Mr. Knightley to know what I am planning. He is bound to scold me even worse than you are doing, and so I intend for the match to be a complete surprise to him. He'll be grateful to be greeted by a smiling housekeeper, at any rate.

MRS. WESTON: I do not approve, Emma, but I know that I cannot dissuade you. I wish you the best of all possible luck, and I will carry your kind message about the carriage to Miss Bates.

*MRS. WESTON exits. EMMA is struck by an idea, and after carefully looking both ways, pulls the two chairs closer together. She judges the distance between them and frowns. It is still too far. She pulls them so close that they are touching, and smiles conspiratorially, but quickly pushes them apart and looks up with a guilty expression as BLAKE enters. BLAKE is sour-faced and grumpy, but treats her employer with the proper respect.*

BLAKE: Good afternoon, mum. The dressmaker was not at home, and so I could not ask her about the bonnet.

EMMA: Ah, good afternoon, Blake! It is no bother about the bonnet. I'll see her myself tomorrow. And how are you after your long walk? Are you feeling hungry?



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BLAKE [*surprised*]: Why yes, I confess I am, but my tea can wait until after you and Mr. Knightley have supped. I see that Matilda has arranged the table. Let me see if Cook is ready to serve the meal.

EMMA: No, no, Blake. I insist you sit down here at once [*indicating a chair*]. I'll speak to Cook myself.

BLAKE [*now thoroughly astonished*]: Sit down? What can you be thinking of, Mrs. Knightley? Are you feeling well?

EMMA [*chuckling*]: I am perfectly fine, dear Blake. Please, do sit down while you await your guest. [*pushes her into the chair*] Tonight we shall switch roles. You shall eat and I shall serve. What do you think of that plan?

BLAKE [*rising*]: Mum, have you lost your senses? What do you mean, "my guest?" Who should be visiting me?

EMMA [*pushing her back into the chair*]: Blake, *do* sit down. You will be ever so grateful once you understand fully. The truth is, I have invited Williams, the butler from Mrs. Cole's estate, to tea with you.

BLAKE [*stops struggling and falls limply into the chair in shock*]: Williams? That sour old man? To tea with me? Why?

EMMA [*smiling*]: Now, now, this may come as a surprise to you, but I do not think that Williams is simply a sour old man. In fact, I have good reason to believe that he considers you as more than a shrewish old woman, as well. Consider Mr. Knightley and myself. We are both so felicitous in our happy state of marriage. Cannot marriage do the same for the both of you?

BLAKE [*so astonished she does not even comprehend EMMA's veiled insult*]: Marriage? Me and Williams?

EMMA [*happily*]: You understand at last! No, no, don't attempt to thank me. Your future happiness is all the thanks required. Do I hear a knock on the door?

BLAKE [*forcefully*]: Mrs. Knightley! What can you be thinking? Have you not met Mr. Blake, the groom at the stables?

EMMA: Of course I have, my dear, and I do not think you should suffer any qualms on his part. Any son would be quite happy to see his ailing mother married again.

BLAKE: My son? Mr. Blake is not my son!

EMMA: Well, then, who is he? Your nephew? It does not signify, anyway. He will have only a periphery interest in the matter since—

BLAKE [*distinctly speaking over EMMA*]: Mrs. Knightley, Mr. Blake is not my son. He is my husband.

EMMA [*for once shocked out of her composure*]: Your h-husband? But how is that possible? He is so young, and you are ... you are—

BLAKE [*stoutly, and circling the confused EMMA*]: I am only 41 years old, and quite as hale and hearty as my 40-year-old husband. Mrs. Knightley, I had heard about your tendency towards thoughtlessness and interference before, of course, but this is beyond anything I could ever have imagined. My husband and I shall take this matter to Mr. Knightley, you can be sure. I would be very surprised if we were both still in your employ tomorrow morning. Good evening, madam.

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*BLAKE stalks out in controlled rage. EMMA stands rooted to the ground, shocked and muttering to herself. At first she is too surprised to understand fully what has happened, but she grows louder and more distinct as she begins to realize what she has done.*

EMMA: Her husband? Her *husband*? How can it be? Her husband? Oh, what a dreadful mistake ... I must rectify it before Mr. Knightley discovers it. He shall be so ashamed of me, and he will laugh at me, which may be worse. Her husband? I would never have dreamed it possible. But if Mr. Knightley finds out what I have done ... Mrs. Blake! Do come back and be reasonable! Please, I was only trying to help you. Please don't speak to Mr. Knightley. Mrs. Blake! Blake!

*EMMA runs horrified out of the room.*

***Set returns to normal. Lights up on ladies as they were before sequence.***

*ELIZABETH, CATHERINE, MARIANNE and ANNE are all laughing while EMMA sits in silence. The other four continue to laugh until they are worn out and only chuckling. EMMA can stand it no longer.*

EMMA: I do not understand what is *quite* so funny about the matter. It was an honest mistake, and I did have good intentions.

ANNE: Now, Miss Woodhouse, do not become defensive. We are not laughing at you. We are merely chuckling at the situation. It is so absurd.

ELIZABETH: Could you ever do anything so silly, Miss Woodhouse? I cannot believe it?

EMMA: Unfortunately, Miss Bennet, I have done worse. The consequences of my first dismal attempt at matchmaking would have been disastrous indeed had affairs gone according to my original intention. It is a wonder that Mr. Knightley still loves me after all of the ridiculous mistakes that I have made. Perhaps he does not, after all. Perhaps he is merely on a crusade to put me where I cannot harm any more innocent people. He may feel it is his duty to marry me. He has become so accustomed to looking after me.

CATHERINE: Oh, Miss Woodhouse, do not speak so! I am quite convinced in the strength of your attachment.

EMMA: Thank you for the kind words, Miss Morland, but they do me no good. The trouble is I do not believe just now that he truly loves me, and nobody will be able to persuade me otherwise. No, I cannot see myself residing happily at the Abbey as long as I carry this dreadful tendency to arrange other people's lives.

CATHERINE: Do stop speaking of an Abbey, Miss Woodhouse! You do not know what associations that word carries for me. In the midst of such gloominess, I begin to doubt my own prospects of happiness at my Abbey.

ELIZABETH: *Your* Abbey? Do you tell us that you, too, are on the point of marriage?

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CATHERINE [*returning to the center of the room and preparing to make a clean breast of it*]: Oh, but indeed I am! Incredible as it seems, I, too, am in love and have received the love of a most worthy man, my dear Henry Tilney, the future owner of Northanger Abbey. I was in Bath this fortnight visiting his sister, who was recently married to Lord Stavely.

EMMA: And no doubt you also spent a little time with the gentleman himself?

CATHERINE [*blushing*]: Of course. How could I travel so far and not see the man whom I am pledged to marry?

ANNE: And how was your visit?

CATHERINE: It was quite marvelous, until the concert. And even afterward, I managed to forget how uncomfortable I had been and spent the rest of the journey in tolerable, even joyous, spirits.

MARIANNE: What concert do you speak of? I adore music! Why, pray tell, should a concert make you uncomfortable?

CATHERINE: Oh, do not misunderstand my love of music. I do love to listen, though I know little about it. That is the trouble, you see. I do know so little about music, and drawing, and the things most accomplished young ladies learn from their governesses, and Miss Harris is no doubt an expert in them all!

ELIZABETH: Miss Harris? Who is she, and what has she to do with your future happiness? And how is a concert important? Miss Morland, we are all thoroughly confused. If you please, begin your tale again and do not forget that we are unacquainted with any of its particulars.

CATHERINE [*apologetically*]: Of course. Forgive me, ladies. While in Bath last year I became acquainted with a young man at the assembly rooms, whose name was Henry Tilney. He introduced me to his sister, for whom I had an instant sympathy. All proceeded so well in our friendship that when it came time for the two of them to leave Bath for Northanger Abbey with their father, I was invited to be the companion of Miss Eleanor Tilney.

EMMA: This is a most convenient arrangement for romance. I dare say you and Mr. Tilney did not find it difficult to move from a mutual love of the sister to a love of each other.

CATHERINE [*blushing*]: Indeed, Miss Woodhouse, I admit it was something like that. But we were not without our own difficulties in forming an attachment. At first I felt dreadfully ignorant among Henry and Eleanor, but they put me at ease so tactfully and thoughtfully, and Henry so carefully instructed me in the finer points of drawing and general taste that I did not feel so inferior as I had in the beginning. I had no qualms after everything was finally settled between Henry and me, which occurred soon after Eleanor married Lord Stavely.

ANNE: Then why are you fearful now, dear Catherine?

CATHERINE: It was while I was attending a concert in Bath with Eleanor that I first began to meet the young ladies with whom Henry had long been intimate. I was introduced to a Mrs. Spencer, a most intimidating woman, and her niece, Miss Harris. It was while Eleanor was attending to other friends that I exchanged a few words alone with Mrs. Spencer, and I was soon made to understand that Miss Harris and Henry had once been intimate friends, and that their engagement had been on the point of being settled when he met me.

MARIANNE: I do not see why such knowledge pains you, Miss Morland. I would think that such a communication would only prove how much Mr. Tilney preferred you to her.

CATHERINE [*expressively*]: You have not glimpsed this Miss Harris! She is quite accomplished, in every particular, as well as being perfectly lovely. I am the fourth of ten children, and while my family is neither poor nor neglected, my mother did not have time to instruct me in the finer points of taste, and I had no great liking for drawing or music as a girl. My mother never engaged a governess, and I know that I am not beautiful.

ANNE: But you, Catherine, are Henry's choice of a wife, not Miss Harris.

CATHERINE: Yes, and I cannot understand why! What if Henry begins to regret his choice?

*Lights and set change for final dream sequence.*

*MRS. CATHERINE TILNEY is entertaining guests at Henry's Woodston parsonage shortly after her marriage. MRS. SPENCER and MISS HARRIS are in attendance, as are LADY ELEANOR STAVELY and MRS. ALLEN. MRS. SPENCER and MISS HARRIS have just sat down. Each holds a teacup and saucer.*

CATHERINE: Welcome to my new home, Mrs. Spencer and Miss Harris. It is very kind of you to oblige me with a visit.

MRS. SPENCER: Good afternoon, Mrs. Tilney, Lady Eleanor. I do not believe I have met your friend.

CATHERINE: Allow me to introduce, Mrs. Allen, one of my dearest friends from home. It was she who first brought me to Bath.

MRS. ALLEN: Yes, Bath is such a diversion for seeing the new fashions. Although I did get a big rent in my best Mechlin gown while we were there, but I found a lovely dressmaker shop that mended it so well you can hardly tell now where it was.

MRS. SPENCER: How do you do?

MRS. ALLEN: Good afternoon, Mrs. Spencer, Miss Harris.

*MISS HARRIS nods in acknowledgment, while Mrs. Spencer takes a haughty sip of tea.*

LADY ELEANOR [*warmly*]: And it was such a fortunate occurrence [that she did bring you to Bath, was it not, dear Catherine? Imagine if we had never met?

CATHERINE: I do not like to even imagine such a frightening idea, my dear Eleanor. Although our first days were not so pleasant, were they Mrs. Allen?

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MRS. ALLEN: Indeed no, Catherine dear. I shall never forget how melancholy it was without my usual friends there. That, of course, was before you first danced with Mr. Tilney at the Assembly Rooms. Such an agreeable young man he was. I recall that evening very well. It was the first time I wore my new silk gloves.

LADY ELEANOR: He still is quite agreeable, is he not, Catherine?

CATHERINE [*laughing*]: I daresay he is the most agreeable husband I have ever had, ladies.

MRS. SPENCER [*frostily*]: We have known Henry since he was a child of four years, and I am sure my niece Susan best knows the evenness of his temperament, do you not?

MISS HARRIS: Oh, I have no claim to Henry other than that of an old friend, Aunt Spencer. Though I often have felt myself quite as much his sister as Eleanor.

LADY ELEANOR: We did have gay times as children, did we not, Susan? Do you recall that French master that Henry could imitate so well?

MISS HARRIS: There is no chance of my forgetting it. How much I have always loved French! I suppose that comes of having had such an excellent tutor as a girl. How did you find your tutor, Mrs. Tilney?

CATHERINE [*confused*]: I did not have a tutor, I fear. My mother taught me French, and I must confess to being an indifferent student.

MISS HARRIS: Indeed. I have never understood people who were not immensely fond of French, but perhaps that is because I have always had such a liking for French art. I am excessively fond of the Rococo artists. Tell me, do you prefer Fragonard or Watteau?

*CATHERINE, having never heard of either artist, is flabbergasted. She is rescued by LADY ELEANOR, though not before MRS. ALLEN seizes the opportunity to return to her favorite subject.*

MRS. ALLEN: For my part, I have always been excessively fond of the French fashion.

*Awkward pause before LADY ELEANOR steps in.*

LADY ELEANOR: Catherine was always much too interested in the doings of her older brothers to leave time for the intricacies of art history, were you not, dear? She is such a loving sister.

MRS. SPENCER: But surely she devoted time to drawing. I always say that it is a mark of distinction when a young lady can draw well. If she were not so modest, I fear that Susan would be always besieged with requests for portraits. She holds a brush so well.

MISS HARRIS: Well, I will confess that there is a certain talent to capturing the very personality of a friend in paint, Aunt Spencer. But perhaps Mrs. Tilney has other subjects of interest. We cannot all be portraitists, you know. [*Miss Harris and Mrs. Spencer dissolve into affected giggles, after which there is an slight silence.*]

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CATHERINE [*attempting to rise to the occasion*]: I am very much afraid that my favorite subjects were always barnyard animals about my village, and I have not attempted to capture the likeness of our cook's chickens in over ten years [*gives a stilted laugh, which ends most unfortunately in a snort*]

MISS HARRIS [*persistent*]: Well, surely you must be inclined to music, then. I often fear that I will not be able to quit the pianoforte once I sit down at it, especially if I am practicing a concerto.

MRS. SPENCER: My dear Susan, you are not being fair to yourself. You know that you will willingly trade the pianoforte for your harp at any time. Did you ever have opportunity to learn the harp, Mrs. Tilney?

CATHERINE [*weakly*]: Unfortunately, we did not possess such an instrument.

MISS HARRIS: But the piano? How did you enjoy your lessons?

CATHERINE: Not at all, I am afraid. I recall with shame my joy the day that the music master was dismissed.

*MRS. SPENCER and MISS HARRIS purse their lips in disbelief and take significant sips of tea while MRS. ALLEN remains serenely unconcerned with the relevant conversation.*

MRS. ALLEN [*after a pause*]: Yes, I have been so pleased with the new empire waist. It shows one's figure to such advantage.

*No one is quite sure what to make of this remark, and there is another pause before LADY ELEANOR comes to the rescue once again.*

LADY ELEANOR: Catherine, I do not believe that our guests have seen your charming new pleasure grounds yet. Why do I not show them about the garden while you wait for Henry? You know he would be quite disappointed if you were not here to greet him when he arrives home.

CATHERINE [*faintly*]: Yes, thank you, Eleanor dear. I shall wait here and ... and think.

*LADY ELEANOR leads the other ladies out to the garden. MRS. SPENCER and MISS HARRIS exit with a nod to CATHERINE, while MRS. ALLEN follows.*

MRS. ALLEN [*anxiously, as she exits*]: I am not entirely certain that this damp weather is at all good for my lace. It is Valenciennes, you know, and I had my dressmaker send to France for it.

*Silence. CATHERINE rises from her chair in dismay, crosses to the settee, and sits. She rises again. She picks up a book of French verse from the table and reads a bit haltingly aloud before throwing it down in frustration. She begins to hum a bit of a song, but cannot find the tune and gives that up in despair. She crosses to a painting hanging on the wall and speaks to the departed MISS HARRIS.*

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CATHERINE [*conversationally*]: Why, yes, Miss Harris, I am quite fond of a Rococo painting myself, though I do feel that the rendering of light is much more masterful in the Italian style, the ... the ... The style which that great artist used to such advantage, Mr. Bot-bot-istroni? No, that's not right at all. [*desperately*] Oh, *why* didn't I study these things more? I'm completely unfit to be Henry's wife. [*resorts to tears*] I don't see why he ever married me in the first place. It is apparent that Susan Harris would have made him a much better wife in all particulars. [*tears begin to crescendo*] No doubt she is congratulating herself on having made me miserable, but it does not signify. Nothing matters now. I am sure that once Henry sees her he will be reminded of the inferiority of his choice, especially when she begins to talk beside me. I can imagine him now. He will think to himself "I must never go to Bath again. There must have been some trick of the light which endeared Catherine to me. To think I actually considered her more charming than Susan." Yes, those will be his very thoughts. For how can he truly prefer me? I am her inferior in birth, in beauty and in education. [*now openly sobbing*] Mrs. Spencer and Miss Harris have done their work well. I am abjectly miserable indeed. How can I face Henry now? The thought is impossible. [*pauses and then begins to move about the room purposefully*] Stay! I can leave here. We have been married only a few weeks. I am sure that Henry can obtain an annulment, once he realizes the disparity of the match. [*returns to tears*] I shall be miserable, but that signifies nothing. I will live out my days as a comfort to my mother. She does not mind my ignorance. Yes, I must leave immediately. But Henry! How can I live without him? [*collapses in tears*]

***Set returns to normal. Characters as before.***

CATHERINE, EMMA, MARIANNE and ELIZABETH are all wailing. ANNE rises and comes to stand in the center of the room. Her gaze travels over each woman in disbelief. CATHERINE is standing up right, her shoulders heaving. ELIZABETH and MARIANNE have their arms about each other as they sit on the settee sobbing. EMMA is sitting on a chair busily blowing her nose and wiping her eyes with her handkerchief. After a few noisy moments, ANNE takes charge.

ANNE [*most severely*]: I am scandalized! Each of you stop crying this very instant. I mean it! Now! Look at me!

*In shock each lady looks up. ELIZABETH and MARIANNE draw apart while CATHERINE draws herself up to her full height. EMMA finishes blowing her nose noisily in the silence, and then turns attentively to ANNE.*

ANNE [*severely, to Catherine*]: Miss Morland, sit over there, next to Misses Bennet and Dashwood. Miss Woodhouse, draw your chair over near the settee. I want to be able to address all four of you at once, for you are all most sorely in need of what I have to say. I expect each of you to be closely attentive.

*The women comply, still too astonished to do anything else.*



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ANNE: Now that you are listening, heed my words well. By some strange twist of chance, the five of us have been brought together in this very room of this very inn at this very crossroads. Each of us is on the point of marriage. [*The other four start in surprise at hearing this.*] Yes, I, too, the spinster Miss Elliot, am about to be married. However, unlike you young ladies, this is not the first time I have been on the point of marriage. When I was but nineteen years old I fell violently in love with a young captain named Wentworth. [*Slide of two Regency lovers courting appears on wall above ANNE's head*] It may come as a surprise to you to learn that I am the daughter of Sir Walter Elliot of Kellynch Hall. However, it was this very nobility of my birth which first prevented my happiness. My mother having died when I was a girl, I relied very heavily upon the advice of a Lady Russell, who had become both mother and father to me, owing to the indifference my father has always shown me. When I informed Lady Russell of the engagement between Captain Wentworth and myself, she was troubled. [*slide change to that of older woman counseling younger tearful woman, while a man watches in dismay*] You may not think it now, but I was considered very pretty at the age of nineteen, and I was also the daughter of a baronet. Captain Wentworth was poor, and had nothing to tempt me but his love. That would have been enough for me, but Lady Russell was convinced that I would be heaping shame upon my father and herself, as well as throwing myself away by marrying a penniless captain. I would not have listened to her at all if I had not, as I said, always considered her my second mother. It was with many tears that I made the decision to refuse Captain Wentworth and please Lady Russell. She succeeded in convincing me that it would be quite the best for Captain Wentworth, as well, if I would give him up. And so I did. I persuaded him that I did not love him, which he did not at first believe, and that I could not marry him, which he understood at length. He left the country in well-deserved anger. I did not see him for seven years.

*ANNE pauses to catch her breath. The other four ladies are still staring at her in astonishment, and hanging on her every word. Slide changes to show a woman waiting by a window.*

ANNE [*continuing*]: One day last year, through a strange set of circumstances, Captain Wentworth returned to my quiet life. He had contrived to make both a name for bravery and a fortune for himself, but I did not consider that when I saw him again for the first time. I had the realization that I still loved him, and that my love was even more intense than when I was a girl. As for Captain Wentworth, though, time seemed to have healed his wounds, and he spent many weeks in the company of my sister's family and me, all the while treating me as the most inconsequential of acquaintances. No one ever knew what had passed between us seven years earlier, and no one ever knew what pain his return caused me. [*pause, while slide changes to show a courting couple walking on a road, while a single woman follows behind*] It soon became clear that Captain Wentworth was paying considerable attention to a girl named Louisa Musgrove, who is connected to me by my sister's marriage, and Louisa delighted in the

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Captain's affections. They seemed to be on the point of an engagement when she suffered a grievous accident and, as a consequence, fell in love with another man. Captain Wentworth was now free once more, and we came into contact with each other even more frequently than before. [*slide change to show young woman reading a letter while a young man looks over her shoulder*] Finally, after I had been pursued by another man, Captain Wentworth told me that he loved me still, and that even when he had been fascinated with Louisa he had been unconsciously comparing her with me. I straightaway revealed the knowledge of my unwavering love to him, and we were reconciled.

CATHERINE [*rapturously charmed by the tale, and clapping her hands together*]: Oh, I am so glad, Miss Elliot!

MARIANNE: [*likewise delighted*]: As am I! How romantic, that you have been reconciled after eight years, and that your love has only grown stronger!

EMMA: [*more cautiously, suspecting a moral*]: I must say that it is a riveting tale, and a proof of the power of affection.

ELIZABETH [*thoughtfully*]: I would rather call it a lucky coincidence, that you were reunited through circumstances and then discovered that you still loved one another.

ANNE [*gently*]: Would you, Miss Bennet? Coincidence or not, I know that I have been given a chance to correct my earlier folly.

*During the following speech, ANNE addresses each lady in turn.*

ANNE: I have sat here and listened as each of you has related fears about your upcoming marriages. Those fears are natural, of course, and you do well to recognize and consider them. But consider also the consequences of your fears run amok.

*Takes CATHERINE's hand and helps her up. Brings her to the center of the room and turns to face her.*

ANNE: You, Miss Catherine Morland, are afraid that your husband will cease to love you when he discovers what you call ignorance. From my experience with you today, I see no fault of ignorance about you, but merely an openness and charming affection for your friends that makes it easy to understand why Mr. Tilney loves you. Your humility is no doubt also an asset to him, especially if he has been used to the company of such people as the insufferably proud Miss Harris.

ANNE [*now turns to EMMA*]: You, Miss Woodhouse, are afraid to marry Mr. Knightley for fear of offending him with your creative schemes. But it is clear to me that your matchmaking impulses are the result of a generous and happy nature which wants to secure happiness for all those around you. No doubt Mr. Knightley sees this and values it in you, and he probably also appreciates the ridiculousness of some of your schemes. Let me only say that life is hard sometimes, and that we all need a little laughter to carry us through it gracefully. I would wager that Mr. Knightley enjoys the entertainment value of your matchmaking schemes. The deeper fear that you contend with, I think, is the fact

you are not perfect. You are marrying a man who demands much, and you have always demanded much of yourself. This might be a dangerous combination, except you have been given the gift of laughter. Use it, and learn to laugh at yourself. In time you will begin to discern what is helpful and what is harmful to others. Meanwhile, I see no reason here for preventing a marriage of true love and affection.

ANNE [ *to ELIZABETH*]: As for you, Miss Elizabeth Bennet, I well understand how it is to have relatives that embarrass one. The only difference between you and me is that my father and sisters are titled and so make only greater fools of themselves when they display their utter want of propriety and decency. I first rejected my love to save myself embarrassment and censure and nearly ruined the future happiness of both myself and Captain Wentworth. If you break your engagement with Mr. Darcy because you are afraid of damaging his reputation, you will, in the end, do an even greater damage to his heart and your own. It is quite clear to me that you love each other exceedingly, and be assured that as long as you retain your excellent ability to laugh, all of your fears will be reconciled.

ANNE [*sitting beside MARIANNE*]: And finally I come to you, Miss Marianne Dashwood. You are the one that began us all on this journey of self-reflection and self-deprecation. I am sorry that you have so distressed yourself as to run away, leaving in your trail sadness and worry for your friends, but let me just say this: Anyone who is so frightened by a dream as to desert everything that she holds dear is in no danger of ever becoming overly sensible. You were unfortunate in your first choice of a husband, but if you truly love Colonel Brandon as much as you say you do, then your passionate temperament will not suffer in combination with his more practical nature. I would expect, rather, that you would find in your marriage a perfect blend of sense and sensibility that would serve only to enrich the partnership and endear you both to each other. [*ANNE stands and addresses all of the ladies*]: And let all of you remember this. When it came time for me to marry all those years ago, I not only entertained these fears but I acted upon them. I refused to marry the man that I loved and I have been miserable for it ever since. You do not know how many times during the colorless seven years that followed I wished that I had had more strength of character to overcome my fears. God heard me in my misery, and granted me another chance at happiness. Be assured that I am now reaching for it wholeheartedly, and I encourage each of you to do the same. I do not often open my heart to even my closest friends, and I hope that my complete frankness before you all is proof of the good will I wish to extend to each of you.

*ANNE crosses to a chair and falls into it, exhausted. The others look at each other. EMMA crosses to ANNE and shakes her hand.*

EMMA: Thank you, Miss Elliot, for having the courage to share your wisdom with me. I see now the unfoundedness of my fears, and I am ready to return to Hartfield and also to Mr. Knightley. I hope one day to invite you to visit us, and you can meet the sour-faced Blake yourself. She does exist, you know, and if she is already married it has not done much for her disposition. But at least my husband and I shall be more than happy to receive you. Or any of you ladies.

ELIZABETH: And I hope to extend the same invitation to Pemberley. It really is the most beautiful estate in Derbyshire. I am certain Mr. Darcy should be particularly gracious in gaining your acquaintanceship, Miss Elliot, especially when I tell him how much of our happiness we owe to you. [*crosses to ANNE and cordially shakes her hand*] And now I am sure that my aunt and uncle are ready to continue on our journey. I must wish you ladies adieu. [*exits*]

EMMA: I, too, am sure that my horses are refreshed and it is time for me to return home. I have spent a most informative afternoon with you, Miss Elliot, Miss Morland, and Miss Dashwood. May we meet again. [*collects packages and exits*]

CATHERINE: My dear Miss Elliot! [*embracing her*] To think that we have traveled all the way from Bath together as strangers while having so much in common. I think the coach is ready to depart, but we shall not travel as strangers now, shall we?

ANNE [*returning her embrace*]: Indeed not, my dear Catherine. And you must be sure to come visit the Captain and me when we are settled. And perhaps I may someday get a glimpse of this famous Abbey, shall I not?

CATHERINE: Indeed you shall! Henry and I would not let you and Captain Wentworth refuse the invitation. I shall save you a place near me on the seat. [*exits*]

ANNE [*laying a hand on MARIANNE's shoulder*]: Miss Dashwood, how do you fare?

MARIANNE [*taking ANNE's other hand*]: Only very ashamed, Miss Elliot, though quite relieved in spirit. I see now how unfounded my fears were. To think I carried them to such an extent! Do not concern yourself about me. I know very well the stage to take home, and I believe I shall reach there before dark.

ANNE: Do not be too ashamed, dear Marianne. Remember that you are not the only one who has acted foolishly. Yet are you sure that you love this Colonel enough to marry him? It is not such a bad thing to live unmarried, though society may look down on us for it. The evil only comes when we sacrifice love for the sake of our pride.

MARIANNE [*blushing*]: I am so sure of my love for Colonel Brandon, my friend, that I have been composing my apology these past ten minutes, ever since you first began to speak. Though to be sure, the romance of our estrangement will add considerable passion to the relationship, do not you think?

ANNE [*laughing*]: I do not presume to be an expert in matters of romance, but I can see that you are. Follow your heart, dear Marianne, but temper your passion with wisdom. I must go. [*exits*]

## NOTES

*MARIANNE picks up her bonnet and prepares to leave. Suddenly, she stops and returns to the sofa on which she fainted. She drops limply into it in memory, then stands abruptly and giggles to herself.*

MARIANNE: I did do it admirably well, did I not? Sometimes I amaze myself. Wait until I tell Elinor about this adventure. She shall be sure to censure me roundly, but I do not care. To think that my running away resulted in the preservation of four marriages! Someone ought to write a romance about that! [*exits*]

**THE END**

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## NOTES

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