Rhetoric as Inquiry: Personal Writing and Academic Success in the English Classroom

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RHETORIC AS INQUIRY: PERSONAL WRITING AND
ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

by

Erica E. Rogers

A DISSERTATION

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RHETORIC AS INQUIRY: PERSONAL WRITING AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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University of Nebraska, 2016

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Holistic and critical pedagogy, an approach to learning and teaching, integrates the everyday realities students live, with the systemic and institutional objectives of education itself. Working with theories from composition, rhetoric, feminist studies, and cognitive psychology from a teacher-researcher perspective, this dissertation explores and theorizes holistic, critical pedagogy within the composition classroom while outlining the use of personal writing as a means to develop critical consciousness. Student study participants kept “Inquiry Notebooks,” semester-long personal writing projects that served as receptacles for practical and theoretical engagement with a variety of texts and ideas, then interviewed after the course to discuss their learning outcomes and discoveries. Rhetorical and critical analysis of classroom artifacts, assignments, Inquiry Notebooks, and interview transcripts made students’ “epistemic assumptions” (Qualley 1997) and “identity process-styles” (Berzonsky 2004) visible, making it possible to map what they learned and decided not to learn. Inviting discussion of how epistemic assumptions and identity process-styles influence student learning outcomes, this dissertation makes the case for holistic, critical pedagogy as a means to tend to student needs as human beings coming to know about themselves, and the world around them.
For my children, and their children.

For my parents, and their parents.
AUTHOR’S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ing more deeply about the rhetoric of emotion, professing and pedagogy, and feminist perspectives within the field of Composition. She continues to be the example of feminist and critical scholarship, practice and theory, I find inspirational. Whenever I have been in her company, I have been star-struck by her brilliance.

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INTRODUCTION:
THAT TWO O’CLOCK CLASS

In the spring of 2011, English 254: “Writing and Communities,” met at two o’clock on Tuesdays and Thursdays. While designing the course content one of my main goals was to complicate cultural tropes about writing, ones that positioned writing as individualistic, allegedly solitary acts with private procedures reliant on rules, assigned forms such as the “five-paragraph essay,” and strategies that treated writing as mechanical production for others. I wanted to guide students to enact writing as a more public and communal enterprise built from and through personal engagement and perspective. My other, and equally important goal, was to persuade my students that reading was much more than the harvesting of ideas from a text. As a graduate teaching assistant I was afforded the autonomy to design course content, which I experienced as a tremendous opportunity to learn teaching as creative, thoughtful, and exciting intellectual work. Learning outcomes for the course were developed by the department’s Composition faculty, and approved at the department and college levels. The desired learning outcomes (Appendix A) focused on composing practices as both individual and community actions, the social contexts for writing and interpreting the writing of others, primary and secondary research strategies, revision and peer response strategies, and self-assessment as inquiry and reflection.

The course, aimed at second-year students and above, often drew a mixture of sophomores, juniors, and seniors who needed an upper-level writing course to fulfill graduation requirements. Thus, when I surveyed the class to gauge students’ motivations for taking the course, responses fell along two main themes: reluctance summarized as a
general statement, “I’m not really a writer;” to resentment, “I have to take this class to graduate” (and “I’m not really a writer”). Only one of the 23 registered students, a forty-year-old male majoring in computer science, self-identified as a writer. Only three of the group identified as what Applegate et. al term “enthusiastic readers” – students who read selectively or broadly during the summer. Of those three, only two would be classified as “engaged and avid readers” – people who expressed a love of reading and read a broad and extensive selection of materials (Applegate et. al 192). In short, one student claimed the identity of writer and was an engaged and avid reader. Another student was an avid reader across a board spectrum of interests. The rest, a rabble of reluctant and resistant students, during our academic version of the “Would You Rather” game, decided reading was better than going to the dentist, but something would not do in their spare time. Writing, as we discussed it, was something the majority did not do, or would want to do, outside of course requirements.

To organize the course, I focused on the many ways writers enact and experience community. Our focus on the Beat Generation writers was aimed at helping students to see the complexities of American postwar culture, and the many ways writers of the Beat movement supported each other. Apart from sharing correspondence between Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, I assigned Kerouac’s *On the Road* (2002) and Ginsberg’s *HOWL and Other Poems* (2000). A new film interpretation of Ginsberg’s work and treatment of San Francisco Renaissance, written and directed by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, had been released in 2010. Within the film Eric Drooker’s animated interpretation of Ginsberg’s poem appears as a rich compliment, one that drives home issues of visual rhetoric. The animated version is taken directly from Drooker’s *HOWL: A Graphic*
Novel (2010). To further enrich students’ experiences with visual rhetoric, narrative, and argument, I included two graphic works, Art Spiegelman’s Maus: A Survivor’s Tale, Parts I and II (1993), and Marjane Satrapi’s Persepolis in both print (2007) and film (2008) editions. Because all of the written works included in the course readings addressed issues of community, war, displacement, racism, gender, and sexuality they provided us an inroad to many difficult conversations. In-class activities and presentations also included explorations of racism, white privilege, male privilege, and how our subjectivities are shaped (and assigned) by culture. The challenge I gave students from the outset was to use their personal locations in culture, their everyday lives and emotions, as a beginning place for contemplation, exploration, and even confrontation.

Apart from three formal writing projects that prompted students to tend to issues of rhetoric, writing, and ethnographic research, students were asked to maintain a semester-long informal writing project I call an “Inquiry Notebook.” Notebooks comprised forty percent of students’ final course grade due to its requirements, investment of time and resources, and the many ways we would use the Inquiry Notebooks during the semester. The Inquiry Notebook has four essential elements: reading notes, class notes, contemplative responses, and visual compositions. My choices for these components reflect my commitments to critical and holistic pedagogy while sponsoring a more complicated reading and writing relationship for students. By holistic, I mean an approach to learning and teaching that integrates the everyday realities students live — emotional, spiritual, and intellectual — with the more systemic and institutional objectives of education itself. I will outline and more thoroughly define my interpretation of holistic peda-
gogy in Chapter One, “A Holistic Pedagogy: Some Ends and Means.” In some ways, In-
quiry Notebooks bring classic (progymnasmata) and contemporary (personal narrative
and cognitive mapping) rhetorical concepts together. Ultimately, these components work
to bring forward the thinking and reading processes that often are left to the “underlife”
of academic work, when students are asked to read and then write projects. As a student
and as a professor, I have experienced the dominant nature of writing assignments: the
often rigid structures of “academic writing” within a seminar, instructors’ use of scaffold-
ing large writing projects into smaller chunks, provision of peer response opportunities,
and the placement of value on process and revision. I know, as both a student and profes-
sor, that students often leave “the real writing” until they feel deadline pressure. I wanted
to create writing room for processes that are often left unexamined in the traditional writ-
ing project models I experienced, to bring the background thinking and mulling that pre-
cede formal writing to a form that would invite analysis. This, in itself, is a part of a ho-
listic pedagogy in that it supports the first tenet for both teacher and student: to tend to
our inner landscapes. More importantly, I wanted to create an assignment that would cre-
ate writing room for the myriad of ways one logically and emotionally responds to read-
ings when working with texts that confront or unsettle the commonplace knowledge stu-
dents assume is inarguably true or “natural.”

To this end, an ongoing, semester-long project that helped students to map their
conflicts, responses, and close readings could help them to explore the use of emotion as
a catalyst for critical consciousness. As a holistic teacher I sought to disrupt their inher-
ited and assigned sense of assessments – who does them, to what end, and what they do
and do not prove. I wanted a project that made it possible to map what it meant to suffer
well while encountering ideas, inequality, and difficulty. Moreover, I wanted to help students develop a project that would allow them to see, from multiple views and strategic positions, the thinking work that went in to writing, to coming to know. In other words, I wanted an assignment that served as a method for experiencing holistic pedagogy in a writing classroom so that students could experience what it means to map their course experiences, assess themselves, and to circle back as a part of moving forward.

**Their Stories and Mine:**
*A Teacher Research Narrative Study Format & Methodology*

This project is part of my larger quest to more thoughtfully integrate teaching and research as reflective practice. There is a rich tradition of such work in Composition, in ethnographic and teacher narrative genres. My work has been influenced by Robert J. Nash (2004), Zan Meyer Gonçalves (2005), Amy Lee (2000), and Shari Stenberg (2015). In many ways, this project is a response to Stenberg’s call to invite new teachers to embark on ongoing inquiries in order to engage with ongoing changes in themselves, their students, and their classrooms (134). Working from this perspective, the primary goal of this project was to create a “mutually beneficial” encounter for both the teacher and the student-participants with the hope of contributing to the field of Composition and Rhetoric (Stenberg 134). Drawing from my own experiences as the teacher of That Two O’clock Class, my personal and teaching journals, student conference notes, curricula, presentations, and other artifacts directly from the course, I first mapped students’ responses to the course. While analyzing these rhetorical artifacts within the context of teaching a second-year writing course with a foundation in classic and modern rhetorical
theory, three themes emerged. First, it seemed that students had responded in complicated and important ways to a semester-long writing project I had assigned. The “Inquiry Notebooks” we kept throughout the semester proved to be a rich site for the contemplation of both teaching and learning practices. Second, the notebook assignment’s focus on “the personal” as a place from which to begin larger inquiries resonated with students in ways that were worth further exploration. Finally, it seemed my focus on holistic, critical pedagogy practices affected students’ experiences with the notebooks in ways that warranted a larger conversation. I decided, after the course, that interviewing students about their course experiences, the personal yet critical inquiries the notebooks sponsored, and their perceptions of the learning they did (or did not do) might yield valuable insights worth sharing.

Included in the study are some of my artifacts of teaching (appendices), theoretical and practical overviews, and interview excerpts from students from That Two O’clock Class. Students were interviewed in the late spring of 2013, two years after their course experiences. Once interviews were complete, I rhetorically analyzed the interviews while drawing from theories from composition and rhetoric, cognitive psychology, and feminist studies. The primary goal of this project is to set students’ stories next to my own narrative as a teacher-researcher in order to complicate and enrich the larger, ongoing conversations about pedagogy and practices within the field of composition and rhetoric. Students were asked the same set of questions (Appendix C), and their responses were recorded (audio). To maintain their anonymity, a requisite of my approved IRB protocol, students selected pseudonyms that reflected their sense of themselves within the context of the “Writing and Communities” course. However jovial or irreverent, these
names reflect intersections where one interacts with others, while also identifying them as course insiders with shared experiences. Some students included the word “pants” in their names, such as Quiet Heathen-Pants, and Steel McThunderpants. This I attribute to the youth cultural phenomenon of picking up movie dialogue to use in everyday conversation. In the film, *Drop Dead Gorgeous* (1999), Loretta (played by Allison Janney) and Amber (played by Kristen Dunst) are in a heated exchange in a hospital waiting area when they are interrupted by a candy striper. “Hey Little Miss Sad Pants and her friend, Serious Sally,” the character says, “How about some nice cool mints to turn those frowns upside-down?” The phrase, “sad pants,” appeared in numerous contexts, and students from That Two O’Clock Class often used the phrase to describe themselves during stressful or disappointing times. When it came to naming themselves for the study, the “pants” stayed whereas the preceding descriptor did not. Quiet Heath-Pants, for example, frames her name as a deeply personal and transformative identity issue in Chapter Three. Steel McThunderpants, combines the pants connection with parody movies in a way that highlights his sense of triumphant thunder as a writer. His story appears in Chapter Four. Another student, Word Skirt, framed her name because she had asked for a list of pseudonyms already chosen, and wanted to be different from pants, but still reflect something worn. She wanted to be just a little different, she said. Her story appears in Chapter Four, too. Two other students, Mr. Tangle and Chatty Kathy, chose names that reflected their sense of outsider status within the context of the course itself. Their stories appear in Chapter Two. Collectively, students’ playfulness is much more than mere irreverence. Many of these students were still meeting regularly for coffee and conversation two years after the course. They were also connected through social media, and kept tabs on each
other as friends. Their names are a reflection of the ways in which these students bonded in the class context and outside of it.

The Stickiness of Method: Inquiry Notebooks Background and Form

In The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models, and Maxims for Writing Teachers (1981), Ann Berthoff advises that writing alone cannot teach writing unless its dialectic and nonlinear processes are understood, and the circling back to review and rewrite is at the heart of the work (3). Berthoff argues that there is no separation between theory and practice for compositionists, because theory itself provides the means by which to critically analyze curricula and courses (3). Because composition courses are so often framed as tedious, Berthoff contends, teaching advice tends to follow three elements: 1) assigning themes and analyzing them; 2) if something works, why it works does not need to be considered; and 3) if an instructor can get assignments worked out “once and for all,” he or she will be spared planning and replanning every course, every time (4). Though thirty-five years have passed since Berthoff’s claimed that, “Teaching composition is famously tedious …” (4). There is enough residual tension surrounding composition, particularly among those who are hired as staff lecturers to teach nothing but first-year writing, to find Berthoff’s words relevant today. This notion of tedium, when teaching multiple sections of first-year writing for considerably less pay than tenure track professors, while occupying a position of institutional subordination, can be difficult to shake. This reflects Laura Micciche’s claim that “Metaphors of subordination express the frustration, anger, and hurt that result from institutional and intellectual repression and
marginalization” (36). The temptation, when overloaded with first-year students, is to design “what works” assignments, forget all about circling back, and treat curricula like a technological “tool” in service to an institution’s alleged efficiencies.

Because Composition is so often positioned as subordinate to literary studies, the conditions in which teachers teach often become larger metaphors for Composition as a field of study, Micciche contends (29). Thus, Composition has been stuck in emotive locations that include guilt and emotional distress (Micciche 30-1), and these institutional locations matter. “Our location in the academy,” Micciche writes, “has everything to do with how emotion sticks to the writing, thinking, and teaching we do, as well as to the identity we construct and circulate” (36). This helps to explain why the Inquiry Notebook itself became a crucial part of my sense of holistic pedagogy. Unsatisfied with the “recipe swapping” of assignments that reject theory, and alienated from “theory for theory’s sake” (Berthoff 4) so often written by men and handed down to practitioners, I craved something that would help to sponsor thinking about thinking. Berthoff calls this in-between a third way named method. “A method,” Berthoff argues, “is a way of bringing together what we think we are doing and how were are doing it: meta + hodos = about the way; the way about the way” (4). As a developing academic in the field of rhetoric and composition, I wanted to disrupt commonplace attitudes about the teaching of writing as I had encountered them as a first-generation, nontraditional student who had been writing for years without teachers before entering college at the age of thirty-two. What intrigued me more than anything while working with students, was the way they wrote, the thinking behind the thinking.
According to Berthoff, there is a circularity to the critical study of language. As Berthoff writes:

Throughout my talks I have commented on this circularity or dialectic that is characteristic of all critical study of language: interpreting our interpretations, thinking about thinking, arranging our techniques for arranging, knowing our knowledge. The most interesting challenge is to take advantage of the fact that we can’t step outside language in order to study it (4).

Because ideas are not just what we think about, but are what we do our thinking with (Berthoff 4), an emphasis on method helps us to map how are ideas are working for and against us. As one committed to education as liberation through holistic, critical pedagogical practices, an outlook I explore in Chapter One, I decided this emphasis on method was just as important to share with students as it was to consider with my teaching colleagues. To Berthoff, the most important instrument any of us possess is imagination, the primary element of our making sense of the world (4). Before positioning writing as forming, Berthoff creates a link between imagination and forming as the thinking behind the thinking that leads to writing. “Forming is the mind in action,” Berthoff writes, “It is what we do when we learn: when we discover or recognize; when we interpret; when we come to know. Forming is how we make meaning” (5). This concept of forming, I decided, was not addressed or explored in the writing and reading assignments I had been assigned as an undergraduate student. Looking back at my own undergraduate experiences in a large state university, I could see that I had encountered a great deal of instruc-
tion outside of my English courses that followed Berthoff’s three elements. I noticed patterns to both assignments and instruction. I could predict by reading the syllabus whether or not an instructor was committed to education as liberation, as an inroad to life-long, autonomous learning; or a structuralist who had worked out all the kinks and constructed a curriculum that worked for him or her (regardless of whether that curricula worked for students). Courses that required rote memorization and bubble-sheet exams tended to all be the same in structure and presentation, regardless of discipline: 1) readings were assigned; 2) there were Powerpoint presentations and lectures in class with at least one concept not mentioned in the book included on the exam as a means by which to promote attendance; and 3) there were four to five exams during the semester, and one’s grade was an accumulation of points. These courses were not inspiring.

When I considered my teaching identity within the field of composition and rhetoric, I knew I did not buy into the metaphors of wounds Micciche outlines, with their stickiness and limiting perspectives. I knew too that I wanted to disrupt the notion that “English is an easy A,” not because I was ornery, but as a writer I knew that when one was writing what mattered it was never easy. Further, I wanted to provide students the rich methods by which to put theory and practice together in order to present recurring opportunities for them to use their imaginations. The trouble, and this was no small trouble, was that like the composition teachers Berthoff describes who seek three elements to course content, students too develop curricular response along the same lines. They read instructors and their syllabi to determine what the instructor wants before drawing from their skill sets for their own sense of “what works” without contemplating why it works.
The longer they are in education cultures, the better they get at planning their own responses to curricula in order to get the grades they want without having to disrupt themselves every class, every time.

My primary goal, when constructing the Inquiry Notebook as a method space, receptacle, and site for inquiry, was to disrupt students’ “what works” methodologies in order to help them create new methods, new ways of forming. This began with reading and reading notes, and a commitment to what Thomas Newkirk terms “slow reading” as a means by which to eventually experiment with Boler’s sense of “testimonial reading.” Because reading and writing are cultural as well as educational practices (Newkirk 13), they are subject to strategies developed by students outside of teachers’ expectations. As Newkirk argues, students have developed methods of their own consistent with cultural values. “The dirty secret about high school reading, particularly book reading, is how it is faked — listen to class discussion, SparkNotes, Internet summaries, and you can not only get by but often do well” (35). I believed it was important to complicate reading for students in order for them to critique and analyze what they most often experience as a technical proficiency in assessment culture, or simply avoid altogether. When his students described their reading, Newkirk noted that their readings were “piecemeal,” a selective process of dipping in for information, formless, and unbound to any quest for method that would reveal patterns of thought and feeling (37). As Berthoff argues, “Meanings are not things, and finding them is not like going on an Easter egg hunt” (42), but that is precisely how the majority of my students approached reading. They read to find the information they believe will be required for a test or writing assignment.
Reading Notes: Methods and Reasons

As Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem argue, it is important to consider not just what we ask students to read, but how we ask them to read what we assign (35). Though most agree that “critical reading” is a crucial skill outcome, particularly in first-year writing courses, there can be considerable confusion between instructors and students as to what constitutes “critical reading.” Adler-Kassner and Estrem outline three “relatively clear purposes for reading” as:

*Content-based* reading, the kind of reading with which students are most familiar, asks students to summarize and interpret, to consider connections between ideas, and to use reading to develop ideas. *Process-based* reading focuses on the work of the writer/researcher, scrutinizing the text to look at the decisions made by the writer in the process of textual production as a possible model for students’ own writing/research work. *Structure-based* reading asks students to focus on developing genre awareness so that student writers can make conscious decisions about how to use different genres and conventions, and can make conscious choices about how, when or whether to use them (40-1, emphasis original).

Drawing from William Hanks’ work, Adler-Kassner and Estrem outline a fourth reading method, their interpretation of Hanks’ “practice-based” reading. This method draws from a reader’s understanding of language as a system that “contains and generates meaning, while at the same time placing emphasis on the reader’s own ideologies and values (42). “Practice-based reading requires the reader to take an active role in analyzing both the
context of her reading and the activity itself” (Adler-Kassner and Estrem 43), promoting a reflexive reading of both the self and the text.

There are misconceptions about the writing process that frame it as linear steps, that language itself is a muffin tin and meanings nothing more than batter we pour into them (Berthoff 25). In order to assist students to see that language is an instrument, a means by which to observer and map relationships (Berthoff 25), complicating reading seemed just as important as complicating writing. In order to do this, I presented reading as a form of rhetorical criticism. I showed students how to use Berthoff’s sense of the “curious triangle” (writer, message, reader) as a lens to use in order to identify the rhetor, message, and intended audience. I then introduced another triangulated lens, based on Aristotle’s sense of appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos to help students identify these appeals within a text. Once students had identified specific appeals, we then used Berthoff’s “triangle of discourse” (reference, word, referent) as a lens to identify specific words and phrases in order to unpack the social constructions that influence meaning (43). We could then look at a referent (a word or phrase that stands for something) within the context of cultural associations, then look at the word as it was defined by dictionaries such as the American Heritage versus Oxford or Webster entries, and then contemplate the reference as an act, and what that reference did rhetorically. These triangulated lenses helped students to pay closer attention to language, its use, and the cultural norms (or deviations from those norms). One example from the course was the word, “tight.” By definition, the word itself means to be closed firmly, hard to move, or stretched taut. However, in colloquial use within the students’ common vernacular, tight meant something else altogether.
Depending on context, “tight” could mean angry, or it could mean cool or awesome. Focusing on words this closely allowed students to see language as socially constructed and malleable. Our inquiry, through these lenses, was shaped directly by Berthoff’s call to consider language as so much more than a container of meaning. As Berthoff writes:

If we can learn to think of language not as a tool, a single-purpose facilitator, but as an instrument that lets us see in many different ways — as both microscope and telescope, X-ray and radar — then we can better discover how to make room at the center of all our courses for interpretation, for the study of meaning (42).

All assigned readings came with the requirement to use the “double-entry notebook” method Berthoff advocates (45). For the reading notes element of the Inquiry Notebook, students divided the pages in half, top to bottom, and on the right side copied down verbatim excerpts they would otherwise underline or highlight in a text (content-based reading). On the left side, students paraphrased the sections in their own words the excerpts they had written on the right before noting decisions the author made as a writer (process-based reading). In addition, students were asked to include their immediate, even emotive responses to reading content, commentary, even editorial suggestions in light of the three main rhetorical appeals, genres, and conventions (structure-based reading). As Berthoff argues, “The reason for the double-entry format is that it provides a way for the student to conduct that “continuous audit of meaning” that is at the heart of learning to read and write critically” (45). In addition, the double-entry format (Fig. 1) puts the reader in conversation with the writer, while practicing translation and interpretation (45). It is also a method by which to slow students down as readers to teach them to
pay attention, concentrate, and devote themselves to authors in order to hear texts, see sentence movement, and in some way own the ideas that speak to them (Newkirk 41).

Moreover, the double-entry method makes SparkNotes, online summaries, and other efficient modes of information delivery nearly useless to students as they must account for and own their own reading, responses, translations, and questions. Reading notes, structured as conversational and dialectic, interrupt notions of utility as the emphasis of reading is not on “the main ideas,” but on the meanings the readers themselves were able to make. I have found it helpful to demonstrate annotation of texts, the ways one can mark up a text in order to engage directly with it as a fellow thinker, before transcribing those annotations within the Inquiry Notebook. It is, admittedly, an “extra step” that students resent and are quite vocal about in the beginning of the semester.
This was certainly true of those in That Two O’Clock Class. Yet, when I listened rhetorically to my students’ complaints, I heard several themes emerge: 1) resentment for reading that cannot be avoided, faked, or skipped; 2) frustration with the disruption to their “what works” strategies; 3) admittance that close, rhetorical readings improved the quality of classroom discussions; and, 4) a new respect for the demands of critical reading, even as they lamented the time it took, or its alleged inefficiencies. I decided I could live with that.

**Contemplative Response: The Core of Critical, Holistic, and Reflective Practice**

At the end of each week, students wrote a “contemplative response” that was designed to help them circle back, to read their own work while noting the reading methods they used, and the results those methods yielded. Contemplative responses, as I framed them, were designed to help students take what could be “irrelevant” ideas or excerpts, and make them relevant in everyday life experiences. Finding personal connections to ideas and authors, as Peter Elbow notes, is something “good readers” do, yet most students require both guidance and a space to articulate “personal entanglements” with the texts they read (538). Contemplative Responses, then, are testimonies in themselves that reflect the “testimonial reading” of course texts, while at the same time working beyond superficial empathy. The primary goal of a Contemplative Response entry is not summary — the reading notes have already collected that in a myriad of ways. Instead, a weekly response was the means by which to pull in, to gather, what would have otherwise been separate moments of cognitive work to establish what, all things considered,
was worth further contemplation (Fig. 2). These weekly writing assignments asked students to place readings, notations, class discussions, and their personal experiences together in conversation. The goal of such writing is not to serve reading, as Elbow notes is common practice (*The War* 10). Instead, it is in service to thinking - to the many deviations and experiences the students encountered while applying reading to their everyday lives outside of the class. Students received Inquiry Notebook instructions (Appendix B) and asked to submit a “Statement of Intent” (Appendix C). The primary goal for the formal statement was to get students thinking about their future actions and commitments in light of the Inquiry Notebook assignment. They were also given a handout on surviving a process-centered course (Appendix E). Once it became clear that “Contemplative Response” writing needed additional guidance, they were given further instructions (Appendix F).

The first obstacle in my Inquiry Notebook work with students is the way they immediately grab commonplace experiences in their education histories with journal keeping, and attempt to project those experiences onto the assignment. This is no small thing. Moving beyond complexities of genre is perhaps the most difficult aspect of working with the Inquiry Notebook. The word “journal” is often seen as synonymous with with “diary,” and both terms are framed in larger, dominant culture inside and outside of the academy as confessional-personal texts that disclose or confess deeply personal and psychological matters. In recent history, the journal as diary has been turned into a feminine trope, what Cinthia Gannett terms a “degraded and degrading notion of the diary as feminized form” (188). Gannett attributes this feminized degradation specifically to changing literacy practices and the public and private spheres ideology of the nineteenth
century. “More generally, however,” Gannett writes, “it is the result of the long-term cultural muting of women’s discourses and experience by means of the creation of the public/private dichotomy” (188).

The men in my study seemed to have contempt for the word “diary,” the act of personal writing as reflexive practice, and the inefficiency of probabilities that inquiry itself demands. They did not, however, equally hold the word “journal” as a pejorative term. The majority of men in the course sought hegemonic order to uncertainty, often expressing resentment for the Inquiry Notebook as an assignment, its required components, and the intellectual and physical labor such work required. The men who participated in this study also articulated this resentment well, but on more nuanced terms directly related to their concept of writing, utility, and purpose. Overall, across the entire male population in That Two O’clock Class, resistance was often evident in their writing and the weekly drawing/graphic expression requirement. Mr. Tangle, featured in Chapter Two: “Bittersweet Encounters with Epistemic Assumptions,” dismissed the Inquiry Notebook outright for a myriad of complicated reasons. Steel McThunderpants, another male student, resisted the Inquiry Notebook as one also struggling to claim the identity of “writer,” during the course. Afterward, however, he held an entirely different view of the notebook experience. His story will appear in Chapter Four. Like the men in Gannett’s study, the men indicated, textually and verbally, that writing in their Inquiry Notebooks
Fig. 1.2) “Contemplative Response Pages”
was a chore, mostly because they struggled to determine what to write about that would not undermine their sense of control (176-7). Contemplative response entries often began with what I term, “throat clearing,” a negotiation of audience and purpose that often began with lines such as, “I don’t really know what to write here, so …” and “Not much to say, but …”. Early entries in the men’s notebooks, as opposed to the women’s, were quite short and efficient. Elaboration, expansion, description, and flourish - the hallmarks of fiction and creative nonfiction — were not present. For most of the semester, the majority of men’s Inquiry Notebooks served as planners for academic and nonacademic purposes, such as planning a week’s worth of homework to meet deadlines, and preparing for vacations and weekends. Like the men in Gannett’s study, the men in That Two O’clock Class tended to use the Inquiry Notebook in a way that reflected journal traditions Gannett describes as historically affiliated with men (166). Their notebooks were used to chronicle daily activity, record productivity or plan for projects, vent frustration with academic and social complications, record their travels and party experiences (not unlike an expedition journal or travel writing, though they were going nowhere beyond the liquor store and someone’s house). Some, a small minority within the class, actively used their notebooks to plan projects specific to the class. Thus, a contemplative response proved just as frustrating as critical reading because both required students to unlearn journaling and diary writing in order to discover something new about both writing and themselves.

The women in the course experienced a different difficulty, though it too was entrenched in cultural norms surrounding the word “journal.” The women in this study, and the majority in the class, limited their reading notes and their Contemplative Responses to the emotive realm, often using the course readings as springboards for emotional, even
confessional, writing. Though emotional writing was not forbidden, I was struck by how often female students seemed to avoid theorizing or critiquing an author’s structural moves, or push on the ideas represented in a text. Instead, they most often began with an aesthetic judgment about the text, then used the emotive center of that judgment as a framing device for emotive work. If a text made them angry, as Paulo Freire’s second chapter from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* certainly did, then they tended to that anger without pushing on his ideas, or even contemplating how our course was not using the “banking model.” They did not, in other words, draw lived everyday connections to ideas so much as they built bridges between emotions. The challenge, then, was to honor their emotive work while at the same time encouraging analysis in ways that would join reason and emotion in a holistic way. Quiet Heathen Pants, a female traditional student from a very religious home, struggled to find her voice within inquiry, as you will see in Chapter Three. Word Skirt, a female traditional student who considered herself “good at doing school,” found herself quite angry yet unable to use that emotion as a place from which to begin her inquiries. Her story unfolds in Chapter Four. What became clear to me while working with all of these students was that all of the them were separating reason from emotion, as their culture has instructed them to do. How they separated it, further reflected societal norms surrounding who does (and does not do) emotional and logical labor.

Regardless of how the separation occurred, whether the writers favored reason or emotion, one pattern remained consistent in the early contemplative responses students wrote: Writing itself was a “medium to communicate ready-made conclusions” (Qualley 36). In the early weeks of the course, students’ entries reflected content-based reading
strategies, with an emphasis on summary and interpretations. They did not write through their engagement with the texts, and the ideas within them in light of past, everyday experiences. They struggled mightily to move from content-based reading strategies and toward process-based strategies as both readers and writers. Reading notes, too, were performances of content-based reading practices. In the beginning, when they were first coming to terms with the idea that there are different kinds of reading to do, for different purposes, genre, and inquiries, their reading notes were scant excerpts of a text, and their responses fell into two distinct categories: affirmation or rejection of an idea within the text. Their early notes reflected the struggle to enact Peter Elbow’s sense of “methodological believing,” the first reading strategy I unfolded in the second week of the course. Skepticism and negation often prevailed as a performance of “critical response.” Once an idea had been rejected there was no need, on the part of students, to explore their reasons for their rejections of texts and ideas. This was not a failing on their part, but a crucial site of genesis for their Inquiry Notebooks and their learning. It became clear to me that content-based reading strategies reflected Elbow’s critique of the ways writing is assigned across curriculum within institutions. As Elbow notes, “…when writing is assigned, it is traditionally meant to serve reading; to summarize, interpret, explain, or make integrations and comparisons among readings” (The War 10, emphasis original). In the beginning of That Two O’clock Class, students enacted the literacy skills they had developed so far in education contexts, and a kind of reading most often experienced in their other courses.

This is just one of many reasons the Inquiry Notebooks prove both vexing and valuable to both the teacher and the students. Early assessment of the notebooks, reading
through them with an emphasis on process-based practices, I was able to see students’ needs as writers and readers in a way traditional writing assignments do not make visible. I was able to see the interconnectedness of writing and reading, and thus make adjustments to the curricula. After collecting and reviewing the notebooks at the end of the third week of class, I reassigned Elbow’s piece on “methodological believing” before leading in-class activities that would help us read shorter texts, enact Elbow’s ideas, and then discuss our difficulties. Moving from content-based reading strategies to process-based and structure-based strategies remained a challenge to students until midterm, when we met one-on-one. In conference sessions, I sat with students to trace with them the reading strategies that became visible through the writing strategies reflected in their notebooks. Then we discussed their own individual difficulties with the Inquiry Notebook and the work it demanded of them. This proved to be a crucial moment, as the majority of students considerably improved the quality and depth of their reading and writing. In the beginning, however, it was very important to hold onto the idea that a long-term writing (and reading) project, that required working across an extended period of time, will assist the writer to make knowledge in a different and more complicated way, as Qualley contends (37). In the beginning of That Two O’clock Class, helping students to develop “a stance and approach to inquiry” so that they could make connections and generate earned insights through writing” (Qualley 37), took considerable teacher investment and care of their whole beings.

Apart from issues of reading and writing strategies and the interconnectedness of both, a central struggle for all students in That Two O’clock Class centered on reflexivity.
Donna Qualley defines reflexivity as a “… response triggered by a dialectical engagement with the other - an other idea, theory, person, culture, text, or even another part of one’s self, e.g., a past life” (11). As Qualley notes, it is within the process of encountering an other than one’s ideologies and assumptions are made visible, and through reflexivity these ideologies and assumptions can become objects to put under examination or critique (11). Contemplative responses, by design, sponsor reflexivity instead of mere reflection, and this is perhaps the key difference between them and say, “reflective writing.” Though both, according to Qualley, can be part of the same recursive and hermeneutical process, they are quite different (11). Self-reflection assumes that one can access matters of one’s own mind independently of others, while reflexivity necessitates a connection and interaction with an other. As Qualley writes, “Unlike reflection, which is a unidirectional thought process, reflexivity is a bidirectional, contrastive response” (11-2).

The aim of reflexivity, thus, is to hold up a current conception and juxtapose it with another in order to reveal converging and diverging meanings. Qualley describes the reflexive process thusly:

The juxtaposition of two different representations often reveals their ill fit. In order to make sense, we are compelled to identify and examine our own underlying assumptions. Once we actually articulate these tacit beliefs, they themselves become open to reflection, critique, and perhaps, transformation (12).

As Qualley notes, reflexivity is not synonymous with metacognition, a way of consciously monitoring one’s cognitive happenings (12). Instead, reflexivity invites one to consider their epistemic assumptions — how they come to know, and the influences that
shape that coming to know. Citing work by Karen Kitchner, Qualley argues that metacognition is fine for simpler, fairly routine situations, but it cannot fully engage with the complexity adults enact when confronting problems that involve assumptions and ideologies as they negotiate multiple (and perhaps simultaneous) solutions and realities (12). As Qualley writes, these epistemic assumptions are at work when understanding requires more from a learner than the addition of information, “… when understanding might necessitate a rethinking of one’s core constructs” (12). In my work with students, I have come to define “epistemic assumptions” as a sieve constructed by and with one’s situated position in culture, primary and secondary discourses (Gee), accumulated skills while “doing school,” as well as one’s claimed (and assigned) identifications and ideologies. Defined this way, it becomes easier to see how students draw on literacy skills they already have, filter engagement with an other through their sieve of identity, and assume that what remains constitutes the only meaning to be made. If they can relate to the outcome, see it immediately as something similar to how they experience the world, they do not see a need to complicate or refine the nature of the sieve, their epistemic assumptions, in order to make new and/or provisional knowledge. Within the context of the early Inquiry Notebook entries students created, for example, their epistemic assumptions surrounding content-based reading became visible, and this visibility, in turn, made it possible for us to discuss, critique, and then transform reading and writing strategies.

Like Qualley, I too encountered the phenomenon of relation, when students encounter an other and feel that they can already relate to it as an extension of how they already see their world. At these times, as Qualley notes, no further effort or learning is re-
quired of them unless their epistemic assumptions are put under examination through reflexive inquiry. As Qualley writes, “If our encounters with differing others do not also compel us to examine our own prior theories and assumptions, our interpretations risk simply being self-confirming” (13). This was certainly true with students’ early Inquiry Notebook entries, their reading notes and contemplative responses. If they could already relate to an idea, an “other,” they did not reflexively question why or how, they simply moved on to the next idea or other. Through unwritten and unquestioned epistemic assumptions, students simply identified and related, then self-affirmed through self-reflection. They did not, at first and without direct instruction, move toward reflexivity in order to make their epistemic assumptions, ideologies, presuppositions, or even their privileges, visible. This is not to say that self-reflection itself is incomplete or “bad,” it is simply inadequate when pursuing the sort of “critical consciousness” advocated across Composition and Rhetoric, particularly among those advocating and enacting social justice pedagogies and learning outcomes. One could say that reflection and reflexivity are conjoined, but separate in their cognitive and expressive demands. As Qualley writes, “I might tentatively suggest that reflection is adequate for monitoring our conscious beliefs, but that reflexivity is needed to call up our unconscious, epistemic beliefs” (13). Meaning, reflection rests in the personal, the internal, while reflexivity rests in the personal-public, when who we are and what we know comes in contact with an other.

Assisting students in their reflexive inquiries and transformations of their epistemic assumptions, however, does take considerable work around how difference is experienced and defined. Linda Brodkey, in her chapter, “Difference and a Pedagogy of Difference,” describes the way differences are constructed as “white noise” in commonplace
beliefs that frame differences as superficial, and/or divisive (194). To confront this, Brodkey recommends a Foucauldian and poststructural version of difference that defines it as a negative quality assigned to an other in order to justify surveillance, regulation, and isolation in systemic, inequitable ways (195). It is the white noise of commonplace practices of systemic injustice that makes it difficult, if not impossible, for students to “hear lyrics spoken in unfamiliar cadences,” from writers often dismissed as being excessive in their vehemence, anger, biases, and political agendas while writing from their personal locations (194). In the white noise of commonplace epistemologies, for example, difference is treated as a lack, abnormality, or negation (195). This could help to explain how often students’ epistemic assumptions create or reflect barriers to engagement with an other, invite “passive empathy,” or permit students to experience testimonies from others as accusations. When students are not urged to reflexively examine their epistemic assumptions, including those that construct writing as a set of rules to be learned and performed, they cannot see what Brodkey terms the “extracurricular” characteristics of writing (193). The extracurricular aspects of writing and reading position students to take ownership of what otherwise might be considered “natural” or “inarguably true.” As Brodkey writes, “For extracurricular versions of writing require students to take responsibility for their assertions, which means taking into account the part language plays in representing a reality in which the writer as a vested interest” (193, emphasis original). Thus, reflexive inquiry, particularly when aimed at students’ assumptions, helps them to experience difference not as an interruption, but a condition of community (195).
Moving students toward process-based and structure-based reading strategies in order to sponsor reflexivity through contemplative practices and writing, was the recurring, seemingly permanent, challenge during the entire semester. This was the most encouraging and complex part of the work, despite its difficulties, because it invited and supported opportunities to experience the enormity and complexity of the world(s) around us. As Qualley notes, when working with students in the construct of a course, we are rarely afforded the opportunity to linger, chat, revisit, and look more deeply at our initial encounters with an other, or to note our complex, and often limited, initial perspectives, reactions, and presuppositions. Reflexive and ongoing inquiry through Inquiry Notebook work invites revisiting and lingering, because it places a value on process instead of product, on the backstory and understory of our formal and polished projects, seminar papers, or written analysis. When students submitted their formal writing projects, such as a rhetorical analysis project at midterm, they also submitted their Inquiry Notebooks. In reading and evaluating both the notebook and the polished piece of writing, I could more thoughtfully respond to both, encourage deeper engagement, and even note the ways students’ epistemic assumptions shaped (and sometimes limited) their polished pieces. This, in turn, made visible something I had suspected about formal writing projects: They tend to obscure writing and thinking processes, the very processes worth exploring, in their perfected construction. As Qualley argues, written texts usually do not reveal the writer’s personal epiphanies (37). Inquiry Notebooks make exposition central to students’ reflexive endeavors, whereas essaying, the articulation of what has already been settled in the writer’s mind before words hit the screen or page, tidy up, perhaps even conceal, the very messy thinking and writing processes that shape them. The Inquiry
Notebook, thus, becomes a means by which to capture both, the expository and the processes that shape exploration, while serving as a thought catalog for things that might otherwise go unexamined, unexplored, or even critiqued, through traditional essay writing. In other words, the Inquiry Notebook serves as the ultimate process-centered recorder of all that goes in to students’ learning assumptions, experiences, challenges, and outcomes.

**Visual Entries: Creativity as Visual Literacy**

In addition to weekly contemplative responses, students constructed weekly visual entries. These entries could be visual representations of ideas, epiphanies, or feelings as experienced in response to coursework or day-to-day life (Figs. 3-5). My justification for visual entries centered on two core concepts central to rhetorical awareness: to experiment and experience visual rhetoric, and to experience the thinking moves that underlie visual representation. Both are important because one’s aesthetic experience of images, as G. Gabrielle Starr argues, is thought and felt (16). Because aesthetic experience is cognitive, sensory, and emotional, it is also subjective, contingent, and experiential (16). “Aesthetic experience, in this view,” Starr writes, “is about ways of not only assigning perceptions a value but revealing the hierarchy and interrelation of values that goes beyond what
(Fig. 1.3) “The Birth of Inquiry”
(Fig. 1.4) “The Gutenberg Bible from Hell” Mr. Tangle names
(Fig. 1.5) An interpretation of Van Gogh’s “Starry Night” to demonstrate how one can case acrylic paints within a sketchbook, and the role copying masters can play in creative development.
we at first perceive” (16). In other words, working with visual artifacts and creating their own, students gain further insight into who they are, what they value (or don’t), and the ways aesthetic values are shaped by culture, identities, and sense of integrity. In this sense, and from a holistic perspective, coming to know is also coming to see. Visual entries prepared students to engage with the graphic memoirs already understanding the considerable, sophisticated rhetorical and visual strategies at work in such representations. Before our readings of Art Spiegelman’s *The Complete MAUS*, and Marjane Setrapi’s *Persepolis*, we read the second chapter from Scott McCloud’s *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993). This helped students to interpret icons as “any image used to represent a person, place, thing, or idea” (McCloud 27). This in turn invited an understanding of non-pictorial icons, such as letters, as having socially constructed fixed meanings. McCloud’s argument that the simplification of reality in the comic genre amplifies meaning (30), helps to illustrate the way we humans see ourselves in everything around us, including other people (36). More importantly, and consistent with the goal to help students toward reflexive inquiries that transform their epistemic assumptions, McCloud draws experience into two distinct categories, the realm of concept and the realm of the senses (39).

As McCloud writes, “Our identities belong permanently to the conceptual world. They can’t be seen, heard, smelled, touched, or tasted. They’re merely ideas. And everything else — at the start — belongs to the sensual world, the world outside us” (40). The notion that identities are conceptual invites transformation of both oneself and one’s epistemic assumptions. Apart from other values for weekly artistic/creative entries, such as the potential to learn drawing by drawing, to think more deeply about arrangement and
icon, and the ways in which the creation of art can be relaxing, and allow one to express visually that which escapes, transcends, or is unacceptable to the self or others in/through language, the weekly entries invited connection with the graphic materials we engaged. This allowed us, too, to respond graphically to graphic work, to simplify and yet amplify our responses to Spiegelman and Satrapi, as well as the stories we decided to tell in a formal graphic memoir project later in the semester. At the time of the course, I was in the process of contemplating the role visual rhetorics and visual literacy could play in a second-year writing course. Two of the study participants, Quiet Heathen Pants and Steel McThunderpants, worked closely with the memoir project. Within this project, “Contemplative Responses” play a more substantial role in how students perceived the value of both their notebooks, and their course experiences. Courses I have taught since That Two O’clock Class have done considerably more with the visual entries, and a project featuring their work will undoubtedly follow this one.

As an artifact, the Inquiry Notebook represents the ongoing collection of ideas, notes, readings, in-class activities, and the flotsam and jetsam of everyday life. They invite students to practice a variety of writing and reading strategies in day-to-day work, collecting in real time their course experiences, learning, and discovery. For the instructor, Inquiry Notebooks allow a view of students’ intellectual underlife, the thinking beneath the writing, reading, and learning, that otherwise goes without direct engagement. Students in That Two O’clock Class met with me regularly to discuss their work, and those discussions featured a discussion of their Inquiry Notebooks. Assessment became a sustained conversation, one that allowed us to circle back while thinking of future options
and other areas of inquiry. In this way alone they became valuable tools for both the stu-
dents and the instructor, even as students and the instructor struggled (sometimes to-
gether, sometimes separately) over the course of the semester. Yet, the Inquiry Note-
books alone tell only part of the story. The pedagogy supporting their use is, perhaps,
more important than the tool.

In Chapter One, “A Holistic Pedagogy: Some Ends and Means,” I work within a
central theme, that learning and teaching are holistic, sacred works of “suffering well” in
a community of others. I offer a secular vision “the sacred” as a sacrosanct shared value
that inspires awe and responsibility. Once one defines teaching and learning as sacred
work, it becomes possible to embark on difficult moments of prolonged uncertainty, con-
flict, and even injustice in order to experience joy, discovery, justice, and wholeness that
transcends the divide between reason and emotion. By focusing on the sacred nature of
teaching and learning, one can then push back against a dominant pedagogy in service to
what Neil Postman terms “technopoly,” and other social mechanisms reducing public ed-
ucation to test preparation. This position of wholeness emboldens teachers and learners to
conduct what Krista Ratcliffe terms, “rhetorical listening,” and Megan Boler expands as
“testimonial reading,” in order to use one’s personal subjectivity and affective response
as a location from which to build meaning. By working from a sense of “the sacred,” a
learning community can use its shared bonds as a means by which to thrive in, and learn
from, difficult encounters with an other without resorting to what Boler terms “passive
empathy,” when one simply observes injustice without questioning the privileges that
contribute to the systemic structures of that injustice. In addition to redefining “the sa-
cred” and how it can affect a learning community, I establish another yet interdependent
call, that students are whole beings deserving of a holistic, critical pedagogy that no longer cleaves to the separation of reason and emotion, “the personal” and “the public.” By emphasizing wholeness, an interdependence of reason and emotion, a holistic pedagogy emerges that invites inquiry on both emotional and logical terms in ways that matter to students’ everyday lives outside the classroom.

In Chapter Two: “The Bittersweet Encounters with ‘Epistemic Assumptions,’” I work closely with Donna Qualley’s sense of “epistemic assumptions,” one’s personal philosophy of learning and knowledge (12), and how those assumptions can limit inquiry, the making of meaning, and transformation. While sharing students’ struggles to define Inquiry Notebooks beyond gendered and institutional (and therefore reductive) constraints, I highlight how “epistemic assumptions” can thwart inquiry, especially when new knowledge challenges deeply personal assumptions about writing and reading, one’s place in the social order as defined by dominant pedagogy, and how the emotive realm goes unexplored when one clings to the dominant notion that affect and logic are irreconcilable, separate entities. Through interview excerpts and analysis framed by Megan Boaler’s sense of “testimonial reading,” I complicate what might otherwise be viewed as straightforward male privilege and student resistance. This complication allows for a more holistic reading of the student’s critique of the Inquiry Notebook and my pedagogy, while also inviting a more rigorous discussion of the ways students perceive and enact their reading and writing strategies in a Composition course. Though one hopes that a holistic pedagogy aimed toward social justice and reflexive inquiry would result in immediate transformation, this chapter illuminates how a conversation that began in one semester was still fruitful enough to yield rich discovery and contemplation two years after the
completion of the course. By focusing on a unifying, holistic pedagogy, one also brings a more holistic response from students, and the student in this chapter embodies how complex and frustrating a more embodied and personal response can be.

In Chapter Three, “Power Struggles: Identity, Autonomy, and Faith” a student shares her sense of “doing school” in light of the Inquiry Notebook, and the ways such work sponsored both her personal and public experiences within the course. In this chapter, “the personal” serves as a location for reflexive inquiry, affective evaluation, and the means by which to challenge the dominant pedagogical order and the societal structures it protects. For Quiet Heathen-Pants (her chosen pseudonym) That Two O’clock Class, and the intersection of “the personal” and “the public” proved vexing and yet powerful as she reconfigured the purposes for her education, and her commitments to it. At the heart of this chapter is another exploration of a student’s epistemic assumptions, her sense of motivation and purpose in the classroom, and the role the Inquiry Notebook played in her discoveries. To this student, the Inquiry Notebook was both an artifact and process-centered receptacle that created “writing room” for her epistemic and personal struggles. Until That Two O’clock Class and the Inquiry Notebook work, her “successful student” performances had masked the type of learning she valued and needed most. Drawing from Edward Deci’s study of human motivation, I explore and explain how Inquiry Notebooks helped this student to find a sense of meaningful motivation and authority even as she struggled with the ambiguity reflexive inquiry demands. Her struggle was a mighty one, as real and material issues of pastoral power deeply affected this student’s sense of the roles “doing school” played in her life, affected her learning, and ultimately led to her claiming an identity and sense of integrity outside of pastoral power domain.
In my final chapter, “The Residue of Inquiry: Reflection, Process, and Progress”
two students outline their responses to holistic pedagogy and the Inquiry Notebook
method as experiences of both challenge and growth, on both cognitive and affective lev-
els. Pushing back on definitions of “learning” and “school,” as well as the ways dominant
pedagogy and institutional practice refuses to attend to or recognize how affect is tethered
to our sense of both, this chapter outlines the role a holistic pedagogy can play in the
claiming or reclaming of learning. These students, both graduates at the time of their in-
terviews, had much to say about their sense of education — what it was, and what it
should be. This I attributed not to mere bitterness, but to a complex weave of accomplish-
ment and survival. Neither of these students felt the entirety of their undergraduate educa-
tion was as good as it could have been, and for similar reasons. The Inquiry Notebook as-
ignment and a holistic, critical pedagogical practice, within That Two O’clock Class,
seemed to have provided these students with a means by which to critique their overall
education. Both students took the inquiry and contemplative skills sponsored in the
course and turned it inward as a means by which to evaluate the totality of their education
experiences. I conclude this chapter answering Shari Stenberg and Amy Lee’s call to pre-
sent narratives not as tidy, complete, stories of finished knowledge, but as provisional,
expository invitations for further learning. Though this chapter serves this project as a
conclusion, it is by no means an ending. The inquiries and discoveries that began in That
Two O’clock Class continue, even now, and will continue to do so because circling back,
it turns out, continually yields new inroads to inquiry.
CHAPTER ONE:
A HOLISTIC PEDAGOGY: SOME ENDS AND MEANS

In many ways my sense of holistic, critical pedagogy and the Inquiry Notebook assignment it supports, is my response to cultural practices inside and outside of the academy that separate reason and emotion. Seeking a means by which to work from emotion as a location for inquiry in pursuit of knowledge, a holistic pedagogy works with a fuller spectrum of affect so that negative and positive emotions can serve as catalysts for inquiry. Equally important are the ways a holistic pedagogy can close the alleged gap between reason and emotion. This means not just honoring and exploring the positive affect of learning, such as a sense of pride and accomplishment, but also the negative affect that come with taking risks, making errors, and confronting inequities in society and culture. Beginning with the acknowledgment that positive and negative emotions are equally generative, a holistic pedagogy can then invite students to begin their inquiries whatever their emotional stance may be. Positive psychology is not the only inroad to successful or generative inquiry. The students in this study, for example, learned a great deal about themselves by working through their frustrations with the pressure the Inquiry Notebooks placed on their reading and writing strategies – their “what works” approaches to curricula before That Two O’clock Class. However, the affective is just one aspect of a holistic pedagogy. For those writing about holistic education and its pedagogies, including myself, there is much to consider.
An Overview of Recent Holistic Pedagogy Literature

In *Holistic Pedagogy: The Self and Quality Willed Learning* (2015), Carlo Ricci and Conrad P. Pritscher advocate a compassionate approach to teaching that fosters fascination and internal motivation. Central to their work is the idea that learning itself is a deliberate choice (3), and that ultimately, despite the many ways teaching and pedagogy is framed, the learner is in total control (4). Mindfulness and contemplation, inquiry and fascination that reflects one’s passion, are hallmarks of their sense of “quality willed learning.” Deeply influenced and shaped by Eastern philosophy, Ricci and Pritscher do not offer a concise or clear definition of holistic pedagogy, but instead leave that open to readers’ interpretations while layering theoretical concepts from a variety of sources, philosophies, and concepts.

By contrast, John P. Miller in, *Teaching from the Thinking Heart: The Practice of Holistic Education* (2014), offers a clearer definition of holistic within the context of holistic education. To Miller, holistic education has two distinct dimensions. The first of these focuses on the learner as a whole being, its “mind, body, and soul.” The second dimension focuses on the interconnectedness of learners’ experiences and the context of their surrounding environments (2). “Holistic education,” Miller writes, “attempts to be congruent with nature by developing a pedagogy that is interconnected and dynamic” (2-3). Meaning, a holistic education pedagogy does not break knowledge into parts, units, and lessons that obscure students’ ability to see learning as more than an accumulation of pieces and fragments. Further, a holistic education pedagogy works with three learning styles (3). For example, “transmission learning” creates a one-direction transmission of
information from the instructor to the student without much room for inquiry or reflection. According to Miller, “transmission learning” is best described as “lecture and drill.” Transaction learning, the second of the three, is founded on the belief that students will make their own meanings and understandings. Through transaction learning, Miller argues, students learn to see knowledge as fluid and in flux, and must embark on inquiries and problem-solving exercises to make meaning. Transaction learner, too, invites more reciprocity between students and their teachers. Finally, “transformation learning” embraces the inner lives of students, and serves to encourage its development. “Education is seen as a process,” Miller writes, “where the student can transform themselves as well as the world they encounter in positive ways. The teacher regards the student as a whole person and engages him or her from that perspective” (3). Thus, a holistic education pedagogy includes all three approaches, working to make wise use of contexts in which each of the three learning styles can be employed. Miller contends that there is no one single model for holistic education pedagogy because each form should, ultimately, be connected to the immediate context, such as the subject taught, students, and environment (4). Because holistic education pedagogies are ultimately concerned with integration and connection, they ultimately move away from the standardized, fragmented approaches. For Miller, holistic education pedagogy is ultimately about making connections between subject, Earth, community, thinking, the body-mind, and soul (Miller citing Miller 6).

Much like Ricci and Pritsch, Miller also draws from Eastern philosophical traditions while offering more of a foothold to aid readers in their understanding of holistic education and its pedagogical imperatives. Miller also provides an outline for holistic education pedagogy (6-15). By working from positions of multidisciplinary to solve of
problem or address a theme (subject connections), drawing from indigenous peoples’ literature from around the world and environmental studies (Earth connections), social activist histories (community connections), the alleged cleft between “left brain” and “right brain” thinking (thinking connections), the usefulness of yoga as a means by which to help students listen to their bodies (body-mind connections), and an exploration of one’s sense of soul through meditation and an emphasis on contemplating presence (soul connections), an instructor can sponsor a more holistic opportunity for students.

In Nurturing the Whole Student: Five Dimensions of Teaching and Learning (2013), Clifford Mayes and Ellen Williams define a holistic education as one that addresses various dimensions of the teacher and student in order to honor and nurture the individuality of both. Mayes and Williams define these dimensions as organic, psychodynamic, affiliative, procedural, and existential (vii). One’s organic dimension rests with the unavoidable truth that we are embodied, physical creatures moving through the world as a sensory experience. Mayes and Williams anchor their understanding of the organic, embodied nature of physical existence as an interrelated construct of the physical and spiritual. “In our faith tradition,” they write, it is believed that one’s soul is an imperishable union of the physical and the spiritual. There is nothing that is spiritual that does not have some sort of corporeal component, and nothing corporeal is without a spiritual aspect” (1). Thus, they contend, “Education that does not attend to the student’s status as an organic being — with organic needs, problems and potentials — is therefore existentially incomplete and pedagogically lacking” (1). Because humans are emotional, complex beings, Mayes and Williams contend that students have a psychodynamic dimension that should be engaged:
Approaching education as if it were merely, or even primarily, a matter of learning facts and figures and how to reason (as important as such things undoubtedly are) overlooks the simple fact that what and how human beings know is almost always tied into how they feel about what they know — or what the believe they know (13, emphasis original).

Mayes and Williams argue that the psychodynamic dimension requires some investigation and understanding of psychology. The reason for this, they contend, is quite straightforward as students’ emotional and subconscious lives are often a factor in whether the student does or does not learn (25).

Like Ricci and Prister, and John P. Miller, Mayes and Williams argue that community connections matter a great deal, and are a foundational part of a holistic pedagogy. Because we are “cultural beings” there is a certain “cultural reflexivity” that shape our sense of identity, subjectivity, and even the trajectory of our lives (44). Thus, a holistic pedagogy addresses what they call the “affiliative dimension,” it is important to contemplate, confront, outline, and address the cultures and subcultures to which students belong (or don’t belong) in order to think more deeply about the innate and relative nature of affiliations (47). This matters a great deal within the context of education, they contend, because the rift between an instructor’s teaching and the students’ cultural norms often leads to resistance or outright rejection. This “cultural discontinuity,” is most often encountered, for example, when a teacher’s sense of education norms, their understanding of education’s goals and processes, runs counter to that which students hold. When
this discontinuity goes unaddressed, communication (and therefore, education itself) de-rails (57).

According to Mayes and Williams, the “procedural dimension” of a holistic pedagogy acknowledges that we are beings who systemically inquire into our world from various disciplinary perspectives (81). These disciplines include their own procedures and vernaculars that correspond to, or define, differing aspects of our intellectual experiences (81). Drawing from Immanuel Kant’s sense of scientific knowing as “mathetic,” and the arts’ sense of knowing as “poetic,” Mayes and Williams acknowledge the dangers of binary constructions of meaning while also noting how working from one, such as the mathetic/poetic construction, does two things: 1) It upholds the traditional views of holistic educational theory, one that makes distinctions between two so that there is consistency in the discourses surrounding holistic education; and 2) It is “pragmatically useful” to contemplate what makes the mathetic different from the poetic in order to create a principled approach to curricula development and pedagogical strategies (83). In other words, though binary constructions of meaning can be dangerous, they can be put to fruitful use when contemplating commonalities among disciplines that fall under the mathetic umbrella, and those that are considered poetic. Ultimately, Mayes and Williams argue that by beginning with this binary, one can work to help students become “cognitive apprentices” that work with metacognition, “to think rationally about thinking rationally,” to observe, critique, and explore the convergent and divergent aspects, the procedural dimensions, of disciplines.

Mayes and Williams also contend that “we are beings who seek meaning,” and thus every individual is more than the sum total of physical, psychodynamic, cultural, and
cognitive realms (107). Drawing from Paul Tillich’s sense of one’s “ultimate concern,” Mayes and Williams contend that there is an “existential dimension” to holistic education that should help students to forge meaning in their lives:

In other words, a person can create a story of his life, a narrative of his existence, a framework of meaning, which draws upon all those other elements while at the same time providing the ethical context in which they operate and evolve. This meaning embodies a person’s best knowledge and deepest intuitions about where he came from what the real purpose of his being in the world is, and where (if anywhere at all) it might be leading after his last mortal breath (107).

Meaning, the role of the pedagogical emphasis on the organic, psychodynamic, affiliative, and procedural dimensions of a holistic pedagogy ultimately support the larger, more important work of defining one’s existential concerns — the ongoing project of one’s life. “The central idea in existential philosophy and psychology,” Mayes and Williams explain, “is that the most important thing that a person can do in life is to discover what is most important to him at the deepest level — and then to honor, explore, and extend that commitment or set of commitments as best he can in his unique life-world (108, emphasis original).

This existential focus of holistic pedagogy provides a way for students to consider all they study and interpret as contributions to their efforts to live authentic and meaningful lives, at once in service to their commitments and to others (111). This focus, too, highlights the fact that no “one-size-fits-all” pedagogical tool or practice will create “zones for self-actualization” in a classroom. “It is an attitude toward the student, not a
program for him, which lies at the heart of existentially rich pedagogy,” Mayes and Williams write (111, emphasis original). This attitude, they argue, is one of care – reverence for the student, gratitude for the opportunity to work with the student, excitement for witnessing a student’s work to learn, and then turn that learning into part of his or her life-story (111). However, this pedagogy of deep care, this holistic attitude, is not coddling, what Mayes and Williams describe as a saccharine pedagogy designed as a means by which to get students to “play nice” and “feel good about themselves.” Instead, it is a value position that sets a standard far higher than those associated with education “reform,” national standards, and the political forces that shape both. As Mayes and Williams content, a holistic pedagogy of deep caring offers expects more of students by setting the highest of all standards, the expectation that a student should engage activities and ideas fully in order to enfold what they learn into their life-stories so that they can live meaningful lives as who they most wish to be, true to themselves and genuine with others (111-2).

Together, and in light of the imperatives holistic pedagogy and education hold as valuable, one could argue that holistic pedagogies uphold values found in critical pedagogies. In this sense, holistic pedagogy is an addition to critical pedagogy, a lens by which to think more deeply about the goals of critical pedagogy, particularly those that focus on issues of social justice, inquiry, self-reflection, and identity. In this view, holistic pedagogy becomes a value system that supports the hard work of critical consciousness, social justice, and the confrontation of cultural forces that often reduce one’s sense of life purpose. My sense of holistic pedagogy is an embodied one, where the theoretical and practical meet in everyday and working day contexts so that students and teachers can
live their lives as engaged, curious, lifelong learning people developing their life-stories true to themselves and respectful of others. For the purpose of this project, I define **holistic** as a value, one that focuses on interconnections and multiplicity instead of the fragmented, parted-out, broken-into-components approach to curricula development and systemic education practices. Further, my definition of **holistic** means that assessment is not something done to the student, but done with the student in order to foster self-actualization and the making of meaning. My sense of **holistic**, too, acknowledges the corporeal, material, and physical aspects of students’ and teachers’ lives, while also making room for the emotional, unseen, and often ignored aspects of being human in a complex world. While I share many of the holistic pedagogy stances provided by Ricci and Prister, John P. Miller, and Mayes and Williams, I use holistic pedagogy as a lens by which to consider and complicate ideas more familiar to Composition, Rhetoric, and critical pedagogy theories.

**Central Tenets to My Practice of Holistic, Critical Pedagogy**

Blurring the arbitrary boundaries between reason and emotion, between positive and negative affect, is just one aspect of a holistic, critical pedagogy. To further define my construction of a holistic pedagogy, I offer what I consider to be central tenets to holistic pedagogical practice. The primary tenet is more of a philosophical location than prescriptive set of practices, and comes from embracing Parker Palmer’s declarative: “We teach who we are” (2). Palmer argues that good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher (13), and though the statement itself could seem pious and
vague, he offers some clarifying statements. According to Palmer, identity is an “evolving nexus” where all the influences of one’s life come together, such as genetics, familial life, culture, the hurt and harm one has experienced and committed, the influence of those who have sustained or loved us, and “much, much, more” (13). Identity, in Palmer’s terms, is both situational and emotional, and just as much about our location in culture as any allegedly individual trait - a field of experiences and identifications. “In the midst of that complex field,” Palmer writes, “identity is a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am, converging in the irreducible mystery of being human” (14). Integrity, according to Palmer, is deeply connected to self-evaluation and growth. It is a contemplative practice of sorts, that requires reflection and assessment on the part of the teacher. As Palmer writes:

"By integrity I mean whatever wholeness I am able to find within that nexus as its vectors form and re-form the pattern of my life. Integrity requires that I discern what is integral to my selfhood, what fits and what does not — and that I choose life-giving ways of relating to the forces that converge within me: Do I welcome them or fear them, embrace them or reject them, move with them or against them? By choosing integrity, I become more whole, but wholeness does not mean perfection. It means becoming more real by acknowledging the whole of who I am (14 emphasis original).

Palmer contents that when we teach, we project the condition of our souls, subject, and way of being (2) onto our students, thus it is important to be more aware of our inner landscapes. “Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness, for
better or worse” Palmer writes (2), and then calls us to work toward knowing ourselves more purposefully and intimately. Self-knowledge, according to Palmer, is not the by-product of narcissism or selfishness. Instead, it is an inroad toward knowing others. Difficulties experienced in the classroom, Palmer argues, are “no more or less” than difficulties of our inner lives. “Viewed from this angle,” Palmer writes, “teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge - and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject (3).

Thus, a holistic pedagogy begins with a commitment to the teaching self. This commitment rests with taking regular inventory of both one’s identity and integrity, charting the inner landscape for growth opportunities, and tending to intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs. Palmer’s definitions for the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects of self are foundational to a holistic pedagogy:

By intellectual I mean the way we think about teaching and learning — the form and content of our concepts of how people know and learn, of the nature of our students and our subjects. By emotional I mean the way we and our students feel as we teach and learn — feelings that can either enlarge or diminish the exchange between us. By spiritual I mean the diverse ways we answer the heart’s longing to be connected with the largeness of life — a longing that animates love and work, especially the work called teaching (5 emphasis original).

As Palmer argues, intellect, emotion, and spirit are interdependent, reliant on one another for wholeness (5). The pursuit of wholeness, too, is not mere self-indulgent focus. In a
culture that regularly uses teachers and education as scapegoats for larger social problems, whose politicians regularly point to an allegedly failing school system as a talking point to gain votes, and that posits large-scale assessments as the sole means by which to test the learning students do, a pursuit of wholeness is deeply political and personal. As Palmer notes, in the classical sense, leading others is dependent on one’s ability to lead oneself. A crucial component of leadership, then, rests with two major premises: 1) We must be able to teach our subjects in ways that connect with students’ inner lives; and 2) We can only speak to our students’ inner teachers — the sense of self that will carry them to continue the pursuit of knowledge outside of school — when we are on speaking terms with our own inner teacher (32). Thus, holistic professional development is first and foremost personal development.

In other words, holistic pedagogy invites the teacher pay careful attention to his or her own inner landscape, to tend it with a gardner’s care, to cut away what compromises one’s integrity, and to nourish that which connects one to the “largeness of life.” This inner work prepares us for the outer work of teaching, the modeling and practices that shape our day-to-day classroom conditions that shape the learning students do. Self-compassion and self-care are hallmarks of holistic pedagogy because both honor the teaching and learning body as a human being. The primary goal of such inner care is to fortify and nourish the body that has committed to the often exhausting work of teaching and learning. Self-care and self-compassion are what I like to think of as a pouring in - when what I need as a human being is freely given by me to me as a means by which to honor my-
self. To further illustrate holistic pedagogy, it is important to move from the inward terrain of the self, to the outward possibilities that come while working with others. My construction of a holistic pedagogy is anchored to the several key concepts:

- Teaching and learning are sacred works of “suffering well”
- Conflict is essential, instructive, and generative
- “Suffering well” requires listening well
- Suffering itself is not the antithesis of wellbeing, but an essential part of being human
- Reading beyond “passive empathy” supports holistic practice
- Whole beings, with holistic care, can reclaim learning
- Emotions provide adherence and cohesion for learners and teachers
- Holistic practices help teachers and learners to reclaim learning from national and local movements seeking to “reform” education through high stakes testing and the curricula designed to support it

Because the Inquiry Notebook demands a great deal from students by altering the ways they read and for what purposes, supporting engagement with ideas in order to help them to create their life-stories, and providing mapping of their cognitive journeys in order to support metacognition — the thinking about their thinking — the notebooks need a pedagogy that supports the complexities that come with such work. Though it is true that one could adopt the Inquiry Notebook assignment without adopting a holistic pedagogy to support it, I have found that a holistic approach assists students in the effort to make meanings that matter both inside and outside of school. Ultimately, these meanings help
students to answer more existential questions, such as who they most want to be, and how they most want to engage in the world around them. It is the combination of the Inquiry Notebook assignment, and the holistic pedagogy that supported it, that the students in this study contemplated, discussed, and chronicled in our interviews.

**Teaching and Learning as Sacred Works of “Suffering Well”**

When working with students, I think of the sacred mind Emerson defined and celebrated in his essay, “Self Reliance” – a mind wholly within one’s providence and unfettered by the religious doctrine of his day. One’s mind as a sacred place, unified with the body, holistically interdependent and *being* human, is a stark contrast from the dominant ways students are embodied in academic texts, environments, and classroom settings, particularly those affirming Lynn Worsham’s sense of dominant pedagogy. As bell hooks notes, educating as a practice of freedom is a highly accessible democratic endeavor, one that respects and cares for students’ souls. “That learning process,” hooks writes, “comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students” (13). I am keenly aware of the ways my teaching and presence in students’ lives makes me an interloper, trespasser, and if I’m not careful, a vandal or thief, in their most sacred spaces. I am also aware that students themselves have yet to define their minds as sacred. They may not yet see their minds as needing to be tended, and even protected, from the influx of day-to-day intrusions that seem to render the mind as a possession to be molded by political-educational policy, weighed and judged by assessments, or labeled as “educated” upon graduation. I
am also aware that far too many enter college assuming that the endgame goal is to get a job, to acquire the “job skills for the twenty-first century” – a line often used by politicians and business lobbyists during their charges for “education reform.” The very real struggle is to maintain my dedication to the sacred work of teaching and learning from and with students as a deeply personal, and therefore deeply political, endeavor without succumbing to the external pressures to justify this work as valuable and assessablesolely in institutionalized terms for institutional purposes.

Defining “sacred” outside of the religious influences that have dominated cultural definition of the word itself is difficult, but not impossible. Something can be sacred, sacrosanct, within a group or culture (religious or secular) for the awe it inspires. Teaching and learning have always filled me with a tremendous sense of awe and responsibility. As a college student, I experienced this awe and responsibility as an invitation to, as Paulo Freire advocates, liberation. As a woman, I can imagine nothing more sacred than freedom - the freedom to choose my destinies, loves, and commitments, the freedom to learn and teach via the fullest expression of my humanity. As Freire notes, such liberation is not handed down, but a collaborative struggle of intellectual, activist, and reflective practices (65). One cannot simply lecture, embody the monologue of oppression while talking liberation, because as Freire notes, to do so is not enough. Instead, one must embark on dialogues consistent with students’ historical conditions and perceptions of reality (65). Inquiry, contemplative practices that are anchored to students’ everyday experiences, and the act of questioning with vulnerability and a willingness to follow the path inquiries provide, leads students toward autonomous liberation in ways that will embolden them to take action in their lives. Liberation, as I have come to see it, is a state of wholeness,
when emotion and reason work together as individuals pursue knowledge, a sense of who they are, and define their own integrity. This trajectory of liberation through critical practice and contemplation, through reading and writing the worlds and words students inhabit, is transgressive. It requires the sort of “prolonged uncertainty” Shari Stenberg describes, a willingness to be uncertain to see where uncertainty leads. The emphasis on the individual inquirer as community member, too, expands notions of multicultural as the more one is present as a whole human being, the more one can see subtleties of difference in ideology, cultural and social identities, as well as privileges. This represents what Freire terms “the historical conditions” that in turn shape students’ perceived realities (65).

**Conflict is Essential, Instructive, and Generative**

It is through the sacred acts of learning and teaching as collaborative liberation that realities collide, subscript, and even confront each other. As bell hooks notes, “Often, professors and students have to learn to accept different ways of knowing, new epistemologies, in the multicultural setting” (41). Different ways of knowing, too, means different ways of not knowing, of sitting with prolonged uncertainty, the displacement that learners and teachers experience in shared spaces of difference. This displacement in real and imagined terms represents what Mary Louise Pratt terms a “contact zone” and once individuals each have a voice, matter within the context of the community, one’s role becomes auto ethnographic as inquiries begin within and then move outward. Conflict is not only inevitable, it is essential when working toward liberation and critical consciousness. When identities are on the line and in flux, any utopian vision of a democratic classroom
must make room for the actual conflicts inherent with a healthy democratic environment, when ideas and ideologies collide, confront, invite, and affirm. The din of democratic discourse is steeped in difficulty as it should be – such is the nature of both autonomy and community membership. Difficulty and conflict can be productive, even essential, in human relationships, especially those that develop in the classroom.

In my experiences, working with students means reconfiguring notions of conflict and difference that position both as inarguably negative stimuli to be avoided. Contradictory feelings, according to Deborah Luepnitz, are an inherent part of all relationships. In her work as a therapist and scholar, she draws on Arthur Schopenhauer’s porcupine fable to illuminate the prickly conditions of human relationships:

A troop of porcupines is milling about on a cold winter’s day. In order to keep from freezing, the animals move closer together. Just as they are close enough to huddle, however, they start to poke each other with their quills. In order to stop the pain, they spread out, lose the advantage of commingling, and again begin to shiver. This sends them back in search of each other, and the cycle repeats as they struggle to find a comfortable distance between entanglement and freezing.

Luepnitz’s paraphrasing of Schopenhauer’s porcupine fable illustrates, to some degree, the ways in which we struggle for community membership and individuality. I find that using this fable helps to illustrate how we approach new ideas and difference. We get close with both intrigue and curiosity, and then get poked by implications that speak to privilege, difference, and injustice. We then move out again. Within the context of a classroom community, students move in close to ideas and then seek respite from the painful
difficulties those ideas represent. Negotiating this discomfort, the displacement that occurs when a new idea challenges the known, is unavoidable with inquiry, particularly inquiries that address issues of social justice, such as racism, classism, ageism, and privilege. Teaching students to make wise, fruitful use of displacement as an invitation to contemplation, to learning new means to reconfigure the roles discomfort plays in contemplation, in learning, as well as in life. As Luepnitz argues, all people in Western culture live lives bedeviled by the porcupine dilemma. “That is,” Luepnitz writes, “we struggle on a daily basis to balance privacy and community, concerns for self and others, sexual union and a room of our own” (4). Further, these negotiations become invitations to transcend what Paulo Freire termed the “banking concept” of education when students are treated like empty vessel-objects in need of being filled by a Subject teacher-narrator (70). If Freire is correct in his assertion that, “knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other (72), bristling and poking, needling and recoiling, is not only inevitable, it is part of the process of being fully human among others in a democratic culture in or outside of the classroom.

Pratt, in fact, makes a point to describe classroom tensions, the porcupine parable in action, as a positive aspect of the “contact zone.” With each student represented, joy, wonder, revelation, mutual understanding and new wisdom accompanied displacement and discomfort (39). “The sufferings and revelations were, at different moments to be sure, experienced by every student,” Pratt explains. “No one was excluded, and no one was safe” (39). This democratization of suffering through representation and even confrontation, within the multicultural classroom, illuminated the positives Pratt described.
As a community, her students learned to appreciate the “social and intellectual spaces” she described as “safe houses,” where people could constitute themselves as horizontal, homogenous, sovereign communities with high degrees of trust, shared understandings, temporary protection from legacies of oppression” (39). In other words, they learned to negotiate porcupine discomforts by holding true to a larger value: the sacred work of learning and teaching, collaborating, colliding, contemplating, and forming community out of individuals. In this sense, suffering is joy’s collaborator, its codependent. Too often, suffering is positioned as the antonym of happiness. Suffering and pain are often portrayed as outlier deviations from an entitled state of comfort, particularly in a consumerist society. As Thich Nhat Hanh writes, “The suffering of each of us affects others. The more we learn about the art of suffering well, the less suffering there will be in the world” (17).

“Suffering Well” Requires Listening Well

One way of learning to “suffer well” is to practice the acceptance of negative affect as an inroad to positive affect, to ride out the flow of discomfort in order to experience the ebb of relief or joy. This is not mere psychological practice, limited to the emotive realm of human experience, nor is it a spiritual practice limited to prayer and meditation. To suffer well in the context of a classroom means to make a tenable peace with what Shari Stenberg terms, “prolonging the uncertainty” (66). Ambiguity, doubt, and conflict are valuable tools, necessary aspects, of learning to listen to others. Listening to others isn’t comfortable nor easy. As Wayne Booth argues, “Close listening often leads to doubt, or even hard proof that the opponent is deceptive or mistaken” (379). Thus, the challenge in listening is learning to suffer doubt and uncertainty in the face of skepticism
or dogmatism. Booth asked his students to never assent or reject an idea or position they have not worked to fully comprehend (386). In his classroom, he asked students with opposing views to “mirror back” what the other had said through summarizing the other’s point in a recognizable and representative way. The goal of such mirroring is to model to both parties the roles of responsibility they have in doubting, one of reflection and reflexive communication that leaves both parties feeling they have indeed been heard. Deep, honorable, and compassionate listening requires letting go of the notion of “winning” an argument. For Booth, the goal is to turn students into listeners instead of “mere would-be winners” (387). Booth argues that students and our larger world need to better understand the “rhetoric of assent,” and the role empirical and experienced evidence, arguments, and commonplace beliefs play as we attempt to determine when and if to change our minds or positions.

Krista Ratcliffe argues that listening is interpretive invention, “…a way of making meaning with/in language” (202). “Rhetorical listening,” as Ratcliffe terms it, requires an ethical commitment to listen to not just what we agree with or challenge, but to listen to all which falls outside of this binary students most often experience or frame as “pro and con.” Ratcliffe refers to that which falls outside of this binary as “the exiled excess,” and asks us to listen to how these excesses relate to ourselves and our cultures (203). Rhetorical listening is not a mere patient act with pluralism, but embodied intellectual work that privileges the ear over the eye to in order to hear and make audible what we cannot see or make visible. Rhetorical listening requires a whole logos, one that is not divided into winning and losing, right and wrong, dominant and submissive, masculine or feminine. As Ratcliffe writes:
Such listening does not presume a naive, relativistic empathy, such as “I’m OK, You’re Ok,” but rather an ethical responsibility to argue for what we deem fair and just while simultaneously questioning that which we deem fair and just. Such listening, I argue, may help us invent, interpret, and ultimately judge differently in that perhaps we can hear things we cannot see. In this more inclusive logos, lies a potential for personal and social justice (203, emphasis original).

In a multicultural classroom, when individuals are also members of a classroom community and experiencing the tensions of democratic practices, rhetorical listening becomes, as Ratcliffe argues, “a code of cross-cultural conduct.” This conduct, however difficult, makes audible the suffering of others and has the possibility of enriching our perceptions. It’s through listening, according to Ratcliffe, that we may invent arguments that gather differences, the notes of discord, in order to hear harmony and disharmony differently.

“Admittedly,” Ratcliffe notes, “we cannot hear everything at once (the din would no doubt madden us), yet we can listen to the harmony and/or discordant notes, knowing that more than meets the eye lies before us” (203). Booth and Ratcliffe both offer theoretical and practical perspectives on listening, and while working with students I ask them to mull the way hearing and listening as words and actions are presented in their everyday lives.

“Suffering Well” Is Not the Antithesis of Positive Affect

Like the word, sacred, suffering too must be reconsidered. Avi Mintz argues that “Suffering has a complex role in social justice education,” (215) and presents educators
with a paradox. A tension exists between the ways educators elicit painful responses from students in order to promote justice in response to the pain of others (Mintz 216). However painful or necessary the discomfort of reading others’ testimonies of injustice may be, however confrontational the issues social justice and critical pedagogy make more visible to students, educators have a responsibility to limit the extent of that suffering while helping students to make cognitive and social sense of that suffering (Mintz 216). Teasing out the differences between feelings of compassion and the suffering of victims of injustice, Mintz advocates “empowering suffering,” when students can examine the oppression and marginalization they face in their everyday lives. Mintz outlines the suffering paradox, and theoretical responses to it, by focusing on the work of Emmanuel Levinas, Nel Noddings, Martha Nussbaum, and Megan Boler. Sorting suffering into categories, Mintz draws distinctions between unethical and ethical forms of suffering in the social justice classroom. According to Mintz, the suffering paradox arises from five assumptions (217) found in the theory and practice of social justice education:

1. Suffering is bad.

2. Social justice educators aim to eliminate suffering.

3. To eliminate suffering, students must learn about suffering.

4. Students who learn about the suffering of others will suffer.

5. Social justice educators cause their students to suffer.

This leaves educators to question whether all suffering is bad, or if in some cases suffering is justified. Mintz pushes hegemonic, monolithic constructions of suffering itself, disrupting the “all or nothing” paradoxical stance. According to Mintz, there is a difference
between teacher-inflicted and self-inflicted suffering. Self-inflicted suffering, in this sense, would be guilt that “… spontaneously arises in a person who recognizes another’s suffering” (Mintz citing Noddings 219). Thus, as educators bring social injustice narratives to their classrooms in a myriad of genres, they are not inflicting suffering on the students themselves. Whatever the students’ response to materials presented, students have their own moral agency that will be explored as part of a social justice critical pedagogy.

Sharon Todd explores this sense of “guilt” as a complicated response to others’ suffering and injustices. As students feel guilt for actions they have not themselves committed or feel impotent as social actors for not directly addressing injustice, self-inflicted guilt is a punishment (599). According to Todd, “What is often obvious in these situations is the sense of remorse that sets in in the face of another’s pain, not because one actually has been involved directly in causing that pain, but because an involvement of the self is nonetheless called into being in confronting it” (599). Another form of “self-inflicted” guilt reflects a form of “survivor’s guilt,” when students are overwhelmed by another’s suffering and then question their own privileged positions in society. “Awakening to the harshness of others’ experiences of the world,” Todd writes, “they feel guilty because they have not ‘suffered enough’” (599). In this self-inflicted suffering model of guilt, suffering itself is place in a hierarchal scheme that may obscure one’s opportunities to act upon injustices instead of merely feel them. Todd outlines an angry guilt, the sort students express as denial. “Here, then,” Todd writes, “there is no sense of remorse present, nor is there a centering of the ego’s privilege and lack of suffering; instead there appears to be a powerful attempt to squirm out, seemingly unscathed, from underneath the oppressive with their new knowledge of another’s suffering” (600). What’s provocative
about Todd’s constructions of guilt is her distinct separation of guilt and shame. Shame is centered in the self by the self, Todd notes, whereas guilt itself assumes a social obligation (600). As Todd writes:

    Guilt connects the self to the external world, to the realm of the social, while shame remains confined within the self’s parameters of self-idealization. Guilt, in this sense, although obviously concerned with how the self is perceived, is more closely tied to how the self is perceived in terms of the *quality* of relationships with others (600, emphasis original).

However, Mintz asserts that nuanced responses to the fifth assumption of the paradox, such as Noddings’ notion that all suffering is bad unless it is “self-inflicted,” do not diminish that the teacher is responsible for student suffering. However, there is something else to be considered. Social injustice is not only painful for those who directly experience it. It is unequally painful to those who are eyewitnesses, or later witnesses through reading, watching, and learning about victims’ stories. This is the nature of injustice itself: It is contagious, from the epicenter to the fray. Though an educator may be responsible for the classroom moments that sponsor a form of suffering, it is important to note there are limitations to that responsibility:

    An educator can only take a student so far in the course of encouraging the appropriate response to the suffering of others. The moment an educator takes too much responsibility for the student’s response, the door is open for abuses that would deny the student the opportunity to come to grips with the suffering of others at her own pace and in her own way (Mintz 220).
Yet, it is the “coming to grips” with suffering that presents rich opportunities for inquiry, meaning-making, and social consciousness, while also presenting challenges to ways students and teachers use empathy to somehow remedy guilt or other “self-inflicted” responses to suffering. As Megan Boler contends, constructions of “empathy” are the most popular goals of democratic educators. Boler asks the question, “But who and what, I wonder, benefits from the production of empathy?” (255) in order to challenge not the popularity of empathy itself, but that which empathy produces and for whom. Boler admits that she remains unconvinced that empathy itself leads to justice or a shift in power relations. Empathy can be inert, momentary, mired by inactive guilt. It is not enough to suffer the “self-inflicted” affect of critical social justice pedagogy, one must act. As Boler writes, “I see education as a means to challenge rigid patters of thinking that perpetuate injustice and instead encourage flexible analytic skills, which include the ability to self-reflectively evaluate the complex relations of power and emotion” (255). To Boler, it is not enough to teach critical thinking alone, but to teach critical thinking that leads to a transformation of consciousness (255). This transformation requires a move from what Boler terms, “passive empathy,” as “those instances where our concern is directed to a fairly distant other, whom we cannot directly help” (257).
“Suffering Well” Requires Reading Beyond “Passive Empathy”

By complicating and exploring the complex power structures and social hierarchies that influence the relationships between reader/listener and text/speaker, Boler advocates what she terms a “testimonial reading” – a way of moving from an empathetic position to one of action (256). At the heart of this way of reading is what Boler terms a “semiotics of empathy,” that focuses on the complex and often hierarchal power and social relationships between readers and listeners, texts and their writers. Ultimately, the responsibility to listen, read, and then act rests with the reader/listener. One must move beyond simple constructions of pity or sympathy, and toward a sense of empathy that invites a fuller identification between those writing testimonial texts and those reading or listening to them. As Boler notes, sympathy itself is a simplistic sense of “this could be me” constructed by a reader who pairs their sufferings with another’s. Active empathy, according to Boler, is only possible when the reader recognizes that they share the suffering as the writer/speaker (256). In other words, it is possible to be sympathetic to another while reading, but this is largely a construction of distance, and in some ways voyeuristic. The sympathy itself is, more or less, a fear that what has happened to the writer could happen to the reader (Boler 257). The danger in this construction, Boler contends, is that the emotive focus remains located with the reader/listener. As Boler argues, this sort of sympathy is very similar to Aristotle’s notion of “pity,” of walking in other’s shoes, but the writer/speaker is still “othered” in the sense that the writer/speaker becomes a secondary concern to the reader/listener’s own sense of fear and vulnerabilities (257).

As Boler notes, this sense of sympathy often goes without interrogation, without the reader/listener having to identify with the oppressor or oppressive cultural practices
the writer/speakers suffers beneath, or to identify one’s complicity within the power structures addressed in the text under consideration (258). According to Boler, the reader/listener in this construction of sympathy so often experienced by students, positions them unquestionably as a judge of the text, identifying themselves in binary opposition to the writer/speaker while at the same time, consuming difference in order to see it, sympathetically of course, as sameness, as a commonality (258). Boler terms this sympathetic construction as “passive empathy,” that is also a position of power afforded by the distance between the reader/listener and the writer/speaker. It is thus possible to read a text such as Art Spiegelman’s MAUS, as Boler’s students did, to be sympathetic to plight of those portrayed in the text while at the same time feeling a powerful distance from the historical and personal implications of the Holocaust. In this sense, passive empathy might make one feel emotionally moved by the text, perhaps give an insight to suffering, and even allow the reader/listener to be entertained by the telling of an important story without having to confront the current, and very real, social conditions that make genocide possible. One is permitted, as Boler contends, to be pleased by the telling, without reflections that lead to real social change. Or, as Boler writes, “This palatable permission of pleasure motivates no consequent reflection or action, either about the production of meaning, or about one’s complicit responsibility within historical and social conditions” (261). The reader/listener is then freed from the responsibility of acting upon social injustices, and able to move on to the next reading, the next moment of passive empathy.

Boler’s sense of “testimonial reading,” by contrast, lays a responsibility upon the reader to move beyond the consumptive, passive empathy. The reader/listener accepts the
commitment to rethink assumptions, conform internal obstacles as one’s views are confronted or challenged, and to read and listen as a shared act of vulnerability (261-2). More importantly, testimonial reading is not an individual, isolated response to others, but a commitment to read in ways that emphasize a collective responsibility (262). In other words, testimonial reading perforates and blurs the arbitrary line between “the personal” and “the public,” the individual and others. Testimonial reading reflects what Boler terms, “one’s own work,” regardless if one can understand the speaker/writer’s perspective or not, and without ranking oppressions as a judge (262-3). Instead, testimonial reading requires what Boler terms, “a self-reflective participation” that acknowledges the distance between the reader/listener and the writer/speaker, while at the same time committing to the task that is, at the very least, challenging to the reader/listener’s assumptions, perspectives, and ideologies (263). In this sense, testimonial reading requires a practice of inquiry, contemplation, and prolonged uncertainty in ways that will make privileges, injustices, and social practices both visible and actionable, instead of merely chronicled and discussed from a distance. As Boler writes, “Testimony resonates with post structuralists’ cries of truth; testimony denies the reader’s desires for certainty; the emphasis on language as practice, as action, replaces coherence and resolution with vulnerability and ambiguity” (266). In sum, testimonial reading requires the reader/listener to take actions, some within oneself, and others within a community. Encouraging testimonial reading, however, may mean stepping away from the typical assignments such as summaries and analysis papers. It may mean rethinking not just reading, but writing as well.
Suffering well in the company of others reflects an ethical commitment to contemplating our assent to ideas, and our responsibility to consider when or if to change our minds, as Booth contends. It also means setting aside a sense of listening as passive, subordinate behavior as Ratcliffe argues. To do the hard work of listening means committing to prolonging uncertainty and riding out the discomfort of engagement, setting aside the desires of ego and embracing a form of humility that will help us to enact patience and compassion especially when we hear what offends, displaces, and confronts us. This means, too, that both the students and the teacher must negotiate their individual needs for immediate affirmation - a sense of safety and validation with each and every tension, with each and every critical engagement. As hooks advocates, “Rather than focusing on issues of safety, I think a feeling of community creates a sense that there is shared commitment and a common good that binds us” (40). Testimonial reading, and its calls to action, frame suffering as essential to “one’s own work” of transformative education, social justice, and community action. Here again is where a sense of the sacred can assuage the feelings of tension and even confrontation so long as there is a shared commitment to the classroom as a community because each as an individual matters enough to make personal inquiry, contemplation, and critical engagement a primary focus of our collective work in a class. As a collection of individuals, we are each embarking on the work the Inquiry Notebook demands, but we only have the courage to work toward liberation because we belong to a community. In this way, the sacred is about faith - in ourselves, our community, and the common good. It’s also representative of our faith in education, its roles in society, and the possibilities education makes for individuals as they seek to join and be contributing members of their chosen and assigned communities. In this way, the
sacred work of teaching and learning is very much about a secular faith in purpose, liberation, democracy, and possibility in the many “contact zones” we inhabit every day.

Whole Beings with Holistic Care Can Reclaim Learning

Like many others, I believe the human connections, the focus on relationships and care of others in education, has been lost or perhaps forgotten, in today’s technocratic assessment-focused culture. As Chris W. Gallagher notes in his book, Reclaiming Assessment: A Better Alternative to the Accountability Agenda (2007) the most dehumanizing aspects in education today rest with political notions of “accountability.” High stakes testing, a hallmark of the accountability movement, are just part of a systemic injustice that positions winning (high scores) over real learning (the messier, harder to pin down processes of making knowledge). Though most today believe the assessments themselves are problematic, and even as No Child Left Behind has fallen in esteem among state and federal leadership, notions of accountability still prevail despite the fact that no one is ever quite certain as to whom we are to be accountable. As Gallagher writes:

Accountability itself is a bad idea. It is a one-way responsibility model premised on transactions rather than interactions. It is about getting what you pay for and paying for what you get. Certainly, there is a kind of mutuality here, but it is severely constrained - as it is in all commercial transactions - by bottom-line self-interest. One’s participation in transactions is motivated by what one owes or is not owed, not by a shared commitment to a valuable cooperative effort (8, emphasis original).
Gallagher argues that sites of public schooling are not places of commerce, manufacturing, buying, and selling. They are, instead, sites where “the care and keeping of human beings” is at the center of the work teachers and learners do (8). Apart from being wretchedly political, education reformers’ insistence on “accountability,” may also reflect what Neil Postman refers to as “the thought-world of technopoly.” At the heart of the “accountability agenda” lies assessments of large and small stakes, and these assessments are eventually machine-scored and rendered down by actuarial practices that rely on the cold mechanics of “objective” science. Postman argues that the thought-world of technopolic culture includes beliefs that place human beings in subordination to machines and mechanisms. Postman cites Taylorism as the epicenter of these several assumptions:

These include the beliefs that the primary, if not only, goal of human labor and thought is efficiency; that technical calculation is in all respects superior to human judgment; that in fact human judgment cannot be trusted because it is plagued by laxity, ambiguity, and unnecessary complexity; that subjectivity is an obstacle to clear thinking; that what cannot be measured either does not exist or is of no value; and that the affairs of citizens are best guided and conducted by experts (51).

Postman asserts that American culture transformed from a tool-using society, where tools themselves solve problems without undermining world views (25); to a technocracy, where tools became central to thought and no longer integrated into culture itself, thereby consuming culture (28); before devolving into a technopoly – a technocracy that renders the thought-world of the human soul, the human condition, invisible (48). In
Postman’s view, American culture has become a totalitarian technocracy, what he terms a “technopoly,” by making very human things and experiences, such as art, religion, family, politics, history, truth, privacy, and intelligence, irrelevant if they are not redefined to suit the technologies that measure, manufacture, or control them (48). Postman asserts that in the American technopoly, all forms of cultural life have submitted “to the sovereignty of technique and technology” (52). Further, he argues that in this totalitarian technocracy, this technopoly, the primary concern is the unrelenting invention of machinery despite its costs to humanity. “That people’s lives are changed by machinery is taken for a matter of course,” Postman writes, “and that people must sometimes be treated as if they were machinery is considered a necessary and unfortunate condition of technological development” (52). In other words, America’s technopoly considers the consumption of human beings as collateral damage in the quest toward technological “progress.”

Postman argues that experts who consider merely technical solutions to complicated problems are part of the technopoly problem, as their primary role is to concentrate on just one field of knowledge and then sort it into two categories: that which does not apply to the problem, and that which can assist in solving the problem (88). He concedes that this approach works rather well in situations when a technical solution is solving a technical problem that in no way conflicts with human purposes (88). However, according to Postman, this approach is disastrous when efficiency assumptions are irrelevant, such as in the very human work of education, law, family life, and mental health (88). Postman then makes a designation between “hard” technological machinery, such as computers, and the “softer technologies” such as intelligence tests, college entrance ex-
ams, standardized forms, taxonomies and opinion polls. As he reminds us, no soft technology, no exam, can actually measure intelligence. Intelligence itself, he argues, “…is a general term used to denote one’s capacity to solve real-life problems in a variety of novel contexts” (89). Because humans vary greatly in their real-life contexts, no one test can ever truly measure one’s ability. As Postman notes, the notion of the test is problematic in itself. “The test transforms an abstract and multifaceted meaning into a technical and exact term that leaves out everything of importance,” Postman argues, and this comes with a considerable human cost: “We come to believe that our score is our intelligence, or our capacity for creativity or love or pain” (89, emphasis original).

Gallagher, too, points to the technocratic fascination of school management as he traces the history of the literacy “crises” of the 1970s that led to government study of adult literacy, a 1977 report on declining SAT scores, “back-to-basics” education tracts, and a national conversation in mass media, most notably, Newsweek’s feature story, “Why Johnny Can’t Read” (19-20). To Gallagher, this marks the beginning of the “accountability agenda” foisted upon public schools, educators, and parents. This era also marks a heightened investment in the technopolis and bureaucratic response. As Gallagher writes, “This era saw a variety of technocratic management techniques imported from business into schools, including performance contracts (often with private firms), management by objectives, and zero-based budgeting (Gallagher citing Tyack, 20). The technocratic fascination expanded in the 1980s when President Reagan charged his Commission on Excellence in Education, a collection of corporate leaders, higher education representative, state and local education officials, and as Gallagher notes “exactly one teacher” (20), released their report, A Nation at Risk (1983). The report, apart from being
the epitome of crisis language, determined that education standards were too low, and that America was ill prepared to participate in a global economy (Gallagher 20). Their ultimate solution, represents a technopoly mindset regarding tools and purpose. As Gallagher writes, “Among the recommendations of the committee, not surprisingly, was a call for standardized achievement tests at key educational moments, especially at the conclusion of high school” (20). From the 1980s, we moved into another era, one that relied on business models for education, that eventually led from Ross Perot to George W. Bush’s No Child Left Behind (Gallagher 21-2).

The most grievous and visible cost to education due to technocratic mandates and standardized testing, is the time in schools surrendered to testing and test preparation rather than teaching (Gallagher 23). Drawing from research by Linda McNeil (2000) focused on “legislative learning” in Texas, Gallagher points out that testing undermined learning, as “Richly conceived lessons and projects were shelved in favor of the regimented, fragmented curriculum handed to teachers by the districts” (24). Drawing from Linda Darling-Hammond’s The Right to Learn (1997), Mary Henning-Stout’s Responsive Assessment (1994), Monty Neil et. al.’s Failing Our Children (2004), Alfie Kohn’s The Schools Our Children Deserve (1999), and Dave Posner’s Phi Delta Kappan article, “What’s Wrong with Teaching to the Test?” (2004), Gallagher clearly states what many of us in education know to be common sense. “As educators around the country have learned,” Gallagher writes, “standardized curricula and standardized tests lead to a narrowing of curriculum and a focus on lower-order, easily-tested skills” (24). Though President Obama did sign what the New York Times terms, “a sweeping rewrite of the No
“Child Left Behind Act” in December of 2015, a bill that eliminated punitive federal sanctions and the imposition of federally mandated academic requirements, and returned power to states and local districts to determine the best means by which to improve struggling schools, federal standardized tests remained unscathed. The Every Student Succeeds Act President Obama signed is a rebrand of the technocratic faith in mechanisms, in the machinery of testing itself. At best, the rebrand is a compromise. At worst, it is an affirmation that technocratic testing, standardization, and certain “accountability” measures are here to stay, not so much because they work and inspire students, but because the technopoly’s leaders can no longer imagine a future for education outside of testing. Further, technopoly leadership, experts, the society at large, cannot seem to rupture the narrative that the sole purpose for education is to foster economic participation. Like Postman, I too wonder what story we’re telling when we speak of education. As Postman argues, the story suggests that America is no longer a culture, just a mere economy, and that economy’s last refuge is “an exhausted education philosophy” (174).

My work and inspiration comes from the belief that human beings should be at the center of education, and that their economic participation is not the sole justification for learning. There are much larger concerns when teaching and learning, such as helping others to define and improve the quality of their everyday lives, helping others see their potential and purpose as people who will embark on a life journey of love, family, work, challenge, citizenship, sorrow, joy — the full spectrum of human emotion and experience. I doubt that anyone, at the end of his or her life, grieved the loss of their economic participation. Our real, everyday lives are profoundly, inextricably linked to those we have loved, and those who have loved us. One of my goals as an educator is to inspire
others to find the courage to claim the lives they most want to lead, to think about how they wish to spend their time and for what purposes beyond the unrelenting, metonymic insistence that education’s primary concern is work and money. I seek to rupture that which seems given, true, inescapable because I am a curious being resistant to that which does not affirm my human potential, the inalienable right to fully live and feel in the world around me, and to construct a life on a foundation of my own commitments. I want to live, to *really live*, my life so that when I teach who I am, I do so in a way that affirms my ethical and pedagogical values. Of course, this living is also dying in the sense that through inquiry and the seeking of some sense of truth that one must yield an old self and sense of understanding, to a newer, transformed sense of self. And because meaning is so temporal, so momentary when living a life of the mind, life and death are in a constant state of decomposition and renewal. As Cornel West argues, “You can’t talk about truth without talking about learning how to die because it’s precisely by learning how to die, examining yourself and transforming your old self into a better self, that you actually live more intensely and abundantly” (Taylor 3). Living intensely and more abundantly, it seems to me, should be the core of education. Turning the philosophical from discourse to a way of living, as West contends, is at the heart of existential concerns (Taylor 3), and this turn toward living is how we make education lifelong, and far more complex, than any test can measure.

**Emotions Provide Adherence and Cohesion**

Laura Rendón takes the idea of care and keeping of students, of developing and supporting, even further. She argues that many educators have become disillusioned by
the public vision of education obsessed with academic standards, competitive testing, the separation between teacher and learner, and a privileging of academic content over real-life living lessons (2). One’s “inner work” of learning, such as the contemplation of what is learned and how these lessons play out in real life is subsumed, perhaps erased, with today’s dream of education (2). As Rendón writes:

In many ways, we have lost sight of the deeper, relationship-centered essence of education, and we have lost touch with the fine balance between educating for academics and educating for life. It is time to reconnect with the original impulse that guided many of us into education — to bring our passion for teaching and learning and our minds and hearts into a profession that many educators, like me, believe is based on service to others and the well-being of our society (2).

To work in service to ourselves, others, and the well-being of society, requires suffering well and testimonial reading. It also requires setting aside the “exhausted education philosophy” that leaves little room for imperfection, prolonged uncertainty, and the very instructive failures that come when trying something new, learning by doing, and experimentation. It also requires taking care of oneself first, to allow one’s full personhood to be present and engaged in learning as a process that leads to self-actualization. In other words, in order to develop relationships with others, to educate for life inside and outside of the academy, we may need to do the inner work of coming to know ourselves while in a community of others. This inner work begins with using the I/eye as a location, as a place from which to look outward, as well as inward. In order to do this work, a reconfig-
uration of “the personal” as mere navel gazing expressionism, as though “personal” narrative is somehow less intellectually rigorous than more “public” oriented forms of writing, such as analysis, seminar papers, and other assignments given to students with the imperative, “Do not use the ‘I’ pronoun.” Though I will explore this concept further in depth while complicating “the personal” and “the public” constructions that separate (and therefore limit) work done in academic contexts, within the context of holistic pedagogy there is no such separation.

Instead, a holistic pedagogy resists the separation of the mind and body, the interior and the exterior lives students and teachers live every day. The “personal” is accepted as “publicly” shaped, and the realms of emotion are not separated from reason. Meaning, embodied and emotional responses to ideas have bearing on the thinking done through informal and formal writing, class discussions, and the shaping of a learning community. Reason is not “spoiled” by the inclusion of emotion, as Laura Micciche notes. Emotion provides the “stickiness” for ideas that create attachments to people, perspectives, and ideologies (1). As Micciche argues, “That is, we do emotions - they don’t simply happen to us” (2, emphasis original). Thus, emotion is as performative as reason itself and warrants some interrogation and exploration within a holistic classroom. Within the context of a critical classroom aimed toward seeking social justice, the status of emotion as a performative tool in analysis is democratizing intellectual work. This is problematic, of course, not due to students’ responses to the invitation to draw from their emotive lives in the performance of critical thinking, but because of the social baggage that has been heaped upon emotions themselves. As Micciche writes:
One of the problems associated with positioning emotion as a category of analysis is the tendency within intellectual as well as popular thought to collapse emotion with all things feminine, a marker that, at least in the history of academic discourse, has signaled a tendency to be weak, shallow, petty, vain, and narcissistic (3).

As Micciche argues, emotion has been framed as dangerous and untrustworthy in the dominant discourses surrounding intelligence and reason, which has rendered invisible the roles emotion plays in how we interpret our own subjectivity and participation in societies and cultures (6). In order to disrupt technopoly’s stronghold on education, as well as the assessment culture that further privileges “reason” over the emotive stickiness of ideas, the ways and means by which one comes to know, examining the role emotion plays in thinking itself is ultimately an action toward social justice within education. Because emotion has been declared “soft,” or what Micciche terms, “counter-factual,” it is often framed as oppositional to “objective” critical analysis (16).

Yet, when one is doing the hard work of critical pedagogy, seeking social justice and critical awareness, emotive responses are not only inevitable, they are crucial to both understanding and action. The students in this study, for example, had a wide range of emotional responses to systemic racism, novels and poetry by LGBTQ writers, Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* film (2007), and Art Spiegelman’s *The Complete MAUS* (1996)—ideas and experiences that were outside their subjective and emotive perspectives of the world around them. In a non-holistic classroom, voiced and embodied responses to such differences in subjectivity could easily have been termed “resistance,” and the students
themselves cast as entrenched in dominant white ideologies within patriarchal culture due to the tone and temperament of their responses. Had I done so, I would have missed the opportunity for complicating theory’s realm of logical explanation, and the roles emotions play in our understanding of Self and Other would have gone unexamined. By using the emotive and personal response as a location from which to begin inquiry, both students and the teacher are able to see and critique the social structures, conventions, and seemingly “natural” (and therefore, unexamined) cultural practices shaping those responses as emotional rhetoric instead of solely ideological positions. In That Two O’clock class, for example, tending to issues of white and male privilege resulting in several blanket statements that, at their surface, seemed like ideological or logical positions. Yet, when we pressed on these responses, we found that these statements masked emotional responses, such as the grief or anger one feels when they navigate unearned privileges and how those privileges negatively affect others. Sometimes, ideological stances that seemed like resistance, upon reflection and discussion, masked a sense of helplessness and futility in the face of systemic cultural practices. This type of reflective and reflexive inquiry helps to expand what Micciche terms “rhetoric’s province” outward, in order to hold up sensory and experiential realms as worthy of critique and examination, so that what gets labeled as rhetorically effective is traced for its larger meanings and associations (19). By bringing emotive response from the margins and to the center of inquiry, thus, one can examine the “stickiness” emotions have, particularly when what one thinks about another is also representative of how one feels when encountering that other. As Micciche writes:
Stickiness is a useful concept for me because it helps explain how emotion resides in neither persons/objects nor the social world exclusively. Rather, emotion is dynamic and relational, taking form through collisions of contact between people as well as between people and the objects, narratives, beliefs, and so forth that we encounter in the world (28).

Micciche’s sense of “stickiness” is framed by Sara Ahmed’s *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), and is defined as “accumulation of affective value” (Micciche citing Ahmed, 27). The adhesive quality of emotion means that people, objects, narratives, and signs accrue affective, emotional associations that in turn embody or represent those objects, people, narratives, and signs (Micciche citing Ahmed, 27).

This is precisely why interrogating and examining an emotive response through inquiry supported by holistic pedagogy matters. The dynamic and relational aspects of emotion, the way they are mediated between Self and Other, and the situations in which emotive responses occur, means that they are not just embodied, but rhetorical (Micciche 14). As Micciche notes, however, “… because people feel emotions and can identify categories of emotion and their familiar manifestations within a particular culture, emotions regularly escape critical thought” (14). Meaning, because of the long history of the emotional realm as a feminine one; because appeals to emotion within rhetorical studies have often been positioned as less reliable than logical ones; and, because there is considerable resistance to the idea that learning itself is at very least an emotional experience with cognitive consequences, exploration of emotion as a location for critical analysis could offer the field and its people much to consider. The oversight, the ways in which the emotional
realm gets marginalized, invites us to bring it to the center in order to consider its potential when working with whole beings. As Micciche argues, this omission of emotion leads to a larger omission overall: “Neglecting to analyze emotional effects leads to neglecting emotion’s role as that which binds the social body together as well as tears it apart, a point of crucial importance to the practice and study of writing and rhetoric” (14).

In terms of social justice and critical pedagogies, approaches to the teaching of writing in Composition and Rhetoric that could be considered dominant discourses, neither social justice nor liberation is fully possible without exploring (and critiquing) the ways emotions are performed, brokered, positioned, and used within social (and therefore, rhetorical) constructs. A holistic approach to critical and social justice pedagogies, requires one to dismantle the privileged position of reason that places it above all else, even the bodies emoting in response to reason itself. Indeed, holistic pedagogies create room, writing room, for a whole being to pursue knowledge that will matter to them inside and outside of the classroom.

As Rendón notes, constructions of holistic pedagogies are not new. Citing Belenky et. al. in *Women’s Ways of Knowing* (1986), and Carol Gilligan’s *In a Different Voice* (1982), Rendón contends that feminist teaching and learning theories “… were considered relational, liberatory, political, and unitive in nature” as they made room for imperfect and provisional knowledge, a shift in teacher-student and student-teacher relations, and respected subjective knowledges and truths (Rendón 15). In 1994, bell hooks presented her concept of “engaged pedagogy,” one that she constructed by using her artful expertise, personal experiences, and study of both Paulo Freire’s work on liberation education, and Thich Nhat Hanh’s work that emphasized wholeness and the union of
“mind, body, and spirit” (hooks 14). To hooks, Hanh’s philosophy of engaged Buddhism, when practice and contemplation are conjoined, interdependent, was the ripe offering she needed to address the mind/body split in education that kept teachers and students from seeing each other as “whole human beings.” As hooks writes of Hanh:

His focus on a holistic approach to learning and spiritual practice enabled me to overcome years of socialization that had taught me to believe a classroom was diminished if students and professors regarded one another as “whole” human beings, striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world (14-5).

There is a “catch,” of course, to holistic education as professional practice. As hooks notes, engaged, holistic pedagogy emphasizes wellbeing, and means that teachers must be committed to the ongoing process of self-actualization in order to teach the sort of critical skills in a way that empowers and encourages students (15). Or, in terms any frequent air traveler can recognize: Just as with a “sudden decrease in cabin pressure” on an aircraft, when one should first apply the oxygen mask to oneself before assisting others, so it is with teaching from an embodied, holistic perspective. Self-care and self-actualization are tantamount to holistic teaching not only as a means by which to care for oneself within the context of a demanding career, but also as a political act aimed at both liberation and social justice. The teaching body has long been an objectified one. As bell hooks notes, this objectification denigrates notions of wholeness and upholds the mind/body split while promoting and supporting compartmentalization and separation of the teaching
body. “This support,” hooks writes, “reinforces the dualistic separation of public and private, encouraging teachers and students to see no connection between life practices, habits of being, and the roles of professors” (16). This concept of the objectified teaching body could easily be a focus of further inquiry and academic work, particularly through the lens of feminist studies – a project I hope to undertake in further studies of holistic pedagogy and practices.

Holistic pedagogy upholds hooks’ declarative about engaged pedagogy, that it values student expression (20), even emotive expression, as a means by which to find avenues for inquiry and learning. The trajectory for all inquiries features an embodied connection between students and the materials under study, so that they can map the theoretical in light of practical, lived experiences. If students’ primary response to ideas or readings is emotive, then the emotive location is the beginning, the epicenter, for moving toward reason. Contemplation rests not with exploring emotion as one would in therapy, but to consider the emotion in relation to the social constructs that sponsor, validate, and shape it.

In a critical and holistic classroom, the mind/body split is reconciled whenever emotions serve as both catalyst and equal component of reason. Self-actualization becomes possible, if not inevitable, when one is invited to utilize his or her whole body, the mind, spirit, and interior realms of emotion as a means by which to make knowledge that matters as much outside the classroom and within it. Though students in this study did report that there were times when their Inquiry Notebooks, particularly their contemplative response entries, felt therapeutic, providing them the opportunity to more carefully ex-
plore their emotional and logical responses to classroom discussions, activities, and assigned readings, the course itself was not therapy. For unlike therapy, when one is in the confessional role while another, more educated person listens, asks questions, and works from a perspective of psychologist or psychiatrist, the holistic educator is working as a guide, a facilitator, equally invested in the emotive, self-actualization processes. With emotion and its articulations as a location, as a place from which to begin the inner work of inquiry, and with emotions as dynamic within a social network, it is important that the teacher-student relationship be as equitable as possible, collaborative, and reflexive. As hooks writes:

> When education is the practice of freedom, students are not the only ones who are asked to share, to confess. Engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process. The empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks. Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive (21).

Like hooks, I do not ask my students to do work I am not also doing alongside them. I keep an Inquiry Notebook with each semester and share it with my students. Doing so helps to demonstrate the role vulnerability plays in the craft of teaching within an engaged, holistic classroom. By sharing my own thinking and writing within the context of my real, everyday life outside of the classroom, I help students to do the same. As hooks
writes, “It is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material” (21). By framing emotive responses as dynamic locations that reflect interdependence with societal and cultural practices, self-actualization is transformed to an equally dynamic, interdependent position. The personal and public, mind and body splits privileged by reason’s hegemonic position are reordered through liberating, socially just practices that prepare one for action and engagement. In other words, the emphasis on the inner work does not absolve students from the outer work of citizenship in a complex, global community. By making the trajectory clear, that one is expected to move from theoretical to practical spheres, self-actualization is no longer isolated to a silent and inactive self-awareness. As Rendón writes, “When all we do is focus on our self-awareness without a concomitant emphasis on social consciousness and action, what remains is a self-serving, individual blindness to world needs (9). The ultimate goals, thus, of a holistic and critical pedagogy is to tend and care for a whole being so that being can do the same for others. The byproduct of such work is a counter to technopoly, to the very “exhausted education philosophies” that support the “accountability agenda” and the ways it dehumanizes both teachers and students. As hooks notes, there is not a separation between the will to know and the will to become (19). By tending to the care of whole beings, knowing and becoming merge, and heal the rift between emotion and reason. Through suffering well, rhetorical listening, testimonial reading, and beginning our inner work from performed emotions as a location, the students from That Two O’clock Class, and their teacher, experienced a holistic, critical education that shaped both being and knowing.
CHAPTER TWO:
BITTERSWEET ENCOUNTERS WITH “EPISTEMIC ASSUMPTIONS”

“Inquiry Notebooks are not journals, but I don’t blame you for your confusion.”

- Me, over and over again

Making Peace with Generative Conflict

When I introduced Inquiry Notebooks to That Two O’clock Class, I held up a black Cachet hardbound artist sketchbook, nine by twelve inches, with more than 200 sewn-bound, acid-free pages. “You will need a book like this,” I said. “You can find them at the campus bookstore, and other local retailers.” In the syllabus for the course, I indicated that a blank sketchbook with line-less pages was a required tool for the course. I explained the Inquiry Notebook concept, provided an explanatory handout, and asked, “Do you have any questions?”

A student, Mr. Tangle, raised his hand. “So … we’re keeping a journal.”

“No,” I replied to his reductive, but efficient, statement.

He looked at me, quizzically. “But we’re writing in it every week about how we feel.”

“No,” I replied. “We’re using the sketchbook as a receptacle for the intellectual work that will shape our larger projects, and as a site for inquiry. This will make more sense once you’ve read the online instructions more carefully and begun the required work.”
“But we can write what we want in it too, like a journal,” he said.

“Ultimately,” I replied, “your inquiry work will become what you want to write. All I can tell you at this beginning moment is that yes, there will be times when you will write or draw whatever you want, but even this writing will be connected to course content.”

Mr. Tangle sat back in his chair. “So it is a journal, like a diary.”

It seemed he was resistant to my request to prolong uncertainty in order to allow a writing experience to unfold over time instead of marching into an assignment with the objective already established like a ready-made conclusion. I refused to over-simplify the assignment. I resisted his resistance to the Inquiry Notebook by framing it as a journal or diary, mainly because when he said the words, “journal” and “diary,” his tone seemed dismissive, as if the forms themselves did not have value. I stepped back and said, “Let me walk you through the instructions, so you can see the Inquiry Notebook does different work than a journal or diary.”

Yet, despite having provided a directive in the syllabus, a visual aid and in-class presentation of the assignment, and provided full assignment instructions outline (Appendix B), few students returned to class the day their Inquiry Notebooks were due for the first time having met the requirement. I made my way to each student to check his or her notebook, and discovered the first of many obstacles the Inquiry Notebook, as an assignment, would present. Several male students had brought the timeless and cheap “composition notebook” with lined notebook paper, and a black marbled cover. Another male brought a spiral theme notebook. Yet another brought a small Moleskin journal someone
had given him. A majority of the women, six as I recall, had brought with them the required sketchbook, but there were many women who brought with them journals as bookstores market them: with colorful illustrated covers and lined pages — some with gilt edges. One student, Chatty Kathy, brought an old spiral bound. “I figured, why waste it?” she said.

After making my rounds, I stepped back and informed those who had not brought the required sketchbook that they had failed their first assignment. There was a collective gasp, and several hands were suddenly in the air. “Do we have to get one of those books, or can we just use what we already have?” Steel McThunderpants said.

Several students lowered their hands and nodded, indicating McThunderpants had voiced their question. I took a deep breath to anchor myself to the moment. “Yes. That’s why it is listed as a course requirement in the syllabus.”

There was a bit of grumbling, something I noted in my own Inquiry Notebook that I kept during the course. One person did ask what to do if one could not afford to purchase a sketchbook. I indicated that I had several in my office for those who ran into economic restraints. When we met again, most students had complied with the requirement. Two students included in this study, Chatty Kathy and Mr. Tangle, did not. I chose not to send them back again for the requisite sketchbooks in order to let them explore the limitations their choices would inevitably present. When it comes to holistic, critical pedagogical practices sometimes one must accept that there is always something to be learned (eventually) when students refuse to comply with requirements. Sometimes, a “lack of compliance” is a means by which students reveal their epistemic assumptions.
During our interview, Chatty Kathy defined both her lack of compliance and the limitations of her choice:

I would say it — my notebook — was definitely different from the others. I didn’t do so much in my notebook as some people did, and actually, midway through the semester I got another notebook because my first notebook was just not cutting it. It was an old notebook, and we we had talked - I don’t know when our meeting was, halfway through the semester or towards the beginning - but I wasn’t proud of [my notebook]. It wasn’t cool to me. It wasn’t something interesting or something where I wanted to go to like, “Oh, I’ve got this cool notebook I can use.” It was, I think it was like a spiral notebook I’d had for a while, and had torn out the first too pages I had already used. So it was like a sketchbook, so it wasn’t lined or anything, so I had some freedom in that aspect. But when we chatted about it, I realized that this was not something I was necessarily proud to take out and start writing in it. So when we talked about it, I went out and got a brand-new one. It was hardcover and black, and I put the sparkly letters of my name on it, “Inquiry Notebook,” and some question marks. So like, once I did that I was way more into my notebook than I had been before — much more willing to use it. It became more like a give and take. I’d put a little it into it, and then I’d go back and get a little bit out of it.

In the case of That Two O’clock class, the resistance to the genre requirements of the Inquiry Notebook, the actual structure of a sketchbook with acid-free, archival-grade pages, reflected students’ epistemic assumptions about journals as a genre — assumptions
learned in other course experiences, in other moments of their personal histories. For
Chatty Kathy, because she had kept a journal earlier in her life, one full of “poetry — ran-
dom poetry stuff,” her sense of journaling was randomized expression, something beyond
required elements and inquiry guidelines. So she resisted, but for reasons far more com-
plex than genre. As she explained:

   School was not that important to me at the time. I don’t even think I had the major
then that I have now. I knew I wanted to teach, but [how, what level] was still
very broad. I think I was still in the middle level [education] program at the time.
And it just … whatever. I’ll be honest, I was just, “Whatever.” I mean, I loved the
class, and the interaction, and everything along that line, but the notebook was
just kinda nothing — it’s a notebook, but it was my, I would say it was more my
sentiment toward school.

   In my earlier years of teaching, particularly as a graduate teaching assistant, I
tended to push for compliance without accepting that push as something other than an is-
sue of control. Engaging with failure, within the holistic classroom, is always/already an
opportunity for growth. In this case, I had to trust not just my pedagogical perspective
that students had the right and responsibility to struggle with their assumptions. I had to
trust that the assignment, as a construction, would eventually yield meaning to them. This
was not an easy choice – as a female educator who happens to be teaching the value of a
genre often demeaned as feminized, I am often dismissed in the early weeks of a semester
as one who is merely interested in feelings. Due to the cultural baggage the words “journal” and “diary” have, the tropes that are bandied about as inarguable truths, presenting Inquiry Notebooks takes far more than a course session dedicated to explanation.

Inquiry Notebooks require an emphasis on process, and some of that process includes letting go of one’s sense of educator authority so that students can see, over time and in their own individual ways, the costly rift between emotion and reason. The temptation to prove myself as an intellectual through the exertion of power and dominance is always present at the beginning of a semester, but I resist. I resist the move of justification of the genre because I know that only through the inquiry work itself will students come to understand the fierceness of the intellectual work, the breadth and depth of my expertise as their instructor and mentor, and the overall value of the Inquiry Notebook as an assignment. I resist, too, knowing that my holistic pedagogy values conflict as generative, and essential, to learning.

However, I do ask the students why they have chosen the books they’ve chosen despite the requirement, but when I ask, I am ready to listen carefully to their answers. This too is part of the inquiry process that must be modeled in order for students to learn to trust the messiness of inquiry, its uncertainties and complications. For the majority of the students I have taught, and certainly the majority in this study, the struggle to justify the journal was a very real, culturally embedded challenge that often interfered with the cognitive and intellectual possibilities the Inquiry Notebook sponsored. For Chatty Kathy, her struggle with the Inquiry Notebook was foremost a struggle with her sense of school, her place in it, and her unhappiness with her program. Her struggle, too, was about writing, thinking, and thinking about her thinking. Through her struggle, and our
conversations during the semester about her struggle, Kathy was able to make valuable observations about herself:

Because to me [the Inquiry Notebook] made me, when we did have conversation, you know, and I did write a few things and you made little notes about stuff, it made me realize that sometimes the things that I was thinking about in relation to the class, or maybe notes I jotted down, my thoughts were always very structured. Like, I felt like I had to — if I started writing I felt like I had to get to a certain point. I couldn’t just be like, “Wherever this takes me, it takes me.” And you know, now I can just start writing and thinking, and then writing some more. One we talked about, when I got the new notebook and we talked about what was in there, it led me more to have my writing be more, well, just flow and not like, “I have to start here and end here.” I had never really done writing like that before. Especially when we were reading — there was that one reading on white privilege — like when I read that and used my notebook with that, that was the first time I really just wrote something and just literally wrote down my thoughts. Even when I was younger I would be like, “This is what I want to talk about in my journal today,” you know? I didn’t just write.

For Kathy, writing as thinking was an entirely new concept and experience. Her disclosure in our interview helped me to understand that it was possible that her initial use of an old notebook in the beginning, her refusal to invest in the required sketchbook format, was more about how unsatisfying journaling had been. Her epistemic assumption, that personal writing was not fulfilling or interesting, coupled with her overall sense of school
at the time we began That Two O’clock Class, had more to do with her actions than any resistance to me or the course requirement. By accepting her resistance as a learning opportunity, and waiting out the time it took for her to see for herself the limitations of her choice, she found room to lead herself to a better understanding of not just the Inquiry Notebook assignment, but of herself.

Equally satisfying to both of us, was how her struggle with the notebook eventually led her to discoveries about the connections between reading and writing in the course. Kathy indicated that the writing about our course readings helped her to map her own understanding, the affiliative dimension Mayes and Williams describe, and the community connections John P. Miller advocates. In writing in her notebook, Kathy describes the emotional-logical work the Inquiry Notebooks sponsor:

How I felt about [the readings], how they pertained to me, and I how I connected to them — what they just meant to me in a bigger picture term. I mean, I know how I felt about reading about white privilege, but then I thought about how that connected to the bigger picture of the world, and how it works in society.

When I met with Kathy, it was clear that she was in a very different place as a person in college. She seemed more confident, and she was quick to tell me about a monumental shift in her education. Kathy had found an academic and professional home in Special Education, and was nearing the end of her practicum semester. Though she had struggled in That Two O’clock Class with the Inquiry Notebook, its demands and possibilities, she still learned a great deal from that struggle. One thing that remained important to her was
the use of a journal as a tool in observation and learning. She said that she kept a journal to assist her in personal development as a teacher:

I’ll be in my practicum, observing. A kid will do something, and I’ll write it down. Later, I’ll go back. Read it. And then I’ll ask questions, like, “Why? What caused this? What was the effect of it?” If a kid does something, and something else happened a few weeks later, then I’ll go back and add [to the journal], “For this kid, in this instance, this was the outcome. So I guess personal - to me that’s very personal because it’s what I want to do with my life.

Kathy’s main struggle with the Inquiry Notebook assignment centered on “thinking connections,” what might be considered the work of metacognition – the thinking about our thinking. It was easier for her to work in the affiliative dimension, make connections between herself and the larger world, and later, herself and her teaching career. More difficult for her during the course, were the moments of Contemplative Response when she was asked to think about her thinking, to interrogate what she knew and why she thought she knew it.

I wasn’t having that struggle [with] making it personal or just how I’m personally engaged with [a] text. I didn’t. Now I’ll look at it and ask, “Why couldn’t I do this? What was my issue?” And I didn’t realize it until now that I was looking at it - I don’t want to say the wrong way because I don’t think there is a wrong way to look at the notebook - but in a way that didn’t work for me. You know, if I could have wrapped my head around it in a differently I probably would’ve been able to
put more into the notebook and gotten more out of it. I would’ve realized, you know, realized it’s not how it connects to just me.

Reflecting back on her own struggle during our interview, Kathy continued to practice the kind of inquiry the notebooks sponsor. This, in itself, was revealing to me in the sense that it is important, when working with students, to remember that is it is the thinking and habits of mind an assignment sponsors that matters most, and not the actual success or initial “failure” of the student’s work at the time of direct instruction:

When I had my notebook, I wasn’t as interactive as I could have been with it. And probably not as interactive as I should have been. But working in my own notebooks and journals now, I wish I would have been because I think I could’ve learned … different skills or techniques for connecting to texts. Or to a situation in the classroom, or a conversation - you know, an offhand conversation you have with a teacher. I would have given me a place to, you know, write down the thoughts I had initially and then letting those flow until I could ask, “Where does this thought take me?” That thought takes me to that thought, or that conclusion, or this idea, or this question. I do that a lot more now, but it would have been really cool if I could’ve started doing that back then.

As we spoke of Kathy’s regret surrounding her notebook, we discussed the value of struggle as a site for learning. As one on the verge of graduating and seeking employment as a teacher, Kathy was exploring all the missed learning opportunities during the earlier years of her college education. She expressed wishing she would have worked more
closely with her Inquiry Notebook, because after her education courses and practicum, she was getting a clearer sense of its potential and value. As we discussed that off record, teacher to teacher, I could see that the Two O’clock Class had been more important to her than she had let on, through class interactions, her notebook struggle, or even her projects. She had passed the class, but both of us had known at the time that she was capable of so much more than she was doing at that moment in time. With a holistic pedagogy commitment to care, however, her struggles were always opportunities for conversation instead of final judgments in the form of grades. We talked about her struggle during conferences, and each conversation eventually led to the moment of the interview with a young professional looking back and seeing the value and her own missed opportunities.

In the end, all things considered, she ended our conversation with this:

I just like the way I see myself, and my correlation to school right now. Because right now I want to be in school. I want to be doing school. I’m excited about it.

Before, I was not like that. I was … [beings to cry]. School was really hard.

Kathy’s story reminds me that learning does not always happen for students in the timeframe institutions, and their assessments, prefer. It also reminds me to hold onto the real value of holistic pedagogy, of accepting the struggle students have in response to curricula as vital to their learning as the curricula itself. Her story, too, reminds me to hold onto the hope that what I teach is sticky enough to last far longer than any one semester. To know that she was using journaling as a way to reflect on her teaching and her students’ learning, indicated to me that some of That Two O’clock Class had indeed
stuck. As a teacher, in that interview moment, I was all the more grateful to have been a witness to, and an assistant during, Kathy’s struggle toward meaning.

Suffering Well by Reading Testimonials

The student struggle to come to terms with the Inquiry Notebook assignment was often complicated – as most things are – by socioeconomic class and gender. Though all the students wrestled with the cultural tropes surrounding journaling, how they struggled often depended upon their gender or, more specifically, their sense of gender. The two male participants in this study each negotiated their definition of “journal” as feminized, nonacademic, and hyperemotional texts, and the definition they worked with (and against) limited their sense of both inquiry and purpose. Only one of the men, Mr. Tangle, considered the journal to be a degraded and diminished form of writing, and struggled, even beyond the course, to explain what he had learned through working in his notebook. Mr. Tangle represents the ways in which epistemic assumption can be constructed as a barrier, a wall, that makes reflexive inquiry and transformation impossible. In the interview, Mr. Tangle cited earlier courses as his reason for resisting the Inquiry Notebook assignment:

Like I said, there’s other classes that demand journal work. A lot of English classes that I’ve been in, Comp One, Comp Two, they all demanded journal work. They all demanded that you write, uh, a quick scribble. When I came back to college I was at [local community college] I had this lovely, fabulous guy who was a Comp One teacher, and I couldn’t tell if he was gay or just really artistic - couldn’t tell which, but he was very florid with his motions and very florid with
his words. He would insist that we just scribble, even if it was “I hate this class” fifty times, he would insist that we scribble something for the last ten minutes of every class. So there’s always some sort of journal work that I had to do, and it kind of reminded me - the Inquiry Notebook reminded me of, in retrospect, of that, that day with that funny, funny man insisting that we spend the last ten minutes of the class writing in our notebooks. “What did we learn today?” “What did we feel today?” Didn’t even have to have a why - we just had to write.

Testimonial listening illuminated two intriguing (if not disappointing) threads in Mr. Tangle response. The first thread was that of demand, that other classes demand journal work instead of invite reflection and reflexivity. The second thread, was the demeaning way he feminized the “lovely, fabulous guy” who sponsored his most recent journal opportunity, a man Mr. Tangle interpreted as “gay or just really artistic.”

The thread of demand, for example, appeared again and again during our interview session. Mr. Tangle said he resented the required writing aspect of the Inquiry Notebook assignment, especially the reading notes and Contemplative Responses. Though he admitted that the notion of having a conversation with oneself and another writer was a new concept to him, the prolonged uncertainty such work required was not something he could embrace. He was, in a very real way, working with his epistemic assumptions and unable (or unwilling) to reflexively engage, complicate, or critique them. The process-centered approach to writing in the Inquiry Notebooks upended his sense of writing, a sense of writing that was deeply connected to Mr. Tangle’s sense of self:
I want to be an author. I want to be a novelist. That’s what I want to be. I discovered I wanted to be that when I was back in high school, well, maybe before that - junior high. I have a notebook at home, I finally found it again, a five-subject notebook that I filled from cover to cover with a story. It’s crap. It’s fifteen year-old [name withheld] trying to write science fiction. I remember how Ayn Randishly wonderful I felt that it was mine. And I made this. And now people can read it and enjoy it, or not. So yeah, there is a joy in creating, and … I don’t … I don’t want to be the next Rowling or King, or Game of Thrones guy, but if I could write a book - or two, five, or ten, fifteen - and God knows I have enough manuscripts - get published, it would be like taking that thing I created and throwing it out into the sea of literature out there. That would make me happy, just knowing that somebody picked it up and read it. I, maybe I’m being egotistic and looking for immortality that way, but I think that, I dunno. It’s not art. It’s not - it’s making something. My dad was a great woodworker. He loved to make cabinets and tables. He made wall hangings and I understand how he felt because he never sold it. He never sold anything. He just gave them away when he got done making them.

Until That Two O’clock Class, Mr. Tangle had been taking writing courses every now and then at a local community college as a means by which to pursue his dream of becoming a novelist. As a first-generation, older student he took utilitarian view of this work, and described all of his courses before That Two O’clock Class as a means of gathering information about his craft. Describing the worst of his classes as a “second year fiction class,” he articulated his “Easter egg hunt” approach to writing advice:
I go to every English class looking for something new, some nugget that I haven’t thought of, and the worst of the bunch was a second-year fiction writing class at [local community college] that was taught by the most angry, bitter, failed writer ever. He published one short story, and was never able to publish his detective novel. And, he was a bitter, bitter man and even he taught me one, at least one, piece of wisdom. Perspective shift is what it was.

When he entered That Two O’clock Class, Mr. Tangle had an agenda: finding the “nuggets” that would improve his creative writing. What he was not prepared for, and never did accept, was the prolonged uncertainty of inquiry, the rigors of critical analysis, and the genre switches between creative writing, literature, and composition. He was not prepared to be the maker of nuggets himself. When presented with the opportunity to make meaning instead of finding it, Mr. Tangle rejected it outright as an unreasonable demand. In his refusal of such demand, his epistemic assumptions could remain outside of critique and transformation.

Writing was not the only challenge the Inquiry Notebook presented Mr. Tangle. Reading, particularly the way he read, played an important role in his own notebook. As Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem suggest, defining reading methods for a specific purpose in a writing classroom is very important. Mr. Tangle’s reading notes were sparse, at best, in his notebook. He assumed, despite instruction and handouts, that he was to enact “content-based reading,” in order to provide summary, interpretation, connection, and idea generation (Adler-Kassner and Estrem 40). He assumed that the reason for reading in the course was to frame class discussion, to prove one had read and be tested either through conversation or a quiz. Because he classified himself as a reader, as one who
could remember plot, content, and main ideas, he saw no reason to complicate his reading, and found the reading notes tedious. Mr. Tangle was not prepared for, nor willing to try, what Mariolina Salvatori terms “introspective reading,” when one explores the “mental moves” of reading by tracking their notations, the way they used their own presuppositions as interpretative devices, and how those presuppositions influenced, limited, or shaped their interpretations (447).

Drawing from a literacy sponsored in his previous courses, Mr. Tangle enacted “content-based reading” as a utilitarian model, one that served him well in his computer courses, and his writing courses prior to That Two O’clock Class. During one-to-one conferences, Mr. Tangle expressed frustration with the reading notes requirement, mostly due to their alleged “inefficient” use of his time. Because he could not see an immediate utility, he did not see a reason for doing such work. In a sense, he was not willing to unlearn, as Donna Qualley argues, to become reflexive and introspective of his own thinking. Mr. Tangle was satisfied with what Qualley terms, “comprehension,” when what we encounter is instantly relatable to what is already in our heads (13). Because he could quickly comprehend readings through a content-based method, he did not believe there were “nuggets” to be found or made. Yet, during the interview he expressed frustration with comments I made in his Inquiry Notebook, questions I posed on sticky notes such as, “What does this mean to you?” during moments of rote summary. Though I tried through questions and comments to push him toward a reflexive reading of his own methods and understanding, Mr. Tangle often took these comments as emotional rejection of his work. In one instance, he specifically pointed to one of his emotional entries, one that emphasized his feelings:
There was one, and because there was one page I was just shouting at the cliffs. It was one of those things, “You want me to write in this thing, fine I’ll write in this thing.” It was a day when the roommate was a jerk, job sucked, the other job sucked, everything. And your response was, “Nope, not feeling it. Try harder.” I kinda read that and [inhales deeply] went, “[O]kay.”

Though I did not write, “Nope, note feeling it” as he contends, I did make a comment about how his expressed frustrations may have influenced his reading of the work that week. As we discussed instructor feedback more thoughtfully, he indicated that he did not understand why some entries received a sticky note and others did not. I explained that the evaluative response practice to Inquiry Notebooks is one of witnessing and following, noting contextual ruptures – the moment an independent, student-created idea emerges. I explained that my notes reflected the kind of reading I was asking students to do, the “process-based reading” (Adler-Kassner and Estrem 40) that focuses on the writer in order to examine the decisions the writer made. At this point in the interview, Mr. Tangle indicated that feedback should be a guidepost, direction. In other words, the thread of demand included a requirement to consider his emotion-based entries as equally performative as his reason-based entries. He could not, or perhaps would not, venture into the reflexive realm that would make his interpretations subject to emotional influence. He could not, or would not, entertain Micciche’s claim that emotions are not just something that happens.
The thread of dismissal in Mr. Tangle’s work and study interview, reflected his vested interest in his epistemic assumptions. When we read Marjane Satrapi’s *The Complete Persepolis* (2007) and then watched the film, Mr. Tangle’s only response in his notebook was, “That Iranian woman is kind of hot.” Apart from the obvious sexist nature of the comment, it also reflected his epistemic assumption that graphic work was not literature, and certainly not in the same realm as his own novel manuscripts. This particular location of dismissal was not reserved for Satrapi’s work. He also equally dismissed Allen Ginsberg’s testimonies in *HOWL*, and Kerouac’s complex, real and yet fictionalized perspectives in *On the Road*. Interestingly, when students wrote a poem in response to *HOWL* instead of an analysis or criticism, his anger and frustration with difference provoked from him a poem, that when he read it aloud in class, deeply resonated with his classroom colleagues. Across all the interviews I did, when study participants indicated precise moments that mattered to them, moments they had remembered two years after the course, Mr. Tangle’s reading of his poetic response to *HOWL* emerged as a “wow” moment students valued. Yet, despite the enthusiastic responses to his reading in class, Mr. Tangle indicated in his interview that he had felt judged and separated from traditional students in the course. He described a particular moment when he and a small group of students, out downtown as part of our “writing marathon” experiment Mr. Tangle said:

> We were down in the Haymarket and eating our expensive food, and drinking our beverages, and I was telling [name withheld] about the story I was writing. I wish I remembered it because it was an awesome synopsis and to this day I cannot remember what I told him, but it was an awesome three-paragraph synopsis that
summed up the entire story. In between that was [name withheld] and [name withheld] making fun of creative writing majors. And that’s when I said, “I am a creative writing major,” and they went [motions head down] “Oh.” First of all, I don’t understand why they’re crackin’ on creative writing majors for starters.

Second of all, um, if you said it, own it. In your own class you said it, “Love the ugly babies.” If you said it, own it. Now that you know there’s one in your midst, own it. Had they stopped and inquired about it, they would have discovered two things. I’m majoring in computer sciences because I have applied for computer jobs in the past and they are just thrilled to death with my work and what I’ve put together, and then they ask where I graduated from. [Makes a spitting sound, gestures with his thumb over his shoulder in an “Out of here” motion]. So, that’s the piece of paper so if I can’t ever be an American novelist, at least I’ll have a job.

It is important to note that Mr. Tangle’s dismissals have an epicenter in his own knotted sense of education, that one must pursue something practical for reliable employment instead of shaping one’s education around a passion and larger dream. This is not a failure on his part, but representative of nontraditional, first-generation students and their struggle to justify education – its expense and demand that first-generation, nontraditional students enter an institution as age minorities making due in a dominant culture that often does not account for, attend to, or support them in equitable, socially just ways. As a first-generation, nontraditional student myself, I understood his dilemma as one I had, only in my senior year, solved for myself by changing my major from journalism to English
Studies, with an emphasis in Rhetoric and Composition. The tension between the practical and the desired takes on a new significance when one’s partner, children, and even employers, must be taken into account when pursuing education. The ways that traditional students reject, ignore, or make assumptions about nontraditional students, reflecting the cultural climate an institution sponsors deliberately or by default, deeply impact nontraditional students and their sense of belonging in classrooms and programs. Mr. Tangle’s dismissal was not relegated to others. It began in his own complex web of epistemic assumptions that, when pressed, solidified in ways that did not allow him to permeate or puncture them. At the core of his epistemic assumptions was a dominant discourse framing degrees in the arts and literature, if not the humanities at large, as less valuable, less reliable than STEM degrees. This could account for his defensive stance overall, and his own complicated responses to others.

During our interview session, for example, he softly dismissed other students in the course as novices, as inexperienced kids while at the same time drawing a divisive line between the writing he did and loved, and the writing the course itself sponsored. While admitting that an Inquiry Notebook would be “handy to have” as a working writer, he did not see its value as a learning tool within a class:

Classwork, unfortunately, you’re getting either kids fresh out of high school who’ve run the gauntlet a year or two here [the university], or you get really lucky and get some [local community college] students who are an entirely different breed altogether. Um, they’re predisposed to, no matter how you wrap it, no matter how you paint it, no matter what, they’re going to see it as a journal. And
they’re going to see it as required writing. They’re not going to see in it, they’re not going to see an immediate value to it.

He then declared that he was sure a fellow female study participant accepted the Inquiry Notebook as valuable. “I’m sure [name withheld] took to it like a duck to water,” he said.

“No, no she didn’t,” I replied.

Not wanting to pursue comparisons between him and study participants, I added, “I wouldn’t assume –

“There were a couple [of students] I thought would have taken to it, seriously, like a duck to water - like [name withheld]” he said, interrupting me.

“Nope,” I replied.

Mr. Tangle then named several students from the course.

“Nope.”

Mr. Tangle sat back, visibly stunned. “My God.”

Despite his new knowledge that all students struggled with the Inquiry Notebook at first, he again dismissed affiliation, commonality, and even community membership:

[Excitedly] Ok, right. I heard an analogy and this, until I heard it, I never thought about. But when I read it I was like, “That’s exactly it!” And it was about first-time writers. I think they really meant essay writers and not - you know. A first time writer sits down to his typewriter or his word processor or whatever, and he sees that [holds up a blank piece of paper], he sees that blank white screen. And he had a great idea, a wonderful idea. He has the next great American novel in his head. He sits down, he sees that big, blank page and his brain immediately takes a
crap on him. That’s the problem with the Inquiry books, and you had a couple of things that broke the ice on that. You had us go to the art museum and write about what we saw, write about what it said to us. I think you had one [prompt] to write about religion or politics. You threw a kind of question out at us. Then you had the one when the girls sat with their backs to us, and the boys sat with their backs to them [for a cross-talk conversation about gender and performance of gender].

We had to write our questions down, and any of our blurbs about that. And - you gave some seeds. So it wasn’t like the page was completely blank. You gave some seeds to the students, and that helped. But unfortunately, when you give seeds you’re [leans toward me, puts hand beside his mouth as if to hide his words, then whispers] you’re requiring writing.

In the moment of the interview, I experienced his emphasis on my holistic pedagogical practices and the writing requirement as dismissive of my approaches. Upon testimonial reading of the interview transcript, however, I noticed the possibility that his take on the course and the writing it demanded reflected his epistemic assumptions that divided creative writing and literature as separate, as more magical, autonomous and self-defining, than writing influenced or sponsored by a course. This brought me back to thinking more about his content-based reading strategies. Juxtaposing those with his romantic constructions of the American novelist, the writer, the wise outcast creating art and then unleashing it into the world, helped me to more thoughtfully and compassionately hear him. It seemed to me that part of his epistemic assumptions were based on a construction of reading and writing as mysterious and magical. As Mariolina Salvatori
argues, not all theories of reading enable one to engage with the interconnectedness of reading and writing. Theories that construct writers as “visionary shapers of meanings, and their works as venerable repositories,” for example, often in turn discourage critical response, particularly criticism from inexperienced readers (443). By emphasizing magic and mystery, the complicated processes of thinking that writing itself provides a form of provisional order, Salvatori argues, make it possible to conceal the processes by which one makes knowledge and understanding (444). This, I think, could explain Mr. Tangle’s resistance to reflexively examining his epistemic assumptions. He was, as one who hoped to contribute to the literary canon of American literature, deeply vested in the metaphor of the master workman, the creator, a visionary shaper of text. In our interview, he followed his critique of the writing marathon moment by saying:

But anyway, um, had they asked I would have said I’m in creative writing for personal fulfillment, not because I plan on landing a job as a “blurbologist” somewhere for some publishing house, or doing copy edit for some newspaper. And actually, computer science creative writing people are hired out on the West Coast for game companies because they need people who can create cohesive stories, and understand how the damn game works.

Reading testimonially, I can “hear” the incredible tension between his epistemic assumptions about creative writing and a degree in English, and his utility-based compromise: combining “practical” computer programming with his love of creating stories. I can also see his limited vision of what a degree in English, regardless of its emphasis, can allow one to do professionally.
When Qualley advocates “long-distance thinking” as part of the reflexive inquiry process, she does not indicate how long that distance can be. For example, interviewing Mr. Tangle was, in many ways, a continuation of conversations and inquiries that began in class. For Mr. Tangle, the long-distance thinking was still happening, still churning in his understanding of both the Inquiry Notebook and the course itself. For example, it wasn’t until we were halfway through his interview, and two years past his course experiences, that he finally asked the question that could have made all the difference to his Inquiry Notebook and perspective. “I guess it never occurred to me until now,” he said, “What were we supposed to inquire with our notebook?”

**Conflict as Generative Insight**

To me, this moment in the interview illuminated just how difficult it was for him to complicate his assumptions and definition of “journal.” I knew, from reading his Inquiry Notebook and from our conferences during the semester, that he had not closely read the directions provided in the assignment overview. I recognized that he was deeply entrenched in his definition of the journal as a means by which to leave his magical and mystical approach to both the identity of “writer” and his own, and this served as a means by which to leave his reading strategies unchanged. Though I cannot testify to his motives, I suspect that changing his utilitarian approach to education as a hunt for nuggets left him vulnerable to other reflexive critiques or inquiries he could not afford, emotionally and intellectually, to make. His insistence on leaving a chasm between the emotional and rational realms, for example, may have been a survival strategy he needed to have the courage and strength to be a nontraditional student in a dominant and often oppressive
traditional student campus culture. Further, if I extend a more holistic understanding of his personal-private struggle in a personal-public classroom community, I can see his humanity despite his dismissals and rigid adherence to his epistemic assumptions. This matters a great deal, particularly when one believes, as I do, in students’ autonomy, even when that autonomy thwarts whatever I am trying so hard to teach.

His epistemic assumptions surrounding creative writing, for example, remained unassailable even as he told me stories about helping his daughter to create her own writing journal. So vested in his assumptions, he extended to me an assigned identity of visionary master creator while at the same time solidifying again the very assumptions that thwarted his work within his own Inquiry Notebook. When he described his most memorable moment in the class:

If it wasn’t for your book [Inquiry Notebook] that you showed us, we only got glimpses of it, because I don’t remember you allowing us to pass it around, but you had a book, it was like a scrapbook from hell. It was the Gutenberg Bible with quilt work stuck in there. Until I saw that, until I saw that book, I had no flipping clue what the Inquiry Notebook was for. All I saw was a damn journal I had to write in to earn my daily grade. And then I saw your book, with the illustrations and the cartoons, the lightbulb, and “The Very Westward Ho” [drawing], then it clicked that you’re writing a story, a letter, you’re writing suppositions, hypothesizing — And you’re basically, that’s when I realized you’re actually writing to yourself. It’s not to the teacher. We’re not - that’s where I think all the students locked up. We had brain freeze. We’re under - even after realizing, even after it clicked, I’m still writing to the teacher, and I should have been writing to myself.
In all honesty, three, six, nine months later, if I had to do the whole thing over again, the inquiry notebook would be a completely different animal.

His second most memorable moment was the day he read his response to HOWL aloud in class. He recounted his experience of peer response this way:

Then my teacher turns around and says, “Does anyone have any words to say to this poet?” And in a look that any lesser man would have claimed said, “I want to have your babies,” [fellow student] turns and looks at me with a flushed face and says, “Add me to your Facebook!” That made my whole year.

His emphasis on the “magic” of that moment continued as he reflected upon That Two O’clock Class:

I don’t know what stars were in alignment, and hopefully you’ve had a better class since then, but I don’t know what stars were in alignment, or what alchemy happened [in]That Two O’clock Class in your first semester of teaching. I don’t know what happened that we were so damn stellar, and we had the right people at the right place at the right time, and maybe that’s all it was. It was just the right people, and the ones who really didn’t want to learn kind of fell away - I don’t know.

I don’t dispute Mr. Tangle’s sense that there was something special about That Two O’clock class. What made that class special, however, wasn’t mystical or magical. It was the combination of several things at once: a holistic pedagogical practice that honored students as whole beings, rigorous curricula that reflected both instructor and institutional
commitments to students’ learning, and evidence of what is possible when one invites different ways of reading and writing that matter to students in their real, everyday lives. By framing it as a magical event, just as Salvatori argues about certain theories of reading, holistic practices that sponsor reflective and reflexive inquiry can remain a fluke, something that cannot be taught again, or taught by others. This I know to be untrue. I have had several courses develop in similar ways, with markedly similar outcomes, as That Two O’clock class did that spring semester. What Mr. Tangle constructed as magic, I construct as evidence proving holistic pedagogies that unite the body and mind, realms of emotion and reason, in turn bring an individual in closer contact with others, with community. Though he left That Two O’clock Class with sexist and hegemonic ideologies intact, this does not mean he was not still chewing on the ideas that countered his position, or that he was not on some route toward change. The timeline for social justice, I believe, is much longer than a semester. Some changes, if change is possible, may happen long after a course or interview experience.

As committed to his epistemic assumptions as Mr. Tangle was, he did indicate that the course itself had brought about changes in his everyday writing routine. Even as he dismissed the Inquiry Notebook’s value, there were practices he decided he valued - the nuggets he found. When I reminded him that teaching and learning is not limited to the classroom, or even the construct of a sixteen-week semester, that as a teacher I’m counting on long-distance thinking to continue long after a class ends, he indicated that happened to him:

Three, six, nine months after the fact, it [daily writing] started to have more prominence. Like, I said, “You know, it really helps if I write notes to myself.” And
you know, because I can’t keep anything in one flipping notebook, I have a stack of pages. Most of them get organized into their folders, but the really important ones get hung up on my bulletin board. So … it was there. It just … it was a seed that sprouted later. And it’s bearing fruit now.

Had I not enacted testimonial reading, I don’t know that I would have been able to see past his sexist comments, the threads of dismissal and demand, or the fact that he had not read the instructions for a project worth forty percent of his final grade. I doubt I would have seen the way his epistemic assumptions limited him far more than they limited me. He could not let go of the ways in which an insistence on magic and the mystical obscured the possibility that perhaps he was the surprising happening, a being writing and making meaning from both emotional and logical realms. When I told him that I have had other classes with similar outcomes as That Two O’clock Class, I was still hoping, even in that interview moment, to put a crack in the epistemic wall that seemed to me more fortress than anything else, he replied:

The nugget of wisdom I took away from that class is kind of - it wasn’t any one thing. It was a complete package. Because that poem [his HOWL response] was inspired. It just popped in my head, and I just started writing. Honestly, other than j-inking a couple of verses around, it spilled onto the paper by itself. I had something possess me, and write it for me. Yeah. I kept all the essays, all the ugly babies I wrote for that class. I kept all the stuff that I peer-reviewed for the rest of the group I was in. I kept all of it. What I came away with from that class was
kind of a complete package, and apparently writing to myself happens a lot more often now.

Seeds and nuggets – always something outside of him. Reflecting on his work and the interview, I am left with a bittersweet sense of dissatisfaction. On the one hand, I am pleased to know that he is writing more, keeping notes, and sharing the concept of journaling with his daughter. On the other, all there is to do when all is said and done, is trust that whatever long-distance thinking there is left to do will indeed be done; that somehow and at some time, his sense of the magical and mystical will bring him to another understanding about his own potential as a maker of meaning, as a full body working wholly, without a rift between reason and emotion he enacted by dismissing the Inquiry Notebook as (another) feminized construct of diary. I would have preferred to see his work grow beyond his epistemic assumptions, beyond his sense of reading and writing. Sometimes, with holistic pedagogy and its commitments, one does not always get what one prefers. Furthering my disappointment, is knowing that his spring semester that year was his last as a college student. For many reasons, including financial aid difficulties, Mr. Tangle did not return to campus the following fall. I can only hope, these many years after meeting him, that he has collected the seeds and nuggets needed for the long winters in a writer’s creative life. I can only hope that he finally set aside his epistemic assumptions long enough to finally see, through reflection and reflexive inquiry, that the magic he once thought was outside of himself as some external happening was always an illusion (as magic tends to be). I can only hope he came to see that what he valued most, he himself created.
CHAPTER THREE:
POWER STRUGGLES: IDENTITY, AUTONOMY, AND FAITH

Quiet Heathen-Pants entered That Two O’clock Class trying to balance various aspects of her identity. The identity she performed as a student, until she enrolled in ENGL 254 “Writing and Communities,” was one very much anchored to a sense of educational commerce. If she behaved in certain ways, mapped professors’ preferences, and then dutifully manufactured the preferred products, she would be rewarded with the currency she needed to access more opportunities, such as graduate school. She also was well aware that study demands changed course-to-course, instructor-to-instructor, and discipline-to-discipline. We began our interview with the formulation of her pseudonym, the name she wanted on record that best represented her as a person outside of the course, as well as represented who she became through working in her inquiry notebook. When she said her chosen name, her eyes twinkled and she grinned. Taken aback, I asked her the name’s significance. Her response was very powerful:

Well, “Quiet” is better than saying “Lost.” When I took the class I was still formulating what I was doing in college, and, like, I was still really in the closet about the fact that I was losing my faith at the time. And “Heathen-Pants” because I’ve now, well, I’ve come out of that. And I’ve become, “You know what? I’m a heathen now. I’ve fully lost my faith.” And I’m okay with that.
Quiet Heathen-Pants was well on her way in her mapping her identity as we began the term, but she was not prepared for the ways holistic pedagogy, a course, readings, and engagement with those readings, could confront and also comfort as she took on her very personal work behind the scenes of school. She did not expect the work to push her beyond her sense of meeting professorial expectations. Caught in the webbing of oppression, what Paulo Freire terms, “prescription,” (47) it was difficult for her to imagine there was something more meaningful than instructor expectations, the adoption of his or her guidelines, and the conforming role of the “good student.” Freedoms represented to students throughout the course as invitations for transformation, to shape one’s inquiry and responsive writing beyond a sense of “testing” and toward translation, the autonomous right to choose genres and topics for projects, and the emphasis on writing as engaged, responsible cognitive processes instead of mechanical production, unsettled students.

Heathen-Pants’ expressed “resistance” to the freedoms the course and the Inquiry Notebooks sponsored. My refusal to tell her precisely what to write, coupled with my repeated invitations to write as much about what one doesn’t know instead of packaging what Donna Qualley terms “ready-made conclusions” (23) as “discovery,” as well as the in-class dialectic modeling were particularly frustrating to Heathen-Pants. Like most of the self-described “A students” I’ve met while teaching, and like fellow “A students” in the class, Heathen-Pants wanted a decisive rubric for writing assignments. She said she wanted steps to follow. She said wanted class discussions to “stay on topic.” She said wanted writing assignments that didn’t ask too much of her as a thinker because the notion of asserting her own opinion as valid, as equal to that of those we were reading, was
heresy in her word-world of school. Though she had done creative nonfiction writing before in other classes, she indicated that doing those projects was always “a kind of surface story.” Contemplative Responses within the Inquiry Notebook represented, for her, a very different challenge:

It was definitely the first time that I really had to sit back and reflect on not only myself, but also on the things that we were reading, and how the things we were reading associated with my inner self.

Heathen-Pants, like the other students in this study, found it difficult to discard the images of oppression in order to picture freedom. As Freire notes, fear most often prevents reimagining, as students themselves are often resigned actors in the dominating school structure (47). This resignation inhibits the imagining of freedom within schools in general, and classes in particular. As Freire writes, the resignation reflects students’ sense that they are incapable of running the risks that the claiming of freedom requires because “Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift” (47). To replace domination and prescription with autonomy and responsibility, with a loyalty to one’s own inquiry process and discovery, is to quest for human completion (Freire 47).

For most of her college courses, and more than half the term in That Two O’clock Class, she had resigned herself to the commerce of school. She believed her responsibility was to provide the materials instructors demanded, as one would pay for an object for sale. Her grades reflected a form of market speculation:

I was a straight-A student. I knew how to get good grades. That’s how it was in high school, and that’s how it was my entire college career.
Until the problem-posing opportunities the course and the notebooks sponsored, Heathen-Pants could not imagine there was an alternative construction for education, an opportunity to claim autonomy and revise the socially constructed identity of student. Her epistemic assumptions were anchored to obedience and making what others wanted. She had the system of school, and her role in it, in “profitable” balance. As Heathen-Pants said:

I would study what I needed to study in order to do good on a test or, you know, I would go through and pick topics for research papers or essays I knew related to the class that the professor would like. I could write a well-constructed paper, so I didn’t care about anything I wrote. I didn’t care about anything but the most important thing of getting a decent grade, focusing on my GPA, and looking good on paper for graduate school. I was going through classes without really retaining anything because I didn’t care about the class itself - the subject matter. I just cared about getting a good grade.

Being a “good” student and getting a “good” grade required rather sophisticated rhetorical skill on her part. Heathen-Pants “read” her instructors, listening carefully in order to predict what might be on an exam, or what she should reflect in a writing assignment. She listened, rhetorically, for any marker in her instructors’ speech that placed a high value on content or concepts so that she could later prepare products that played to those preferences. Doing so gave her a favorable return - the “A” - with minimal investment:

I could play to what I thought my professor was going to ask about the reading, why that would be important, and then do the bare minimum necessary to get through and get the grade.
It would be easy to cling to the phrase, “the bare minimum necessary,” and lament the lack of intellectual engagement on her part, but to do so would only protect an oppressor’s position and power while affirming the prescriptive practices that come with both. Heathen-Pants’ descriptions of her work prior to That Two O’clock Class are emblematic of much larger issues surrounding student identity, education sites, and the normative practices within them. As Clifford Mayes and Ellen Williams contend, the psychodynamic dimension of holistic education is not a call to be “steeped in emotionalism.” Instead, it is a call to acknowledge that every education situation involves emotions, even strong ones. “The teacher who is unaware of or indifferent to this fact,” Mayes and Williams argue, “will often be an ineffective teacher because she is an insensitive one” (14). Thus, to consider and contemplate students’ psychodynamic responses to education situations, particularly the situations constructed by the instructor, is necessary work within holistic pedagogies.

Again, to be concerned with the psychodynamic aspects of the teaching and learning experience is not to claim a role of therapist or to assign the role of patient to the student. Instead, it means to be aware that there are unconscious and conscious emotions at play, and tending to that means one can tend to the cognitive and emotional growth learners and teachers do (15). Mayes and Williams argue that once teachers are aware of the psychodynamic, they can work to create learning environments in which students are emotionally nurtured as they take on difficult work instead of intimidated, suppressed, rendered anxious, and other generally negative feelings we experience in unsupportive and inappropriate environments (15). As Mayes and Williams write:
In this manner, the teacher, although not a therapist, has considerable power into a “therapeutic environment” in which students are emotionally enriched and therefore want to engage more deeply with the subject matter, or an “anti-therapeutic environment” in which students are emotionally ignored or perhaps even abused and therefore lose interest in an area of study that may have otherwise enlightened and empowered them (15).

Mayes and Williams also argue that much like the difference between the “official curriculum” teachers are told to teach, and the “operational curriculum” teachers actually teach in their classrooms, students experience the “subjective curriculum” - the different ways students experience instruction. As they note, “There are as many subjective curricula in the classroom as there are students” (16).

Perhaps the most valuable lens the psychodynamic dimension provides is one that allows an instructor to contemplate and consider that a student’s emotional and subconscious life will affect what, and to what degree, a student learns (25). As Mayes and Williams write:

In short, a student’s ideas about something may change quickly or slowly, partially or completely, depending on how heavily invested she is the idea(s) under analysis. And this is true of all of us — not just students in the classroom. We tend to learn life’s lessons slowly, kicking and screaming along the way; for, change is hard and is not simply a matter of mere cognition but also of one’s emotional, ethical, cultural, and spiritual commitments (26).
Within my own practice of holistic pedagogy, tending to the psychodynamic dimension of learning invites me to consider “resistance” in new, gentler ways beyond constructions of power and powerlessness. The overall goal of such tending is to help students find the courage to try new, difficult things. Without this courage, as Mayes and Williams argue, there is no creativity. “For creativity always entails intellectual and moral risk, emotional exposure, periods of doubt and drought, and frequent bouts of ambiguity. In short, it requires courage” (28). In order to help Heathen-Pants find the courage to claim her own creativity, to move beyond the predicting of instructor preferences and limiting her performance to those predictions, required talking through her emotional responses to the coursework, the Inquiry Notebook, and her sense of school during out conferences and office hour appointments. Listening to her testimonially, it seemed she was struggling with her identity roles, her potential, and issues that were far beyond the classroom even as they affected her work within it.

Identity and the Commerce of “Doing School”

In Writing and Sense of Self: Identity Negotiation in Writing Workshops (1991), Robert Brooke outlines a theory of identity negotiation anchored to two core assumptions: 1) Within every social context, one must select from a range of roles that suit that particular social context; and, 2) One’s identity structure is a composition of stances, processes of compliance and resistance, that demonstrate not just one’s unique identity, but also the ability to belong within a social context (17). As Brooke writes:
An individual’s psychic life can thus be thought of as endlessly concerned with social place and the negotiation of group affiliation, for from these patterns of affiliation and rejection arise the individual’s sense of self. Identity thus arises in negotiation and remains a structure in flux, changing as the contexts surrounding the individual (and the individual’s response to these contexts) change (14).

Heathen-Pants, her construction of identity, was based on her familiarity with the role of “A student” — a role that seemed to invite very little caring on her part about course content or learning outcomes. There were enough similarities, classroom to classroom, school to school, that her role had a routine, a personal rubric. Yet, as Thomas Newkirk writes, this role routine rests within a sense of competence in our interactions with other contexts. “It is a sense of effectiveness,” Newkirk writes, “the robust feeling that we possess a repertoire of performances so natural that they cease to seem like performances at all” (Performance 5). The challenge for students, in their behavior and writing, is to find the role that works often at the cost of reflection. As Newkirk argues, “The task for students, then, is not one of revelation but of construction. How to create a self that works, that will be taken seriously” (Performance 6).

Enriching the search for a role to perform, an identity performance suitable for a particular context, is what cognitive psychologist Michael D. Berzonsky calls “identity processing style” (14). Within his research, Berzonsky has identified three processing styles within the identity negotiation context. “Informational identity processing” is one dependent on seeking out, processing, and evaluating self-relevant information. Individuals with the informational style are able to reflect on experiences, even those that make them uncomfortable, and able to make identity adjustments. As Berzonsky writes, “They
are self-reflective, skeptical about self-views, open to new information, and willing to examine and revise aspects of their identity when faced with dissonant feedback” (14). By contrast, a “normative identity processing style” resist the openness and self-diagnostic associated with informational identity processing. Instead, a normative identity process person will conform to and internalize the expectations and values of others who are most significant to them, such as partners and referent groups such as family. “Their primary concern to protect and conserve their existing identity structure,” Berzonsky writes, they have a low tolerance for ambiguity and a high need to maintain structure” (Berzonsky citing Berzonsky and Soenens et. al. 14). Those working within a normative identity process, Berzonsky argues, are rigorously organized and change-resistant. In addition to informational and normative processing styles there is the “diffuse-avoidant identity processing” style, one that relies on chronic procrastination and defensive avoidance. According to Berzonsky, “diffuse-avoiders” are reluctant to engage with personal problems, or actively engage with identity conflicts. Often, when a delay protracts too long, these individuals tend to focus on situational demands and consequences. Meaning, any adjustments diffuse-avoiders make address the immediate context or issue, often through transient acts of compliance or behavior (14). “This identity style,” Berzonsky writes, “is associated with a fragmented, inconsistent, even empty, identity structure continually needing to be validated and replenished by approval, praise, and acceptance from others, pleasurable experiences, consumer goods, and the like” (Berzonsky citing Berzonsky and Ferrari 14).
That Heathen-Pants could read her instructors, predict the texts and assessments, and efficiently plan accordingly while maintaining the “A student” identity and impressive GPA, earned her a favorable standing within the economy of school. Her approach, however, was consistent with Berzonsky’s sense of the normative processing style, one that required tidy step-by-step instructions, clearly stated objectives, and nonexistent ambiguity. With her normative processing style, she earned her keep, so to speak, but at a cost of her autonomy, curiosity, and creativity. Heathen-Pants’ narrative illuminates Freire’s sense of resignation while at the same time shedding light on the problematic and defeating nature of extrinsic rewards. Compensation for work or the completion of tasks, whether money, status, prizes, or even grades, may influence behavior in the short term, but in the long-term such rewards decrease interest in the work itself (Deci 28). During our first conference of the spring term. Heathen-Pants and I discussed at length her frustrations, particularly her lack of motivation, while also discussing what she was enjoying about the course itself. She understood that the course and my approach were different and exciting, but she also openly expressed how much she resented the challenge to her system of doing school. She was struggling to identify a motivation for the work of learning beyond the extrinsic reward of “good grades.” As Heathen-Pants said:

I think at the time my limitations were that [the notebook] was a new way of doing academic work for me, so I definitely had some serious pushback against it. And it wasn’t simply, like, I wasn’t interested in doing more of it. I still was having the issue of how to do what I thought the professor wanted me to do. That’s something that held me back until last spring [a year after our course], when I finally realized it’s okay for me to do something that I’m enjoying.
Motivation: Moving from Extrinsic to Intrinsic Motivators

In human motivation studies conducted by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, trends emerged that allowed both men to construct what they termed, “Self-Determination Theory” (SDT). As Deci notes, all the work he did with Ryan indicated that “… self-motivation rather than external motivation, is at the heart of creativity, responsibility, healthy behavior, and lasting change” (emphasis original, 9). In education settings, Deci noted that extrinsic rewards, particularly grades, were experienced by study participants as extrinsic controls - a means by which educators and education systems leverage students to display preferred behaviors (47). Grades, a primary extrinsic reward, are considered to be incentives, but this outlook assumes that the grades themselves motivate learning (47). According to Deci, this belief is anchored to a set of misguided questions those in power ask while trying to elicit certain valued behaviors in others. There’s a certain “behaviorist dogma” at work when questions such as, “How do I motivate people to learn? to work? to do their chores? or to take their medication?” To Deci, these are not the right questions. “They are wrong,” Deci writes, “because they imply that motivation is something that gets done to people rather than something that people do” (20-1). When considering autonomy and liberation as an education quest, then, structures of motivation must be questioned, if not restructured, too.

From the onset of Deci and Ryan’s work, a central theme emerged that would prove to be foundational to Self-Determination Theory and motivation itself. “It was clear,” Deci writes, “from the earlier studies that people frequently interpret rewards as
controls, as means of pressuring them to behave in particular ways” (36). Though rewards as controls, even coercion, may increase the likelihood of preferred behaviors, they will only do so as long as the rewards continue (Deci18). Paradoxically, the reward for compliance undermines authentic engagement and interest. When Deci’s study participants were compensated with money for solving puzzles they had previously solved for fun, the participants lost interest. They continued to solve the puzzles, but they did so in what Deci terms a “strained and instrumental” way. They were “in it for the money,” but not engaged intellectually in the puzzling itself. Deci terms this state of being as “alienation,” when people give up their authenticity and simply do what they believe they must do (28-9). As Deci writes:

One take on the meaning of alienation is that it begins as people lose touch with their intrinsic motivation, with the vitality and excitement that all children possess, with the doing of an activity for its own sake, with the sense of being that Robert Henri called a more than ordinary moment of existence (29).

When Heathen-Pants described playing to what she thought her professors wanted and doing the bare minimum necessary to get paid with the grade, the A, she is describing the very condition of alienation that Deci describes. She is also demonstrating, if not embodying, Freire’s notion of resignation - when one is inhibited from claiming liberation due to the fears of being incapable, of being unable to run the risks such claiming would require (47). Resignation, as Freire describes it, is not always an overt degradation of one’s humanity. The insidious nature of resignation as a response to oppression is that it can often offer pseudo-rewards, such as school community membership as a member of the
higher echelon of grade-seekers, those with higher GPAs and class standings. Without what Deci terms “autonomy support,” when one takes another’s perspective and works from there, offers encouragement not pressure, the resigned remain oppressed, disinterested but compliant students. They may do work and get a good grade, but they, according to motivation research, will not have deeply engaged with ideas or projects that interest them as autonomous “beings for themselves.” Instead, they will remain inside the structures that support their dehumanization, the structures that make them “beings for others” (Freire 74).

This lack of autonomy and intrinsic motivation does affect learning in negative ways. Deci and another researcher, Carl Benware, conducted a study of college students. Two groups of students were given materials on neurobiology and three hours to study. One group was told they would be tested and graded, while the other group was told they would be putting the material to use by teaching it to others. As Deci and Benware predicted, the students to be tested were found to be less intrinsically motivated than those who were told they would later share what they learned (Deci 47). Deci and Benware also wanted to evaluate what learning had taken place by both groups, so they tested all of the study participants. They found that the group learning free from testing “… displayed considerably greater conceptual understanding of the material than did the students who learned in order to be tested” (Deci 47). Mark Lepper, with his colleagues at Stanford University, explored the negative consequences of extrinsic motivations. They found that “deadlines, imposed goals, surveillance, and evaluations were all found to undermine intrinsic motivation” (Deci citing Lepper, 31). In Lepper’s study of children in a Head Start
program, he found that children who were told in advance that they would receive a certificate of reward for drawing with markers were less interested in creative coloring than they were prior to the incentive (Kohn 70-1). As Alfie Kohn notes, Deci’s and Lepper’s studies have one thing in common. “Despite the differences in design, the two experiments converged on a single conclusion: *extrinsic rewards reduce intrinsic motivation*” (emphasis original, 71).

My understanding of the negative effects of extrinsic rewards is why Inquiry Notebooks are not graded in a traditional sense, but evaluated and discussed with students as artifacts from their cognitive and creative processes. As Deci notes, sometimes “autonomy support” does require an establishment of guidelines, as the assignment did. However, the purpose of instructor engagement with the student-centered texts was to provide autonomy support that proactively sponsored self-initiation, experimentation, and responsibility (Deci 42) to one’s own questions and explorations. When reading contemplative responses as an instructor, for example, I am not reading to see if the student read the assigned material - a common practice associated with weekly summary assignments. Instead, I read to observe the ways students applied key concepts within the readings to their thinking as evident in their accounts of their lived lives and understanding of their world(s). When evaluating Inquiry Notebooks, I am reading testimonially and slowly to see what inquiries the assigned texts sponsored, how students seem to be processing and performing identity in the texts they create, where the students took the ideas, and how they wrestled with them. I always tell my students that I don’t need them to summarize the texts - I know what the authors wrote already. I’m far more interested in how students
engage with other authors as co-conspirators in the art of making meaning. I read students’ texts with the same respect and regard I extend to the authors of the assigned published texts. When I respond to students’ contemplative responses within the notebooks, I do so as a fellow colleague interested in their ideas. In the majority of cases, students are not prepared for this level of collegial engagement and collaborative spirit. Thus, early entries in notebooks tend to be a mixture of summary writing they’ve done in other courses, for other instructors, and they most often do not draw ideas into the everyday lives, into their everyday experiences. Their personal responses to big and small ideas remain hidden until, through conversation and feedback, they understand that the only thing that truly mattered were their personal and intellectual responses, in life and in school. Personal response and engagement is the birthplace of liberation, autonomy, and holistic teaching and learning.

**Living Between Lines: The Power Struggles for Autonomy**

In assessing Heathen-Pants’ inquiry notebook and contemplative responses at the end of our first four weeks of the term, I noticed two striking features of her work. Quiet Heathen-Pant’s double-entry reading notes were full of lively moments of “speaking back” to Gee and Freire, but her contemplative responses were typical five-paragraph essays that lacked the vigor and robust engagement of the notes leading up to them. According to Robert Nash, personal narratives take many forms (29), and it seemed that in Quiet Heathen Pants’ notes, a personal narrative was emerging. It was work that mattered to her. By contrast, her contemplative response essays were flat performances of “good
writing,” the sort of work that would score well on a state writing assessment while giving no hint as to what was happening for the writer at the scene of writing, the construction Linda Brodkey terms writing “from the garret” (59). Heathen-Pants read within a community and responded vigorously in her notes, but she wrote in isolation. As Brodkey notes, this solitary scene of writing is a falsehood, a myth. Yet “in its extreme versions, writers are sentenced to solitary confinement, imprisoned by language and condemned to write without understanding either why they do so or for whom” (61). When I discussed this phenomenon with Heathen-Pants during our first conference of the semester, she told me that she didn’t know what to write or why to write it without a rubric or sample. So I asked, “What did you want to write about?”

“I really didn’t know,” she said.

When I gently pressed by asking questions about her emotive responses in her reading notes, she did admit to being pissed off by Freire and Gee. They left her agitated and uncertain. “You could have written about that,” I said, “and that would have been far more authentic than this summary stuff you’ve got here.”

To Heathen-Pants, writing from an emotional, personal position about ideas was not “academic” practice. It seemed to me, too, that her normative identity processing style made confronting or disagreeing with a text or idea a risky move. Though the social context of the holistic pedagogy classroom invites and honors an emotional response to reason as academic practice, its lack of dominance in educational contexts left Heathen-Pants unable to determine an identity role to perform as efficiently as those she had relied on before. Compounding her difficulty was the ambiguity and process-centered approach to inquiry and contemplative response. The personal location of contemplative response
writing, one that asks students to account for both emotion and reason in response to ideas, while looking to see how those ideas appear (or do not appear) in their everyday lives, did not allow her to anchor herself to performances that had been profitable before. This produced an opportunity for “suffering well,” though at the beginning of the term, the possibilities within this suffering seemed illusive and frustrating. Heathen-Pants’ sense that a personal location was not academic practice echoes the critique Barbara Kamler makes about the way personal writing is treated in school as a place of confession (1). By design, contemplative responses are assignments that invite students to relocate the personal as a space from which to begin inquiry, as a location that helps to put subjectivity into a perspective shaped by academic scholarship in order to make the world anew, and to reconsider one’s place in it. The assignment invites students to experience Kamler’s shift from “voice” to “narrative,” so that students can pay closer attention to textuality and representation, while also experiencing writing as a conceptualized “… space for transforming both the text and the writer’s subjectivity” (Kamler 34).

Heathen-Pants was resistant to the assignment itself because she was well-versed in prescriptive practices that used extrinsic motivation to control her responses - her writing and class discussion contributions. Her years of being a student taught her what Kamler claims, that “It has become common in school contexts to think of certain kinds of writing as personal and others as impersonal or factual” (83). As Kamler notes, this division valorizes the impersonal or factual as somehow more “… objective, significant, prestigious and to ascribe to them the authority to empower those who master them” (Kamler citing Martin, 84). Heathen-Pants had experienced this assigned hierarchy to
writing, one that privileged the “impersonal or factual” efforts over those which were embodied, or drawn from experience. It would take a lot of conversation and encouragement to help Heathen-Pants relocate the personal as a position of cognitive strength and possibility. As Kamler writes, “All writing is personal to the extent that it involves writers with gendered, classed, racialised, sexed histories negotiating and engaging with sets of equally gendered, classed racialised, sexed discourses and genre conventions” (83). Helping Heathen-Pants to draw from this sense of personal location, to utilize the fullness of her human experience as a resource for intellectual work, would comprise the rest of our work together during the semester.

We met several times in conferences during the semester, working through her notebook and projects, while also negotiating (and renegotiating) what it might mean to be autonomous. As I listened to her, I came to understand that there was so much more going on than modernist constructions of writing in isolation, and the disembodied notion of academic writing. The more she spoke, the more I understood that her resignation, her acceptance of her assigned role in school to anticipate professorial prescriptions and produce products that could earn her evaluated currency – the grade – was somehow contributing to her devaluing of her writing. Her own curiosity, creativity, and humanity was not considered, even by herself, as she produced her work. So in our conference, she admitted to feeling a sense of incredulousness that bordered on panic whenever I spoke of her autonomous right to question, pursue those questions, and tend to her own intellectual development. Her uncertainties grew, she said, whenever I spoke of making writing personally meaningful and that in itself would satisfy whatever course requirements I may have as an instructor. As Robert Brooke notes, “Writing becomes meaningful for individuals
when it supports their attempts to be certain kinds of people in their world - to be reflective adults, perhaps, or persuasive contributors to debates that concern them, or successful professionals” (10). Yet for Heathen-Pants, the pursuit of a meaningful writing experience would require her to claim a Freirean sense of liberation, and draw from an informational identity processing practice she had not yet committed to trying. She was uncertain she had what it would take to do so, mostly because it would take time and effort on my part to become one of those significant figures in her life that would model the evaluation of self-relevant information and its role in becoming self-reflective. This working toward trust and significance is one way a holistic pedagogy perspective supports students as they work through, modify, perhaps even change, their processing styles as part of a larger move toward cognitive and psychological maturation.

Despite her verbal misgivings, her notebook told another story. This in itself gave us much to discuss. Our course readings on literacy, particularly James Paul Gee’s work surrounding “primary Discourses” explaining the ways we are socialized to see and read the world in certain ways that are molded and crafted by our family’s sense of the world and values (527), provoked Heathen-Pants thorough, and sometimes snarky responses. Gee’s assertion that “We acquire this primary Discourse, not by overt instruction, but by being a member of a primary socializing group (family, clan, peer group)” (527) prompted her to respond with questions surrounding the quality and sincerity of the family. She understood that a Discourse was an “identity kit,” one with “…appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize” (Gee 526). In fact, she resented this, according to her notations, but did not clarify. Personal writing within inquiry notebooks tends to be coded in
a personal language, with the writer having full knowledge of all that is on the cognitive table. To explain, to even clarify beyond her own understanding as the creator of the text, would be to write for the instructor (something discouraged in my assignment overview). In the double-entry reading notes section of her notebook, her sense of identity and integrity as a reader was easier for her to claim than that of Contemplative Response writer.

In our interview, Heathen-Pants indicated that this struggle was not imagined on my part, nor projected. She explained that the Inquiry Notebook had helped her to rethink academic work:

Especially when it comes to my English classes, [the notebook] helped me to come to a point where I was okay with experimenting with my writing. It helped me to get over saying, “Okay, this is what I know academic writing is supposed to look like. It needs to have this, that, and the other, and this kind of language, and it has to be written this way.”

When we read Paulo Friere’s second chapter from Pedagogy of the Oppressed (2000) Heathen-Pants was again provoked to great engagement. With her broad pen strokes, doodles, quick-witted responses, and prolific immediate responses on the right margins, she was doing meaningful writing, thinking through her own identity in response to the reading. According to her notations, she found Freire arrogant. She did not care for his assessment that students were treated like containers, and the more they permitted themselves to be filled by narrating teachers, the better students they were (Freire 72). The entire “banking model” that Freire discusses at length in the chapter was rather unsettling to Heathen-Pants, and she often resisted the potential consequences or implications of his
ideas in her notes, as well as in our class discussions. This response, however animated and powerful, is not uncommon. In fact, in my work with students Freire’s critique of the banking model tends to upset those students who consider themselves “good students.” This is precisely why I bring his work to the class conversation table to be considered and discussed. In my years of using Freire’s chapter as a discussion starter, I have learned that the upset and resistance students express to his ideas falls into the category of psychological displacement, in Freudian terms, when new ideas or experiences create anxiety even threaten one’s sense of the known world. In this sense, an idea can be experienced as an aggressive undermining of what the reader understands about her world. Reading Freire created lines of inquiry that, however liberating in concept, felt quite threatening to Heathen-Pants’ sense of student identity. Derrida never claims that “fruitful rupture” of language is pleasant, and Freire himself describes liberation as a painful childbirth (49). As Heathen-Pants labored to make sense of the readings, my job fell somewhere between a version of the Aristotelian “midwife of ideas” and the modeling of pain management. Grief and pain are normal, respectable, and human responses to learning as one comes undone a bit in order to reconfigure understanding. Heathen-Pants may not have enjoyed the process, but she expressed later in our interview that the experience was fundamental to her shift in perspective and personal power.

Many of her negotiations with discomfort took the form of cartoons and doodles. A regular visual feature in her work were themes of religion, most notably, cartooned stick figures depicting alternative stories for the Old Testament. Two were particularly striking: King David and an effigy of the Tribe of Benjamin postured like characters Ennis Del Mar and Jack Twist from Brokeback Mountain (2005) with the caption, “I just
can’t quit you.” In another drawing, one that she shared with me during our interview, King Saul stands with the Witch of Endor as she conjures the Prophet Samuel. The drawings were done in bold, felt-tip black ink.

Fig. 3.1 “A Heathen-Pants Original”
Though I did not comment on the themes in her notebook during the semester (to do so would violate her right to process ideas in her own way, on her own terms), or during our interview, I did note how heavy the ink strokes were and wondered their significance. During our final interview, Heathen-Pants explained that the drawings themselves were inspired by work in her religious studies course, and represented her overall sentiments as one experiencing existential crisis in light of religious doctrine and family tradition. By depicting figures from her family’s sense of a sacred text in cartoonish and somewhat confronting ways, Heathen-Pants was able to make light of a very heavy burden. Drawing helped her to make sense of what was, at that time, a soup of confusion and frustration. If the Prophet Saul was conjured by the Witch of Endor, a witch referred to as a “medium” in the sanitized version of the Bible her father required the family to use, she experienced a hypocrisy that was at the center of her primary Discourse and the “identity kit” her primary socialization experiences shaped. The more we worked with texts that explored autonomy as a birthright and language as a social construction with identity implications, the more difficult it was for Heathen-Pants to believe her place, as one losing faith, was in the closet.

**A Revelation**

In our interview, Quiet Heathen-Pants explained the real source of her resistance to both the ideas from Gee and Freire by outlining her struggle with her faith, as well as her struggle to address what her “A student” identity might be costing her in terms of real learning. Freire’s critique of the “banking model” of education, the notion that students
are mere containers or accounts ready for deposits (72), was also a critique of Quiet Heathen-Pants’ profiting from that system. She understood that she had been “good” at receiving deposits, memorizing, and then reflecting back to her instructors’ particular transactions. As we explored the implications of Freire’s critique, she felt implicated. The exploration of alternatives, however motivated by social justice commitments, was an intimidating and displacing exploration of an alternative student identity. Freire’s claim, “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other (72)” was deeply intriguing to her and the rest of the students in That Two O’clock Class. Yet that intrigue also brought considerable unease, challenge, and an existential crisis of personal meaning as they began to find the words that could name their sense of alienation and resignation, their own roles in it, and the risks they would have to take in order to claim liberation and autonomy.

After naming herself first “Quiet,” it’s her last name, “Heathen Pants,” that fully articulated the very personal and deeply important struggle our course readings and inquiry notebook work brought to bear on her overall sense of Self. To Quiet, her last name “… comes from the people [she’s] decided to associate [herself] with now.” The significance of “Heathen-Pants” was an actual renaming moment, one that took a term her family and former church family had cast upon her in judgment and turned it into something else, something she could claim and own. Her father had called her an apostate, and as one who had “turned her back” upon the faith, as well as the primary Discourse values of her childhood, she was to be punished. Her father, a pastor of a small church, forbid her
to attend church with her family. She was also prohibited from living in on-campus housing due to her lack of “sound judgment.” If Quiet Heathen-Pants wanted continued parental financial support while in college, she had to abide by the family’s house rules. This often meant keeping her opinions to herself, maintaining a rhetorical silence in order to maintain a tentative peace. Her older brother followed their father’s lead and also cast the “apostate” judgment upon her. This particular naming was something I, lacking the religious literacy of her family’s faith, didn’t fully understand. So she explained:

An apostate is this super-bad [name] that Christians call you, and family numbers will call you. So, heathen, it's kind of like uh, I’m owning the fact that I used to be something, but it’s less hurtful than “apostate.” I’m just “Heathen-Pants.”

Quiet Heathen-Pants had worked very hard to be a successful “A student” in a banking system in order to assuage the pain of the assigned identity of “apostate,” the most painful personal challenge in her life at the time she entered the course. As she had indicated in our interview, she was very much “in the closet” (her words) as one who was losing her faith within a family born from, framed by, and reinforced through a sense of Church and Christian. In her personal home life, she was experiencing ostracism. As Brock Bastian and Nick Haslam note, belonging is a central feature of our experience of being human. To be denied that, to be ostracized, is to be denied a central “…sense of ourselves as members of an interconnected community” (107). The consequences of this exiled existence are profound, and seemingly terminal. “Just as many early civilizations equated exile with death,” Bastian and Haslam write, “ostracism may be experienced as exclusion from our humanity, a primal disconnect with the human group” (107). Her uniqueness as
an individual, as one with human attributes that separated her from mere animals, her very nature, was subsumed by the projected and accusatory “apostate” label. Within her family, her denial of faith was framed as justification for disciplinary measures at home such as the limitation of funds for schooling, the insistence that she live at home instead of within the “debauchery” of student housing or within a home with roommates, and the weekly experience of being denied the ability to attend church with her family.

Familial ostracism, however painful and bewildering, was echoed in education environments that reduced her to a container, a receptacle. As Freire notes, however, the ostracized and the oppressed are not actually outside society or the structures that limit them (72). Encountering alienation and resignation in school, and encountering ostracism at home, Heathen-Pants chose her battles carefully. During our first one-to-one conference in the fall of 2011, a required meeting for all of my students, Heathen-Pants expressed considerable frustration with my methods. She indicated that she could not read me, could not hear what I valued, and thus did not know what to write, or even what to think about. The reading notes requirement vexed her, but at least had some “rules” to which she could anchor herself, but the weekly “contemplative response” writing was causing her a great deal of frustration and anxiety because her skills of response to prescriptive expectations from instructors proved useless to her. Of course, that’s not how she said it. Instead she flatly stated, “The contemplative responses suck.”

Inquiry and Reading: Making Time, Making Meaning

One of the many things I love about Quiet Heathen-Pants is her generosity. Despite the difficulties inquiry and personal reflection in light of academic opportunity presented; despite the incredible struggle toward autonomy and liberation, Heathen-Pants
was incredibly good-natured, quick-witted, and kind to herself and to others, including myself. She was earnest in her struggle. She recognized the tensions between the possibilities of inquiry and the intellectual opportunity they presented, and the consequences of those possibilities. She fully occupied her displacement, the space between what is known and what is about to be known, what is real and about to be realized, and the transformative nature of her experiences as a thinker and writer. She was rightfully resistant to the changes autonomy and liberation would bring her way, and for deeply personal reasons. The extrinsic rewards, however oppressive by structure and intent in Freirean terms, were also a form of insulation that kept other struggles with autonomy and independence manageable.

It seemed reasonable to me that she would use one form of oppression, the system of schooling that presented the least painful of her experiences, to in some way seek to relieve the more painful and oppressive ostracism at home. Being inside two systems of oppression, the family and the school, did not sponsor or affirm her need to be a being of herself, but one did provide an opportunity for her to push back against the other. By being an “A student” at school, she could push against the identity of the “bad girl” apostate. Yet Freire’s claim that the solution to dehumanizing “banking system” rested in problem-posing inquiry practices, acts that are humanist and liberating in order to assist those subjected to domination as they fight for emancipation (Freire 86) was not the affirming move toward liberation I had hoped it would be for her. The move toward intellectual independence, for a closeted atheist experiencing ostracism within her primary Discourse community, the very place that molded her into the being she became, the prospect of autonomy and Self-authorship within a school environment that had helped her
to barricade herself from the painful effects of that ostracism, was implausible. Foreign. To take on her role in her own liberation, was to step away from a very complicated and important psychological infrastructure that had helped her to navigate the complexities of her existence. Liberation, thus, represented a considerable risk to realities Heathen-Pants wrestled with every day.

Reaching toward liberation, too, required Heathen-Pants to reconsider reading, its role and possibilities, within our course and her academic life. As a self-described avid reader outside of school, she found solace in books outside the classroom. Her regard for authors and published work, in some ways, explained a very interesting tension within her Inquiry Notebook. Within her reading notes modeled after Ann Berthoff’s “double entry” notebook method (45), Heathen-Pants engaged fully and articulately in the works assigned. She asked questions, noted her thoughts, jotted down immediate responses. On one side, she collected direct quotations and summaries of assigned texts. On the other, immediately beside such textual artifacts, Heathen-Pants collected thoughts, revisions, criticisms, connections, and disconnections, questions, and lines of inquiry about herself and the versions of reality the excerpts sponsored in her own thinking. As Berthoff writes, such notebook method puts “facing pages in dialogue with one another” (45) in creative and critical ways that help students to fruitfully audit their own makings of meaning (44). This mapping of dialogic responses transcends customary expectations students have for reading an assigned text, specifically the acts of “getting the main idea” and “author’s meaning” so commonly the focus in test-driven education culture, and invites them to use others’ writing as a catalyst for their own thinking and knowledge-building. As Berthoff notes, reading critically for meaning is not like going on an egg
hunt because meanings are not objects to be found (42). Instead, as Berthoff writes, “Meanings are relationships: they are unstable, shifting, dynamic; they do not stay still nor can we prove the authenticity or validity of one or another meaning that we find” (42). Taking the time to make these relationships visible, tracking them, circling back, perhaps even rupturing previously made meanings, is the primary focus of the critical notes section of the inquiry notebook. Questioning our answers and our questions, too, is an essential part of critical engagement. The inquiry notebook provides room - the writing room - for inquiry that makes the *process* of coming to know far more important as a class and intellectual activity, than proving to anyone (including the teacher) what is known.

Not that this comes easy. For most of my students, the very notion of critical engagement with a text is a challenge that complicates, if not completely undermines, well-versed and hard-won reading practices gained prior to entering the course. The majority of my students know that to “read for the main idea” is to read quickly, to skim for the gist, the superficial assigned meanings that require little in the way of critical thought. To read this way is to read for the eggs in the hunt, for the easy prizes, for the things that “stand out” as potential test or “class discussion” answers. To read this way, too, is to emphasize the extrinsic motivators for reading, such as an assigned sense of “what the teacher wants,” “what’s needed for the grade,” and the standard-issue reading comprehension questions students can predict with regular, depressing, regularity. Reading is often experienced by students as a task to be done for another’s extrinsic reasons or the extrinsic rewards of meeting another’s expectations, instead of an intrinsically valuable process of discovery and contemplation - the flint strike of curiosity by which one can build
an eternal flame of self-driven inquiry in pursuit of meaning. The difficulty my students face first is not a matter of reading comprehension, but of agency and purpose that is free of the clock - the internal stopwatch of efficiency so culturally engrained as a value, it seems to be a natural part of the education process instead of what it truly is: An arbitrary construction closely tied to standardized testing and instruction. The construction itself leaves a residue, a “hidden curricula” that is very difficult to dismantle:

The child on the stopwatch,” Newkirk writes, “must surely learn that schools reward speed (though we might call it “fluency”), that it is the primary virtue, the basic quality of a good reader, a good student. That it’s a race. This value system will be reinforced again and again as students take tests - invariably timed - throughout their school careers (Newkirk 17).

The “child on the stopwatch” Newkirk describes, by the time she or he arrives at college, is so committed to the mechanisms of standardized assessment, the organic disorganization of meaning-making seems absurd to them, as if it were a deviation or inefficient practice. Saturated with the ideology of the “cult of efficiency” (Newkirk citing Callahan 17), students often resist critical reading and the double-entry notebook method because of the time real engagement requires. That is not to say students are lazy or unprepared for the rigors of college work. Students such as Heathen-Pants, “straight-A” students who have elaborate and efficient systems of their own constructed to make extrinsic school demands manageable with a “pay-off,” are often most resistant to the slow reading required as a practice for engagement. Newkirk’s work with his own first-year students and their reading habits helps to illuminate students struggles with reading, but his declarative
of a hidden truth is the most interesting to me: “The dirty secret about high school reading, particularly book reading, is how much of it is faked – listen to class discussion, SparkNotes, Internet summaries, and you can not only get by but often do well” (35).

For Heathen-Pants, the double-entry notes requirement was a confrontation of her high school literacy skills that were foundational to her efficient system of “doing school” in college:

It [notebook] forced me to stay on top of the readings, to actually read instead of skim, which is something I struggled with as a student before.

In the “cult of efficiency” (Newkirk citing Callahan 17) such moves that truncate inquiry and engagement to satisfy the basic requirements are not mere proof that anti-intellectual practices and cultural attitudes have undermined the importance of academic work and honesty, but evidence that the “hidden curricula” of testing has been well-learned. If the primary goal of reading is an extrinsic one, a goal not of shared interest but of external demands; if the outcomes for reading assigned texts routinely fall within extrinsic categories such as summary, “discussion,” and reading comprehension quizzes; and if dominant discourses surrounding education emphasize efficiency over complexity as Gallagher notes the “accountability agenda” among education and politician leaders often does (23); then shortcuts make a certain, if not perverse sense. At least through taking shortcuts, one can express and embody a form of autonomous response to education practices that do not support or affirm intrinsic motivations for intellectual work, inquiry, and the making of meaning. As a student myself I took shortcuts in reading - reading to skim for gems in courses that graded me on five bubble-sheet exams over the semester. I turned to online
summaries to anchor my reading so I’d have the “main points” memorized for exams, some of which were written essay-answers in “blue books” passed among large lecture hall classes. If all a course demanded was memorization, that’s all I gave to it — efficiently, with obedient resignation, because the “pay-off” for me was the excellent grade that contributed to an excellent GPA, and the ability to apply for graduate school. Having come to college later in life as a nontraditional student, the struggle for both autonomy and purposes for reading was fresh when I began my work with the students from That Two O’Clock Class. The sense of alienation clock consciousness wrings from students (Newkirk 26) was also my concern as their teacher.

Because, as Berthoff argues, meanings are dynamic relationships, unstable, ever-shifting, and contingent upon the way one thinks of language (Berthoff 42), they take a lot of time to puzzle. Part of my work with Heathen-Pants and the others in the class centered on the notion of time - how we spend it, to what end, and for whom. With the dominant model of efficiency and its mechanism, the clock, deeply embedded in the construction of schooling, modeling a thoughtful disregard for time as a controlling factor or influence became a pedagogical imperative. Inquiry notebooks themselves, because they required time and thought, were given more grade-affecting value than formal projects: 40 percent of the final course grade. In a process-centered course, honoring the process of writing and inquiry became more important than the production of polished prose even as student inquiries, research, and contemplations ultimately enriched and shaped those formal projects. Much like the double-entry method, the inquiry notebook itself put projects in dialogue with the processes of making meaning. The meanings made, in turn, shaped formal projects, revisions, and class conversations. By design, the Inquiry Notebooks are
a collection space for personal writing - the personal responses to texts, conversations, and puzzling that so often go untapped when a course’s emphasis is on formal projects and the common draft, revise, draft again model with which so many instructors (and their students) are familiar. As Berthoff notes, the shift from personal to expository writing is a difficult one for instructors to make, because “…we do not always define what they have in common” (Berthoff 46). Defining the commonalities, the shared meanings influencing both inquiry and projects becomes the inquiry notebook’s primary role.

By design, the notebooks take time. In terms of the technocratic fantasy Neil Postman outlines and critiques, one that assures technology itself can conquer the adversary of time (45), the Inquiry Notebook is almost a luddite construction, reliant on the prosaic pen, page, and the body creating the text. They demand the sort of slow reading Newkirk promotes, reading with a sense of performance that attends to the dramatic, acoustic, and emotional qualities of language; reading to memorize at least one small part by heart; “centering” on a significant (to the reader) excerpt, “problem finding” to note confusion or inconsistencies in the text; “reading like a writer” to pay close attention to the author’s choices while considering alternatives; and, elaborating - expanding the text with a plethora of possibilities that begin with “What if?” and “What about?” (42-3). Tending to testimonial reading, working past passive empathy in order to identify systemic structures that contribute to others’ suffering, particularly structures of benefit to students, also takes considerable time. In other words, the notebooks require personal and critical engagement through reading and writing. They are not tests. They are collection sites, receptacles, personal spaces of both meditation and reflection that sponsor critical engagement and awareness. They make room for a range of student responses, not just those that
the students try to predict the instructor will want, and those responses are often personally significant to the student. For Heathen-Pants, this radical interruption of her efficient, systemic approach to school was also a confrontation of her definition of “academic writing” and “academic work.” As a veteran child of the stopwatch, she was accustomed to the efficient yet impersonal structure of expected response. For her, the notion that a personal response was a valid beginning for inquiry and intellectual pursuits was nearly heresy. When she said that the contemplative responses sucked, she was also saying that the role of such writing played after reading was far more difficult than the typical summary assignment. Though her notes were rich, complex, and indicated there was an incredible amount of meaningful reflection at work as she made meanings through language, her contemplative responses remained flat, five-paragraph essays with all the muted bells and whistles of “good academic prose.” The liveliness of her engagement in the notes did not appear in her essay responses, nor did her lines of inquiry.

As her instructor, I interpreted this tension between her notes and her contemplative responses as two distinctly different struggles: 1) A struggle to move from the extrinsic practices of reading, and toward the intrinsic rewards and complexities of reading and writing in order to make meaning instead of finding it; and 2) A struggle to undo the knot of reading and writing, what Deborah Brandt terms the “sacred and the profane” (146). For Heathen-Pants assigned readings held more power and legitimacy than anything she could write, devise, or construct on her own. The double-entry notes requirement, too, came with more specific and manageable (to her) tasks that played to her strengths as a reader. Growing up in a fundamentalist Christian household, reading was considered a crucial part of one’s faithful life. Her parents sponsored a two-fold ideology for reading,
One read to be closer to God, and reading itself was valuable enough to do at home in one’s spare time. In Brandt’s overview of the division between reading and writing in public education, she traces Sunday school curricula’s historical influence over reading and writing in England and in France. By the 1830s, Brandt notes citing Thomas Laquer’s study, there was considerable tensions between reading and writing that reflected tensions in the broader cultures. “Unlike reading, with its direct and traditional connection to piety and Bible study,” Brandt writes, “writing was considered too secular, worldly, and vocational and too strongly associated with upward mobility (a process the conservative church leaders wanted no part in encouraging)” (146). Drawing from Furet and Ozouf’s study of mass literacy education in France (1982), Brandt notes that public French education sponsored by parishes was first anchored to reading alone because writing belonged to the civil domain (147). Even twentieth century American instruction included the historical, European divide between reading and writing largely due to issues of assessment, budgetary and public concern (Brandt citing Monaghan and Saul 147). According to Brandt, Monaghan and Saul’s assertion that “Reading … fits more easily than writing with traditional roles of student and teacher, one as receptor of knowledge and the other as conduit” (Brandt 146) posits an interesting challenge to today’s emphasis on “new” literacy or “higher literacy” (148).

This certainly seemed true for Heathen-Pants. Brandt’s claim that “Writing now more regularly activates reading” (148), was certainly true for those working within Inquiry Notebooks as students’ writing of contemplative responses, in light of formal projects, helped them to determine additional reading opportunities under the banner of “qualitative research.” This, in particular, vexed Heathen-Pants as one who had become
fluent in the efficient articulation, through an organized essay, of “key points” and “established author meaning.” Her struggle with contemplative responses, ultimately centered upon the idea that her own responses, even the emotional responses to assigned readings, could be the sort of writing that would sponsor further reading - reading she herself would determine. During our semester together, we met several times to discuss the flat nature of her contemplative responses and the missed opportunities for further inquiry those responses masked. The more we talked, the more I understood that her struggle was deeply intertwined with far more personal missed opportunities, including her sense of being a closeted atheist. The more I listened, the better I understood her resistance as an essential, necessary component of whatever long-term growth and autonomy she would later claim. The student of the stopwatch, the “straight-A student” and master of her own efficient systematic approach to managing life inside and outside of the classroom had a right to struggle, and it wasn’t my job to correct so much as it was my job to listen, to witness.

By tending to the psychodynamic dimension, by witnessing her struggle, then asking her questions to help her name the nature of her difficulties we were able to talk about her fears that came with the prolonged uncertainty, the raw ambiguity, of learning. More importantly, she was able to tell me about the familial pressures affecting her school performance, and I was able to recommend campus resources for her. Though these moments were therapeutic in that they helped her to focus on her work, taking care of herself, and contemplating actions to take, they were not therapy. The conversations were always intense, but they were also deeply meaningful, insightful, and crucial to her growth as a writer and thinker, and as a human being making her way in the world. As
Mayes and Williams advocate, tending to the psychodynamic dimension, especially in the classroom (or in this case, office hours) the space(s) become symbolic of autonomous venturing, intellectually and emotionally, into new ideas, practices, thoughts, and actions (30). “They will occasionally experience conceptual dead-ends, contradictions, and tension within themselves and with their fellow-travelers in the classroom in the course of this ‘imagined exploration’ into new and cognitive territory,” Mayes and Williams admit, but that too is part of inquiry and learning (30).

In our interview, we laughed a great deal about our office hour meetings and conferences. We recognized that we had spent an entire semester locking horns, so to speak, over autonomy and freedom. I wanted it for her, she didn’t want it from me. Her struggle was deeply personal, and my own was deeply professional. Every socially just commitment I had made as an instructor was on the line every time we met. She wanted a list of instructions, but I wanted her inquiries to be organically from her own work and experiences. She wanted me to tell her what to write, but I wanted her to see where writing would take her. I wanted her to seek answers to her own questions, but those answers terrified her for reasons I would yet to understand. She was willing to read critically, but the critical writing and analysis seemed a profane gesture against the sacred texts she valued or experienced. We ended those meetings with a fair amount of intellectual exhaustion. While she fumed about my inefficient methods and time-consuming assignments, I fumed about her rejection of pedagogical practices that were painstakingly constructed with her autonomy as a priority. They were fantastically complex and deeply important discussions to me as a teacher, but I could only hope they would eventually make more
sense to her as a student. That hope, really, was an act of faith in both her as a student, and in my own thoughtful disregard for time itself.

Heathen-Pants, the alleged apostate and closeted atheist, taught me a great deal about faith - in teaching, relationships, pedagogy, and even time. In the years that followed our semester, she kept inquiry notebooks of her own. She had amassed a stack of work, books filled with musings and questions, reading notes and ideas, even more cartoons. I found this remarkable in itself, because until our experience in That Two O’clock Class she had not done any personal writing before. Despite her initial resistance, or perhaps because of it, Heathen-Pants eventually incorporated deeper reading and writing habits on her own terms, even for courses that did not require it. She said that she found her version of Inquiry Notebooks worth the time, that they helped her to make sense of all of her responses to ideas and experiences. In our final interview, she claimed that working in her books, the act of exploring all of her responses, helped to her contextualize her education in a meaningful way:

Sure, there are those professors here and there for whom you absolutely have to follow their rules for what they want you to do, but now I know I can learn a lot more going through a class taking what I want to take from it, rather than giving to the class what I think my professor wants me to give.

Her sense of “take” versus “give,” for me, is a great definition of student autonomy. Her claiming of the right to be a being for herself also helped her to assert herself with her family. She eventually stepped out of the atheist closet, told her family where she stood, and let the inevitable fallout happen knowing it was their response to have, and not hers
to own. This she attributed to personal reflection and personal writing, something that was not possible for her before taking That Two O’clock Class. Heathen-Pants also indicated that she had made peace with the time it took to read and write, to follow her own thinking and responses to texts. This, she said, came in time:

I don’t think I can say that it happened during that class. Since then, I moved to the point where I’m much more comfortable making time for myself so that I can read things more than once because I know I’m reading it to understand it, taking a few notes here and there as I read, and then going to the beginning again to make sure that I have a good, deep analysis.

Time also yielded other moves toward autonomy neither she nor I could have predicted during the course itself. These moves were centered upon her own writing, and her right to write work that matters to her:

I’m not having a fear of experimenting with academic writing anymore. I can play with different things, write different things. I no longer have a problem with going from writing a history paper to writing an English Studies paper because there are different styles of writing for all departments. Before our class it was as if everything I was writing was the same. Now I’m down with the concept of translating others’ work in my own words. Now I have a right to decide what’s important to me, and that’s pretty awesome.

In the end, deciding what was important to her included another change in majors. She entered That Two O’clock Class as a History major with a math minor. After the
course, as she amassed her own library of Inquiry Notebooks, she tended to her new interest in English Studies. The addition of another major was not the least bit efficient. It didn’t make economic sense, either. She had never been excited about her stack of completed course projects, but her notebooks were a great source of pride to her. She discovered, through resistance and struggle, that there was something about English Studies and the inquiries it sponsors, that played to her strengths as a thinker. She said she still looks back on the course and gets excited about the messes we made then. “Going through that class,” she said, “is the whole reason why I decided to add-on a major. After that process, I was like, ‘Man, I really love English. I want to do English too.’”

Her shift from voice, or rather voicelessness, did shift to narrative – a story of struggle that led to discovery. As lost she may have been, she eventually found herself and her passions. She graduated and moved to the West Coast to work and save for graduate school. While she works, she says she’s thinking more about the contributions she wants to make to academe instead of worrying about whether or not she’ll get accepted by a program. She’s independent, living a life of being for herself that still includes reading and personal writing. Though she admits to ditching the reading notes as a notebook component, instead preferring to annotate her books directly, she’s still moving forward in her intellectual life by building on core concepts from the Inquiry Notebooks themselves. Her faith in process, in inquiry, writing and reading, is unshakeable. She has become, despite her apostate status, an inquiry apostle. Heathen-Pants provides just one example of struggle, of the ways in which holistic pedagogy and Inquiry Notebooks work together to Donald Murray’s notion that a teacher must have faith that the student will be
the student’s most effective teacher, and that students will feel the faith and trust extended to them (27). “It will goad, support, challenge, and comfort the student,” Murray writes, “And faith and trust given may be returned, especially to teachers who reveal their own lonely journeys as they use language to discover meaning” (27).

In many ways, my project is a collection of lonely journeys that shaped the collective experiences within That Two O’clock Class. Through inquiry and personal writing, we made those journeys less lonely, less insular. Ultimately, the value of those experiences of personal struggle within the context of public education are made visible through holistic pedagogy, and the demands of the Inquiry Notebooks. This is both the promise and the pain, as student struggles also illuminate teachers’ struggles, confront and question pedagogical choices, and make wholly visible the struggle toward liberation. I always tell my students that inquiry isn’t for the meek, that committing to process is also committing to the unknown. I tell them that time is required, that efficiency is not foundational to making meaning. Even so, their stories and my own mingle in this project as proof that “relocating the personal,” however problematic, is a problem worth having. It is my attempt to achieve fruitful revolution. As Freire writes, revolutionary leadership requires leaders to consider, as they act, attitudes of mistrust they encounter. Seeking avenues of communion with them in order to help them critically perceive the reality that oppresses them (Freire 166) begins with inquiry and ends somewhere else in time, far beyond the sixteen weeks of a given semester. I hope these acts of faith, in inquiry and education, will lead to others.
CHAPTER FOUR:
THE RESIDUE OF INQUIRY: REFLECTION, PROCESS, AND PROGRESS

Reflection: Circling Back, Moving Forward

Chatty Kathy, Mr. Tangle, and Quiet Heathen-Pants, when considered together, demonstrate possibilities for teaching and learning for both students and teacher. Through the sacred work of “suffering well,” conflict became generative and informative. Though Mr. Tangle’s epistemic assumptions proved to be an impenetrable wall that thwarted reflexive inquiry on his part, the conflict between us proved vital to inquiry itself. With a holistic, critical pedagogy serving as a value, a set of commitments, his interview becomes a vibrant and complex example of Deborah Luepnitz’s interpretation of Schopenhauer’s porcupines fable. Even in the interview exchange, Mr. Tangle would get close to ideas, get poked by them, and (re)create space between his values and my own. Through reading testimonially, I was able to see beyond the sexist and often diminutive, armor-like constructions of his words in order to see him and his perspective in a more compassionate light. To suffer well in light of this study meant looking deeply for inroads to inquiry that invited an alternative way of knowing both his perspective and my own. This is representative of the ways in which a holistic, critical pedagogy helped me to model critical consciousness as protracted, even frustrating, uncertainty. His case offers an opportunity for deeper, richer conversations about epistemic assumptions and the roles they play in students’ learning outcomes. After all, there was something about the course he
valued enough to sit down two years afterward to be interviewed. He also admitted to increasing his own use of personal writing after the course. This suggests that while the trajectory of his learning was not on my preferred timeline, learning was still occurring. His question, asked during the interview far more sincerely than during the course, “What were we supposed to inquire with our notebook?” signified that he was still learning, still thinking about his thinking. Though I could grieve the lost opportunities, and focus on issues of gender and power, I prefer to be grateful for the opportunity to have worked with him. Doing so helped me to examine, identify, and then engage with epistemic assumptions as something that rests outside instructor purview, yet profoundly affects students’ learning outcomes. This, it seems to me, invites more conversations about epistemic assumptions and possible preemptive approaches that would assist students in identifying their assumptions in order to critically engage them in time to invite more meaningful inquiries and learning. As a teacher-researcher, the commitments and value that shape my sense of a critical, holistic pedagogy make it possible to imagine further work surrounding epistemic assumptions, learning outcomes, and the ways students’ assumptions shape or derail their course experiences.

Chatty Kathy and Quiet Heathen-Pants, for example, had different epistemic assumptions that influenced their learning during the course. The Inquiry Notebook assignment, in tandem with a holistic and critical pedagogy, conferences during the course, and the interviews afterward, made it possible for these women to name their both their subjective positions within school and culture, and the epistemic assumptions shaped by them. Kathy was able to articulate her location within the institution of school, and how her sense of doing school at that time limited her engagement with her notebook, the
course, and education. She was able to inquire into the affiliative dimension of writing and reading, while also engaging in the emotional-logical work of comparing her own subjectivity to the subjectivities of others. More importantly, and despite her initial difficulties, Kathy was able to make use of personal writing and mapping during her teaching practicum, carrying forward a sense of engagement and inquiry to her own work with students. Like Kathy, Heathen-Pants also named her subjective positions within school and family life. Engagement with issues of autonomy, power and powerlessness, as well as faith, helped Heathen-Pants to find her voice, her perspective, as an important academic contribution to her work. In turn, this resulted in a paradigm shift, a radical reformation of her sense of education. Instead of working toward grades as a form of currency, she reconfigured her motivation from extrinsic reward to intrinsic motivation. She reclaimed her learning, allowing herself to enjoy her work while taking from it what she needed, instead of focusing on what she perceived instructors wanted her to give them.

When considered together, these three students help to illuminate the challenges underlying education as students’ everyday lives mix with academic expectations that are affected by epistemic assumptions. This, ultimately, contributes to the field’s understanding of these challenges while inviting further research. Through their Inquiry Notebook work and experiences with holistic and critical pedagogy, they help to illustrate the possibilities of deeper assessments than those associated with Technopoly’s tired education philosophy of large-scale testing and the “Accountability Agenda.” First, they serve as a model of what long-term assessment could look like if students were given an opportunity to reflect back on their course experiences and challenges. In addition, they demonstrate that there is much going on in a student’s life beyond the course and the
tasks at hand that directly influence the learning accomplished (and not accomplished) within a semester. Finally, they demonstrate that when given the opportunity to discuss their education experiences, they have a great deal to say — something the typical assessments associated with dominant pedagogies do not invite, support, or engage. As instructors, particularly those committed to critical pedagogy, contemplate their own assessment practices, they have a tremendous opportunity to include assessment within the realm of liberation and social justice. Further, as teacher-researchers contemplate and construct their projects, they have an opportunity to invite students into such work as direct participants with voices to contribute to the larger work. Assessments and research done with students instead of to them may be a crucial first, public step to enriching (and yes, disrupting) the dominant discourses most often espoused by the Technopoly’s elite class that insist large-scale testing at recurring intervals is the only and best way to assess student learning outcomes. This move toward student-centered, student-included assessment, a move this project demonstrates as an inquiry into the possibility of such work, is vulnerable. As Pratt says of the “contact zone,” no one is spared the discomfort of inquiry and discovery within a multicultural context.

**Positive Epistemic Assumptions: Still Complicated, Still Illuminating**

Not all students in That Two O’clock Class struggled with the Inquiry Notebook or its demands. Two “traditional” students, each with different but substantial privileges within the institution, help to illustrate the stakes and outcomes of a holistic, critical pedagogy. Closing this project with their insights and perspectives contributes to my sense of the stakes — the possibilities a holistic, critical pedagogy makes possible within the
larger context of education itself. For Word Skirt, a recent college graduate with her first full-time job in her desired field, our interview represented an opportunity to discuss her course experiences in light of her overall college experience. Word Skirt represents an institutional success story. She graduated after four years, and landed a job immediately. She was an active member of the campus community, and a fervent fan of the school’s football program. Her alumna status was a matter of pride for her and her family. Her connections to the institution, her sense of loyalty to the football team, and all that encompasses “Husker Nation,” were still important to her. This did not, however, prevent her from critiquing the education she received at the institution, as well as her sense of education overall. What I remember most about her performance in the class was her intensity. She was engaged, thoughtful, and quick to speak in class. The identity of student that she performed, that she had constructed over time, was that of a “hard worker.” She took pride in her ability to produce, something she had commented on often during our conferences. Like all students, she had a backstory that came with her to That Two O’clock Class.

When she had joined the course she was a sophomore music student who had just changed her major to journalism, and was experiencing a difficult transition in both her academic focus and her identity:

When I was in your class, it was my first semester of not being a music student. So I was going through this really weird phase in my life where I was trying to figure out who I was. Music had always defined me. Everyone was like, “I can’t wait to see what you do!” and “We can’t wait to see you go far because we know you will!” People never say that with the intention of trying to put boundaries on
your life, but they do, because in your brain you’re like, “Oh my god! I have to produce!” So I had just made this very not-me decision to not do what everybody wanted me to do. I mean, I am an enabler. So when I got to your class, it was just weird. I mean, someone was there telling me that I could think the way I wanted to think. It was like [gestures her head exploding]. That was just everything I needed at that moment.

As the daughter of an educator and administrator, Skirt had grown up in a household where education was a core value. Her parents deliberately, she said, invested in her literacy development. Personal writing and journaling were nothing new to her:

I always read a lot when I was little. So I would journal, and my mom was always real good at that - about trying to get me to express myself creatively. I grew up in an environment where, my dad is an educator, so they both encouraged it. I did lots of workbooks and stuff like that.

Yet, when we began That Two O’clock Class, and the concept of Inquiry Notebooks was unveiled, Skirt experienced a shift in both her thinking, and in her sense of doing school. Much like Heathen-Pants, Skirt read her instructors and played to what she thought they wanted of her. She learned to produce products, she said, and sometimes made that production a personal contest to keep herself challenged:

Well, I didn’t read for my other classes. I always tell people that in college, except in [your] class, I had a competition with myself to see, when assigned a paper, how long I could wait to start it and still get it done on time. My record was a
three-to-four page paper for a Latin America History class, so it had a lot of potential to be a cool paper, over a book. But I didn’t read the book [shakes her head]. I wrote it all in eighteen minutes, and when I got it back, I got a 98 percent on it.

Having heard similar stories from students before, and having had similar experiences during one of my undergraduate courses myself, I asked her how that moment of receiving such a good grade had felt at the time. She replied:

I was pissed! I don’t know if I was pissed because I will never get those eighteen minutes of my life back, or if I was pissed because I had to pay for those three credit hours. I mean, I think we all go to college with an expectation that we’re gonna learn something. Not that we haven’t learned anything up to that point, but I mean, we come and it’s like we had all seen the movies where they had gone of to college, and it’s like this beautiful academic experience. But I think even the most annoying, trashy frat boy even thinks he’s going to learn something when he gets here, you know? And we don’t. You don’t. You just show up and you hand crap in, and so long as you show up, usually, you pass the class. Which is harder to believe that it may sound. And we pay so much money, but you to have this piece of paper with your name on it to get a job. So we just do it. We just jump through hoops. So every time, I mean, that’s what that 98 percent was. It was the embodiment of paying to get a stamp on me that said, “Ready for work!” That’s not okay.
Hearing her explain where she had been as a person, and what experiences she had had in courses prior to That Two O’clock Class, helped me to contextualize and appreciate the nature of her challenges in my course. When Skirt had turned in her Inquiry Notebook and first ethnography project of the term, it was clear to me that she had “invented the university,” while coming to terms with the assignments. As David Bartholomae argues, students have to assume a privilege they do not have in order to write their way into the academic discourse community the professor represents (511). However, the “commonplaces” she chose reflected what seemed like a patchwork of ideas surrounding “academic prose.” There was a great deal of performative work, what Bartholomae calls “imitation and parody,” but there was very little evidence in her work that she had experienced the invention and discovery — the hallmarks of inquiry. To read through her early work was to read well-organized and correctly spelled, tidy, risk-free “readymade conclusions” — rushes toward closure that abbreviate thinking, obscure the messiness and uncertainty between knowing and knowing more, and curtail further inquiry (Qualley 22-3). Like the students in Qualley’s study, Skirt was far more focused on persuading me to believe the correctness of her conclusions instead of exploring, as the Inquiry Notebook assignment and our first project outlined, the tensions and gaps between her thinking, the ideas within course readings, and her everyday life. She did not, as instructed, believe and doubt ideas as the Peter Elbow reading we had done for class outlined. Instead, she used the literacy skills that had served her well before That Two O’clock Class. She was not prepared for the grades she received during that first unit, and so we had to discuss her work at length early in the term. When she began the course, she struggled to accept that
writing about her uncertainties, naming and tracing them, comparing what she read to her own real life experiences and thoughts, was the aim of our coursework.

During our interview, Skirt explained that the difficulties at the beginning of the term taught her a lot about herself, and her challenges:

I don’t know if I knew I was bitter about education until I started doing that [Inquiry Notebook]. But I was. And I don’t think I ever would have known that if you hadn’t - I mean - you would always push us. “Just don’t write about what you think I want to hear. Write what you actually think” was a very new-fangled concept. I got to say what I thought. I don’t think I would have learned to do that any other way … and I think that it showed me a lot about the way things work, and that made me think about things differently.

I mean, you, I mean, I met this class at a point in my life where I had just spent, I dunno, fifteen years — I’d probably been in school for fifteen years at that point. I was a sophomore in college. And I had spent all those years just cranking out stuff because I knew that — I knew what they wanted at the end of it. And I was bitter about that because I didn’t think that was how it should be, but nobody ever let me think about that. [Bitterness] was never conscious, if that makes sense.

I asked her how her Inquiry Notebook work had shaped her overall course experience, she was quick to answer that it had:

It changed everything. It was, I mean, the notebook didn’t even feel like an assignment at the end. At the beginning it did because I was like, “I don’t know
what to write in this thing.” But after I started letting it be a fun thing, then it
could be a fun thing that didn’t have to be, like, school. It could be like, learn.
Those things shouldn’t be different, but they are. [The notebook] helped me to
take all of these different creative influences, and the different things that I’ve ex-
perienced in my life - which affect the way that you write about something
whether you know it or not — and it sort of helped me to zone those in so I could
be more clear in my final product.

More intriguing to me was the way Skirt outlined how Inquiry Notebooks yield a differ-
ent understanding of readings than “reading summary” or “reading response” assign-
ments:

Well, when you do those it’s, “Here’s what I have read,” and that’s the epitome of
the Sunday school answer when you repeat back what you have been told to re-
peat back. So those writing assignments become like [gestures as if holding up pa-
per], “Here’s what you wanted me to learn so I’m going to tell you about it be-
cause I know this is what you’re looking for.” But the Inquiry Notebook, it wasn’t
about summaries. It was about what you thought about what you read. It was
completely different, so it made you think about everything you read in a very dif-
ferent way.

Listening to Skirt I wondered if the way we approached the literature, as a conver-
sation and inquiry collaborators instead of a sites of example or information, coupled
with the double-entry method and contemplative responses, had cause the shift. I also
wondered if the various ways the Inquiry Notebook assignment slows students down,
first by requiring handwritten engagement, and then by the nature of the thinking it sponsors, had given her the room for more complex thinking, inquiries that somehow transcended the mere production of papers she had described. The graduate in front of me during the interview was not afraid to admit and own her narrative about not reading for courses, and waiting until the last moment to get things done. She was also willing to discuss how reading assignments, particularly Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*, had changed her overall outlook of “college reading” during the course in a way that had mattered to her:

All the reading I enjoyed, but after [*Persepolis*] I was like, wow, that’s when I finally realized that our concept of what qualified as literature was wrong. And by “our,” I mean everyone. When I was little, my parents would go up in my bedroom when I was, hmm, in second grade, and I would be posted up with a sheet over my head with a flashlight, reading until two in the morning. And so I’ve always loved to read, but I sat down on the couch and opened that book, and I did not leave that couch until I was done with *Persepolis* — which is not short. It was like I just couldn’t stop, couldn’t put it down, and it was so beautiful. I think after that something really clicked about what it was okay to love, what is was okay to learn from, and what was okay to think. *Persepolis* was a game-changer. It really was. I mean, looking at that, I mean, I don’t have prolific artistic talent, however, after I look at that [book], it changed my mental definition of art. I stopped categorizing it the same way in my brain. I think after that my Inquiry Notebook got a lot cooler. I remember that specifically being an influence, especially because no
one had assigned that in other classes, you know? Oh, and *Maus* was so good. I couldn’t put that down, either.

Her accounts of her experiences in That Two O’clock class, the way she represents how materials and experiences affected her, is another example of Micheal D. Berzonsky’s sense of identity processing styles, and the “informational identity processing” style in particular. Because “personal interpretations of events, not events-in-themselves constitute a person’s reality,” there is a constructivist theory at play when a person makes meaning of these events and stimuli (Berzonsky 305). This does not, however, mean that people arbitrarily construct their identity in a way that pleases or suits them. Rather, Berzonsky argues that reality cannot be directly perceived or understood. “A person’s cognitive structures influence what information is attended to, encoded, and interpreted,” (Berzonsky 305). According to Berzonsky, adolescent students “process self-relevant information, make decisions, solve problems, and reconstruct their self-theories” while experiencing stimuli. Those who are of an “information process orientation” are self-reflective, Berzonsky argues, often actively seeking and evaluating information they believe is self-relevant. As Berzonsky writes:

Adolescents who use an informational processing orientation are self-reflective and they actively seek out and evaluate self-relevant information. They are information-oriented, self-explorers who want to learn things about themselves. They are skeptical about their self-construction, open to new information, and willing to examine and revise aspects of their identity when faced with dissonant feedback (Berzonsky citing Berzonsky 305-6).
Though Skirt was willing to self-reflect in light of new information that countered her sense of reality, this did not come without a struggle. For example, the identity processing style of Quiet Heathen Pants may have limited inquiry, it did insulate her from some of the larger existential questions Word Skirt tackled.

According to Skirt, the Inquiry Notebook experiences, course assignments, and assigned readings led her to reflect on her overall education experiences. This may have helped her to name what she called, “bitterness,” about her education, but it also led to self-questioning about her personhood and the way she treated others. She found herself turning to her father to discuss her education. As she explained:

I have, actually, explained this to an educator before. I tried to explain to my dad. I think the point that I always tried to get across at the end of talking a lot to try to explain it, was that [the course] totally changed the way my brain worked when it comes to the way that I learn, the way that I take in information, the way that I look at other people, and the way that I function in life. Because … I mean, up until then, I had always thought I was a pretty accepting person. I wasn’t super judgmental — that’s just not my way. Live your life. I’m not here to tell you what to do with your life. After that, it wasn’t so much just, like, “I’m gonna observe you, and then not talk about the fact that I’m not judging you.” It became, like, you see all these differences in people and you think everything is beautiful. Because after you are allowed to take the things that you’ve learned and not simply put out an end-product that needs to fit guidelines, then your brain’s allowed to think that different things are okay.
She indicated that her father’s response was to explain constructivist pedagogies and theories, and offered her books to read. This began an ongoing conversation between the two, and her sharing her Inquiry Notebook with him. Skirt said that her father was really supportive of her Inquiry Notebook, and this helped her to imagine a final project that explored all she had discovered during the semester. Her only regret, she said, was that she wished that her understanding of critical consciousness and inquiry hadn’t come so late in her overall education experience.

Word Skirt was fortunate in that her family was truly supportive of her education on her terms. Supported during her change in major, and supported in her changes in thinking, she was able to make discoveries she had not anticipated:

Turns out I’m a writer. Now. Which I never would have done. At first I was like, “Well, I can crank out papers really fast, whatever. I’ll try journalism classes, whatever.” But I had always loved English classes. Always, always. And I was really blessed in high school. I had incredible English teachers … After I got into journalism school, I realized I should probably write some work. Makes sense — that’s a cohesive concept. Then I ended up in [That Two O’Clock Class], and after that, writing became a completely different thing. Just changed everything.

This sort of substantial change, when a student takes on a new way of looking at themselves and others, is what a holistic pedagogy and the Inquiry Notebook assignment hopes to sponsor. Word Skirt was not alone in her transformative experience. Another student, Steel McThunderpants, a student athlete, also reported a tremendous shift in his
thinking about writing and himself. Like Word Skirt, Steel had recently graduated when we met for our interview session. He too had a reflective attitude about his education, and a critique of college specifically. Whereas Skirt focused on the processes of school, the creation of projects and grading, Steel focused on his instructors as actors within institutions that deeply affected his sense of schooling in general, and his education specifically. I believe both students, given the space and time away from college, could afford to critique education in a way other students could not. The time and distance, the public declaration of being “educated,” allows them to take a different, even polemical, stance. However, both make significant contributions to my argument for holistic, critical pedagogy by reminding stakeholders that human relationships between teachers and their students matter in ways that shape students’ sense of their education’s value and purpose.

Like Skirt, Steel had experienced personal writing before. “In high school, my freshman English class, I had not many assignments but some assignments, where they asked us to write a more personal piece. I never took them seriously,” he said. The Inquiry Notebook was his first encounter with a personal writing project that would last the duration of the semester. “This Inquiry Notebook was my first major experience, and the first one that I was motivated to write - the first one I guess that I cared about.” When I asked him what he thought caused that motivation, he elaborated, explaining the source of his motivation overall:

Because it was obvious you cared about teaching. You cared about not so much the grade that people got, but the experience that they got. And I mean, most teachers that I, actually every teacher, just about every teacher, I had [at university] is … it’s a paycheck. So I didn’t learn a whole lot from their classes. I didn’t
retain a whole lot. They’re, I mean, they’re testing just to give kids a grade. I know there are other teachers that are above and beyond that, but I think a lot of the teachers that I’ve had, in my experiences, they just don’t care a whole lot about the output that students give. I think it’s partially because there are so many, and like, how do you care for that many people? You have to care more for the subject. I dunno. But I think our class was small enough, and I think that you actually took a personal interest in everybody.

In the moment, I found it interesting that Steel was comparing courses, but it also seemed to me that he was comparing teachers in an unfair, overly simplistic way. However, it seemed to me that he had focused on two important aspects of That Two O’clock Class that differed from other courses he had taken. First, my course sizes were capped at twenty-four because my department, led by Composition faculty, had committed to smaller classroom sizes for writing courses. Second, my discipline, department, and the faculty tending to my own development as a scholar and teacher, had made substantial commitments to pedagogy and practice. Out of a sense of fairness, I asked Steel to explain to me how he had determined that I cared. He replied:

I could just tell that you had committed yourself to the class, and because you did that, I fully committed myself to the class. If I had to explain it to somebody I guess, I mean, there’s obvious visual cues, from anything like body language, to the tone of your voice, to your attitude when you walk in the door. You [points at me] never put up a front. If you were having a bad day, like, you told us and everybody knew. I don’t think that’s such a bad thing. A lot of people will put up a
front, and they will just put on a mask for the day so you never get a feel for them because they’re wearing a mask that isn’t, essentially, them.

Steel’s sense of reading a teacher while looking for markers of caring reminded me of Parker Palmer’s view, that teaching is done at a dangerous intersection of personal and public life (18). “As we try to connect ourselves and our subjects with our students,” Palmer writes, “we make ourselves, as well as our subjects, vulnerable to indifference, judgement, ridicule” (18). The wearing of a mask Steel pointed to is a way to deflect that vulnerability. As Palmer notes, sometimes teachers disconnect from themselves, their subjects, even their students, in order to build a wall between what he calls, “inner truth and outer performance.” In our rush to distance ourselves from vulnerability, Palmer argues, “we play-act the teacher’s part” (18). In Steel’s reading of teachers, one can see that he was reading for signs of deep care, the type of caring for whole beings a holistic, critical pedagogy aspires to convey. His reading of teachers also suggests that he sought reciprocity, that once he perceived deep caring on the part of the teacher, he could then risk the vulnerability of caring deeply about his work, and the class, in return.

Palmer advocates that teachers tend to their inner lives so that they can teach in ways that more fully expose their identities and integrity. However, such exposure comes with considerable fear. As Palmer notes, developing a capacity for connectedness, to ourselves and others, is very difficult when living and working within an academic culture that does not foster or help us to develop connection. As Palmer writes:

Educational institutions are full of divisive structures, of course, but blaming them for our brokenness perpetuates the myth that the outer world is more powerful than the inner. The external structures of education would not have the power to
divide us as deeply as they do if they were not rooted in one of the most compelling features of our inner landscape—fear (36).

Palmer argues that we can conquer our sense of fear by committing to self-knowledge in order to bring our reformist energies inward (37). Though fearing the loss of one’s job, location in the academy, and professional status may keep us from fully challenging the structural forces that limit our sense of connection, Palmer contends that there is another fear, a deeper fear, that keeps us in a collaborative relationship with the institutional and bureaucratic practices that limit our potential. As Palmer writes:

We collaborate with the structures of separation because they promise to protect us against one of the deepest fears at the heart of being human — the fear of having a live encounter with an alien “otherness,” whether the other is a student, a colleague, a subject, or a self-dissenting voice within. We fear encounters in which the other is free to be itself, to speak its own truth, to tell us what we may not wish to hear. We want those encounters on our own terms, so that we can control their outcomes, so that they will not threaten our view of the world and self (37-8).

While contemplating Steel’s comments on teachers and their embodied performances and the wearing of masks, I recalled my own first years of teaching. Worried that students would perceive my novice teacher status as a sign of weakness and thus, devalue the curricula and my methods, I kept a distance. I wore a mask. I performed the role of teacher and donned the vestments of a corporatized university’s sense of “professionalism,” and the power that comes when one does. It was a miserable first year of teaching,
mostly because, as any actor can testify, long-running performances are exhausting. What Steel did not know, for example, was that when I entered the room for the first time and met That Two O’clock Class, I had only recently made a commitment to teach who I was, for better or for worse, just to see what I could learn from doing so. I wanted to see if my job satisfaction would grow, and my teaching improve. I wanted to see if student outcomes would improve, and if students themselves would meet me halfway and be more of themselves than some constructed sense of “the good student.” In short, I entered that semester seeking some sense of authenticity and connection. My pursuit of holistic, critical pedagogy was just as much about scholarly inquiry back then as it was about the loneliness and isolation that sometimes comes once one has committed themselves to full-time scholarship and professional development.

There were other aspects his course experiences that Steel noted as important to him. As he sat in the chair across mine, his Inquiry Notebook opened on his lap, he pointed to my commentary practice on student work:

There was a lot more feedback. It was clear that you had spent time reading everything and not skimming. There’s sticky notes. I mean, some of these comments in here are just lighthearted, and they’re not telling me to put a comma here, a semicolon there. It’s more about content. I mean, I think you were more about the personal development of everyone in the class, and just opening the eyes of everyone in the class to what’s out there, to things that are different, and that showed through in a a lot of different areas.

Here I find it helpful to return to Berzonsky’s claim that reality is not directly perceived, but a matter of interpretation. Like Word Skirt, Steel fits the “informational processing
style.” He was self-reflective and quick to adapt his perspectives in light of new information. At the time of our interview, he was set on being a teacher himself. This could explain, perhaps, his critical gaze on teacher performances, the way they embodied or masked their identities, and their pedagogical practices. Palmer’s claim that mentoring is a mutuality, that what makes a good mentor is dependent upon what makes a good student (22), leads me to believe that what Steel valued most about me as his teacher, was actually what he valued about himself, or some sense of a future self he would like to be as a teacher. As a student who wanted a career in teaching, he may have been looking at all of his instructors as models and mirrors, something that another student with a different vocational goal may not have done. This is, I think, worth contemplating as we teach who we are. If we are all “beings coming to know,” as Rendón contends, teaching who we are, even in our state of becoming, may be more helpful to a student than performing some protected, masked version of ourselves.

As we continued our interview, Steel too had much to report about his experiences with writing and the Inquiry Notebook. For him, the course sessions and writing requirements of the notebook assignment moved him to discover more about his writing self:

I think the writing in the notebook helped me to better my writing because it kinda gave me a paradigm shift — took me away from the very traditional and rigid structures that I grew up learning, and showed me that there are other ways to write than just, I dunno, your standard intro paragraph and three body paragraphs. I think the notebook definitely developed me as a writer. I never — even
calling myself a writer now sounds kinda funny now — but I think it’s true. I definitely noticed an increase in my ability to express myself in writing. Now I can express myself very well. I feel very proficient on paper. Sometimes, when I’m speaking, I get jumbled up or miss things, but I think the notebook helped me develop as a writer a whole lot. The class helped develop me as a person.

Steel reported that the limitless nature of the Inquiry Notebook assignment helped him to think differently about formal writing projects. By having a space to “free write,” and having to tend to his own thinking, he was able to reimagine drafting papers as a process. Steel said he remembered advice I had given students to use their Inquiry Notebooks as a space to complain about a writing project, to write about not writing, or to write about how much they loved (or didn’t love) writing, so they could vent but get writing and thinking going anyway. Writing was still difficult, he said, but the Inquiry Notebook had taught him the value of just getting started to see where writing would take him. As Steel said:

I know I’ve sat down to write numerous papers, and I mean, I’ll write three words. I’ll sit there for ten or fifteen minutes and stare saying, “I don’t wanna do this. I don’t know what I’m gonna write.” In my book, I would just start writing, even if it was crap, just to get moving, to kinda shake the cobwebs off. The possibilities are limitless. So I don’t — I don’t see that as a terrible thing. It can be obnoxious, difficult, but in terms of writing, I think it definitely benefitted me.

I believe he had benefitted from a prolonged personal writing project. Following the trajectory of his work from the first project to the last, I had witnessed his shift from writing
what he thought was academic writing, toward academic writing that reflected his own curiosity.

**Epistemic Assumptions: An Omnipresence Worth Further Inquiry**

It would be easy to point to Word Skirt and Steel McThunderpants as “ideal examples” of the outcomes of a holistic, critical pedagogy and the Inquiry Notebook assignment. However, to do so would be to do their stories a form of injustice. Skirt, with her family background and education support, coupled with her identity processing style, made her struggle different from those struggles explored by Quiet Heathen-Pants and Chatty Kathy (and unexplored by Mr. Tangle). However, epistemic assumptions were still part of Skirt’s story in the sense that she had been making those assumptions for the majority of her education career and getting high marks for doing so. Until That Two O’clock Class, she had not been provoked to think more critically about the system of education that had favored her, or the literacy skills that her parents had mentored, and how both afforded her substantial privilege in school culture. For her, the reflexivity and critical thinking skills the Inquiry Notebook, my pedagogy, and the course made her name her bitterness, sit with it, and puzzle it through. However kind and generous she was in the interview, I know from working with her that term that the experience of doing such inquiry was very painful for her. To some extent, she suffered an “existential crisis of meaning,” and my pedagogical commitment to holistic pedagogy meant that I was ethically and morally required to assist her efforts to make sense of what her learning made visible. I could not remove myself from her stresses and inquiries, set them aside, or hide from them behind a mask of constructed professionalism. I had to be willing to dig
through the muck of discovery with her in order to model what it meant to “prolong uncertainty” as an important, even vital, aspect of critical engagement.

For Steel McThunderpants, his epistemic assumptions seemed to be located at the intersection of “the personal” and “the public.” While working within the context of the course, he was paying careful attention to the teaching body, looking for outward performances that would yield some understanding of the inner workings of a teacher. Like Quiet Heathen Pants, he too was working from a position of motivation, though his was a deeply intrinsic one. He was, as an aspiring teacher, working from a position of self-motivation that came from his internalized sense of reward (Deci and Ryan 9). This, coupled with his “informational identity processing style,” invited him to take on experiences he had not encountered in other courses, such as taking the opportunity to make friends, and spend social time with fellow students outside of class. “I mean we built kinda a family of sorts — a misfit family — out of our class,” he said. “I’ve never done that before, and it was huge.” This, he attributed to the community focus of our course. I attribute his sense of community to holistic, critical pedagogy, particularly the ways in which it invites students to bring more of who they are into the classroom. However, it seems that invitation is only accepted once some students perceive the instructor to be armor and mask-free, unafraid of the vulnerability being fully human requires.

**Resisting the Tidy Teaching Narrative: Loose Ends, No Tying**

As Shari Stenberg argues, there is value in “embracing the mess of learning” (148). A holistic, critical pedagogy as I have theorized it, coupled with the Inquiry Note-
book assignment, certainly presented a great deal of mess for both teacher and her students. Here, I want to tend to the inner landscapes of some of that mess to emphasize Stenberg’s idea that, “If learning-centered encounters are to function productively, we need to challenge not only material realities, but also the conceptions we may hold about what constitutes a valuable learning experience” (148). Study participant interviews made very messy processes of “coming to know” more visible. This visibility, in turn, served as a catalyst for my research as I worked to theorize both my pedagogical practice and students’ accounts of their course experiences while comparing them with the totality of my artifacts from the course itself. Working with all of these materials was not a tidy, linear process. For example, while working with Mr. Tangle’s interview script and supporting materials, it seemed his choices and assumptions were far more strategic and deliberate than I had first thought during the course itself. This reminded me of Amy Lee’s idea, “Though conventional wisdom assumes that knowledge equals power, ignorance is often more powerful, and with particular students, we need to contend with the will not to know” (147). Contending with the “will not to know,” it seems to me, is part of the larger invitation to my field of composition in rhetoric to look more deeply into epistemic assumptions in order to untangle the roles they play in students’ learning outcomes. As I move forward from this work, for example, I have already begun to construct reflective writing prompts, assigned readings, and class activities that could help my current students to identify and articulate their assumptions so that I can work with (and against) these assumptions in order to improve their learning outcomes as the course evolves. Currently, I am developing a project with twenty-two students at the University of Wiscon-
sin-Eau Claire that will sponsor their qualitative research into pedagogies across disciplines, and how their first-year experiences across all of their classes work with and against their epistemic assumptions about education itself. The goal of the project is to help students write their way into discourses about teaching and learning, discourses that have, for a variety of complicated reasons, rarely include students directly as researchers-collaborators.

Attending to the messiness of this doctoral project, the interviews yielded an insight into the ways learning is not limited to the semester when one has direct contact with students. As Mr. Tangle, Quiet Heathen-Pants, Chatty Kathy, Word Skirt, and Steel McThunderpants have demonstrated, reflexive inquiry continued beyond the course. This became evident in the ways they spoke about their notebooks and classroom experiences. This inquiry extended beyond the course for me as I worked to make some theoretical and practical sense of their work, interviews, and, insights. My own transformation continues, particularly as I work to embrace teaching who I am, even when doing so leaves me feeling vulnerable and uncertain. I resist the urge to mask, to develop a “professional” persona as armor because I learned, in That Two O’clock Class, that there is much to discover about myself and my students even years afterward. As Lee argues, claims of radical transformations within the context of a semester are seductive, but limited (150-1). My project, for example, highlights what Lee terms, “sustained impact” (151), learning that continues beyond the construction of a course or its term.

This idea of “sustained impact” was present across all of the student interviews. As Lee contends, a goal within a critical writing classroom seeks to implement processes by which students can identify, explore (and revise) concepts of self, other, and world as
constructions, choices among a variety of choices (153). In this way, Inquiry Notebooks sponsor writing as part of a critical process without a definite end and step-by-step instructions. To me, this is consistent with Lee’s claim about the value of such work. “This process,” Lee Writes, “…aims to enable the demystification of texts and contexts, allowing students to enter into the process of constructing meaning, rather than to believe it is done for/to them or that they might inscribe meaning unproblematically or naturally” (153). As Lee argues, students struggle with the idea that language itself determines a particular and contextualized reality (163). This was particularly true for That Two O’clock Class in general, and for the student participants specifically. The idea that language itself, how we speak and write particularly within education, was a worthwhile site for critical inquiry (163) created dissonance because until That Two O’clock Class, students had experienced writing as a means of information delivery that came with rules. There is a certain lawlessness that comes when language becomes the site for critical inquiry, when the inherited (or assigned) rules for writing become less important than the ideas within the writing itself. This shift from such rules to content, as performed within contemplative response practices, provided students the opportunity to map the way they used language, and to what ends, while making it possible for the teacher to respond to “ready-made conclusions.” Ultimately, teacher response and evaluation of the notebooks is more about modeling how one can, through inquiry and critique of our discourses, (re)create ourselves and our relations to the world through our use and examination of discourses (Lee 163).

However, as Quiet Heathen Pants and Word Skirt prove, such transformations do not come without emotional impact. It has been my experience, as both a student and a
teacher, critical consciousness can lead to deep hurt (and also profound joy) as one processes revisions to reality. Therefore, my call for a holistic, critical pedagogy is aimed at suffering well these moments of discomfort, and celebrating our joys, so that students can use both reason and emotion as sites for critical engagement. As Shari Stenberg contends, when emotion is liberated from the private realm, it becomes potentially forceful rhetoric (Teaching and (Re)Learning 350). By engaging with emotion as a site for critical inquiry, as students did while working in their Inquiry Notebooks, we could contemplate individually and collectively, the roles emotion played in our intellectual work. As a holistic educator, then, my role is “not to snuff out or smooth over emotion,” but to guide students to attend to emotion as an epistemic part of their rhetorical education (351). As Stenberg argues, using emotion as a site of inquiry can only occur when it is considered a feature among other equal features of making meaning. “Just as writing and rhetoric teachers help students to develop strategies to read with rhetorical contexts strategies in mind.” Stenberg writes, we might also work with students to develop a vocabulary for the rhetoric of emotion” (360). It seems to me that additional research that examines and explores the rhetoric of emotion within the context of composition classrooms would make a substantial contribution to the field, while opening new lines of inquiry.

In the meanwhile, a holistic, critical pedagogy is thus a means to help students to develop that vocabulary of emotion, particularly when asking them, as I did, to use their personal, everyday perspectives as sites of inquiry while writing contemplative responses in their Inquiry Notebooks. In this way, tending to our inner landscapes, as Palmer recommends, also means tending to others by holding us accountable through self-reflexive inquiry. As Stenberg argues, such inquiry helps students and teachers to determine how
our “emotional investments” determine what we choose to see, hear, ignore, accept or reject (361). This means of tending to our internal landscapes, as Palmer advocates, becomes a means by which to tend to others. By recognizing our own emotional investments, we can develop a means to compassionately and ethically engage with others. To this end, the Inquiry Notebook assignment served as a space to articulate and explore emotional investments when contemplating responses to texts and class discussions.

While deepening their reading and writing strategies, theorizing in light of their practical experiences, they also deepened their capacity for self-reflexivity. How deep that capacity went was up to the student, and contingent upon their epistemic assumptions, identity processing style, and ability to use their emotions as a catalyst or sponsor for inquiry.

However, this sort of academic success in the writing classroom does not come without challenge, messiness, and a variety of responses on the full spectrum of emotion. This is precisely why I find holistic, critical pedagogy so promising. The “Accountability Agenda” that Gallagher critiques is representative of a larger, tired philosophy about education itself. As Neil Postman argues, Technopoly is at once a state of culture, and a state of mind (71). Those who feel most comfortable in this culture/mind state, are those who believe technological progress will provide answers to our most pressing dilemmas. We have certainly seen this commitment to technology in the ways state and federal legislatures have voted to expand large-scale, computerized assessments despite research findings that indicate these tests are negatively impacting education. It seems to me that both Stenberg’s call for a rhetoric of emotion, and calls for holistic, critical, and process-based pedagogies are seeking to rupture the technopolitical state of mind by bringing education
back to its roots: the human relationships between students and teachers. The tired education philosophies that insist large-scale testing is the only means by which to measure learning success have not yielded the improvements to education that reformers first sought in 1984. For more than thirty years, the metronomic beat of politicians and business leaders is that America has fallen behind and lost its sense of quality education. The technopolitical landscape of America continues to build vast infrastructures for the “Accountability Agenda,” yet ignores a fundamental truth: Teachers are not in a profit-driven business, but are in the business of tending to human beings coming to know themselves and the world around them. Academic success in the English classroom, then, is not a numbers game. It is a process, one that a teacher hopes is life-long and anchored to students’ sense of purpose, agency, and ability to contribute to the world around them. Until then all a holistic, critical pedagogue can do is teach who they are while tending to students as whole beings on journeys of becoming.
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Appendix A: Learning Outcomes for ENGL 254: “Writing and Communities”

• Students will build on prior experiences with composing (invention, drafting, revising, and final editing) and with the rhetorical concepts of audience, purpose and context by undertaking a minimum of 3 projects and producing (at minimum) the equivalent of 30 pages of polished prose (typed, double-spaced). These formal projects should be informed directly or indirectly by students’ developing understanding of writing as a social practice and students’ study of writing in community/ies

• Students will learn to analyze the social dynamics of actual contexts for writing, and interpret polished texts through an understanding of writing as a social practice

• Students will learn strategies for researching the uses of writing in a community. While the emphasis of this course is on conducting primary research, students may also gain additional experience with secondary research as well

• Students will have opportunities to learn new revision strategies and gain new insights about revision by developing a more finely tuned understanding of how writers conceptualize their work and possible communities of readers for their work

• Students will continue to refine their skills at providing constructive response to peers’ writing by producing at least 3 substantive written responses to peers’ or community members’ texts-in-process

• Students will have guided opportunities to inquire into and reflect on the development of their writing and learning in terms of the concepts taken up in the course

• Students will gain additional practice in sentence-level editing and proofreading their writing, an in identifying and attending to appropriate stylistic conventions for citation and formatting
Appendix B: Inquiry Notebook Instructions

In order to better understand what is being asked of you within the pages of your Inquiry Notebook, you may need to become more patient with both ambiguity and displacement. We will be creating a set of skills or ideas (a toolbox) as we progress this semester. It’s impossible to prescribe a total list of items that must be involved in each individual student’s inquiry. However, I do have a list of requisite elements that are designed to help you autonomously navigate both inquiry and engagement.

For now, try to think of the Inquiry Notebook as a space in which you will map, chart, chronicle, and explore course readings, class discussion, musing, and your experiences (and your response to those). In many ways, your notebooks serve as or resemble intellectual records. However, unlike diaries (often considered receptacles for feelings) your Inquiry Notebook is for writing about your thinking (though feelings inevitably, and should, become tangled with our thinking). Scientists and researches have established a tradition for maintaining these kinds of journals, as have many writers, English scholars, and philosophers. However, personal writing and the archiving of our quests for understanding and knowledge have fallen out of public practice. This kind of work, the archiving of our own thinking, requires some explanation and exploration. We will begin that work together, beginning with some basic requirements. The rest, well, we’ll figure that out as we go.

There are basic elements that must be included in your Inquiry Notebook:

Reading Notes
Class/Discussion notes (the notes you take during or after our class sessions)
Assigned writing
At least four pages of “contemplative response” each week (date your entries)

Reading Notes

Our course readings may seem difficult because you will not be our authors’ primary audience. You may find the readings frustrating, bewildering, complex, and even boring. However, if you think about these readings as conversation partners who are waiting for your contribution to a larger conversation, the inquiry work will become easier, perhaps even rewarding. The key to reading for this course rests in challenging how you read, or why you read. Many students think of reading as an act of acquisition. They read to consume information in order to spit it out later.
However, reading rhetorically, or critical reading, requires a different set of skills in order to fulfill entirely different requirements. You will be challenged to read texts in order to join a conversation and/or understand a concept – this is not part of the rote memorization skills many acquire (if not perfect) in their K-12 experiences. As one of my colleagues likes to say to his students, “Yeah, uh, this is not the 13th grade.” Meaning, as undergraduate scholars you will be encouraged to gain new reading skills that will serve different purposes inside and outside of college courses. Learning to read critically, to follow themes, arguments, and purposes within a text (and to believe and doubt them in order to find new meanings and possibilities) will be a major part of our coursework together. Your Inquiry Notebook is a space in which you can explore these aspects of a text, test what you think, and articulate your thinking (the process), instead of simply writing down your “answers.” Through our work, we will move from acquisition reading to translation reading – the backbone of collegiate scholarship.

Inquiry as Translation: Deepening Reading and Writing

The notion of translation – making the vocabulary, rhetoric, and ideas in a text work for you in your lived examples – is a major component of the inquiry notebook as an assignment. When you run into difficulty or a passage you don’t understand, the reading responsibility becomes inquiry as soon as one pulls a dictionary from a shelf or scans one online. Because the texts (and the ideas) can be difficult and demand literacy skills we may not have developed or honed, and because reading is a skill that must be practiced, improved, and deepened over time, comprehension may elude us. That’s where the inquiry notebook comes in handy as it allows space to wrestle with what you think something might mean, shape (through writing) questions you can bring to class, and build both a rhetorical theory toolbox and vocabulary. It can be a place to write across the difference between the material as it’s presented and our own understanding. Though many are familiar with the classic tactic of confronting text on its aesthetic grounds (“I liked it because…” or “What I liked about this book …”) because it allows those who care about a text to espouse its greatness while it also allows those who didn’t read to razzle-dazzle a spiffy BS response, we’re not doing that for ENGL 254. We’re digging deeper into the sociopolitical and theoretical implications of the readings, inquiries, and class discussions.

For example, reading as a citizen or consumer habit doesn’t often demand much of the reader. News products, magazines, novels, and other everyday media are designed to be consumed and considered by audiences largely outside of scholarship. By comparison, the texts offered in ENGL 254 are texts designed for the both the general and academic audience – that group culture expects to be expert, intellectual, and critically engaged. If you’re frustrated by the readings, for example, because it all seems to be “above your head” or below your personal
taste standard, because we’re doing this work within a research institution we can’t just put it down the way we would a novel or other piece we buy to entertain us. Instead, we are called to try (through inquiry and our notebooks) to understand, appreciate, and as Krista Ratcliffe would say, “rhetorically listen” across the difficulty. To listen rhetorically means to listen generously while considering how one’s sociopolitical position, ethics, identity would or could influence both the speaking/writing and the listening/reading. It means paying attention to context so that you can decipher and detect moments when an adjustment in context could expand meaning. In this sense, inquiry notebooks offer a fantastic opportunity for what I term, “translation,” when we can stalk meaning by converting it into a language we ourselves know best. Literacy scholars call this sort of activity “code switching” and it can be really helpful when trying to take a difficult text and turn it into something personally meaningful to your own scholarship.

For example:

Although rhetorical listening may be employed to hear discursive intersections of any cultural categories (age and class, nationality and history, religion and politics) and any cultural position (child and parent, patient and doctor, clergy and parishioner, teacher and student) (see Pradl 67-72), my particular interest lies in how it may help us to hear discursive intersections of gender and race/ethnicity (including whiteness) so as to help us to facilitate cross-cultural dialogues about any topic (Ratcliffe, 196)

could be translated into my version of academic language:

Listening for say, ethos, pathos, logos while paying attention to the contexts, we can hear reasoned argument from the speaker’s spoken or implied identities, and how these are placed within the context in which we hear them. By listening (and reading) carefully, we can answer questions of the things we hear (and read), such as: “Who’s (not) speaking?” “Who’s (not) silenced?” and/or “Who’s (not) privileged?” This will help us to (re)configure opportunities to make peace, amends, or positive change while also learning to appreciate those we call “The Other.”

And, just for fun, this translation could be translated again as action and in a shared conversation I recorded in my inquiry notebook as an example:

Daughter: So, how did your meeting go with that dude in your class?

Me: Well, I had to listen past his various versions of “this is so stupid” and “that’s not how I roll” long enough to find something we had in common. Who knew our shared enthusiasm for cheese and The Big Lebowski could help us work out a fair strategy for our group project? Now I’m not going to get jacked and stuck with all the work, and he’s feeling better about the project because he won’t be doing all the hard parts alone.
Learning to make this “reading move”- to translate - isn’t about one’s intelligence. It’s more about diligence. Taking the time to look up key terms, to wrestle with language, to write what we think something means and what questions remain positions us to make meaning. It also positions us to ask better questions in class. Thich Nhat Hanh writes, “If you have a chance to ask a teacher a question, as one that will change your life.” I think engaged rhetorical reading, writing through the difficulty and articulating the nature of that which we do not understand, helps us to eventually, through conversation and comparisons, comprehend difficult material while improving our reading skills. Don’t be afraid to try translations of your own as a way of experiencing how a text or idea from class can appear in your lived life outside of our class. Yes, it’s a lot of work; but true scholarship that empowers people to make changes in their lived experiences and the world in which they live is supposed to be. We’re not making deposits of knowledge. We’re creating investments – in ourselves and our communities – through inquiry.

Learning to do this work will require you to keep reading notes. Most of us are familiar with keeping notes in class. Reading notes, however, ask more of us. In order to challenge the readings, it’s important to note ideas or passages you don’t understand, what you think they mean, or what implications they make visible. It’s equally important to note the meanings you grasp and challenge them anyway. So while you read, take time to quote those passages that challenge, inspire, intrigue, vex, or befuddle. When you find yourself having an immediate sense of surprise, note that moment and why you’re surprised. Quote the section, note the page number and author, and then write your immediate response to that excerpt. Also, keep a running list of words you did not know and then look those words up. Building a vocabulary is part of the college experience, too.

Some find that keeping a “double entry” format (quote on the left side of the page, your response on the right) helpful. Some prefer writing reading notes in a narrative format that provides context, the quote, and then a response. Some keep notes while they read. Some prefer to make their notations after reading. You will have to determine a method that works for you. A goal here is to mark moments of your thinking and your reading responses so that you can articulate your reading experience as an active and engaged textual interplay, instead of just consuming words in order to regurgitate them later. Another goal is to hypothesize, to theorize, to consider what you think the text means in multiple contexts. These “notes” become the grounding for what should be the next step: a “contemplative response.”

“Contemplative Response”

You should write at least four pages of “contemplative response” each week. This work is similar to a “reading response” paper, but the mission is not to
summarize the reading. Instead, you use the cited excerpts as the beginning of your contemplation, as you write through what you think the text could mean or imply. The idea here is to compare what the text posits or suggests, to what you have experienced or know (or even think you know). This is very similar to stating your opinion, but your opinion must be well-reasoned, in relation to the text (and not, say, just your ethics, “common sense,” or beliefs). Find it helpful to keeping reading notes all week, and then at the end of the week, I write a thoughtful response to those readings as if they were in conversation with each other. A helpful “contemplative response” strategy from Dr. Chris Gallagher, a fellow rhetoric scholar:

> Locate a moment of difficulty or confusion as you read. Write the passage in your IN. Now write around it: What’s giving you trouble? Why? If you HAD to try to restate the passage in your own words, what would you say? Does the surrounding text, or other parts of the chapter, provide any clues as to the meaning of this passage?

It’s important to note that the Inquiry Notebook work is personal, but it’s not confessional. Your notebook is not required to have personal (as in private) details about your life. Think of the Inquiry Notebook space as a place for your personal thoughts and responses to intellectual work. Remember: You will have an audience. Much in the same way other academics keep research or lab notebooks, you will be charting progress, hypotheses, and discoveries so that you have a semi-public record of your work. This will get easier as the course continues, and as you have more ideas to sit next to each other.

> Each week, however, you should be creating at least four pages of meaningful and engaged inquiry writing that is not class notes, reading notes, or simple summary.

Making Your Notebook Yours

Other than the required elements, Inquiry Notebooks (like journals) should also include whatever you wish. If you’re an artist, feel free to practice your craft within the pages of your notebook. Exploring art and other types of writing (fiction, poetry, etc.) can be great things for you to try within the notebook pages. In my own notebooks, I have a recurring cartoon hero, “Captain Inquiry.” I also include poetry and other drawings – whatever it takes to amuse myself. My point: Don’t just relegate yourself to the required content – explore your own learning, creativity, and purposes by taking creative risks. My point: Personalize your Inquiry Notebook by making it represent you in some way.
Appendix C: Inquiry Notebook Statement of Intent Assignment

For this document, you will be laying the groundwork for your inquiry work until midterm. It’s a statement of intent, a blueprint to the approaches you will try as you embark on inquiry in the scholarly sense. Because this is inquiry and a beginning, please don’t assume this is a “high stakes,” “please the teacher” moment. It’s not. It’s a for-credit assignment that will help both you and I approach your work. Please print your document using 12 point Times New Roman font (the industry standard), and staple your pages together. In your statement, please address and explain:

- **Your proposed reading strategy for the work we will be considering:** How will you approach reading to cull meanings from the text? Will you be skeptical? Will you try believing an author’s argument first, and then applying your skeptical, critical eye (as Elbow advises)? Will you use highlighters? Underlines and annotations? How will you position yourself as a reader? What will you have to change or improve in your own reading so that you can be in conversation with the writers as opposed to just reading to consume their words?

- **Your methods for reading notes:** Will you use the double-entry format I showed you in class? Will you use another method? If so, what will it be? Reading notes are required for each text we consider, so it may be important to keep track of the major ideas or concepts that will support your contemplative response writing (see the “Contemplative Response Instructions” on Blackboard to revisit those questions)

- **Goals:** What kind of scholarly work do you most want to try? What will it take for you to consider yourself a scholar and even part-time (or full-time) philosopher?

- **Risks:** What kind of artistic and/or intellectual risks are you willing to take in your notebook? Considering that we’re entertaining a larger idea of “doing school,” and in some cases, “undoing school,” what are you going to try that you have not tried before? What kinds of inquiries into representation of your thinking and writing are you willing to make or wanting to experience?

- **Method of artistic expression:** What kinds of activities, supplies, and approaches do you intend to explore as articulation of your thinking? If true learning is multimodal (involving more senses than text alone can articulate), what are you willing to explore and try?

- **Method of self-expression:** Will you be making room for personal writing in your notebook? What limitations do you believe will be present in that work? What opportunities might there be?
Appendix D: Interview Questions

Have you kept a journal or diary before?

Was the Inquiry Notebook experience your first with personal writing?

How did working in the inquiry notebook affect your formal writing projects in the course?

Did you learn anything while working in your notebook that you believe you could not have learned any other way?

Do you think your notebook helped you to understand the assigned readings?

How did your weekly work in the notebook shape your overall course experience?

How did instructor response to your notebook affect your course experience?

Did the notebook have any limitations? Did you experience any limitations?

Do you think the weekly Inquiry Notebook work improved your overall writing ability?

Did your Inquiry Notebook work influence other classes outside of ENGL254?

Do you think the personal writing we did individually shaped our learning community?

What motivated you to do the work in ENGL254?

If you were trying to explain, say, to other educators, what the value of the Inquiry Notebook is, what would you say?

When you think of the work you had to produce for the class, the notebook, the assignments, what influenced you most?

As a learner, if you look at everything we experienced, are there moments that stand out as important to you today?
Appendix E: How to Survive a Process-Centered Course

At this point in the semester I like to refer back to the earlier weeks in the course when critical concepts were unveiled but perhaps not fully absorbed. Now that we’ve had time to work together, to see how process-centered education compares to “the banking system,” and to feel some of our own frustration with both change and difference, it’s time to evaluate the course and our roles in it. Process-centered education is an extension of what many Composition and Rhetoric teachers refer to as “critical pedagogy.” In the history of critical education, Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Alfie Kohn, and Peter Elbow remain foundational to this 20th century education concept even as we move into a new millennium.

Revisiting, then, Freire’s second chapter from his book, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is where we will begin. As you may recall, his concept of “the banking system,” educational methods that treat students as receptacles instead of active agents in their own learning, or as Freire writes:

- The teacher teaches and the students are taught
- The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing
- The teacher thinks and the students are thought about
- The teacher talks and the students listen – meekly
- The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined
- The teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply
- The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher
- The teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it
- The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students
- The teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects

As I have modeled for you this semester, it’s very difficult, even risky, to move from the “beings for others” (products of the education system produced for businesses) toward “beings for themselves” (students who can think critically, in pursuit of their own individual goals, desires, and identities). Much of our work together is learning how to think instead of what to think, and this difference in prepositions can lead to feelings of frustration and even a sense of pending failure.

What may feel like failure, even despair, may be the first symptom that process-centered education is in fact effective. This despair is something I call “displacement” which, I must add, combines several disciplinary definitions all at once. Displacement, as I define it, includes:
1. The Newtonian mechanics idea of a position in relation to an origin or previous position.

2. The psychological definition of displacement as a “mental defense mechanism” in which the mind “redirects” information or stimuli a learner/teacher feels is “dangerous” or “unacceptable” to information and stimuli previously thought to be “safe” or “acceptable.”

3. And, oddly enough, fencing: as “displacement’ is often a defense move in response to an attack or advance, one in which the fencer retreats, advances, ducks, employs a fleche (a surprise counter-attack), or steps off piste (the area of play).

When I first encountered process-centered education as an undergraduate in the English program at UNL, I was a junior and certain I had the college system “all figured out.” I thought I knew the A-level performance of “the good student.” When I began working with the chair, vice-chair, and writing program director, when those shaping the writing pedagogies at this institution, I was shocked (even angered) to learn my performance wasn’t what they wanted. Their emphasis on process, the many ways they asked their students to articulate their thinking instead of “readymade conclusions” was really frustrating for me. In a meeting with the writing program director, I was told to be patient, and that “one can’t undo 13 or so years of institutionalized education in just a few weeks or even a single semester.”

Indeed, the very word, “process” implies that learning will be ongoing and unending, that there isn’t a tidy “finish” or even completion of learning “goals.” Instead, the emphasis is on reshaping how we educate, the language we use to discuss or even evaluate our education. Thinking in terms of “the banking system,” the very systems we have come from, taking on process-centered work may also mean taking on a new vernacular. To critique process-centered education with or through our previous education experiences, to use the language or traditions of the oppressive system, is much like comparing apples with rules about oranges. The comparisons and our expectations need to be rewritten and reconsidered. In order to do this important work, in order to build critical lenses that will help us to develop or refine our critical education, I have designed the following Survival strategy:

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1 Author Donna Qualley, in her book, Turns of Thought: Teaching Composition as Reflexive Inquiry, describes “ready-made conclusions” as the finished product students submit for a grade that in no way represents all the thinking and inquiry behind it. Qualley argues that students are well-versed in the non-problematic, tidy student essay or thesis paper, but are often unprepared to explore their thinking behind their writing or reading strategies. Process-centered education seeks to bring all that messy stuff behind what we think and do into the foreground instead of the background of our work as individuals or a class.
• Recognize that one can’t “undo” years and years of product-centered or results-centered education in just a few weeks or even in one semester. The conversation and inquiry often last years beyond the initial contact with the process-centered teaching and learning.

• Recognize (and explore the idea) that your current language, a derivative of your K-12+ education, may not equip you to critique or inform process-centered teaching and learning.

• Recognize (and explore the idea) that lasting change in a person’s life most often occur after one is made so uncomfortable change is requisite. Meaning, only after one feels as if he or she is lost, failing, or “not getting it” will he or she begin to construct the kind of questions, thinking, or perspectives that will facilitate change.

• Recognize (and explore the idea) that oppression creates dependence on the system of oppression. Meaning, as one attempts to work outside “the banking system” of education as Freire defines it, one may actually desire the teaching tactics and submission from that very system.

For example: Students often express their displacement and preference to return to “the banking system” in the following ways (as I’ve taken from my previous students’ midterm and end of term assessments):

“I want more step-by-step instructions.”
“I just want a schedule with all the work laid out.”
“I wish she’d be more specific.”
“Just tell me what to write.”
“I do better when I have a writing prompt and rules.”
“I feel like I’m doing it all wrong.”
“I’m not that creative.”
“I just want to know the answer.”
“I like the freedom, but I want more direction.”
“I don’t understand how thinking connects to writing.”

• Recognize (and explore the idea) that teachers modeling process-centered education are often dismissed as not “doing any actual teaching” because they are not modeling and replicating the language, methods, and goals of “the banking system” model specifically, and the oppression generally, with which students are most familiar. At midterm, students are often at the apex of their displacement, and this can lead to both student and teacher frustrations that are exhibited in a multitude of ways, including but not limited to, apathy, accusations, and hostility (spoken or secret).

• Recognize (and explore the idea) that there are certain “freedoms” in oppressive teaching models, such as “the banking system.” For example, they require less
intellectual engagement from the student, and once the students master “the system,” students can treat school as separate from what affects students’ “real lives.”

- Recognize (and explore the idea) that with the lack of freedom comes the absence of autonomous, student-driven inquiry. Doing what one is told seems easier than risking complexity, determining one’s own purpose and intellectual interests, or even contributing to the intellectual climate and goals of the class. One gets a scapegoat in traditional education methods: Apathy, disinterest, and poor student results can be blamed on teachers and instructors.

- Recognize (and explore the idea) that until this conversation, you could not name the nature of your discontent, its origin, or possible solutions. We may need each other, our community, to determine where we’re going from here, what we most want to learn more about, and how to become autonomous, process-centered learners (and teachers).

- Recognize (and explore the idea) that we may need to work together, to ask questions of ourselves and each other, to redefine our own objectives beyond the acquisition of a grade or credits if we are to experience classroom learning as a democratic process – a process that students and instructors can continue long after their work together comes to a close.
Appendix F: Contemplative Response Instructions

A contemplative response is not summary. Most students are well-versed in the summary activity that, at its best, demonstrates “reading comprehension,” and at its worst functions as a “prove to the teacher I read” exercise. By comparison, a contemplative response functions as an exercise in qualitative research, a logical heuristic.

First, engage the text by following lines of inquiry:

- Which ideas in the text surprised or intrigued you? (Include cited excerpts, with page number – this should come from your own reading notes)
- Which ideas in the text frustrated or vexed you? (Include cited excerpts, with page number – this should come from your own reading notes).
- Which argument did you find intriguing?
- Which argument did you find lacking?

Then, explore the implications of the text’s ideas:

- What are the implications of these ideas in your own perspective, practice, and theory?
- What are the implications of these ideas and arguments in the context of what you already know in the subject area?
- What are the implications for you as a thinker (even outside the subject area)?
- What are the implications of these ideas within the larger construction of society and within the culture of school?
- What argument would you make in response to (contrary) or in support of the author’s ideas?

Contemplative responses should comprise at least five pages per week. You can write all five pages at once, or you can parse them out reading assignment to reading assignment. You can do a mixture of both. The goal is to make a writing appointment with yourself and keep it, at the same time every day or week. My own inquiry practices is a daily one, something I do at the end of the day so I can put ideas to rest before going to bed. On Saturday mornings, I often write in my own notebook to process all that has happened over the week. How your inquiry practice develops, is for you to determine.

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2 These centering questions come from the UNL Department of English Teachers’ Sourcebook.
3 The definition here, for our purposes: The implication can be in terms of logic, as in the logic that holds (stays true) between two propositions or groups of propositions (ideas) often with the virtue that one implication is logically deductible from the other. A common implication format would be, “Well, If Dr. Bones says Spock is irrational, Spock must be infected with the planet’s virus.” Deductive and inductive reasoning are part of the contemplative practice. It is up to you to determine how to best engage with ideas in ways that matter to you within your academic and personal lives.