



inside english

Journal of the English Council of California Two-Year Colleges

TYCA PACIFIC COAST: A REGION OF THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION OF NCTE

Volume XXVIII, Number 8

Spring 2004



In This Issue:

Comments from ECCTYC's "Crafting Literacies" conference participants	7
Selected Session Summaries from ECCTYC's "Crafting Literacies" conference	14
Why We Hate Clichés (And What We Should Hate Instead), by Charles Hood	14
Do Workshops Still Work?, by Mike Guista	18
Why Can't We Fail Failing Students?, by Shari Dinkins	22
Poetry and Book Reviews	30
Academic Senate for California Community Colleges Report, by Mark Snowwhite	34

INSIDE ENGLISH

A JOURNAL OF THE ENGLISH COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

Bruce Henderson
Editor
FULLERTON COLLEGE

Regular mail can be sent to Fullerton College, Humanities Division, 321 E. Chapman Ave., Fullerton, CA 92832-2095. Phone (714) 992-7741; FAX (509) 691-7673. You may email submissions to: bhenderson@fullcoll.edu.

inside english is published biannually (spring, fall) by the English Council of California Two-Year Colleges.

Subscriptions: If you are not currently receiving *inside english* through your college, please contact Sara Blake, El Camino College, 16007 Crenshaw Blvd., Torrance, CA 90506-0001. E-mail: sblake@elcamino.edu

ON THE WEB: WWW.ECCTYC.ORG

TYCA Pacific Coast: A Region of the Two-Year College
Association of the National Council of Teachers of English

President
STERLING J. WARNER
Evergreen Valley College
3095 Yerba Buena Rd.
San Jose, CA 95135
(408) 274-7900 X6605

First Vice President
LEE HERRICK
Fresno City College
Second Vice President
PETER RALEIGH
Modesto Junior College

Secretary
AMY OLSEN
Cuesta College

Treasurer
SARA BLAKE
El Camino College

Immediate Past President
LYNN FAUTH
Oxnard College

TYCA Representative
SALLY FITZGERALD
Chabot College

Regional Directors

I. JUDIE HINMAN
College Of The Redwoods

II. PERRI GALLAGHER
Ohlone College
TOM HURLEY
Diablo Valley College

III. HEIDI RAMERIZ
Hartnell College
SRAVANI BANERJEE
Evergreen Valley College

IV. PATRICK BETTENCOURT
Modesto Junior College
MARTHA RICE
San Joaquin Delta College

V. SHANA BARTRAM
Reedley College
GARY ENNS
Cerro Coso Community College

VI. ELISSA CARUTH
Oxnard College
MELANIE ECKFORD-PROSSOR
Santa Barbara City College

VII. ROGER MARHEINE
Pasadena City College
SUSAN BRANT
College of the Canyons

VIII. DARREN CHIANG-SCHULTHEISS
Fullerton College
PETER MARCOUX
El Camino College

IX. MICHAEL DINIELLI
Chaffey College
MARK SNOWHITE
Crafton Hills College

X. TINA RAMSEY
Imperial Valley College
CARMEN JAY
San Diego Miramar College

Adjunct Directors-at-Large

DARREL THOMPSON
El Camino College

JOHN THOMAS
Diablo Valley College

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

inside english welcomes articles, reviews, and other writing of interest to instructors of English in two-year colleges, as well as letters in response to articles or on issues of concern to English faculty. Poetry is also welcome, as are manuscripts for the occasional columns, "Part-Time Faculty Concerns," and "One Good Idea" (describing a single classroom technique or approach). Articles should be no more than ten double-spaced typed pages; reviews, five pages; and letters, one page. Please do not double-space before each new sentence or set strange tabs when sending your submission--the less formatting the better.

The editor reserves the right to edit manuscripts to conform to the language and style established in *inside english*. Manuscripts not conforming to the format described above will be returned unread; manuscripts not accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelopes cannot be returned or acknowledged. In general, manuscripts should follow The MLA Style Manual and The NCTE Guide for NonSexist Language. Articles, poems, and reviews should be titled, with the author's name and campus affiliation(s) under the title. All submissions should have each page numbered. When appropriate, parenthetical citations and a Work(s) Cited page in MLA style should be included. Please enclose a cover letter that includes the title of the submission and the author's mailing address and telephone number, a separate brief biographical statement in the third person, and a self-addressed stamped legal-sized envelope. Articles submitted electronically can be sent as an email attachment to bhenderson@fullcoll.edu (rich text format strongly preferred--and don't forget to put your name in the document).

From the Editor

We have a new spring issue and a new governor, and we hope important budget issues will be favorably resolved soon. Meanwhile the everyday work of good teaching goes on. Articles in this issue explore our kneejerk condemnation of clichés, a reexamination of the creative writing workshop, the question of what to do with failing students (i.e. should we actually fail them?!?), and an account of the academy from an outsider/punk perspective.

Also featured here are selected highlights from last fall's ECCTYC conference in San Diego in the form of session summaries and the result of a participants' survey. A selection of poetry and a book review round out the contents of this Spring 2004 issue.

Please send along your own articles, letters, reviews and poetry for the upcoming fall issue.

Bruce Henderson

Fullerton College
bhenderson@fullcoll.edu



Illustrations: Bob Aul - www.aulcallahan.com
Layout: Angela Henderson

President's Message

by Sterling Warner, Evergreen Valley College

Greetings to one and all in the Year of the Monkey. 2004 promises to be yet another year of challenges, inviting reflection on the past, scrutiny of the present, and application of sound teaching pedagogy to sustain quality college education amid budget constraints and educational politics in the future. As always, ECCTYC remains dedicated to the advancement of what's best for teaching and learning in two-year colleges.

ECCTYC's commitment to diversity and its blend of new and experienced officers and regional directors revitalize the organization on an ongoing basis. During the Fall semester 2003, for instance, Shana Bartram from Reedley College (Region V) and Patrick Bettencourt from Modesto Junior College (Region IV), as well as a second Adjunct Representative joined the bevy of ECCTYC regional co-directors. In the spring of 2004, we will also welcome several novel fresh faces to the board from Regions I, VIII, and X.

Unfortunately, such positive changes go hand in hand with the loss of expert leadership in the English Profession. Nonetheless, long standing ECCTYC members frequently mentor new officer and directors or encourage "new voice" to emerge from our ranks. As such, even former ECCTYC leaders continue to serve the board and the Two-Year College English Instructors it represents.

One long-time ECCTYC figure, Lynn Fauth, officially moves off the board this spring. Former Regional Director, ECCTYC Treasurer, ECCTYC President, and our current Immediate Past President, Fauth has been a bastion of information—not to mention a first rate scholar, active national voice, and all around helpful individual; we hope he remains active on ECCTYC Board in the capacity of researcher.

Sara Blake, another key individual in college English, has served ECCTYC for over a decade, beginning as an ECCTYC Region VI Co-director, and presently finishing her third term as ECCTYC Treasurer in June 2004. Her wit, common sense, fiscal skills, and overall expertise will be missed, for she will not be standing for reelection. An author of college textbooks, an award-winning instructor, and a current force in the national YRC conference in college composition and rhetoric, Blake will leave a significant legacy behind her when she steps down from

the Executive Board. Tina Ramsey, formerly ECCTYC Co-director, Region X, from Imperial Valley, accepted a new full time position at Yuba Community College. Pending Board approval in April, Ramsey will move on to the position of ECCTYC Treasurer—a position where Sara Blake will no doubt serve as mentor.

During 2003, ECCTYC made major advancements on its web site thanks to web tender Darren Chiang-Schultheiss. Although we appreciate his efforts moderating our discussion board, it still tends to be somewhat underused; nonetheless, it provides us with an ideal place to discuss a plethora of issues that not only concern community college education in general, but also, ECCTYC operations in particular. Please take advantage of the discussion board. My most recent message there regarded a call for ways to rejuvenate our commitment to conferences and workshop attendance as a way of ongoing professional development. Post your responses to this and other topics at www.ecctyc.org.

ECCTYC 2003: Crafting Literacies was a resounding success when judged in terms of first rate workshops, quality speakers, thought provoking presentations, great hospitality, and impressive exhibitions. Additionally, to commemorate the 30th anniversary of ECCTYC, the organization offered attendees the option of earning up to two-post baccalaureate units through California State University, Bakersfield. We plan to continue this practice at all future conferences.

2003 Nina Theiss Award Winner John Lovas set the tone for *ECCTYC 2003: Crafting Literacies* with a rousing keynote speech; author Daniel Chacon, our Friday Luncheon Speaker, brought a creative edge to our conference in full swing; and poet Amy Uyematsu, the Saturday Luncheon Presenter, concluded our conference with memorable poetic readings and a stimulating question and answer follow-up session. I would like to offer Lee Herrick, chair of the conference's speakers' committee for a job well done—not to mention the rest of the ECCTYC board members for their essential roles at the conference.

I would further like to congratulate Marueen Ellen O'Leary from Diablo Valley College, recipient of the distinguished *inside english* Best Article Award, 2002-2003 for "Showing My Seams: Exposing My (writing) Self to

continued on next page...

Students” (Spring 2003). Additionally, I want to commend first runner up, William Silver, for his deftly researched and very timely article, “What Does Research Say About Differential Teaching Loads for Writing Courses?” Both O’Leary and Silver represent the sort of work befitting the teacher/scholar, and I have no doubt that the *inside English* Best Article Award will continue to be as competitive in 2005.

While a broad cross-section of the 52 workshops and sessions from *ECCTYC 2004: Crafting Literacies* will be discussed elsewhere in this issue of *inside english*, some of the more popular workshops included “Demystifying the Media: Lived Experience in the Composition Classroom,” “Remembering Orange County;” “Shakespeare Comes Alive!” “Drinkers at the Well: Developmental Writers in the Writing Center;” “So Why Haven’t You Retired, John?;” “How Hybrids, Blogs and Conferences Keep Me Going;” “Teaching in a Time of War;” “Desperately Seeking Employment: How to Secure a Full-time Tenure-track English Position at the Community College Level;” “New Frontier: Students Who are Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Teach;” “Slaying the Dragon Lady: Asian American Women Poets;” “Professional Writing: Moving Down the Road of the Teacher/Scholar;” “Exploring Diversity: Ways to Use the Diverse Student Population in the Composition Classroom;” “NCTE Writing Initiative;” and “There Are Computers in My Classroom—Now What?”

In spite of *ECCTYC 2003: Crafting Literacies* overall success, the number of conference attendees fell short of our expectations, largely because community college instructors could not afford to absorb conference expenses without some sort of staff development assistance. While effective to some degree, online or satellite conferences cannot duplicate the dynamics of face-to-face conferences, nor will they replace ECCTYC, NCTE, CCCCs, YRC, CCHA or other major conferences. Again, please refer to the ECCTYC discussion board and share your ideas on how to weather the hardship of funding conference travel costs and paying registration fees while staff development monies remain tight or nonexistent.

During the Spring Semester 2004, ECCTYC will continue to work closely with the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, particularly on matters dealing with minimum English graduation requirements for an Associate’s Degree. As stated on the Academic Senate for Community Colleges “Events: Curriculum Colloquia” 2004 web site, *“The Curriculum Committee of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges is holding two Curriculum Colloquia to discuss possible Title 5 changes in the English and Mathematic requirements for Associate degrees. The subject has been under deliberation for several years, and the Cur-*

riculum Committee is charged with writing a paper about the issues by the Fall 2004 Plenary Session.” Regardless of where people stand on this issue, ECCTYC and ASCCC encourage full-time and adjunct instructors to attend upcoming meetings and voice their opinions. For a complete list of times, dates, and meeting locations, consult www.academicssenate.cc.ca.us/Events/CurriculumCol/Announcement.htm or the state Academic Website: www.academicssenate.cc.ca.us.

Another topic needing immediate English faculty participation and input would be the IMPAC discussions coordinated by Mark Snowwhite, ECCTYC Region IX Co-director, CCCAS Liaison, and Secretary for the CCCAS. In a nutshell, “The Intersegmental Major Preparation Articulated Curriculum (IMPAC) project is a unique intersegmental, faculty-designed and faculty-run project to ensure that students transferring from the community colleges to UC and CSU are prepared for work in their chosen major and can avoid having to repeat coursework” (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges). For more information about IMPAC meetings, refer to www.cal-impac.org or get in touch with Mark Snowwhite at Crafton Hills College (909) 389-3334.

Apart from IMPAC gatherings and State Academic Senate colloquiums, several forthcoming conferences offer a lot to the college English instructor. The CCCC 2004, *Making Composition Matter: Students, Citizens, Institutions, and Advocacy*, in San Antonio, Texas will touch upon many of the essential issues two and four year colleges face as institutions of higher education. Doug Hesse, the CCCCs Associate Chair and Conference Coordinator, has put together a marvelous program. As usual, National TYCA (Two-Year College English Association) will provide a strand of workshops and events relevant to higher education in general and two-year colleges in particular. For a full conference preview and html and PDF downloadable versions of the text see: www.ncte.org/profdev/conv/cccc04/news/113997.htm.

In California, The National YRC (Young Rhetorician’s Conference) in composition and rhetoric for two and four year colleges and universities meets at the Monterey Beach Resort from Thursday morning, June 24 until Saturday at noon—concluding in plenty of time to check out of the hotel (or stay another night if you will), catch a few sets at the annual Monterey Blues Festival, take a drive to Big Sur, visit the Monterey Aquarium, stroll down Canary Row, have a bite to eat in Carmel—the list goes on and on. Enjoy the YRC both as a unique conference and a well-earned retreat at the close of another academic year. For more information, contact Sara Blake sblake@elcamino.edu or me jsterlingw@aol.com. Like the ECCTYC 2003 Conference, the YRC makes it possible to

earn up to two post baccalaureate units from CSU Bakersfield for attending the conference.

Finally, in August 2004, ECCTYC President Elect, Dr. Peter Raleigh in conjunction with The Shakespeare Academy at Modesto Junior College, offers students and instructors alike an incomparable London trip and study of the bard's works through 1) Shakespeare's Life, Time, and Works; 2) History of Drama: Emphasis on Elizabethans; and 3) Shakespeare's Masterpieces on Film in Shakespeare Summer in London 2004: *July* 18 through August 20, 2004. Once again, CSU, Bakersfield worked with the Shakespeare Academy, and participants now can earn three CSU units per course (a total of nine units) for studying Shakespeare abroad. Check out the advertisement for Shakespeare in London 2004 elsewhere in this issue or contact Dr. Peter Raleigh c/o Modesto Junior College (209) 526-6974 or raleighp@yosemite.cc.ca.us for additional information.

When the ECCTYC Board meets this April in Sacramento, we will discuss everything from IMPAC to differential loading. When your ECCTYC Regional Co-Directors call a meeting this spring, I urge everyone to attend or at the very least, email concerns to them. Finally, I am in the process of reviewing proposals for this year's YRC Conference in Monterey. If you are interested in presenting an interactive workshop or moderating a session, be sure to get in touch with me ASAP. Have a great semester.

Official ECCTYC Wares



Pencils or coffee? You decide! \$9.99 and up.
Go to <http://www.cafeshops.com/ecctyc>
to place your order

Quoted

Comments from the October ECCTYC "Crafting Literacies" conference participants

a

"The level of enthusiasm and energy was outstanding!"

"An excellent forum for networking, meeting, and supporting colleagues and the profession during these budgetarily uncertain times."

"A pleasure--I look forward to the next one!"

"The conference was a great way to inspire each other to continue growing, changing, and learning as teachers."

"I enjoyed the topics at this conference; they were eclectic and practical."

"I loved the interaction with colleagues from other schools and all the new ideas for creative teaching."

"ECCTYC is the only place where I find colleagues interested in talking about teaching."

"The conference is a great way to connect with other instructors and to affirm to yourself that you are on the right track."

Selected Session Summaries from **ECCTYC 2003 “*Crafting Literacies*”**

October 16 – 18, 2003, San Diego

a

”But I’m Such a Good Actor!”: The Paradigm Shift from ‘The Sage on the Stage’ to the ‘Guide on the Side’ in Online Instruction”

In this round table discussion led by Julie LaMay and Peggy Madden of Chaffey College, conference participants shared various techniques for teaching on-line or in on-line hybrid courses. The issues ranged from how to engage students in the on-line environment through discussion boards and the types, quantity, and frequency of discussion questions to matters of increasing student retention in on-line courses, which by the group’s consensus typically is around 50%. Various members also offered suggestions about how to better target the right audience for on-line courses through specific advertisements in the course schedule. One of the most important points that the presenters made was the need to make the on-line version of the course as student-centered as possible as a means of increasing retention.

Darren Chiang-Schultheiss

Session: New Frontier: Students Who are Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Teach

Presenter: Marilyn Valentino, TYCA Associate Chair and Lorain County Community College Faculty Member

After presenting information and statistics about college students whose actions indicate they may be “mad, bad or dangerous,” Marilyn Valentino encouraged the audience to share experiences with students who represent those she described. Then, she showed videos where students and teachers acted out situations such as the student who becomes too friendly with a faculty member or a student who uses racist language. The audience offered suggestions about ways to work with such students and Marilyn gave suggestions of what to avoid in the classroom and how to deal with situations that may arise.

Sally Fitzgerald

“What’s Cooking in English?”

What do food and literature have in common? From baby beef jerky (Swift’s “A Modest Proposal”) to angel hair pasta (Pope’s “Rape of the Lock”), Amy Olsen from Cuesta College demonstrated the imaginative connections students in her British and American literature classes have made between food and literature. Amy’s “lite” approach makes a serious subject palatable for her students.

“‘Underprepared’ Does not Have to Mean ‘Uninformed’: Basic Skills and Information Competency”

Electronic research is often a component of college composition classes, but what does “information competency” mean for students six levels below college English? Gloria Heller from Santa Monica College demonstrated how she introduces pre-remedial students to the Internet.

“Poetry: The Bridge Between Rules and Freedom in the Composition Classroom”

Ruth Nolan from College of the Desert uses poetry as a way to show students the importance of connecting logic and rational thinking with creativity and emotion. Nolan shared the colorful handouts she created to teach key concepts and terminology and modeled techniques she uses in class for both developmental and college level courses.

Judie Hinman

”Demystifying the Media”

In a wide-ranging, incisive and very well-attended session, Miramar College Professor of English and Media Studies, Carmen Jay, analysed the content of TV sitcoms, commercials and art works from the 50s to the present. Carmen clearly demonstrated the gender, ethnic and socio-economic biases of the selected media in such a crystal-clear fashion so that all participants will be able to return to their respective campuses and present similarly cogent analyses to their own students.

Peter Raleigh

“Literacy Unleashed: An Integrated Approach to Teaching Reading and Writing”

Colleagues at San Francisco State University and Skyline College presented their integrated approach to teaching reading and writing at the developmental and transfer levels. This FIPSE-sponsored program is based on seven principles: integration, time, academic membership, community, development, sophistication, and purposeful communication. The presenters described these curricula, teaching and reading strategies. One particularly interesting feature of this approach is the high degree of collaboration between a community college and a SCU. After five years of testing this approach at SF State and about two years at Skyline, data suggest that courses promoting the reading and writing connection increase retention, success, and persistence.

Tom Hurley

“The California Community College State Academic Senate: Issues and Concerns”

Mark Snowwhite, the original presenter, was unable to attend, so Edith Conn, session moderator, led the discussion. Among the topics covered were SB6, which proposes masterplan changes including to governance, involving the role of the local academic senates. Also reviewed was SB 338, having to do with state funding of classes with concurrent enrollment of high school students in community college courses. Sterling Warner introduced information on the ‘IMPACT’ project: Intersegmental Major Preparation Articulated Curriculum. He also reminded the group of ECCTYC’s recent resolution urging community college faculty to adopt the successful completion of a college-level English Writing course as a requirement for the AA and AS degrees.

Edith Conn

Continued on next page...

“Drinkers at the Well: Developmental Writers in the Writing Center”

Instructors from College of the Redwoods presented a well-organized program giving the history and current status of the Writing Center at College of the Redwoods, which recently opened a new building housing the center and featuring top technology, offering student tutors as well as professional assistance. At C of R there is a mandatory requirement that students use the Writing Center, that work counting as part of the students' course grade. The speakers were Judie Hinman and Pan Kessler who teach developmental English and Leslie Leach who is the writing center director. A comprehensive handout covering all aspects of the center activities was distributed.

Edith Conn

“NCTE Writing Initiative”

Presenter: Paul Bodmer, Associate Executive Director of NCTE

NCTE is working with colleges to help them develop a framework and philosophy regarding the importance of writing across the curriculum. The discussion included concerns about where colleges give their philosophy about writing (for example, in course descriptions, or in a mission statement, or elsewhere). Other points of discussion included the significance of “writing across the curriculum,” how learning communities can or cannot promote writing, the role of SAT and ACT tests affecting writing, and how, and if, teaching grammar relates to writing. At a national committee meeting under NCTE auspices in November, these and other issues will be explored. NCTE hopes to have a position paper ready by spring 2004.

Edith Conn

“Starting at Ground Zero: Intercultural Literacy in the Composition Classroom”

Presenter: Susan Sink

Sink told about a project she began after the 9/11 attacks. The class had just finished a unit on non-violence, and the students had admired the work of Martin Luther King and Ghandi, but the day after the attacks most of the students were saying “bomb them.” When Sink pointed out that their response did not fit their non-violent mode, one of the students said, “That unit is over.” Sink then began a project to look into different forms of terrorism to help students think critically about this important issue. The students developed group presentations on a variety of terrorist activities including the IRA and Israeli/Palestinian conflicts. The presentation formats included a talk show, power point programs, and a variety recording student reactions to 9/11. Sink learned from this activity that it was difficult for some students to continually face the topic of terrorism. It made them feel defeated, but for other students the projects gave them “possession of the topic” and it made terrorism and its consequences meaningful for them. She also learned that students will not change their views in one semester, but that they can move toward more diverse views on a subject in that time.

Amy Olson

“Integrating Diversity into Composition Curriculum”

Presenter: Christy Flores

Flores gave some tips on how to create racial and ethnic diversity in the classroom. She talked about some of the pitfalls such as “tokenizing” a text by using one text to represent a whole culture as is often done with *The House on Mango Street* to represent the whole Chicana experience. She also cautioned against having “multicultural week” where many multicultural readings or issues are lumped into one week of study. She advocated integrating multicultural studies into the themes of the course. She suggested some useful texts such as Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderland/La Frontera*, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*, Sandra Cisneros' *Woman Hollering Creek*, and Dany Senna's *Caucasia*. Flores said it is not easy to create multicultural classes, but it is worth the effort to face that racism does still exist.

Amy Olson

“Film and Literature: Translating ‘Everyday Use’ to Film”

Presenter: Bruce Schwartz

Schwartz showed his film of Alice Walker’s short story “Everyday Use” followed by an interview with Walker about the story. The film beautifully captured the changing dynamics of African-American identity Walker presents in her story. The interview gave excellent background on Walker’s feelings about responses to the Civil Rights movement. The interview also included lovely images of quilts and explained how quilting is an art form that has only recently received its due. Schwartz also shared his experience in acquiring the rights to film the story, a process that took almost ten years.

“Remembering Orange County by Karl Rosenquist”

Roberta Tagerz, Rosenquist’s colleague at Santiago Canyon College, introduced his video by reading a tribute one of his summer school students had written after Rosenquist’s sudden death three weeks into the semester. The tribute eloquently told how Dr. Rosenquist had made a reluctant student want to attend a 9 am summer school English class. Rosenquist had made a video about reactions to living in Orange County in the spring of 2002. Students brought in family pictures of Orange County to develop a classification paper on community identity. The assignment blossomed into a project where students brought in memorabilia related to Orange County and displayed it in the library, and Rosenquist videotaped their reactions to Orange County as well as interviewing students, faculty, classified staff, and administrators. The result was a fascinating look at a community and the diverse reactions to living in a growing county.

Melannie Eckford-Prossor

“Organizing a Student Conference”

Presenters: Krista Walker and Brian Kennedy

This session covered both the philosophical and practical matters involved in conceiving and running a student conference. Philosophically, the organizers asserted that such a conference engages and empowers all types of students. Practically, the organizers discuss a six-month calendar to use when putting on a student conference.

Martha Rice

“Shakespeare Comes Alive!”

Presenters: Peter Raleigh, Michael Flachmann, Barbara Tull, Carmen Madden.

This lively workshop provided valuable techniques for unlocking Shakespearean texts and stimulating student interest in the emotional subtexts. The audience was involved in active participation. What fun! Peter Raleigh, Director of the Shakespeare Academy at Modesto Junior College, led off by giving an interview of his approach to deconstructing Shakespeare’s texts. Using “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” he led the group through a brief analysis of character, setting, and imagery. Barbara Tull and Carmen Madden, both Shakespeare instructors at Ohlone College, provided exercises guaranteed to relate central issues in the plays to their own lives. If Oprah and Jerry Springer formatting works on TV, why not in the classroom? Michael Flachmann, Resident Dramatist at the Utah Shakespeare Festival and Carnegie Foundation Professor of the Year, captivated the audience with spirited hands on exercises meant to demonstrate how instructors can create a participatory atmosphere in which students deal with Shakespeare plays as scripts—alive with action and emotional subtext—rather than as pieces of literature to be dryly analyzed. The workshop was truly a workshop—a performance not a recitation—a great addition to the conference.

Darrell Thompson

Continued on next page...

Conference Luncheon Presenters

“How to Teach a Research Paper”

Presenter: Charles Kovach

Mr. Kovach led off a lively session regarding the teaching of the research paper. His portion discussed the importance of helping students to recognize the difference between the various types of sources. Armed with a suitcase full of hard-copy sources he illustrated the distinctions that students often neglect to notice—the edition of a book, the differences in journals, whether continuous pagination or otherwise, how to approach a newspaper and the like. By having students do various practices he helps the students to understand the variety of sources before they actually have to try citing them in assignments.

“Maintaining Your Voice: Research as Conversation”

Presenter: Robert Lundergan

The topic continued with Mr. Lundergan explaining his successes when using a step-by-step method to help students develop a research paper. By treating the research as conversation, he relies heavily on conferences and group work, which he says not only cuts down on plagiarism, but also helps the students own and develop their topic. Further he, similar to Kovach, has students write the first draft without sources. Sources are later added and expanded upon with attention to their appropriate location and context. This, he argued, leads student to a final product that is less source driven and more relevant to the student's native knowledge and interests. Mr. Lundergan ended his portion by asking the attendees, “Are we having our students do too much in Freshman English courses?” We debated whether Freshman Composition was the appropriate forum for teaching research, when it is so central to the entire educational experience. Naturally, we left the debate unresolved, but departed with interesting thoughts about research, our approaches to it, and our roles regarding it.



Daniel Chacon displaying his new novel, *And the Shadows Took Him*



Tom Hurley presenting the award for Best Article in inside English
(Winner: Mareen Ellen O'Leary, Diablo Valley College)



John Lovas, Nina Theiss Award winner

The Shakespeare Academy at Modesto Junior College presents

Shakespeare Summer in London 2004

July 18th - August 20th, 2004



- * Comfy apartments in Bloomsbury/Clerkenwell Districts
 - * 3 Courses: *Shakespeare's Life, Times & Works;
 - * History of Drama: Emphasis on the Elizabethans;
 - * Shakespeare Masterpieces on Film
 - * 3 semester units for each course. CSU credit available
- * 7 Shakespeare theatre tickets, including: The New Globe and The RSC
- * 2 full-day trips to Stratford and Oxford/Blenheim Palace

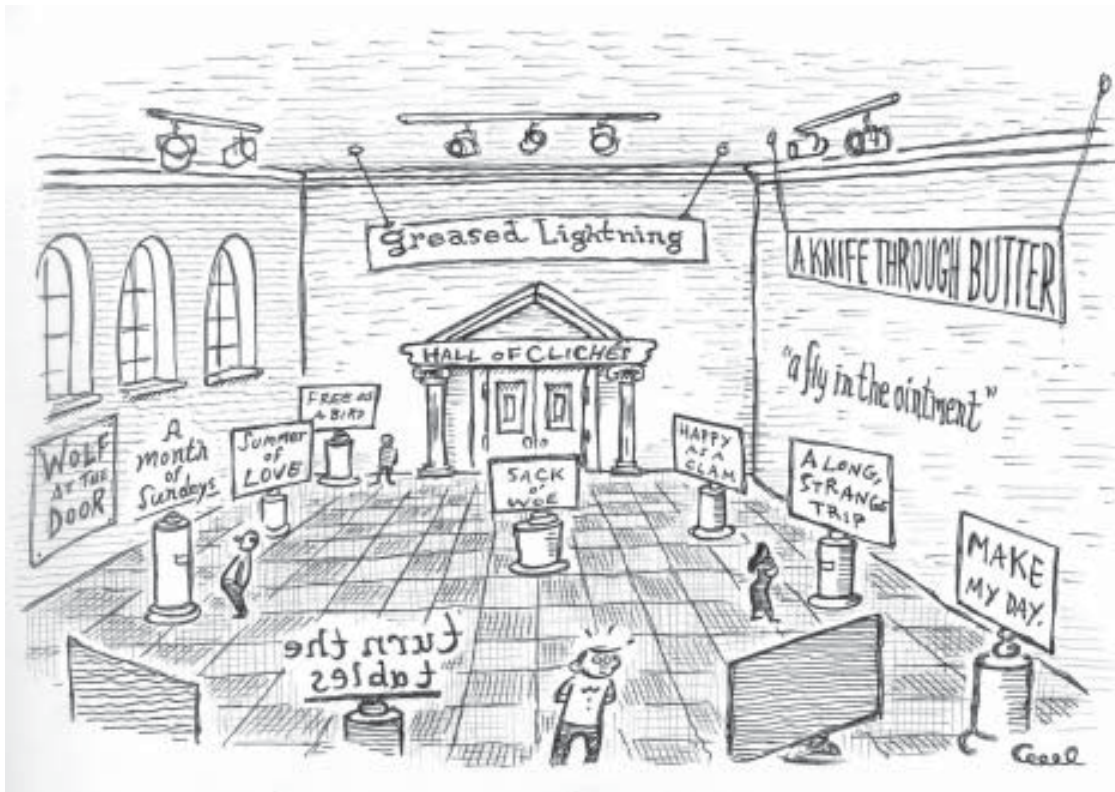
Cost: \$3100 + \$100 refundable sec. dep. + MJC fees+ air (approx \$750)

**For more information on the
Shakespeare Summer in London program,
please contact:**

Dr. Peter Raleigh: (209) 575-7841

or

raleighp@yosemite.cc.ca.us



Why We Hate Clichés (And What We Should Hate Instead)

by Charles Hood
Antelope Valley College

Harold Bloom doesn't like clichés. Neither does Martin Amis, who has a five hundred page book called *The War Against Cliché*. While I hesitate to disagree with these two gents, one of whom wrote a book titled *Genius* and the other of whom is one, it does seem a bit harsh to condemn Harry Potter just because J.K. Rowling uses the expression "they went out to stretch their legs." Are clichés really all that bad?

Oh yes, chorus the style books. Clichés are *way* bad, burning bad, Al-Queda bad. And most English teachers agree. Using clichés reveals laziness, and sloth, after all, is sinful. Further, sloppy language leads to sloppy thinking—just ask George Orwell. Well, okay then, but do we all agree what a cliché is, and if we do, why it is bad? And once we sort that out, can we actually show that cleaning up prose cleans up thought? Bloom takes this as self-evident, but it may not be.

Rewind to September, 2003. Apparently Stephen King won a national writing award. While I probably could go the rest of my life without reading a single novel by Mr. King, I don't consider him to be the worst writer in the world. He does, after all, publish in *The New Yorker*, and doesn't he donate money to

literacy campaigns or something? Affable hound that I am, I find it hard to rouse myself from my front porch stupor long enough to lift my snout in the air and bark bark bark at Stephen King. Not so the vigilant Mr. Bloom. He published an essay in the *L.A. Times* last September objecting in the firmest language to Mr. King's award, and went on to backhand Harry Potter while he was at it.

In the piece—after reminding us that Stephen King "is an immensely inadequate writer"—Bloom describes reading the first Harry Potter book. "I suffered a great deal in the process," he says. "The writing was dreadful; the book was terrible. As I read, I noticed that every time a character went for a walk, the author wrote instead that the character 'stretched his legs.' I began marking on the back of an envelope every time that phrase was repeated. I stopped only after I had marked the envelope several dozen times."

Had he marked less and read more (reading in the sense of sinking into a text like taking a bath: enjoy the warmth, don't criticize the pH of tap water), he probably wouldn't have had this problem. But his disdain raises an interesting issue, since at

some level, Hogwarts aside, many of us share his bias. Let's look now at what clichés are and why they are so (supposedly) evil.

Please Don't Squeeze the Charmin (what is a cliché?)

Perhaps it is easiest to teach writing if we don't look too closely at the terms we assume we know the meaning of—"thesis," "good English," "clichés." Surveying for this article, I found it hard to be sure what was or was not a cliché. If I say "neither a borrower nor a lender be," am I being cliché, giving good advice, quoting Polonius, or quoting Shakespeare who may have been quoting an Elizabethan commonplace? Stock phrases often originate in literature, so shouldn't I be glad they still have some shelf life left?

Some books solve the problem by ignoring it. The term gets no treatment anywhere in my 700 page *Oxford English Grammar* nor in the first five handbooks of literary terms that I checked. Yet when it is mentioned, most books agree: it is that which is banal, hackneyed, tired, worn-out—apparently, as a party guest, a cliché is a cross between a boor and a shabby carpet. Others sources limn them as twilight expressions, the embers of thought. "In clichés we see fragments of language apparently dying, yet unable to die" notes *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* (186). I like this—pass the stake and mallet, because putting it this way I now feel as if in marking student clichés I am doing a useful and even merciful form of euthanasia—but it hardly helps me know the c-word when I see it. That entry goes on to say that these fragments are dying not from underuse but overuse.

True, you can wear a thing out from too much use, be it Calvin Kleins or clutch plates, and true too, that is a common way this linguistic problem gets identified. We don't want to be members of any club which will have us, so if a phrase is used a lot, it risks being described as used up, worn out, exhausted, muerte. One problem thus is ubiquity, but not only of the ubiquity of phrases labeled as clichés, but of the expression itself. "Cliché" is cliché—it is worn out, overused, without specific meaning. *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* points out that the term, in addition to its application to language, "is widely used to refer to any social, artistic, literary, dramatic, cinematic, or other formula that through overexposure has, in the view of a commentator, become trite and commonplace" (222). Cliché, then, is a synonym for "bad" or "yuck" or "I can't think of what else to say but I just don't like it." You've seen this too I bet. Imagine this exchange: "What's wrong with the poem I just showed you?" "It's too cliché."

Does such a comment even have any critical validity? Can there be such a thing as cliché sex? A cliché sermon? A cliché life? The term is everywhere and nowhere. "Did you read the latest attack on (or support for) Bush?" "Yes, I did, it was horrible—filled with lies and riddled with clichés."

Yet once again we see that "riddled with clichés" is itself a cliché, even though it is not listed in my 400 page *Dictionary of Clichés*. It just is one, we're sure of it. Like Communists, we know them when we see 'em, even when we can't quite define them. Oh wot the hell—rather than say that it is "a string of some bad words that maybe are too popular for their own good," for now let's just agree to say that a cliché is, you know, a CLICHÉ, and move on. We can leave exact definitions to lexicographers.

Why We Hate the Talaban (oops, I mean clichés)

Even assuming we have a shared sense of meaning, I still think that as graders, most English teachers (myself included) are too easily ticked off by clichés. We overmark them, for four reasons.

(a) We take clichés personally. Comma splices don't mean that much to me one way or the other, but once a student says "back in the day" and means the misty, distant era of, oh, say, 1985, it's hard not to feel ever so slightly insulted, isn't it? I mean come on, none of us wants to think of ourselves as out of the game, so even if we know we're no longer twenty-something, we still don't want to be thought of as ossified has-beens, which is what a misplaced "back in the day" implies. It is not just a cliché, it is a

If we insist on originality too loudly, we then have to expect students to produce *Finnigans Wake* every morning, and even that book is in some ways a rehashing of itself page after page.

shove in the chest. "Hey," you want to say, "at least have 'back in the day' be some era before I went to graduate school." So, feelings hurt, we respond with a red pen. It's only natural. (I think a similar reaction happens when we grade papers after a particular grammar lesson, on active voice for example or the semi-colon, and see exactly those same just-reviewed problems still occurring, as if the students are taunting us with their refusal to learn a single damn thing).

(b) Clichés spotlight the writer's cultural illiteracy. Most of my students probably couldn't name ten U.S. presidents consecutively, tell me the difference between William Blake and Robert Blake, or explain what connects *Seven Samurai*, *The Magnificent Seven*, and *Bug's Life*. Well, all right, but if ignorance is bliss, then I am ever so blissified not to know how deep is the river of what they don't know. What happens when students don't just write clichés but miswrite them (pre-Madonna, tow the line, a doggy dog world) is that they display their ignorance like a red union suit hung out to dry. "Jesus," you think, "can't this loser at least spell the clichés right? What's wrong with this lunkhead?" Now you know not only that the student can't write, but that he or she can't read, either—the MTV Generation, indeed. It's hard to be even the teensiest bit generous with grades at that point. (This is when you open your next lecture with, "Back in my day at least we KNEW how to spell the clichés we were using.")

One of my creative writing students recently wrote "mist" when she intended "midst," and it was not a typo. ("The hero strode through the mist of the crowd" is almost a clever line—too bad she didn't mean it as such). My opinion of her dwindled,

since how can you write if you don't read? Not to know how to spell or use "midst" in and of itself means nothing, but if one wishes to be a writer, then not knowing it reveals a hesitancy to commit to one's craft, or so says Hood, so high up on his high horse he's about to get a nose bleed. Yet you want to know what? Some perfectly good writers can't spell, and my assumptions about this particular student probably reveal more about my readiness to judge than they do her unwillingness to be a good apprentice.

(c) Clichés are easy to mark. Ever get those sentences which are simultaneously a fragment, a run-on, a predication fault, and a fallacy? Somehow the little abbreviations in the grammar handbook don't really fit (how about a proofreader's symbol for "this sentence is really, really, really screwed up"?). You know what I mean: sometimes to explain an error would take a page and half, single-spaced. But clichés? Like telling pennies from pebbles: clean, simple, easy to spot, and, above all, easy to mark. Zoom—"cl" goes your margin note, your eyes already re-reading the mess of a sentence which follows it. If every time we had to note a cliché in a paper we had to write "Rumplestiltskin" in the margin, I bet cliché-marking would drop by 90%.

(d) Clichés are accumulative. Sock me in the shoulder and I will say "ow," rub my arm, and demand crossly, "what did you do that for?" Do it ten times in a row and I will reach for the pepper spray while speed-dialing 911. Once is almost okay but too much is definitely too much. In any given student paper, there may only be three or four (or ten or twenty) clichés. But for us, we don't read just one paper, we read class sets of papers, so the our fed-up-to-hereness with errors compounds exponentially. Remember Bloom and his hash marks on the envelope? Once he started grading Rowling he was no longer reading her. His indigestion rumbled like Vesuvius with each repeat of the supposed offense. I bet he was really grinding the pen tip into the paper once he wrote down the twentieth lapse. It's easy to make people wrong, easy and fun and in our profession almost inevitable. No wonder Bloom hated the Harry Potter book—it became work, darned unpleasant work. I suspect most of the rest of us just let ourselves read it as a story (a children's story at that) and if we noticed the occasional redundancy, just shrugged and let it go. Not meaning to radicalize the profession or nothing, but there may be an element of that ease which may apply to our day jobs.

Stale Bread vs. Stale Advertising

Here's a scary thought: our students do worse things than write with clichés. The wrapper surrounding their ideas may have misprints or hackneyed phrasing, but much more insidious are the stale ideas themselves, the moldy bread inside the wrapper. Those are where we should focus our criticism, not on the dopey writing. How about a new abbreviation, not "cl" but "clid" (cliché ideas). This is where we need to focus our attention. More on this below.

A Brief Aside for a Historical-Philosophical-Relativist Observation

Not to make this essay any longer (or more contrarian), but it does seem at least worth a footnote to acknowledge that this whole originality kick is contrary to traditional rhetoric and hence to ways writing was taught back in the day. If we assume that an intense focus on originality and the primacy of individual expression are by-products of Romanticism, then we end up admitting that there are other ways of validly expressing coherent ideas besides just the witty, first person belletristic model of *Harper's* magazine. Even inside our own discipline we can see this, at least with a negative example. Near as I can make out, each issue of *PMLA* has something intelligent to offer, but the prose of most *PMLA* articles is about as sexy and original as insurance policies. *PMLA*-y academic jargon is writing which conforms to a particular style, and what is style but conventions, and what are conventions but the shared clichés of a given tribe?

The Page 89 Experiment

But let's assume the Romantics were right, that original thought sailed up into the sky on a kite of original expression does indeed make the brightest spring day of all. Is there really very much cliché-free writing out there, even among the greats? To see if Bloom's attack on Rowling had merit I went looking for clichés in literary fiction. We have to start post-Chekov, since Modernism launches our keen emphasis on the show-don't-tell economy of tight language. (Compare *A Tale of Two Cities* to *The Sun Also Rises*). I decided to open famous books to page 89 and take a core sample of their prose. Why that page number? Because it seemed far enough into a book that the opening razzle dazzle would be over and the long haul middle stretch would show a writer in his or her boxer shorts, hair mussed, just trying to get the job done. Any book's premier page can shine, but what about hump days?

The results surprised me. Stephen King actually came off with passing marks. I went to Barnes & Noble and opened up to some of his page 89s, and was impressed if not by the vividness then at least by the serviceability of his writing. In the hardback version of *The Green Mile*, page 89 is a scene with prisoners feeding a mouse some bologna, and other than forced phonetics in dialogue spelling, it didn't set off the metal detectors. By contrast, other writers (Jack Kerouac, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Alice Walker, Richard Wright, yadda yadda) slacked off on occasion. Even Shakespeare nodded, as the tired phrase yawningly goes (it has stayed up past its bedtime).

To write prose is to use language and to use language is to use combinations used before. If we insist on originality too loudly, we then have to expect students to produce *Finnigans Wake* every morning, and even that book is in some ways a rehashing of itself page after page. In Joyce's striving to follow Pound's dictum and Make It New, he made it so new it teeters on unreadable and actually starts to swallow its own tail. In the end the book becomes rather quaint and dated, like those cute knickers golfers supposedly wore one hundred years ago or the very first airplanes with too many wings.

Following This Thought a Moment Longer

If writing a novel means applying the occasional pre-formed phrase (lest the text sound like mimeographed James Joyce), then what about less intense forms of communication, such as email, chatting on the phone, writing a letter to the bank? We cannot be brilliant, compressed, original with each and every utterance, and even if we could be, who besides Harold Bloom could stand to be around us? *The Cambridge Encyclopedia* again: “Life is full of occasions when a serious conversation is simply too difficult, or too energetic, and we gratefully fall back on clichés” (186). (Or as Pascal said, “I have made this letter longer than usual because I lacked the time to make it shorter”).

Think you’re not guilty of this process? Tape your own hour or two of lecturing, transcribe that tape with every um and er, then watch as the clichés pop their heads up like gophers in the lawn. We speak them constantly and that may not be a problem.

“Clichés,” champions another guide, “serve as the lubricant of language: summing up a point or situation, easing a transition in thought, adding a seasoning of humor to a discourse” (Rogers 1).

Aww sure, you say, but that is a context issue: we hold a student writing a paper to a higher standard than we do Hood when he is talking to his idiot neighbor, the one with the pro-Bush stickers on his pickup truck. In conversation clichés are acceptable, even necessary, but a student essay? Now we have a holy text, a sacred arena, and no apostate phrase should be permitted to sully the purity of the endeavor. And why not? Because clichés hinder expression of thought, they muck up the works, they block the light, they clog the drain. Hunky dory they are not. Orwell called them swindles and perversions, making them not just obstructive but morally noxious, the child pornography of language.

Not so fast, buckaroos. Poor writing may be just that, poor writing, and not necessarily poor thinking. These may be two separate problems, and fixing one may not save the other. Truce, friends. Let’s cut clichés some slack, just for the moment. Most clichés were true once, some are true still, all serve a purpose in canon or canard.

But What Do I Do With All These Red Pens I Just Bought?

To return to my thesis: it may not be the wrapper which is the problem, but the bad bread inside. I think most of us mark cliché writing while accepting cliché thought. Have you ever passed a paper about topics such as these? Adult Children of Alcoholics. Why Violence in Movies is Bad. Folly Caused the Vietnam War. Shakespeare’s Linguistic Inventions. A Comparison/Contrast of Baz Luhrmann’s *R&J* to Zeffirelli’s *R&J*. Child Abuse. Drug Abuse. Banning Smoking. The Hindenburg. The Death Penalty.

Writing clearly is hard enough; writing with grace and salsa and ooh-la-la is harder still. It may be unfair, even unkind, to remind students how often they use language badly (they are, after all, students, not masters, and few are creative writing majors anyway—as they will quickly remind you). Look again at the course outline of record: is your comp section a class in perfect prose, or is it a class in research and critical thinking? As much the second part as the first, right, or maybe even more so? If that’s true, then why not zap the little angels with our red ink ray guns each time their thesis statements are banal, hackneyed,

tired, worn-out? The cemetery stretches forever: there is dead thought just as there is dead metaphor.

What to do in that case? From first paper on, give the whole gang of them Ds and Fs, not for prose but for thesis and evidence, and keep doing so until they have something to say worth reading. If we as teachers and citizens have a stake in the quality of America’s brain-life—how we as a culture think when we vote, how we frame the boundaries of an argument, what we accept as legitimate evidence or rational explanation—then as teachers and citizens we may be worrying about the touching up of the fingernail polish on car accident victims when we focus on sentence-level errors and not on the global problems of tepid thinking and shallow analysis. In suggesting this I knowingly contradict George Orwell (about whom Cyril Connolly said, “He would not blow his nose without moralizing on conditions in the handkerchief industry”). For Orwell, cleaning up writing cleans up thought, and cleaning up thought gets us out of Iraq / Public Radio / the U.N. (circle one).

Can we be so sure? T.S. Eliot wrote exquisitely but was an anti-Semite, while there must be an example or two of something written rather plainly, even ambiguously (the Second Amendment?) whose idea has power but whose expression needs a make-over. For my students, mastering style and mastering critical thinking are separate peaks in the Himalayas, and, given the brevity of our expedition, perhaps we can only target one summit. Orwell’s wishful thinking notwithstanding, an elegant and cliché-free ascent of style’s K-2 will not inevitably transport us to the top of thesis development’s Everest.

“Blaise Pascal Lip-synchs the Void”

This essay’s final section heading comes from Charles Wright. His phrase is clever, even witty, and since it titles a philosophical yet inventively worded poem, the originality fits. He’s a poet and so we expect him to know his ducks from his drakes—one party cliché should never gatecrash is poetry’s. Yet the inverse also is true, in that cliché can serve art and serve it well. Umberto Eco thinks that *Casablanca* succeeds exactly because it IS a shopping cart of clichés (Blonsky 35-38). Or consider the latest book by Tony Hoagland, winkingly titled *What Narcissism Means to Me*. He has gotten some prizes (and is bound to get more), and his poetry, like Billy Collins’s, often uses humor and everyday situations. One poem admits that “Sometimes I like to sit and soak / in the Jacuzzi of my hate” (51). But in addition to cup-of-java plots and Home Depot diction, Hoagland’s poetry uses clichés and uses them intentionally, slyly, suavely. Zip and slash: in this book he becomes the Zorro of clichés, as in the poem “Hate Hotel.” The opening stanza announces “Sometimes I like to think about the people I hate. / I take my room at the Hate Hotel, and sit and flip / through the heavy pages of the photographs, / the rogue’s gallery of the faces I loathe” (51). This is honest and funny and shocking all at once, shocking not only for the self-revelation but because he dares to use words like “rogue’s gallery” when he—a Poet no less!—should know better. True, rogue slant rhymes with loathe (another borderline cliché), but tut tut, really now old chap, really!

Yet he uses the commonplace language to emphasize the commonplace emotions, which in turn serve to remind us, his readers, that we too share such mean thoughts, at least once in a while. I can deplore the genocide in Rwanda, but oh, let some-

body go slow in the fast lane, and lordy, my fingers are on the blasters, ready to take that sucker out. Hoagland knows this—knows this about himself and about me and even about you—and plays this insight throughout that poem and through others in the book. “We’re normal,” he seems to say, “and I’ll use normal language to prove it.” He is playing around, celebrating and chastising American life simultaneously. Clichés are part of that playfulness, as he takes us into the tired expressions and then through them to a better, more elevated place on the other side.

We can see then how at times even the most reviled parts of writing can have beauty and purpose. Similarly, when banishing clichés, most how-to-write handbooks also send adjectives to the rubbish bin. But as Charles Wright reminds us in the poem “Broken English,” “without the adjective there is no evil or good” (41). (As he also says, “without a syntax, there is no immortality”). These are good reasons to reconsider the roles of proverbs and prefab English.

And finally, here are two last points why we should each of us be a tiny bit glad that our students still use clichés. First, if they didn’t, we each would be out of work. More important still, their reliance on clichés makes our own novels and dissertations and sonnets look that much better. None of us may be the next Melville, but at least we know enough not to say that our characters went outside to stretch their legs—or, if we do say it, not to let Harold Bloom find out.

Works Cited

- Blonsky, Marshall. *On Signs*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1985.
- Bloom, Harold. “For the World of Letters, It’s a Horror.” *Los Angeles Times* 19 September 2003:B13.
- Crystal, David, ed. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.
- Hoagland, Tony. *What Narcissism Means to Me*. St. Paul: Graywolf Press, 2003.
- McArthur, Tom, ed. *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.
- Orwell, George. *The Penguin Essays of George Orwell*. New York: Penguin, 1980.
- Rogers, James. *The Dictionary of Cliches*. New York: Ballantine, 1985.
- Wright, Charles. *Chickamauga*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1995.

CHARLES HOOD was writing a book about tigers, however he finds that the subject matter verges on being cliché, and he may instead now be writing about Buddhist art or else mammalian evolution and taxonomy, he is not sure which.

Do Workshops Still Work?

by Mike Guista, Allan Hancock College

I’ve taught creative writing at two colleges for several years. I also was a student of creative writing at College of the Sequoias, where I went when I was just out of high school and studied under two non-writers; at San Jose State, where I studied under Robert Hass just after he had won the Yale Younger Series prize; and at UC Irvine, where I studied under Jim McMichael, Louise Glück, Carol Muske, and Charles Wright, among others. Two of my instructors have won Pulitzers and the National Book Critics Circle Award. Four of them are critics as well as poets. I think they’ve all won Guggenheims. My wife and I used to go barhopping with Michael Chabon, who was a student at Irvine while I was and who, just a few months after his graduation, hit it big with a best seller. A few years after that, he also won a Pulitzer Prize. As for my own writing, I’ve published in a couple of dozen journals, had a sexy New York agent (and a couple others of less fame), won a California Arts Council fellowship, published one book of poetry and have one book of short stories coming out shortly. Editors, agents, colleagues, and my previous instructors have all thought I was a smart reader (and writer) of poetry and prose.

Yet I have a great deal of trouble convincing many of my creative writing students of that. Though fellow students and professors I worked with while I was in graduate school thought me to be perceptive, a number of community colleges students think I’m a dullard, that I just don’t “get it,” and—I’ve heard it several times—that I read like a math teacher. My namedropping in the previous paragraph was not intended as braggadocio; rather, I’ve been trying to understand the difference between how professional writers view my critical abilities compared to how my students do. The problem, I think, is that I’ve failed to explain my criteria well enough. I think that my downfall has been an overreliance on the workshop.

How Many Audiences Are Too Many?

I’ve had discussions with colleagues everywhere I teach about just what audience is and how to address it. Basically, I believe that audience is always make believe

(in the spirit of Walter Ong's "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction"). Of course, if one is writing and not speaking or acting on a stage, I am right—in a purely logical sense. If you can't see your audience, read their body language, ask them questions, how can you really know what they are thinking, how they are responding to your work? And even if you *can* see them and hear them (for example, in peer editing situations), how can you know that they are actually telling you the truth? Many people are too polite to tell in person how they really feel. I know this as a teacher because, following peer editing, many students have told me that they didn't have the heart to be honest with their partners.

But even if we cannot ever really know our audiences, for practical purposes it is important to pretend that we can. Yet, once again in a purely logical sense—oh my, the mathematical equations!—if there are twenty students in class, each at a different level with different needs and desires, there are twenty audiences. And it would be impossible to write or speak at all without constructing some kind of uniform entity called "my audience."

Still, I can usually get some global sense of audience when I'm teaching composition courses. For English 101, in fall term, week one, I have a pretty good idea about how much students know about paragraphs. About seven or eight out of ten will know what a fragment is (and about half of those will be able to identify one); about a third will know what a comma splice is; maybe two out of ten will know the difference between argument and persuasion; about half will be able to define "thesis." Remarkably, most will be willing to learn about all of these things, since composition is viewed as a "utility" class, sort of like having a mouse for your computer. You just get through college more easily if you have taken composition and if you know how to use a mouse, so, awkward as these things are to deal with at first, students suffer the learning curve. But when I teach creative writing, I just never know who my audiences are going to be, from one semester to the next, and quite a number of students really do believe they don't have anything to learn from me. Paradoxically, even though they are enrolled in a college class, many students think creative writing can't be taught.

Actually, it would be easier if *all* my students felt they had nothing to learn from me. I'd just set loose the class in regular workshop fashion and facilitate discussion. I wouldn't even come in with my opinion at the end, as is traditionally done in workshops. What an "easy money" job I would have! Unfortunately, about half the students insist I do pipe in at the end of a critique, and, not only that, many have asked me to interrupt throughout. During the last semester I was asked to *teach more*.

Basically, some students thought I was being too lazy. They wanted lecture. I was hesitant. I've not been trained to lecture in creative writing courses. I lecture a little in composition; I never have in creative writing. But perhaps I've been wrong; perhaps my faith in the workshop method has been misguided. Many students seem to want more teacher-directed learning than workshops can provide.

Four-Year Versus Two-Year

At Allan Hancock we have but one creative writing course, and in this course we teach fiction *and* poetry, about half and half (at least in theory). The problem is, we never know what our students will prefer from one term to the next. This last semester I mostly had fiction writers, though the few aspiring poets who were enrolled made it clear that they didn't want their smaller numbers to be a cause for shortchanging them class time spent on poetry. The fiction writers, in large part, concentrated on two genres: fantasy and experimental (sometimes combining the two). There were analytical readers, touchy feely readers, readers still struggling to learn English. Many of the students hated one another, and though they kept their hatred fairly well under wraps in class it burst out in their journals. (One student came to my office to find out how to make a living as a writer. I said teaching was the safest bet. He said that would not be enough money for him. I said we might make more than he thought. No. He knew how much we make. Most of us—unless we teach lots of overload and summers—make under a hundred grand a year and that just wouldn't do. I helped him win a thousand dollar scholarship on the basis of just a few pages of writing. Though he was happy, he was also disappointed. For him, the definition of starving artist was anyone who couldn't buy a beach house to live in during the summer months).

I could see cliques while in a graduate workshop, but mostly a homogeneous group of twelve to fifteen students. At community college, the enrollments are in the twenties. And the students' aptitude, knowledge, and motivations are quite heterogeneous. There's so much more to teach, and so much less time—per student—to get the teaching done. I don't know if workshopping for most of the term is the best use of time.

So Why Have I Workshopped?

The workshop method would appear strange to an outsider, no doubt. The students take home each other's work, read it carefully as many times as it takes, and come back the next class meeting to critique. The writer cannot explain his story or poem, cannot even talk about it until the class is finished with their critique.

First the students have their say; then I follow; if the writer still wants to talk to us, then he can.

I've always used the workshop method, I think because it's how I was taught; it's what I know. Other creative writing teachers, as well, have begun to wonder about its efficacy:

We are all aware that creative-writing workshops offer a model of instruction over a hundred years old but basically unrevised. Teachers of creative writing, in the absence of any formal research on the effectiveness of the workshop, have long relied on what Steven North calls 'lore' to determine what they should do in instructing their students. Clearly, the lore of creative-writing instruction has it that writers should teach what they do when they write, employing the 'workshop' approach to teaching—based on a longstanding notion that the teacher is a 'master' who teaches 'apprentices.' The workshop method survives not because rigorous inquiry offers testimony to its excellence (Bizarro 296).

Even if the workshop method should prove to be effective, I wonder if it might work best at upper division and graduate levels, where students are often handpicked by an instructor. It's a more homogenous group. An instructor can get a better sense of who his audience is before he meets them in person since he's read their work already.

But community college creative writing students tend to have incredibly diverse backgrounds and motives. If there ever was a case for twenty students obviously equaling twenty audiences, I think it's in these classes—much more than in composition, upper division and grad school, and more than in literature survey courses. Seniors sometimes take the class for pleasure; some want to learn to be travel writers; some are very serious about becoming writers of children's books. There are students who haven't been in a college classroom for thirty years. A few only want to write creative non-fiction, even though that is not part of our course outline. Oftentimes the younger students have been given a romantic-expressivistic model of writing—write what you feel; that is who you are. It makes sense that this kind of work ought not be judged by a class or a teacher; if students judge the writing of a student who believes “my writing=me” (mathematical equations of self!) then to say something bad about the writing is to disparage the student. And it's not only the writer who now claims the text is his definition; because of the considerable popularity of reader response approaches, to remark that a reading of a poem or a story doesn't make much sense is to somehow tell the critic that his life is not worth living, that I have failed to “validate” his perception.

Abandon the Workshop?

So I tried something new this last semester: suspend the workshop and lecture instead. This way I could create a more homogenous group, similarly prepared, with a shared vocabulary and, to a degree, sensibility. I used to go through conventions of poetry for a couple of weeks and do the same for fiction. But I no longer believe that's enough. Teaching conventions of literature in a writing class is quite a bit different from teaching conventions of critical analysis in a literature class, so one can't assume skills learned in one easily translate to the other. Even if the students have already taken literature courses, creative writing requires a brand new way of looking at literature. In fiction there's

*Basically, some students
thought I was being too
lazy. They wanted lecture.*

how to put subtext into dialogue, how to use dialect and slang, how to space dialogue tags; how to make “filler” scenes, “summary” scenes, how to build up to “big” scenes; how to balance antagonists and protagonists, how to develop characters gradually; how to choose POV; how to write introductions and conclusions—and these are just some of the elements. Poetry has just as many elements to teach, if not more!

How Lecturing Can Keep Students Safe

In the very first creative writing class I taught a woman kept turning in poems that she told the class her son had dictated to her. She wasn't cheating, not by any usual definition of the term. He was dead. We still criticized the poems. She felt it wasn't fair because he wasn't in class to defend himself (he only dictated to her when they were alone). At the end of the term she was dissatisfied with her grade and she complained to the dean and asked that *he* read the poems because surely he would notice that her dead but genius son should have received a better grade. And she told him that she had heard a rumor that I used to teach math, which I have heard from students is a very, very bad thing. She felt I had been judgmental. I had, in the sense that I was making judgments. I didn't see any way that I could not be.

The workshop is full of judgment, sometimes explicit,

just as often implicit. When the students discuss a fellow student's piece of writing, they are judging how well they think it "works." Then when the instructor pronounces his judgment, it is as much a critique of the students' critiques as it is of the writer's work. The writers' workshop, as relaxed as it might appear to be to an outsider (we sat on couches at Irvine), is one of the most judgmental environments I've ever worked in. Even if nothing bad is said, the students and instructors change tone of voice, body language, and give more time to some works than they do to others. It is much more dangerous than it appears.

Back to Lecture-Discussion

It seems unfair to judge students' critiques, via workshop, before the students know fairly well what is being looked for. And though the teacher can always say "Well, that's my opinion and that's all," there are several reasons for his opinion to appear more important than the students', not the least of which is that, in workshop, he gets the last word. Even if he didn't, he is the teacher; the students know it. And even the ones who seem on their own and unconcerned with what the teacher says in class—these same students, in my experience, are quite likely to show up in office for individual conferences and want very much to know how instructors feel about their work. It just makes sense to me that before I judge the students' creative work and their criticism of it, that I ought to first be clear about what my criteria are. Like most creative writing teachers (at least the ones I've had, and I've had about a dozen), I basically use a "New Critical" approach. I look very analytically at the writing (thus the math teacher reputation), one word at a time. I read very literally, looking for character development, some kind of arc in stories, themes people probably will care about, scenes that build and keep up tension and speed up and slow down the passage of time in ways that will likely keep most readers' attention, dialogue that seems real but with boring parts left out. In poetry I look for lines with surprises in them, effective sounds and rhythms, smart use of enjambment and stanza breaks, fresh imagery, intelligent and sensible uses of metrics (even free verse can be scanned!).

Explaining the fundamentals of poetry and fiction to a group of novice creative writers, in a "how to" way that they will not likely get taught in literature or composition courses, takes a great deal of time. I no

longer believe that students can learn these elements through the osmosis of workshop, at least not quickly enough. I am shocked that I have begun to lecture so much in creative writing. I only started doing so because so many students asked me to. It was I who resisted them, at least for quite a while. But I think they've made a good case. They've taught me to be less reticent and more directive. Ironically, I have found students to be more actively involved in the lecture format, where there is more structure, explicit instruction, and safety, than in the workshop, which many introductory students aren't prepared for.

And for the record: I have never taught math. Not that there's anything wrong with that.

Works Cited

- Bizzaro, Patrick. "Research and Reflections in English Studies: The Special Case of Creative Writing." *College English* 66 (2004): 294-309.
- Ong, Walter J., S. J. "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction." *PMLA* 90 (1975): 9 -21.

Michael Guista's book Brainwork is currently a fiction finalist in Middlebury College's annual Bakeless contest. He teaches composition and creative writing at Allan Hancock College in Santa Maria.

Why Can't We Fail Failing Students?

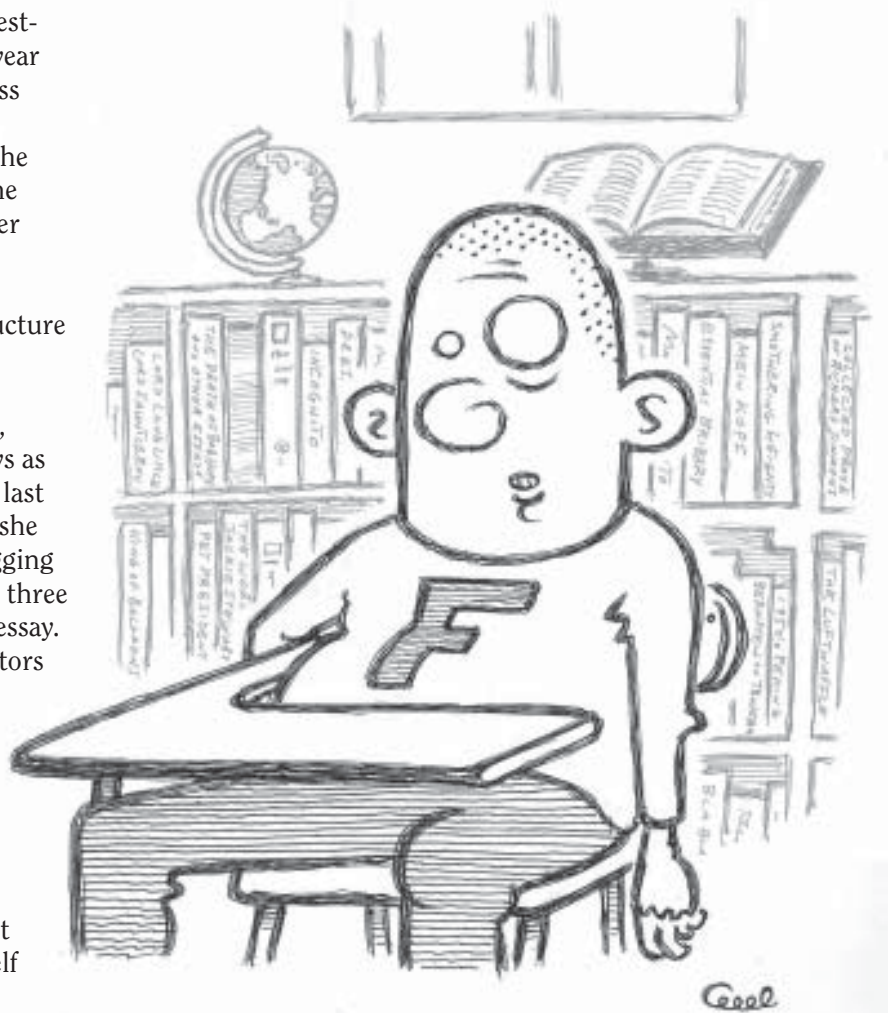
by Shari Dinkins, City College of San Francisco and Skyline College

Hang Lee*, a returning student, failed the lowest-level developmental English class with me a year ago. I can't figure out what she is doing in my class today. She has the same grammatical problems as before—with very little improvement. Somehow she has not only passed the class I failed her in, but the next class as well. A year ago when I taught her, her first written assignment was dismal; she showed tremendous problems with grammar at the word, phrase, and sentence levels and an inability to structure paragraphs or essays.

Yet here she is.

I met with her summer school instructor. "Oh, Hang? I guess I shouldn't have passed her," she says as we stand in a dreary hallway. "I let her rewrite her last three papers." Now I am trapped. Now, every time she fails an assignment, Hang comes to my office, begging for an explanation. Once she claimed that she had three tutors look at her paper; one said it was a passing essay. Tired and annoyed, I calmly explain to her that tutors are not supposed to grade her work; they cannot know what the instructor's course objectives are. They are also not supposed to edit or rewrite her essay. That would mean that she has not done the work herself. I ask if I can drop her from the course. She adamantly refuses. Her next paper jumps a grade—it looks to have been worked, reworked and reworked again. Possibly not by the student in question. I make a note to myself to have an in-class writing the next week. My thought? Try to find out if she is writing her own papers. I talk to the head of the ESL department that afternoon. She reveals that Hang had failed out of the ESL classes and immediately took placement tests to get into the mainstream English courses. Although she cannot write or communicate well, she can tell what is correct. The result? She has been allowed to take the lowest-level developmental English courses. Now she is failing those as well. I am confused, angry and shaken.

Why can't we fail students who are failing? What compels instructors to pass a student who does not show a command of the subject? Why write course objectives if we pass students who not even close to meeting those objectives? Part-timers seem to have the worst time of it. Scared of



students demanding grade reviews and criticism from the department, we frequently pass students who are not "C" material. Is it fear? People pleasing? Many of us are frightened of being questioned, of losing our jobs. We will do whatever it takes to make everyone happy. Unfortunately the price here becomes exponential.

Fabrizio Sanders* has failed the same developmental-level English course three times. After petitioning the dean of student advocacy, he has been allowed to take it again. One more time. Now he comes to my office every week with excuses. Why he wasn't in class, why he missed turning in the assignment, why his paper is not written. Four weeks into the semester, I beg him to allow me to drop him from

the course. Not only does he refuse, he claims that his problem is that he is not being challenged enough in my course. And that his classmates are “dragging him down.” After failing his first paper, and seeing his work in class, I believe he is delusional. Indeed he is on medication for mental problems. But his panic is borne out of his “last chance” mentality. Now all I can do is wait out the semester, knowing that I will be explaining over and over and over why he has not passed my class.

I have decided that when it comes to grades, I will not bend to the desires of my students. Yes, I may assign a reading that is more to their liking. Yes, I may let them have an in-class work day to check their thesis statements. Yes, once a semester I may have them team up and work outside the classroom on a nice day. But I will not pass them unless they have earned a passing grade. They may wheedle and complain, but I don’t believe I am an unfair grader. In fact I know I am not. How? Holistic grading sessions in my department may have seemed like a waste of time at first—but the most valuable lesson for me was finding out that I am in the middle. When it comes to

“Oh, Hang? I guess I
shouldn’t have passed her,”
she says. “I let her rewrite
her last three papers.”
Now I am trapped.

grading papers, I am not the easiest, nor the most difficult; I am in the center. There is a sense of safety in that—and a sense of confidence. I no longer feel compelled to adjust a student’s grade because he “tried so hard.” When a student requests a conference to see his grade to date, I do not lift a pen. I do not change the grade. Under no circumstance do I allow myself to be swayed by stories of dead grandmothers, lost jobs, and abandonment by girlfriends. Yes, I look empathetic. But I do not change the grade—on an assignment or on a final grade.

If I somehow feel that I have been too difficult on a student, or missed something that might have earned a better grade, I tell the student that I will review her work with a senior instructor. Not only does it take the pressure off of me, it also tells the student that I am not God. I am not the person who can make or break her academic career. There is a committee at work here—and the student will be judged by the quality of her work. Some of my students have trouble differentiating between intent and behavior. This process reaffirms that although I care, I cannot judge them on what they meant to do, only what they did do. It sounds simple, but it is something that distinguishes the

high-school students from the college students. And we are in the business of teaching community college.

One issue that used to muddy the waters for me was make-up work. It was difficult to figure out which students should be allowed to do make-up work and those who did not qualify. In the end, I allowed in-class work to be done up to a week late—at a cost of half the grade. Midterms and finals could only be made up if the student could show me official proof of illness or jury duty. Students were allowed to turn in papers up to a week late if they didn’t mind losing ten percent of their essay grade. And what about extra-credit? Not all students have access to a computer or library. If the extra-credit assignment asks the student to use any resources, I may be accused of favoritism. And when would the extra-credit assignment be due? Could I accept it as late as the week of finals? Even if it gave a student only a few points, would I end up passing a student who was below par because of his extra-credit work? After struggling for semesters, I have finally abolished extra-credit work from my courses.

In the end I believe we not only injure failing students by giving them an unearned “C,” we also injure their classmates, our colleagues, ourselves, the campus we work for, the accrediting association, and education in general. I have worked on curriculum committees for the past two years. The good news is that full- and part-time instructors are working to ensure that students are qualified—to move to the next level, to transfer to a four-year system, or to move out into the working world. We may seem like hard-heads, but I think we’re doing what we can to hold the line in a world where the line is less and less distinct.

*Student names are pseudonyms.

Shari Dinkins teaches English composition at City College of San Francisco and Skyline College in San Bruno. In addition to her duties in the classroom and on committees, Shari is a columnist for The Adjunct Advocate, a national teaching publication out of Ann Arbor, Michigan. She has published fiction in numerous literary magazines and articles in teaching magazines and mainstream publications.

On Seeing Woolf for the First Time: Using Virginia Woolf and Jamaica Kincaid in the Community College Classroom

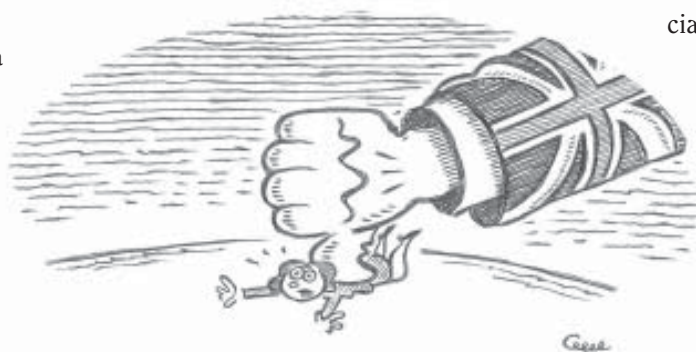
by Lynnette Beers, Santiago Canyon College and Saddleback College

Does a complex writer such as Virginia Woolf have a place in the community college classroom? For that matter, should Woolf be taught in a composition class comprised mostly of non-English majors, students taking the class mostly either for transfer credit or to just fulfill the requirements for their non-English degree? Shouldn't we *save*

Woolf for the more precious years of study, the years when literature students are at a more serious level of study? For most students at a community college, freshman composition is their only exposure to anything "English"—that is, their *only* exposure to any "great" essayists or writers. A community college is America's bridge between high school and a university. Included in this group of community college students are the remedial writers. For these more beginning writers, a class in writing can be a painful process, a sixteen week course in the basics. And by the basics I mean basic sentence structure—subjects, verbs, run-on sentences, commas, basic vocabulary. So why would Woolf have a place in such a class as this?

To the community college student, remedial or not, Virginia Woolf is usually an unknown name, often just a character in Edward Albee's *Whose Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Elizabeth Taylor. Richard Burton. These names the students recognize. But not Virginia Woolf. Often quickly correcting them and explaining that no, Virginia Woolf is not so much a character in that play as she is a concept, I realize that these students are no more interested in literature than I'd be in a calculus or physics class. Some avid film goers in class might think of Nicole Kidman playing Virginia Woolf in the recent film *The Hours*. But the reality is that most students are not familiar with Woolf's *writing*. Some students may see her as a mentally-anguished British writer, but for most, they are not familiar with her complex prose.

Perhaps the biggest factor in my sharing Woolf with community college students is because, being an adjunct or part time instructor, my class load usually *only* consists of composition classes. But herein lies the reason why I teach Woolf in the community college classroom. So many scholars feel that she belongs at a more advanced level—mostly due to her complex prose, her confusing diction, her weighty passages, and espe-



cially her heavy themes. In a community college, not only are students unfamiliar with Virginia Woolf, but the *faculty members* possess a similar fear of Woolf. Never have I seen a class listed in the community college catalogue titled: "The novels of Virginia Woolf" or "Virginia Woolf as Essayist."

The only thing remotely leading to a serious study of Woolf might be an

occasional class offered in women's literature. Who's afraid of her? Well, not me, of course, yet as a part-time instructor, I will likely not be assigned such a class till I am a full-time, tenured track professor with considerable years of teaching composition behind me. So what's a Woolf scholar to do? Well, I teach her.

But before studying Woolf in depth at the community college level, I often first share with the students someone who appears in their anthology of essays and who they *can* relate to—Jamaica Kincaid. An Antiguan, a woman of color, someone alive and still writing in America, Kincaid acts as my bridge to Woolf. Before reading Kincaid's writings on England and of Britain's colonialism or before sharing the Britishness of Woolf with them, I often have the students write a short in-class freewrite on what they think England is like. Keep in mind that most of these students, being eighteen or nineteen years of age, have never left America, so their impressions of England are of double-decker buses, Austin Powers, dreary weather, and thick accents. We then read Kincaid's post-colonial essay "On Seeing England for the First Time" and discuss her deep-seated hatred for England. We talk about colonization, inequality, racism. As a class we read of colonialism and how England took over this tiny island where Kincaid lived. The words in her essay—complex, dense, heavy—reach the students. Students in a community college are often diverse, either ethnically or socio-economically. Kincaid reaches these students, because she—intelligent, creative, outspoken—comes from a similar background. Let me explain that of the two community colleges I teach part time at in Southern California, students typically consist of numerous socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds, many of these students being labeled as "minority" when filling out the community college application. The link between Kincaid and these students is a realistic one. The Latino students who call America their home relate to Kincaid because they continually fight for

their voice in what they still feel is a white man's world. So too for my Middle Eastern students, or my students from Korea or Vietnam.

Trying to convey to the students that words are power, that tone and diction can convey in very few words such things as hatred and bitterness, I share with them Kincaid's essay. Her angry tone, of course, is first and foremost noticed throughout her essay, but the culmination of her bitterness is stated in three short but powerful words at the end of the essay: "I hate England" (374). The straightforwardness of the simple subject-verb-object is often a good place to begin when teaching a composition class, be it remedial or not.

But the accompanying passages within this essay contain more than the simple subject-verb-object sentence structure. It is here that we can move on to more complex sentences, making the transition to the complex, compound sentences that Kincaid is so adept at. Conveyed in "On Seeing England for the First Time" are the lengthier passages where Kincaid shares her jaded descriptions of England, and how the city to her was ugly, "the weather . . . like a jail sentence . . . the food (also) . . . like a jail sentence" (374). And yet here it is that I make an initial connection to Woolf. I talk of the differences between Kincaid's England as opposed to Woolf's, one calling England her home, the other not. I introduce them to Woolf by providing them with a page or two of her prose, the words a dramatic contrast to Kincaid's feelings that England's people are ugly, dirty, rude. But we then focus on *Woolf's* words. The discussion starts out slowly, a few brave or more advanced students stating that in *Mrs. Dalloway* (or "Kew Gardens" or whatever short story, essay or novel I share with them), London seems inviting, tranquil, comforting. Woolf describes Clarissa's attachment to London as "an absurd and faithful passion" (5). Rather than that sense of the weather being like a jail sentence as it is to Kincaid, Woolf describes England's weather and locale as possessing a "silence," accentuated with the "mist; the hum; the slow-swimming happy ducks" (5). The students notice, of course, the stark contrast to the England that Kincaid so despises. But for Woolf, this is an England where she obviously found great comfort and belonging. Yes, I tell my community college students, this is Woolf. This is Woolf's England. The students then see England through Woolf's eyes, experience the vision through her words.

But there are other reasons to use Woolf in the community college classroom. When teaching composition, it is not only suggested that I cover grammar—it is required. Yet being so impassioned to study Woolf's writing, I find that I cannot possibly let a semester go by without teaching at least one of her essays or a passage from a novel or short story. So how might I employ Woolf when teaching grammar? I have already mentioned that Kincaid is useful when teaching basic sentence format, but it is crucial to note that Woolf was not, shall we say, a strict grammarian. She put to use such radical writing techniques that a good many of us teaching composition must sift through the weighty passages when closely examining such things as Woolf's sentence structure. So then how would I handle this at a remedial level? This is where I find Woolf to be of utmost value when teaching such things as semi-colons and the dash—and for that matter, when teaching the comma, the parenthesis, the one-word sentences. Early in my teaching career, I decided to put a plan into action: Woolf was going to teach my lower-level writing students how to use the dash and

the semi-colon.

I know it hardly seems necessary to pause here and go over the basics of what these two punctuation marks are used for, but for my examination of how to teach Woolf in the community college classroom, I find it worthwhile. One of the texts I used early in my teaching career was a handbook titled *Adios Strunk and White* by Gary and Glynis Hoffman, English professors at Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa. A somewhat radical approach to composition and grammar, the text introduces some non-traditional modes of sentence structure. Early in the text, the Hoffmans discuss the use of what they call flow and pause, but it is in how they present this writing strategy that becomes my window to using Woolf in the classroom each semester. By flow, the authors mean that sentences need to be broken up or interrupted with descriptive and verbal phrases, which they call "freighting." As the word suggests, the Hoffmans teach that a sentence is like a train, each added phrase used like a freight car added to further describe the action going on within the sentence. To summarize what they suggest in their textbook, it is best described as a complex sentence with interrupted adjective clauses and descriptions broken up with commas. When put into practice (and practice is the best way to truly understand this writing strategy), the result is that of a sense of flow within the writing—a typical style that Jamaica Kincaid uses in her writing.

And so here it is that I again use Kincaid, because within her writing, she most definitely uses this technique of freighting (or flow) in her writing, especially in her essay, "On Seeing England for the First Time." I typically have the students cite specific passages where this use of flow occurs. While conveying her deep-seated bitterness for anything and everything English, she does so in such a smooth manner that the reader feels drawn into this flow of emotions pouring forth from the powerful words of Kincaid. She begins a paragraph later in the essay by saying, *And so finally, when I was a grown-up woman, the mother of two children, the wife of someone, a person who resides in a powerful country that takes up more than its fair share of a continent, the owner of a house with many rooms in it and of two automobiles, with the desire and will (which I very much act upon) to take from the world more than I give back to it, more than I deserve, more than I need, finally then, I saw England, the real England, not a picture, not a painting, not through a story in a book, but England, for the first time.* (371)

I stop here, asking the students, remedial that they are, to locate the subject and verb. This proves a painful process for some, for most of these students somehow missed the lessons on subjects and verbs that they should have been given in their earliest years of schooling. Most students are inhibited by the sight of Kincaid's 108-word sentence and do not notice that the first eighty-four words are, in fact, an extended introductory clause. And so in locating that subject and verb, I ask the students to locate the main part of that sentence. I ask them to subtract all of those extra, less-needed phrases, and there they can locate the subject, the verb, the object. Some stammer out a word or two, barely audible at first, their eyes averting my glance. Having reminded them of a previous lesson on introductory phrases and dependent clauses, I might ask them to under-

line or cross out that introductory clause. It is here that a good portion of my students finally recognize that *I* is the subject of our very long, complex flow sentence. From there they understand that the main portion of the sentence is: "I saw England." Simple as that. The other portion of the sentence, of course, consists of words and phrases, linked together by commas, added to create that sense of flow. And it is also worth instructing my students (or reviewing with them from a previous lesson) that it is permissible and effective to begin a sentence with "And," as Kincaid so often does. The key with freshman composition students is to break some of the previous myths they have learned in high school and in previous years. Ingrained in their minds is the thou-shalt-not-begin-a-sentence-with-*and-or-but* lessons. Giving them examples of strong, effective essays such as Kincaid's shows them the efficacy of breaking some of those false writing myths the students had learned in the past.

But breaking those writing myths is what Woolf so often does in her writing. To first make Woolf more palatable, especially for the new or remedial writers, an initial valuable lesson conveyed in the *Adios* textbook is what the Hoffmans refer to as the use of hieroglyphics. By this they mean such punctuation marks as the dash, the hyphen, and the semi-colon, used to create *pause* within sentences. For the remedial writing student especially, these *are* unrecognizable hieroglyphic marks found within such a passage as Woolf's. But it is here, then, after having taught my students of the *correct* and proper use of the dash and the semi-colon that I share with them a passage from *Mrs. Dalloway*, one that is riddled with the use of such hieroglyphics. Most effective is a passage that beautifully depicts that scene in London, the scene that would, to a normal tourist maybe, be one of chaos. We as a class read of Clarissa's sense of oneness in that city that she so loved—of such sounds as the peal of Big Ben or the sight of Parliament, Victoria Street, or of motor cars passing. Woolf appropriately refers to the moment as "an indescribable pause" (4). As I read the passage, I overemphasize the pause, of course, because for many of my students, this is also the first time they have been taught how to *read* a semi-colon or a dash. We read of Clarissa's love for this city, of "the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs;" and continue to see that "in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June" (4). Looking at the passage purely from an editing stance, it is quite apparent that the semi-colons are not only excessive but are obviously incorrect. It is Woolf's indescribable pauses that contribute to a fuller understanding of grammar and of such hieroglyphics as the semi-colon and the dash. Invariably, I get a few bright students, who have indeed mastered the use of the semi-colon, ask me *how* Woolf ever got published with so many grammatical errors? I tell them that Woolf, yes, may not have necessarily correctly used the semi-colon but that to notice the *purpose* of those semi-colons and dashes. I might read the passage again, overemphasizing each semi-colon as an excessive pause: "life; [. . .] London; [. . .] this moment of June" (4). That moment in June in London is presented at a slower pace, the semi-colons acting as dramatic but necessary pause.

But Woolf's indescribable pauses serve another function as well. Following our in depth analysis of Woolf's use of the dash and semi-colon, I round the discussion back to that of theme—

this time focusing on the theme of chaos and turmoil, of mental illness and suicide. The extreme analysis of that pause technique lends to a further study of precisely *why* Woolf incorporated such extensive pauses within her writing. Why, I ask, would someone intentionally include such drastic pauses within the writing? Think about that scene of Clarissa on that London street. Think about what precisely is going on at the moment. Think about the chaos in that mere moment—Big Ben striking, cars moving about, people passing, brass bands clamoring. Why would a writer want to give a sense of pause or hesitation? I then move the discussion again back to that of theme, tying the writing technique of pause into the theme of chaos and turmoil within Woolf's life. I mention the significant traumas in Woolf's life—her mother's death, the turmoil of suddenly being disciplined by the step mother, the sexual abuse, the deaths of other family members, the mental illness, the suicide attempts, the war. I mention that Woolf scholars examine the occurrence of semi-colons and dashes as interruptions within Woolf's writing, much like how those traumas served as interruptions in her life. For a woman whose childhood was interrupted by the death of her mother, along with the ensuing trauma of childhood sexual abuse, Woolf, it can be understood, perhaps felt impelled to write with such excessive pauses. Her life, it must be noted, consisted of a series of interruptions. It was her attempt to find control within most chaotic situations. But suicide, I tell my students, was the ultimate, permanent interruption to her life. If we can momentarily suggest that Clarissa too felt the overburdening sense of chaos in her life, then it would be right in assuming that the pauses—the semi-colon, the dash, the parenthesis even—serve to create a momentary peace within a typical chaotic moment in London.

So whether it be the theme of suicide or the writing technique of semi-colons, Woolf *can* reach the community college student. Woolf, as well as Kincaid, create bridges of learning, ones that will enable these students to connect to worlds they normally would never reach. This, I remind them, is precisely why words equate to power. In studying Woolf and Kincaid as essayists and fiction writers, my students learn the value of words, the sentences that are created from these words, and the effect they can have on their readers. These students not only see Woolf for the first time, but they in turn understand what at one time was so unattainable and distant.

Works Cited

- Hoffman, Gary and Glynis Hoffman. *Adios, Strunk and White: A Handbook for the New Academic Essay*. 2nd ed. Huntington Beach, California: Verve, 1999.
- Kincaid, Jamaica. "On Seeing England for the First Time." 3rd ed. *The Best American Essays*. Ed. Robert Atwan. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001. 364-75.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. London: Harcourt Brace, 1925.

Lynette Beers is adjunct professor of English composition and literature at Santiago Canyon College and Saddleback College, both in Southern California. She also teaches part-time at Chapman University and writes fiction.

Selling Out or Buying In?

The Journey of a Working Class Punk Infiltrating the Academy

by Optimism One, CSU Stanislausby

I am a factory worker. My employee number is 138. And in the eyes of those who sign my paychecks, it seems I am nothing more than that. Or, rather, I am a machine who has thoughts and feelings they do not acknowledge. My number is merely a way for them to identify me without accepting my humanness, which is evidenced by a bloodthirsty focus on production and ice-cold ignorance of my personal characteristics. It is obvious that they wish I really were a robot and they treat me as such, even as I insist on asserting my subjectivity. But they don't want to listen.

It could be the din. I work in an environment that is deafeningly loud. Imagine the white noise of a snow-filled television channel, amplify it by a few thousand watts, and you might come close to the aural assault I endure for eight to twelve hours a day, forty to eighty-four hours per week. I wear ear plugs, of course, but still my hearing progressively deteriorates every year that I get checked. Communication in such an environment is necessarily primal. Picture two people standing facing each other, mouths to ears, one yelling while the other nods, trying to pick out key words like a second language learner but still only deciphering maybe one quarter of what is said. It's just as well.

I would rather not understand most of what I hear. From the unabashedly-delivered sexist joke-of-the-day to the highlights of the most recent sporting event that my workmates have somehow vicariously participated in through their television sets, as in "my Marlins kicked some serious butt on the Yankees last night," I try not to show my boredom. After six and a half years of enduring these monologues, I have grown rather impervious to such verbal onslaughts, delivered without any sense of audience or purpose. Somehow a great number of my peers have failed to recognize that I am not a fan of NASCAR, I don't watch Jerry Springer, and I don't think all women are inferior objects that exist for the benefit and so-called humor of man. But, like my superiors, the other "them," many of my workmates do not exhibit empathetic qualities.

It could be the toil. Factory work is merciless on both the body and the mind. The most unlucky ones stoop over two trays of relentlessly approaching tin can ends, which they slide into bags that weigh from five to fifteen pounds, lift, fold closed, then lift again, and turn 180 degrees to place on a pallet – every ten seconds. The back-breaking, carpal-tunnel-straining, mind-numbing *unnature* of this work is enough to beat even the sharpest person into a stupor. The monotony is lobotamous. During my own tenure at such stations, I have maintained my sanity only by breaking the company rules against reading on the line. Nevertheless, it is difficult to digest only one sentence at a time. I have also done a fair amount of writing in said environment, which is curiously not against regulations, and which I can



only attribute to the company not thinking that some of us might have other-than-passive tendencies.

It is no wonder, then, that the company responds to discussion and criticism like an impatient parent to an eager, questioning child. As a former union representative, I have fought against the unfair punishment of my peers, the unequal distribution of jobs, and the unsafe conditions of certain assignments and machinery. But, more often than not, I am heeded like a foreign-language student at a high-literacy convention. The company's incredulous looks and "because I said" rhetoric is a testament to their dictatorial practices. And some of the more pompous supervisors have even laughed at me when I have filed a grievance because they thought my argument was baseless or unwinnable. As I've indicated, their purpose is the product. And the more cans

that are made on their shift, the better, regardless of the human consequence.

This has been perfect training for being a student. With the exception of a decent amount of my English classes, being a student is much like being a factory worker: arrive on time, get lectured, receive my job assignment, clarify the dictator's desires, and carry out my duties in an efficient and harmoniously acquiescent manner. The syllabus is a contract, the rules of engagement. Deviance is answered with devalued grades. The message is loud and clear: conform for success. Party-line language is exalted as gospel. And machine-like regurgitation is the greatest asset I can bring.

One key difference is my peers. As a member of this community of goal-oriented subjects, I have enjoyed a great amount of camaraderie and understanding with those whom I have shared courses. And I would submit that I have many times learned more from them than I ever did from my professors. But there still exists that old, familiar us/them dichotomy, as in the factory setting. Our "we" is just as overwhelmed and bewildered as their "they" is arrogant and demeaning. The student and professor too often exist in completely separate worlds of both expectations and discourse, in which neither one either wants or tries to comprehend or appreciate the other. Therefore, the same frustrations prevail on both sides of the offense.

And despite my earlier caveat, English classes are not immune to similar dis-unities. Word- or page-count requirements, format issues, including the seemingly yearly-changing MLA guidelines, topic restrictions, due dates, typed-only, thesis first, grammatically correct, process-as-Big-Brother, focus, and God damn you if you misspell, all have the same underlying message: follow the rules. In fact, it is a peculiar, if not oxymoronic, blindsiding that English students endure when they are asked to discuss the daily readings while they are graded for their level of participation. And more regularly than not, the professor has the final word, especially if s/he disagrees with what is said. Of course, such end-of-the-conversation comments are euphemistically disguised as scholarly debate, intellectual exercise, or critical analysis, all steeped in unintelligible jargon and esoteric references that make the divide crystal clear. Professors hold the power – students are lucky to receive and/or borrow it.

Considering my contempt at often being belittled and manipulated in my K-college career, then, it is not surprising that I was reluctant to make the transition from being a student to being a teacher. I doubted my abilities. *Was I ready? Did I know enough? What do I do when...?* But more importantly, I wasn't sure if I wanted to change teams. I was so accustomed to being the underdog, the underwhelming, the underclass, that I questioned my commitments and even balked many times at following through with my graduate studies for fear of becoming "one of them." I didn't want to be a boss in another factory. I liked my working-class clothes, my working-class friends, and my working-class ideals. I was a punk at heart who resisted institutional oppressions. I did not want to represent them. But stronger still was my dream of becoming a different kind of teacher, like the ones who actually listened to and respected me and encouraged me to be creative, along with my desire to escape the hell-hole called Ball Western Can Company.

I sent in my application to be a graduate assistant for our English 0111, Writer's Workshop, with a mixture of hesitation

and hope. Besides my fear of being swallowed by the monster that is academia, I really was not sure that I would be hired since my graduate career had been a series of false starts, incompletes, and withdrawals, which left my scholastic reputation in deserved doubt and my transcript looking like alphabet soup. But I was still hopeful that I would be allowed to take this initial culture-jumping step.

I am sure there was at least a little debate amongst the hiring committee about whether I should be trusted with fifteen new college writers. And after much delay, I was officially accepted. I was going to be a semi-professional. But despite my stutter-steps and apprehension, I really had no idea what I was getting into.

I did not know how much of a performance it is to teach a class. I did not know how quickly a conversation can shift and die without the possibility of resuscitation. I did not know how difficult it would be to juggle fifteen different personalities from fifteen distinct backgrounds all at the same time, and all of which were different than mine. I did not remember that everybody does not value writing as much as I do and that, in fact, some actually loathe it. I did not remember the silly and transparent excuses some students use to explain why they have not completed the assigned work. And I did not remember how impatient I can be.

It did not take long for me to become frustrated with a few of my students and forget my teaching philosophy. And, for one short week, I fell back on some of the exclusionary tactics with which I had been so comprehensively indoctrinated. I lectured more than I listened. I found myself complaining to other writing instructors about lazy prose and superficial ideas. I referred to my students derogatorily and I waged a war on errorism. I stopped having fun and I stopped liking teaching. I could suddenly see why so many teachers seem so bitter and jaded. And I wondered what kind of mess I had bought into.

But, as luck or fate or God would have it, I read an article by Sonia Nieto called, "The Personal and Collective Transformation of Teachers," in which she reminded me that "teaching and learning are primarily about relationships. What happens in classrooms is first and foremost about the personal and collective connections that exist among the individuals who inhabit those spaces" (130). I felt like a real jerk. But at the same time I was grateful that Nieto had picked me up when I fell, like my fellow punks in the pit, back in the day. And, in fact, her against-the-grain approach reminded me of the principles of punk that also define me, which Seth Kahn-Egan, in "Pedagogy of the Pissed," outlines as follows:

- 1) The Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethic, which demands that we do our own work because anybody who would do our work for us is only trying to jerk us around;
- 2) A sense of anger and passion that finally drives a writer to say what's really on his or her mind;
- 3) A sense of destructiveness that calls for attacking institutions when those institutions are oppressive, or even dislikable;
- 4) A willingness to endure or even pursue pain to make oneself heard or noticed;
- 5) A pursuit of the 'pleasure principle,' a reveling in some kind of Nietzschean chasm. (100)

My class is a mirror of punk's informal amalgam of disparate voices. The best I can do is to respect them. I do so by shutting up and listening a la Mary Rose O'Reilly in her revolutionary book, *Radical Presence*. I try to share power with my students, which is made easier by the fact that my class is portfolio-graded on a pass/fail basis. I let them choose the readings because I want them to not only know that they have *some* control of their education but also that they will be interested in the issues we discuss. I have plans to ask my students about whether they would each like to lead or co-teach a class session, which would not be a requirement even if the majority votes for it. I also want to do a unit on music, in which each student plays a sample and reviews his or her favorite group or genre for the class. I am trying to be creative rather than remediative. In these ways, I treat my students as able, intelligent subjects instead of ruptures to repair.

Sometimes, when I'm walking to my class or writing something on the board, I wonder who the hell I am. I expect to hear someone yell, "Fish outta water!" as if I were caught outside my true environment. I am still wearing Ben Davis pants and Doc Marten shoes, but everything is clean and matches and looks "nice." I remember, back in the 80's, getting ridiculed and spit on for how I looked, long before shaved heads became the norm. I remember busting my ass on the graveyard shift for the last six and a half years. And I wonder if I have now sold out, or if I am getting too big for my britches, even though I am still a student and I only teach one small class. Additionally, I am now employed by and therefore represent an institution where the President refers to students as customers, which I find repulsive for its business-like orientation. I am a subversive at heart but I am expected to help my students reach certain competencies and I assume that getting re-hired next semester is at least partly contingent on their successful advancement to freshman composition. But when it comes down to it, I cannot worry about that stuff. In fact, in true punk spirit, I should not even care.

But I do care about my students. And I do care about maintaining my ideals, which are rooted in the transformative possibilities of countercultural opposition. I also have to trust that my efforts will manifest positive results, even as I regularly take the pulse of my students by asking them to evaluate both me and the class as a whole. I have to be willing to adapt to their needs and continually think about how I can change myself rather than how I can mold them. The student as clay is a bygone paradigm. Yes, some still prefer to be told what to do – the result of years of scholastic subservience. But that does not mean that I will assume their passivity, or that passion does not lie dormant within them.

Nevertheless, I am in a quandary regarding the seemingly asynchronous agendas of school and self. I am filled with questions that beg to be asked but defy simple answers. For example, should I teach according to what I think is important or should I prepare my students for the educational factory? That is, would I be doing my students a disservice by ignoring the myriad rules of being college students or would I be liberating them? Also, is it possible to encourage the creation of meaning within a system that is designed to neuter and castrate the very individuals it promises to empower? How can I foster inclusivity in an alienating atmosphere? And finally, how do I maintain humility in an ego-filled profession?

Works Cited

- Kahn-Egan, Seth. "Pedagogy of the Pissed: Punk Pedagogy in the First-Year Writing Classroom." *College Composition and Communication* 49.1 (1998): 99-104.
- Nieto, Sonia. "The Personal and Collective Transformation of Teachers." *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1999. 130-161.

Optimism One is a graduate of Modesto Junior College who would like to work in the two-year college system in the fall of 2004, after he receives his M.A. in Rhetoric and the Teaching of Writing from CSU Stanislaus. He is currently a teaching assistant in developmental writing. And he still works in a factory.

Poetry

Today's the Day

by Elizabeth Columa

today's the Day to celebrate
what has freely come to me
to sing a song that is a lullaby at dawn

the summer day is hot outside
the sidewalk is scorching under my feet
and I won't wait till sadness settles in

to grab the pen to write about
the love that love breaks
shattering inside the human shell

today's the day to celebrate
not lofty lifetime accomplishments
but small victories of the *coueur*

today's the day to write a poem
that's light and simple and to have
a toast from the finest crystal glass

to dance the waltz in slow motion
to take a snapshot of the full moon
till the last gray cloud is gone from the sky.

Life's Cycle

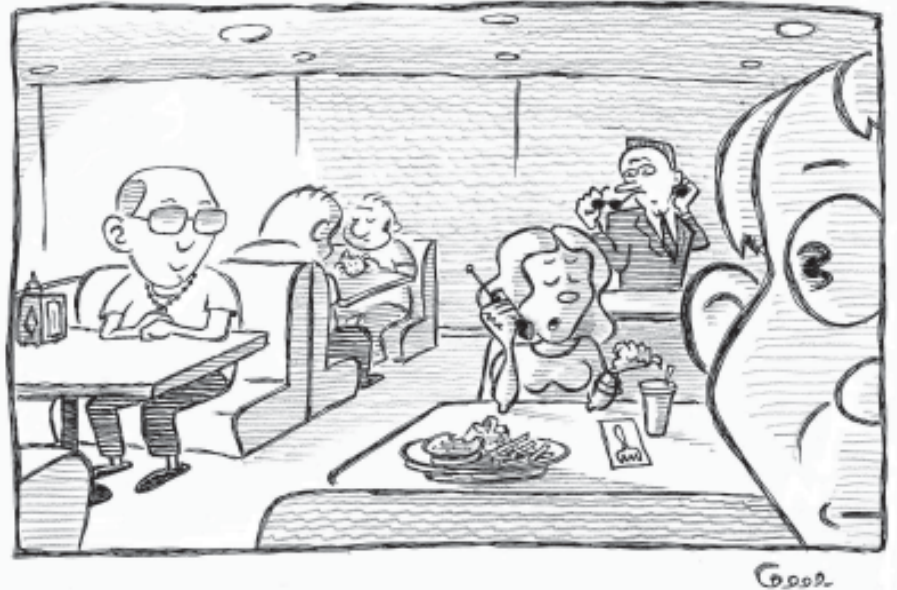
Hands that touch,
that clap in zest,
that flap like a bird's
wing in the nest.

Hands that touch,
that wave, that play,
that sway, betray,
that command and obey.

Hands that touch,
that paint the clouds
that the mother caresses
that lovers love to hold...

Hands that touch
and grow old with time,
that lose the grip,
that cross the heart.

A native of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Elizabeth Columa teaches English as a Second Language and American Culture at El Camino College. She holds a Ph.D. in Education from the University of Southern California. She is also an intercultural consultant, with partner Jonathan Van Speier, in intercultural negotiations and communications. She writes professional articles as well as poetry in English and in her native Portuguese. She was recently a semi-finalist in the William Faulkner Poetry Competition.



Lunch with the Dalai Lama

by Bill Wallis

He appeared at the restaurant door, in T-shirt and jeans-
Barefoot, peeking in, the busy crowd blind about him.
Apparently, I alone saw him for who he was,
But who could blame them—he a field vibrant
And glowing gold, relative to plastic orange.
My smile his invitation, he appeared a blur
Across from me and ordered double portions
Wordlessly; we ate—or the food simply disappeared
In a blur of chopsticks—if causality held at all.
Dreamless, I knew he was there because a
Broker suddenly stopped his Cubist summary
Of the market's fall, put on his sunglasses,
And shyly blinked—blinded, I assume, by the
Glancing splendor of something vaguely pure,...
Or perhaps our presumed interest in his pitch.

Bill Wallis teaches at L. A. Valley College

Poetry

Magpie Funeral

by Annie D'Arcy

I didn't know what it was at first:
the whir of flapping wings,
shrill cries, dismay.
I watched as magpies, twos and threes,
crash landed in the grass.

More came, and more. The air a din
of squawks and shrieks.
So many feathers,
beaks, and claws.

And then I saw the reason:
inert body, one of their own,
quite dead.

They struggled, each in turn,
to pull it back to life.
They pecked. Nudged. Dragged.
Piercing questions
Screeched, repeated.

Then finally, one by one,
they left, each uttering
the same long caw:
they knew.

I asked myself,
How did they know to come?
What message did they get—and how?

They knew to come as I did,
responded to a call
to mourn the loss of
one small life.



Annie D'Arcy has taught at various California universities and community colleges for the past fifteen years and presently teaches at Solano College. She is a doctoral candidate in interdisciplinary studies at Union Institute and University with a focus in ecriture feminine.

Book Review: **Writing Connections: You, College, and Careers** by Lee Brandon

Melissa Utsler

"Improving your writing skills can make a world of difference in various aspects of life, including your career." How many times have I impressed this concept upon students in my developmental writing classes? Writing skills, learned in the community college classroom, transfer to those very "down to earth" concerns of current and future employment. On more than one journey, I have traveled the World Wide Web to locate a vivid descriptive piece in a sample police report or a focused thesis sentence in an applicant's autobiographical statement.

In the series, **Writing Connections: You, College, and Careers**, Lee Brandon travels the worlds of personal, cross-curricular, and career-related writing. Book One: Sentences and Paragraphs reflects a major strength of the series, a collection of readings, demonstrating various applications of skills, learned in the writing classroom. For instance, the cause- and-effect chapter includes diverse selections from professional and student writers. Student writer, Louis Crissman, addresses the startling influence of alcohol on a father's actions in "My Dad, The Bank Robber." Following Crissman's contribution, Linda Ellerbee's "Television Changed My Family Forever," provides a professional example of personal writing. As the chapter continues, one student writer and one professional writer deliver examples of cross-curricular cause-and-effect writing. Sarah Bailey's "A Divorce With Reasons," connects sociology coursework with her student life while the Social Psychology textbook excerpt, "The Robbers Cave Experiment," considers competition and conflict. Jean Chew and Bob Walter supply student and professional readings, related to career contexts. Providing guidance in modes such as narration, division, and persuasion, other pattern-focused chapters similarly include professional and student examples of career, cross-curricular, and personal writing.

Featured at the beginning of each textbook chapter, reader-friendly quotations will arguably provide reasons for reflection in students and moments of metacognitive analysis in pedagogues. Encouraging discussion of mode use, one featured quotation addresses the textbook philosophy, "As with patterns in previous chapters, these offer structure. Overuse them and your writing will be mechanical, neglect them and your writing may be aimless." The pattern-focused chapters of Section Four emphasize the use of modes in the book's three major contexts.

Brandon blends the textbook's unique three-context approach with common developmental emphases. In the narration chapter, attention to verb tense, point of view, order, description, and dialogue follow attention to situation, conflict, struggle, outcome, and meaning. Each chapter provides various practice exercises and explanations to help students meet listed "learning objectives." Through writing process worksheets as well as other strategies, students consider common steps for creating texts. Students read as writers, analyzing the steps, taken to create selected writings from the textbook. For instance, the cause-and-effect chapter includes a step by step examination of Crissman's process for writing "My Dad, The Bank Robber." Through the use of three stage worksheets, Brandon encourages students to consider writing processes (suggesting linear, rather than circular models), used by featured student writers.

A brief, linear review of the Writing Connections textbook may dissuade some developmental writing teachers from book use; the initial emphasis on sentences, followed by a focus on paragraphs, and a brief consideration of essay writing will not appeal to all. Still, Brandon provides five textbook sections for developmental writing courses, and these varied sections can be put to flexible use. The first part of the book provides strategies for reading as well as connections between reading and writing. The second section focuses on sentence level construction. Part Three encourages students to use writing as a process in the creation of paragraphs and other writing forms, including short essays. Part Four uses cross-curricular, personal, and career-related writing situations to help introduce students to particular writing patterns. The fifth section of the text addresses career-related decision-making and provides engaging springboards for critical thinking and writing assignments.

Career-related readings, featured in Section Four, complement the Section Five emphasis on career choices. Through a series of assessment exercises, Brandon encourages students to consider their passions, abilities, and other criteria for making career choices. In one of many related readings, the student writer, Chew, reflects on work-related communication tasks, sharing connections between her Feng Shui knowledge, advising capabilities, and real estate career. In another reading, addressing career-related choices and well-being, Bob Walter explores the worries of workaholics with his professional piece, "Work, Work, Work: For Workaholics, the Job Can Be a Disease." At the end of the piece, a quiz allows students to assess personal propensities for wandering too completely into the work world.

Brandon encourages student writers to not completely wander into one writing context. Instead, students are encouraged to consider writing as a communication tool for personal, professional, and educational aspects of life. Considering career-related writing as well as writing across the curriculum, Brandon's refreshing text is well-worth the consideration of developmental writing teachers.

In her third year at Chaffey College, Melissa Utsler teaches developmental writing and other English courses. During ECCTYC 2003, she presented "Seeing Through Student Eyes: Developmental Writing Teachers as Learners."

Report on Activities of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges

By Mark Snowwhite

Gearing up for its spring session in San Francisco on April 15-17, the Academic Senate's executive committee and other committees have been grappling with the ramifications of the Governor's proposed budget. While the bottom line for community colleges appears healthy relative to what the other segments would receive (The proposed budget actually includes an increase for community colleges), there are areas of concern. First, the community college budget assumes an increase in student fees to \$26 per unit and a whopping \$50 per unit differential fee for those with bachelor's degrees. (If the differential fee for degree-holders sounds familiar, it was tried a few years ago and succeeded only in angering or driving away many students who sought education to change or enhance careers).

The \$26 fee has been defended on the grounds that it brings college expenses up to Pell Grant threshold levels, allowing students access to these funds; however, this level is not fixed and may change year-to-year, especially if demand for it exceeds funding. Also, it may very well scare away economically disadvantaged students before they learn about financial aid.

Much of the Senate's concern about the budget flows from the proposed cuts in funds for CSU and UC, who were provided no money for outreach efforts or growth. Outreach has funded many projects especially important to historically underserved populations, and it also funds ASSIST, which is an important tool for our transfer students. With Tidal Wave Two continuing to increase demand, our four-year partners will be expected to redirect many first-year students to our campuses (10% of applicants is estimated), yet there are no growth funds specified for this redirection and no plans for additional support for the counseling that these students will need. Also, with fee increases a certainty at UC, CSU, and the independent universities, we can expect many more students to self-redirect to the community colleges, possibly creating pressures to alter our missions (e.g., more transfer courses and less service to basic skills students).

The Senate is concerned about the threat to the part-time initiatives. The Governor's budget proposes to remove these from categorical status and move them into general apportionment. Consultation members have voiced opposition to this mechanism, arguing that these relatively recent enhancements are too new and too important to legislators responsible for their creation.

Similarly the Senate views attempts to fold matriculation funds into the base as a significant threat. Matriculation funds now are essential for orientation, assessment, placement, developing student education plans, and follow-up. De-categorizing these funds in the name of greater "flexibility" decreases their visibility (and accountability) and allows those funds to be diverted to "pet" projects. At the last Board of Governors meeting Academic Senate representatives joined other faculty representatives in objecting to this proposal.

At its February meeting, the Senate's executive committee decided to take no position on Propositions 57 and 58. Because the body (voting delegates) has not had a chance to adopt a position on these propositions nor has it taken a position on the principles of Propositions 57 and 58, the executive committee felt it could not legitimately take a position. (All positions of the Academic Senate must derive from resolutions adopted at one of the two plenary sessions held each year).

Matters beyond the financial will be presented at the April 15-17 spring session. Delegates will probably have an opportunity to vote on whether to raise Title 5 associate degree requirements for English and mathematics. The two colloquia on these issues (at the end of February) will result in a paper summarizing opinions and will certainly generate resolutions for determining the Senate's position. (ECCTYC has already taken a position that the Title 5 associate's degree requirement for English be a writing course "at the college level").

There will also be two breakouts on the process for reviewing and revising the Disciplines List that determines minimum qualifications for faculty being hired. These breakouts will mark the beginning of this review, which is conducted once every three years by the Academic Senate. It is important note that the Senate consults with a variety of representatives from groups statewide, including professional organizations such as ECCTYC.

Much more information about the spring session is available at www.academicssenate.org.



YRC (YOUNG RHETORICIANS' CONFERENCE) ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC, 2004

June 24 - 26 at the Monterey Beach Hotel

Composition & Rhetoric: Walking the Tightrope: Balancing Theory and Practice

This June, academics, writers, publishers, and lovers of language will converge as colleagues to explore the balance between theory and practice in teaching, bringing the skills and joys of language to others. The YRC looks to issues and ideas that enable us to enable our students' skills and passions relative to all aspects of discourse—cognitive, pragmatic, and artistic. Bring your concerns—ideological and/or intuitive—to the beach as we gather to rejuvenate ourselves and ponder what we are about—where the Monterey Bay warmly greets general sessions, workshops, panels, and luncheons. Please join us! See our website or contact Sterling Warner, Conference Co-chair for more information: jsterlingw@aol.com.

College Credit (Post-Baccalaureate)

Earn 2 units of California State University credit while you enjoy the YRC: Your choice of either English or Education in-service credit through CSU Bakersfield, \$40/unit.

Down in Monterey

We are booked for June 19-21 at the Monterey Beach Resort. Thursday once again finds us on the hotel beach, settling back for the luncheon barbecue spread. Later, as evening falls on minds astir from afternoon seminars, jazz-based sounds resonate from the balcony above the waves.

YRC in Monterey Bay: A Retreat and Conference

Drive the Coast Road to Big Sur—or seek the ghosts of Jeffers, Steinbeck, Kerouac—or take a sunset sailing cruise across the Monterey Bay. Come regenerate yourself for the coming year.

Conference registration

PREREGISTRATION Conference fees include Thursday's barbecue on the beach and Friday's luncheon with speaker. Preregister with the attached form.

Full-time Faculty: \$90, Adjunct Faculty/Students: \$70

WALK-IN REGISTRATION will begin around 8:00 AM on Thursday, June 19, on the fourth floor of the Monterey Beach Hotel. Fees include two meals.

Full-time Faculty: \$100, Adjunct Faculty/Students: \$80

Hotel Accommodations

THE BEACH RESORT We meet at The Beach Resort for all general sessions, workshops, luncheons, and book exhibitions. The YRC has booked a block of rooms, so remember to ask for "Young Rhetorician special rates" when you reserve your room.