

COMMUNITY COLLEGE MOMENT



**MISTAKES, MISSTEPS,
AND MESS-UPS**

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Volume Sixteen
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Editors' Note

We live in an age of the spectacular public failure. Public missteps can derail a presidential campaign (think Howard Dean's scream), enrage moral arbiters (think Janet Jackson's accidental exposure at the Super Bowl), and expose political hubris (think George W. Bush's "Mission Accomplished"). "FAIL Blog" has been a comedic fixture of the Internet for eight years now, and "has helped popularize fail as both a noun and an exclamation, not to mention an easier-to-spell synonym for *schadenfreude*" (Fitzpatrick). Social media allows for immediate condemnation and ridicule, illuminating the incredible power of public shame.

Within this context, it is worth asking: Which kinds of mistakes are forgivable, in ourselves and in others? Which are not? What is the line between accountability and intransigence? How and when can we learn from our mistakes? What do mistakes do?

Mistakes are arguably essential to who and what we are as human beings. In *The Power of Myth*, Joseph Campbell argues that perfection "would be inhuman. The umbilical point, the humanity, the thing that makes you human and not supernatural or immortal — that's what's lovable" (4). In this vein, one of your editors once lost his voice on the first day of class. He was embarrassed at his failure as a public speaker to even be able to get through the syllabus. Dismissing class early, he was certain that the course as a whole would be a disaster. Instead, the flaw seemed to humanize him as a teacher in the eyes of his students and the course proved a success. Some theorists have reimagined the classroom as a space that is open to such moments. Peace educator Edward J. Brantmeier, for example, imagines a "pedagogy of vulnerability" that centers on "taking risks — risks of self-disclosure, risks of change, risks of not knowing, risks of failing — to deepen learning. Vulnerability is an act of courage" (96).

Historically speaking, some have transformed their mistakes on a grander scale. Back in 1988, then-Governor Bill Clinton gave a speech that would be remembered not for its eloquence but rather for its length and tedium. He was literally booed while onstage at the Democratic National Convention. He didn't come across as presidential, and not a few pundits wondered whether he would ever recover from such a public debacle. Of course, he did recover. He soon poked fun at his foibles as a speaker on the *Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson, who jovially pulled out an hourglass at the outset of the interview. That appearance helped to revive Clinton's political aspirations, and he would build on his self-correction to help change how politicians campaign today. Seizing on the approachability of being "unpresidential" during his 1992 run for the White House, he played the saxophone on *The Arsenio Hall Show*. Now, the public sees presidential contenders and presidents themselves not only on late night talk shows, but also on comedy sketch shows like *Saturday Night Live*. President Barack Obama would jam with Jimmy Fallon on *Late Night* in 2012 and in 2014 would promote the Affordable Care Act on *Funny or Die's Between Two Ferns* with Zach Galifianakis.

The mistakes people fear and the missteps many try so hard to avoid often prove to be catalysts for enormous growth and positive change. Via the theme of "Mistakes, Missteps, and Mess-ups" this

edition of *The Community College Moment* offers faculty pieces that consider the value of our all-too-human blunders. The bookends of the “Essay” section — D. Shane Combs’ “In Search of Affect Affiliation: Mistakes, Missteps, and Mentor Relationships” and Alice Louise Warner’s “Whose Mistake? Shifting the Focus from Reader to Author and Steering Clear of Shame” — offer alternative frameworks to the shame both teachers and students can associate with their work in the classroom. In “Rethinking Curriculum,” Lori D. Ungemah considers how working with a student who is homeless helps her to see the shortcomings of an assignment focused on consumption, and essays by Scott West and Jarvis Slacks explore how misunderstandings of student knowledge and engagement can disrupt teachers’ attempts to engage with digital technologies, pedagogies, and philosophies in the classroom. Meanwhile, Brooke Taylor explores the expansion of knowledge borne from scientific errors in “Mistakes in Chemistry.”

The theme of “Mistakes, Missteps, and Mess-ups” is also taken up in creative ways. Jen Ferro examines the limitations of a librarian’s power to help, Carol Watt explores the complications that arise from kindness and sympathy, Perry W. Ma reflects on the potential of asymmetry, and Philos Molina offers a meditation on war and violence. In the “Life in the CC” section, Marc Duyck explores the personal transformation that can emerge from a mistake not of one’s own making, while Shannon Mootz explicates what can be gained from finding ourselves lost.

This edition of *The Moment* also offers essays that consider the subtleties of the father-daughter relationship, the fraught history of what we know today as wilderness spaces, and what it means to write in obscurity. Poets Jean LeBlanc, Peter Jensen, and Sarah Lushia meditate in profound and lovely ways upon language, longing, and identity, while Sandy Brown Jensen and Kathleen Caprario-Ulrich pair visual art and written reflection to explore both the way objects can inspire artmaking and the productive potential of decomposition.

Finally, photographs by Russell H. Shitabata flank the issue, illuminating the beauty that can emerge from the spectacular mistake. It is with these images of risk-taking and freedom in mind that we invite you to read on.

Russell H. Shitabata and Aryn Bartley
Co-editors, *The Community College Moment*

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ESSAYS



An expert is a person who has made all possible mistakes
in a certain narrow domain.

— Niels Bohr

In Search of Affect Affiliation: Mistakes, Missteps, and Mentor Relationships

D. Shane Combs with contributions and input from Colleen Keefe

I. Constructing Shame

"Shame marks the break in connection" — Elspeth Probyn

In the fall of 2015, I began my first semester at Illinois State University, where I had moved a thousand miles from North Carolina in order to pursue a PhD in English Studies. It was a move I helped create (in that I did the research on Illinois State University, applied, and eventually said "yes" when I was accepted) and one that, towards the end of my decision-making process, I actively resisted. My mentors at East Carolina University, where I had just completed my Master's in English, should have understood my situation. I wrote actively, intensely, about what it's like to be an introvert, what it's like to have a highly-sensitive temperament, about how I spent more than two decades of my life in an abusive/authoritarian environment, under the strong arm of fundamentalist religion, and, in the last ten years, trying to work my way out. They should have understood that it was only when I met them, only in the last two years of my life, that I felt like I had learned to think critically, to understand the social and relational implications of all that we do, and, it was only in their presence that I felt capable to *be* and *become*, which, contrary to my fundamentalist upbringing, didn't mean striving for perfection or straight and narrow paths but, rather, meant wandering, curving off that path, exploring and transgressing those boundaries. It meant being free to fall, free to fail, and free to make motion by way of the missteps involved in honest, vulnerable tries.

In my first eight weeks at Illinois State University, I bumped headlong into two things: the point my mentors had been trying to make to me and the point I had been trying to make to them. Their point, that Illinois State University was "a good fit on paper" for me, first proved true in a course I signed up for, called "Class, Affect, and the Autobiographical Impulse in Composition." In the early stages of that class with Dr. Amy Robillard, we read "What Are Affects?" by Silvan Tomkins and *Blush: Faces of Shame* by Elspeth Probyn. In both of these texts, we were informed that, according to Tomkins, shame is not a binary with pride, but rather should be paired with interest:

Like disgust, [shame] operates only after interest or enjoyment has been activated, and inhibits one or the other or both. The innate activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest or joy. Hence any barrier to further exploration which



partially reduces interest ... will activate the lowering of the head and eyes in shame and reduce further exploration or self-exposure.¹

Tomkins' idea, that there was an interest-shame continuum, resonated with me to the point that I immediately began turning my life over, viewing it from various angles. For once, I felt equipped with the theories and thoughts to make educated guesses out of the mess that had been *me*. That shame could be "the incomplete reduction of interest"² illuminated a space I never knew how to vocalize. How could I have known, in a world informed by concepts, that I had been standing on a continuum, always aware of interest, but always stunted by shame?

In those same readings, I discovered the words I hadn't been able to say to my mentors at East Carolina University about why I was so hesitant to pursue the positive opportunity at Illinois State University. Probyn, speaking about Tomkins, gave me the words when she writes that "Tomkins cites the example of a man who having suffered humiliation all his life suddenly meets with praise. The question is: how will the man integrate praise into a lifetime of experienced humiliation, which has in part been shaped by his negative script? Tomkins' answer is that he will tend to repeat the negative script and not understand praise."³ Probyn, speaking more of Tomkins, goes on to tell us that "[w]hile it is possible to develop positive scripts ... the weight of experience is played out in the nuclear scripts. These 'appear to the individual [with a negative script] to have robbed him of what might otherwise have been a possibly better life.'"⁴ With these words that I had only felt in my body in North Carolina but not known how to say now speaking to me through the readings at Illinois State University, I immediately came to a hypothesis, one that I will explore in the following pages. My hypothesis went like this: perhaps people who come from authoritarian homes (who never had the chance to make mistakes), or people who have suffered trauma (and thus struggle to make themselves known), have very little chance to truly pursue their interests because of the scripts of their lives. They have been conditioned *not* to take chances, not to take steps for fear of missteps, and not to seek what they desire for the shame that might come from it. It became my argument, then, that these people, in the presence of true interest, may *skip* interest and go straight to shame. They may keep themselves *in* shame due to their inability to flip the script set so early in their lives. And these struggles, absent Tomkins, may only know silence, for their inability to articulate what is felt in the body but lost in translation to the mind. The script, then, becomes an accumulation of what Pierre Bourdieu calls *habitus*, or "embodied history."⁵

...

"Say you lied."

These words came to me while reading Tomkins. They came to me though they were never directed at me. They came to me though two decades separated me from their hear-

ing. They came to me with my father's image, not as he is now, humbled by time and age, but as he was — broad-shouldered, so broad, that he filled the house with his power. In the memory, he hovers, as does his power. He hovers over my brother, who is either crying or resisting.

Hence: crying now or crying later.

My father demands, "Say you lied, boy. Say you lied."

Just the fact that he had to repeat himself that day must have warranted punishment. I don't remember the cause of his accusation; I only remember the consequence. There will be violence, will be punishment. My brother *will* cry. My father, having completed his primary duty as a father, will jump in his truck and go someplace else. When he returns, he will line us up and see sure that we stand up straight. He will have us say sorry whether we mean it or not.

Ours is a childhood where you lie, not for advantage, but for disadvantage. You go to Christian school, even though your family considers itself backslidden and 'away from God.' When your parents stay up all night fighting and cannot take you to school, you say your car got stuck in the mud, even though nobody believes that excuse anymore. Your teachers mock you in front of your classmates, even though they know you aren't the one who wrote the note with the lie for an excuse.

But you stand and take it because it's all you know to do.

Yes ma'am. I am the liar. I am the school-skipper. I am the one who stayed up all night drinking and fighting. Yes ma'am. I wrote the note. I made the excuse. I stuck the car in the mud. I'm sorry. I'm wrong. I deserve it. Punish me.

In *Blush: The Faces of Shame*, Probyn, channeling Gerhart Piers, writes that, "Shame brings the fear of abandonment by society, of being left to starve outside the boundaries of humankind."⁶ But I don't know this at ten years old. I don't know the boundaries that have been drawn between my family and the rest of the world. I don't yet know in my mind — though I do in my body — that I am starving outside the boundaries of humankind. I don't know, when Probyn writes that "shame ... reveals with precision our values, hopes, and aspirations"⁷ that I don't yet have values, hopes, or aspirations. Rather, I am the embodiment of my parents' fears and boundaries. And they are the product of the fears and restrictions of their parents — ways of living so abusive, so authoritarian that it makes my parents' worst mistakes seem like kindness and charity.

...

In the car, on the way home from school one day, a new country music song plays, and the chorus sprawls through the speakers and across the makeup of my identity:

"Shame, Shame, Shame, Shame."

I blush and bury my head. I'm afraid others in the car are looking at me. On some level, I hear a country singer crooning on about shame, and I hear it as such. But, on another level, it sounds too much like my name, feels too much like my lived experiences, and somewhere between what I know with my mind and what I feel with my body, I hear the following words, as if they were crafted out of me:

Shame, Shane, Shame, Shane.

It's more than a similarity of sounds that causes my anguish. The embarrassment wasn't registered in reflecting on the names; the embarrassment was already present, waiting on the mere verbalization of the word to register within my body the story of shame that had been written upon it.

For years I will blame my sensitive temperament for these sorts of reactions, but it isn't that simple. It is, in great part, the environment, the relational, that has the say so on what I feel in that car. Just as my brother said he lied when he didn't, just as we said we were sorry when we weren't, my habitus moved me from what could have been positive affects, if they had been born to positive relations, to a narrative of negativity, of emotional starvation, of a constant state of shame.

All the affective responses that might otherwise have belonged to Shane — those that could have helped me make relations, grow, try, and fail — were rerouted through *Shame*. When I kept all my trauma to myself as a child, when I eventually dropped out of high school in the twelfth grade, when, years later, I was accepted to the nonfiction MFA program at Iowa and felt too undeserving to attend, when I was accepted to an MFA TV Writing program in New York and the Director — a writer of movies and former showrunner for TV — called and pursued and wouldn't give up even after I declined — each person, each situation, was met with a dead end that neither they nor I could explain. It's only now that the dead end has a name, a direction, a placement on the map of my life. Simply, they were trying to speak to *Shane*, and all I had to offer them was *Shame*.

II. Feeling a Sham

"[B]ehind the feeling of shame stands not the fear of hatred, but the fear of contempt which, on an even deeper level of the unconscious, spells fear of abandonment, the death by emotional starvation" — Gerhart Piers

What was it that happened at East Carolina University in 2013 that began to speak positive script to negative? Appropriately, it was in almost failing that I found a place where I felt comfortable trying to succeed. It was my first week as a Master's student, and I was working up the courage to walk into the office of the Director of Graduate Studies to let her know that, even though I didn't want to, I would have to drop out of the program and go home. I had been placed in an assistantship where I was to edit a journal that I

knew little about, where I was expected to already have the skills. Simply said — this experience triggered all the wrong things in me: many years of missed grammar instruction, the return of absolutes, and a feeling of imposture syndrome that sought to jeopardize my hard-earned entry into higher learning.

In the office of Dr. Michelle Eble, as I tried to tell her why I couldn't fulfill my assistantship, I kept saying the word *contract*: "I know I signed a contract and ..."; "I want to honor my contract but ..."; "If breaking my contract means I have to go home, I will."

Though this happened only two years ago, I struggle to narrate myself back into a mindset so small, with fears so large, that every failure or potential failure always meant an absolute cutting off of opportunity. Again, however, I address Tomkins' interest-shame continuum and my hypothesis that those who carry trauma and the sediment of authoritarian limitations in their habitus, those who have fear, failure, and shame written into their script, may try to skip interest and go straight to shame, to cling to shame, because they have been conditioned, by experiences of class, gender, relation, to believe, *through to their bodies*, that shame is their destination.

On that day, I didn't even think negotiation could be a thing. I was trying to throw myself out of the academy so Dr. Eble wouldn't have to. I was on the verge of tears as I talked to her and, when I finally looked up, she seemed on the verge of laughter. She said very few graduate students recognize what fits or doesn't so early and most only come to her when it's too late. *She actually praised me for my failure.*

What happened in that room, I now know, was the collision of two scripts. Mine was a script set to a rigid, legalistic interpretation of scripture, of absolutes; hers was a script set, in part, to the words of one of her favorite authors, Brené Brown. In other words, my script was "be ye perfect for I am perfect," and her script was *The Gifts of Imperfection*.

...

I want to talk now about what is easier not to talk about, which are the difficulties, the missteps, the messing up, that sometimes come from caring in the classroom. There seems a connection, for many, between caring in the classroom and writing personal on the page. Neither is well supported by cultural or economic capital. When a teacher (/writer/researcher/scholar) publishes a personal piece, it sometimes doesn't receive the academic value that a more 'scholarly' piece might receive. When a teacher mentors or leads a directed reading, it is often on her own time and dime. And it is often easier to gain a circle of colleagues by criticizing students than by defending or praising them. Thus, when we take the time to care in an engaged and holistic manner and we succeed with students, often the compensation of that labor is strictly in the relationship built and the progress seen with the student. When we fail, we are often left to fail alone and without support. It feels, at times, in a pedagogy of caring, that we are on a continuum of *caring* and *caring too*

much, but this is, in reality, still Tomkins' interest-shame continuum, as caring, at least in the embodied, temporal moment, can seem appropriate and worthwhile when the interest is returned and learning is seen, but that same level of care often feels like too much when interest is reduced and shame is introduced.

In this regard, Probyn writes,

Imposture implies making it up, hiding behind a mask of competence. Etymologically *shame* comes from the Goth word *Scham*, which refers to covering the face. The crucial element that turns sham into shame is the level of interest and desire involved. There is no shame in being a sham if you don't care what others think or if you don't care what you think. But if you do, shame threatens. To care intensely about what you are writing places the body within the ambit of the shameful: sheer disappointment in the self amplifies to a painful level.⁸

Towards this passage, all I would add is this *feeling a sham* that produces *shame*, this interest and desire, made vulnerable, applies not only in caring on the page but caring in the classroom.

...

For the first few weeks at Illinois State University, I felt many layers, many masks, between my students and myself, mostly because I had returned to a conservative, cautious way of *being*, because of being in a new place. The day the mask came off and the guard came down, however, was the day I brought Tomkins into the English 101 classroom. I don't remember how and I don't remember why (it was more an embodied *how* or *why*), but I went to the whiteboard and wrote on it:

Interest-----Shame

As I told them about Tomkins' continuum, I began a conversation that I had been part of the night before in Dr. Robillard's class. I asked them about their embodied experiences when walking from campus to the Uptown area. Did they look at the people walking the other way? Did they make eye contact? Or did they look anywhere *but* at the people around them? Were they mindful of those moments? Immediately the class opened. Students began talking, not just about their own habits, but about Midwest culture. One person mentioned what it was like being on an elevator with another person, how awkward it felt, and a majority of the class echoed her sentiment.

In return, I shared my experiences as a highly-sensitive introvert, and how difficult it was to meet new people in the Midwest. Again and again, we kept bumping into one word, their word — *awkward*. I walked back to the whiteboard. I told them that, according to Tomkins, in order to engage interest, we risk engaging shame. But, I added, to engage interest is to attempt to engage the perceived purpose, fulfillment, and potential

that we believe might develop along that *interest* line. On Tomkins' continuum, between interest and shame, I wrote:

Potential
Interest-----awkwardness-----Shame

The final moments of class came at this time, and I ended with asking, "If the things you want, or think you want, or may not want but will never know unless you pursue, exist down the line of the interest continuum, but there is always an *awkwardness* that points to the potential of *shame* along that line, when, if ever, will you be willing to crawl over *awkwardness*, through *shame*, to get to the places you want to go? Or are your paths already determined — personally, socially, relationally — by perceived boundaries of *awkwardness* and *shame*?"

• • •

In the next few weeks, students began engaging, opening up, showing interest. In our ten-minute one-on-one conferences, three students stayed much longer. Colleen, who often disrupted our classes in smart and effective ways (but apologized when I made mention of it), stayed longer. Chris, who had taken to a Donald Murray piece we read, stayed longer. And Kacie, who presented herself as a very sensitive person, stayed longer.

From the interest shown in Unit 2 and in conferences, I scrapped Unit 3 (with all the time, energy, and pedagogical planning that had gone into it) to improvise a Unit 3 that was not ready. Immediately I found myself standing in front of a class that was not buying in. In fact, for as intense a buy-in as I felt with the class after Tomkins, I felt an equal level of opting out from the students after. Colleen, who had talked passionately about disrupting/apologizing, seemed determined now to *not* have her voice heard in class. Chris began missing class, and Kacie, when I reached out to encourage her to continue expressing herself, thought I was inviting her to become an English major.

It seems as comical now as it felt devastating then, that every level of connection I felt — intellectual, emotional, affective — seemed to break, wholesale, at the same time.

In my teaching journal, I wrote a passage entitled, "When Giving a Shit Feels Like Shit," in which I wrote, "Some weeks don't go well at all. Some weeks you get tired and make mistakes. Some weeks you close your office door behind you and think to yourself, *I don't want to be a teacher.*"

In my office, I contemplated failure. And despite what I knew with my mind (that classes ebb and flow over any given semester), it felt, in my body, like an indictment of everything I believed and practiced, as if there had been no connection, and I had made myself believe things that simply were not so. Absent mentors, absent what I'll call a posi-

tive affect affiliation, once more I felt a return of the negative scripts, and now I felt more than shame. I felt myself a sham.

...

It would be easy to pretend I hadn't cared, or that I cared *just the right amount at just the right times*. But why live an embodied experience, why speak about the affective, why fight for a space to live and write the personal, if we are going to clean it up, make it as neat as over-practiced theory?

Indeed, in formulating theory, somebody has to be willing to collect and embody the *good* and *bad* of experience. In exploring interest, somebody has to crawl through shame. In resetting boundaries, somebody has to be willing to misstep or overstep the line.

Little did I know, while I was striving to push boundaries in the class, Colleen was trying to do the same with a leadership organization, trying to transgress and reset boundaries in order to make me her mentor.

III. Affect Affiliation

"Who would have thought that we could break the rules like this?" — Colleen Keefe

Interest emerges in the most seemingly natural of ways, but seeing interest manifested and maintained is a messy affair. That is why people who grew up in authoritarian homes, who suffered trauma, who have sensitive temperaments, so often start out at a disadvantage. Making mistakes, seeing interest reduced, can be, for them, a reconstitution of the narrative that they are failures, or should not try, or deserve their lot in life. But if the argument is that toxic relational atmospheres, beliefs, and boundaries can produce negative scripts and a habitus of shame, then we must also contend with a phrase from Tomkins that we glossed over earlier, that "it is possible to develop positive scripts."⁹ This would mean, by contrast to the forming of negative scripts, that creating new relational environments, beliefs, and shifting boundaries can produce an emancipatory effect. Or, as I'll argue, an emancipatory affect. This feeling of freedom creates what I've coined *affect affiliation*.

In considering affect affiliation, I am interested in what is felt in the body, with bodies, when we feel liberty within a space, within relations. I am interested in affect at the level described by Rice, when she channels Massumi, who would have us know that "affect is like a degree of intensity that is prior to an indexed or articulated referent."¹⁰ Here I am interested in what Rice tells us of Brennan's "zone of relationality,"¹¹ but I am interested not just in a relational affective exchange but with the collision of scripts and histories as well. It is in this temporal moment where we feel affect but have not yet defined it, that we begin to experience affiliations that have the potential to reverse negative scripts and rewrite the habitus of shame.

...

What I first noticed about Colleen is that her responses in class seemed impulsive. Her arm would shoot up so fast it looked like it might leave her shoulder, and she'd start talking, spilling words at a speed that rivaled her shooting arm. But when I made mention of this, or she became mindful of it, she would apologize and recede. Concerning this, Colleen writes,

In my English 101 class ... I have a tendency to be somewhat disruptive. By this I mean that I will commonly challenge statements and am *highly* vocal in class. I don't even remember the context, but one day our class got into a deep discussion about something that I knew couldn't be changed no matter how much we discussed it or wanted it to be changed. I got frustrated that we were wasting time discussing a topic that would never be changed. As always, I verbalized this and after realizing what I had done, I was pretty distraught and felt guilty for disrupting class so rudely. Later that day, Mr. Combs sent me an email with the following James Baldwin quote: "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it's faced." He went out of his way that afternoon to send me that email. This was the first I realized I wanted Mr. Combs as my mentor.¹²

It is insightful here that I don't remember sending that particular quote. I only remember, in that early part of the semester, feeling, at an affective level, that Colleen had the potential to be a leader in the class or to shy away under the pressure of what others might think of her speaking up. I had no idea that Colleen was, in that same stretch of time, considering me to be her potential mentor.

Shortly thereafter, in the one-on-one conference I referenced for Unit 2, Colleen writes "[t]hese conferences were supposed to be ten minutes long. I ended up staying around forty-five minutes discussing the relationship of being disruptive versus being apologetic. This meeting solidified my want of Mr. Combs as my mentor."¹³

...

The organization Colleen sought to join did not permit graduate students to be mentors. The thinking was, graduate students might graduate while the student is still pursuing her work. Colleen's childhood script, I would later learn, was far different than mine. She had been raised not to take no for an answer. When Colleen asked someone at the organization if I could be her mentor and she had been told "no," she asked a second person. When that person said "no," she emailed the woman who made the final decisions but was told "no" again.

By the time Colleen made me aware of her three tries, she was experiencing something similar to what she felt in the classroom — a frustration with wasted words that could not bring about change. In the email to me, she writes:

I don't even know if I'm going to participate anymore because I don't know of anyone here yet, and I was so bummed that I can't use you. Just thought that I would enlighten you with this not-so-fun-fact that has so far been my recent disappointment. I meant to end this [email] on a good note, but I ... am not creative enough to turn this around, and I just wanted to tell you. Because I'm really sad (and angry) about it.¹⁴

After reading her email, I asked Colleen if it would be okay if I emailed the woman at the organization. When she said "yes," I wrote the following:

Colleen is very instinctive There is little separation between her personal self and the professional self she is seeking to develop It seems to me that Colleen is already being a leader and personalizing her experience by not only knowing what she wants but taking the initiative to follow up about it That language and action allows us to co-create our futures is something that I try to teach in 101, and it's only so often that a student really hears it and tries her best to act upon it.¹⁵

...

At a rounded table in the library, some six weeks after receiving our "yes" on the mentorship, one of the themes that emerged with Colleen was an expansion of what I saw between her embodied responses and her need to recede. As example, when I announced to the class that our one-on-one conferences would be at a local coffee house, Colleen burst forth with excitement at having class "in the real world." When she got to that ten-minute conference, she stayed forty-five minutes. But what I hadn't known was what happened in-between. As Colleen walked towards the coffee house, she became so nervous that she sat outside for twenty minutes. Over and again, I would see, as with her frustration that day in class, Colleen would struggle, at an affective level, with work that made her imagine what she hadn't before seen, done, or known. In this same regard, Colleen revealed that, like me, she was struggling to make a home at Illinois State University. She emphasized past relationships she had formed in high school with her teachers, coaches, and principal.

It was weeks into the meetings before I realized that both Colleen and I had surrendered to a narrative that who we had been, at our best, was contained within relationships we could never fully get back to.

These issues of affect, of temperament, of habitus, I truly believe, don't get worked out alone, nor do they get worked out in spaces with people who do more to limit and shame than to listen and understand. In *Ordinary Affects*, Kathleen Stewart writes that "[o]ut there on its own, [the affective subject] seeks out ... little worlds to nudge it into being."¹⁶ Colleen and I came together through a series of nudges — my email to her, her pushing the leadership organization, additional time spent in conference. Concerning the mentor-

ship, Colleen would later write that she “learned about [herself] by learning about someone else,” and that, after our meetings, she “seemed to like it better in Normal, Illinois.”¹⁷

Because the affective subject seeks out little worlds to nudge it into being, at that table, in a space created by three *no*'s and a single *yes*, affect affiliation allowed us to experience not who we had been, but who we were now. It allowed us to feel, not simply who we were, but who we might become.

Notes

¹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 134-135.

² Ibid., 134.

³ Elspeth Probyn, *Blush: Faces of Shame* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 84.

⁴ Ibid., 84.

⁵ Ibid., 39.

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ Ibid., x.

⁸ Ibid., 131.

⁹ Ibid., 84.

¹⁰ Jenny Edbauer Rice, “The New ‘New’: Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94 (2005): 201.

¹¹ Ibid., 203.

¹² Colleen Keefe, e-mail message to author, October 22, 2015.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Colleen Keefe, e-mail message to author, September 22, 2015.

¹⁵ Shane Combs, e-mail, September 23, 2015.

¹⁶ Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 59.

¹⁷ Colleen Keefe, e-mail message to author, October 22, 2015.

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Rethinking Curriculum

Lori D. Ungemah

I have had homeless students before. In fact, when the recession began in 2008, the number of students living in shelters at the high school where I taught in Brooklyn grew and grew and grew. Most students guarded this information closely, but every so often I would find out. Sometimes they would quietly tell me after class while awkwardly lingering in my classroom. Other times I heard it from the guidance counselor, when they needed me to cut a student a little slack for tardiness or sleepiness. Whenever I found out that a student was homeless, it was as if a missing puzzle piece completed a confusing image — the fatigue, the sudden weight loss or gain, the increasing dirtiness of their clothing or unkempt elements of their personal self. “Oh,” I would think, “*That’s* what’s going on.”

As much as my homeless high school students hung heavy in my heart, I experienced a new type of heartache when I found out that one of my community college students was homeless. Why? Because he was 19 years old and alone — alone — on the streets of New York City, from 8 pm to 8 am, waiting for our college to reopen so he would have a physical space to simply be. This is what it means to teach college. The students are legally adults even though, at 18-ish, they are still so, so young.

Listening to his story was both a punch in the gut and a revelation about curriculum development for me. Me, a person who studies curriculum and how it can include or exclude students. Me, someone who has a Doctorate in Education in Curriculum & Teaching. Me ... I missed this one.

Our fall curriculum topic for our first-year City Seminar course was *From Transaction to Trash: Consumption, Waste, & Sustainability in New York City*. During the first six-weeks of the semester, students kept a consumption diary in their Quantitative Reasoning (QR) class: they collected data, read their data, and created a table/graph/chart to explain their data. Next, they were to take that data from QR and write about their consumption practices in my Reading & Writing class for an essay entitled “Who Am I as a Consumer?” They were to use our class text, *No Impact Man* by Colin Beavan, as a point of comparison or contrast. They had to create a simple thesis about their consumption practices and back up their thesis with data from QR and the text from Reading & Writing. It was a pretty straightforward developmental Reading and Math assignment.

One student — we will call him Glen — wrote a first draft of the “Who Am I as a Consumer Essay” that was very confusing. It talked about times (arrival/departures) of the Staten Island Ferry and mentioned being repeatedly homeless with his mother and brother while in high school. As I read the essay, I found myself drawn into his story but confused

because his writing did not refer — even once — to the assignment’s goal of documenting his consumption practices and relating his practices to the class text. I wrote him a note telling him that this personal narrative was sad, powerful, and needed to be told one day, but that he needed to follow the guidelines for the assignment and rewrite his first draft in order to receive credit. I signed my note with the all-feared professor comment: Please see me after class.

Glen waited patiently for everyone to filter out of our classroom that night. Other students offered to let him talk to me first, but he encouraged them to go ahead. Soon the room was emptied and we began to talk. There was another class waiting outside to use my classroom, so we walked down the hall towards the faculty floor. I told him I didn’t understand his paper, especially the references to the Staten Island Ferry, and he began to explain.

He told me, in quiet words with many pauses, that he was homeless. “I didn’t know how to write this,” he told me, “because I don’t consume much.” He explained to me a typical day. He had a free Metrocard from the college so he spent no money on transportation. After our library closed at 8 pm, he went to Times Square to people watch if the weather was nice, then he took the subway to the Staten Island Ferry and rode the Ferry all night long. Every day he ate a dollar slice of pizza and a 25 cent bag of chips. He sometimes bought a dollar tea. He scavenged around the college for meetings that included lunch or snacks to eat the leftovers. He didn’t buy or consume much because he had no money. Conclusion: he didn’t know how to do the essay because he didn’t have enough data in his consumption diary. Although he had read the class text, he didn’t know how to compare or contrast himself to Colin Beavan, an upperclass man who lived in the West Village and experimented with reducing his consumption practices for one year of living sustainably. He didn’t know how to do the assignment because he was homeless and had little to no money.

I stood there, taking in his story piece by piece, and my eyes welled up. I took some deep breaths to rein in my emotions, but a few tears slid out. I tried to brush them away before he could see them, but he noticed. How embarrassing.

He apologized for making me cry to which I stammered, “Don’t apologize to me for your life!” I looked at him, so full of integrity and good intentions. He is somebody’s son, I thought. I thought of my son. I wanted to hug him, but I resisted. Emotions came at me from all directions until he interrupted my over-processing mind.

“Professor,” he said, “I just want to do the assignment. I don’t want any special treatment, I just want to do the assignment.”

But my brain continued to spin with a million questions I couldn’t ask. Where was his mom? Why wasn’t he in a shelter with her? How could his parents live, knowing their son

was alone on the streets of this crazy city? Was the Staten Island Ferry safe at night? Wasn't he cold? It was middle October Wasn't he hungry? Tired? What would he do that winter when it became very cold? How did he muster the ability to come to class every day?

I pushed these questions aside and gathered my wits. *Get your shit together*, Lori, I told myself. *This kid doesn't need you crying over him*. I took a deep breath and focused on this student, this assignment, and how we could make it work for his very real life.

In *No Impact Man*, Colin Beavan found that once he cleared the consumption from his life, he had extra time to play with his daughter, to cook and bake, and to spend time with his wife. Glen, since he did not consume much, also had this extra time. In fact, that was the data he had documented in his consumption diary. He had written down the time the ferry left the station in Manhattan, when it arrived to Staten Island, how long he had to sit in the Staten Island Ferry Terminal awaiting the next ferry to Manhattan (you actually have to disembark the ferry, go into the station, and re-embark the next ferry later), his time of the ride back to Manhattan, and the time spent in the terminal in Manhattan waiting for the ferry back to Staten Island. He had calculated the time spent on the ferry travelling, the time spent in the Manhattan station, and the time spent in the Staten Island station. The data from his consumption diary that had confused me was data that represented this loop of travel he experienced every night. Since he had no home, no food, and no commodities like television or video games, he had 12 hours a day that he needed to fill until he could come back to the college. Both he and Colin Beavan had time on their hands due to their lack of consumption, but the circumstances for their lack of consumption could not be more different.

Once he explained the Staten Island Ferry data to me, I saw a way into the essay. We sat down at my desk and discussed the time element of the book, referenced the pages for quotations, and decided that Glen's extra time due to his lack of consumption could be the thesis for his essay. We discussed how and where the data from his consumption diary on ferry travel from his QR class could be woven into the essay and how it proved his thesis. Together, we went over the assignment outline and plugged in Glen's unique circumstances and data, and, surprisingly to me, it actually worked. He thanked me and walked away with a plan for his essay. I think we both felt relief.

He went downstairs to our school library to work one hour until it closed and his evening on the streets began. I gathered my things, and, stunned from this interaction, rode the subway an hour home to my family of four and our small one-bedroom apartment that seemed warm, welcoming, and more perfect than ever.

That night I sat at our kitchen table and told my husband Glen's story. I got teary when telling it and my mind started racing again. "What can we do for him?" I asked my husband, an edge of urgency in my voice. "Can I make him a lunch every day? Do you

have any old clothes?” And my wise husband said, “The best thing you can do for him is to make sure he succeeds in college. He needs this degree, this start, more than most. Make sure he makes it.”

Glen got a B+ on that paper. He graduated from our college in two and a half years, a great timeline for any community college student and an excellent timeline considering that he struggled with homelessness his entire degree. He began a four-year degree, but he has since left that program due to a need to work full-time. He hopes to re-matriculate one day. We are still in touch.

And I, an educator who prides herself on creating culturally relevant curriculum, realized that for all the time I spent thinking about race and ethnicity I had failed to think deeply about the role of class in curriculum development. I never considered how an assignment might marginalize a student who already lived on the economic margins of society. How lucky I am that Glen shared his story with me so that I could understand how class, too, needs to be acknowledged when creating curriculum.

I am sure I have made hundreds of curricular mistakes in my years of teaching, but this is one I will never forget.

Why Did You Make Us Read This?



Scott West

I struggle with teaching. Not all the time, not on a daily basis or anything — not anymore — but there is a part of teaching that continues to create a ripple of anxiety. What if a simple mistake ruins this cohort of students forever? Will they ever recover, or will they graduate into the world without a crucial set of skills? It took several years to relax a little — to develop a comfort with not only the material and how to approach it, but with the idea that mistakes happen, and they do not necessarily result in calamity. How did I learn to write, anyway? In fits and starts, with help and without — turns out this is also how I learned to teach.

One of my goals this semester has been to put the finishing touches on my reworking of our Contemporary Humanities course — transforming it into a Digital Humanities (DH) hub for my institution and revitalizing the division. Students, I imagined, inspired and energized, would spread the word that something truly new and amazing was happening that would place them on the precipice of the future. Through an examination of new tools and ideas that were all around them, they would discover a love for the study of art, literature, and music that they never knew was possible. Somewhere in the usual thicket of grading and committee work, I would plant the seed that would flower in the spring semester. The first of these seeds was an article.

My second semester writing students begin the term with a summary-response. It is a nice tune up for students who have enjoyed a summer without researching academic databases or indulging in MLA Style. I choose the article, we spend a week of class discussing it, and they have a week to put together a two paragraph summary and a relevant response — a wonderful opportunity to introduce some new ideas, and maybe build a little buzz about a new course. I spent some time in our library databases and selected Cornelius Puschmann and Marco Bastos' "How Digital Are the Digital Humanities? An Analysis of Two Scholarly Blogging Platforms." It is a fairly technical piece about data mining a pair of DH blogging platforms.

Aside from my attempt at promotion, I had other criteria for selecting an article for this assignment. I like the selected article to be somewhat challenging — pushing students a bit outside their comfort zones. Not all writing is accessible, and learning how to navigate a difficult piece is a pleasure not reserved for literature students. I also like using an article that will challenge me a bit. There is something about the need to reach and stretch — to worry over a strange concept — that causes synapses to fire pleasantly. Sometimes

this happens in front of a class. That moment of realization is a thing to live for, and students tend to respond well. It is a bit of a risk, of course, but it is just a small paper, after all.

My willingness to overlook some of the article's technical discussion, mentally skimming over the statistics and algorithms in favor of hypotheses and results, may have been my first stumbling block. I warned students to be patient and take their time. Don't worry over details and focus on the big picture, we will discuss this in class. "Can I ask a question?" Of course. "Why did you make us read this?" When a student emphasizes what she perceives to be the compulsory nature of an assignment, the conversation is likely about to become a "teachable moment."

The first such moment was easy. I have assigned articles about German cinema and *Doctor Who*. Students in my classes have been asked to consider concert ticket prices and the future of libraries. Having to begin a conversation about DH was exactly what I wanted. I was looking forward to engaging the class with some of these new ideas that had been brewing for the better part of two years.

The details of the ensuing classes are probably less interesting than the conversations I had with students after class, in office hours, and during conferences. I drew graphs on the board and shared Ngrams and we talked about how cool it would be to chart the use of the words "atomic" vs. "nuclear" in American science fiction over the last century. That aforementioned moment of realization never arrived. Some seemed to grasp what I was saying, but they were all concerned with how to distill the article into a pair of paragraphs. My attempt to distract them from an assignment by teaching them new ideas had not gone well.

So I helped them get through the first paper. I answered a lot of questions about what the authors had done, not about what may be possible. We talked about explications, not implications. Digital Humanities is new and writing is a little scary. An article that introduces an academic perspective on a television program requires a bit of explanation, but it is hardly a paradigm shift. Perhaps this is hyperbole, but I discovered that my students were not quite ready to write about something so foreign in a new class for an unknown professor. They did fine, of course, when the writing had to happen — few struggled as much as they feared, but it took some reassurances, those extra conversations, and a lot of humor.

So why was this mistake so fortuitous? On the surface, one may assume I learned to handle writing students with more care. Don't throw them into too many unfamiliar situations. Start with the known. Maybe the key to this is to build to the DH gradually. Make them write about the familiar, and then blow it all up. Establish an old path, and then forge ahead.

Or I learned something else. I am anxious and honest enough to admit that I may find myself right back here next year, but the mistake was in the reading without building.

Dropping an article on unsuspecting students and spending a day at the whiteboard does not mirror my experiences with learning about DH. Clearly, I read. I took all the notes and looked up all the words. I looked at bibliographies and followed links. I did all the things a good student learned to do all those years ago in classrooms very much like the ones I find myself in now. Then I tried some stuff. I sampled the tools, made clouds and graphs and puzzled over why in the world I should care about how prevalent “old” is in *The Scarlet Letter*. I asked a lot of people a lot of questions and I started to use “corpus” in sentences while contemplating how a smartphone could map local architecture. And then tried a little of that mapping myself.

Next semester, my class will begin with a little bit of reading — I am not going to burn the academy down quite yet — and then more doing. The biggest gap in this pilot, really a sneaky attempt to build a little interest in a new course, was not giving my students space and time to experiment with DH and explore the tools a bit. There was room for mistakes, but on the first paper? Would they trust me enough to make a mistake on that? I skipped the part that had the most profound impact on my own learning. The confusion and fumbling is necessary, but showing still beats telling.

Scaffolding and the Digital Humanities

Jarvis Slacks



When we discuss Digital Humanities, we generally focus on how we can use technology to enhance our students' learning. This feels limited to me. The digital world is vast, with every inch of it touching our daily lives. Our students can learn much from Digital Humanities and the digital tools we use to bring them information. However, our students also need to learn the more practical applications of digital components. We believe that students are digital natives. This is perhaps misguided. Some of our students are playing with digital toys that they don't fully understand. Their lack of a broader understanding can limit their ability to grasp what we are trying to do with Digital Humanities. This needs to change.

To fully understand my point, let's think of the average freshman college student. They have smart devices: a phone, a computer, a tablet. These devices might have the right software on them, but the student may not know for sure. Often, these devices are used for leisure activities such as Instagram, Snapchat, watching videos on YouTube, etc. We like that students use their devices for stuff like this because it makes it easier for Digital Humanities to get its foot in the door. *Hey, Students! Do you like YouTube? Well, hey, how about making a video about your learning process and putting it on YouTube!* Generally, this works. Students understand the concept. But do students understand how to make an appointment to see a professor? And do students know how to schedule the appointment using their digital calendar? And do students know that they can email people and set up a group meeting? Possibly not. They may not know these skills because we aren't teaching them. Digitally scheduling an appointment isn't fun or sexy, but it's vital for students when they need help on a major project.

Here's another example. A student spends weeks setting up an ePortfolio so they can put all their projects online. This ePortfolio will be shared by others and will be a great showcase of their talent. The student works on the background, the color templates, and the proper font. It looks great. Then the student begins to work on a research paper and the student has no idea how to properly format a word document. The student has a hard time figuring out how to put page numbers on the page, or how to change the fonts, or even which font is supposed to be used for a formal paper. I once had a student who was going to miss class and asked me if they could email me their paper. I said, of course. Then the student asked me how to do it. A student, who spends numerous waking hours each day on their cellphone, didn't understand how to send a document to their professor via email.

We assume that students know all this, but they don't always. Basic digital literacy is barely on our radar. Most of our attention is spent on improving our students' academic abilities and creating an environment that fosters critical thinking. These are smart areas on which to spend our time, but more attention needs to be given to the basics of the digital world. These basics help build the foundation for all our students to succeed in our classes. If a student doesn't know how to type, there is not much you can do when they are struggling to write their papers on time. If we don't teach students where to find quality sources online, they won't find quality sources for their projects. We can make digital artifacts available for our students as much as we can (and we should), but what do we do when our students don't understand how to access them?

When introducing Digital Humanities to our students, it is always important to remember the core principles of scaffolding. It's a slow (and sometimes frustrating) process, but giving our students a foundation in the nuances of their digital tools will ensure success for them later. You might not reap the rewards of your efforts in the semester you're teaching them, but academics have always been about laying proper ground work for the future.

Mistakes in Chemistry

Brooke Taylor

Saccharin, penicillin, Scotchgard™, Post-it® notes, Teflon™, Viagra®, chocolate chip cookies, vulcanized rubber, and more recently “smart dust” and Mas-blue pigment have all been discovered by mistakes or unexpected experimental results.¹ Admitted experimental failures don’t often make it into the literature. Published experiments are thoughtful, purposeful, and intentional even when they aren’t. There isn’t a journal titled “Mistakes in Chemistry” with peer-reviewed articles about chemistry experiments gone wrong detailing the mistakes or admitting the unexpected. “Look what I made when I was really trying to make something else” is not high on the list of quotable or even publishable chemistry. Yet some truly useful, everyday, familiar materials have been made by mistake. Here are a few examples.

Sweet, Sweet Bread

In 1877, Russian chemist Constantin Fahlberg was asked by his employer, H.W. Perot, to analyze a shipment of sugar impounded by the US government. After his analysis was complete, Fahlberg was given permission by Ira Remsen to use Remsen’s lab for personal research. Remsen was a medical doctor turned professor at John Hopkins University, and was also employed by H.W. Perot.

One early summer day, Constantin returned home for dinner after working in the lab. When he tasted his bread he noticed it was exceptionally sweet. Apparently, the chemist had spilled something on his hands while working in the lab earlier that day. Neglecting to wash his hands prior to leaving the lab or eating dinner was Fahlberg’s first mistake. He returned to the lab and made his second and most risky mistake: he started tasting everything in the lab. Historically, chemists who tasted their experiments in search of the elixir of life, known as alchemists, had very short life expectancies. The more modern saying also applies: chemistry is like cooking, just don’t lick the spoon. Eventually, Constantin Fahlberg tasted what he was searching for, the chemical we now call saccharin. Fahlberg had apparently synthesized the chemical in a previous experiment but hadn’t spilled any on his hands that day and therefore had not tasted his work with his supper.

In February of 1879, the two chemists jointly published a paper about the two different methods for synthesizing the artificial sweetener. In 1884, Fahlberg alone applied for German and American patents for the synthesis of saccharin by a third method, producing greater quantities at less cost. Fahlberg filed one more patent in 1886 and made his third mistake, he listed himself as the sole discoverer of saccharin. Remsen protested to



the chemistry community, not for the money but for recognition. Fahlberg continued to produce saccharin and the world's first artificial sweetener maintained a long history of controversy and regulation. Interestingly, the story of the discovery of saccharin by tasting has been told in general chemistry labs at LCC for years, however, the discovery was always attributed to Ira Remsen. Next year that mistake will be corrected.²

Why Bother with Experimental Protocol?

A simple act of forgetfulness led Alexander Fleming to the discovery of penicillin in 1928. Fleming studied medicine at St. Mary's Hospital and then worked as a medical bacteriologist in the Inoculation Department headed by Sir Almroth Wright. Despite the department chair's belief in strengthening the body's own immune system rather than introducing external chemical agents to the body, Dr. Fleming was permitted to study a drug for treating syphilis. He continued to administer the drug to wealthy patients after moving on to studying wound care, still under the direction of Dr. Wright.

In 1928, while studying a type of bacteria known for causing boils as well as more serious infections for those with compromised immune systems, Fleming was preparing for a two-week vacation. Prior to leaving he mistakenly forgot to put a petri dish containing the bacteria he was studying into the incubator and instead left it sitting on the lab bench. Somehow, during preparation a mold spore made its way into the sample, perhaps being carried into the lab on another researcher's shoe or from the mold lab on the floor below or through an open window. Because of the contamination and the lack of temperature control, both the bacteria and the mold were able to grow. If the sample had been placed in the incubator, only the bacteria would have survived and path to discovering penicillin would likely have been very different. Fleming continued to observe and study his discovery following the mistake of forgetting to put the sample in the incubator, but he left both sketchy and contradictory accounts in his lab notebooks.

The full potential of penicillin as a curative agent was not discovered for years. Even Fleming himself failed to isolate the substance; instead he focused on its use as a topical antiseptic. Fleming never did inject penicillin samples into lab animals, perhaps because of his belief, like the lab director's, in strengthening the immune system, rather than adding an external chemical to it. He was able to determine the antibacterial substance came from certain strains of bacteria and not the molds; he also studied methods of producing impure forms of penicillin, as well as its stability at different temperatures. Was it a mistake for Fleming to not inject laboratory animals with penicillin? Perhaps this mistake only delayed the discovery of the antibacterial properties of penicillin until 1940, when Fleming's Nobel co-winners, Howard Florey and Ernest Chain discovered the therapeutic properties of one of the most widely known antibiotics.³

Clean up on Aisle 3M

In 1952, a chemical researcher named Patsy Sherman went to work for the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company, better known as 3M. Patsy would have been working in a mostly male environment on her task of researching rubber materials resistant to jet airplane fuels. The following year, Sherman's research assistant mistakenly spilled or dropped some synthetic latex on their white tennis shoes. The synthetic latex was a creation of Patsy Sherman. The assistant tried in vain to clean up the spill and Sherman observed closely as water, oils, soap, alcohol, and other solvents were used to no avail, the substance would not come off. The rest of the tennis shoe where the synthetic material hadn't spilled came clean however.⁴

Over the next three years, Sherman and her lab partner, Sam Smith, investigated this new material, and Scotchgard™ was introduced to the market in 1956.⁵ The colleagues continued their work through the 1960s and expanded the line with related products to protect carpets, materials, and clean upholstery. Sherman and Smith obtained thirteen patents, all a result of an assistant making one of the most common lab mistakes possible, spilling chemicals. Sherman herself offers excellent advice for all chemists, not just the ones who make mistakes in lab: "Keep your eyes and mind open, and don't ignore something that doesn't come out the way you expect it to. Just keep looking at the world with inventor's eyes!"⁶

Sticking to It

Scotchgard™ wasn't the only product developed by 3M involving mistakes. In the 1968, Dr. Spencer Silver was tasked with the job of making an improved adhesive. The adhesives being studied were polymers, large molecules made from repeating units called monomers. Instead of following the experimental protocol of using smaller quantities of monomers, Silver used large amounts and the result was an adhesive even weaker than those already made by 3M, the exact opposite of the desired goal.

Unsuccessful experiments may be caused by mistakes, more formally referred to as error. Error can be systematic or random. Systematic errors often result from a miscalibrated measuring device and are consistent throughout the experiment while random errors vary. They are generally attributed to sloppy technique, mistakes when measuring or a careless chemist. Not following experimental protocol by varying the amounts of starting materials could have been a purposeful choice of Dr. Silver's or it could be considered a random error.

Instead of continuing his work to find a strong adhesive, Silver was determined to find a use for his latest development. Following the synthesis of the weak adhesive, Silver observed that the adhesive actually formed in tiny spheres that would not dissolve or melt.

Individually, the spheres were strong adhesives but they made only intermittent contact with the surface, so the result was sticking to a surface but not permanently so. It took Silver five years of work searching within 3M for a purpose for the less than sticky glue he had developed. As part of his work to find a use for the weak adhesive, Dr. Silver gave many seminars. Arthur Fry, a newly hired researcher at 3M, attended one of the seminars. Fry was also a member of a church choir and was constantly losing his place in the hymnal because the little scraps of paper he used to mark the hymns kept falling out. This scenario created Fry's "Eureka" moment.⁷ Silver's adhesive could be used to keep his scraps of paper in the hymnal in place. And with that, Post-it® notes were born. After Fry came up with the idea, 3M still had the challenge of marketing the product. The company wasn't sure why people would pay for a sticky scrap of paper, but can you now imagine life without a Post-it® note? Look around; you probably have one in your office, stuck to your computer screen, desk, door or book you're reading right now, don't you?

Blue is the New Black

Recent discoveries by mistake in chemistry are not easy to find but a research lab at Oregon State University is all about embracing unintended experimental results. In 2009, a student working in Dr. Mas Subramanian's materials science research lab discovered a blue pigment, now called Mas-blue, while testing materials for use in electronics. The research group was mixing and heating chemicals and expected the results to be black or brown in color. Surprisingly, one of the results came out of the furnace bright blue.⁸

While not on the scale of discovery like saccharin, penicillin, Scotchgard™, or Post-it® notes, and not made or discovered by a mistake but perhaps a mis-step, accident, or surprise, the discovery is still impressive, considering blue pigments rarely occur in nature and the last natural blue pigment was discovered in 1802.⁹ A synthetic blue pigment was first made in 1826 but no recent synthetic new blue paints have been reported since 1960.¹⁰ This discovery has now led to focused work on the production of stable blue dyes, as well as experiments to make turquoise, green and orange pigments.¹¹ Additionally, the research team is working on methods to make the pigments less costly. Currently, the blue color results from the presence of indium, a costly and toxic element. The team is looking to replace indium with manganese and cheaper and more readily available aluminum. Iron has replaced indium to produce orange pigments and copper has been used to make green.¹²

Dr Subramanian is unique in his admission of a surprise result in real time. Many chemists who made mistakes leading to significant discoveries shared the error in their ways only later in their careers. Students and researchers can learn a great deal from the errors of others. The lack of literature highlighting the mistakes of chemistry is unfortunate. It makes one wonder what else has been discovered by mistake, shared or kept secret.

Students and researchers can learn a great deal from their own mistakes. The scientific method in general includes observing, hypothesizing, researching, experimenting, analyzing, revising, concluding, refining, rinsing and repeating (okay, maybe not rinsing). The scientific method also doesn't formally include making mistakes. When students or researchers make a mistake, instead of dumping the experiment in the properly labeled waste container and starting over, maybe they should take the time to analyze the end result; it could be something new, it could be a new way to make a known substance, or it could really belong in the waste. Without analyzing it, how is the scientist to know? Learning from mistakes, your own or others, is a key part of science, and really life in general.

Notes

- ¹ Susan Borowski, "Scientia. Scientific breakthroughs that were accidents," *AAAS Member Central*, April 22, 2013, <http://membercentral.aaas.org/blogs/scientia/scientific-breakthroughs-were-accidents>.
- ² Jesse Hicks, "The Pursuit of Sweet: The History of Saccharin," *Chemical Heritage Magazine*, Spring 2010, <http://www.chemheritage.org/discover/media/magazine/articles/28-1-the-pursuit-of-sweet.aspx?page=1>.
- ³ "Alexander Fleming," *Chemical Heritage Foundation*, accessed November 10, 2015, <http://www.chemheritage.org/discover/online-resources/chemistry-in-history/themes/pharmaceuticals/preventing-and-treating-infectious-diseases/fleming.aspx>.
- ⁴ "Famous Women Inventors, Patsy Sherman," *Inventors.com*, accessed November 10, 2015, <http://www.women-inventors.com/Patsy-Sherman.asp>.
- ⁵ "Innovations, Case Study for Management 321" *Montana State University Billings*, accessed November 10, 2015, <http://www.msubillings.edu/businessfaculty/larsen/mgmt321/3M%20Innovations/Dick%20Drew%20Patsy%20Sherman%20Art%20Fry-%20masking%20tape%20scotchguard%20post-its.pdf>.
- ⁶ "Famous Women Inventors, Patsy Sherman."
- ⁷ "Innovations, Case study."
- ⁸ Casey Chaffin and Nina Lopez, "Discoveries by Accident – The Way They Should Be?," *The Oregonian/OregonLive*, June 27, 2015, http://www.oregonlive.com/teens/index.ssf/2015/06/discoveries_by_accident_the_wa.html.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ "Local Colors," *Lapham's Quarterly*, accessed November 9, 2015, <http://laphamsquarterly.org/fashion/maps/local-colors>.
- ¹¹ "Pigment Discovery Media Attention," *Subramanian Research Group*, May 23, 2015, <http://subramanian.science.oregonstate.edu/news/pigment-discovery-media-attention>.
- ¹² Philip Ball, "Blues Standard," *Chemistry World, Royal Society of Chemistry*, September 27, 2012, <http://www.rsc.org/chemistryworld/2012/09/blue-pigment-paint-chemistry>.

Whose Mistake? Shifting Focus from Reader to Author and Steering Clear of Shame

Alice Louise Warner



My Failure

This is the story of a search to improve a learning outcome. It's a story of my failure, and how my students found a work-around. It's the story of how my students taught me to steer clear of their shame by shifting the focus to the struggle of the author to communicate with them, instead of focusing on their struggle as readers.

The learning outcome: *students locate comprehension problems in a[n appropriate level] text, at the level of concepts, phrases and words.*¹

I started by following a model for teaching the outcome:

- lessons with two-minute demonstrations of how I locate problems in text
- thinking out loud so that my thinking process was “visible” to students
- students practicing the technique with me as a whole class and debriefing
- students trying the technique in pairs, and debriefing again
- students completing structured logs describing their thinking and the meaning they made

However, student progress was tentative at best and didn't return my time and effort. Classroom assessment showed most students weren't making sense of the text, although the students reported finding no problems in the text. Nearly all students finding problems pointed out words they didn't understand, although classroom assessment showed they weren't making sense of concepts or phrases either. Only a few strong students reached the outcome. Why was the model such a failure in my classroom?

More Failure: Walk Away or Keep On?

I repeated model lessons across terms, texts, groups, and skill levels. The constant: too many students failed to reach the outcome. I admit to acting crazy: repeating this again and again, while expecting different results. Was this outcome worth it?

I teach adults of mixed ages in a non-credit program. I have people with high school diplomas improving skills to enter college credit classes, while others in the class seek alternate diplomas (GEDs). The bigger strategic reading outcome is the ability to “choose from a range of strategies, including some sophisticated ones, and integrate them to monitor and/or enhance text comprehension.”² This requires students to use skills from the Lane's core learning outcomes: “persist when faced with difficulties, resistance or errors,” “assess

failures or mistakes and rework,” and “reflect on success, failure and obstacles.”³ The strategic reading outcome also builds core college outcomes such as thinking critically and applying learning.⁴ Ultimately, the performance outcome students seek is passing scores on a standardized test, either the reading portion of the college placement test or the GED.

Most people arrive with one-size-fits-all strategies. They may remember being told to “read more slowly” or “read carefully” (akin to “just pay more attention”). They might remember teachers telling them to re-read (thinking this means starting from the first word of the assignment and going to the last word, and repeating this as long as they can stand it). A handful believe they could solve any textual problem if they could find the main idea. Almost all think that if they really did what they were supposed to, they would look up every unfamiliar word in the dictionary, but they sense that good readers don’t do this.

It’s tough to make sense of complex texts with that toolbox. You could come across an idea you don’t understand, or miss the connection between what you just read and the part you are reading now. An awkward phrase or unusual grammar can jolt you out of the flow of meaning. You find words you can’t make sense of. These are all comprehension problems, and they come in many shapes and sizes.

What’s wrong with the tools struggling readers employ? “Read slowly” or “read more carefully” is vague. Further, serial or global re-reading rarely changes comprehension by much. Sadly, it does invite external and internal distraction. It also exhausts struggling readers.

Finding and making sense of the main idea could be a key symptom of a problem, not the tool to fix it. Or, if phrases and concepts are confusing, and/or strange words are thick in the text, a dictionary will be little help.⁵ How can you hold onto the thread of meaning as you stop to look up words? How exactly do you locate the correct meaning without a nuanced understanding of the vocabulary of formal grammar, dictionary formatting conventions, and common abbreviations for grammatical terms?

When I make sense of challenging texts, I do much more than read slowly and look up words in the dictionary. I am strategic and flexible. I exercise agency, choosing and experimenting with more than one approach. For example, if I hit unfamiliar words or phrases, I might look for morphemes (parts of words that carry meaning). Or, I might call up what I know about the content and the context, predict the missing meaning, and then check my prediction. I could visualize, make visual notes, or hunt for the answers to clarifying questions I created. No matter what, to make sense I need to be aware that I have a problem, pinpoint it, figure out what’s wrong, and try a tailored approach. After years of practice, I do most of this automatically, unless a text is very far from my background knowledge.

Locating problems as you read is a small step towards the larger learning goal — what animal trainers call an “approximation.” Students can use this approximation in other

disciplines. Math students locate error patterns in solutions. Writers use the skill to look for problems when editing. I bet scientists find flaws in experiments or data. Creating requires makers to be aware of problems, and to locate and solve problems during the creative process.⁶

On reflection I concluded this was worth the effort, but why didn't more students reach the outcome?

Students Provide the Clue

I got a clue when my students took on a chapter from the book *Hungry Planet* about Egypt.⁷ Author Faith D'Aluisio describes a family in Cairo preparing food: "Nadia Mohamed Ahmed and her sister-in-law Abadeer sit barefoot and cross-legged on the floor of Nadia's apartment, companionably coring baby eggplants and stuffing them with spicy chopped lamb for the evening meal."⁸

I had a hunch that calling something a "reading problem" was off-putting. In this class, I tried a roadblock metaphor instead. I told students to look for the places in the text that make you slow, stop and stare, the way you would if you drove up to a roadblock or an accident or a road hazard. In the lesson on the Egypt chapter I asked students to read the beginning and put sticky notes whenever they noticed a roadblock — for example, if they became aware of slowing down, re-reading, wondering what the text meant, or getting internally or externally distracted (such as noticing room noise, thinking about something other than the book, etc.). After they created their sticky notes, I asked them to identify the roadblocks on the board.

A student wrote this roadblock on the board: *Why are they cooking baby elephants?*

Aha! Here was a complex "miscue" — a place where the reader saw (or said) something that differed from the text.⁹ "Miscues" are valuable windows into readers' thinking.¹⁰ Looking through to the reader thinking, we found that the phrase "baby eggplant" sent the reader in the wrong direction. Eggplant was an unfamiliar vegetable, and it was hard to imagine how an egg could be a plant. He looked at the word "baby" in the phrase, and predicted that the word "baby" would be followed by the name an animal.

Here is how the two words compare visually (graphically):

baby eggplant
baby elephant

Because eggplant is graphically similar to elephant, the student thought his prediction that baby would be followed by an animal was being confirmed.¹¹ Still a little unsure, he looked back at what was happening with the baby elephant. The women were "companionably coring" it. The student had used an apple corer, but he had never seen or tasted eggplant. Thinking of the apple corer set off an emotional reaction. He was horrified: this

family was getting ready to cook a baby elephant. No wonder he didn't make sense of the scene.

After jumping the elephant/eggplant roadblock as a group, other students zeroed in on the author's choice of phrasing: "Why did the author say they were 'coring' an eggplant?"

The next day we ate baba ganoush to discover eggplants' flavor and we tried coring an eggplant with a knife in class. The discussion flowed between the family in Cairo, and student experience preparing food in families from India, El Salvador, China and the U.S. Students shared expertise about cooking eggplants, coring vegetables and fruits, and cooking recipes like the one in the text. Students referred to the text, pointed to evidence in the narrative, information in the photographs, in the statistical index of Egypt, and the recipe. Readers fully engaged in deconstructing a textual problem for about an hour across two class meetings. I saw the depth of analysis of a text problem that I had hoped would come when I taught this learning outcome. At last.¹²

After inspecting and considering the real eggplant, my readers concluded that the women in Cairo weren't "coring" because the eggplants don't have a real core, unless Egyptian eggplants were different from the ones we had. They said that if they were describing the cooking process they would write that the Egyptian women scooped out the eggplant to prepare for stuffing. Students were emphatic and agreed: Faith D'Aluisio used the wrong word, and she was confusing readers needlessly.

Here was the happy ending: it was the author's fault!

Schema Conflict Lurking

How did the learning process come together so beautifully on that day, instead of on other days?

My students do what they do for a reason. There is a method to their madness. They are intelligent. If my outcome is reasonable, directions are clear, and students are motivated, something must be getting in the way if they don't reach the outcome.

We can examine the reading process through three lenses: focusing on the text, the context for reading the text, or the reader. Since my results were lackluster with a variety of texts, I looked to the reader and the context for clues.

Examining the readers, I suspect that their existing framework of assumptions (schema) for the reading process conflicts with the learning outcome at a deep level. Students arrive with assumptions about the process from earlier experience.¹³ Many of these are assumptions that make trouble when they try to comprehend text. I call these "troublesome assumptions."

My students are not alone in using schema to manage challenges they encounter. Humans need a way to manage the stimuli flooding our senses. We need to decide what we will pay attention to. I imagine schema as a three-dimensional picture frame. When we

look, we see what our schema has framed for us. In reading, as in life, we see what we expect to see, or what we assume and predict we will see. This creates a huge challenge for struggling readers, who lack a base of knowledge to make solid predictions and often have little idea about what to expect in challenging academic texts. Instead of looking through a framework that supports comprehension, students rely on troublesome assumptions.

Troublesome Assumptions That Get in the Way

What are the troublesome assumptions in the way here? Why is locating a problem in a text outside readers' frames?

Observing and listening to readers of different ages and levels for many years, I have developed a list of troublesome assumptions that my students tend to share. There are several that could affect students attempting this learning outcome. In my experience struggling readers assume that:

1. *Reading is magic. When a good reader looks at a text, meaning magically appears.*
2. *Reading is a born talent. Some people have it, some don't, and that can't be changed.¹⁴*
3. *You can't fix problems you find, so it's best to ignore them.*
4. *You will only comprehend if you know all the words. If you don't know all the words, you can't fix the problem, and it's best to ignore it. (This is a specific version of #3).*
5. *The author is always right. If you have trouble making meaning it's your fault and your failure.*

I can see my students come up against a variety of problems or roadblocks when they complete reading comprehension assessments — writings, tests, discussions, projects, and exit tickets. Yet my students are often oblivious to their own experience. The schema that they bring to the task of reading puts the very thing they need to see — the problems they need to solve — outside their frame of reference.

I am currently engaged in classroom research to explore how student schema for the reading process impacts their comprehension. I posit that students comprehend better when they learn to assume that:

1. *Reading is a process the reader uses to make sense of text, and to converse with the author.*
2. *Reading is a skill you can gain through effort and practice.*
3. *During the reading process, readers find and fix problems.*
4. *Readers can fix reading problems and make sense of text without knowing all of the words.*
5. *Readers matter, bringing knowledge, experience and ideas to the process and the conversation.*

Shame is the Context

Readers are not text-digesting machines. They exist within a social context. I suspect there are deeper emotions that keep my students from making meaning.

Our identity as a learner is often bound up in our identity as a reader. K-12 teachers and schools sort people according to reading ability, starting at a very young age. Stand-up comedian Mike Birbiglia remembers:

I was a terrible reader in grade school. We used to do these things called SRA's ... What they would do is they would post how many everyone had done on the wall ... I remember there was this girl in my class named Janie Burson ... She finished 147 of these things before I finished two ... I distinctly remember thinking, 'I think I might be retarded.' And then I looked at the wall, and I was like, 'Oh yeah, I am.' In retrospect it seems so obvious that I just had some kind of ADD ...

I remember reading these books as a kid — there were four rabbits: Mopsy, Flopsy, Cottontail and Peter. And I was thinking: 'If you're going to name your rabbit Mopsy, you're really going to name the second one Flopsy? Do you want everyone to hate you?' Peter's the only one who made it out ok in the naming process, he's like an investment banker now. He's like 'I do not know those other rabbits.' And they're like, 'Aren't you Peter Rabbit?' and he's like 'No, I'm Peter Lippins!' and he's tucking his ears into a baseball cap Anyway, while I was thinking about all that, the other kids read the book.¹⁵

A student who achieved great success at our college described his early memories of reading: having trouble reading in elementary school, "getting rowdy" and then being tied to a tree in front of the school for several hours by the principal to make him "grow up straight." As an adult he found he had an eye condition that complicates reading but can be controlled with eye exercises. Poor reading means low status in school, translating to low status in families, communities, and future classrooms.

Imagine that instead of writing, authors stood in a circle, surrounded by the audience, and spoke their ideas. People standing close to the author could hear well, but people standing further away would find it harder. Every author has an intended audience in mind, and they write for that audience — the audience that will stand around them when they publish the text. An author can make the message easy for a wide audience — a big circle of listeners — to make sense of (think of the *Dummies* series), or the author can speak to a smaller circle of people who already have the background knowledge and experience needed to grasp the meaning.

When I taught Reading to first and second graders, I saw the impact of class and race on early development, as my students had unequal exposure and support for reading. As

a ninth- to twelfth-grade teacher I saw the consequences of the gap. This taught me that I am a privileged, high status reader. Literacy was the highest family value of my white, middle class professor and professional parents. This status, conferred randomly on me by birth, became my context. I was encouraged to feel that I belonged in any author's circle. I was taught to push my way into the circle when I had to: breaking the text down into manageable chunks, making notes, annotations and organizers, watching videos, finding easier materials, and getting help from classmates, tutors, professors, family and friends.

Imagine now that you are standing outside the author's circle. You can't hear, and the author can't hear you. Teachers talk as if you were included in the author's circle, but you always find yourself on the outside. I imagine it feels like crashing a party, or being in the hall in middle school.

Looking at the context in this way brings Brené Brown's work to mind. Brown reveals how shame controls our behavior.¹⁶ Readers standing outside the author's circle of intended audience members often come to the circle socialized by educational and social systems to experience shame. Shame and feeling powerless go hand in hand.

I came to see that on the way to this learning outcome I have been asking readers to remind themselves, their classmates and me of a painful place in their lives and their histories. As a teacher I think, "Awareness: good! Metacognition: good!" My students may be thinking, "Having a problem when I am reading: bad. The fewer problems I find, the better!"

I have students who drive heavy equipment, nurse patients, build cook-stoves from coffee cans, speak three languages, make sushi while customers look on, improve engine performance, hang drywall, draw portraits, fix computers, hunt deer, and perform music. Yet my students discount their expertise when they are reading. I think they blame themselves for problems in the text.

Shifting the Focus onto the Author

I am in search of lessons that cause students to confront the assumptions that lead them to conclude that identifying reading problems is not worth it — the schema that gets in their way. What activity will cause students to discover that identifying reading problems makes it easier to solve them? PCC Faculty Librarian Jennifer Klaudinyi suggests that students can use roadblocks in editing as signals for what to improve. My next step is to reframe the editing process, using the same language I use to teach reading strategy.

I can also offer students experience finding and solving problems in reading text. In the successful baby eggplant discussion, students experienced success by shifting the focus from the reader's action (having a problem comprehending) to the author's action (having a problem getting the intended message to the reader). The next term, I rephrased direc-

tions to focus on the author: “Look for the places where the author loses you, and figure out how that happened. Every reading can have places where the author loses you. No author is perfect. What an author might do for some readers might not work for others. Even a great author doesn’t reach every reader.”

I used the analogy of getting lost while walking in the woods. If I keep walking not knowing I am lost, the situation gets worse. If I know I am lost, I can do something about it, like consulting a map, staying where I am until I get my bearings, looking around me for clues, or getting help.

I wouldn’t claim victory yet. I have seen an increase in students reaching the learning outcome and a deepening of their analysis.

Reaping the Benefits of the Shift in Focus

In addition to sidestepping shame and self-blame, shifting the focus to the author as maker changed the language of the reading classroom in a way that supports other learning objectives in reading, writing and other disciplines.

First, it revealed another fundamental truth of the reading process across the disciplines: that the text is a conversation between author and reader. The larger goals are active learning and reading, not passive absorption. We want students to ask questions, make comments, and make connections. We want students to see that a text is part of a larger conversation — a “discourse.” Readers join the conversation when they read, bringing their background knowledge and experience to the task.

Second, questioning the author’s craft brings the reader into the process as someone who matters. Human beings see the world through their own eyes. When the reader feels that s/he matters, the text matters more to the reader.

Third, focusing on the author’s craft increases student awareness of text structure across disciplines. What is the author doing (or not doing) that supports the reader? Does this text support the reader? Perhaps the author follows a pattern, like chronology, cause/effect, problem/solution. Maybe the text format helps, providing bolding, italics, headings, pictures, diagrams or charts. There might be an abstract, an introduction, conclusion, or a summary. The author may provide word or phrase definitions, or other learning guides such as objectives and guiding questions.

Finally, this approach improves awareness of audience in writing across the disciplines. Readers are also writers. Part of writing development is growing consciousness of audience. To practice writing we can look at the reverse: “What do I need to do so as ‘not to lose the reader’?”

Conclusion

I feel lucky that I kept making mistakes until my students came up with this work-around, and I am grateful to the student who wouldn’t let the baby elephant scandal pass

without sharing his outrage. I hold the memory of the eggplant/elephant analysis in my mind as a “bright spot,”¹⁷ a moment that I can appreciate, and, with care and attention, replicate.

Notes

- ¹ I got the idea for this learning outcome from a strategic reading comprehension model presented at the League for Innovation in the Community College. See <http://readingapprenticeship.org/>
- ² “Read with Understanding Framework.” Oregon ABS Learning Standards. August 1, 2010. Accessed November 23, 2015.
- ³ “Core Learning Outcomes.” Lane Community College. Accessed November 23, 2015.
- ⁴ “Core Learning Outcomes.” Lane Community College. Accessed November 23, 2015.
- ⁵ Much has been written about the proportion of known and unknown words in a text, and reader ability to recognize a word “on sight,” especially in ESL pedagogy where teachers choose texts based on level of language mastery. I see the word level as one variable among many in a strategic approach. The number of unknown words a reader can deal with seems to me to vary widely with the amount of engagement, background knowledge related to content, disciplinary structure and format, and linguistic experience (for example, bilingualism in a Romance/Latin-based language vs. an Asian language or Greek), etc. My goal is to help students learn and use strategies that they can choose from when they meet a variety of textual challenges at different levels and in different contexts and disciplines, increasing their stamina for finding and solving reading problems. I aim to prepare students for authentic reading challenges (especially in credit classes where teachers choose text based on content, not student reading level) so I choose texts with a wide variety of reading levels. My approach reflects my natural fascination with the reader and context. Tighter focus on reading level is the more traditional approach.
- ⁶ Creating involves “persisting when faced with difficulties, resistance or errors,” “assessing failures or mistakes and reworking,” and “reflecting on success, failure and obstacles.” See “Core Learning Outcomes.” Lane Community College. Accessed November 23, 2015.
- ⁷ Menzel, Peter and Faith D’Aluisio. *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats*. Napa, Calif.: Material World Press, 2005.
- ⁸ Menzel, Peter and Faith D’Aluisio. “Cairene Cuisine.” *In Hungry Planet: What the World Eats*. Napa, Calif.: Material World Press, 2005. 119.
- ⁹ Davenport, M. Ruth. *Miscues Not Mistakes: Reading Assessment in the Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002.
- ¹⁰ Davenport, M. Ruth. *Miscues Not Mistakes: Reading Assessment in the Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002.
- ¹¹ Graphic similarity is a major source of miscues, particularly for struggling readers who make meaning by relying more heavily on decoding letters to identify sounds, as opposed to using associations with word parts, morphemes, or contextual clues.

- ¹² “[C]ompanionably coring” was another problem. If the reader didn’t see the morphemes (companion + able), she might predict that companionably was a method for coring. I let that go. Text analysis can be exciting. It is also exhausting. An hour on one phrase is a huge commitment of mental energy and focus. Inquiring in a classroom (especially with no immediate confirmation of an approved answer by an authority) feels new and often scary to struggling readers. My goal is to keep students engaged and comfortable as they practice making meaning: I use student reactions to find the place to stop. I also let go the analysis of coring as a method to remove bitterness. I didn’t want to risk pushing to reach the perfect technical answer, while students tired or lost interest in the inquiry. If I were teaching a culinary class with this text, I might need to pursue the bitterness issue further with new sources.
- ¹³ Student schema for the reading process is different from schema for text content. I’m interested in: What do students think it means to read a text? What process do students think they follow or could follow to make meaning from a text? Teachers more commonly think and talk about the other kind: schema for the content of a text. For example, what background knowledge does the student bring to the ecology text when reading about ecosystems? Teachers can do much to improve student comprehension of the content of the text by helping students become aware of their background knowledge and assumptions they hold about the content before they read, during reading and after reading.
- ¹⁴ Psychologist Carol Dweck calls this “fixed mindset.” Dweck, Carol S. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2007.
- ¹⁵ Birbiglia, Mike. “Don’t Tell Anyone.” *Sleepwalk With Me*.
- ¹⁶ Brown, Brené. *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*. New York, NY: Avery, 2015.
- ¹⁷ Heath, Chip, and Heath, Dan. *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*. New York, NY: Crown Business, 2010.

ART



Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.

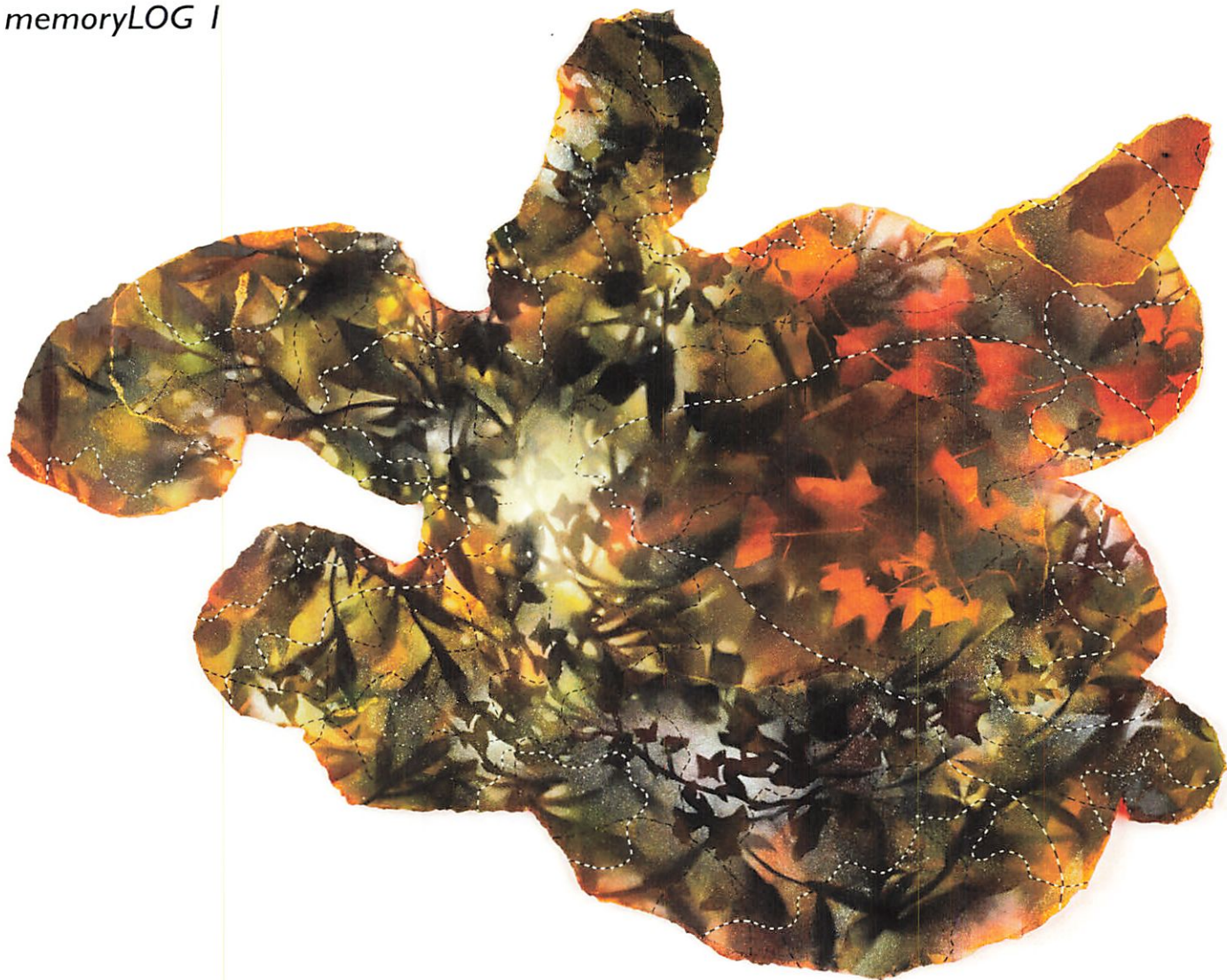
— Leonard Cohen

The Right Move



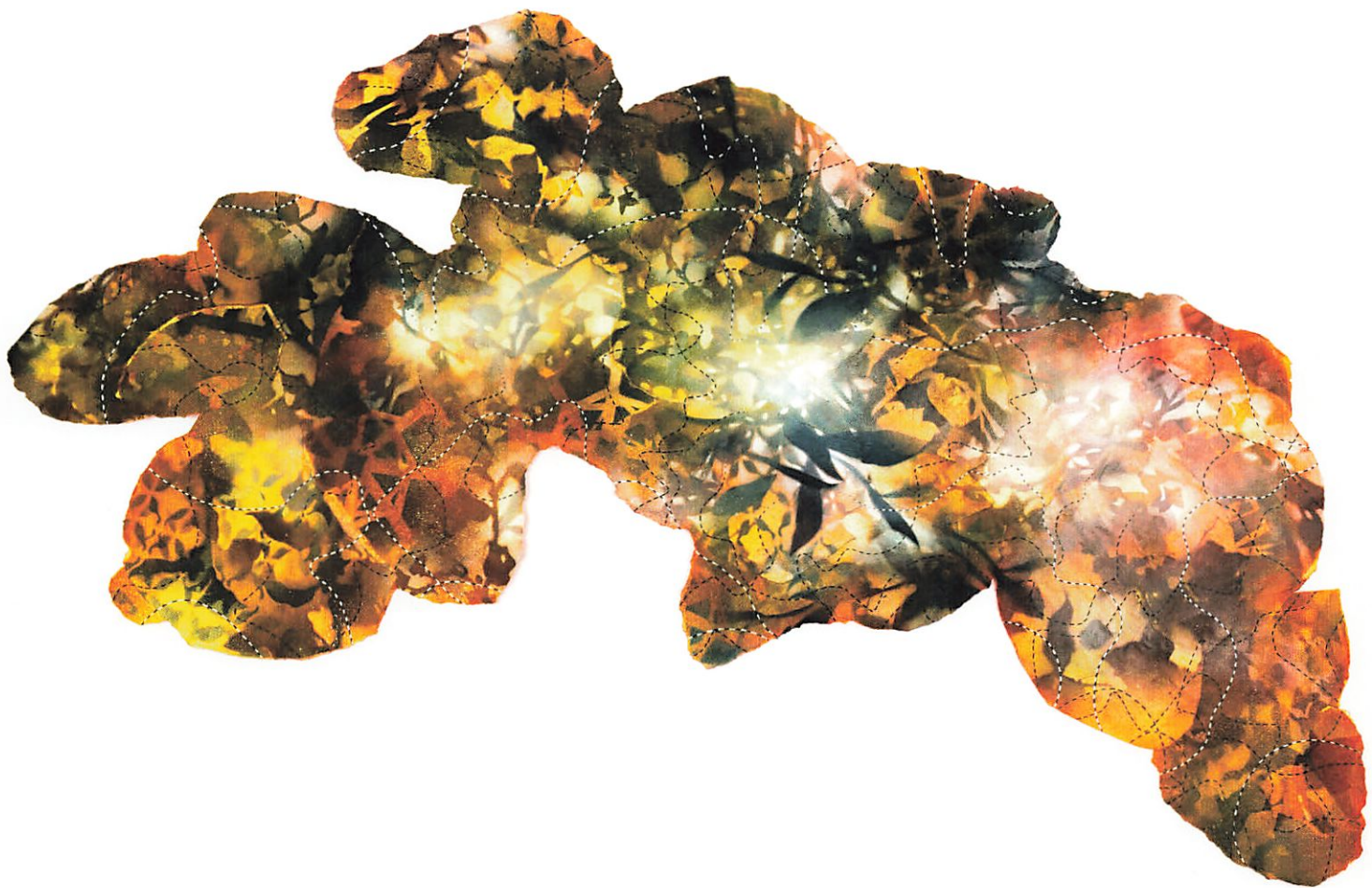
Russell H. Shitabata
digital photography • 20 mp

memoryLOG I



Kathleen Caprario-Ulrich
mixed media collage • 37" x 47" • irregular edge

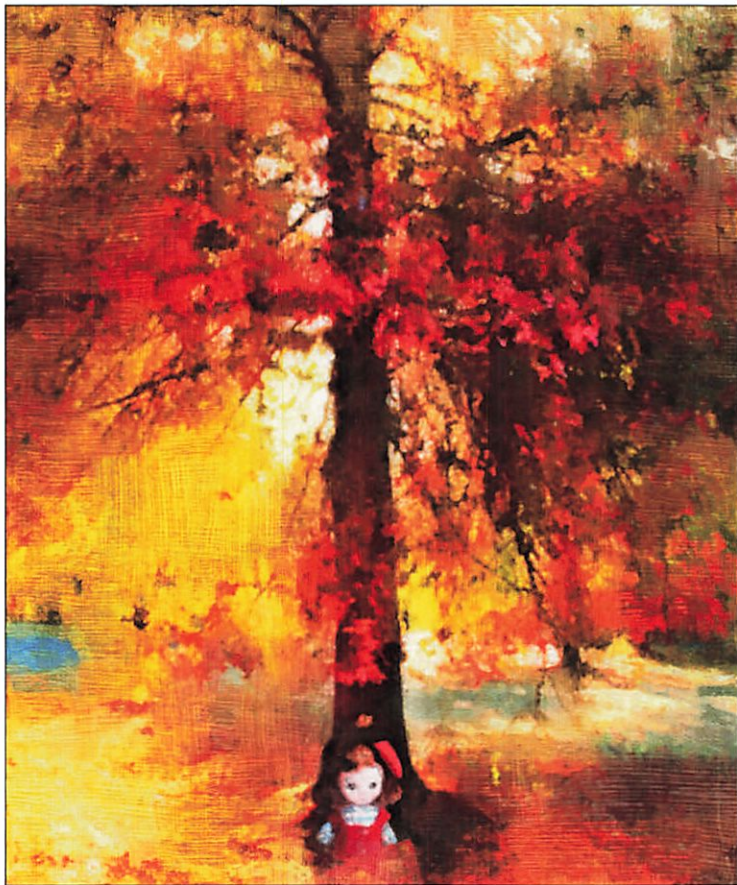
memoryLOG 2



Kathleen Caprario-Ulrich

mixed media collage • 39" x 65" • irregular edge

The Lost Betsy



Angel and Doll



Sandy Jensen

digital collage • 3072 x 3600 pixels

CREATIVE WRITING



In order to rise
From its own ashes
A phoenix
First
Must
Burn.

— Octavia Butler



Origins of a Poem: Allusions

Jean LeBlanc

It is a daunting course: Literary Masterpieces of the Western World I, a requirement for our English Option Program majors at Sussex County Community College. From the Hebrew Bible and Gilgamesh to Chaucer and Dante, my students and I seek to understand this journey through time and place and culture.

Our most wonderful discovery is how relevant, how fresh, how new this literature feels. Whether ancient or medieval, each piece somehow describes our world today. *The Great Hymn to the Aten* lures us into the realm of politics; we can't resist a few allusions to the ego of a man named Trump. *The Book of Ruth* astounds us with its message of generosity and humanity. Clytemnestra and Medea horrify yet fascinate us, raising all sorts of issues about mental illness as well as the legal limbo of women in ancient times (and not-so-ancient, I remind my students — referencing “The Yellow Wallpaper” and other more recent and closer-to-home texts).

From *Ruth* to the *Odyssey* to *Canterbury*, we read and discuss tales of hospitality. The stories exemplify for us how to treat travelers and how to behave as host and as guest. Every person dressed in tatters should be considered a god. If one of us were to wash up on an island where we know nothing of the inhabitants, mores, and history, remember the currency of humility and gratitude. Many of my students choose to do their research papers on some element of hospitality. It's a topic, I realize, that doesn't come up in any other literature class. My students are quite taken with it, as am I. It's such a new idea in our rude world.

To be captivated by a text, to share that captivation, to immerse ourselves even for a fleeting seventy-five minutes in the art of the story — these are remarkable states of mind, the nexus of critical and creative thinking, perhaps the place where knowledge begins its transformation into wisdom. Each story is itself a sort of Sirens' song, one that changes us and lets us go forth thus changed. And then it haunts us into listening again, changing again. The power of the literary device of allusion is that it transcends time. An allusion alludes to some future truth by evoking some past (or, for the artist, contemporary) fact. For “future,” “past,” and “contemporary,” read “human.”

Siren

Jean LeBlanc

If I told you I saw lake become crow you'd say I was
If I told you I walked in a circle except for spillway
If I told you the trees were bare but leaves were falling
If I told you here on the ridge winter insinuates
If I told you personification's not a lazy thing

An opening in a circle for water rushing out
Water that was not gulped by crow rushing out
An opening in each circle for light rushing out
Crow after crow after startled crow rushing out
What we misname luck love crow rushing out

Lake that gets gulped by crow becomes crow
Not just one crow but three crows gulping
And no not misnamed crow that's what crow is
I correct myself midstream midlight midcrow
But you long since will have stopped your ears



Reference Desk Log: A Found Poem

compiled by Jen Ferro

Where's the bathroom?
Where do I pay for this book?
I need authoritative statistical information on maintaining healthy relationships.

How do I use a thesaurus?
How do I print from my cell phone?
Which colleges in the Northwest offer programs in heavy equipment operation?
But the *College Blue Books* are missing.
Who knows where they ran off to.

I need books about Ginger Rogers.
But I just weeded the only one we had about a month ago.

I need information about Deccani art, art during the time of the Moghuls, the Adil Shahi dynasty, Farrukh Beg, and the history of falconry in India.
It's so hot in here! Don't you think it's hot?
The best source of information is our online reference title
Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic Art and Architecture. And there's a
book here, a couple of books at UO, a few articles in the databases,
some websites, and some articles in the *Dictionary of Art* (which
by the way isn't a dictionary).

I want some children's picture books about polar bears. Do you have any?
Oh, I think we can find one or two.

Do you have quantitative scientific articles about acute compartment syndrome in the lower extremities? How do I parenthetically cite a journal article with six authors in APA?
We do. And let's look at the publication manual.

I recently suffered a traumatic brain injury and I don't know why but suddenly I love reading. I never liked to read before. I also realized that I really like to draw. Do you have any books on drawing? Can you recommend any good fantasy novels? What's the difference between low and high fantasy? Have you ever heard of Boris Vallejo?

This reference interview lasted from 4 until 7.

I'm not sure whether my father is dead or not. Can you help me find out?

Here's his gravesite on findagrave.com.

I'm so sorry. I'm so very, very sorry.

Can I check out a copy of the *DSM-V*?

No. But you can look at it here until we close.

A student came looking for Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*.

We didn't have it to my shame.



My Scandinavian Roots

Peter Jensen

*For my birth mother, Miss Carlson,
An illegal immigrant from Nazi-occupied Norway
Who came to Brooklyn, New York in 1941*

It's not as if my people came from the sky.
They were not birds, who came in on a wing.
But I can feel my anger at the law
That will not give me names of my own birth
Of she who made my egg and then would die
Before I could touch the bread that was her skin.

Never to touch the origin of my skin —
Instead to watch birds fly across the sky
And know I'll never touch before I die
The feathers of the birds who gave me wing.
Instead, to know the secrets of my birth
Are against the law, are locked up in the law.

I have such anger against this unkind law
That locks up access to my kind of skin.
It's cousin to the superstitious birth
That landed in a virgin from the sky.
I'll never know that kind of lifting wing.
I'll be a blood orphan until I die.

I'll never know why my mother died.
Such simple things are outlawed by that law.
Her egg came first before my feathered wing.
Her bread was baked before I grew my skin.
I look up at an always empty sky
And feel a replay of the labor of my birth.

She who held me for nine months, gave birth,
Gave me up, and started then to die.
She also searched the clouds and then the sky,
Was also blocked by the wall put up by law.
She thought of me and felt her shoulder skin
And never grew a loving mother wing.

Now I must fly without a family wing,
A beloved, adopted boy after my birth.
Alone inside the costume of my skin
As we all are, all all alone to die.
None of us are protected by that law.
We all must leave the love we get from the sky.

Envoi

We die. The law can't help. We'll miss the sky.
Our wing of birth will lose its loving skin.



An Invitation

Carol Watt

Sifting through a box of memories, I find a folded notepad page that takes me back in time.

London 1998, my mate is having what he would later call a mental meltdown and is immersing himself in research at the British Library to keep the demons away. He and I have just seen a movie about Oscar Wilde, which includes voiceovers of his fairy tales, so I offer whimsy as a way for us to approach his struggle within. Frightened, anxious, and well-intending, I hand him the following as he sits at a desk far from mine.

The ogre is snarling, gnashing, bashing at every door and pane.

Shall we invite him in for tea and cakes?
He might sit down and balance a cup,
one knee crossed over the other.

Shall we offer him
a chance to chat
and have us really listen?

Maybe I'll visit a museum or library.
What you two say to each other
I can hear later in your eyes.

Perhaps he'd like a good wrestle.
Just point out the breakables, pushed to the corners,
then have a rousing tussle.

I could stay to referee,
but the grapple isn't about winning,
so I'm not needed for rules or partisan cheers.
An outside coach may be a good idea.

Any time you want me to help —
Scrub, tidy, sift, scatter, butter, serve —
I'll be your maid, butler, mate, overseer, visitor to the visit.
I'd like to participate.

In any case, he's shaking the gates and rattling the air.
Let's invite him in.

* * *

Furious, he comes by, tosses the folded paper on my desk, and walks out. He tells me later that my words trivialized his terrors.

I am befuddled and grieve our loss.

Here is a haiku that I work out for myself several weeks later.

Two days without tears,
a personal best. I'll try
again tomorrow.

I share this poem with him. He has no room for sympathy. These are hard times for us both.

Fast forward to now.

I'm worried about my current mate's health, so I fuss and nag about details in spite of knowing I'm more nuisance than help. Finally, at a loss, I ask for his advice. He replies, "How about just saying, 'What can I do to help today?'"

So simple: ask, don't tell; ask, don't assume empathy and love will lead to what someone else needs. I understand better now.



An Asymmetrical World

Perry W. Ma

A symmetrical world is puzzling.
The sun sails daily across the sky,
the moon shuffling monthly at night,
species split into males and females,
the two poles far apart evenly set,
light riding electro-magnetic
transverse waves and zipping by,
the four seasons giving the year
the wind, heat, snow and ice,
and the four knights of gravity,
the weak, strong and EM forces
reigning the daily life.

An asymmetrical world is puzzling.
It revolves only in one direction,
our heart placed solely on the left,
the cow's udder hanging as a single mass,
sea snails endowed with the eternal
counter-clockwise spire,
parity conserved except in decay,
the neutrino only found
left-handed, to wreck its partner
of electron for a reasonable pair,
and motions viewed in the relative sense,
except for the speed of light.

However, the world is in the aftermath
of the simultaneous symmetry breaking,
balance shattered, the Goldstone eaten
but Higgs up to be the lord of mass.
Is it in a transition over a quagmire,

with Adam in the Fortunate Fall,
King Lear duped in the court
only to be enlightened in the storm,
non-linear in the global warming,
El Niño, endless Great Recession,
inequality, and one-way hikes of living,
out of the magnetic mono-pole vertex?

An asymmetrical world is puzzling,
awe-inspiring and frustrating,
efforts, the LHC, the 13-TeV monster,
all fed into a desire. Clouds, though,
are scampering, thunders growling,
waves pounding the shores,
horizon arching, squirrels shuttling,
deer gazing, and Douglas firs sky-needling.
A hiker, frightened and emboldened,
takes a trail head, to sip not only
a summit view, but also
a panorama of the woody canyon.



All That Lies

Sarah Lushia

Queen Anne's lace
or wedding flowers
the women of my youth called them.
Their tall, branch-like stems,
topped with tight fists of intricate flowers
holding their breath until they could unfurl.

Only the hottest summer sun
could persuade them to
burst
hundreds of white flowers
forming a virginal crown,
prostrating itself to the blazing sun
and swaying willingly, excitedly
in the afternoon breeze.

In the rural stretches of Upstate New York
where fields spread open
between the bases of the Adirondack Mountains,
Queen Anne's lace
offered a royal touch
to weddings usually plain
as calico.

Young girls swooned at the sight
of the first blooms each year,
warmed by the sun,
but more by the promise of their own futures.

Eager to be near the regal flowers,
 bridesmaids did not settle
 for gazing at the bride's bouquet.
Instead, they clattered
 barefoot into the nearest field,
gathering armfuls of lacy blossoms for themselves.

Inside the house, they would carefully cut
 each stem at a diagonal,
then scurry to the cabinets to find the food coloring
 last used to tint icing for
 wedding cake roses.
Each girl would fill a mason jar with
 well water, adding pigment
 drop by drop
until their water was the color of their dreams.

By the time they'd bathed,
 braided each other's hair,
 pinned it in crowns
 upon their heads,
 slipped crisp cotton dresses onto
 bare shoulders,
their flowers would have
 sipped the blues, pinks, purples, reds
 from the mason jars.

I was thinking of those
 mason jars today
as I stepped off the path to admire
 the first wedding flowers of this summer.
I was so lost in memory
 it took me a moment to notice
 the acrid smell creeping up from the earth.

Eyes following the source,
I looked down.
Just in front of my toes
lay a crow.

Here, beneath the white head of the flower
the onyx feathers of his back
glistened in the blazing sun, which
was coaxing subtle blues and greens
from the heart of each plume,
as though he were dreaming of his future even in death.

As I studied the curve of his
slightly extended wing,
briefly animated by the passing breeze,
it occurred to me that quite possibly
all that lies between the white and the black
are the few sips of color
we create with our dreams.

A Coming and a Going

James F. Vickery



These nights are ears and skin and eyes,
are winter's celebrants,
are cold and lonely.
The feet are squeals and giggles in the snow,
and the face goes tight — almost audibly —
and the eyes are drunk with ice and branches.
Pale arc lights are borne silent kisses
on the paler breathing, and they receive them.
Or almost receive: perhaps beyond the seeing.
The piety and love are steadfast here,
for one: whatever hours stalked before,
almost to the minute, make this so,
where it was warm and there was talk,
where there was talk and coffee —
even where there was wine!
But one Wednesday where there was talk
and wine or coffee (or was there?)
stole a little of the celebration's joy,
shook the piety a little
and made one love a little less
the loneliness and the cold.



Mistakes of April

Philos Molina

On April 23, 1985, the Salvadoran armed forces and the guerillas battled for nine hours in the town of Suchitoto. Don Daniel would remember that date for the few remaining months of his life. Easy for him to remember: Miguel Cervantes Saavedra died that same day almost four centuries before. Don Daniel used to start reading *Don Quixote* on that day, for he read it regularly, like William Faulkner did, though without the religious fervor of the American writer. Don Daniel never found a practical application for the book, even though this was El Salvador, a country where, as Joan Didion found out, madness was a form of surviving. The book was for him a comedy of awry stories, one within another, like images infinitely reflected in barbershop mirrors. Nothing practical about that — except for the illusion that every image was a new one and thus the need to struggle for the next. It would have been an irony that he died that day, though without any significance: he was no Cervantes; he simply read his books.

The battle began around four o'clock that morning, long before even roosters crowed. Fog usually scarfed the hills by the Lempa River and the town, sitting on the top of the slope, lay vulnerable even to moonlight. Everybody knew the imminence of the confrontation, but the fatigue of expecting the inevitable had worn people out. "Like expecting a delayed apocalypse," Don Daniel wrote to one of his sons living abroad, in one of his unusual hyperboles. The war started in 1980. It would last for another seven years. Some succumbed to despair and migrated to Canada and even the United States. They sold their houses for half their price and never returned. They lucked out. A few years later, some sold them out for just enough money to migrate to other Central American countries. Those who stayed lived in *quiet desperation*, though not the kind that Henry David Thoreau misguidedly thought of people whose only flaw was to live banal lives, but rather a resignation of knowing that death lurked on their backs, like an annoyance they could not turn their face to. Suicide, as Thoreau recommended, would have been redundant.

The sound of machine guns and grenades found the town's people sleeping, but not Don Daniel. He had been awake all night. He was reading John Jay Allen's edition of *Don Quixote*, published by *Ediciones Catedra* in 1977. On the title page, above Allen's name he wrote down with a red pencil: "Hispanophile!" He considered himself an Anglophile — which in those days was no compliment — and found the reversed roles amusing. Unbeknown to many, especially Doña Vita, his wife of many years, he kept a collection of English writers, mostly comedies from the Restoration period (1660-1714) that included works by Ben Jonson, George Etherege, William Wycherley, and, his favorite, William Congreve. He kept them in a small wooden chest under his bed, next to the chamber pot,

to make sure that Doña Vita would not look under. One notable absence in the pile was William Shakespeare, who died the same date, allowing difference of calendars, as Cervantes. Don Daniel never forgave Doña Vita for burning the complete works of Shakespeare in one of her snits of jealousy — for other women were not the only object of her rivalry. He resented that she followed the steps of *Don Quixote's* pyromaniac characters, especially the infamous housekeeper, whose name Cervantes did not deem necessary to mention or — fatal for a character in a work of fiction — even to make up, and who carried her duties with exceeding diligence. Mostly he grieved that he had not yet read any of the works and this left him, according to some, ignorant of one of the major English writers. It was for him a painful way of learning that life was as fictional as novels of old.

Yet, Don Daniel did not get out of bed with the commotion. His family, on the other hand, did. Doña Vita and some of her children got under the bed in the next room, the one that served as storage, bedroom, dining room and living room. They remained there lying face down for hours, even after the battle had ceased. There was little Don Daniel could do: what age has not robbed — he was eighty years old — prostate cancer had ruthlessly reaved. He kept reading up to Chapter V, the one with the introductory summary: “In which the account of our knight’s misfortunes continues.” Don Daniel underlined the sentence: “They asked Don Quixote a thousand questions, but the only answer he gave was that they should give him something to eat and let him sleep, which was what he cared about most.” At the bottom of that page, Don Daniel wrote: “See Chapter II, page 127: relation of sanity and hunger.” On page 127, he had underlined another sentence: “In any case, bring the slop soon, for the toil and weight of arms cannot be borne if one does not take care of one’s tripe.” The note underneath read: “Don Quixote, lucid when hungry.”

A few hours later, around ten o’clock, Don Daniel asked for breakfast. “Vita, bring me some food!” he yelled from the back room. By that time, the town swarmed with soldiers and guerilla fighters. There were also planes and helicopters hovering in all directions. “There is nothing to eat, *viejo pendejo!*” Doña Vita replied with sour tone from under the bed. “Viejo pendejo” was her most derogative way of insulting Don Daniel. It had the force of two equally scathing insults. “Viejo” meant for her not a wise man, as in the age that usually elicits elderly respect, but the opposite, something superannuated and an annoyance. “Pendejo” conveyed many meanings, all fused in a single word and simultaneous: coward, jerk, idiot, imbecile and all other synonyms, the kind of word that makes language not the craft of precise sounds and symbols following linguistic rules, but an ethereal product of mental caprice and circumstances. “Don’t you see that there is a war, *viejo pendejo?*” she tartly added. He responded with what Doña Vita thought gibberish: *πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, πάντων δὺ βασιλεύς*. He enjoyed irritating Doña Vita with phrases in other languages. “He’s talking nonsense again,” she grumbled. It was not nonsense, though, it

was Heraclitus' dictum in Classical Greek, depressing as it was under the circumstances, about war being the cause of everything. Nevertheless, it did annoy Doña Vita.

As annoyed as she was, however, she did not have time for bickering, as they had done for twenty-seven years of common-law marriage. She realized that the bullets were hitting the front adobe walls of the house. The sound of boots treading the cobblestone streets and the clanking of metal resonated now inside the house. The battle was now at her door, after hours of explosions, fire, and smoke on the northern side of town. It was then that she noticed that Francisca, her youngest daughter, thirteen years of age at the time, was not with the rest of the children. It would be hours, however, before she dared to get from under the bed.

Francisca spent most of the day under a cement sink, oblivious to the bedlam outside the walls, playing with a plastic doll, a gift of Christmas of years before. She sang lullabies for the doll to fall sleep and hold it in her arms. At some point in the afternoon, she got up and started running up and down at the backyard. She had her arms up like a woman in a trance, waving, jumping, and screaming: "*Sos cruel, abril, sos cruel!*" repeatedly, as if blaming the month of April for the misery war had brought to town. She seemed to dance to a loud music she alone could hear in the midst of the balagan. And it seemed to have its own rhythm because she moved in unpredictable patterns: her arms up and down as if trying to climb in the air and her feet pounding the ground like a bass drum. There was dust flying all around her and the mud created with her own saliva muffled her voice, like a child talking with her mouth full. Then she screamed in tongues: *fris ch weht der win der herma tzu mei ni nisch kin d wow eiles tdu*, and she only stopped when she saw wild, shriveled flowers left from the dry season. She threw the flowers against the adobe fence and resumed: *oed'undleerdas Meer*. And again: *Poi ss'asco senel foco che gliaffina, quando fia mut icheli donlerin ced'aqui tai neala tou rabo lie. Hosanna! Alleluia! Jicama!*

Don Daniel, who was closer to the backyard, saw her through the iron bars that protected the old window. She ran around, always shouting and then closing her unintelligible sentences with, "*Hosanna! Alleluia! Jicama!*" like they did in the Pentecostal congregation Doña Vita had started to attend. The last word confounded Don Daniel. He thought he had found a pattern, like those poems T. S. Eliot jammed with quotations from foreign languages, but adding the name of a fruit that was not even her favorite did not make sense.

When she stopped running, she threw herself on the ground, yowled and rolled frenetically over rocks, twigs and weeds, and guffawed out of control. She got up and screamed at the adjacent houses, over the adobe fence. "*Putá vieja!*" (old whore) she yelled. She ran to the next house and yelled again: "*Putá vieja! Hosanna! Alleluia! Jicama!*" And to the next one: "*Putá vieja! Hosanna! Alleluia! Jicama!*" This last obscenity did not make sense either.

The only thing Don Daniel made out was the inversed order of words, an anastrophe, and one that could be found in old books, like Fernando Rojas's *La Celestina*. But by that time he had realized the futility of his lucubration, in times of war or peace.

The smell of powder and burnings now filled the town. The battle had stopped, though the sound of heavy boots trotting on the street still could be heard, back and forth, fading and then reappearing stronger and again without ceasing. Strafing in the distance broke the few gaps of silence. Before he could call her name through the window, Don Daniel tripped over Yeats's "The Madness of King Goll" poem, the Spanish version, "La Locura del Rey Goll," the one where the king went mad in the middle of a battle. He grinned. It was one of many books strewn on the floor, dusty and scuffed after months of neglect.

Francisca sat in the rain for a while. It was seven o'clock that evening, dark, and silent. "Mamá," she whispered when she saw silhouettes approaching, "I am hungry."

Don Daniel could muster no strength to call her through the broken glass slats. She would have not heard him, anyway. The thunder was now deafening.

LIFE IN THE CC



You have to make mistakes to find out who you aren't.

— Anne Lamott

The Lost Doll

Sandy Brown Jensen

When I was a little girl, I was doll crazy. I dressed my dolls obsessively, and I was lucky enough to have an Aunt Mel who loved to make doll clothes for my girls.

I sat them around the picnic table and taught them; and I became a teacher.

I invited them to tea parties and cooked for them in my doll kitchen; and I became an avid home cook and dinner party hostess.

I read to them and became a reader.

I drew with them and became an artist.

My most beloved doll was a Betsy McCall doll. I took her on our family vacation to Glacier National Park. One morning, I got her all dressed for the day's adventure over the Going to the Sun Highway and arranged her in a little tableau under a huge old oak tree.

In the kerfuffle of departure, I forgot her until we were high on the pass, and then my parents said it was too late to go back for her. I was heartbroken. My mother, now age 89, has so many times told me one of the few regrets of her well-lived life was that they didn't go back for Betsy.

In my memory, Betsy is still there, waiting for me. I have returned to Montana three times over the span of the ensuing five decades, and each time I have gone to that tree to look for her. At age 65, there is some inner compulsion to return again and again to the scene of the crime — the crime of abandoning a loved one to the wilderness (see p. 46).

Why does a doll, an inanimate object, hold such a place of psychic charge, of emotional power on The Doll Stage of my soul? She was my first loss; she went ahead of me and created the Room of Inconsolable Grief that is now always there just off stage. Betsy lives there in the good company of my father and a black dog named Fianna.

Dolls occupy a liminal space between the rational and the irrational, between form and shadow, between daylight and dream. The word "liminal" itself means the bottom of a door, the threshold. I was always a child who lived in the world of imagination. Betsy McCall knew me as an attentive caretaker, more acolyte than mother. I arranged her and her doll siblings in such a way as to act out dreams. In my other life, I fluctuated through all the emotional backtalk, anger, panic, absorbed play, and luminous joys of child and teen stages. Oddly, both worlds were equally strong, and I struggled on multiple thresholds to find my balance.

I come from a very large, extended family, and I remember putting all my dolls in a carriage and wheeling it into a large culvert that ran under our property. Turning to stare out into the sun from the cement shade, I arranged and rearranged Betsy and Co. to act out the psychodramas of school and family as best as I could understand them. Inevitably, that play shifted back into the memory of a dream, and then Betsy could fly, or cover herself in mud and feathers, or have the ability to freeze another doll to stone with a look.



The great German poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) wrote extensively about dolls, which he called “stuffed skins.” He understood anthropologically, as it were, about the prehistoric use of masks and imagos (which are idealized images of another person, often a carved doll likeness). On ritual occasions, these objects filled with their named spirits, and a person wearing the mask had community cultural permission to embody that spirit.

Rilke felt that both historic and modern doll use had its roots in these ancient practices. He referred to the spirit that came to inhabit the mask or doll as an Angel. In what has become known informally among doll collectors as “The Way of the Doll,” Rilke says:

Am I not right to feel as if I
must stay seated, as if I must
wait before The Doll Stage, or, rather,
gaze at it so intensely that at last
an Angel has to come and make
the stuffed skins startle
into life?
Angel and Doll. A real play, finally.

Rilke’s “Doll Stage” in the poem refers to a theatrical stage, which has always been the most liminal of all human secular spaces. There, the actors bring a story to life. The audience “gaze[s] at it so intensely that at last” the story takes on a magical life of its own, and the whole theatrical experience becomes much more than the sum of its parts. The Angels have come and made “the stuffed skins startle into life.”

Long before I immersed myself in the intense interior tragedy of *Macbeth* at the Ashland Shakespeare Theatre, my loss of Betsy McCall had shown me the passageway between two worlds. In our high play, she showed me how to move fluidly across those thresholds between imagination and reality as I grew older.

The psychodramas of childhood doll play became the dark Well of Mystery that I draw on daily in my art, in all the details of a passionate life lived for and in art. What I am now, I learned by acting on The Doll Stage.

I return to the theme of dolls again and again in my *Mysterious Night Vision Field Journal*, a journal of black paper with gel pens and Prismacolor colored pencils. It is also a website and blog at mysteriousnightvision.com. I find them deeply satisfying. The dolls act as intermediary objects between daylight and the place where I do art. When I do art with the dolls, I enter a waking dream that speaks to me of my many interior worlds. These liminal figures act out on The Doll Stage that is the theatrical doorway to my creative mind.

It turns out that *I* am the “Angel who startles the stuffed skins into life. Angel and Doll: A real play, finally.”

The Road That Chose Me

Marc Duyck



The impacts were immediate and lasting.

The bike ride was nothing out of the ordinary. It was a typical dusk on a typically wet January day in Oregon, with the dark falling as if a light switch suddenly had been flipped. But then, suddenly, the truck in front of me made a U-turn, causing me to swerve out of its way. The vehicle's lights blinded me. In the next moment my entire life changed.

I hit the aluminum road barricade, tumbling head — and face — first. My head snapped backward in contraccoup whiplash. I lay on the ground in my own blood, with a badly lacerated nose, lip, and chin.

Adrenalin nevertheless propelled me home on my blood-spattered bicycle. From there, I was driven to a level-one trauma hospital. It felt as if a very heavy object had struck my neck, which was largely numb yet also radiated pain.

After extensive imaging and testing, doctors determined that the accident had left me with a spinal concussion, five broken cervical vertebrae, and the loss of 40% of my nose. My face was brutalized and battered with extensive muscle, skin, cartilage loss, an open nasal cavity, and an upper and lower lip ripped in half. When I looked in the mirror I saw only a shadow of my former self. For the initial 48 hours, I was told not to move due to concerns of a possible spinal cord injury. I had a urinary catheter inserted, and I was dependent on others to bathe and clean me. I felt helpless like an innocent babe, or like one of my patients towards the end of their life. This sudden role reversal — from provider of health care to helpless recipient of services — was surreal to me. I felt demoralized and humbled.

Yet my inner drive to live and experience the richness of the human experience outweighed any self-doubt. I became more determined than ever to live and to thrive despite this transformation from care provider to care recipient. As a well-educated healthcare provider, I trusted the healthcare system and the expertise of my physicians, physician's assistants, nurse anesthetists and physical therapists. Just as my patients and students learned to trust my expertise, I too learned to trust my healthcare team.

It took some time for me to adjust to my new road. Gradually, I learned to accept the goodness and kindness offered to me. I learned to say yes to the daily visitors and care providers who helped me with things like housework and bill paying. My self-awareness and spirituality deepened as I strove to be as patient with myself as I always had been with the individuals I'd served and the students I'd taught in my roles as a physical therapist assistant and a PT educator.

The first month definitely was the hardest. I underwent four facial reconstruction surgeries, and my orthopedic surgeon confirmed that my neck fractures would take up to a year to fully heal. The hard cervical collar, I was told, must remain on my neck around the clock for three months. While I understood the need for bone callus to form, I naively had assumed that I'd mend faster than do most people — given my low body mass index for my age of 47, a highly nutritious diet that was low in sugar, and a healthy lifestyle that exceeded the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and the American Heart Association for aerobic and muscle strengthening activity.

I had to learn, however, to embrace the collar and accept my circumstances. My spirits were buoyed by my dean, program coordinators, and students, who were frequent visitors and bestowed on me a Faculty Recognition Award.

Thirty days post-injury, I started intensifying my workouts, with sixty minutes of daily cardio exercise and an additional thirty minutes of strengthening even as I adhered to strict spine precautions. My facial surgeon said I was healing faster than was normal. My facial scars were flattening and becoming less pronounced.

At nine weeks post-injury, my spine orthopedist took new X-rays. The news was great! Strong bone calluses were forming on the fracture sites. Even spinous processes that had not been expected to heal were mending beautifully on C4 - C6. My vertebral body on C7 was stable.

I graduated from the hard collar to a soft one. I finally could shave my neck and get a decent haircut. I received the okay to exercise at a higher intensity. I began doing water aerobics in deep water, a program in which I had led patients in the past.

To be sure, none of it was easy. My body was deconditioned. I was stunned by how difficult it was to work out at 15 or 16 on a Rating of Perceived Exertion scale of 20. But I cannot say enough about my company's commitment to my healing. The chief executive officer, Mike Billings, PT, MS, CEEAA, met with me during this period.

Thirteen weeks after my injury, X-rays showed solid callus formation. My remaining movement restrictions were lifted. I got the go-ahead to begin weaning myself off the soft collar by adding one collarless hour every two days. My therapist, Scott Beadnell, PT, DPT, took an eclectic approach to my rehabilitation that included manual therapy, job-specific strengthening, proprioceptive cervical strengthening, and upper-quadrant stretching.

Scott and I discussed evidence-based practice and the "why" behind the range-of-motion norms and goals he had set for my cervical mobility — 80 degrees rotation, 60-70 degrees extension, and 45 degrees side-bending. Those numbers were consistent with those proposed in the widely used textbook *Joint Range of Motion and Muscle Length Testing*. The goals that Scott established for me were based on my needs as a PTA in an outpatient and skilled-therapy geriatric setting who needed to be able to drive himself safely to work.

I've been asked how this experience has changed me. For one thing, I've learned that it's okay to cry. It's not a sign of weakness, but one of the five stages of grief described by Swiss psychiatrist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. On a physical level, I lost part of my face. On a psychological and emotional level, I lost my self-identify as someone who required no assistance in activities of daily living. There is no question that I now can readily and viscerally identify with patients whose independence has been lost, temporarily or permanently, in a way that I could not before my accident. I have gained perspective and empathy that will make me a better PTA and a better person.

The International Classification of Function, Disability, and Health became very personal for me as I underwent my surgeries and rehabilitation. My preexisting familiarity with the ICF model helped me understand the factors behind my inability, for a time, to lift any weight, turn my head, or squat without significant dizziness and fear of falling. The experience gave me great insight into the many ways in which loss of function may differ from one person to the next, and what the various manifestations and implications of that loss might be.

At this writing I'm continuing intensive physical therapy and planning to return to work soon, albeit on a limited basis at first. My neck mobility and overall strength have improved dramatically. I can only express my deepest gratitude to those inside and outside our profession who continue to support me as I embrace the road that chose me, and as I prepare to share my newfound knowledge with the patients I serve. My professional role as an educator and physical therapist assistant will forever be changed as I have *been on the other side* as a recipient of the knowledge, expertise and skilled hands of healthcare providers. I have found my interactions with my students and patients have changed on an existential level, as I have found greater meaning in the interactions since I have learned that our time to together is limited. The opportunity to grow in my skill set as an educator and practitioner is much more clear and vivid, as I now have a second chance on life. In other words, I choose every day to help my patients and students learn to live and grow. My experience of learning to rely on others to alleviate my pain and suffering has made me more empathetic and determined to assist my patients and students. I choose and learn to traverse a road that I am now more grateful to walk on.



Finding Beauty: A Father/Daughter Production

Sarah Lushia

Such a beauty.

Since I was a child those are words I've associated with my father and with death. They are the words that begin every story my father tells about a successful hunt. There's something about the fact that he deeply enjoys hunting but is an abysmal shot that compels him to retell the stories of his few hunting "victories" in meticulous detail, even, or perhaps especially, to his vegetarian daughter.

My dad and I are often referred to as "two peas in a pod." Our shared sense of humor is obvious to anyone who has spent five minutes in a room with us or had the experience of being in a movie theater during an animated film where we simultaneously bust out laughing at something no one else finds amusing. He is the one who taught me that picking out the *perfect* gift for someone — the one that will make their eyes twinkle with delight — is an act of love. It is from him that I inherited the inability to walk past any bloom without stopping to absorb the color, scent, and beauty. His love of cameras, photography, and capturing moments in time is likely responsible for my multiple humanities degrees and for my ability to lose myself in a photograph or work of art. It is also likely responsible for my recent production and story editing work.

When I first saw part of the footage that I would eventually help mold into the feature-length documentary *-1287*, "she's such a beauty" was one of the first thoughts that came to my mind. Kazuko was indeed beautiful — inside and out. She wore a cream colored silk blouse adorned in tulips whose hues highlighted the rosiness of her cheeks and the depth of her eyes, and her skin looked more like porcelain than flesh, its smoothness enhanced by the dark, shiny hair that framed her face in a stylish bob. It was nearly impossible to believe that she was 66 in this scene and greeted her 70th birthday before the filming was over. The gentleness and humor that filled her stories evoked her inner beauty so clearly that even as a stranger I felt immediately connected to her. As I listened to her talk about her life and grapple with her impending death from breast cancer, I realized that I was finding beauty in the midst of death and wishing that my dad, who taught me how to see this beauty, could share in this moment.

When my friend Ian, a documentary filmmaker, first asked me if I'd consider working on Kazuko's film with him, I didn't hesitate for a moment, despite the fact that I'd only gotten to "meet" Kazuko through Ian's footage after she'd already left this world and despite my total lack of knowledge in the area of film production. In the process of working

with Ian, I learned much about film production. But I learned more about life. Having grown accustomed to being a teacher, I found myself continually being a student in this project. And more than anything, I was Kazuko's student.

Kazuko taught me the power of being honest with oneself, how to heal friendships that might seem beyond repair, how regret can turn to loneliness, and how taking risks can help us create relationships that fill our lives with joy. She taught me what it really means to engage in lifelong learning, and reminded me how humor can heal better than any medicine. She taught me so much more than I have room to talk about here. But what I am most grateful for is what she taught me about my father.

Despite all our similarities, during my adult life it has been the differences between me and my dad that have seemed the most important. My dad had not understood my decision to go to college. Having grown up in a family and community that valued manual labor and having had a range of difficulties in his own schooling experiences, he worried that "book learning" wouldn't offer me the skills I needed to provide for myself. He was saddened that I did not feel compelled to participate in the labor-of-the-body that he and his family had long valued, that he thought he'd taught me to value, too. He struggled to understand the possibility that I could value this kind of labor, but decide that it was the labor-of-the-mind that excited me and gave purpose to my life. It seemed incomprehensible to him that grasping the symbolism in a novel could feel as rewarding to me as seeing someone use a product he had made with his own hands was to him. We had spent many years struggling through the awkwardness of these differences before Kazuko taught me an important lesson about my father. She taught me that Dad could come to understand more than I'd believed possible, and she helped me to see that he had come to value the labor-of-the-mind in ways I, and perhaps he, had never before imagined.

-1287 was screening at the Lake Champlain International Film Festival, which is held just down the road from where I grew up. I had made arrangements to attend and was looking forward to seeing Ian, who was flying in from Japan, and my family. I invited my dad to come to the screening with me, and he immediately accepted. Despite the fact that I knew that Dad would attend the screening and be proud in his own way, I was incredibly nervous. My father shared my love of animated films but not my love of documentaries. He had been raised in a rural area where foreign ideas and cultures were, at best, frowned upon. And, due to learning difficulties, he struggles with reading and comprehension. And here I was, asking him to sit through a 70 minute subtitled documentary about a Japanese woman. To top it off, *-1287* was being screened in a block with another documentary film, also foreign with subtitles, which would screen first, bringing our viewing total to just under two hours. Needless to say I was not expecting my father to enjoy this experi-

ence, and despite the fact he'd never say so, I knew him well enough to know that he wasn't expecting to enjoy it either.

As we walked into the theater, I tried to just be grateful that he was willing to come and support me and the film and not to hope for anything more. He sat quietly through the first documentary, and by the opening moments of *-1287*, I wasn't even sure he was still awake. Frankly, I didn't want to know. I took a deep breath and willed myself to just enjoy the experience of seeing a film I'd helped create on the big screen.

Despite the fact that Kazuko spoke of many difficult things, she often brought humor to the topics at hand. For example, when talking about her husband's affair, Ian asks her if her husband broke up with his mistress after he'd apologized to Kazuko for being unfaithful. She replies through a smile, "No, my husband is not a quitter." One of the things I was most committed to in my role as story editor was ensuring that we retained and highlighted Kazuko's humor.

Just moments into the film, I could feel some of the tension in my shoulders release as I laughed aloud. It took me a second, in the midst of this release, to realize that not only was my dad awake, he was also laughing. Laughing at a foreign documentary with subtitles that was about, in part, a woman who was dying. By the time I'd had a chance to begin processing what was happening, my dad was laughing aloud again at Kazuko's next quip. *Oh my god!* I thought with such intensity that for a moment I feared I'd uttered the phrase aloud. He gets it. And he likes it.

My heart swelled as I sat next to my dad for the rest of the film, feeling his emotions ebb and flow in sync with mine as we shared this experience. When the closing credits ran across the screen, I heard my dad chuckle softly when he saw my name appear. I blinked back tears as I walked to the front of the theater to join Ian for a Q&A. I tried hard to focus on the questions the audience was asking, but really, all I could think of was my dad. And Kazuko.

When the Q&A ended and Ian and I exited the theater to pass out pink remembrance ribbons I had made in honor of Kazuko, I found my dad standing in the lobby waiting for me. He patiently stood there as Ian and I passed out ribbons and greeted members of the audience. Finally, when the lobby was empty, I turned around to face my dad. He extended his hand for a ribbon, smile wide across his face. "That was beautiful. I loved it. You and Ian should be proud," he said, as I placed a ribbon in his hand. I could find no words to respond so I simply smiled at him.

Last week I got a call from my parents. "Dad has exciting news to share with you," my mother told me as she handed him the phone. "I shot an eight point buck today," my dad began. *"Such a beauty ..."*

Wild Line

Daniel Lee Henry

Author's Note: *My forthcoming book, Across the Shaman's River: What the Tlingit Taught John Muir (and the Price They Paid), explores Muir's relationship with Native America, especially Alaska's Tlingit people, as related to wilderness aesthetics and the federal campaign to dispossess Native lands.*

Three months and five hundred miles after O.O. Howard ("The Christian General") declared war on the Nez Perce, Chief Joseph/Hinmatóowyahtqit found a haven. In the midst of an eleven-hundred mile retreat known as the Nez Perce War, the leader guided several hundred children, women, and men into Yellowstone National Park for thirteen days of rest and repair.

As a tourist visiting the nation's first national park, General William Tecumseh Sherman was furious when he learned that the Nez Perce "combatants" had passed within shouting distance of his ostentatious campsite. After Sherman departed, his scouts guaranteed the safety of nine frightened vacationers but vanished when the tourists later confronted a Nez Perce scouting party. Gunshots echoed across the meadows. The horsemen faded into the forest leaving one white man dead, another gravely wounded. Troops encircled the tourists. A day or two later, Chief Joseph sent a subchief and horsemen to disavow the violence and care for the white survivors. Gunfire foiled their approach, so the refugees resumed their northward exodus.

Firebrand of Grant's Indian Wars, Sherman parlayed his close encounter into military strategy with a wire flashed to Colonel Nelson A. Miles at Fort Keogh, three hundred miles north. Joseph's tribe would pass nearby — an easy interception. Just two days from the Canadian border, Miles' forces confronted the Nez Perce in the Bear Paw Mountains of Montana. Exhausted and outnumbered, Chief Joseph surrendered: "From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever."

Sherman forced his captives to march four hundred miles to Leavenworth, Kansas, then relocate years later to the Colville Reservation in central Washington. Joseph never returned to his homeland in Oregon's Wallowa country, much of which is designated wilderness today.

By seeking cover in Yellowstone, Chief Joseph led his people into a region long considered a sanctuary by inter-mountain tribes, a place apart from white settlers where the First Ones withdrew to hunt, fish, and gather. The creators of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 codified a line around the land to keep wilderness in and keep former residents out. As with later designations in Yosemite and Glacier National Parks, U.S. military troops



were stationed to enforce the line. But for token Natives at trading posts and “Wild West” shows, early tourists — privileged, white Americans — sought wilderness in its purest form: sans humans.

Chief Joseph crossed the line and paid the price.

All for the semblance of Eden did a national Native dispossession movement precipitate the wilderness preservation movement.

“Wilderness is a made-up word,” Tlingit cultural activist Bob Sam told me in May 2014. In his late fifties, Sam’s steady gaze and solemn expression underscored the weight of his claim. “Native people were here as stewards long before John Muir, yet white people act like he was the first to think of it.”

Much of the America whose beauty Muir extolled had been ethnically cleansed not long before he saw it: Winnebago in Wisconsin, Cherokee in southern Appalachia, Seminole in Florida, Miwok in Yosemite, Modoc of Mount Shasta.

Bob Sam maintains that Muir created “a religion called conservation” which “disciples follow blindly.” For Sam, like many Native Alaskans, the wild line makes little sense. Wilderness designation nullifies an ancient relationship with Place and cripples a way of life. Your family fished this stream for a thousand years? Too bad. It belongs to Nature now.

Some place their faith in lines to protect landscapes. Some lines protect habitat for egrets and bears and fish. Some keep out those who know it best and love it most. Some lines are defended, some ignored. Some heal, some ache for generations.

I recall the tingle that shot through my nine-year-old body when I first saw the line. For three summers my family camped at a favorite fishing hole on the South Fork of the Payette River, in central Idaho. On days when midday heat numbed trout and small children, a grown-up might lure us onto a trail with promises of Vienna sausages and candy bars. A few hundred yards up what is now called the Idaho Centennial Trail, we routinely paused to admire a wooden sign marking our entrance into the Sawtooth Primitive Area. Here was a place where animals ran free, my folks said, where humans were only visitors.

The line became more real when I encountered a new sign in July 1965: Entering Sawtooth Wilderness Area.

“This is all that’s left of the great American frontier,” Dad explained. He and Mom had recently joined The Wilderness Society and were reading the organization’s magazine. In the simplest, most romantic way he could muster, Dad explained how the Wilderness Act became law the previous fall as a last-ditch effort to save the natural treasures of a great nation. Lover of history and close calls, Dad regaled us with nail-biters about John Muir, the “grandfather” of wilderness, who survived by grit and faith, and transformed the world with his vision.

“Muir was a wild guy,” Dad said, “but he was lucky. The Paiute (whom Dad taught on the rez) thrived for centuries out here not because of luck, but because it was home. Now you tell me — who’s wilder?”

My father’s question lingered as I tried to discern the division of an otherwise innocuous lodgepole pine meadow. As the others turned for camp, I hopped back and forth over the line. Wilderness, plain old forest; wilderness, forest. I swore it felt different on the wild side.

The incident propelled me through a half-century of inquiry into the wild line. As a student of “frontier rhetoric,” I explored Native and non-Native relationships with the natural world, an investigation that, over time, confirmed my father’s allusion to the racist implications of the word “wild.” Tecumseh and Thoreau notwithstanding, tracing the roots of American conservation advocacy invariably led to the man whose name I first heard while standing on the line with Dad.

In his crusade to preserve his beloved Sierra Nevada and America’s forests, John Muir sharpened a rhetorical tack dodged by Emerson and Thoreau. While American philosophers and poets waxed romantic over the beauty and restorative powers of wild places, Muir was among the first to argue for their *necessity*. Like few Euro-American contemporaries, Muir’s sheer personal vigor and scientific acuity deepened his relationship with nature beyond utility or taxonomy. Product of an evangelical upbringing, he fashioned an image of wild nature safe enough for a Christian nation.

Read “evangelical” as righteous passion. Like all true believers, Muir drew a line in the duff between good and evil — specifically the superiority of wild over domestic. But lines are funny things. Even when inviolate, they can move, pivoting on an axis, as it were. A line looks different depending upon your perspective, depending on which side of the line you stand. For Native people, the wild line all too often meant exclusion, and the inevitable collapse of Old Ways.

This became clear to me when I moved to Alaska a century after Muir’s first visit and felt the environmental icon’s presence in vast landscapes seemingly untouched by humans. How, I wondered, did Alaska Natives respond to “preserved” lands? Does wilderness status kill culture by excluding Natives from their traditional lands, or does it protect the Old Ways by managing lands and resources for future generations?

When Muir ventured into Alaska in 1879, he lugged along the mainstream belief that post-conquest Native Americans were pitiable has-beens with “no place in the landscape.” Aboard the *SS California*, Muir’s missionary companions spoke of the northern Tlingit people as the last of the “wild tribes” — untreatied, unchurched, unafraid — in a geographic and cultural stronghold all but free of Euro-American influence. Though the naturalist disdained the hubris he found in the “Divines,” he nonetheless confirmed their overall mission to domesticate the heathens in his alliance with fellow explorer, Reverend

S. Hall Young. After all, his “discovery” of Glacier Bay was financed by the Presbyterian Church. His life-long friendship with Young was bound not only by shared adventures, but by shared responsibility for the mass conversion of over two thousand Chilkat Tlingits.

“As a result of that first visit with John Muir,” Young surmised in a eulogy, “today three-fourth of that tribe are humble followers of Christ — a transformed people.”

Few tribal members today recall details about Muir’s ordained companion; most will tell you that, for better or worse, it was Glate Ankow (Ice Chief) who persuaded them to redraw the line. In their writings, Young and Muir acknowledged a Tlingit translator, yet collective memory seven generations later holds that Muir and his listeners understood each other *without* translation. As the first white man to offer Chilkat-Chilkoot people brotherhood and scientific inquiry — no strings attached — Muir set a new standard as a white man whose *ethos* carried a message more meaningful than words.

For a century and a half, the northern Tlingit defended a bold line against any white settlement in the region. Then it was over.

Two months after Muir’s visit, headman Koh’klux signed a letter ending the prohibition of non-Natives in Chilkat territory, opening the gates to a vast land previously unavailable to white miners. In the months to follow, Muir gave speeches and wrote articles touting the possibility of gold in a land once hidden behind the Tlingit Curtain. In May 1880, two dozen men followed their Tlingit guides up the torturous route from tideline to a keyhole notch in the Coast Range, over to the headwaters of the Yukon River. Eighteen years later, forty thousand stampedeers crowded onto the trail over Chilkoot Pass, gateway to the Klondike goldfields.

There is not enough space here to frame the cultural impacts wrought upon the northern Tlingit when supplanted by outsiders. English became the dominant language. Racism was rampant, fish and wildlife exploited, traditional sites overrun. After disease wiped out two-thirds of the population, survivors were left to reconstruct their elaborate past or find a white-man job. Their legacy lagged.

In a rare act of contrition, Congress passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971 as an attempt to settle for a century of cultural upheaval with a billion dollars and return of forty-four million acres to Native ownership. Some Native lands were logged, mined, and drilled, some preserved as habitat. Like their white brothers and sisters, indigenous adversaries learned how to sue each other over land use.

A crowning achievement for Muir’s disciples was the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980, which granted special status (parks, monuments, preserves) to 157 million acres, including 56 million into wilderness. In the Last Frontier, wilderness set-asides are subject to an “Alaska exception” that authorizes, among other things, motorized access to pursue traditional subsistence foods for Natives and rural residents. Most Alaska

wilderness lands protect vital habitat for key subsistence species, often stewarded by those who have the most to lose. For the first time, tending the wild line became a common concern.

Gradually, some Alaska Natives came to embrace the wild line as a firewall against encroaching development, a tool in defense of traditional ways. Arrival at this conclusion is difficult. Living with the line is often a lengthy, painful process as indigenous residents re-experience the loss of access and/or control of ancestral lands with ensuing degradation of memory and culture.

These issues weighed on the Klukwan tribal council in 1982 when it voted to oppose creation of the Alaska Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve, a state bill to set special protections in the 44,000 acres of rich habitat surrounding the village. Council members voted against the Preserve not because they disliked eagles, but because all the way back to Russian days Tlingits had drawn and redrawn the lines of *Jilkaat aani* (Chilkat homeland), ceding control each time. Those times, leadership decided, were over. Despite village opposition, Republican governor Jay Hammond sought special status for the Chilkat Council Grounds — the delta expanse in front of Klukwan village where each fall four thousand bald eagles congregate for salmon — and shepherded a law he hailed as “a crown jewel in the annals of cooperative resource management.”

Disputants still wince at that line.

But none deny that the wild line to protect eagles also conserves the salmon runs that have sustained Klukwan for at least a thousand years, providing up to seventy-five percent of villagers’ annual protein. In the milky run-off of glaciers throughout the 1400-square-mile watershed wriggle all five species of Pacific salmon plus healthy runs of steelhead, Dolly Varden, and eulachon. The subsistence nets which stretch into the Chilkat River along the Klukwan riverfront are prime indicators of community wellness. Full nets mean healthy diets, economic resilience, and community purpose. Empty nets require more twenty-mile drives to town for processed foods and increased health care.

In an age when glaciers melt faster than at any time in human memory, Chilkat people are even more protective of their river. In 2014 the village council acknowledged the latest threat to pristine Chilkat headwaters — rich deposits of copper, zinc, gold, and silver ore may signal massive development in the near future. Years of exploration has led Constantine Metal Resources to the brink of full-scale production. “Tremendous expansion potential,” claims the Canadian firm’s website about the mine it calls the “Palmer Volcanogenic Massive Sulphide Project.” In the next decade Constantine envisions a “world-class” source of minerals with “ready access to Asian concentrate markets.” As required by law, the multinational giant promises to monitor salmon-spawning streams and fund “stream mitigation,” but offers no word about the long-term effects of heavy metals from impoundment

reservoirs leaching into salmon-producing streams. In an area prone to earthquakes and flash floods, the company's pledge to contain toxic leachfields for centuries seems disingenuous to downstream populations who fear the prospect of a poisoned legacy for their grandchildren.

"When it comes to fish, we draw the line," says Brian Willard, Klukwan village manager, of the community's stance. Brown-bear-sized Willard endured four years of my high school English classes and more in college. He's now forty-three with a village on his broad shoulders. If anything, he has learned the value of a clear, uncluttered message. "It's not that we're against all mining," says Willard. "But without salmon we're gone. Poof."

By teaming up with local and international conservation groups, Klukwan is leveraging the wild line for subsistence rights, and once again asserting themselves as protectors of *Jilkaat aani*. In fall of 2014, the village council passed a resolution to compel the State of Alaska to authorize an EPA designation of "Outstanding National Resource Water," in effect holding the mine to the highest possible watermark. Beyond its role as a source of protein and cultural identity for Tlingit people, the council argued that the Chilkat River nourishes a rich ecosystem that sustains wildlife and human populations. In 2012 the watershed supplied salmon enough to net \$12.5 million for local commercial fishers.

It turns out that foremost among EPA standards for an "outstanding" designation is that the nominee flows across a line marking protected habitat, such as wilderness, national park, or wildlife preserve.

The Eagle Preserve fits.

"They're gonna harm our fish since the water's going into the river," traditional leader Joe Hotch told me in 2014. The Tlingit elder's hands gestured like water. "So we need to make them aware that our fish are harmed enough already." A finger slashed a line in the air. "Instead of fighting more."

Refracted through a modern lens, John Muir's wild lines may seem simplistic, naïve, or even racist. In a nation of postage stamp wildernesses surrounded by vast sacrifice lands, the cynicism of Native America is understandable. But when residents align with stakeholders to preserve the sanctity of a few special places, miracles happen. For tribes in Alaska and elsewhere, advocates for future generations are discovering that cultural survival depends on protecting habitat. Meaningful alliances are being forged between non-Native groups and Native — Tlingit, Nez Perce, Gwich'in, Umatilla, Hupa, to name a few — for the sake of wildlife and wild lands.

We might debate into the night over definitions of "wild" and "wilderness." Were the Chilkat-Chilkoot people any more "wild" before they met John Muir than after? Is *Jilkaat aani* a wilderness or a neighborhood? Do wild salmon require wild waters to be wild? Did Muir reserve a place for humans inside his wild line?

The Poetry of James F. Vickery

Ben Hill



I first met Vickery at the University of Maryland field office in Seoul. He happened to be there, picking up mail when I arrived from Okinawa with no prior knowledge of Korea and no idea where I would live. Characteristically, Jim came to the aid of a stranger by inviting me to share his lodgings, a low concrete house in the corner of a walled garden, off a quiet street in Huam Dong. This was 1986.

My job in those days was to teach undergraduate math at ever changing locations in Japan, the Philippines, Korea, Australia and Guam — wherever the University of Maryland offered courses to troops in the Asian Pacific. Before email, before cell phones, this work was both stressfully isolating and gloriously independent. At some locations, I was the only Maryland lecturer and my supervising administrator worked in a different time zone. In addition to soldiers and sailors, classes included local Asian students who often volunteered as language and culture guides. Fellow lecturers were a natural source of support and social contact, and despite the brevity of our acquaintance, several of these, including James Vickery, left large and lasting impressions on me.

Jim was a scholar of American literature. I believe his Ph.D. dissertation at SUNY Buffalo was titled *The Fonts of Henry James*, and he was quick to advise me on such lights as Melville, Fenimore Cooper and Twain. His literary insights framed and undergirded trenchant observations of contemporary society. According to Jim, the American condition is one of inarticulation. Americans are speechless, however much we talk, and, like the title character of Melville's *Billy Budd*, young and beautiful but incapable of articulating, and therefore of fully perceiving, the truth.

After a year on the Maryland circuit, Jim had insisted on a longer-term assignment in Korea, which he adored. Many of Jim's friends there were marginalized expatriates. He drank with drunks and snorted with addicts, explaining that he felt a camaraderie with outcasts — black sheep, convicts, the estranged, the disgraced. His empathy was grounded in the experience of his divorce, in sub-society adventures such as being paid to steal fuel from a railroad tank car on behalf of a company that actually owned the fuel but didn't want to unload it legally, and from his stint as a Sheriff's deputy on the Colorado Front Range, saving half-frozen hunters, armed and unaware they needed saving. He was a blue-collar intellectual, a brilliant curmudgeon, and a compassionate professor who made Chaucer speak to the conditions of infantrymen. He consistently over-tipped hack drivers and waitresses.

The act of saving a nest egg seemed to Jim self-centered and classist, so when he eventually married his Korean sweetheart, Sangmin, and retired to the small brick house he had inherited in Denver, I doubt it was a “comfortable” retirement. Regardless, Sangmin stuck with him, and by his own reckoning made him a better man and a happier one, though perhaps that is not saying much. They made a life together and mutually adored their dog. But Jim still sat awake nights, and drank too much, and wrote poetry, quite a lot of it, before cancer overtook him.

His poems were published in *The Auraria Times*, *Breaklight*, *Icon*, *The Montana Poet Magazine*, *Poetry Texas*, *South Dakota Review*, *Spree*, *Top*, *Ululatus*, and in a three volume collection from Outskirts Press. One poem, “A Coming and a Going,” appears on page 61 of this journal.

Decades after encountering James Vickery, and as I look forward to my own retirement of thinking and writing in obscurity — the fate, let’s face it, of many a lower tier academician — I am struck by how clearly Jim’s inimitable intellect shines through and endures in his work.

Log Decomp Thoughts

Kathleen Caprario-Ulrich

In August 2015, Kathleen Caprario-Ulrich spent ten days as an artist in residence at the H. J. Andrews Experimental Forest, a 16,000-acre ecological research site in Oregon's beautiful western Cascades Mountains. These notes were made during that time of reflection and research. Her art can be found on pages 44 and 45.



August 6, 2015

Decomposition and renewal What is considered waste and detritus is the foundation for succession, the new, the future. What is old then dies and, in its demise, becomes repurposed, reborn and the basis for future generations of life and biological innovation. That's what I call "karma" in action. Transformation, metamorphosis, symbiosis, interdependence — they're all there and richly in play. But what if we don't understand or perceive that value? What if we can't see, hear or appreciate the benefit because of our limited set of experiences, interests and values?

The patterns and systems in nature that we understand are those that are generally found to be useful to humans and thus valued. Those patterns and systems that can be perceived in human terms, produce human benefit, create human profit and can be controlled by humans are most valued.

But what if the greatest value to be had is beyond the scope of human understanding? What if the benefit is not always immediate and conspicuous but sustains humanity, just the same? We often do not recognize systems and patterns of organization in nature, patterns that have a scope and duration that is outside of our generation's lifespan or cultural aesthetic.

We may have the ability to look back far into the past but are limited in imagining the future. How has that lack of long-range vision influenced the criteria used to assign value? Who has traditionally and culturally made that determination? Is the matrix for assigning worth outdated, false or corrupt? Who do we value and does the system through which we evaluate and consider merit favor certain groups and points of view to the detriment and exclusion of others, including the environment?

How can we determine a new, more inclusive and true value system, a system that extends over generations? Can we value beauty and curiosity as useful and critical parts of being human? Can we?



Not Lost, Just Staring

Shannon Mootz

"Wait, wasn't that (chain of mountains/overpass/Camino Seco Road) supposed to be over there?"

"We missed the exit and the next one isn't for another X miles."

"It says if we see the frying pan on the fence we've gone too far and I think I just saw it."

"This wasn't the right street to turn on."

Living in our Google-Map, Siri, GPS-driven world this doesn't happen to us as much as before, unless we forget to print a map out or lose the napkin with the neatly printed diagram with the house on the left. Those of us who are directionally challenged continually have to adjust our route or pray for a red light so we can glance at the microscopic print of the Google map. Does it say two streets past or three? Turn at the light or past the light?

What happens if I get hopelessly lost and don't have a road map? In my experience: tears, calls on payphones or dying cell phones, stopping the car to center myself. Unless I need to get somewhere, what's the difference between being lost and merely exploring? I've seen T-shirts in the Sea-Tac airport that say 'Not all who wander are lost' from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. I've seen multiple blogs of those who went off the blue line of the Google map and are all the better for it. I see the images, an overload of flamboyant color from exotic places all around the world. The blue-toned stormy sky over a Saskatchewan prairie. The wrong turn that led to a stunning display of northern lights in the snow. Being lost in a section of a city where no *Frommer's* guide would take you but you'll never forget. Maybe the wrong turn is success after all. Maybe it's just the doing-something-differentness of it all that's so alluring. The backpacking in Laos, Kazakhstan, or name-the-new-place-that-has-not-been-discovered-yet. What I don't see or read about so much are the failures, the wrong turns, the unfamiliar roads driven down at midnight. It's all part of the experience too, right? In travel, road trips, just going to the social security office, a retreat, or a new workplace for the first time on the other side of town, is there such thing as a wrong answer?

As an assistant at Lane's Library, I've had many trips to the BF section, where self-help titles and philosophies abound to combat this fear of failure, like strips of happy-faced duct tape. Make lemons into lemonade. There is no such thing as a wrong answer. How to set goals for yourself and seven healthy habits. All of these are inherently good in themselves, but sometimes they keep us from being still, staring out our windshield at what may have been a desert, a city, fields, the woods, but now might as well be the moon.

Healing can be found in the staring.

Before we even think *how did I get here?* or *how do I get back to where I was?* we're just staring. It is that moment of staring, that realization that we might have failed, that changes us, humbles us, and sometimes gives us the clarity of mind to make vanish whatever clouded our senses enough to lead us here. In essence, then, have we truly failed or are we all the better for it? Isn't this all part of the journey?

During a dark time in 2004 I stumbled into a church library, seeking solace on the shelves, and came across *How to Cope with Conflict, Crisis and Change*, a mustard-colored book thickly laminated but hard to forget with its curlicue swash lettering — and amazingly something I was able to order through a Summit Library this year. It was from this book I learned the ideogram in Chinese for 'crisis' is a combination of the characters for 'death' and 'opportunity' (Ahlem 18). This may be disputed in the Wikipedia-influenced world we now live in (substitute 'danger' for 'death' and something else for 'opportunity' because the symbol doesn't carry the same meaning cross-culturally). However, at the time this passage struck a real chord within me. I began to look at crisis, something that just wasn't working, major change, regardless of whether it was positive or negative, as a two-part program. There was the 'death' to the old expectations, methods, mindsets — or, as in driving, giving up the belief I was going the right way and accepting being lost. The 'opportunity' then is only made available by what precedes it. The possibilities widen because we have to do something totally out of our previous nature: think a new way, take actions we would have never considered earlier. Those death+opportunity life lessons move us forward, become ingrained in our actions/reactions and carry us along on our journey. When we have to start over, we are already in the process of changing.

I became intimately familiar with this process in 2004, the year I discovered that coping book. I had just graduated from college in December, eager to transition from my job as a copyeditor for a home-grown bilingual textbook business into a local public library position in southern Arizona. Instead, I began the year minus that job. The company went into bankruptcy over the holidays and I was laid off shortly afterward. The public library was under an indefinite hiring freeze and I was no longer sheltered under the umbrella of student work at the university. It was that week in January that I started over. I began to open my mind to all opportunities for employment; anything was on the table. I was filled with a new fire as I searched for jobs until 4 am each night, scanning the Internet for posts. Teaching English as a second language in Chiang Mai? Why not? Tape librarian ad from Monster.com? Sure. Library positions for Latah County, Idaho, Pikes Peak, Colorado and Fargo, North Dakota? I actually got an interview from the third one. My mind had changed from analyzing how I became unemployed to strategizing what to do next. I had even considered a paper factory with only three walls on the side of the freeway where I'd be stuffing 60,000 coupons in newsletters from 5 pm Sundays to 5 am

Mondays each week. Then in February, I landed a temporary job at the university. That led to my first full-time position at the Arizona Superior Court Law Library. Those two rainy months spent reflecting on possibilities created the pathway for me to eventually work for that same public library and later, Lane Community College.

There is opportunity to recalculate where we are and where we are going. I may have taken a wrong turn, but now I want to see where this road leads. Why are journeys that involve failure — where we overcome the odds or beat what seemed impossible and become aware of our humanity through it all — so satisfying? Is it the lessons we learn? The wisdom we often gain? Is it the realization that these experiences can or will eventually meld into who we are?

Why are we so inspired by Einstein's failures, or actors who don't get their first role until later in life? With stories like these, we can relax and realize we can still do great things, that it's not too late to try again. Failure — well, that was all part of the journey, part of who we are. After all, what fundamental purpose would learning by trial and error serve without the 'error'? The dark needed so we can see the light? The hard times so we can better appreciate the good? When it's all in the course of our life path, there's no such thing as a wrong turn.

Work Cited

Ahlem, Lloyd H. *How to Cope with Conflict, Crisis and Change*. Glendale, CA: G/L Publications, 1978.

Contributors

Kathleen Caprario-Ulrich is a screenwriter, stand up comic, art educator and award winning visual artist. She has taught for Lane's Art Department for 20 years. In addition to Lane, her adjunct teaching practice has included Linn Benton Community College, Oregon State University and the University of Oregon.

D. Shane Combs received a B.F.A. in Creative Writing from UNC-Wilmington and an M.A. in English from East Carolina University. He has published creative pieces in online journals and has published essays for *The Community College Moment* and *Composition Studies*. His interests are currently in autoethnography, including the relational and interpersonal.

Marc Duyck earned his Master's degree in Adult Education with a thesis on best practice for veterans with traumatic brain injuries and hearing loss. He has taught at Lane Community College since 2010. He has published and presented on topics related to healthcare for local and national organizations.

Jen Ferro earned her Master's degree in Library and Information Science from UT Austin. She has been a librarian at Lane for 11 years. She enjoys singing and acting in local theatrical productions in the Eugene area. This the first time she has been published.

Daniel Lee Henry is an adjunct instructor for University of Alaska and Lane Community College. He is the founder/director of North Words Writers Symposium in Skagway, Alaska. His work has appeared in 8 anthologies, including the Pushcart Prize and Best of Pushcart.

Ben Hill is a retired community college math instructor and a former co-editor of *The Moment*.

Peter Jensen, an LCC Writing instructor, enjoys writing formal poetry. This 39 line Sestina form is good for expressing an "obsessive" theme like the effects of laws on adoption. Sestina math rules were invented by a French mathematician in the late 1100s. The 6 "magic" words repeat in a pattern that forms a Solomon's Seal or the six-pointed Star of David.

Sandy Jensen is a retiree writing instructor who has started an online drawing-on-black paper class with her sister called *Mysterious Night Vision Field Journal*. This story and the images began as a blog post at mysteriousnightvision.com.

Colleen Keefe is a first-year undergraduate at Illinois State University. Her major is Middle Level Teacher Education, and she hopes to eventually teach language arts and social sciences at the 6-8th grade levels.

Jean LeBlanc is an assistant professor at Sussex County Community College in Newton, New Jersey. Her most recent book is *A Field Guide to the Spirits* (Aqueduct Press, 2015). More of her work can be seen on her website, www.jeanleblancpoetry.com.

Sarah Lushia has taught at Lane Community College since 2011. She is passionate about helping students thrive in the CC setting and in their larger academic, professional, and personal lives. In her free time she can most often be found curled up with a non-fiction book and a cat.

Perry W. Ma earned his Ph.D. from the University of Oregon. He has been teaching at Lane Community College since 2003. His past publications include the books *Amazing Tales: Second Series* and *Confucius: The Sage on the Road*.

Philos Molina is from El Salvador and has been an Enrollment and Financial Student Services advisor at Lane Community College since 2005.

Shannon Mootz is a recent transplant to Oregon and Lane as of Spring 2012. She is currently a circulation assistant/Interlibrary loan processor at LCC Library. Her hobbies include a keen passion for foreign languages, travel, photography and writing. She hails from the “Old Pueblo,” Tucson, Arizona.

Russell H. Shitabata teaches at Lane Community College and pursues photography on the side. You can find his photography on Instagram and EyeEm. He has published entries on Milton Murayama and David Mura in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Asian American Literature* (2009). He is co-editor of *The Moment*.

Jarvis Slacks teaches first year composition and creative writing at Montgomery College in Maryland. His focus is Civil Rights and Post-Modern fiction. He is currently working on a novel and a memoir.

Brooke Taylor teaches the science majors sequence at LCC. She has served as one of only two community college members on the American Chemical Society General Chemistry scenario based on-line lab exam, administered through the ACS Exams Institute. Brooke has presented at the past four Biennial Conferences of Chemical Education, including “Sustainable Chemistry: Small Scale Kinetics in Real-Time,” which was Lane’s 2013 Innovation of the Year.

Lori D. Ungemah has her Ed.D. from Teachers College, Columbia University. She is a founding faculty member in English at Guttman Community College at CUNY. Publications include creative ethnography in *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* and a chapter in *The Poverty and Education Reader: A Call for Equity in Many Voices*.

James Vickery’s poems were published in *The Auraria Times*, *Breaklight*, *Icon*, *The Montana Poet Magazine*, *Poetry Texas*, *South Dakota Review*, *Spree*, *Top*, and *Ululatus*. Recently, a body of work has been collected and published in three volumes available on the website of Outskirts Press and on Amazon.com.

Alice Louise Warner earned an M.A. in Teaching from Western Oregon University, a B.A. from Yale College and a J.D. from Boston University. She began teaching at the University of Massachusetts in the College of Public and Community Service 25 years ago. She has taught at LCC since 2010. Her past publications include *Generating Transitions: From Incarceration to College*, and *With Cloak and Veil at a Community College*.

Carol Watt has been an English instructor at Lane since 1997. She helped create and teach two Learning Communities, including Go for Baroque! She has worked with the American Indian Languages Program since 2000. AILP is committed to developing and supporting American Indian Languages courses, and is working to establish a certificate/course of studies at Lane.

Scott West has taught English, writing, and humanities at Harford Community College for nearly 13 years. He holds an M.A. from Morgan State University and an M.F.A. from the University of Baltimore. Past publications include short fiction and book reviews in *Welter* and *the Baltimore Review*.

Community College Moment: Call for Submissions

The Community College Moment invites academic and creative writing, visual art, and other original work relevant to the mission and environment of community colleges. Submissions should reflect scholarship, broadly defined, and should appeal on a local or national level to an educated, but not specialized, audience. Each issue of *The Moment* is thematically organized, all or in part, providing multiple perspectives on a topic. The next theme is "Civic Engagement." The deadline for submissions is Monday, November 14, 2016.

The Community College Moment is open to a variety of submission formats, including essays, research articles, conference papers, sabbatical reports, and reflections on innovative pedagogies (under 5000 words; languages other than English considered), fiction and poetry relevant to our audience, artwork including drawings, paintings, photographs, three-dimensional works or choreographic projects featured through photographs, and musical compositions. Works in progress and excerpted works are also considered, as well as collaborative, web-based and multi-media projects. We invite scholarly book and film reviews (under 1200 words).

2017 Theme: Civic Engagement

In the work of the Truman Commission of 1947, the U.S. government made the case for the central role of higher education in democratic society. At the first meeting of the commission in 1946, John Steelman argued that "We face national decisions that are as important as any that have confronted us since the federal union was formed. These decisions are made in a democracy by the people, and not by a Government apart from the people. Their choices are governed in large part by their opportunities for education aimed at producing effective citizens" (in Hutcheson 107-8). Not only did the Truman Commission lay the conceptual groundwork for a community college system open to all "without regard to economic status, race, creed, color, sex, national origin, or ancestry," it imagined an educational curriculum that explicitly helped students to develop "ethical principles consistent with democratic ideals" (in Hutcheson 109).

This issue of *The Moment* will take up and reflect upon the vision of the Truman Commission as it manifests (or does not) today. In the context of the various reform movements within and outside of higher education, to what extent are community colleges — and we as teachers — fostering civil and social engagement? To what extent should or can we? We encourage you to think about the relative importance of civic awareness and engagement in your pedagogy. Which models of education and modes of communication produce and/or deter such engagement in ourselves and in our students? What challenges do we as teachers and citizens face when we work towards these goals? We invite submissions that consider the above questions in various contexts: professional, political, and personal (and all of the intersections between them). For more information, please go to: <http://www.lanec.edu/ccmoment/submission-information>.

Work Cited

Hutcheson, Philo A. "The Truman Commission's Vision of the Future." *Thought and Action: The NEA Higher Education Journal* (Fall 2007): 107-115. Web.



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